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**THE CONTRIBUTION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN
PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN YAMBIO, WESTERN EQUATORIA-
SOUTH SUDAN**

A dissertation presented to

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Making a Difference

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Master's Dissertation

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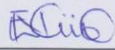
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to GOD Almighty for his continuous support and guidance through all my struggles; my late father, whose effort towards my studies cannot be left unnoticed, especially his support in ensuring I attained the basic foundation of education, and dedication to ensure I acquired values and principles to stand firm during the challenging moments in life. I also dedicate this work to my wife, Julie John Sabastian, for her continued encouragement, which has been instrumental in ensuring I complete this academic journey. To my children, Prosper, Mila and Bernice, whose existence has pushed me to always be the best version of myself. Thank you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CDO	Community Development Organisations
CSN	Civil Society Networks
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
FBO	Faith Based Organisations
GOSS	Government of South Sudan
IDPs	Internally Displaced persons
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LNGOs	Local Non-Governmental Organisation
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in Sout Sudan
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

Existing evidence shows that women's representation in governance and politics in South Sudan remains limited despite constitutional and international commitments. Nevertheless, little empirical research has examined how Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) contribute to women's participation at the local level, particularly in Yambio, Western Equatoria State. This study, therefore, examined the contribution of NGOs in promoting women's participation in Yambio, guided by feminist theory and social dominance theory, which together explain how structural inequalities and cultural hierarchies restrict women's access to political spaces. Using a case study design and a mixed-methods approach, the research collected and analysed data from 174 women in governance and political roles through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that gender equality programs, such as promoting quotas and replacement mechanisms for women candidates, are central among NGO contributions. Key impediments to women's participation include a lack of formal education, limited political information, and male-dominated party structures that devalue women's voices. Making laws that support work–family balance, prohibiting workplace discrimination, and eliminating violence against women emerged as the most viable strategies to address these barriers. The study concludes that NGOs contribute significantly to advancing women's political participation, though limitations remain in funding and institutional advocacy. It recommends strengthening grassroots advocacy, enhancing women's civic and political training, and promoting gender-responsive policies at institutional levels to ensure sustained progress.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Non-Governmental Organisations continue to be at the forefront of promoting gender-related programmes and encouraging the government to participate in their implementation. Over the past two decades, NGOs have actively engaged in advocacy, education, and training to raise awareness and enhance the capacity of women and key stakeholders in women's programmes, while also monitoring their implementation. NGOs in South Sudan recognise that the lack of women's participation has resulted in reduced involvement of women in decision-making, denial of opportunities, and restrictions on property ownership. Since South Sudan gained independence, women have had limited opportunities to partake in decision-making within many communities. However, the R-ARCSS has advanced women's voice and representation, yet according to Boswell and Waal (2019), there has been minimal progress towards fulfilling this constitutional commitment. Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, norms, traditions, political insecurity, underdeveloped infrastructure, and ongoing violence have hindered this progress in South Sudan. This situation calls for sustained and focused advocacy, training programmes, and active NGO involvement in a comprehensive, women-centred approach within communities. This study, therefore, examines the role of NGOs in promoting women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria - South Sudan. This chapter will outline the background, problem statement, overall and specific objectives of the study, research questions, scope, significance, justification, conceptual framework, and key terms. It also addresses the local knowledge gap concerning NGOs' contribution to women's political participation in Yambio.

1.2 Background of the Study

Conceptually, the world of nongovernmental organisations (hereafter NGOs) contains a bewildering variety of labels. While the term "NGO" is widely used, many other overlapping terms are also used such as "non-profit," "voluntary," and "civil society" organisations. In many cases, the use of different terms does not reflect descriptive or analytical rigor but is instead a consequence of the different cultures and histories in which thinking about NGOs has

emerged (Lewis, 2010). NGOs refer to civil society organisations, non-profit organisations, private voluntary organisations, and groups of watchdogs that pursue the public interest, and promote development and policy organisation (Capable Partners Program, 2011). Rather than promoting their interests or making profits (non-profit), NGOs monitor government performance, and the definition includes Faith-Based Organisations (FBO), Community Development Organisations (CDOs), and Civil Society Networks (CSN).

NGOs are private organisations that strive to reduce suffering, promote social welfare, eliminate poverty, and promote sustainable and community development (World Bank, 2016). NGOs can be categorized according to their purpose of relieving suffering and promoting development. The activities related to suffering directly offer small-scale change while those that relate to development indirectly offer large-scale change by influencing governments (Willets, 2018). Women's participation is envisaged in this study as the outcome to which NGOs' contributions (e.g., representation measures, rights training, and development support) are directed in Yambio. In Egypt, OECD (2018) found that domestic laws are applied unequally among men and women. Women are disregarded in terms of inheritance, consent to marry, and maternity leaves. These discriminatory laws affect women's political experiences.

Participation can include voting, working on election campaigns, engagement in the community, contact with political leaders, and attendance at demonstrations. Kelly (2019) uses whether women 'got together with others to raise an issue' as a measure of inter-election participation broad enough to encompass different political cultures and situations. The strong political participation of women is critical for democratic governance. However, girls and women throughout the world continue to be marginalized from the political sphere due to restrictive laws and institutional barriers; discriminatory cultural practices; and disproportionately low access to quality education, healthcare, and resources (Dilanzo, 2019). However, reversing discriminatory policies and practices is possible and has been done.

Gender inclusion is an important element of any country's social, economic, and political development. Gender exclusion and other institutionalized inequities and inequality in politics can lead to serious socioeconomic and political difficulties with deep social cleavages that make them prone to conflict and violence (Oyewole, Atela, & Agbalajobi, 2021). Gender relations

characterized by gender exclusion thus become more than mere analytical categories; they can be real sources of conflict, instability, and discontent. Mlambo & Kapingura (2019) provide that the 30% average woman participation rate required by the Protocol on Gender and Development of 2008 is still only halfway to the target of 50% women representation.

Historically, the term NGO owes its origin from 1910 when over 132 international NGOs came together to liaise with the League of Nations to strengthen the social and economic issues of the organisation (Willetts, 2018). The concept became distinguished when United Nations used it to refer to all the private organisations that helped war victims arising from displacement, unemployment, and loss of parents (Binder-Aviles, 2012). Today over 40,000 NGOs operate internationally, influencing human rights, protecting the environment, empowering young leaders, empowering women against violence, and reducing poverty (Binder-Avile, 2012).

The Barometer explores the long-term structural causes of women's exclusion from political decision-making and other immediate barriers. Across Africa patriarchy, social, cultural, and religious influences have made women's participation in decision-making impossible. For instance, a study by Amdany (2021) shows that in Africa, women's representation in the lower house of parliament stands at 25%, 24% at the parliamentary level, and 21% at the local government level. These statistics are far below 32% in America, and 30% in Europe but above 16% in the Middle East, 20% in Asia, and 21% in the Pacific.

In South Sudan, women's representation at the national level stands at 28% while at the local level, there is no data available. Adult literacy stands at 40% while among women, the literacy rate stands at 29%, which is below 35% among men. Women are least represented in justice and security (29%) and economic planning portfolios (6%) but overrepresented in the social sectors (education, health, and gender) by 50% (International Conference of women Leaders, 2020). The statistics reveal some level of gender disparity in positions of leadership and decision-making platforms.

Contextually, South Sudan has had a long history of humanitarian intervention, organized under the umbrella of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) throughout its decades-long civil war. In 2005, there was a general understanding that the international community would be vital partners in

peace. However, a large proportion of the international community, especially senior management, was not based in South Sudan majorly due to the conditions of the civil war with frequent bombings and unpredictable fighting (Phillips, 2011).

The political turmoil that marred the South Sudan between 1972 and 1983 prompted the international non-government organisations to function as state administrators besides their welfare functions. Around the same period, NGOs shaped the political landscape, captured the rights and obligations, roles that were meant for the state (Riehl, 2001). Among the NGOs that have operated in South Sudan is the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), one of the largest international NGOs currently operating in South Sudan. NCA provides a wide array of aid to vulnerable populations within South Sudan, particularly in the conflict-ridden. However, the increase in the regulation of NGOs set by the Government of South Sudan (GOSS), hindered the operations of NCA in fighting further conflict (Jake, 2014).

Curion (2010) showed that the two biggest concerns amongst the NGO community are security and funding. Primarily the former for INGOs, primarily the latter for the LNGOs. While these are valid concerns, they reflect a disappointing unwillingness to engage with policy issues at a critical time for South Sudan and illustrate that NGOs have not successfully made the transition to the development phase. In 2015, South Sudan experienced a continued deterioration in the security environment with opportunistic theft and attacks. Consequently, the level of crime affected NGOs including carjacking of NGO vehicles remained. This has the reduced number of operating hours to daytime only (South Sudan NGO Forum, 2016).

