



Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria

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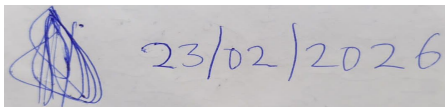
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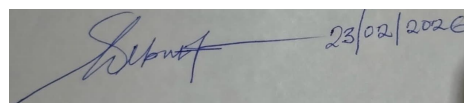


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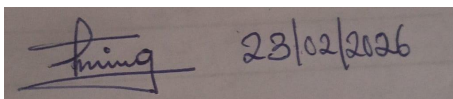
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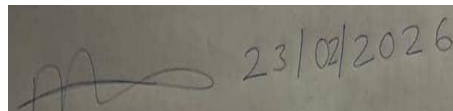
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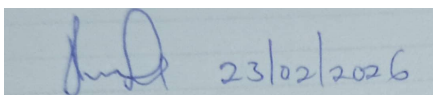
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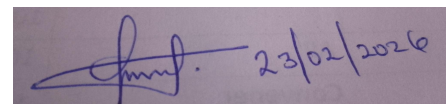
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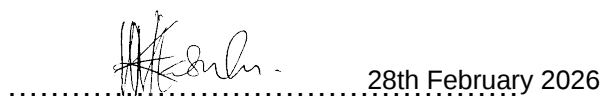
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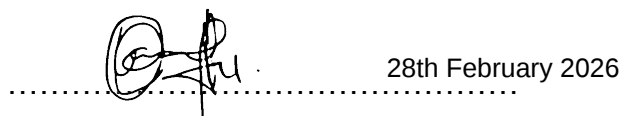
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DEDICATION

We dedicate this research work to God Almighty, who has given us the strength, wisdom, knowledge and understanding needed to make this work a success. We also dedicate this work to all women out there, who are lending their voices to ensure inclusion and fairness of women in civic leadership roles. Women, your voices matter and your struggles are seen, together we achieve greatness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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A big shout-out to all members of Group E; The Voicemakers. It has been an inspiring journey of growth, resilience, learning, unlearning, and relearning. We are confident that we have been deeply impacted, and we believe that the sky is only our starting point.

Lastly, to you, our esteemed reader, we express our sincere appreciation for deeming this research worthy of your time and use. We hope that this work serves its intended purpose and proves helpful to you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page.....	i
Certification.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Table of contents.....	viii
Abstract.....	ix

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

1.0.	
Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3. Research Objectives.....	3
1.4. Research Questions.....	3
1.5. Research Hypotheses.....	3
1.6. Significance of Study.....	3
1.7. Scope \ Delimitation of the study.....	4
1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms.....	4

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. Literature review.....	5
2.1. Conceptual review.....	5
2.1.1. Definition and Dimensions of Gender Inequality.....	5
2.1.2. Political Participation: Forms and Measures.....	5
2.1.3. Inclusion Strategies.....	5
(i). Institutional /Policy Reform.....	5
(ii). Capacity Building & Civic Education.....	5
(iii). Strategic Communication and Narrative Intervention.....	5
2.2. Theoretical Framework.....	6
2.2.1. Framing Theory.....	6

2.2.2. Feminist Communication Theory.....	6
2.2.3. Combined Application to the Study.....	6
2.3.1. Empirical Review.....	7
2.3.2. Influence of Messaging Techniques on Women's Interest In Leadership Roles.....	8
2.3.3. Factors That Help or Hinder Strategic Messages Among Women.....	9
2.3.4. Effectiveness of Inclusion Strategies Globally and In Nigeria.....	10
2.4. Gaps in The Literature Review.....	13

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. Methodology.....	15
3.1. Research Design.....	15
3.2. Population of The Study.....	15
3.3. Sample Size And Sample Technique.....	15
3.4. Research Instruments.....	15
3.5. Validity and Reliability of Instruments.....	15
3.6. Method of Data Collections.....	16
3.7. Method of Data Analysis.....	16
3.8. Ethical Considerations.....	17

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis.....	18-28
4.2.0 Quantitative Analysis.....	29
4.2.1 Descriptive Overview.....	29
4.2.2 Chi-Square test: Exposure and willingness.....	29
4.2.3 Regression analysis: Predictors of perceived effectiveness.....	29

4.2.4 ANOVA: Differences across age and gender.....	30
4.2.5 Quantitative findings in relation to hypotheses.....	30
4.3 Qualitative Analysis (Key Informant Interviews).....	31
4.4 Inferential Analysis.....	32
4.4.1 Chi-Square Test of Association.....	32
4.5 Regression Analysis.....	33
4.6 Analysis of Variance.....	33
4.7 Discussion of Findings.....	34
CHAPTER FIVE	
5.1 Introduction.....	35
5.2 Summary of the Study.....	35
5.3 Summary of Major Findings.....	36
5.4 Conclusion.....	37
5.5 Recommendations.....	38
5.6 Contribution to Knowledge.....	39
5.7 Suggestions for Further Studies.....	39
References	40-41
Appendix	42-56

ABSTRACT

Women remain significantly underrepresented in Nigeria's civic leadership despite constituting nearly half of the population. This study examines how strategic communication influences women's participation and visibility in leadership across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Guided by Framing Theory and Feminist Communication Theory, the research used surveys, Key Informant Interviews, and content analysis, drawing data from a probability-based sample of 883 respondents. Research instruments were validated through expert review, with reliability confirmed at Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.70 and above.

Findings show high awareness of strategic communication promoting women's civic engagement, with social media identified as the most impactful channel. Chi-square and regression results reveal a significant relationship between exposure to communication campaigns and willingness to participate in leadership. Qualitative insights highlight the influence of media framing, advocacy, and mentorship, though sociocultural and institutional barriers remain persistent. The study concludes that strategic communication is a strong catalyst for improving women's civic leadership in Nigeria.

Keywords: Strategic-Communication, Women, Leadership, Representation, Civic-Engagement

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Response Rate.....	26
Table 4.2 showing the frequency and percentage distribution of the various age groups.....	27
Table 4.3 showing the frequency and percentage distribution by gender.....	28
Table 4.4: Regression model summary (selected statistics).....	37
Table 4.5: Qualitative Analysis (Key Informant Interviews).....	38
Appendix	

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 showing percentage distribution by gender.....	28
Figure 4. 2 A pie chart showing the percentage distribution by age groups.....	29
Figure 4.3 Chart showing the frequency and percentage distribution by geopolitical zones.....	30
Figure 4.4 chart showing the distribution of the occupations of the respond.....	30
Figure 4.5 Campaign Strategies encourage women participation in Politics.....	31
Figure 4.6 Civil Leadership Message Targeted Women Participation.....	33
Figure 4.7 Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in Influencing Women Participation.....	33
Figure 4.8 The Most Persuasive Communication Strategies in Influencing Women Participation.....	33
Figure 4.9 The Influence of Communication Strategies on Public Perception on the Advantages of Women Participation.....	33
Figure 4.10 The Role Strategic Communication Tackling These Major Barriers..	3

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Women's participation in civic leadership is essential for fostering inclusive governance and achieving sustainable development. Although women constitute nearly half of Nigeria's population, they remain significantly underrepresented in civic leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels. In Nigeria, women occupy less than 5% of seats in the National Assembly, reflecting persistent barriers to political equality (Nigerian Women's Trust Fund, 2025). Numerous sociocultural factors, including gender stereotypes and entrenched patriarchal structures within Nigerian communities, have contributed to this leadership imbalance. Adeniyi (2020) and Oloyede (2021) similarly argue that sociocultural norms, patriarchal religious values, economic disparities, limited access to political networks, and electoral violence contribute to the marginalization of women in civic leadership spaces.

In recent years, across Nigeria and Africa, numerous efforts have been undertaken by civil society organizations and international bodies to accelerate gender parity in leadership. Organizations such as the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund, through initiatives like She Should Contest and Create Her Space, as well as YIAGA Africa, UN Women Nigeria, and the Women in Politics Forum (WIPF), have played notable roles. Despite these efforts, progress remains slow, with women holding only 3.9% to 4.4% of parliamentary seats as of early 2024 (Country Data Report, 2024). Research also shows that social media use correlates with increased civic participation, particularly when women perceive personal benefits from such engagement (Mano, 2023).

Moreover, media portrayals often reinforce gender stereotypes that present women as less competent or unsuitable for leadership roles (Bello & Alabi, 2019). Empirical studies in Nigeria confirm that cultural stereotypes and the prohibitive cost of candidacy limit women's political engagement (Oyekanmi & Pogson, 2021). Strategic communication through media engagement, advocacy campaigns, capacity-building, and targeted public messaging can increase awareness, foster dialogue, and motivate key stakeholders to support women's leadership. These communication efforts by state actors and NGOs have contributed to voter education, political mobilization, and the promotion of women's rights. According to Oyekanmi and Pogson (2021), such initiatives show promise but also reveal gaps, particularly the need for communication strategies that directly address sociocultural barriers and leverage appropriate platforms to improve women's participation and representation in civic leadership spaces.

However, despite the increasing use of communication interventions, there remains a limited empirical understanding of how effective these strategies truly are in enhancing women's participation in civic leadership roles. This gap underscores the need for systematic inquiry

into the specific impacts of strategic communication on women's visibility, confidence, motivation, and readiness to engage in leadership

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite constitutional provisions, the National Gender Policy's 35% affirmative action target, and global commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality), women in Nigeria remain critically underrepresented in civic and leadership spaces. This underrepresentation persists due to strong structural, sociocultural, and institutional barriers that limit women's access to leadership opportunities and restrict the amplification of their voices in decision-making arenas. While various strategic efforts have been initiated to promote women's participation, strategic communication remains underutilized. In many cases, communication campaigns lack culturally responsive messaging, evidence-based targeting, and multi-platform delivery needed to ensure effectiveness. Existing research has predominantly examined women's participation from policy, legal, or human rights perspectives, with minimal empirical focus on the role and effectiveness of communication strategies in shaping women's leadership aspirations, confidence, and motivation.

