



EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG WOMEN IN POLITICS

E-WIP PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT



Submitted by:
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EWIP	ELECTRONIC WOMEN IN POLITICS
IT	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
MP	MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
NOWIP	NETWORK OF WOMEN IN POLITICS
SDGS	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
UMWA	UGANDA MEDIA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
WIP	WOMEN IN POLITICS

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About NOWIP

The Network of Women in Politics (NOWIP) is a non-partisan organization. The vision is creating a platform, where Women in Politics have amplified and empowered voices in Governance and Democracy” and the mission is “To enhance the potential of Uganda Women in Politics by providing network opportunities”. It has so far registered some achievements that include network growth, capacity building for women politicians and membership testimonies since its inception. All NOWIP reports are available at www.nowippress.com

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ABSTRACT

Social Media has become an effective avenue for social and political communication and shaping public options. In the 2021 general elections, when Uganda went to polls to elect the next set of leaders like the member of parliament, local government councils, City and Division Mayors, representatives of the special interest groups, and youth representatives, many used social media for political campaigning over traditional media.

As with many worldly events, the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted Uganda's general elections. It presented losses and gains for women in politics. To keep Ugandans safe, the Uganda Electoral Commission (EC) issued a press release banning public rallies for the 2021 political campaigns as part of the country's Covid-19 containment measures. During the same period, all political campaigns were not convened in large groups campaigns to limit the numbers of electorates thus social media was the next best alternative and cheapest tool of communication. Campaigns were normally conducted on radio and television, in newspapers, and on the internet.

The number of Women in Politics drastically also increased during the 2021 general elections after training on the use of various social media platforms and use it as a tool to connect with their peers and networking by the Network of Women in Politics. The WIP were empowered to use social media tools to convey their political messages, strategies to many voters.

This report draws back to share experiences by WIP on use on social media and how the skills gained influenced their political participation. It is mainly based upon the Primary data collected from 100 respondents consisting of Women Member of Parliament, Personal Assistants of Member of Parliaments, Councilors, WIP contestants who never made it through Microsoft and mobile telephone.

This study has revealed that 80% of WIP respondents use various social media platforms. The majority of WIP between the age group of 25-34 years utilize social media and engage in online political activities. It was found that social media is an effective tool for communication among WIP.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Women have made significant political gains in recent decades. Women today hold only 22.7 percent of national legislative seats. In more than thirty countries, women hold less than 10 percent of the positions. There are only two countries, Bolivia, and Rwanda, where women make up a legislative majority. The digital age has brought with it tools that can help women to achieve greater political parity. Whereas traditional news media exhibit many of the gender biases found in the broader society, social media are as available to women as they are to men. Ugandan women in politics use social media far less than their male counterparts, which could be related to the abuse they experience across platforms.

In 2021, the Electoral Commission of Uganda declared the January 14, presidential elections would be “scientific,” meaning that campaigning would be done entirely online. The commission prohibited in-person events to align with COVID-19 prevention measures. Politicians had to capitalize on digital and social media to engage with voters. At some point, social networks like Facebook, micro blogs like Twitter, and video-sharing platforms like You Tube provide women with powerful tools for their advancement but were also temporarily shut down.

On the other hand, nearly 2.5 million

new voters were estimated to participate in the 2021 general elections, registering an increase from 15.2 million on the voters’ roll in 2016 to 17.7 million voters on the updated voters’ roll published by Electoral Commission. During the same period, the social media users were 3.40 million in Uganda in January 2021. The number of social media users in Uganda increased by 900 thousand (+36%) between 2020 and 2021, equivalent to 7.3% of the total population in January 2021.

The Network of Women in Politics in a bid to increase WIP Competitiveness trained 600 women candidates were trained to use at least two virtual transformative social media tools in political campaigning. The training took place on Zoom and WhatsApp live chat.

The virtual elections to some extent present a great opportunity to monitor social media content and analyze how online violence against women in politics manifested on the Ugandan internet.

2.0 OVERARCHING CONTEXT

NOWIP and UMWA supported by DGF implemented a 5 -month project from December 1, 2021, to April 28, 2021: dubbed the E-Women in Politics (E-WIP). The project targeted 600 women politicians in Uganda, empowering them to utilize online/social media systems during the 2021 general pre-election and post-election period. The engagements were online and offline interactive sessions coupled with the media, online surveys, assessments, chats, and online zoom training. The training helped women candidates to overcome traditional and cultural barriers of Communication. It brought on board successful women leaders to share experiences and help build local capacity.

