



Strategies Used by Women Seeking Elective Political Leadership in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The growing number of women in elective positions represents a significant shift in worldwide politics. Despite the advancements, women still continue to face unique hurdles in attaining and maintaining political power. Using a cross-sectional data of 384 from registered voters, this study evaluated strategies used by women seeking elective political leadership in Meru County, Kenya. The study is guided by the Feminist Theory and employed descriptive research design. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size formula was used to identify a sample size of 384 from a target population of 772,139 registered voters in the nine electoral constituencies in Meru County. Respondents were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected using structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics was applied to analyse the collected data using SPSS version 24. The results indicated that women in Meru County advocate for gender mainstreaming by adhering to constitutional and legislative frameworks, a strategy for achieving gender equality, and public recognition of women. Grassroots mobilization emerges as an important technique for females to contact voters, challenge cultural conventions, and strengthen relationships with them. The successful use of traditional and social media is emphasized as critical to molding public



perception, reaching wider audiences, and engaging voters. Support for gender quotas is characterized as a proactive approach to removing structural barriers and ensuring women's fair representation in politics. Collectively, these strategies demonstrate women's dedication in Meru County to construct a more inclusive and fairer political climate and could serve as a model for establishing gender-balanced leadership in other regions. These findings contribute new knowledge to literature and theory.

Keywords: Elective Political Leadership, Feminist, Gender Mainstreaming, Grassroots Mobilization, Gender Quotas

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Agenda dubbed “the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” remains a blue print to eliminating global inequalities. Taking cognizance of the substantial proportion of women’s population in the world, the Agenda recognizes their full and equal participation in political leadership and public affairs as critical to realization of sustainable development (Manzano, 2021). Evidence has demonstrated the power of women’s political leadership in among other benefits, reducing inequality (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2017), improving education and health, and reducing party-oriented and ethnic barriers to collaborations (Markham, 2013). Yet, women’s participation in elective political leadership positions falls way back below that of men worldwide (WEF, 2018). Although, global gender equity in health and education outcomes had been achieved by 2015, only 21% of political empowerment had been attained in the same period (UN Women, 2021).

According to United Nations (UN) women calculation based on data sourced from Permanent Missions to the UN, gender equality in executive governance positions may not be realized for another 130 years given the current trend (UN Women, 2024). The calculation shows that as of June 1, 2024, there were only 18 countries with female heads of state, and 15 with female heads of government. At the same time, women represented 23.3% of Cabinet members heading Ministries, most of whose portfolios were related to women affairs and the equality of gender, affairs related to children and family at large, social inclusivity, protection, security, and Indigenous and minority affairs. Only 26.9% of legislators in lower or single chambers were female, an increase of 11% from 1995. Furthermore, the calculation painted a grim picture for gender parity in legislative bodies with women holding 36% of parliamentary seats in Latin America and the Caribbean, 33% in Europe and Northern America, and 28% in sub-Saharan Africa (UN Women, 2024).



Women in Kenya face ongoing hurdles in political involvement and leadership. Despite affirmative action rules, women continue to hold fewer elected and appointed jobs than expected. Kenya's 2010 Constitution aims to promote gender representation by limiting elected or appointed public entities to two-thirds of each gender. Article 86 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 for example clarifies to women seeking elective political leadership the roles of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. This includes ensuring the voting methods used in every election are uncomplicated, precise, certifiable, safe, responsible, and transparent (Constitution of Kenya 2010). That votes are counted and tabulated and results announced promptly, in addition to having appropriate structures that eliminate electoral malpractices. Article 73; reiterates the need for high integrity among the elected leaders, while Article 38 provides for the rights for self-determination of the citizens on political choices free from intimidation (Ndungo, et al., 2012).

Education training workshops through civil society organizations demystified the Elections Act 2011 to women seeking elective political positions of leadership by outlining clear guidance on voter registration, the process of running elections, and carrying out a referendum (Ndungo, et al., 2012). The Act provides that all Kenyan citizens aged 18 years and above, and whose names duly appear in the voters register have the right to vote (Article 3). The Act clarifies emphasizes the need for a poll register in every polling station, ward, and constituency. Moreover, every county should have a county register and a record of potential voters who live outside Kenya (Article 4) (Elections Act 2011). This knowledge remains vital for women candidates vying for elective political positions of leadership. Through training and knowledge acquisition, it was hoped that women seeking elective political leadership could use such established laws effectively to implement their political agenda. Through this knowledge women can get to know the procedures through which an election could be invalidated if an elected leader was found guilty of an electoral offence (Elections Act, 2011).