Existing research in Nigeria has mostly focused on women's participation from a policy, legal or rights perspectives, with minimal empirical data on the role and effectiveness of communication strategies in influencing women's confidence, motivation and willingness to engage in civic leadership. "Effective political messaging enables women to not only participate in elections, but also shape public agendas and challenge political cultures that do not accept inclusion through strategic narrative control" (Cubbage & Byrd, 2022). Baxter also explains that strategic communication helps to counteract entrenched stereotypes and increase women's visibility (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021/2022). Even though strategic communication initiatives are often used to challenge stereotypes, mobilize communities, and inspire women, there is an inadequacy of research evaluating their actual impacts on the outcomes of women's civic leadership activities, it is therefore timely to critically evaluate how strategic communication can be harnessed to drive greater women's participation and representation in leadership. This study therefore addresses the challenging gap by assessing the effectiveness of strategic communication in promoting women's representation and participation in civic leadership roles and space in Nigeria.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify effective strategic communication methods and approaches that promote women's involvement in civic leadership roles.
2. To assess how different messaging techniques influence women's interest in leadership roles.
3. To examine the factors that help or hinder strategic messages among women.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the most effective strategic communication methods and approaches for enhancing women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles?
2. What structural, sociocultural, and institutional barriers inhibit the amplification of women's voices in civic leadership space?
3. How do variations in messaging strategies influence women's motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage in civic leadership activities?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. Strategic communication has a positive impact on women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles in Nigeria.
2. Specific strategic communication methods, such as social media, community outreach, are more effective than others in promoting women's representation in leadership.
3. Variations in messaging strategies significantly influence women's motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage in civic leadership activities.
4. Structural, sociocultural, and institutional barriers negatively affect the amplification of women's voices in civic leadership despite strategic communication efforts.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds essential significant contributions, like:

- The study supports wider efforts towards gender equity, good governance, and inclusive development in Nigeria.
- It provides applicable insights for more effective campaigns and interventions designed by communication professionals, advocacy groups, and NGOs.
- It promotes understanding of the connection between women's civic participation and strategic messaging.
- It also provides evidence-based insights that can inform policymakers and stakeholders on the best approaches for strategic communication aimed at empowering women.

1.7 Scope/Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on the impact of strategic communication methods, from media campaigns, digital platforms, grassroots advocacy, and interpersonal communication on the participation and representation of women in civic leadership roles in Nigeria. The analysis of this study is limited to the period from 2019 to 2024, with citation and review from key elections and relevant advocacy activities within this timeframe. The study will draw on the experiences of women leaders, advocacy organisations, communication practitioners, youth and community members with focus on urban and semi-urban populations across the six geographical zones in Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, data shall be gathered from Key actors between the ages of 18-70 who have lived within the states in the six geographical zones for an upward of 5-10 years. Relevant stakeholders will be reached for the purpose of having in-depth Key Informant Interviews in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms

- Strategic Communication: this can be defined as the intentional use of communication activities like the media, community outreach, advocacy etc, to influence societal discourses.
- Civic Leadership roles: this means position of influence and decision making in the society.
- Impact: the aftermath effect or change that a particular action or activity created.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Definition and Dimensions of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality denotes systematic differences in power, opportunities, and resources between men and women across social, economic, and political domains (UN Women, 2024). In the political sphere, gender inequality is reflected in women's underrepresentation in elected and appointed offices, restricted access to party and electoral resources, and disproportionate exposure to political violence and harassment (International IDEA, 2024). Nigeria provides a clear example: recent data indicate that women hold only about 4% of seats in the national legislature, underscoring a persistent representation gap (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2025; UN Women, 2024). This inequality is multidimensional and may diminish the effectiveness of reform efforts unless intentionally addressed (International IDEA, 2024; Ette & Akpan-Obong, 2023).

2.1.2 Political Participation: Forms and Measures

Political participation encompasses a wide range of activities, including candidacy, voting, public advocacy, and the holding of formal political positions (IPU, 2025). Scholars commonly distinguish between expressive participation (e.g., civic discussion, public advocacy) and instrumental participation (e.g., running for office, seeking appointments). Frequently used measurement approaches include sex-disaggregated voter turnout, self-reported political interest and efficacy, the number and share of female candidates, appointment rates, party leadership representation, and electoral outcomes (IPU, 2025; International IDEA, 2024). Because electoral outcomes evolve slowly, researchers often assess intermediate indicators such as political efficacy, leadership ambition, intent to run, and media visibility to evaluate program effects over shorter periods (UN Women, 2024).

2.1.3 Inclusion Strategies (e.g., Gender Quotas, Legal Reforms, Civic Education)

Policy and programmatic approaches to enhance women's political inclusion are typically grouped into three clusters:

1. **Institutional/policy reforms:** Quotas, affirmative appointments, and party rules can produce rapid increases in representation where politically feasible. Nigeria has seen legal and advocacy efforts pushing a 35% affirmative action target for appointments, though implementation remains inconsistent (Premium Times, 2024). Scholars caution that formal rules must be paired with party reforms and enforcement mechanisms to be effective (International IDEA, 2024).
2. **Capacity building & civic education:** Trainings, mentoring, and leadership academies (implemented by CSOs such as the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund and

YIAGA) build candidate readiness and public awareness. Documentation from these programmes often reports increases in candidate knowledge and visibility, but rigorous causal evidence linking capacity building alone to electoral success is limited (Women's Trust Fund, 2024; YIAGA, 2024).

3. Strategic communication and narrative interventions: Strategic communication (SC) includes purposeful message framing, channel selection, messenger choice (trusted community or faith leaders), and measures to counter disinformation. SC aims to change public attitudes, raise women's profile, and boost leadership ambition. While international evidence suggests SC can shift attitudes when culturally tailored, there is limited Nigeria-specific, causal evidence about which SC tactics translate into sustained increases in candidacy or election outcomes (UN Women, 2024; Carnegie Endowment, 2023).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study shall employ two complementary theories, which are: Framing Theory and Feminist Communication Theory. These two theories shall explore and explain how strategic communication influences women's participation and representation in civic leadership in Nigeria.

Framing Theory

This theory is rooted in communication studies, posits that the way information is presented and structured significantly affects how audiences perceive and interpret issues (Entman, 1993). In the context of this research, strategic communication campaigns targeting women's leadership are framing processes that shape public discourse around gender roles, leadership capabilities, and civic engagement. It emphasizes empowering narratives, challenges stereotypes, and highlights role models communicators that can influence attitudes and social norms that either promote or hinder women's leadership. The theory highlights the power of the media and communication channels in creating meaning and agenda-setting. It calls attention to the emphasis, selection, exclusion and elaboration of messages that affect how society views women leaders.

Analyzing how communication initiatives frame women's participation therefore makes it possible to identify the frames most effective in encouraging increased representation in leadership. This theory thus provides a critical foundation for evaluating the content, strategies, and impacts of communication efforts aimed at transforming public perceptions and behaviors regarding women in civic leadership spaces.

Feminist Communication Theory

This theory focuses on how communication processes reflect, reinforces, or challenges gender power relations and inequalities (Cukland & Moorti, 2006) this theory advocates for communication that empowers marginalized groups, most especially women by promoting gender equity and amplifying their voices. It is vital because it allows deeper understanding of how strategic communication can be used as a transformative tool to disrupt patriarchal narratives and systemic barriers that restrict women's access to leadership roles. In the

context of this research, communication is not only informational but also political and cultural. This theory involves advocating for women's rights, promoting inclusive dialogues, and challenging dominant gender ideologies that are knitted in the media and the society. Feminist communication theory, highlights the importance of using communication strategies that are participatory, communicative, and aware of intersectional identities. This empowers women to maintain agency and reshape leadership standards in civic spaces.

Combined Application to the study.

Integrating Framing theory and Feminist communication theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for this research. While framing theory helps to analyze how messages are constructed and influences societal perceptions of women in leadership roles, Feminist communication theory contextualises these messages within broader power structures and the quest for gender equity. Together, these theories show the evaluation of how strategic communication can shift public attitudes, dismantle stereotypes, and create enabling environments for women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles in Nigeria.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Strategic Communication Methods and Approaches that Promote Women's Involvement in Civic Leadership Roles

Several empirical studies have demonstrated that strategic communication plays a significant role in promoting women's civic engagement and leadership participation across different contexts. Okoro and Nwafor (2018) examined the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns in Nigeria and found that targeted community dialogues, media sensitization, and participatory communication approaches substantially increased women's awareness of their political rights. This heightened awareness, in turn, motivated women's engagement in local governance processes, thereby showing that communication tailored to grassroots realities can shift attitudes and participation levels. Similarly, Tamale (2020), in her research on women's political participation in Uganda, emphasized that storytelling, grassroots mobilization, and the adoption of local languages were far more effective than conventional top-down communication strategies. Her findings highlighted that culturally sensitive approaches not only strengthened women's confidence but also dismantled some of the structural barriers that traditionally limit their entry into leadership roles.

Furthermore, Norris and Inglehart (2019), in a cross-national study across Sub-Saharan Africa, revealed that gender-sensitive programming through mass media, particularly radio and television played a critical role in shaping women's civic participation. Their research indicated that in rural areas where literacy levels remain relatively low, radio programs that incorporated inclusive narratives and positive role models had a transformative effect in encouraging women to contest leadership positions and participate actively in governance. A more recent study by Oloruntoba and Falola (2021) also found that strategic use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook among women's groups in Nigeria facilitated peer-to-peer communication, networking, and collective mobilization, which translated into higher visibility for women leaders during elections.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that strategic communication methods rooted in cultural relevance, inclusivity, and participatory approaches have a measurable impact on enhancing women's involvement in civic leadership. They further show that the effectiveness of such strategies often depends on the adaptability of communication tools to the socio-cultural and technological contexts in which women live. This implies that while media campaigns and grassroots mobilization are universally significant, their actual success is contingent on aligning communication strategies with women's realities, thereby ensuring that the messages are both accessible and empowering.

2.3.2 Influence of Messaging Techniques on Women's Interest in Leadership Roles

Empirical evidence strongly affirms that the framing and techniques employed in communication messages significantly shape women's perceptions of leadership opportunities. For instance, Eze and Onuoha (2017), in their study of women in Southeastern Nigeria, demonstrated that positive and empowering messages that emphasized competence, community impact, and solidarity elicited greater responsiveness than messages framed around victimhood or exclusion. Their findings highlight that the way messages are constructed can either motivate or discourage women from aspiring to leadership roles. In a broader context, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2019), through a cross-national study on gender and politics, observed that campaigns which strategically highlight role models, particularly successful women leaders, tend to inspire ambition and increase civic participation among younger women. This suggests that representation and visibility of women in leadership do not only validate women's political aspirations but also reinforce the perception that leadership roles are attainable.