The environment in South Sudan has been exceptionally harsh for NGOs under the current regime and it is described to be one of the toughest environments for NGOs' operations. The South Sudanese regime has been using multiple strategies to control and suppress NGOs, yet the NGO's law remains the greatest obstacle in their way (Khalafallah, 2018). Nevertheless, aside from the regime's redundant firmness, NGOs and civil society in South Sudan have been suffering from complex internal deficiencies that prevent them from fully utilizing the limited space allowed by the authorities and potentially expanding it. These deficiencies are harder to address in such restraining conditions.

Women continue facing heightened challenges to funding, leading, and working for NGOs and accessing funding for their organisations. Deeply entrenched gender inequalities in South Sudan mean women are less likely to possess the social, economic, and political capital (including, for example, education, access to resources and connections) that represent a springboard to establishing a successful or large-scale NGO (Robinson & Tanner, 2016). South Sudan has not experienced peace in recent history, entrenching violent attitudes to conflict resolution as well as weapon ownership. Similarly, women have historically experienced very limited educational opportunities and early marriage. Gender has so far been low on the development agenda, and only in 2013 gender focal points were appointed in the UN cluster coordination system (Jeene & Sabu, 2013).

In July 2011, South Sudan became independent from Sudan after a long struggle. In December 2013, a vicious armed conflict broke out (again), which caused severe human suffering. South Sudan's economy has been devastated and food insecurity has worsened considerably. Since 2013, thousands of lives have been lost due to direct violence and many more through the breakdown of social services (e.g., health and education), agriculture, transport, and markets. Out of a population of more than 11.7 million people, approximately 1.6 million have become internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 2.2 million have become refugees in neighboring countries (Dijkzeul, 2021).

1.3 Problem Statement

The Revitalized Peace Agreement, which was signed in September 2018 to resolve the conflict in South Sudan, provided for 35 per cent representation of women at different governance levels, ranging from localities to the parliament. However, women remain inactive in shaping the political landscape of the country. A report on how women in Yambio, Western Equatoria could advance their representation at all levels of governance by Louro (2020) indicates several barriers. "...many challenges we face in making sure our voices are heard at all levels of governance include lack of knowledge. How can we, as female activists and representatives from the grassroots, know which positions we can apply for in keeping with the provisions of the Revitalized Peace Agreement..." (Jenny Michael, a participant at an UNMISS-facilitated workshop for women, in Yambio, Western Equatoria, 2023: P1).

In a related forum aimed at strengthening women's voices in decision-making within the political and social spectrums, United Nations Peacekeeping (2021) reports: "...as a woman, I am sure of one thing—if I don't speak up, my voice shall never be heard. How can anybody be included if they aren't heard?...we've discovered that, more often than not, we become victims of tokenism...we are given apparent leadership positions but aren't given the freedom to express ourselves, exercise our rights to the fullest or truly be change makers...the provision for 35 per cent representation of women in cabinet positions hasn't been implemented across Western Equatoria... political representation of women across the state is very low; in certain counties, local administration is actually still 100 percent male-centric..." (Laetitia Benito, a participant at a networking forum for durable peace held in Yambio, Western).

While the above discussions reveal the plight of women's participation and the role of nongovernmental organisations in helping women, there is still a critical knowledge gap. Existing studies and reports highlight women's low representation. Still, they do not provide empirical evidence on the actual contribution and impact of NGOs in enhancing women's participation at the local governance level in South Sudan. This gap limits both academic understanding and practical policy responses. The current study therefore, addresses this gap by generating empirical evidence on the contribution of NGOs to promoting women's political participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria.

Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine the contribution of Non-government Organisations in promoting women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1.4.1 To examine the contributions of non-government organisations to promote women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.

1.4.2 To determine the impediments to impede the progress of women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.

1.4.3 To evaluate the strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.

1.4 Research Questions

1.5.1 How do non-governmental organisations contribute to promoting women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan?

1.5.2 What are the impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan?

1.5.3 What are the strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan?

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Content Scope

The primary focus of this study is to examine the contribution of the non-governmental organisations in promoting women's participation in leadership roles in Yambio Town, Western Equatoria State. The content on NGOs focused on their contribution through programs, advocacy, and support mechanisms that directly promote women's political participation. The content on the impediments to women's participation is scoped to political constraints such as access to information, education, and resources, which emerged as the most significant barriers in the existing literature and local reports. On the other hand, the strategies examined in terms of social, economic, and political empowerment approaches identified in the study findings, particularly those emphasized through NGO programs and participant responses.

1.5.2 Geographical Scope

This study was conducted in Yambio town in Western Equatoria State. Yambio is the State Headquarters of Western Equatoria State, and according to UNDP (2022), women are underrepresented in both public and private sectors in Western Equatoria State. Yambio is one of the eight counties in the Western Equatorial State, whose population was approximated to be

197,603 by 2017. The county covers a land area of approximately 8,792 square kilometers, which is used mostly for crop cultivation and mild pastoral activity. According to USAID (2019), 20–45% of the population live outside the household (mostly fathers), and 94% of the households are Zande, with small populations of Balanda, Baka, Mundu, and other ethnic groups. In Yambio, paramount chiefs and traditional leaders play a larger role than political leaders.

1.5.3 Time Scope

This is the period when the Internal Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2021) documented women’s political participation in South Sudan to be 28% at the national level and no data available at the local level. The absence of data on women’s political participation at local the level is enough evidence of little women’s participation in Yambio. This is because it is the period in which several peace agreements included provisions for gender participation – The Agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) signed on 17 August 2015 proposed 25 percent representation of women, Revitalized agreement (R-ARCSS) signed on 12 September 2018, increased the quota to 35 percent and by November 2021, recognized progressive effort towards women’s rights including the right to participation.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The current study is significant at three levels that are policy level, operational level, and knowledge level.

At the policy level, the findings offer evidence for NGOs and for the government of South Sudan, through its relevant ministries, the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, to address barriers to women’s participation and to design, revise, and implement gender-responsive policies such as those in the Transitional Constitution and Bill of Rights (2011).

At the community level, this study contributes to filling an academic gap by generating context-specific evidence on the contribution of NGOs to women’s participation. The findings from Yambio provide unique, localized insights for future researchers and comparative studies.

1.7 Justification of the Study

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2021) documented women's political participation in South Sudan stands at 28% at the national level, with no data available at the local level. The Revitalized Peace Agreement, which in September 2018 which sought to resolve the conflict in South Sudan, provided for 35 per cent representation of women at different governance levels for, ranging from localities to the parliament. However, women remain inactive in shaping the political landscape of the country(Louro, 2020; United Nations Peacekeeping, 2021; USAID Sudan, 2019).

In practice, women often experience tokenism. Although some are appointed to apparent leadership positions, they are not given the freedom to express themselves, exercise their rights or act as genuine change-makers. This frustration is captured in the words of a participant at a Workshop in UNMISS, Yambio: "How can we, as female activists and representatives from the grassroots, know which positions we can apply for in keeping with the provisions of the Revitalized Peace Agreement?" (Jenny Michael, UNMISS workshop, Yambio, 2023). Similarly, another participant at the Yambio peace forum emphasized "How can anybody be included if they are not heard?"(Laetitia Benito, networking forum, Yambio, 2021).

These voices highlight the persistent barriers to women's participation in both political and social spheres. Most critically, the absence of data on women's political participation at the local level underscores a major knowledge gap. Addressing this gap is essential not only for academic inquiry but also for informing policy and advocacy. This study therefore, provides empirical evidence on the contribution of NGOs to promoting women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria, filling an urgent gap in both scholarship and practice.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The current study uses a theoretical framework to link NGO activities to women's participation in Yambio. A theoretical framework is a well-structured explanation of the details of a research activity based on theory(Adom, Kamil, & Agyem, 2018). A theoretical framework explains the concepts, the hypotheses, and the method of analysis that will guide the research. The

importance of the theoretical framework includes helping the researcher in defining the key concepts the research will address. These concepts direct research in terms of knowledge and conceptualization(Adom, Kamil, & Agyem, 2018). A theoretical framework helps the researcher to position the study in a particular school of thought or field of study. The choice of the theoretical framework to the conceptual framework draws from the fact that gender is a social construct that can be more explained by sociological experiences than concepts.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Non-governmental organisations

NGOs refer to civil society organisations, non-profit organisations, private voluntary organisations, and groups of watchdogs that pursue the public interest, and promote development and policy organisation(Capable Partners Program, 2011).

Women's participation

Women's full and effective political participation is a matter of human rights, inclusive growth, and sustainable development. Women's political empowerment is an essential requirement of democratic governance and can be measured in terms of both the legal rights afforded women to vote, express their opinion, and run for elected (or other) office, as well as the practical exercise of these legal rights.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher identified the objectives and the theoretical framework to guide the current study. In the current chapter, the researcher provides a detailed review of the works available on NGO contributions to women's participation. Most of the review is drawn from academic journal articles, reports from nongovernmental organisations, and international agencies. The review is presented in five structures. The first section is a review of feminist theory. The second section is a review of the NGO contributions to women's participation. The third section is a review of the impediments to women effective participation. The fourth section is a review of the available strategies to improve women's participation. The fifth section is a summary of the gaps in the literature.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The current study reviews the feminist theory and the social dominance theory.