Around March and April 2021, activities focused on online interactions and ensuring that WIP applied the skills they acquired during the training. NOWIP has continued to encourage WIP to use social media. For example, March 2021, a total of 45 elected Members of Parliament were supported in using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Zoom with their public relation officers.

NOWIP encouraged more interactions using the commonly used social media as identified in the assessment conducted in December, WhatsApp, twitter, zoom, and face book, all these could not be used during the first

days of February 2021. The numbers of WIP participating in the interactions were low at the beginning of February 2021 due to this ban but later increased towards the end month when the Government lifted the ban. Now, NOWIP and UMWA are undertaking a post project evaluation to largely assess the use of social media by WIP and status of cyber harassment among Women in Politics. This evaluation targeted 100 WIP and was largely conducted virtually



3.0 DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is described as a set of online technologies, sites, and practices which are used to share opinions, experiences, and perspectives. In contrast with traditional media, the nature of social media is highly interactive. In simple terms, social media are websites and applications that enable users to create and share information or to be used for social networking and communication.



Social media are used to document memories, learn about, and explore things, advertise oneself and form friendships as well as the growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, and videos. Social media outlets differ from traditional media (e.g., magazines, newspapers, TV broadcasting, and radio broadcasting) in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. Additionally, social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system (many sources to many receivers) while traditional media outlets

operate under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers).

Karalee Kaur Kapoor, et al (2018) defines social media comprises communication websites that facilitate relationship forming between users from diverse backgrounds, resulting in a rich social structure. User generated content encourages inquiry and decision-making. Social media sites are already so deeply embedded in our daily lives that people rely on them for every need, ranging from daily news and updates on critical events to entertainment, connecting with family and friends, reviews, and recommendations on products/ services, to name but a few. When we refer to social media, applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram often come to mind which have over 100 million registered users. However, there several social media applications used. For example, a newspaper is delivered to many subscribers and a radio station broadcasts the same programs to an entire city. Other social media websites, include: TikTok, WeChat, ZONE, Weibo, Tumblr, Baidu, Tieba, Quora, Telegram, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, Reddit, Discord, VK, Microsoft Teams, and more.

These applications are driven by user-generated content, and are highly influential in a variety of settings, including political issues.

Social media is a tool that allows people to create and share different ideas, information, and pictures/videos. It is an online communication, a way dedicated to developing interaction and collaboration among people. Thus, social media might be changing the attitude and behavior of women in politics. It also spreads awareness among people by creating different online pages and accounts by giving their agendas and information via these techniques.

4.0 LINKING SOCIAL MEDIA TO POLITICS: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS.

Social media has proven to be the best place to communicate by politicians with constituents, launch campaigns, build awareness around initiatives, and is an essential tool in crisis communications. Social media is a solid place to keep the public informed and updated about important issues and engage with big audience on a deeper level. Communicating and engaging with constituents has proven to be helpful to establish and build credibility and trust, if it is not used to broadcast messages and engage with people who follow them. Social media also humanizes politicians and makes them more accessible and accountable to the public. Of course, this can backfire if a politician posts content deemed socially unacceptable. Social media increases the chance to the citizen to participate in political activities. It is an effective platform that provides democratic values to the public and is also effective for political discussion for political disclosures.

According to Karamat and Farooq (2020), social media also help to work democracy better by ensuring easy entrance by the citizen in political debates.

Most significantly, media has the capability to give back control in the hands of voters, as it cannot be controlled by politicians. Having understood the positive correlation between social media and politics, it is beneficial study the benefit of it to Women in Politics post the 2021 General elections. Thus, NOWIP has undertaken an evaluation of the impact of EWIP project on Women in Politics.



HAWAH NAKAGGWA MUGENYI
PANELIST - POST EVALUATION DIALOGUE

5.0 TRAINING OF WIP ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE

NOWIP trained 600 women in politics as part of E-WIP project with UMWA to increase use of social media in campaigning and communication. The training empowered WIP to use social media applications majorly Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and Zoom, with a view to facilitating online discourse. NOWIP also developed an online platform to amplify sharing of news and profiles of WIP. The training focused on social media for effective campaign management during the 2021 general elections in Uganda.

The WIP were oriented on the use of social media tools in Uganda and providing them with an introduction to major applications like Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, WhatsApp; creation of social media content, development of a communication strategy including vlogging, social media influencing,

creating an election manifesto; networking for victor; holding successful debates; holding successful virtual events and budgeting for social media campaigns. The trained used both text and infographics to increase engagement and interactivity during the training.