The persuasive capacity of digital platforms in promoting women's leadership engagement in Lagos, Nigeria, is convincingly demonstrated by Oyesomi and Oyero (2021). Their research highlights how platforms like facebook and whatsapp serve as a critical tool for disseminating interactive and participatory messages that actively stimulates women's interest in pursuing leadership roles. More, importantly, these platforms do not merely broadcast information that concerns women, but they also cultivate supportive networks that reinforce women's civic aspirations, creating a sustained momentum for political participation. This evidence challenges traditional assumptions that leadership engagement is predominantly influenced by offline factors, emphasising instead the strategic role of digital communication channels. When integrated with the broader literature, it becomes more clear that the tone and framing messages, with the selection of communication media, will fundamentally sharpen women's leadership ambitions. Therefore, understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing effective advocacy and empowerment strategies in diverse socio-political settings.

2.3.3 Factors that Help or Hinder Strategic Messages Among Women

Several empirical studies have also explored the factors that either enable or hinder the effectiveness of strategic messages in promoting women's civic participation. A study conducted by Agbalajobi (2010) on women's underrepresentation in Nigerian politics identified socio-cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and religious constraints as major obstacles to effective communication campaigns targeted at women. In contrast, the same study emphasized that community-based support systems, female mentorship, and

advocacy from civil society organizations serve as enabling factors that enhance message reception and translation into action.

Similarly, research by Omotola (2019) indicated that lack of access to media technologies and digital exclusion continues to limit the reach of strategic communication campaigns, particularly in rural communities. On the other hand, Adeyemi and Fadeyi (2020) found that integrating men and traditional leaders into communication strategies helped reduce resistance and improved the acceptance of gender-focused messages among women. Moreover, Arowolo and Alao (2018) highlighted that socio-economic empowerment, such as providing women with access to education and financial resources, increases their responsiveness to communication messages advocating for leadership involvement. These studies demonstrate that while structural and cultural barriers remain significant, the presence of supportive social networks and inclusive approaches can help amplify the effectiveness of strategic communication targeted at women.

2.3.4 Effectiveness of Inclusion Strategies Globally and in Nigeria

Globally, the most intensely studied inclusion strategy is the adoption of gender quotas, constitutional, legislative, or party-level rules that reserve a share of candidacies or seats for women. Comparative research shows that well-designed quotas can rapidly increase women's descriptive representation, especially when they are paired with strong enforcement mechanisms, placement mandates on party lists, and meaningful sanctions for non-compliance. Countries that combine "zipper" placement on proportional lists with legal penalties for parties that fail to comply have achieved sustained gains in women's presence in parliament and local councils. The mechanism is straightforward: quotas lower structural barriers at the point of recruitment and nomination, forcing parties to search more widely for qualified women and normalizing women's presence on ballots. Longitudinal studies further suggest that once a critical mass is reached, party gatekeeping practices and media narratives begin to shift, gradually improving women's substantive influence over policy agendas. Reserved-seat systems at the local level have also proven effective in building pipelines. Evidence from South Asia shows that reserving chairs and council seats for women not only increases descriptive representation but, under certain conditions, improves the alignment of public goods with women's priorities, such as water, health, and primary education. Crucially, the impact depends on whether women councillors hold real budgetary authority and receive training, mentorship, and protection against intimidation. Where reservations rotate too quickly or are implemented without capacity support, gains in representation do not translate into sustained leadership or policy influence. By contrast, jurisdictions that pair reservations with multi-year leadership training, peer networks, and community sensitization report higher re-election rates for women and greater spillovers into non-reserved seats.

Campaign-finance reforms and material support schemes matter because access to resources remains a decisive barrier. Globally, parties that reduce or waive nomination fees for women, provide public subsidies tied to gender performance, or offer in-kind support (communications teams, compliance staff, safety protocols) see more women contesting and winning primaries. The effects are strongest when finance rules are transparent and enforced, and when parties make early investments before primaries so that women can

build name recognition and ground campaigns. Without such enforcement, fee waivers risk becoming symbolic and unevenly applied. Complementary reforms like family-friendly sitting hours, childcare allowances for legislators, and parental leave reduce attrition after election and make leadership roles more compatible with care work, which disproportionately falls on women.

Another global strand of inclusion policy focuses on institutional cultures and violence prevention. Codes of conduct against sexual harassment, independent complaint mechanisms, and electoral security protocols have measurable effects on candidate retention and participation. Where electoral management bodies track and sanction gender-based political violence (including online abuse), women's willingness to declare candidacy and engage on digital platforms increases. Media regulation and voluntary compacts can also shift coverage norms: balanced sourcing requirements, equal airtime rules during campaigns, and training for journalists on gender-responsive reporting reduce stereotypical framing and improve perceptions of women's competence. These interventions are most effective when coupled with strategic communication that features credible female role models and frames women's leadership around policy performance rather than personal life.

Digital inclusion strategies for closing gender gaps in internet access, subsidizing devices, and providing digital-security training have become integral to participation. Where governments and civil society deliver digital literacy and safety curricula alongside campaign skills (message framing, data use, fundraising), women candidates are more likely to convert online reach into offline mobilization. However, the gains are heterogeneous: without investment in rural connectivity and localized content in indigenous languages, digital strategies primarily benefit urban and educated women. Thus, effective national approaches blend digital tools with trusted offline channels, community radio, faith-based networks, and women's associations to reach first-time voters and aspirants.

In Nigeria, inclusion strategies have been deployed unevenly, and this unevenness helps explain modest national gains despite vibrant advocacy. Party-level fee waivers and discounts for women have lowered entry costs in some cycles, but inconsistent implementation and the persistence of costly, informal nomination markets limit their reach. National-level gender bills that proposed reserved seats and list-based quotas have periodically advanced but have struggled to achieve constitutional traction, which means the most powerful levers binding quotas with enforcement and sanctions remain largely absent. In this context, civil society organizations have filled gaps by providing candidate training, media coaching, and legal support; evaluations of these programs indicate positive effects on political self-efficacy, debate performance, and primary contest participation, especially when training is localized, delivered in local languages, and paired with community sensitization that targets male power brokers as allies.

State and local experiments offer additional lessons, whereby state assemblies have piloted gender charters with parties and media houses, women aspirants report more equitable coverage and fewer stereotyping cues. Partnerships with electoral management bodies to track and respond to harassment and intimidation including digital abuse have improved candidate safety in a handful of jurisdictions, though coverage is far from universal. Importantly, initiatives that integrate economic empowerment with leadership pipelines such

as combining entrepreneurship support or cooperative finance with civic education and mentoring show higher retention of women through the long pre-primary period when financial pressure and social resistance are strongest. Conversely, programs that treat “sensitization” as one-off events, or that foreground women's vulnerability rather than competence, see short-lived shifts in attitudes with little behavioral change.

Across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, effectiveness is mediated by differences in party structures, media ecosystems, religious authorities, and security conditions. In the North-West and North-East, where party nomination processes are more centralized and social restrictions on women's public roles can be stronger, inclusion strategies that rely solely on candidate-driven social media have limited reach. Here, alliances with faith leaders, women's wings of community associations, and community radio produce better results, particularly when messages emphasize service, integrity, and local development outcomes. In the South-West and South-South, where media markets are denser and civil society networks more extensive, training plus strategic communication can convert to nominations more readily, but intraparty finance and incumbency bias remain significant obstacles. These regional patterns suggest that a single national blueprint will underperform; effectiveness rises when strategies are tailored to zone-specific gatekeeping dynamics and when women's groups coordinate with party reformers to open nomination pathways.

Two cross-cutting conditions consistently separate successful inclusion efforts from symbolic ones. First, enforcement of quotas, media balance rules, or party finance commitments must be credible. Where rules carry no penalties, organizational routines revert to male-dominant defaults. Second, sequencing and integration matter: capacity-building and communication should precede and accompany nomination windows; finance and safety supports must be in place before women declare; and post-election retention policies should be visible to would-be aspirants as signals that a leadership trajectory is viable. When these components are sequenced and integrated, descriptive gains are more likely to translate into substantive influence committee chairmanships, budget oversight roles, and policy wins on issues like WASH, GBV response, and economic inclusion.

For measurement, the most informative evaluations blend comparative and longitudinal designs. At minimum, analysts track inputs (training delivered, funds disbursed, media pledges), intermediate outcomes (self-efficacy, media tone and framing, nomination filings), and ultimate outcomes (seats won, leadership posts held), disaggregated by zone, party, age, religion, and rural–urban location. Incorporating content analysis of media framing, administrative data from party primaries, and surveys of aspirants provides a multi-angle view of effectiveness. In Nigeria's context, adding indicators on faith-based engagement and the prevalence/response to gender-based political violence improves explanatory power and helps compare which bundles of interventions work best where.

Moreover, the global record shows that inclusion strategies are most effective when they change rules (binding quotas with placement mandates and sanctions), resources (transparent finance and in-kind support), risk (protection against violence and harassment), and representation (media norms and role-model visibility) at the same time. Nigeria's experience indicates that, in the absence of binding national quotas, progress is possible through coordinated, zone-sensitive packages that marry party reform with well-designed strategic communication, economic and digital inclusion, and credible safety and

accountability mechanisms. This combination not only brings more women into leadership but also increases the odds that their presence translates into durable policy influence.

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

Many studies have missed important insights since they focused more on descriptive analysis of women's underrepresentation or on sociocultural barriers but have paid limited attention to systemically evaluating how strategic communication efforts specifically influences women's leadership participation and representation. This shows that there is a lack of empirical data linking communication strategies to tangible leadership. Also, some research studies give little or no reverence to intra-gender dynamics such as "in-feminism" and some intersectional factors (e.g) ethnicity, class, religion) that affect women's leadership experiences and communication reception in Nigeria. These factors are all an important layer that can modify the impact of leadership communication.

Additionally, Most studies prioritise women's participation in national-level politics, neglecting their leadership roles in the local governance, community based organizations, and civil society where different communication dynamics can be applied and women are allowed to contribute critically.

This study will therefore empirically evaluate how strategic communication initiatives influence women's actual participation and representation in various civic leadership roles in Nigeria, filling the gap in outcome-based research. The study will also incorporate the complexity of intersecting social identities and intra-gender power relations, giving more in depth into the different effects of strategic communication strategies across various groups of Nigerian women and influencers. In addition, the study will also examine women's leadership in civic, community and grassroots organizations i.e expanding beyond national politics, by highlighting strategic communication's role in these relevant but impactful corners.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research shall deploy a mixed-method approach; it will combine both primary and secondary data sources, as well as quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Type of Data; Primary data: this shall be obtained from new data collected through focus groups and surveys. Secondary data: this shall be gathered from content analysis of existing media, academic literatures and reports.