2.2.1 Feminist theory

The current study is built on feminist theory to examine how structural inequalities, patriarchy, and cultural norms shape the exclusion of women from political participation. It positions gender as a social construct shaped by status, lived experiences, and social arrangements (Kim, 2017), and provides tools to question why women remain underrepresented despite constitutional guarantees such as South Sudan's 35% quota.

From the standpoint of feminist theory, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. It recognizes that people with less power are often more aware of how power is exerted through sexist, racist, or classist practices (Sharma, 2019). In South Sudan, this perspective helps explain why women at the grassroots understand exclusion most directly, yet lack the political capital to overcome it.

Applied to this study, feminist theory supports the view that empowering women politically is essential to dismantling disparities rooted in cultural and religious definitions of gender roles. It also highlights that state commitments alone are insufficient; NGOs therefore play a critical role in challenging patriarchal structures and providing women with the skills, knowledge, and spaces to participate in decision-making.

In summary, feminist theory frames women's limited political participation in South Sudan as the outcome of entrenched patriarchal and cultural structures. It provides a lens to understand why NGOs' contributions are necessary, not just complementary to government policies, but critical for equipping women with political capital, awareness, and advocacy platforms.

2.2.2 Social dominance theory

The current study also builds on the social dominance theory, originally developed by Sidanius and Pratto (1999) to explain how societies reproduce group-based hierarchies and inequalities. The theory argues that dominant groups maintain their privileged status through institutions, laws, and cultural ideologies that legitimize inequality (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). Later work, such as Cummins (2019), extends this perspective by linking social cognition and survival needs to perceptions of hierarchy and status over time.

According to SDT, discrimination and unequal outcomes are not accidental but legitimized by social institutions and cultural narratives, which allow dominant groups to retain political, economic, and social advantages. Pratto and Stewart (2012) emphasize that all stable societies reproduce hierarchies where privileged groups consistently enjoy better outcomes, while subordinate groups face systemic barriers. This dynamic is evident in South Sudan, where men dominate political institutions and women are relegated to symbolic or low-influence roles.

This study applies the social dominance theory to explain the variations in political power between men and women in South Sudan. Patriarchal social beliefs have normalized male dominance in both community and household settings, presenting it as "natural" when in fact it is socially constructed. As a result, men dominate political and decision-making positions, while women's participation remains constrained. Even where women gain access to political

organisations, they are often confined to low-influence roles, reinforcing the hierarchy that privileges men's voices and sidelines women's decisions.

The core tenet of the theory is that hierarchies are actively maintained by dominant groups, who use laws, cultural practices, and institutions to preserve their privileged access to resources and decision-making. Together with feminist theory, SDT provides a critical lens to understand how patriarchal hierarchies persist in South Sudan. It also shows how NGOs' contribution — through advocacy, training, and awareness- disrupts legitimising ideologies, challenges male-dominated institutions, and expands women's space for political participation.

2.3 Contribution of Non-governmental Organisations among Women

NGOs provide alternative actions and interventions to the status quo, and societal needs, especially those that are not adequately met by the government. Acting outside the government, NGOs mobilize communities to participate in social and development activities, which governments ignore (Lewis, 2010). Besides mobilizing community support, NGOs provide spaces that enable for social development. Mostly, NGOs are seen providing cost-effective services while others advocate for change in specific areas of need.

Most of the major anti-NGO legislative and policy measures violate human rights commitments undertaken as part of global and regional human rights treaties, in particular those relating to freedoms of association, assembly, and expression Musila (2019). These violations are established by applying a limitations test to determine whether any abridgements of rights are legitimate. As is more fully explained in an appendix, Musila (2029) finds that anti-NGO measures fail the limitations test because they discriminate in singling out certain NGOs and their leaders, because they are unnecessary in an open and democratic society, and because they lack proportionality in terms of the means deployed and ends sought.

Adu-Baffoe and Bonney (2021) conducted a study on the contribution of Non-Governmental Organisations activities in basic education delivery, spotlighting Action Aid Ghana in Tamale Metropolis. The results show that infrastructure development, provision of teaching and learning materials, capacity development of teachers, providing learning needs to students, and school community sensitisation are some of the contributions of Action Aid in supporting basic education

delivery in Tamale Metropolis. However, the support activities are inadequate to improve students' performances in Basic Education Certificate Examination. This education-focused evidence does not address women's political participation and therefore indicates a thematic gap for the current study.

2.3.1 Gender Equality Programs

The UN Resolution on Women and Political Participation (United Nations General Assembly 2011) urges all state actors to fight against all forms of discrimination based on sex, as these hinder women from full participation in the political sphere (IDEA, 2021). According to OECD (2016), several NGO programs lack specific budgets for gender equality, which hinders their significant influence on supporting women's rights organisations. Country offices often report weak outcomes where earmarked resources and corporate guidance for gender equality are absent.

2.3.2 Human rights

Research has shown that increasing the social and economic capabilities of women is essential in orienting them to political power (O'Neil et al., 2016). Higher education and political capital are key instruments for equipping women with political skills and resources. As such, NGOs can engage party leaders at both national and subnational to attract women. According to Holmes et al. (2019), NGOs and CSOs have helped women access public works programs. Policy outcomes reflect interactions between formal and informal institutions, a space in which NGOs often contribute by shaping agendas, coalitions, and implementation.

Women's participation in parliaments, local councils, or government helps women to enact laws that influence their rights, lives, and behaviour. Women's participation improves the representation of minority groups and the underrepresented. Put differently, the more women participate at decision-making levels, the more the interests of diverse communities are reflected in policy and service delivery (OECD, 2018; Gjermeni, 2021). While NGOs are known for improving women's political leadership and adding value to democratic institutions, some approaches may suffocate age-old power relations. For instance, the creation of quotas and

affirmative action means that governments must incur additional expenses to meet such goals(Frost, 2020).

Marcinkute (2011) argues that while NGOs are central in defending minority groups, the task is very complex, varying according to the country's levels of economic and social development, political regime, traditions, culture and as well as the government's attitude on human rights NGOs and even how state sovereignty is perceived. In some cases, the effectiveness of the NGOs depend on their size and power. This report, however, addresses human rights broadly and offers limited specificity on women's political empowerment, leaving a conceptual gap for this study.

A study on the contribution of NGOs in protecting human rights by Packadkar (2019) shows that Civil Society Organisations have occupied a wide area in governance, contributing to human rights dynamics. However, due to the various dimensions of human rights, NGOs have a diffuse impact across multiple fronts. The culture of enforcing rights at both the national and international levels appears to be lacking.

Krause (2020) examined how human rights organisations make decisions about how to allocate resources and how to manage their commitments to specific causes, specific people, and specific areas. The study finds that resources are not allocated directly to issues or causes but rather are distributed on the onehand among a range of practices, such as reports and campaigns, and ways of responding, which are considered legitimate within the structure human rights organisations. Macarchuk (2018) shows that the success of NGOs promoting human rights is when NGOs interests align with the State. The contrast here is that in many cases, States do not fight human rights abuses though they have policies in place. For the current study, this suggests that women-focused rights work may be under-prioritised where policy-practice gaps persist.

In Bangladesh, the contribution of HR NGOs is contested. Government constraints limit NGOs' effectiveness in promoting human rights, with elite interference, harassment of NGO officials, impunity, dependence on foreign donations, restrictive laws, and weak institutions (Uddin, 2023).

2.3.3 Development

Active and effective NGOs focusing on women's equality issues can be important in bringing about and supporting change. They can act as a catalyst for change at the legislative level and by promoting understanding and acceptance of the importance of women's equality they can change the perception of citizens. They can also provide a useful monitoring mechanism to ensure that existing policies are effective in their application and outcome. They can also play an important practical role in raising awareness and recruiting and training potential women candidates. (Council of Europe, 2019). A study on the contribution of NGOs in promoting sustainable development by Abiddin et al. (2022) shows that sustainable community development is not a one-time effort. While the NGO program engagement contributes to sustainable development, their interventions call for continuous engagement of stakeholders and monitoring of performance assessment. This report focuses on the general development strategies of NGOs without focusing on women and empowerment, indicating a thematic gap.