Africa Centre for Open Governance (AfriCOG) (2014) advanced that although women understood electoral laws as a result of civic education, legal frameworks on how to implement most of these laws were yet to be legislated. For example, the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 81 (b), decrees more than two thirds of one gender to be appointed or selected to elective bodies. Yet, this decree remains unimplemented despite the launch of the 2010 constitution of Kenya (AfriCOG, 2014). Women's inclusion in decision making whether through the two-thirds gender rule or affirmative action, remains contentious both in and outside parliament. Women continue to be sidelined from leadership even at political party level (WEL, 2013). Conducting



research and understanding the needs of voters promote women's candidate's campaigns to be based on issues which concern the people than rhetoric (Owuor, 2021). Research enables the formulation of clear policy options that are appealing to the voters (Tripp et al, 2014). At the same time, research help women vying for elective political positions of leadership to focus on their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as the needs assessment of the voters before drafting a campaign plan (Ndungo et al., 2012). Lilleker (2014) notes that credible data from research facilitates women to develop a viable campaign plan when allocating time for when, where, and how to engage all campaign activities, including voters, supporters, and personalities such as opinion leaders.

Despite being almost a decade since the constitution's adoption, this provision is still not fully implemented. Nonetheless, there has been a significant increase in the number of women elected at various levels. The 2022 general election yielded better results than 2013 and 2017. However, the gains made have not been satisfactory enough regarding inclusion of women in elective political leadership (UN Women, 2023). One County that epitomizes the struggles that women have to go through in political involvement and leadership in Kenya is Meru County. Meru County features what is referred to as "women of firsts" depicting two women with similar political trajectories (Kamau, 2023). The first case relates to a woman who trod against all odds in the 1975 by-election to become first Meru woman MP, beating powerful men in the patriarchal Meru politics (Abuya, 2023). However, she was haunted out of office through a 1979 court ruling that has remained controversial (Kamau, 2023). The second is the case of a woman who defied long-held cultural beliefs to become the first elected woman Governor of Meru in the 2022 general election. Yet, like the case of the first woman MP, the woman governor is facing a tough task governing and is now on a third impeachment attempt in close to two years, with thoughts that her case requires a council of elders to preside over its resolution (Muriithi, 2024). Besides, these two cases, women have found it difficult to get elected in political leadership positions in the County. For instance, in the 2017 General Election, only one woman vied for Parliament in the Meru's nine constituencies, but came a distant fifth. In the 2022 general election, 8 women vied in the eight constituencies but failed to be elected.

With the UN Women prioritizing the inclusive participation and representation of women in political and electoral processes, bearing in mind that their political leadership skills and talents are often ignored when they are not adequately represented. This represents a wastage of valuable resource, raising the question of what strategies can boost women participation in leadership and politics in Meru. The Beijing Declaration and



Platform for Action targets a balance between men and women in decision-making (Beijing declaration, 1995). Scholars have unearthed a plethora of strategies that are used to promote the participation of women in politics in diverse contexts, including gender quotas, political financing, laws against gender violence, party policies, and mentorship (Israrud, 2024; Krook, 2017; Krook & Norris, 2014). However, in the context of Meru County, despite challenges that women face participating in leadership and politics, no known study has explored strategies in place for their inclusive participation. Therefore, this paper addresses this gap by exploring strategies used by women seeking elective political leadership in Meru County.

Literature Review

Theoretical Literature

This research was grounded on the feminist theory seeking to enable an understanding of how women seeking participation in leadership and politics in Meru County interact with political terrains to offer solutions to systems and structures that may be oppressive. According to Hooks (2000), feminism as a movement attempt to not only put an end to sexism, but to also obliterate oppression and sexist exploitation. Suffice it to say that feminist theory does not only target women but caters for all sexes. Therefore, by using this theory, strategies that women use to promote their participation in leadership and politics in Meru County can exhaustively be approached to include those that could address women's own frailties. Recently, scholars have underscored feminist nuances in women leadership strategies. For instance, in contending that no woman should be left behind, Bierema et al. (2024) argues that a focus on critical feminist leadership development can enhance gender consciousness and transform organizations. Similarly, in a recent study, Srikandi and Lubis (2024) examined Kamala Harris's inaugural speech as US Vice President, revealing that the speech embodied the Spirit of Feminism, with 13 utterances promoting education, gender, equal liberty, women's rights, and addressing prejudice and discrimination.