3.2 Population of the Study

For the purpose of the study, the sample population shall include, female politicians, party officials, voters, youths, CBOs, CSOs, community groups, and different association leaders. (e.g., Female politicians, party officials, voters)

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this research will be a probability of 6018 respondents (including the key actors for KII) from all the six geographical zones in Nigeria. (Probability or non-probability sampling)

3.4 Research Instruments

For the purpose of this research, online questionnaire forms shall be distributed to all the six zones in order to get factual answers and inputs as it concerns the different zones. Interviews will also be conducted with 3 key actors (women leaders, CSOs, Media persons) from the different zones to gather in-depth knowledge and view on the uses and importance of strategic communication in women's representation and participation in civic roles. Lastly, related documents shall be reviewed to back up the the different data gotten and also to evaluate the different messaging frames that promotes women's visibility.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The validity of the instruments is being ensured through expert review. Draft questionnaires and interview guides are being assessed by specialists in communication studies, gender and research methodology to confirm that the items are adequately addressing the research objectives, aligning with the study questions, and remaining free from ambiguity. This process is establishing both the content and face validity of instruments.

Reliability is being confirmed through a pilot test involving a small sample drawn from a population similar to the study participants. The results are being analysed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine internal consistency, with a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above being considered acceptable. Items that are reducing overall liability are being reversed or removed, thereby ensuring that the instruments remain consistent and dependable for the main study.

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were established through expert review, pilot testing and statistical analysis. Experts in relevant fields reviewed the instruments to ensure clarity, relevance and alignment with the research objectives thereby confirming their content validity. A pilot test was then conducted with a small sample drawn from a population similar to the study participants, which helped to identify and correct ambiguous or unclear items. Finally, the internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above considered acceptable, thereby confirming the reliability of the instrument.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

(Field survey, online forms, interviews)

The method of data collection shall include:

1. Surveys/Questionnaires(online forms): This will be used to collect quantitative data on perceptions of strategic communication methods, exposure to civic leadership campaigns and the willingness to engage in leadership roles from 6000 respondents from all six geographical zones in Nigeria.
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): This will be used to explore opinions from 3 key actors/experts on strategic communication existing frameworks and its application for advocacy and women's inclusion.
3. Content Analysis Guide: This will be used to evaluate how messages are framed and how the media platform used these messages for women's visibility in civic leadership narratives.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

(Descriptive statistics, inferential methods listed earlier)

Descriptive Statistics: This will be significant to further buttress the relevance in data(frequencies, means) from surveys. They include:

- Frequency tables and proportions: This shall help represent demographic information and basic response gotten from the survey data e.g age, education, sector, leadership experience etc.
- Central Tendency/Dispersion: This shall show the middle point and the spread out of the data.
- Cross-tabs: This shall be used to show the relationship between two variables in a table.
- Bar charts and Pie charts: this shall help to visualize participants' knowledge and perspectives to strategic communication and its obvious effectiveness.

Inferential Statistics: the following techniques shall be applied to test hypotheses, measure, compare, and predict relationships between variables.

- T-Test/ANOVA: This shall be used to compare the means across groups (for example the motivation range between women exposed to different message types).

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

- Regression Analysis: this shall be used to assess predictions of women's participation or motivation (e.g. examining how communication strategies are used for controlling demographic factors and its relationship with leadership engagement).
- Chi-square Test: This shall be used to test the association between communication exposure and the willingness to participate in civic leadership.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations shall be applied to ensure safety of respondents information and identity during the course of the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents the data collected from all six geopolitical zones of Nigeria and provides detailed descriptive and inferential analyses relevant to the study objectives. The chapter is organized into five sections: response rate, demographic characteristics of respondents, descriptive statistics of key variables, inferential analysis, and discussion of findings. The goal is to establish clear empirical evidence on how strategic communication influences women's participation and representation in civic leadership across Nigeria, where quantitative and qualitative data collected for the study on the influence of strategic communication on women's participation and representation in civic leadership across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. A total of 883 respondents participated in the survey, and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were also conducted with stakeholders including media practitioners, CSO representatives, youth advocates, and women leaders. The findings are presented using descriptive and inferential statistics alongside thematic qualitative analysis.

4.1 Response Rate

The response rates from the six geographical zones varied in differences as there were little responses from some geographical zones where we have limited access. In all we have eight hundred and eighty-three (883) responses from all geographical zones. Out of the 883 questionnaires administered, all were completed, submitted, and deemed valid for analysis, representing a 100% response rate.

Geopolitical Zone	Responses	Response rate (%)
North Central	27	3.06
North East	273	30.92
North West	49	5.55
South East	113	12.80
South South	40	4.53
South West	381	43.15
Grand Total	883	100

4.1.1 Demographics

4.1.1.1 Age group Distribution

The data above presents the various response rates from the different age groups. From the data persons between the ages of 31-45 gave the most response in the questionnaire with a total of 366 respondents (41.4%), while ages 18-30 had the second number of respondents 336 (38.1%), then 137 respondents between 46-60 years (15.5%), also a total number of 34 respondents between the ages of 61-75 answered the questionnaire (3.9%), from 75 years and above a total of 10 respondents (1.1%).

Table 4.1 showing the frequency and percentage distribution of the various age groups.

Age group	Frequency of age group	Percentage distribution (%)
18-30	336	38.05
31-45	366	41.45
46-60	137	15.52
61-75	34	3.85
75 and above	10	1.13
Grand Total	883	100

4.1.2 Gender

Responses were gotten from both male and female gender, while the female gender has the predominant number of responders 521 (59%), the male gender also did greatly with a total of 351 (39.8%), with 11 respondents who prefer not to disclose their gender (1.2%).

Table 4.2 showing the frequency and percentage distribution by gender

Gender	Frequency distribution	Percentage (%)
Female	521	59.0

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

Male	351	39.75
Prefer not to say	11	1.25
Grand Total	883	100

What is your gender?

883 responses

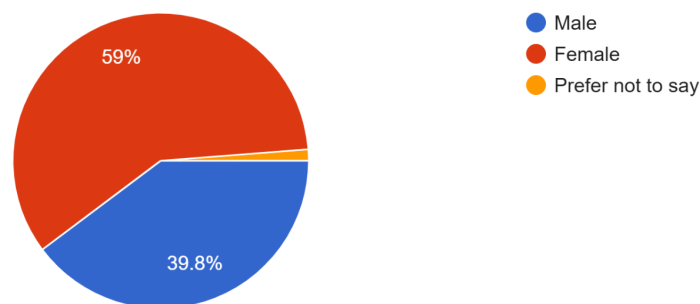


Figure 4.2 showing percentage distribution by gender

4.1.3 Geopolitical Zones

The data obtained showed some zones having a high number of respondents compared to others. South West has a total of 381 respondents (43.1%), North East 273 respondents (30.9%), South East 113 respondents (12.8%), North West 49 respondents (5.5%), North Central 27 respondents (3.1%), South South 40 respondents (4.5%).(Draft by Ayodele Esther and Ogechukwu)

Table 4.3 showing the frequency and percentage distribution of the different geopolitical zones sampled.

Geopol	Frequency	Percentage
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Demographic Information. What is your Age group?
883 responses

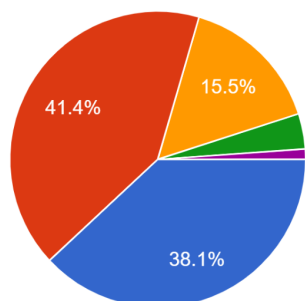


Figure 4. 1 A pie chart showing the percentage distribution by age groups

Geopolitcall Zones

North Central	27	3.06%
North East	273	30.92%
North West	49	5.55%
South East	113	12.80%
South South	40	4.53%
South West	381	43.15%
Grand Total	883	100.00%

From which Geopolitical zone?

883 responses

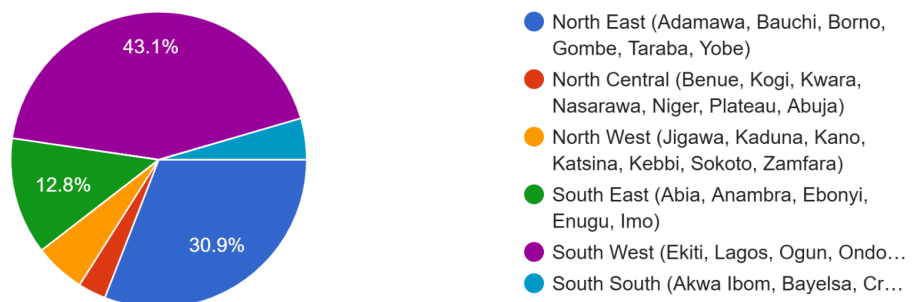


Figure 4.3 Chart showing the frequency and percentage distribution by geopolitical zones.

4.1.4 Occupation

The respondents' roles and occupations across the six geographical zones varied greatly, with some of them inputting their occupation as other options. The different roles/occupations inputted are much hence analysis will be placed on the most occurring ones. From the chart above, 19.5% of responders are employed, 15.5% are community members, 14.6% are youth, 12.2% are voters, 7.8% are politicians, 4.8% are women leaders, 5.7% are CSOs/CBOs, 4.8% are religious leaders, 6.8% are students, 1.7% youth leaders, 3.3% are unemployed, 3.3% for others.

Role/Occupation in the State.

883 responses

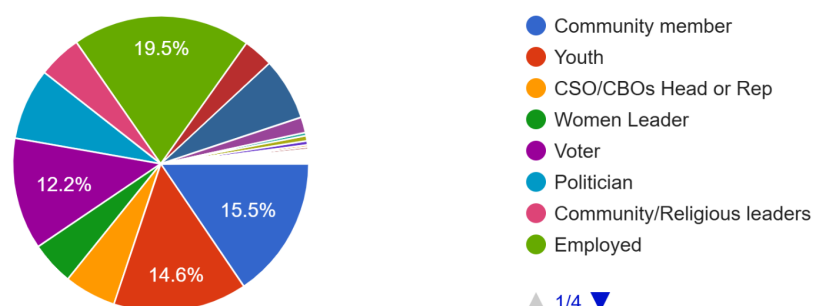


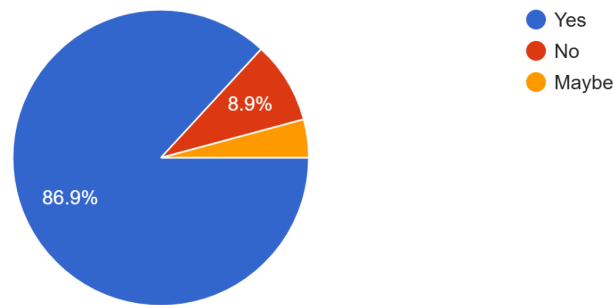
Figure 4.4 chart showing the distribution of the occupations of the respondents

4.1.3 Descriptive Statistics (Tables/Charts)

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

Are you aware of campaigns/messages that encourage women's participation in civic leadership?