2.4 Challenges to Women's Participation

Citing the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2008), the dominant factors limiting women's participation in politics include household responsibilities, the demeaning role of women in society, low family support, low self-esteem, and low finances (World Federation of United Nations Association, 2017). Shreeves and Prpic (2019) identified political parties and media as the main barriers to effective women's participation. Political parties require women to pay nomination fees to vie for political offices at the party level, which are resources women do not have. While the media can increase the visibility of women candidates and politicians, they are often misrepresented in the media. (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019; Oguadimma, Nwakalor, & Ejinkeonye, 2021). Due to the context of South Sudan, where religion and cultural tendencies are deeply entrenched, the current study will therefore discuss patriarchy, household chores, and economic resources as key challenges to women's participation.

According to Christopherson et al. (2022), the laws in many countries often reflect and promote gender norms that limit women's economic participation. Removing these impediments through legal reform have been shown to be an effective method to catalyze greater participation of

women in the economy—along with the related macroeconomic benefits. Once legal barriers are removed and provisions for more equal treatment under the law are embedded, the law can also be employed as a powerful tool to incentivize women to pursue equal opportunities, change mindsets regarding the role of women, and hold institutions and individuals accountable for achieving results.

2.4.1 Patriarchy

Globally, labor force participation rates were 76.7% for men and 50.3% for women, according to the ILO Report (2014). The increase in women's participation in the labor force is attributed to several factors including increasing education, reduced fertility rate, and technological shifts. Notwithstanding, very few women hold top managerial positions (Avolio & Giovanna, 2017; Mohsin, 2016). Many African communities do not see women as potential contributors to social and economic development (Africa Barometer, 2021; Owusu et al., 2020; Council of Europe, 2019). The report further shows that even political parties remain male-dominated and below the expected level of transforming women's representation.

World over, girls and women suffer gender discrimination (IDEA, 2021). While women are known to rally behind political actors, their participation hardly translates into participation in decision-making. Specifically, the involvement of women in positions of power remains very small and with little influence in political parties. The same findings were established by EPRC (2021) showing that Uganda has not attained the level of gender equality, where women are fully represented in both local and central governments. Most of the positions at the decision-making levels are mostly occupied by men.

According to (UBOS, 2017) as cited by EPRC (2021), the high degree of underrepresentation in the different spheres of governance indicates a democratic deficit. A study by Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018) showed that while women share several seats in parliament, volatility and variability are still high. Most of the achievements made by women in any political term remain awash in successive political terms. In effect, women find it hard to win successive elections in Parliament.

Watkins and Smith (2014) show detriments for women working in workplaces where powerful positions are held largely by men. Women working in male-dominated organisations were less likely to advance to positions with authority. However, those women with high political skill were more likely to elude the challenges of working in male-dominated organisations and obtain positions of authority. The authors did not only demonstrate that political skill may be an important tool that assists women as they attempt to navigate the often complex maze that presumably leads to powerful positions, but also that a consideration of the context is critical. Born, et al. (2018) who show that despite the significant growth in female labor force participation and educational attainment over the past decades, few women reach leadership positions. Women randomly assigned to male majority teams are less willing to become team leaders than women assigned to female majority teams. Women in male majority teams are less confident and less influential. In Yambio, these patterns map onto expectations of electoral loss against male opponents.

According to Tripp (2002), most of the debates on women participation in politics in Uganda focus on culture, avoiding the material conditions that shape people's lives and underpinning cultural justifications for women's subordination. Scholars must see the global struggle between those supporting women's political, economic, and social advancement and those opposed to such change. As many as pretend to defend practices that are harmful to women in the name of preserving their religious, ethnic, or other cultural identity; they also seek to protect certain political and/or economic interests.

2.4.2 Household chores

Women are engulfed in the bulk of domestic work, which gives them little time to participate in the community and decision-making arena (Africa Barometer, 2021). Women are caretakers in their families, and their work is not recognized or paid. This cripples women's participation in political activities (Avolio & Giovanna, 2017; Kemal, 2021).

A study to determine the barriers to women's participation in economic activities in Ethiopia by Alemu et al. (2022) showed that women are considered housewives who should do not participate in economic activities. The findings were mostly influenced by husbands' and

women's education levels. A study conducted on women in electoral processes in Somalia by the Electoral Institute of Sustainable Democracy in Africa (2022) shows that women account for 50.2% of the population yet most of them dominate domestic activities. This view increases the underrepresentation of Somali women in politics. Consequently, the state of women representation in politics is very low.

Due to the many activities in the family, which require a woman's touch women find little time to participate in community group activities. Women do most of the cooking, and taking care of children and the elderly, yet they lack family support to freely take part to participate in programs that free women (ZOA and SUDIA , 2019; Gordon et al., 2021). The burden of striking a work–family balance bars women from establishing political careers. However, these studies rarely quantify the size of these effects on political participation, indicating an empirical gap.

2.4.3 Economic resources

Due to their limited access to education, women operate in limited resources. For instance, how many women can afford the fees needed for nomination forms? (Africa Barometer, 2021). Girls and women have limited economic resources, and even when the chance to have resources exist, there is an unequal distribution between men and women (IDEA, 2021). Women have fewer financial resources to inject into their political careers. According to Potapkina (2009), NGOs depend on the financial support of donors and fundraising drives by media companies.

A related study conducted in Uganda by Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe et al. (2018) highlighted funding as a key challenge to promoting women in the political arena. Due to funding gaps, many NGOs fail to allocate resources for women's human rights work, to the point of ignoring the broader areas of leadership. Women continue in household and care roles, particularly young women and children. Consequently, women continue in part-time employment, are paid low, and work in low-paid sectors (Maguire, 2018). Besides part-time employment, the unemployment rate among women remains high, and even when they are employed, they are always underemployed, which limits their economic participation (Avolio & Giovanna, 2017).

According to (Banks (2020), a deeply managerial-driven aid system has constrained NGO effectiveness to the extent of prioritizing service delivery over social justice. The lack of

systematic analysis of development NGO sectors within donor countries makes it impossible to measure their full contributions to development cooperation. However, some NGOs are moving away from managerial assistance to a transformative ideology for civil society funding.

Women have attained a great deal in the past few years, but there are still areas of discrimination which exist (Toal, 2019). Non-governmental organisations' contributions significantly contribute to women's empowerment, enabling them to stand on their own through various programs. It is believed that providing programs from NGOs to women has a multiplier effect for women's empowerment through decision-making.

Abiddin, et al. (2022) show that NGOs suffer from lack of resources and management inefficiency, like those provided by the government. Women who are part of the country's important assets need to be optimally developed to enable them to contribute actively to community development. While the study emphasises community development, it pays limited attention to women's political participation, indicating a scope gap.

Mukasa (2022) studied the factors accounting for the low participation of women in economic activities in Uganda. The results indicate that most women are illiterate, and lack capital, besides men refusing them the right to work. Most of the loans women obtain are often misused by their husbands. Evidence on direct links to political decision-making remains thin, highlighting another gap.

2.5 Strategies to promoting women's participation

According to European Partnership for Democracy (2019), the supporting women into political practice can take the form of gender equality strategies, party rules and strategies, quota systems, women parliamentary caucuses, and women's wings. The UNFPA 2018–2021 strategy for promoting gender equality focuses on eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. The approach includes gender transformation programs, and policies that engage men and boys meaningfully (UNFPA, 2019). The current study discusses gender equality strategies, party rules and strategies, and training and capacity building. This is because women continue to be marginalized by the male-centric representation at all spectrums.

Secondly, 84% of the women in South Sudan are illiterate, which may suffer women's confidence to take part in elective political activities.

2.5.1 Gender equality strategies

The philosophy of gender equality is well stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the idea of which is to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women including barring them from taking part in decision-making (International IDEA, 2021). Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, embedded in many national constitutions entitles women to take part in all activities that improve the lives and welfare of women.

According to the fifth Development Goal, there is a need to increase the number of women who take part in political decision-making (Gender Links for Quality and Justice, 2021). However, many countries across the world have not registered much success in the important pillars of women empowerment, which include cultural empowerment, civic empowerment, decision-making empowerment, and policy empowerment (Pippa, 2020).

According to UNFPA (2019), struggles to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence, to which include gender-transformative programming, community mobilization and activism. According to the strategy, policies and protocols that engage men and boys as collaborators in the fight against discrimination are a long way to eliminating gender inequality in politics.

Kantola & Verloo (2018) explored the ways in which gender equality is used in gender and politics research. The authors found four strategies, namely escaping equality, fixing equality, deconstructing equality, and delegating equality to political theory. The study concludes that gender strategies do not merely require choices but productive dialogue between strategies. A group of catholic anti-gender movement in Italy sought to define pro-life and pro-family agendas anti-gender campaign (Lavizzari & Prearo, 2018). The movement opposed to the approval of the bill on civil unions for same-sex couples and the introduction of gender education programs in schools, has grown in popularity, becoming a source of participation and protest for politically committed Catholic and social conservative actors. While these studies are particular on the strategies for promoting gender equality, they lack a conceptualization of NGOs. This leaves a knowledge gap.