The modules were aligned to the 2019 National Information Technology Authority-Uganda (NITA-U) guidelines on Social Media use in Uganda. In these guidelines, the Government of Uganda recognizes the importance of Information and Communications Technology (IT) in economic development and has initiated major steps to promote its use. One of the major initiatives is to improve IT infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and lower the cost of communication.

The objectives of the training were:

1. To deliver practical knowledge and skills on the use of social media for running effective election campaigns.
2. To deliver practical knowledge and skills to women candidate to enable them stand against cyber harassment and bullying
3. To offer an opportunity for networking and learning among female candidates
4. To support the design and development of elections manifestos including profiles and communication strategies for the women candidates.

WIP were made to understand the importance of having on point content, good quality and interesting content in running a successful campaign. There are many ways to create interesting content that is more likely to spread across social media, and in the training presented practical tips of doing so.

Some key questions that emerged in the trainings on social media included: How can social media be used more effectively for political communication by WIP and candidates? Are social media platforms and blogs a threat to WIP Careers? How should WIP respond to social media bullying? How can social media be used to promote the engagement of electorates? How can WIP transform engagement online to real actions for mutual benefit?



MARIA NAMUKASA
PARTICIPANT- POST EVALUATION MEETING



6.0 Objectives of the evaluation

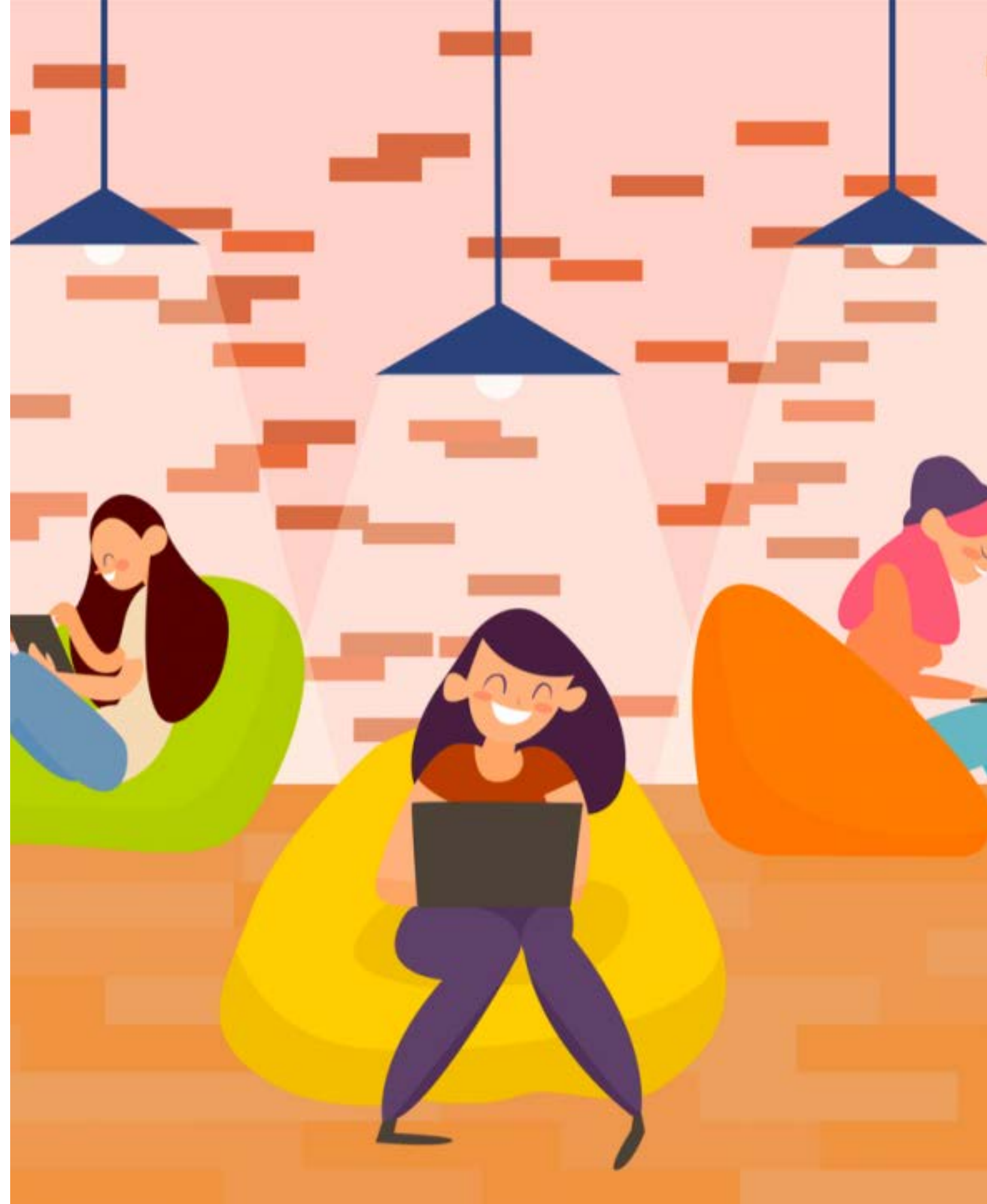
1. To identify the benefits of social media use among women in politics
2. To find out if women in politics faced cyber harassment during and after the 2021 general elections.
3. To propose policy recommendations on the use of social media by women politicians and to curb cyber harassment