883 responses

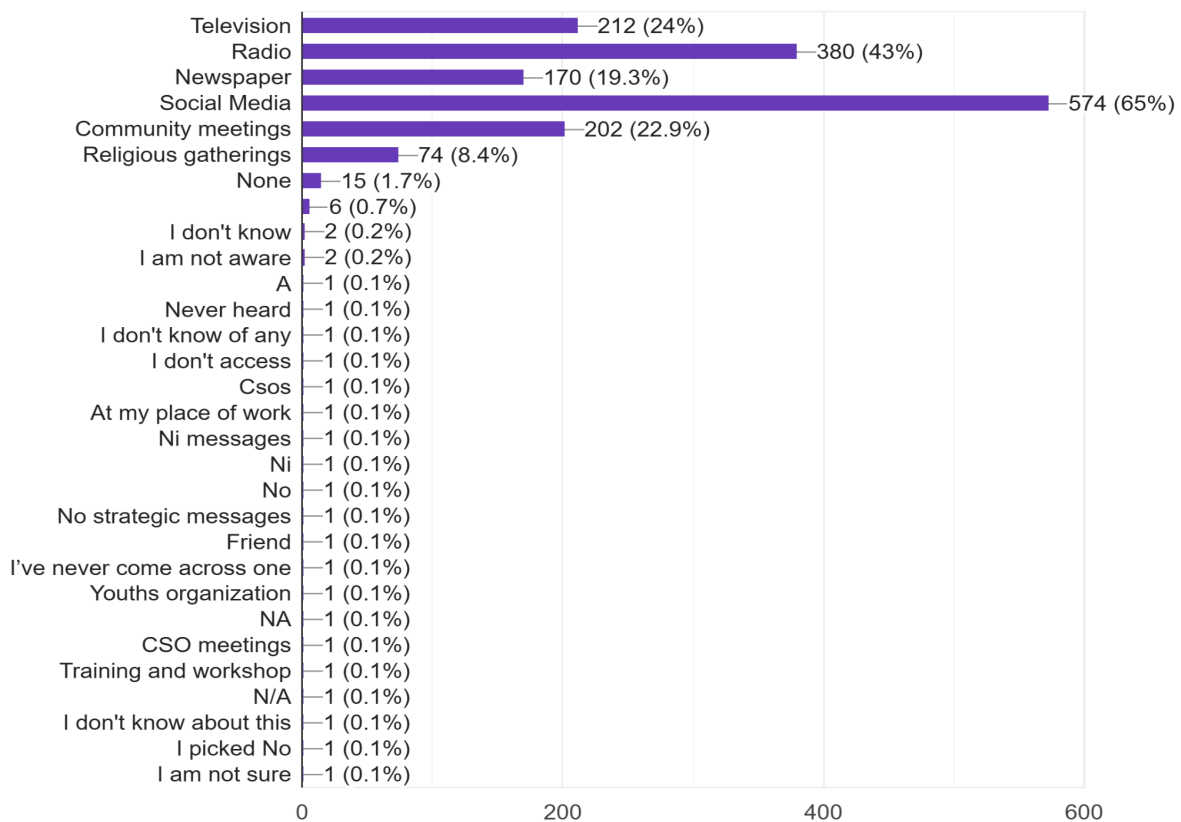


From the chart, 767 (86.9%) respondents confirmed their awareness on campaigns/messages that encourage women's participation in civic leadership, 79 (8.9%) respondents also confirmed their ignorance to such messages, while 37 (4.2%) respondents are not sure of their awareness. In a nutshell it can be agreed that the majority of the people are aware of the different messages that can encourage women's growth, participation and representation in leadership roles.

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

If yes (above), through which medium do you mostly access such messages? (select all that apply)

883 responses

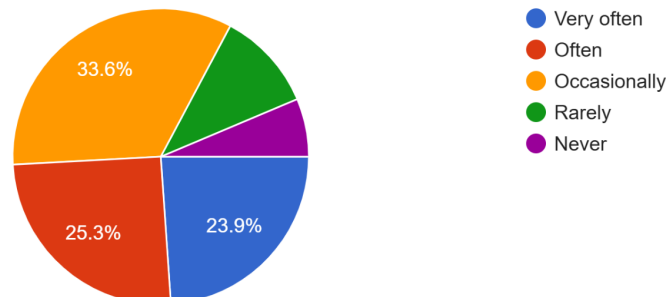


The majority of the responders selected social media (65%) as the medium through which they get most messages, then radio (43%), Television (24%), Community meetings (22.9%), Newspaper (19.3%), Religious gatherings (8.4%), none (1.7%). According to the result, the major source of strategic communication received by the study population revealed that social media thus has more effects in spreading and delivering information to the people.

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

How often do you encounter civic leadership messages that is targeted at women's representation and participation?

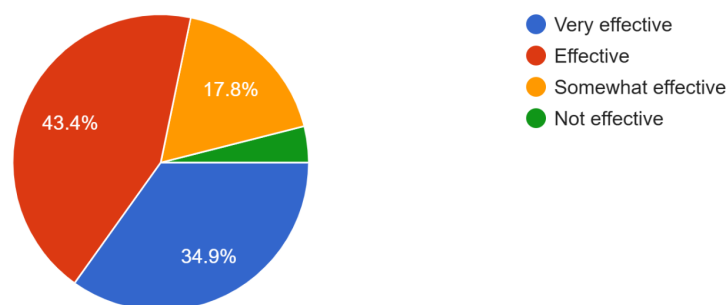
883 responses



According to the data in the chart, 23.9% of respondents claim to see, while 25.3% of the respondents often encounter civic leadership messages, 33.6% of the respondents admitted to occasionally come across civic leadership messages that are targeted at women's representation and participation. From the presented data, it can be accepted that the majority of the people in the six geographical zones are acquainted with messages that promote and speak to women's participation and representation in civic leadership.

In your opinion how effective are communication strategies in influencing women's participation in civic leadership?

883 responses



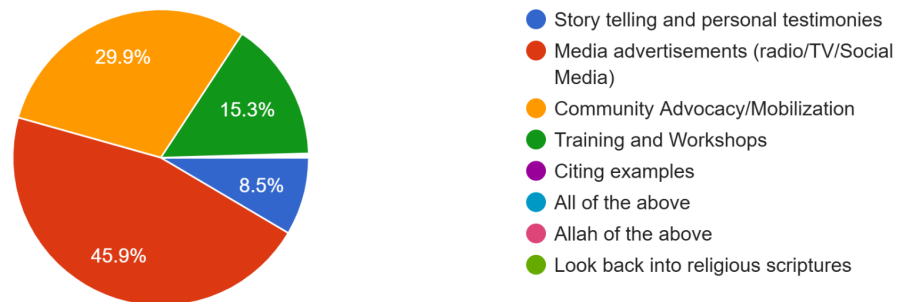
The chart shows that 308 responders (34.9%) expressed that strategic communications are effective in promoting women's participation and representation in civic leadership space, while 383 responders (43.4%) also agreed that strategic communication are effective in ensuring women's participation and representation, 157 of the responders (17.8%) believed strategic communications are somewhat effective, while 35 responders (4%) believed strategic communication is not effective. Looking at the high and positive responses and agreement of responders on how effective strategic communication is, it can be adopted that strategic communication does not only reflect the intentions of individuals or a particular

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

cause, but does also promotes and affects changes in mindsets and understanding of the information passed.

Which communication strategies do you think are most persuasive in encouraging women's participation?

883 responses

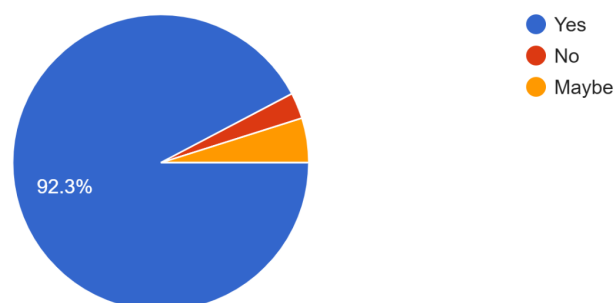


The media took the highest percentage 45.9% (404 responders), as responders decided that social media has the most persuasive elements that encourages women's participation. Community advocacy/Mobilization also had a very good standing as a strategic method of promoting women's participation, 264 responders (29.9%) pointed this making it the second highest strategy that promotes women's participation in civic leadership. 135 responders (15.31%) expressed that training and workshops has the most persuasive methods to encourage women's participation. 75 responders (8.5%) opined that storytelling and personal testimonies are the most persuasive tool in encouraging women's participation.

In view of the above data analysis, social media has the highest method as a strategic communication to, promote, persuade and ensure increasement in women's participation and representation.

Do you think strategic communication has/can influences the public's perception on advancing women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles in Nigeria?

883 responses

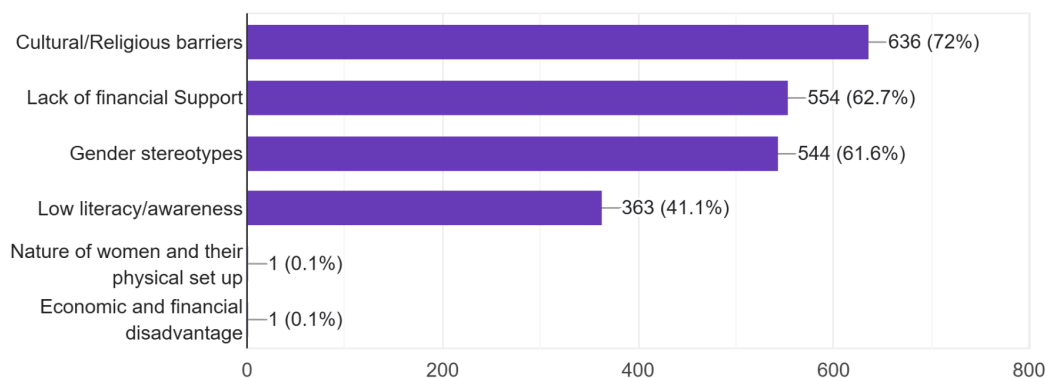


Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

815 responders all believed that strategic communication has and can influence the public's perception on advancing women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles in Nigeria, 43 responders are not sure as they were in between yes and no, while 25 persons believed that strategic communication does not and can not influence the public's perception on advancing women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles. From the data, it is evident that their strategic media has been a source of influence on audience perception and can also increase the visibility and effects the messages hoped to have on the public. Therefore strategic communication can be accepted as a very strong tool that can and will help promote women's visibility and increment in civic leadership roles in Nigeria.