Ennaji (2016) analyzed the relation amongst gender, women's activism and political participation in Morocco. The author argues that women's activism can solve women's discrimination in politics. Women NGOs challenge the traditional thinking and oppressive practices of government.

Tildesley, et al. (2021) developed an analytical framework to study power struggles in gender equality policies. The authors offer a more accurate account of the possibilities of a feminist politics of implementation. The authors applied the framework to Spanish universities and identified both the forms and types of resistance that hinder gender reform efforts in higher education institutions and the counter-action strategies that seek to drive implementation forward and achieve institutional change. However, the approach to improving women's participation via university education has limits in South Sudan. Most of the women in South Sudan are less educated, and lack university education. This leaves a contextual gap. Besides, the study lacks a focus on NGOs, which leaves a knowledge gap.

McGregor, et al. (2016) used 'self-personalization' of campaign politics, marked by candidates to highlight the importance of social media in shaping personal lives over their policy positions. Drawing on large-scale computerized content analysis of social media posts, the author argues that male candidates may see more and female candidates see less strategic benefits in personalizing their competitiveness via social media. The authors seem to place social media as a strategy for improving feminine participation in politics. This study however, misses out on the role of NGOs, leaving a knowledge gap.

Li & Li (2017) show a group of young activists who changed the landscape of the Chinese feminist movement in 2012. These activists placed women's rights in the mainstream public discourse by drawing the media's attention to their "performance art". Using media strategies, the young feminists legitimated the movements, aroused public attention, imposed pressure from the outside, and finally gained policy responses from the government. Given the current study, there is no information on how media has helped in promoting gender equality in the politics of South Sudan.

Phillips (2015) investigated the intersection of how women's NGOs conceptualise and deliver action towards gender equality and why gender inequality is still a major global social problem. Given that 'empowerment' frames contemporary gender equality policy at all levels of governance (local, national and global), the study explored its impact on the progress of achieving gender equality from the women's NGO perspective. The results showed tensions between the predominantly individualised empowerment processes and the much broader structural and other feminist objectives of how the NGOs understood gender equality. The concept role of women in politics was ignored. This leaves a knowledge gap.

Cullen (2014) shows how European Women's Lobby (EWL) use EU funding to consolidate gender equality policy in European Union. The author shows that EU progress on gender equality has stalled, with most policy advanced through non-binding or soft law mechanisms. The organisation has adopted strategies aimed at compensating for declining resources including seeking out new resource streams and cohering closely to topics where EU funding opportunities remain. In the study in Yambio, the researcher argues that funding available to EU member countries towards gender equality is unavailable to countries like South Sudan. This leaves a contextual gap.

Nimu (2018) examined survival strategies, mechanisms and tactics, which gender rights activists in Romania and Poland use, in an environment of changing foreign aid. The authors show that regardless of financial aspects, activists struggle to keep organisations alive, while adopting similar strategies in different cultural and political contexts. This study lacked the concepts of women in politics. Besides, the paper does not explain the reduction in foreign aid and how it affects women in politics in Yambio, south Sudan.

In making a case for gender equality discourse in both theory and practice, (Mukhopadhyay, 2016) shows that most development institutions need constant reminders on the need for gender analysis in their work. Policymakers have to be lobbied to "include" the "g" word and even our own colleagues need convincing that integrating a gender analysis makes a qualitative difference. This seems to suggest that women efforts to include women in decision-making are still lacking even at policy and academic level.

While the foregoing studies consider interventions to eliminate gender inequality and or promote equality, Gupta (2021) shows that no need for any new interventions to empower women. Activists and researchers should focus on the existing strategies or policies and strengthen them either. However, the authors are particular on the importance of training and information to women, which can promote networking, SHG, and knowledge of policies and the law.

2.5.2 Party rules and strategies

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2014) highlights political party-related strategies that promote women's participation in political decision-making. The strategies stretch from within the party to the party's immediate environment, up to when the party is in office. The strategies are as follows: political parties can introduce rules that guarantee the representation of women in political party decision-making, which influences the number of women who vie for party positions. Political parties can introduce sections of women (women wings) within the party to exploit the expertise of women in influencing 'women issues' in party statutes and by-laws. Political parties can ensure women wings actively participate in decision-making at all levels including nominations, development programs, party electoral campaigns, and recruitment.

While an increase in the number of women joining politics is one step to empowering women politically, their effectiveness in contributing to decision-making is another story. According to United Nations (2005), more women in politics might increase the number of bills passed but may not increase political alliance. The same view is supported by Lagunas & Lister (2020) from the public administration perspective. The report argues that strengthening constitutional and legislative frameworks, institutional change, and promoting linkages on gender equality can empower women within public administration.

2.5.3 Training and capacity building strategies

According to European Institute for Gender Equality (2016) argue that unless more youngwomen are attracted to political life, the under-representation of women in elective office will continue. Mentoring, training courses, public campaigns and professional networking can play an important role in encouraging more women to stand for office and prepare them for a political

career. Governments in Africa took the initiative to include women in sustainable economic growth and socially cohesive society. Training girls and women is a key contribution to fighting poverty improving social cohesion and increasing political stability and human capacity (Common Wealth of Learning, 2021). A project conducted by (British Council, 2017) showed that skilling women helps them in contributing effectively to legislation, and policy formulation. European Center for Electoral Support (2019) shows that training men on violence against women in elections and women on leadership and conflict management were found to empower women in Ethiopia. A study by Yamin (2022) on the importance of women in promoting human security, peace, and fighting conflict emphasizes the importance of capacity building beyond other interventions. The author observes that building women's capacity produces women across a number of security sectors, positions women at the center of influencing decisions on security alongside men, and diverse the roles of women in organisations.

There are very NGOs in South Sudan whose operations aim at improving the well-being of the vulnerable categories of the population including women and girls, children, and older persons. These NGOs appear to address the gap in gender inequality. The available literature lacks evidence on the implementation of the 35 percent representation of women at different governance levels as provided for in the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement to the resolve conflict in South Sudan.

Gupta (2021) shows that women are creative enough to start their own venture, but they are not able to explore the available opportunities because of male dominance, lack of education and proper government support. Thus, NGOs play a major role in training and empowering women to attain immediate livelihood. In Tunisia, Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), an international NGO based in Tunis implements projects and programs in the Arab world, in cooperation with local NGOs. CAWTAR aims at eradicating discrimination against Arab women and to reduce inequalities through the promotion of research, education and training (Bennis, 2016). These strategies lack a contextual application to south Sudan. Besides, these reports do not link training to women's political participation, which leaves a knowledge gap.

According to Preethi & Kumar (2022), women empowerment can be attained through provision of adequate education facilities, political support, and effective legislation system and employment generation for women. While NGOs play vital roles in women's empowerment by providing basic education, vocational training, training for self-employment, and self-awareness programs, there is little evidence in south Sudan, given the increasing low levels of political information.

A report by Elsayed & Roushdy (2017) shows that NGOs provides business skillstraining and actual support in starting a business or gaining employment. It emphasizes soft and life skills acquisition, knowledge of legal rights and the importance of involving the women's gatekeepers (husbands and fathers) and community leaders. Women empowerment can be achieved through provision of adequate education facilities, political support, and effective legislation system and employment generation for women (Namurugai & Kumar, 2017). NGO'S and the self-help groups (SHG) play a very vital role towards women empowerment by providing basic education, vocational training, training for self-employment, legal aid, protection for women and self-awareness programs. While these reports emphasize training, they offer little training on politics and political information, which are necessary for motivating women into joining politics.

Ghenwa, et al. (2022) identified the diverse understandings of women's empowerment as portrayed in literature and the evidence of NGO projects in the field. The findings highlighted four common understandings of women's empowerment including granting women a voice, challenging existing power structures, the radical transformation of lives and livelihoods, and gender mainstreaming. Actually, NGOs are limited to granting women a voice and gender mainstreaming, offering little information to empowering women politically.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem. It is the science of studying how research is to be carried out. It refers to the procedures by which researchers conduct their work of describing, explaining, and predicting phenomena (Rajaseka, 2013). This chapter, therefore, presents the highlights of the research design, study population, study area, sampling procedures, sample size, data collection methods, quality control measures, data analysis and presentation, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research design

A research design refers to the plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. It serves as a blueprint for the realisation of research objectives and the pursuit of answers to the research questions posed by the researcher. (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The researcher used a case study design. By definition, a case study is a research design that involves collecting and presenting detailed information on a given unit or a small group of units, which includes the accounts of subjects themselves. (Creswell, 2008). The current study collected and analysed information on women in active politics.

The researcher used a mixed research approach involving the application of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to collect and analyse data on women in active politics (Creswell, 2008). The researcher used the quantitative approach to quantify the contribution of NGOs, the impediments of women in politics, and strategies to address these impediments. Similarly, the qualitative approach was used to collect and analyse the lived experiences of women who participate in politics in Yambio town.