7.0 Scope

This report shares the aftermath of application of social media tools by WIP. In particular, the report will present the following questions:

1. Which social network do you use the most?
2. How often do you check the social network selected?
3. On which device do you use social networks?
4. Which type of content do you share on social networks?
5. You can choose multiple answers.
6. “What do you mainly use social networks for?”
7. What benefits did you earn from using social media?
8. Have you ever been a victim of Cyber Harassment during 2021 elections and post-election period?
9. Has social media made political bullying worse?
10. What forms of cyber harassments have you faced?
11. How did you deal with cyber harassments?
12. What recommendations to you must improve use of social networks by Women in Politics?
13. Are you likely to recommend this survey to fellow Women in Politics?

In this report, will also provide evidence for the influence of social media on WIP, by looking at how circulation of information, actors, and political practices, by paying particular attention to how social media was used for campaigning and for mobilizing voters.



8.0 METHODOLOGY

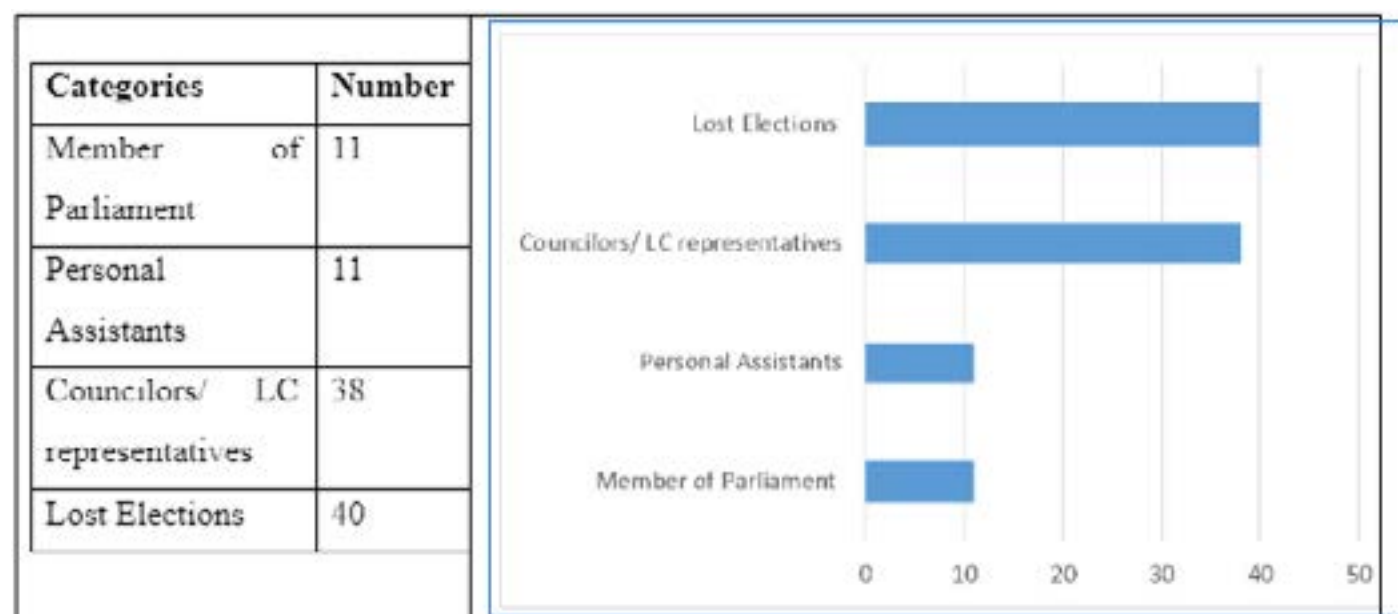
The participants consisted of 100 WIP currently member of NOWIP. The data was collected using online and offline interviewing techniques Data from August 15 to September 15, 2022.