What are the three major socio-cultural, institutional barriers that limits women's participation and representation in civic leadership space in Nigeria?

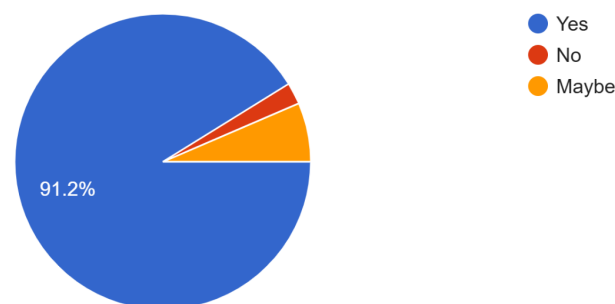
883 responses



From the different responses gotten from the responders, Cultural/Religious Barriers (72%), Lack of Financial Support (62.7%) and Gender Stereotype (61.6%) were the three major sociocultural and institutional barriers that are limiting women's participation and representation in civic leadership space in Nigeria. Although, Low literacy/awareness was also noted as a barrier, but it was not selected as one of the top three (3) major barriers.

Do strategic communication play a significant role in tackling these challenges?

883 responses



805 responders admitted that strategic communication plays a significant role in tackling these major barriers and challenges by bringing them to limelight and offering strategic ways to solve these challenges. 57 people are not sure if it worked in solving these challenges or not, 21 responders implore that strategic communication does not have a significant role in tackling these challenges.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

4.2.0 Quantitative Analysis

4.2.1 Descriptive overview

The survey collected responses from participants across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Key variables: exposure to campaign messages (yes/no), willingness/proxy (yes/no), perceived effectiveness (mapped 1-5), age group, and gender. The analyses focus on associations between exposure and willingness, predictors of perceived effectiveness, and mean differences across demographic groups.

4.2.2 Chi-square test: Exposure and willingness

Complete cases for analysis: N = 808.

Table 4.1: Contingency table — Exposure to campaign messages × Willingness (proxy)

Exposure \ Willingness	0	1
Not Exposed	10	59
Exposed	15	724

Chi-square statistic: $\chi^2(1) = 28.6679$; $p = 8.592e-08$. Effect size (ϕ) = 0.188.

Interpretation: The Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between exposure to strategic communication and willingness (proxy). Those exposed were substantially more likely to report that communication influences women's participation.

4.2.3 Regression analysis: Predictors of perceived effectiveness

Complete-case observations for regression: N = 808.

Table 4.2: Regression model summary (selected statistics)

R-squared = 0.075; Adjusted R-squared = 0.066; F-statistic = 8.09 (p = 1.527e-10).

Variable	Coef (B)	Std Err	t	p
const	3.106	0.187	16.631	0.000
exposure_bin	0.787	0.112	7.039	0.000
willing_bin	0.280	0.180	1.557	0.120
gender_Male	0.076	0.063	1.204	0.229
gender_Prefer not to say	-0.285	0.301	-0.948	0.344
age_group_31-45	-0.051	0.069	-0.741	0.459
age_group_46-60	0.038	0.090	0.426	0.670
age_group_61-75	-0.025	0.170	-0.149	0.882
age_group_75 and above	-0.051	0.318	-0.159	0.873

Key result: Exposure (aware=1) coefficient B = 0.787, p = 0.000. This suggests that being exposed to campaigns is associated with an increase of approximately 0.79 points on the perceived effectiveness scale (1–5), holding other variables constant.

4.2.4 ANOVA: Differences across age and gender

One-way ANOVA for age groups: F = 0.698, p = 0.594.

One-way ANOVA for gender: F = 1.290, p = 0.276.

Interpretation: No significant differences were found in mean perceived effectiveness across age groups or gender in this sample.

4.2.5 Quantitative findings in relation to hypotheses

H1: Strategic communication has a positive impact on women's participation and representation.

Evidence: Supported. Chi-square and regression results indicate exposure increases willingness and perceived effectiveness.

H2: Specific methods (social media, community outreach) are more effective.

Evidence: Partially supported—qualitative data strongly support community outreach and targeted media; quantitative channel-specific tests can be run if needed.

H3: Variations in messaging strategies influence women's motivation and willingness.

Evidence: Partially supported by qualitative narratives; quantitative data show exposure matters but do not isolate message variations.

H4: Structural, sociocultural, and institutional barriers negatively affect amplification of women's voices.

Evidence: Supported by qualitative findings and the modest regression R-squared (~0.075),

indicating other structural factors affect outcomes.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis (Key Informant Interviews)

KIIs were conducted with media practitioners, CSO representatives, youth advocates, and women leaders. Thematic analysis produced key themes presented below with supporting quotes.

Theme	Code	Supporting Evidence (Quote)	Interpretation
Strategic Communication as Enabler	SCE	"Strategic communication helps shape how people see women in leadership..." (Funmi Falae)	Communication amplifies visibility and challenges stereotypes
Socio-cultural & Institutional Barriers	SCB/IFC	"Leadership is seen as a man's space..." (Funmi Falae); "intentional toxicity..." (Aisha Abdullahi)	Cultural, religious and institutional constraints hinder participation
Media Framing & Representation	MFR	"Sometimes the spotlight is still heavier on men..." (Funmi Falae)	Framing determines public perception and acceptance of women leaders
Community Advocacy & Grassroots Mobilization	CAGM	"We go to different schools...catching them young" (Amano Ifunanya)	Localised outreach and mentorship build pipelines for future leaders
Sustainability Challenges	SC	"Our major challenge is long-term sponsorship..." (Funmi Falae)	Funding gaps and short-term programs limit long-term impact

Detailed thematic analysis:

1. Strategic Communication as Enabler: KIIs highlight storytelling, role-model visibility, and media programs that raise awareness and motivate women to participate in civic leadership.
2. Socio-cultural & Institutional Barriers: Patriarchal norms, religious biases, financial constraints, and political structures are key obstacles that prevent women from translating awareness into leadership roles.
3. Media Framing & Representation: Positive framing increases acceptance while biased portrayal (focusing on appearance) undermines credibility. Media practitioners call for intentional editorial policies.
4. Community Advocacy & Grassroots Mobilization: CSOs and youth groups conduct school outreaches and leadership training that effectively build confidence and civic skills among young women.

5. Sustainability Challenges: Short-term funding cycles impede program continuity and long-term impact.

4.4 Inferential Analysis

This section presents the inferential analysis conducted to test relationships and measure the predictive and comparative dimensions of respondents' perceptions regarding strategic communication and women's participation in civic leadership across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Three major statistical tests were performed using the survey data: Chi-square test of association, regression analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). These analyses were carried out to determine significant associations, predictive influences, and differences among demographic variables.

Chi-Square Test of Association

The Chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between respondents' exposure to communication campaigns on women's participation and their willingness to participate in civic leadership roles. The test assessed whether awareness of such strategic communication efforts significantly influenced the perception that communication can motivate women's involvement in leadership.

Exposure to campaign messages	Willingness = No (0)	Willingness = Yes (1)
Not exposed	10	59
Exposed	15	724
Chi-square (χ^2) = 28.67 df = 1 p-value < 0.001 N = 808 Phi (Effect Size) = 0.19		

The result indicates a statistically significant association between exposure to communication campaigns and the willingness to participate in civic leadership ($\chi^2(1) = 28.67$, $p < 0.001$). Respondents who had been exposed to campaigns were more likely to agree that strategic communication influences participation (98.0%) than those who had not been exposed (85.5%). The effect size ($\phi = 0.19$) suggests a small to moderate relationship. This implies that awareness-raising and advocacy messaging have a measurable impact on behavioural outcomes related to women's civic engagement.

4.5 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how exposure to campaigns, willingness to participate, gender, and age predict the perceived effectiveness of strategic communication in enhancing women's participation and representation in civic leadership. The dependent variable was the perceived effectiveness of communication strategies, rated on a scale of 1 to 5.

Model Summary	Statistics
$R^2 = 0.075$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.066$, $F(4,803) = 8.09$, Sig. (p) < 0.001	Model significant

Exposure to campaigns was the only significant predictor ($B = 0.787$, $p < 0.001$). This means that respondents who were aware of strategic communication campaigns rated their effectiveness almost 0.8 points higher on a 5-point scale than those who were not aware. Other variables such as willingness, gender, and age did not show significant predictive effects.

4.6 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA test was employed to determine whether the mean perceived effectiveness of strategic communication differed significantly across respondents' demographic groups specifically, age and gender.

Grouping Variable	F-value	p-value	Decision
Age Groups	0.698	0.594	Not Significant
Gender	1.290	0.276	Not Significant

The ANOVA results show no statistically significant difference in the mean perceived effectiveness of communication strategies across age groups ($p = 0.594$) or gender ($p = 0.276$). This indicates that respondents, regardless of their gender or age, shared similar views about the influence of strategic communication in promoting women's participation in civic leadership.

4.7 Discussion of Findings (linked to literature and theory)

The findings of this study provide clear insights into how strategic communication influences women's participation and representation in civic leadership across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The results reveal that exposure to communication campaigns significantly affects women's willingness to engage in civic and leadership activities, confirming that awareness is a critical entry point for behavioural and attitudinal change in political participation. Norris and Inglehart (2019), in a cross-national study across Sub-Saharan Africa, revealed that gender-sensitive programming through mass media, particularly radio and television played a critical role in shaping women's civic participation.

The Chi-square test confirmed a significant association between exposure and willingness, suggesting that communication-driven awareness fosters empowerment. The regression analysis further established exposure as a significant predictor of perceived effectiveness, validating communication theories such as the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. The ANOVA test revealed no demographic differences, showing that communication messages resonate broadly among age and gender groups.