3.3 Area of study

This study was conducted in Yambio town in Western Equatoria State. Yambio is the State Head Quarter Western Equatoria State, and according to UNDP (2022), women are underrepresented in both public and private sectors in Western Equatoria State. Yambio is one of the eight counties in the Western Equatorial State, whose population was approximated to be 197,603 by 2017. The county covers a land area of approximately 8,792 square kilometers, which is used mostly for crop cultivation and mild pastoral activity. According to USAID Sudan (2019), 20–45% of the population live outside the household (mostly fathers), and 94% of the households are Zande, with small populations of Balanda, Baka, Mundu, and other ethnic groups. In Yambio, paramount chiefs and traditional leaders play a larger role than political leaders.

3.4 Study population

The population of the study is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications or are selected because they are relevant to a researcher's research question (Cooper & Schindler, 2008; Creswell, 2008). The study population consisted of women politicians in Yambio town. While the actual population of women currently in politics is not certain, there is some evidence that the representation of women at all levels of governance in South Sudan stands at 35%, which is still below the target of 50% according to the Sustainable Development Goals. Due to the absence of actual data on women's participation in politics in Yambio town, the target population consisted of women who were active in politics at the time of the investigation. The unit of analysis was individual women politicians in Yambio town holding governance positions at both local and central government.

3.5 Sample size

A sample is a finite part or subset of participants drawn from the target population. In turn, the target population corresponds to the entire set of subjects whose characteristics are of interest to the research team (Etyang, 2018).

Table 1: Women's participation in local governance in Yambio town

SN	Governance levels	Governance units	Estimated women's participation	Population
1.	National Legislature	1	8	8
2.	Counties	1	8	8
3.	Payams	5	8	40
4.	Bomas	6	8	48
5.	City/town	1	8	8
6.	Block	5	8	40
7.	Quarter	6	8	48
	Total	25		200

Source: Field data, 2023

This study sought to select 40 women from active women at payams and bomas at the rural council, while 40 women were selected from blocks and quarters at the urban council. In addition, 30 women hold governance positions at the party level. Finally, 20 women were selected from women politicians who are not holding any governance position. Ten women were selected from women politicians at the national level. Since there is no data on the number of women politicians due to persistent conflict in Yambio town, the sample sizes was guided by willingness to participate and saturation, which coincide with (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

3.6 Sampling techniques

Sampling can be defined as the process through which individuals or sampling units are selected from the sample frame (Martínez-Mesa et al 2014). Sampling helps to generate logical and presentable data for new ideas and making inferences of the entire group or community in a given short time (Odiya, Mbabazi 2012). Therefore, since the population shares similar characteristics, the study employed both simple random sampling and purposive sampling.

3.6.1 Simple random sampling

Simple Random Sampling refers to the means by which the elements of the target population (geographic units, households and persons) are selected for inclusion in the survey (Logo, 2005). Researchers use this sampling technique when they intend to get an unbiased selection of the population units and a fair representation of the population. This study used simple random sampling to select women politicians holding governance positions at the local government level and political parties. A simple random sampling technique was used because the results from such a sample are easy to generalise (Etyang, 2018).

Because no standard administrative list of women politicians existed in Yambio, respondents were identified in the field through recommendations from women leaders and community contacts. From this frame, simple random sampling was applied to reduce bias and give each woman an equal chance of selection, ensuring that the sample was fair, credible, and representative of women's participation in governance

3.6.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is the sampling technique where the researcher selects those units of the population who meet a certain parameter of interest as defined by the researcher. The essence of purposive sampling is to ensure relevant characteristics to the deep understanding of the study problem are investigated (Creswell, 2008). Purposive sampling helped the researcher to identify more features associated with women's participation. Secondly, the purposively selected samples are likely to bring out features that influence women at the national level as opposed to the standard features at the local levels of governance. The researcher used purposive sampling to select women politicians holding governance positions at the national level, and NGO staff

3.7 Data collection Methods and tools

According to Sekaran, (2003), data can be obtained from both primary and secondary data. Data collection refers to the systematic process of collecting research data on a given phenomenon. The researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data collection for the study. In using primary sources, the researcher used interviews and questionnaires. Secondary data collection

was collected from records of the existing women's participation in South Sudan. This helped the researcher to access relevant information that may be missing in the original primary data (Creswell, 2008). Both primary and secondary data collection methods were employed. Whereas primary data collection methods included questionnaires and interviews, secondary data were collected through document review as described below.

3.7.1 Interview Method

An interview is a method of data collection that involves verbal interactions between interviewees and interviewers where the interviewer asks questions related to the study objectives and the interviewee provides suitable responses based on their knowledge and experience (Etyang, 2018). This method was used to collect data from women politicians in governance positions at the national level. This method was suitable for collecting data on personal accounts, personal experiences, and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, it provided them with ample opportunity to share their personal experiences regarding the tenets of decentralisation and health personnel performance. Women's participation is a complex social phenomenon that varies according to motivations, decisions, and outcomes. Therefore, interviews helped the researcher explore the processes and issues surrounding women's participation.

The researcher prepared an interview guide to capture data from key interview informants. An interview guide is a data collection tool with questions prepared by the researcher for verbal interactions with interviewees about the study objectives for knowledge and experience-based responses (Etyang, 2018). This tool was applied during the collection of qualitative data from women politicians in positions of governance at national level. This tool was applied to this category of the population because it aids in the effective collection of knowledge, experience, opinions, ideas and attitudes of the above individuals about the situation of women's participation. Moreover, it provided them with the opportunity to share their personal experiences on their political journeys in a private manner. Given the above, the interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that call for detailed explanation and probing. The researcher arranged appointments with the interviewees, most of whom are likely to be found in their places of abode or work.

3.7.2 Questionnaire Method

According to Etyang (2018), the questionnaire method is a data collection method mainly aimed towards collecting qualitative data, where the researcher designs a set of questions related to the study objectives for the purpose of collecting the required data. In this study, the researcher applied this method to collect data from women politicians in positions of governance at the local level and the political party level. While applying this method, the researcher guided respondents on how to fill out the questionnaires by reading or paraphrasing questions to help them answer with some degree of understanding. However, the researcher ensured respondents were not compromised in the process of answering the questions to ensure quality responses. This method was chosen for its ability to provide sufficient data on the study concepts.

The researcher designed a semi-structured questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions on the NGO contributions, impediments to women's participation, and the strategies to address impediments to women's participation in Yambio town. The researcher designed and produced a standardised semi-structured questionnaire to be self-administered among women politicians at local and political party levels. The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section A consisted of items that sought to understand participants' profiles. The items covered age, gender, level of education, marital status, and the number of years in political activities.

Section B consisted of items that sought to understand the activities of NGOs in Yambio town. Participants indicated how they judge the contribution of NGO towards women's participation. Emphasis was given to gender equality programs, human rights, and development programs.

Section C consisted of items that sought to understand the impediments to women's participation in Yambio town. This study focused on the patriarchal system, household chores, and economic resources.

Section D consisted of items that sought to understand the strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation in Yambio town. This study focused on gender equality programs, party rule and procedure strategies, and training and capacity-building strategies.

The researcher constructed items measured on a dichotomous scale (YES/No), which was integrated with open-ended questions.

3.8 Quality control methods

This focuses on validity and reliability. Validity refers to the truthfulness of findings or the extent to which the instrument is relevant in measuring what it is supposed to be measured Sekeran (2009) while reliability measures the consistency of research instruments to come out with the same result each time it is used under the same condition.

3.8.1 Validity

Saunders, et al (2003) define validity as the extent to which data collection tools accurately measure what they were intended to measure. According to Etyang (2018), validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument correctly measures what the researcher wants to measure. Therefore, he argues that validity is about credibility, trustworthiness, accuracy or correctness of the research instrument. In this study, the researcher ensured validity through expert judgment of the extent to which the instrument covers the entire content of women's participation. Particularly, the supervisor (Academic Research Supervisor) judged the items against the contribution of NGO to women's participation, impediments to women's participation, and the strategies to address these impediments. The researcher, with the guidance of the supervisors, constructed a content validity index for the quantitative items using the formula:

$$\text{Content Validity Index} = \frac{\text{Number of relevant items in the questionnaire}}{\text{total number of items in the questionnaire}} = \frac{48}{55} = .872$$

The index was above 0.70 and therefore judged as acceptable validity index, according to Amin (1995).

3.8.2 Reliability

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) define reliability as a test of how consistently a measuring instrument measures whatever concept it is measuring. Etyang (2018) defines reliability as the consistency of a research instrument. Therefore, the reliability of a research instrument refers to the ability of

a research instrument to yield the same results once used repeatedly over a given period of time while measuring the same variables.