9.0 DEMOGRAPHICS

9.1 RESPONDENTS

A total of 100 Women in Politics participated in the online survey. Out of these, 11 were representing Members of Parliament, 11 were representing personal assistants, 38 were representing councilors and local council representative and 40 were representing women who lost the elections.

TABLE 1 AND FIGURE 1 SHOWING CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS

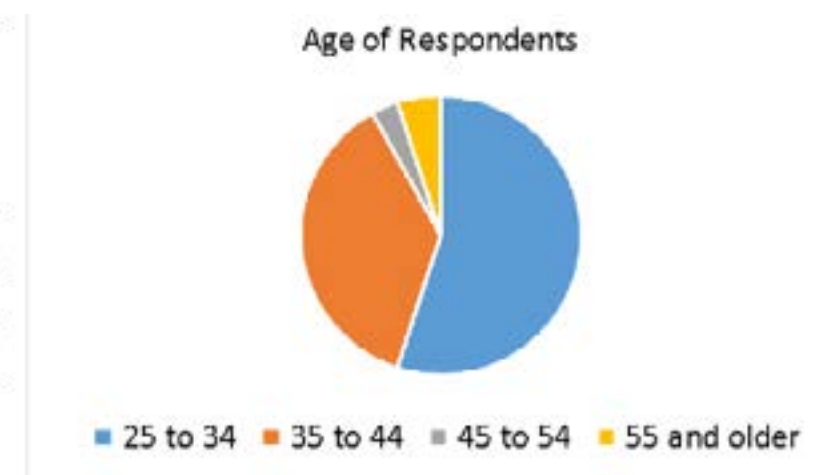


9.2 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

The age range of the respondents was 25-55 and above years of age. Most of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years old at percentage of 55.1 (n=98). Table 2 and Figure two present the age range of the respondents. All the respondents were Women in Politics.

TABLE 2 AND FIGURE 2 SHOWING AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Age of Respondents	No.	Percentage
25 to 34	54	55.1
35 to 44	36	36.7
45 to 54	3	3.1



9.3 EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS

Majority of respondents have a bachelor's Degree representing 66 percent (n=100). About 2 percent attended tertiary institutions, 8 % attained secondary education and only 4 percent have a master's program.

Table 3 showing education of respondents

Level	No.	Percentage
Secondary	8	8
Bachelors	66	66
Master's Degree	4	4
Tertiary	22	22
Total	100	

10.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

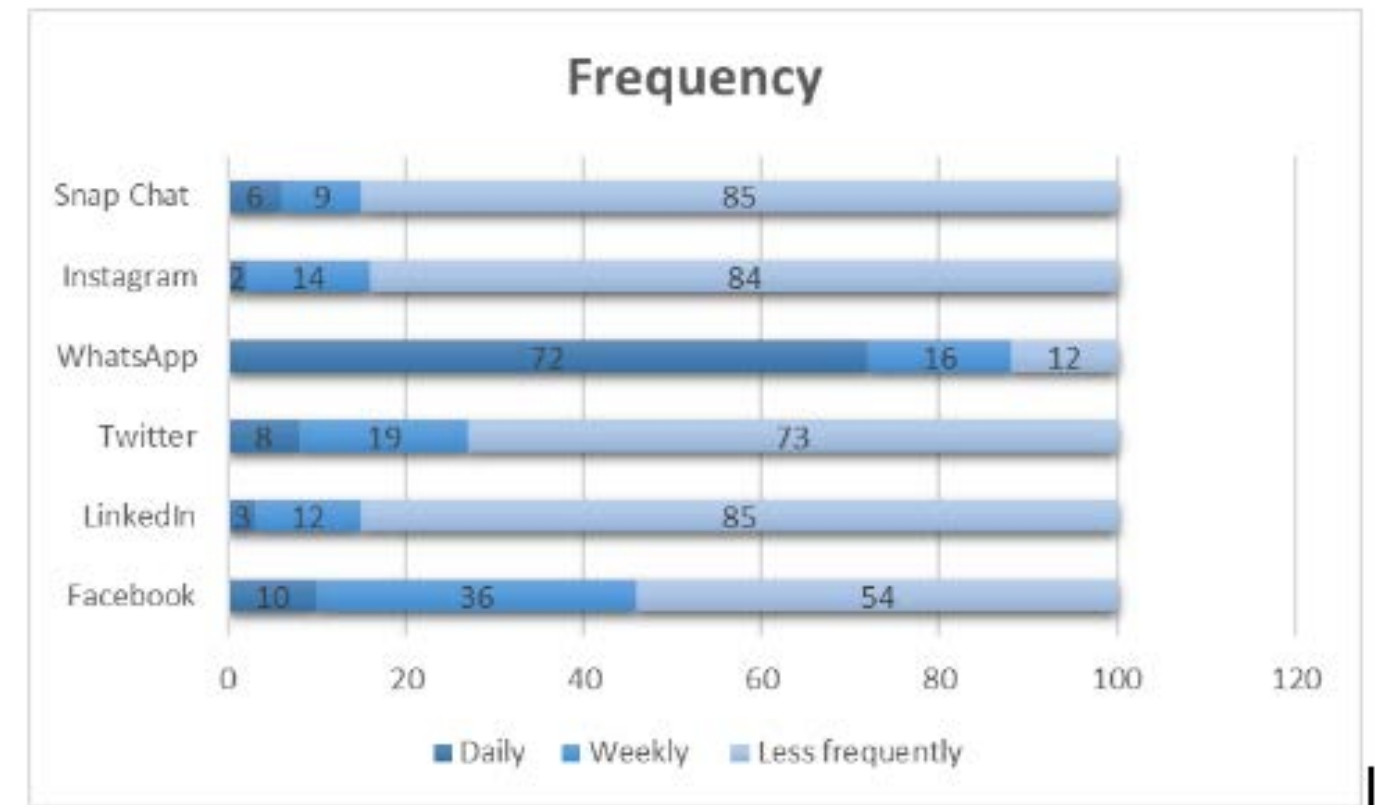
10.1 SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION USED MOST.