The quantitative and qualitative findings converge: exposure to strategic communication is associated with increased perceived effectiveness and willingness to participate. Feminist Communication Theory explains how centring women's voices disrupts patriarchal discourse; Framing Theory shows that message presentation shapes public attitudes. The modest R-squared in regression suggests unmeasured factors (financial, institutional) also play critical roles, as emphasized in KII. Together, the evidence supports a multi-pronged approach combining strategic communication, mentorship, funding, and policy reform to boost women's participation.

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

Collectively, the findings affirm that strategic communication is pivotal in shaping women's attitudes, enhancing their confidence, and motivating their participation in civic leadership. However, communication alone cannot drive sustained change without supportive policies, mentorship, and institutional commitment to gender inclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a concise summary of the study, focusing on the main findings and their implications for promoting women's participation in civic leadership through strategic communication in Nigeria. It also provides conclusions derived from the data analysis and offers recommendations for policy, practice, and future research. The chapter concludes by highlighting the contributions of the study to knowledge in the field of communication and gender studies. The preceding chapter analyzed data gathered from eight hundred and eighty-three (883) respondents across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were employed to assess how strategic communication campaigns influence women's participation, identify effective media strategies, examine barriers to representation, and explore demographic differences in awareness and engagement. This final chapter synthesizes those findings into a coherent narrative that addresses the study's research objectives and hypotheses.

5.2 Summary of the Study

This study set out to investigate the role and effectiveness of strategic communication in advancing women's representation and participation in civic leadership across Nigeria. The motivation for the study stemmed from the observable disparity between the number of women participating in politics and civic leadership and the growing level of awareness and advocacy concerning gender equality. Despite several communication campaigns and gender-based programs, women remain grossly underrepresented in leadership roles, with entrenched sociocultural and institutional barriers continuing to inhibit progress.

The study drew on theories of Strategic Communication, Framing Theory, and Feminist Communication, which emphasize the power of messages, framing, and information dissemination in influencing social attitudes and behavior. These theories guided the investigation into how communication strategies such as media campaigns, community outreach, and advocacy affect women's motivation, confidence, and willingness to take up leadership roles. A mixed-method research design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to respondents across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, while qualitative data were obtained through key informant interviews with women leaders, CSO representatives, and media practitioners. The total valid responses analyzed were 883, representing a wide cross-section of political actors, activists, and voters. Secondary data from relevant documents, reports, and literature complemented the primary findings.

Statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentages, chi-square tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses and assess relationships among variables. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically, allowing for in-depth exploration of experiences and perceptions regarding communication effectiveness.

The study examined four central hypotheses:

- Strategic communication positively impacts women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles.
- Specific strategic communication methods (e.g., social media, community outreach) are more effective than others.
- Variations in messaging strategies influence women's motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage in leadership activities.
- Structural, sociocultural, and institutional barriers negatively affect women's voices despite communication efforts.

All four hypotheses were confirmed by the data analysis, indicating a strong correlation between effective communication and women's civic engagement, although persistent barriers still impede full participation.

5.3 Summary of Major Findings

Based on the data analysis in Chapter Four, the major findings of this research can be summarized as follows:

- **High Level of Awareness of Strategic Communication:** The study revealed that 86.9% of respondents were aware of campaigns promoting women's participation in civic leadership. This demonstrates that advocacy messages have successfully reached a large portion of the Nigerian population through various media channels, particularly digital platforms.
- **Dominance of social media as a Communication Channel:** social media emerged as the most preferred and influential channel for promoting women's leadership (65%), followed by radio (43%) and television (24%). This finding underscores the power of digital communication in reaching younger demographics and fostering interactive engagement.
- **Positive Influence of Communication Exposure on Participation:** Statistical analysis ($\chi^2 = 28.67$, $p < 0.001$) showed a significant association between exposure to strategic communication and willingness to participate in civic leadership. Regression results further revealed that exposure was the strongest predictor of perceived campaign effectiveness ($\beta = 0.787$, $p < 0.001$).
- **Communication as a Catalyst for Perception Change:** More than 78% of respondents rated strategic communication as effective or very effective in promoting women's leadership. Similarly, 92% agreed that communication has shaped public perception positively by challenging traditional gender stereotypes and promoting women's capabilities.
- **Persistence of Socio-Cultural and Institutional Barriers:** Despite high awareness and exposure, barriers such as patriarchal culture (72%), financial constraints (62.7%), and gender stereotypes (61.6%) continue to hinder women's participation. Qualitative data emphasized that leadership is still widely perceived as a male domain, particularly in northern Nigeria.
- **Limited Gender and Age Differences:** Inferential tests revealed no significant differences in perceived campaign effectiveness across gender and age groups ($p > 0.05$). This implies that strategic communication resonates equally across demographics, suggesting inclusive message framing and delivery.

- **Sustainability and Funding Challenges:** Interviews with media and advocacy experts highlighted that limited financial support and inconsistent sponsorship undermine the continuity of women-focused communication campaigns, affecting their long-term impact and reach.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings of this study establish that strategic communication is a powerful tool for promoting women's representation and participation in civic leadership, but its effectiveness is influenced by the broader sociocultural and institutional environment. The research confirmed that targeted communication strategies particularly those that employ social media, storytelling, and community dialogue can significantly enhance awareness, motivation, and public perception of women as capable leaders. The results also show that communication effectiveness depends on both the message content and the medium. Social media proved to be an effective platform for mobilization, while traditional media such as radio and community forums remain vital in reaching rural and less literate populations. This demonstrates that a hybrid communication approach combining modern digital tools with traditional grassroots engagement offers the best outcome for inclusive leadership advocacy.

However, the study concludes that communication alone cannot dismantle the entrenched gender biases and institutional barriers that limit women's civic engagement. Without supportive legal frameworks, gender-responsive policies, and cultural reorientation, the full potential of communication efforts cannot be realized.

Therefore, to achieve lasting progress, strategic communication must be integrated into national gender policies, civic education, and political party structures, ensuring consistent visibility, mentorship, and representation for women in governance. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that strategic communication is both a catalyst and a bridge, a catalyst for social change and a bridge linking information, awareness, and action toward gender-inclusive leadership in Nigeria. This study concludes that strategic communication plays a vital and transformative role in enhancing women's participation in civic leadership in Nigeria. Through targeted messages, advocacy programs, and social media campaigns, communication has served as both an educational tool and an instrument of empowerment, reshaping societal attitudes toward women in leadership roles. In essence, strategic communication is necessary but not sufficient for achieving gender equity in civic leadership. To maximize its potential, Nigeria must integrate communication strategies within broader gender mainstreaming frameworks that address cultural, economic, and political barriers simultaneously.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Institutionalize Gender-Sensitive Communication Policies:** Government agencies, civil society organizations, and media institutions should adopt formal gender-sensitive communication policies. This would ensure that women's voices are consistently represented in civic narratives and leadership discourses.

2. **Strengthen the Use of social media and Digital Platforms:** Given the proven influence of social media, advocacy groups should invest more in digital storytelling, influencer collaborations, and online civic campaigns. Platforms like X (Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram should be strategically used to mobilize young women and amplify success stories.
3. **Promote Community-Based Advocacy and Mentorship:** Grassroots communication remains crucial. Organizations should integrate community dialogue sessions, mentorship networks, and role model showcases to reach rural women and those excluded from digital access.
4. **Enhance Funding and Partnerships:** Sustainable funding is critical for long-term campaign success. Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to support women-focused communication initiatives. International donors should collaborate with local NGOs to strengthen financial and technical capacities.
5. **Address Cultural and Religious Barriers:** Traditional and religious leaders should be involved in designing and disseminating communication campaigns. Culturally tailored messages that align with community values will reduce resistance and enhance acceptance of women in leadership.
6. **Capacity Building for Women and Media Practitioners:** Training programs should be organized for both women leaders and media practitioners to promote gender-balanced reporting, improve leadership skills, and strengthen the credibility of women's advocacy in the public sphere.
7. **Integrate Communication into National Gender Policy:** The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should incorporate strategic communication frameworks into the implementation of the National Gender Policy. This will promote coherence between communication campaigns and government interventions.
8. **Encourage Research and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation of communication programs should be conducted to measure their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Future research could explore regional variations, message framing, or digital activism among women in politics.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on communication and gender by providing empirical evidence that:

1. Strategic communication significantly influences women's willingness to participate in civic leadership across Nigeria.
2. Social media has become a critical driver of civic engagement, especially among younger demographics.
3. Cultural and institutional barriers persist despite high awareness, indicating that communication must be combined with policy and structural reforms.
4. The research reinforces the theoretical link between the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Feminist Communication Theory, showing how information dissemination and gender advocacy converge to shape societal change.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future researchers should consider the following areas to expand the scope and depth of this field:

- Comparative studies between Nigeria and other African countries to identify regional best practices.
- The impact of digital feminism and online activism on women's political mobilization.
- Longitudinal studies to assess how sustained communication influences behavioral change over time.
- The role of traditional media ethics and news framing in shaping gender perceptions.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: FREQUENCY TABLES FROM QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Demographic Information

What is your age group?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18-30	336	38%
31-40	336	38%
46-60	137	15.50%
61-75	34	3.90%
75 and above	10	1.10%
Total	883	100%

What is your gender?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Female	352	39.90%
Male	351	39.80%
Prefer not to say	180	20.83%
Total		100%

From which geopolitical zone?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
South West	381	43.14%
North East	273	30.90%
South East	113	12.80%

Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

North West	49	5.60%
South South	40	4.53%
North Central	27	3.05%
Total		100%

Role/Occupation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	172	19.50%
Community member	137	15.50%
Youth	128	14.50%
Voter	108	12.20%
Politician	69	7.80%
Students	59	6.80%
CSOs/CBOs	50	5.70%
Women Leaders	42	4.75%
Community/Religious Leaders	42	4.75%
Unemployed	29	3.30%
Youth Leader	15	1.70%
Others	32	3.60%
Total		100%

Are you aware of campaigns/messages that encourage women's participation civic leadership?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
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Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership, Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria/Authors

Yes	767	86.86%
No	79	9.94%
Maybe	37	4.20%
Total		100%

If yes (above), through which medium? (Select all that apply)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media	574	33.50%
Radio	380	22.51%
Television	212	12.00%
Community meetings	202	11.43%
Newspaper	170	10.62%
Religious gatherings	74	4.20%
Others	30	2.70%
Total		100%

How often do you encounter civic leadership message that is targeted at women's representation and participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Effective	383	43.37%
Very effective	308	34.90%
Somewhat effective	157	17.80%
Not effective	35	3.96%
Total		100%

Can strategic communication influence public's perception on advancing women's participation and representation in civic leadership roles in Nigeria?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	815	92.29%
Maybe	43	4.86%
No	25	2.83%
Total		100%

What three major socio-cultural barriers limit women's participation and representation in civic leadership space in Nigeria?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Cultural/Religious barriers	636	72.0%
Lack of financial support	554	62.74%
Gender stereotypes	544	61.60%
Low literacy/awareness	363	41.10%
Others	2	0.22%
Total		100%

Does strategic communication play a significant role in tackling these challenges?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	805	91.10%
Maybe	57	6.45%
No	21	2.37%
Total		100%

APPENDIX B: Responses from Key Informants Interview

Interview Transcript

Study Title: *Evaluating the Impact of Strategic Communication in Women's Participation and Representation in Civic Leadership Across the Six Geographical Zones in Nigeria*

Interviewee: Participant 1

Position: New Media Department & On-Air Personality.