Empirical Literature

The strategy to address any identified concern starts by establishing the challenge affecting women, men, or any established institution (Nadia, 2007). A strategy is identified as a plan that addresses the concern with the ultimate goal of building a better future (UNDP & UN Women, 2017). In this research, the concern is strategies women engage to promote their participation in elective political leadership processes. Scholars have



highlighted several strategies that can be employed in elective political leadership.

In a study linking women's path to high political office with female suffrage, Baturo and Gray (2018) implicitly point to strong networks as a strategy. They examine how educational personal, and career backgrounds vary between effective men and women leaders in the years 1960 to 2010. They demonstrate that no significant differences in leadership existed between those leaders, concluding therefore, that empirical modeling needs to recognize that women are equally qualified to offer leadership. Moreover, they demonstrate that women rely mainly on family ties to attract support, financial resources and political clout. However, they significantly reduce familial connections when more women recognize their right to vote and become more receptive to politics. The question then is whether in the context of Meru County, family ties supersede female suffrage.

In another study, Wells et al. (2020) use the Trump's case to implicitly point to the strategic role of media and social media in elective politics. They explore how communication among candidates using diverse media, including mainstream media, partisan media, and social media shaped candidates' attention during the 2015-2016 US presidential primary elections. They recognize six main components of the media system that candidates largely used to attract attention. They reveal that social media activity, such as re-tweeting candidate posts, significantly boosted Trump's news media coverage, giving him an edge over other candidates. After realizing his disadvantaged position in the mainstream media, Trump strategically exploited tweeting to get coverage. While this research by Wells et al. (2020) reinforces the central role of social media, the question is whether such a strategy can work in Meru County, and more so among women in elective politics.

O'brien and Rickne (2016) introduce the idea of gender quotas while examining women's political leadership. They investigate how use of gender quotas has impacted women's leadership chances across 100 countries. They used a case of the social democratic party of Sweden, which imposed a 50-50 quota system on 290 municipal branches to show that more impactful municipalities had women as leaders. Moreover, they demonstrated that the quota system greatly boosted chances for women qualified to hold leadership positions. The findings lend credence to use of quotas as an effective way to raise women's representation in leadership positions. The question that emerges is whether such a strategy works in Meru County when the two-thirds gender representation rule has failed to work in Kenya.

Mawhinney (2020) points to feminist policy as an avenue to enhance chances of women in elective political leadership. While acknowledging that



policy studies in a feminist framework are a relatively recent branch of political investigation, Mawhinney contends that they possess potential to institutionalize women's voices rather than their echoes. But decries the fact that political science, the forerunner of policy studies, has taken longer to include feminism into its conceptual storehouse than most social disciplines. Consequently, feminist political analysts frequently disagree on how to approach differences, such as recognizing gender disparities and advocating for special treatment in change methods.

Grassroots mobilization also features significantly among strategies that have been used in elective politics. Goyal (2023) presents a new theory of descriptive representation, recommending that female leaders increase women's political engagement by recruiting them to help with activities at the grassroots level. Goyal uses citizen surveys and natural experiments to confirm this, revealing that women in elective political leadership prefer to recruit and maintain activists who act as their conduits at the grassroots level. This contact positively impacts political knowledge and participation. Goyal's findings also support the theory, highlighting the pivotal role of women's party activism in shaping women's political behavior, particularly in contexts with pervasive clientelism and persistent gender unequal norms. Considering that Meru County hosts unequal gender norms due to long-held cultural beliefs (Saya, 2024), it would be ideal to establish whether grassroots mobilization ranks among strategies that women in elective political leadership use.