Prior to data collection, the research tools were presented to the research supervisor (experts) for testing and approval to ensure that their reliability takes precedence over all other considerations in data collection in the field. The researcher then conducted a mini-survey in the area of study with 20 randomly selected sample respondents who helped to test the reliability of the research instruments, and the results were presented to the academic supervisor for a go-ahead.

3.9 Data analysis

Processing of qualitative data involved reading, organisation, identification of themes, re-coding and exploration of relationships between categories (Moore & McCabe, 2005; Polit, & Hungler, 1995).

3.9.1 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis took the form of counts and percentages to analyse NGO activities and how they associate with women's empowerment. The researcher used percentages and counts to understand the range of activities provided by NGOs towards women's participation. The results, derived from dichotomous questions, were presented in both graphs and tables, along with the challenges and strategies for improving women's participation. Specifically, the researcher reported the counts that agree with the claims raised and those that disagree. SPSS, a software for data analysis, supported the quantitative analysis.

3.9.2 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative analysis involved summarising data gathered during the interviews and documents. Similar and related views were summarised into categories and themes to support quantitative analysis. Sample quotations supported both the quantitative results and the subsequent discussion. In the first place, qualitative data from the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire were categorised, patterned, and themes were generated from them. Secondly, qualitative data from the interviews with key informants were categorised, patterned, and themes were generated

from them to explain women's participation from the viewpoint of NGO activities in Yambio town.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

a) Authority to carry out research.

The researcher sought permission from Uganda Martyrs University to proceed to the field for data collection. In the field, the researcher obtained permission from the authority leaders of Yambio town to interact with men and women, from whom consent to participate in the study was obtained.

b) Confidentiality

The researcher guaranteed the confidentiality of respondents' views and used them for academic purposes only. In this respect, respondents were not required to identify themselves to keep their views secret from the researcher and any other persons who would come into contact with this kind of information.

c) Patent rights

To observe the rights of all relevant authorities, both officially published and unpublished materials were used and acknowledged. A complete reference list was given to provide a detailed explanation of all citations used in this study. Wherever the author and publisher's details are not known, the current study remained anonymous.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study on the NGO contributions to women's participation in Yambio town. The findings are presented on charts and tables. The charts present findings on respondents' characteristics, while the tables present findings on specific objectives. This chapter presents results in three parts aligned to the study objectives: NGOs' contributions to women's participation, the key impediments to participation, and strategies for addressing those impediments.

4.2 Response Bio data

The study targeted a population of 200 respondents, consisting of women in political and governance positions at both rural and urban councils.

A questionnaire was administered to women at Village, Bomas, Payams, and County levels totaling 176 study units (table 1). Of the 176 women who were targeted, 151 were accessible. This was a response rate of 86% (151 out of 176). This response rate is acceptable and adequate for conclusion, according to Amin (1996). The remaining 24 women at state legislation, counties, and cities were subjected to interviews, of which 15 were accessible. Generally, the response rate was adequate for conclusion and interpretation of results.

4.3 Respondents' Profile

The study examined the governance units, age, marital status, and highest education levels. The study focused on women in governance positions and political activities. Therefore, the outcomes on gender are redundant and not analyzed.

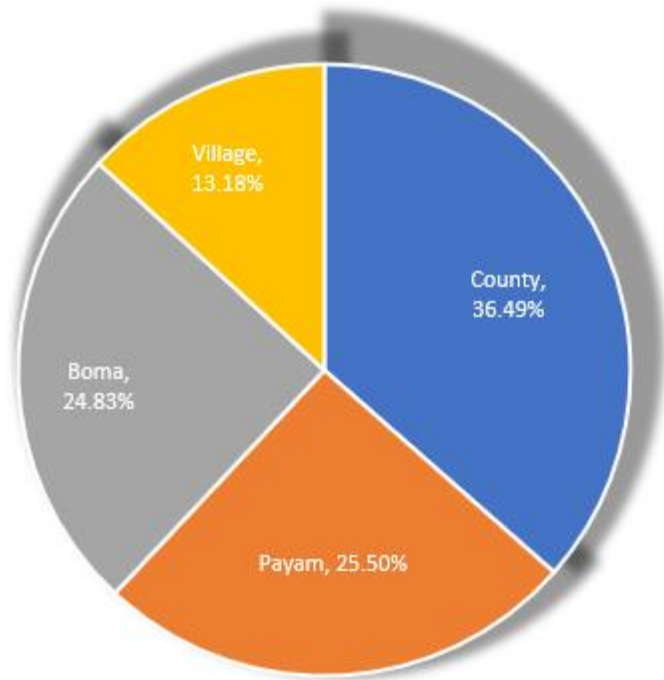


Figure 1: Unit of Governance

Source: Field data, 2023

The findings on the governance units indicate that 36.5% constituted women representing Counties, 25.5% were women representatives from Payams, 24.8% were women representatives from Bomas, and 13.2% were women representatives from the village level. While the findings do not indicate significant variations in participation according to the governance units, they indicate that most of the women who took part in the study were representatives from Counties. The state is second administrative level at the state level. Before the independence of South Sudan, the counties were known as districts. Most of the women represented counties possibly because Yambio county is the State Head Quarter to the other nine counties in Western Equatoria. The findings indicate that few women representatives at the village level took part in the study. This can be associated with the fact that most women in the villages lack civic awareness and are restricted by the patriarchal tendencies in their environment.

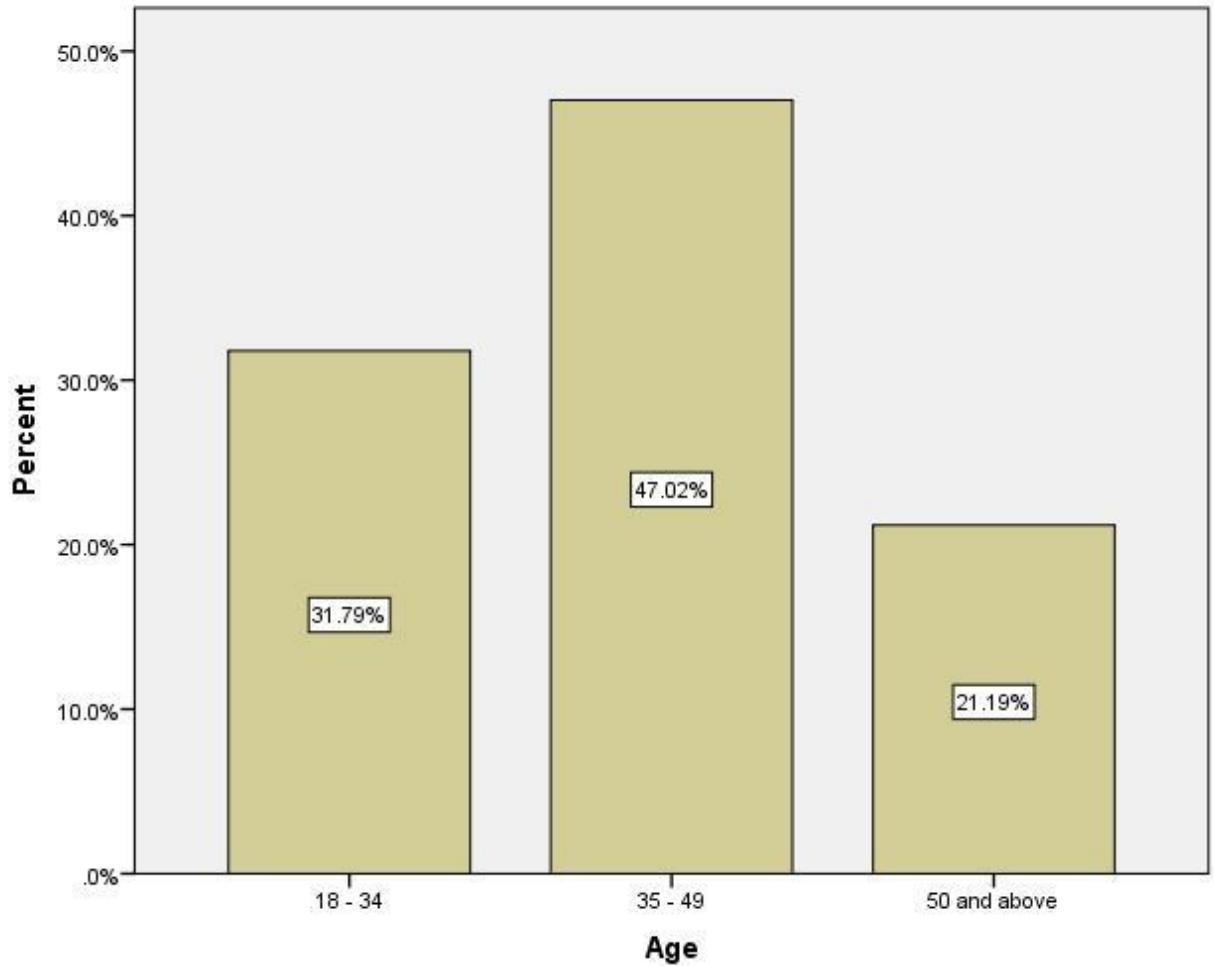


Figure 2: Age of respondents

Source: Field data, 2023

The findings on the age of respondents indicate that 47.0% fell in the age bracket of 35 – 49 years, 31.8% fell in the age bracket of 18 – 34 years and only 21.2% fell in the age bracket of 50 years and above. Most of the women who participated in the study were adults compared to the youths and older persons. The tendency of replacing fallen heroes or rewarding their families with positions has led to women taking the place of their fallen husbands thus dominance of adult women in governance and political activities in Yambio. Additionally, there were few youthful women who are participating in governance and political activities in Yambio possibly because youth including young women are systematically excluded due to their age and assumptions that they are inexperienced in governance and political activities.