Market leader Facebook was the first social network to surpass one billion registered accounts and currently sits at more than 2.89 billion monthly active users globally. The company currently also owns four of the biggest social media platforms, all with over one billion monthly active users each: Facebook (core platform), WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram. These findings are like our findings of the commonest social media applications used by WIP. Majority reported that They use WhatsApp mainly for political information sharing at about 76 percent, followed by Facebook at 11 percent, followed by Twitter at 8 percent and lastly 3 percent. 2 percent did not disclose. The leading social networks have enabled WIP to connect with friends or people across geographical, political, or economic borders.

Most of the WIP about 59 percent use social media every hour, 35 percent use social media every day and 6 percent access social media at least once a week. Most of the information is accessed via the smartphone regardless of the other options of tools available like desktop computers, laptops. It is true that the high numbers of daily use are associated with the fact that WIP are always connected to the internet, check social media every hour, and can receive timely information.

Table 4 and Figure 4 showing Frequency of use social media usage by WIP

Type of social media	Daily	Weekly	Less frequently
Facebook	10	36	54
LinkedIn	3	12	85
Twitter	8	19	73
WhatsApp	72	16	12
Instagram	2	14	84
Snap Chat	6	9	85



These age differences generally extend to use of specific platforms, with youthful WIP aged 25 to 34 use more social media than their older counterparts. Unlike the pre assessment that showed that the majority WIP use Facebook, the numbers have greatly reduced to access and share information.

Since the 2021 social media training offered to WIP, there is a registered increase in the number of respondents who use social media, mostly for WhatsApp.

10.2 SOCIAL MEDIA BAN DURING 2021 ELECTIONS



Uganda's 2021 presidential election shows that digital restrictions are becoming a routine part of the country's electoral cycle. Uganda banned social media and messaging apps on Tuesday, two days ahead of a presidential election half on January 14, 2021. There was limited access to the commonest use of social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp, yet they were widely used for campaigning by all candidates including WIP, and electorates. Recall the ban came ahead of an election that was already redirected to use scientific methods by the same regime. On January 12, all communication regulators were ordered to block social media platforms and messaging applications. This caused difficulty of the users to access the platforms.

While security forces have intim-

idated the opposition at previous elections, the run up to this year's vote has been especially violent. In November, 54 people were killed as soldiers and police quelled protests after Wine was detained. Although it was mentioned that the ban targeted blocking of some pro-government accounts on Facebook, this affected all the electorates. No one could access the internet. Yet, NOWIP had largely linked the social media trainings to WIP empowerment to sue them.

During this assessment, the WIP say they lost interest in suing social media applications like Facebook that require them to pay a tax before their access or use of VPN which could be a threat to their privacy. They recommended further studies on the effect of social media ban to performance of WIP in active politics.

10.3 PURPOSE OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Many people around the world use social media to share information and make connections. On a personal level, social media allows people to communicate with friends and family, learn new things, develop your interests, and be entertained. When WIP were asked about the purpose of using social media (n=98), 18 percentage use social media to discover new things, 55 percent sue it for staying in touch with friends, 11 percent use social media to keep up with friends, and only 16 percent use social media to follow thoughts of leaders and celebrities. It is true that social media usage has increased but the search for political information has reduced.