In a similar study, Ponce et al. (2020) build on research which repeatedly reveals that women are less likely than men to be members or activists in political parties, to look at grassroots partisan participation in 68 parties across 12 parliamentary democracies, seeking to establish whether factors that increase the number of female candidates and legislators are also related with shifting the historically male dominance of grassroots party politics. They discover evidence of correlations between some party procedures and increased women's intra-party participation, but worryingly, these do not change the gender gap. Only increased female participation in party parliamentary delegations is connected with lower gender inequalities at the grassroots level. With this knowledge, the question is whether women in elective political leadership in Meru County seek to participate in party delegations at grassroots level.

From the Kenyan context, Lomong et al. (2023) introduce the strategy of gender mainstreaming policy. Buoyed by the Knowledge that some county's experience a shortage of women in elective political leadership, despite global progress in recognizing women's political, socio-economic, and equity in governance, they examine the impact of gender mainstreaming



policy implementation on women's political representation in Baringo County Assembly. Using a cross-sectional survey design and mixed method approach on a population of 2446 individuals, they demonstrate a significant positive correlation between gender mainstreaming policy implementation and women's political representation and governance. In so doing, they highlight the need for more inclusive and efficient policies in promoting gender mainstreaming in politics. Therefore, this spurs interest in replicating the same in Meru County.

Still in Kenya, Ndungo et al. (2012) and Owuor (2021) identified various strategies women use to secure elective political leadership positions. These include understanding election laws, campaign preparation, budgeting, fundraising, donations, communication, rhetoric persuasion, public talks, road shows, social media, and print media. Women also employ various tactics such as priming, issue convergence, and rhetoric persuasion, as well as public talks and road shows.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This research used a descriptive research design to explore strategies women in elective political leadership in Meru County employ to be relevant. Descriptive research is a method for precisely and systematically describing a population, situation, or phenomena. It focuses on detecting traits, frequencies, trends, and categories, rather than regulating or modifying factors. This form of study is appropriate when little is known about the topic or problem, because understanding how, when, and where something occurs is critical before determining why. Descriptive research can employ a variety of approaches and is often classified as quantitative research; however, qualitative research can also be utilized for descriptive reasons (Siedlecki, 2020). The choice of descriptive research for this study is informed by the need to investigate the phenomenon of strategies women in elective politics use, which prior to the research were unknown.

Data Collection

The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size formula was used to identify a sample size of 384 from a target population of 772,139 registered voters in the County. Respondents were selected from Meru County's nine electoral constituencies using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. A simple random sample represents the entire data population by randomly selecting individuals, while stratified random sampling divides the population into smaller groups based on shared traits (Meng, 2013). The



final sample consisted of 330 registered voters whose opinions were gathered through a structured questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The main inferential analysis used to identify strategies used was the Principal Components Analysis (PCA). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a dimensionality reduction technique that identifies orthogonal axes called principal components (in this case strategies) that capture the maximum variance in data. These components are linear combinations of original variables, ordered in decreasing importance. The total variance captured by all principal components equals the original dataset's total variance (Greenacre et al., 2022). Data analyses was facilitated using SPSS version 24. Under the PCA approach, factor loadings were required to be above 0.6 in order to achieve strong item loading (Shrestha, 2021). All the 29 items were subjected to PCA under the Kaiser criterion. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess sampling adequacy and data structure respectively.

Results

Demographic Profile

Respondents' demographic profiles were evaluated in terms of age, gender, and marital status. Research has shown that these demographics influence women's political goals in some way (Agrawal & Singh, 2022; Fraile & Gomez, 2017), hence they attracted researchers' attention. The demographic profile (Table 1) shows that the majority of respondents (84.8 percent) were over the age of 30, indicating that their opinions should be taken seriously.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20yrs	7	2.1
	21-25yrs	5	1.5
	26-30yrs	38	11.5
	Above 30yrs	280	84.8
Your gender	Male	149	45.2
	Female	181	54.8
Marital status	Married	259	78.5
	Single	45	13.6
	Widowed	8	2.4
	Divorced	9	2.7
	Separated	9	2.7



Gender-wise, both females (54.8%) and males (45.2%) had a significant representation in the sample, implying that the views obtained may not have been biased towards either gender. The majority of respondents (78.5%) were married, implying that reports of familial interference could be found.