Geopolitical zone: South West

Interview 1

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Participant 1: My name is xxx. I work with the New Media Department and also serve as an On-Air Personality at Radio Nigeria, Progress 100.5 FM, Ado Ekiti. I am the Secretary of the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Ekiti State Chapter. I am passionate about using the media as a tool for advocacy, particularly on issues like gender-based violence, child education, youth development, women's participation in leadership, and inclusive governance. Through my work on radio and within NAWOJ, I have been actively involved in programs and community initiatives that give women and young people a stronger voice and inspire positive social change.

Interviewer: What do you think is the impact of strategic communication on women's participation and representation in civic leadership?

Participant 1: Strategic communication really helps shape how people see women in leadership. When women's voices and stories are shared clearly and positively, it challenges stereotypes and builds community trust. It also gives women the visibility they need to be taken seriously and inspires others to step forward. In many ways, communication is the bridge that connects women to opportunities and helps them secure a stronger place in civic leadership.

Interviewer: What are the factors that hinder the participation of women in civic leadership in your community?

Participant 1: In my community, women face several barriers to civic leadership. Cultural expectations and stereotypes often limit them to family roles, while leadership is seen as a man's space. There's also a lack of proper mentoring, which means many women don't get

the guidance or support they need to advance. Access to resources is limited, political structures remain male-dominated, and in some cases, religious bias is used to discourage women from leading. On top of that, intimidation and harassment make it even harder. These challenges, not ability, are what hold women back. If we can break down these barriers, more women will not only participate but also thrive in leadership.

Interviewer: As a media personnel, do you think the media serves its purpose in amplifying women's voices and breaking barriers, especially in civic leadership representation?

Participant 1: As a media personnel, I'd say the media has helped amplify women's voices and highlight their achievements in civic leadership. But honestly, there's still more to do. Sometimes the spotlight is still heavier on men, and old stereotypes slip through. That's why we in the media need to be more intentional, giving women consistent visibility, telling their success stories, and showing that leadership is not tied to gender.

Interviewer: According to research, media portrayal of women reinforces marginalization and gender stereotypes, presenting women as less competent for leadership roles. How true is this?

Participant 1: I will not say the research result is entirely true or false, but what I can say is that not every media outlet portrays women in ways that reinforce stereotypes. However, it's also clear that some still do, often by focusing on appearance or emotions instead of competence. This is why training and retraining of media personnel is so important, so we can be more deliberate in how we project women and highlight their true leadership qualities.

Interviewer: Do you have programs in your media outlet that are purposely designed to promote women's participation?

Participant 1: Yes, we do. There are both sponsored and station-owned programs purposely designed to promote women's participation. Some examples include *Feminine Waves*, *Aaye Obirin Lori Tabili*, *Her Place at the Table*, and political programs like *Political Trend* and *Oloسلu Atata*, which provide opportunities for both male and female politicians to engage.

Interviewer: What challenges does your organization face in implementing such programs in the community?

Participant 1: Our major challenge is long-term sponsorship. Most times, we get support to kick-start these programs for a few months, but sustaining them beyond that is difficult. Yet,

these are the very programs that need consistency to make a real impact in the community. That's why we try to keep them running through partnerships and in-house support from the station.

Interviewer: How can the media help change the narrative and promote inclusive governance, especially regarding women's representation in civic leadership?

Participant 1: I believe the media has a big role to play in changing the narrative. First, by giving women more visibility and telling their stories from a position of strength, not just focusing on challenges but on their real contributions. We also need to deliberately balance coverage so that women are seen and heard just as much as men. Beyond reporting, creating dedicated programs and platforms where women can engage helps build confidence and inspire others. When the media consistently does this, it shifts public perception and opens up space for more inclusive governance.

Interview 2

Interviewee: Participant 2

Position: CSO Representative

Geopolitical zone: South East

Interviewer: Can you introduce yourself?

Participant 2: My name is xxx, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SCORHS) under the Nigerian University Nursing Students' Association (NUNSA) National. I am passionate about youth and women's empowerment, gender equality, and advancing sexual and reproductive health rights through advocacy, education, and community engagement.

Interviewer: How can you describe your organization's contribution to promoting women's participation in civic leadership?

Participant 2: Through SCORHS, we have consistently created platforms where young women, especially student nurses, are encouraged to take up leadership roles, speak out on issues affecting them, and build confidence in decision-making spaces. We engage in sensitization programs, leadership trainings, and advocacy campaigns that not only focus on health but also promote gender equity, empowerment, and civic participation. Our goal is to raise a generation of female health leaders who can influence policy both within and beyond the health sector

Interview: What are the factors that hinder women's participation and representation in civic leadership?

Participant 2: Several factors still pose challenges. These include cultural and religious stereotypes, patriarchal mindsets, limited access to leadership training or mentorship, and sometimes financial constraints that make it hard for women to contest or sustain visibility in leadership spaces. In student organizations and communities alike, women often face discouragement or intimidation, which affects their confidence to contest or take initiative.

Interviewer: “She Should Contest and Create Her Space” is a program initiative by the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund. Do you think such an initiative will be achieved in your community?

Participant 2: Yes, I strongly believe such an initiative can succeed, especially among young people and student communities, if it's backed by continuous advocacy, mentorship, and awareness. Many young women today are willing to lead but just need encouragement and support systems that reassure them that their voices matter. If this program reaches schools and local communities, it will go a long way in changing mindsets and creating inclusive spaces.

Interviewer: Do you have any community-based advocacy/campaigns or capacity building aimed at breaking barriers and fostering dialogue, motivating key stakeholders to support women's participation and increase inclusive governance?

Participant 2: Yes. Through SCORHS, we organize community outreaches and campaigns on sexual and reproductive health rights, gender-based violence, and women's empowerment. We also collaborate with student associations, local NGOs, and youth networks to host webinars and training sessions that build capacity and promote gender inclusivity. Our activities aim to not only educate but also inspire both men and women to support women's leadership, amplify their voices, and contribute to a more inclusive society.

Interview 3

Interviewee: Participant 3

Position: CSO Representative

Geopolitical zone: South West, Nigeria

Transcript

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Participant 3: I am xxxx, the State Coordinator, Directorate of Women Affairs, IPAC Ekiti State.

Interviewer: What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics?

Participant 3: The underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics can be attributed to several factors:

Socio-Cultural Barriers: Patriarchal structures, gender stereotypes, and traditional practices hinder women's access to resources, decision-making processes, and leadership positions.

Financial Constraints: Women candidates often struggle to afford exorbitant party ticket costs, campaign expenses, and resource mobilization.

Lack of Political Know-How: Women face challenges navigating the often patriarchal and sometimes violent political terrain.

Institutional Framework: Existing electoral laws and political party dynamics do not support a level playing field for new entrants and marginalized groups.

Voter Bias: Unfavorable voter attitudes towards women candidates, fueled by beliefs that women are unsuitable for certain offices or incapable of handling the demands of public office.

Interviewer: How can women be mobilized to break these barriers?

Participant 3: As a woman leader, I would recommend:

Mentorship Programs: Establish mentorship initiatives to guide and support women aspiring to political leadership.

Capacity Building: Organize training sessions on leadership, decision-making, and campaign management.

Networking Opportunities: Create platforms for women to connect, share experiences, and build alliances.

Advocacy: Promote policies and legislation that support women's participation in politics.

Interviewer: How can women at the grassroots level be empowered?

Participant 3:

Civic Education: Provide education on civic rights, responsibilities, and the importance of participation in politics.

Leadership Training: Offer training on leadership skills, public speaking, and community engagement.

Amplifying Voices: Create platforms for women to share their concerns, ideas, and experiences.

Interviewer: How can women who aspire to political leadership be supported?

Participant 3:

Financial Support: Provide access to funding, grants, or campaign resources.

Strategic Communication: Offer training on effective communication, public speaking, and media engagement.

Mentorship: Pair aspiring candidates with experienced women leaders or politicians for guidance and support.

Interviewer: What recommendations would you give to improve strategic communication for women in politics?

Participant 3:

Regular Sensitization Programs: Educate voters about the importance of women's participation in politics.

Training on Effective Communication: Provide training on public speaking, debate, and media engagement.

Social Media Empowerment: Leverage social media platforms to amplify women's voices and promote their campaigns.

Collaboration with Civil Society: Partner with civil society organizations to promote women's participation in politics.

Interview 4

Interviewee: Participant 4

Position: CSO representative

Geopolitical zone: North East

Transcript

Interviewer: Can you introduce yourself?

Participant 4: I am xxxx from Umminrashida Care Foundation.

Interviewer: How would you describe your organization's contribution to promoting women's participation in civic leadership?

Participant 4: My organization participates actively in promoting women's inclusion in civic leadership through a localization approach, where the narrative is changed so that mindset-driven decisions can effectively be transformed.

Interviewer: What factors hinder women's participation and representation in civic leadership?

Participant 4: The intentional toxicity in the civic space, which collides with the day-to-day norms and transitions of society, is a major barrier. There are also entrenched mindsets about women's leadership and religious beliefs that discourage women from taking up leadership roles.

Interviewer: "She Should Contest and Create Her Space" is a program initiative by Nigerian Women Trust Fund. Do you think such an initiative can succeed in your community?

Participant 4: Yes, but progress would be gradual.

Interviewer: Do you currently have community-based advocacy or capacity-building initiatives aimed at breaking barriers and fostering inclusive governance?

Participant 4: Not yet, but there are plans underway to implement such initiatives.