The WIP share content in the following categories:

Status Updates	Articles	New s	Pictures	Videos	Quizzes	Deals and coupons
71	42	43	50	56	1	14

The following were the Key points on Usage raised by WIP

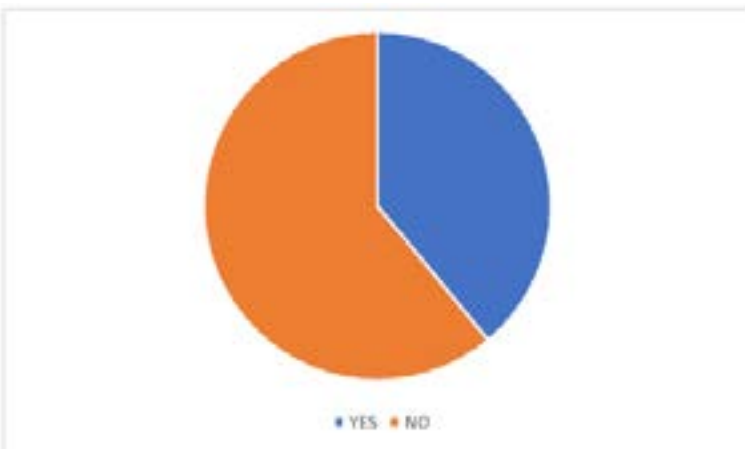
1. WIP used social media to reach larger audience
2. Social media was used to create a two-way dialogue with voters
3. Increase brand awareness of WIP
4. Build a community voter, which was less expensive around your campaign
5. WIP were able to connect with other politicians and organizations
6. Get feedback from the public was easily accessible
7. Greater opportunities for fundraising, they were able to create smaller social media groups and solicit money for the campaigns
8. Build relationships with key individuals and groups

11.0 CYBER HARASSMENT

Out of the 95 respondents, 58 (61%) WIP who participated in the evaluation still reported that they are facing cyber harassment. 37 (39%) WIP have never experienced cyber harassment. Like in the Pre training assessment conducted, WIP still face the following harassment.

Offensive name-calling was reported by 13 respondents; purposeful embarrassment was reported by 32 respondents; physical threats was reported by 7 respondents; stalking was reported by 18 respondents; sexual harassment was reported by 25 respondents; spreading false rumors reported by was 46 respondents; having explicit images of women politicians without consent reported by 8 respondents; receiving explicit images they didn't ask was reported by 25; constant asking of where they are, what they are doing, who they're with, by someone other than a parent was reported by 6 respondents.

Figure 5 showing respondents on being victims of cyber harassment



According to the assessment, harassment happens in many forms. During the assessment, the women politicians said it is hard to speak about it to the public as they fear being judged.

Social media facilitates the spread of false rumors. The news or content sharers do not verify information sources turn out not to be true. This is not only targeting political persons but the most prominent people in the country.

The Uganda Communication Commission has acted by directing the registration of all content creators; however, their recommendations have not been adopted by the users.

The women politicians provided several reasons to the question of why cyber harassment and abuse of women in politics occurs and is widespread. Cyber harassers target women to undermine their efforts and capacity by attacking their image and personality. Women are perceived as objects that are used to entertain and decorate or even seen as tea girls in serious meetings that is why a picture of a naked woman pops up people are more interested in it than when she speaks about something important in an article.

Below are more responses gathered on views about cyber harassment on women politicians.

Patriarchal norms dictate that men must be the leaders thus exposing women to intimidation when they come out openly to pose them.

People are jealous of others when they come out openly to participate in elective politics thus use cyber harassment to fight them.

It is due to the constant desire to suppress the voice of women by both men & women.

Gender imbalance,

become a norm in politics to blackmail, and character assassination which people think puts down their opponents and thus creating space for them. Weak candidates use it as an instrument to fight their opponents and thus fulfill their egos.

Cyber harassment is a form of malice from the opponents, so they are after tarnishing other people's names seeking cheap popularity. People see politics as a job, so they do anything to win an election.

It is widely used to spread rumors as it spreads them so fast.

Competition from Cyber Harassment is used as propaganda because it deals with women very fast to weaken them and intimidate them out of politics. Cyber harassment occurs most especially when women aspire to contest for the same posts as men. Political opponents can use it as a tool to win greater favor yet in turn it is foul play.

It has male counterparts as they always take women for granted. Some men think that some women running for political offices defy social norms so by harassing them they think that they will have discouraged them to withdraw thus resort to using cyberspaces to tarnish their names.