Sampling Adequacy and Data Structure

Twenty-nine questionnaire items were initially suggested to probe strategies that women in elective political leadership in Meru County use to navigate the political terrain. The KMO measure valued at .848 (Table 2) fell in the Kaiser's meritorious category, indicating adequate sampling (Nkansah, 2011). The significant Bartlett's statistic (χ^2 (406) = 6545.8, $p < .001$) indicates that the items under investigation were independent of each other showing that the data structure was ideal for dimension reduction.

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.848
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6545.832
	df	406
	Sig.	.000

Items Extraction

Twenty-two items were extracted and loaded highly on five components representing five strategies (Table 3). The first component had five items focusing on recognition of gender in elective political leadership. Reviewing existing literature revealed that this component represented a strategy that could be designated as "Gender mainstreaming (GM)". The second component had five items biased towards community involvement making it to be designated as "grassroots mobilization (GRM)". Component three had three items depicting association with others, thus designated as "political networking (PN)". The fourth component consisted six items largely reflecting media use, and designated as "media exploitation (ME)". The fifth and final component had four items loading highly on it. The items were largely leaning towards apportionment of representation by gender, and was designated as the "gender quotas (GQ)" strategy.

The five strategies extracted cumulatively explained 63.9% of the variance in strategy usage (Table 4), indicating women in elective political leadership in Meru County have other strategies which account for 36.1 percent that were not covered by this research.



Table 3: Component Extraction

Most women in elective political leadership in Meru...	Component				
	GM	GRM	PN	ME	GQ
Highlight gender equality goals in their agendas	.843				
Seek integration of gender perspectives in electoral policy	.812				
Often focus their agenda on gender-sensitive budgeting	.743				
Prioritize women in decision-making in their campaigns	.642				
Communicate gender equality values	.638				
Focus on local issues that resonate with voters		.771			
Actively engage with local communities		.770			
Employ door-to-door canvassing to reach voters directly		.711			
Prefer to mount a sustained presence in community affairs		.796			
Form robust network of grassroots supporters		.761			
Build strong alliances with influential leaders			.866		
Join women's organizations and gender advocacy groups			.733		
Use well-established political networks to attract attention			.677		
Use social media to engage with voters				.816	
Use facebook to relate to local communities				.802	
Use TikTok to engage younger voters				.796	
Use radio broadcasts to reach a broad audience				.783	
Use WhatsApp for real-time communication with voters				.755	
Use SMS as the main tool to communicate campaign updates				.636	
Advocate for gender quotas to increase their representation					.776
Gender quotas as avenues to diversify political perspectives					.772
Ask for mandatory gender quotas to hit minimum thresholds					.771
Often challenge resistance to gender quotas					.645

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.



Table 4: Total Variance Explained

Component	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.067	20.921	20.921
2	3.793	13.080	34.001
3	3.052	10.524	44.525
4	2.926	10.089	54.614
5	2.687	9.266	63.880

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Discussions

This study identifies five strategies that women in elective political leadership Meru County predominantly employ to gain entry into the field of politics. The first strategy identified is gender mainstreaming. Under this strategy, women come up with agendas that are loaded with messages campaigning for gender equality, gender perspectives in electoral political leadership, gender-sensitivity in budgeting, and in decision-making. Gender mainstreaming is enshrined in the Kenyan constitution of 2010, and remains a key focus of vision 2030 through which gender-specific policies, plans, and programs that meet the needs and interests of all genders, including women, men, girls, and boys are emphasized (Njagi, 2018). The goal being to recognize women's contributions to the economy and society while increasing gender awareness.

Women eyeing elective political leadership positions in Meru County are cognizant of the fact that the Constitution of Kenya emphasizes the importance of involving all citizens, including marginalized groups, in governance for societal progress. Therefore, considering long-held cultural beliefs that are locking them out of leadership, they opt for grassroots mobilization as a strategy to get to people and demystify such beliefs. Under this strategy, they focus on issues that resonate with the local people while engaging actively with them. Through door-to-door canvassing, they are not only able to sustain their presence in community affairs, but also to reach potential individual voters directly. The use of grassroots mobilization by women in elective political leadership in Meru County is indeed not farfetched given the positive impact that has been attributed to this strategy in existing research. For instance, Panagopoulos and Francia (2014) in their book report that the 2008 US presidential election saw a significant increase in grassroots mobilization efforts. And that such mobilization efforts significantly increased national voter turnout by 14.5 million votes. Similarly, Sinclair et al. (2013) demonstrated that face-to-face get-out-the-vote canvassing in ones local neighborhood had an influence on voter turn-out. Therefore, by using



grassroots mobilization, women in elective political leadership hope to not only increase voter turnout, but also sway the votes to their candidature.