Cyber harassment is used to discourage women from joining politics and has continued to exist, and with no clear legal sanctions and clear guidelines by authorities to regulate its use, it is not about time that it will go away now thus continuing to affect women in politics.

Cyber harassment occurs because mostly some men are very excited to see women joining politics and they take advantage of them since they try to seek help from them being experts in the field, when women refuse, the male counterparts start calling them abusive names on social media platforms plus making false allegations about them. It has been widely shared by women in politics that political opponents are the mastermind of cyber harassment and an idle public. As women are considered a minor in society, they are weaker to fight back naturally.

Politically active women are more on the ground with voters and have less time for social media. So, the culprit takes advantage of that to do the crime, and by the time the candidate gets to know it, it is late.

To deal with the Harassers, WIP said that they would rather block the harassers, report them, or strengthen privacy settings. Cyber bullying women in politics makes political careers unattractive. Women politicians provided advice to fellow women considering leaving politics or discouraged from engaging in public after falling victims to cyber harassment. Women politicians should find solutions to problems other than distancing themselves from the problem.

The advice was as follows:

Women politicians should focus on their goals and not be discouraged, but instead, use social media as a platform to build strong support networks that help them combat violence.

Women should advocate for strong online gender-sensitive laws and practices that boost their level of confidence.

Women politicians should be free to speak about cyber harassment.

Women should use social media as a platform to build strong support networks that will help them combat violence and advocate for strong online gender-sensitive laws and practices.

Women Politicians should join women organizations for seminars to be sensitized about politics and the challenges it presents.

Women politicians should stay focused and determined on their goals and always remember what motivated them to get where they are. Women politicians should stand by their word and stick to the truth and principles.

Women politicians should not give up but rather reposition themselves for constructive engagements via social media.

Women politicians should stand out and remain outstanding no matter the circumstances, ignore statements made to lower their esteem, believe in their abilities, remain focused and assertive until the set goal is achieved. Ignore the naysayers and go on your ambitions and aspirations

Women get united and fight against a common cause other than pushing for individual interests. Women politicians should consult their senior politicians on how to handle through mentorship program.

12.0 Recommendations by WIP on social media use

Political information by WIP can be passed on using social media. These platforms facilitate real time transmission of information and transfer of political opinions.

Social media can improve accessibility as it allows electorates to reach out to political leaders through different channels.

Social media can facilitate effective networking among the WIP and the creation of different and smaller political groups. Currently NOWIP has sustained groups via WhatsApp by the following categories. Member of Parliament group with 70 members, Councilor who lost and won the election with 496 members, and Personal Assistants of MPs 52 members.

Social media can provide platforms for discussion of pertinent issues between electorates and WIP especially current affairs including those that are tabled by traditional media. One has a chance to watch back a recorded content in case they missed it.

Social media can provide avenues for more participatory, inclusive, and deliberative processes of decision-making.

WIP daily can share information about personal progress for free consultation from peers and sharing open-source content for growth in their political careers.

Promote equitable access to the media for the WIP and media should use gender -friendly languages. This will help to reduce the rate of cyber harassment. WIP should seek more media support to ensure balance in gender reporting.

More training for WIP on social media usage especially for trending platforms like twitter and audience engagements. The training should focus on orienting WIP of their benefits.

For busy WIP like members of parliaments, they are encouraged to hire social media administrators to help in content development and production.

NOWIP should develop its own WIP social application, for use rather than the known apps.

Information posted on social media should be regulated. Leaders should be encouraged to give accurate information not propaganda. The Parliament OF Uganda should strengthen the cyber harassment bill. Also, UCC should regulate the use of social media but holding accountable people who use it negatively i.e., harassing people, and posting information that's not useful for public consumption. WIP should at least use social media every day because it's a digital world now. However, WIP needs to be prepared on how to positively respond to negative criticisms.

CONCLUSION

The study was designed to assess critical factors that influenced WIP knowledge of social media use. Using social media has a positive relation with political interactions, knowledge transfer, through sharing and content management on the online platforms. The more WIP use social media and discuss political issues, the higher their level of knowledge. Therefore, social media as an outlet of political information for enhancing political knowledge was an outstanding factor.

The results contributed to understanding the indirect effects of using social media by WIP. This influence was mediated by interpersonal communication on social media networks such as using tweet chats.

Social media can help strengthen WIP's political knowledge participation if they are empowered to use the tools; furthermore, they can integrate social media as part of daily communication avenue in case they are in service.

Communication involving WIP about the benefits of using social media as a means of discussion should be highly encouraged to foster growth.

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