Political networking also emerges as a strategy that women in elective politics in Meru leverage in their endeavor to get acceptance. In this strategy, women seek to build strong alliances with influential leaders and other established networks. More importantly, they join women's organizations and gender advocacy groups. One such group is the Meru Women Legislative Association (MEWOLA) formed by the women Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) to champion for the rights of women and engender the legislative processes at the county level. Use of political networks by women in elective politics in Meru County reflects a growing trend particularly in this technology era that has seen an increase in online networks. For example, Guo and Liu (2012) demonstrated that external networks improve gathering fundraising activities and contributions for the election. Bor (2014) points to the growing use of network sites to raise communication levels between citizens and political campaigns.

Exploiting media resources is also another prevalent strategy among women in elective political leadership in Meru County. Social media, particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok platforms together with mainstream media are central in these women's communication with electorates. This use of media resources in campaigns is consistent with the emerging trend where digital media practices are reshaping election campaigns and political parties (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). Gerbaudo (2018) contends that social media's mass networking capabilities, akin to a 'mass web', enable mass politics and populist appeals to billions of people worldwide. Therefore, a strategy that leverages media resources stands to popularize women's appeal to Meru voters.

The last strategy that was apparent among the respondents is the use of gender quotas. Recognizing that long-held cultural beliefs have conspired to lock Meru women out of political participation, women look towards gender quotas to increase their participation and diversify political perspectives. Besides seeking for mandatory gender quotas, they also challenge resistance to such quotas. Use of gender quotas has proven to be a common practice for assuring women participation in other societies. Lang et al. (2022) highlight how gender quotas are used by parties across Europe guided by the Gender Equality Policy in Practice (GEPP). Krook and Zetterberg (2017) observe that over the last two decades, electoral gender quotas have emerged as a critical political reform, with over 130 nations now implementing them. Molders et al. (2018) argue that support for quotas for women in male-gendered leadership is often emboldened by perceptions of them as active, assertive, and strong.



Conclusion and Recommendation

This study presents a comprehensive examination of the techniques used by women in Meru County to traverse the challenging terrain of elective political leadership. Gender mainstreaming is an important technique in which women intentionally align their goals with constitutional and legislative frameworks that promote gender equality. Women have advanced their personal ambitions through campaigning for gender sensitive policies and inclusion in governance and this has contributed to a greater society movement through recognizing and rewarding women's contribution in all areas.

It becomes clear that mobilizing at the grassroots is a crucial tactic for interacting with voters directly. Hence, concentrating on local concerns and building trust through door-to-door canvassing, female candidates may be able to break long-held cultural preconceptions that have historically prevented women from holding leadership roles. This approach strengthens the links between candidates and the communities they are running to represent in addition to increasing voter turnout. Political networking, which involves the establishment and active engagement in women's organizations and gender advocacy groups, emphasizes the need of solidarity and collective action. Women in Meru can raise their voices and gain the support they need to pursue political careers by connecting with influential people and leveraging established networks.

Digital platforms enable networking, demonstrating how technology is becoming increasingly vital in current political campaigns. Using media resources to emphasize the importance of communication in shaping public opinion and gaining support encompasses both traditional and social media. Female candidates can increase their online presence, engage voters in real time, and reach a larger audience by using platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp. Finally, intentional implementation of gender quotas demonstrates a deliberate commitment to institutional growth. Recognizing the structural hurdles to women's political engagement, women in Meru County call for gender quotas to achieve equitable representation. This is consistent with global developments, in which gender limitations have effectively expanded women's political representation while challenging traditional dynamics of power. In general, these initiatives demonstrate Meru County women's resilience and drive to establish a political space for themselves. Their efforts are not only focused on obtaining positions of power, but also on making the political environment more inclusive, equal, and reflective of the community's many viewpoints. If these strategies are adopted and supported, Meru County might usher in a new era of gender-balanced leadership and become a model.



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