Table 2: Marital status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Single	19	12.6	12.6	12.6
Married	86	57.0	57.0	69.5
Others	46	30.5	30.5	100.0
Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2023

The findings on marital status indicate that 57% were married, 30.5% indicated the ‘others’ option while 12.6% were single. The statistics show that most of the women who participated in the study were married. This can be attributed to more than any other aspect of life in South Sudan, it is marriage that shapes a woman’s experiences, her status and her responsibilities. The least participation of the single women in the political activities in Yambio can be attributed to the believe that marriage is the only institution that shapes a woman’s experiences hence able to earn community trust. The women in political activities who indicated the ‘others’ option mostly characterized mostly the ‘separated’ than the ‘widowed’. The visible number of the separated than the widowed suggests that some women with passion to participate in governance and political activities end up separating with their spouses who do not support the cause.

“My cousin wanted to serve in the State Assembly through her party, but her husband was against it and threatened for divorce.”

Generally, the results imply that married women have the potential to shape the governance and political activities in Yambio.

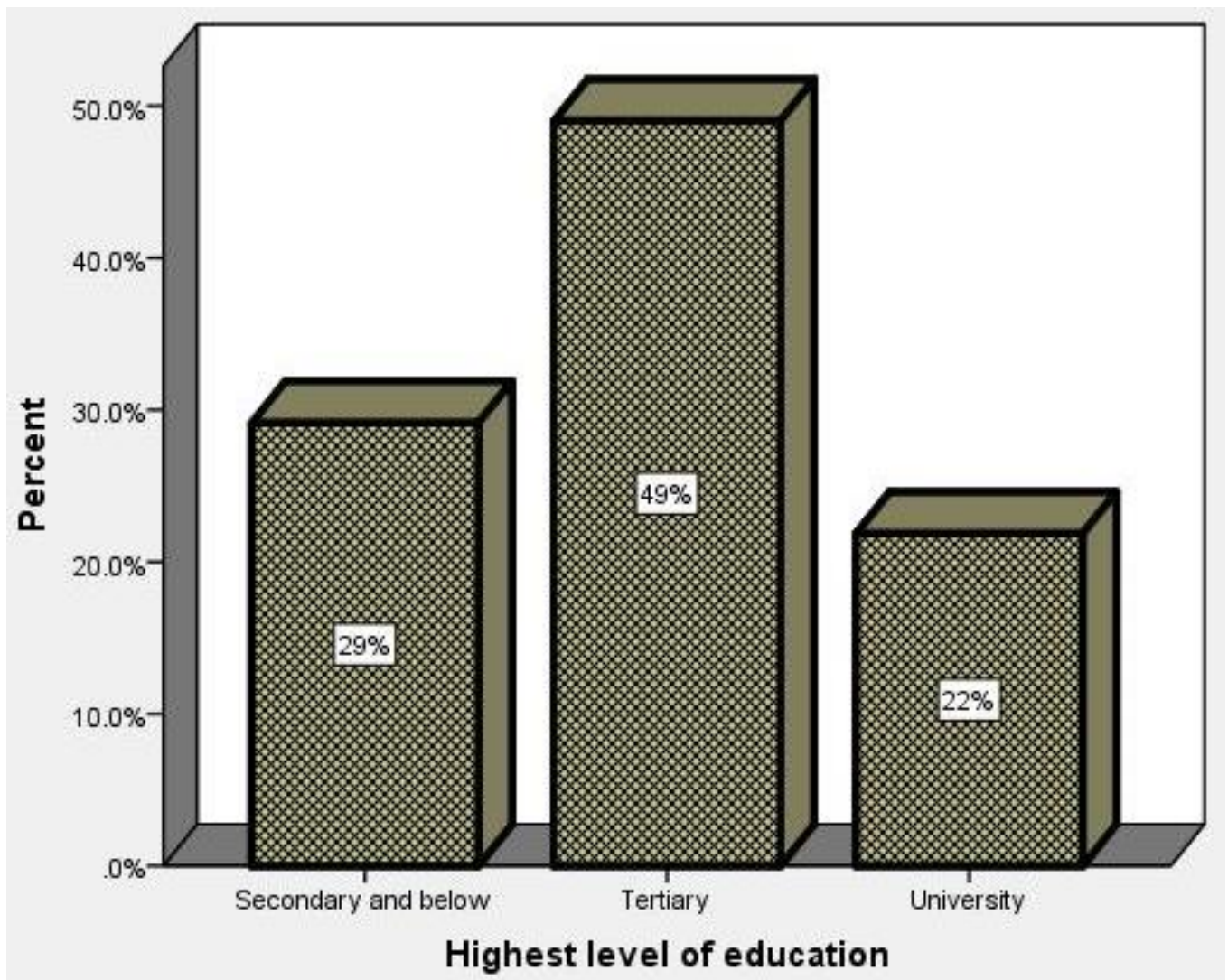


Figure 3: Age of respondents

Source: Field data, 2023

The findings on the variations in the education of the participants indicate that 49% had tertiary education, 29% had secondary and below education, and 22% had university education. The results show that the study was dominated by women with tertiary education. This is possibly because most women furthered their education during their adult ages mostly after securing governance and political roles. The few women with university education in Yambio are women who have upgraded after the introduction of Mikese University and Catholic University in Yambio allowing women to acquire a university education not far from their families. While most of the women in governance and political activities in Yambio are educated, there are 29%

who are less educated. This suggests that most adult women dropped out of school before or after completing secondary school perhaps because of lack of available girl child education during their youthful times and the absence of higher education at the grassroots. Generally, the results imply that active women's participation in governance and political activities requires educated women.

Table 3: Crosstabulation of the highest level of education, age and governance units.

Governance unit			Age			Total
			18 - 34	35 - 49	50 and above	
Boma	Highest level of education	Secondary and below	21.4%	50.0%	28.6%	100.0%
		Tertiary	21.4%	64.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		University	11.1%	44.4%	44.4%	100.0%
	Total	18.9%	54.1%	27.0%	100.0%	
Village	Highest level of education	Secondary and below	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%	100.0%
		Tertiary	55.6%	27.8%	16.7%	100.0%
		University	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%
	Total	35.9%	35.9%	28.2%	100.0%	
Payam	Highest level of education	Secondary and below	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	100.0%
		Tertiary	36.4%	40.9%	22.7%	100.0%
		University	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%

	Total		31.4%	42.9%	25.7%	100.0%
County	Highest level of education	Secondary and below	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	100.0%
		Tertiary	45.0%	50.0%	5.0%	100.0%
		University	12.5%	87.5%		100.0%
	Total		40.0%	55.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Total	Highest level of education	Secondary and below	29.5%	47.7%	22.7%	100.0%
		Tertiary	40.5%	44.6%	14.9%	100.0%
		University	15.2%	51.5%	33.3%	100.0%
	Total		31.8%	47.0%	21.2%	100.0%

Source: Field data, 2023

Among the participants who represent at Boma level, the majority were adults (54.1%) most of whom were educated up to tertiary level (64.3%). At the village level, there was no significant difference in participation among the youths and adults (35.9%). However, there were more educated youths with tertiary education (55.6%) compared to the adults most of whom had secondary and below (55.6%). Comparing education levels among the representatives at County and Payam levels, it is evident that more of the County than Payam representatives were educated. The variation in the education of the adults at the County and Payam levels can be attributed to available learning institutions at the county level compared to the other administrative units. In addition, women with basic level of education are most likely married to men with higher education working at the county and state public services.

At the village level, most of the participants were adults (42.9%), the majority of whom were highly educated (50.0%). At the Boma level, most of the participants were adults, the majority of whom were highly educated (87.5%). The presence of highly educated adults representing at

Block and Quarter levels of governance can be attributed to adults being more likely to stay back in the lower administrative units compared to youth with the same level of education. This is because youth are more likely to be part of rural-urban migration compared to the other groups.

4.4 The contributions of the non-governmental organisations among women in Yambio

Western Equatoria State, South Sudan

This section examines NGOs' contributions across three domains—gender equality, human rights, and development and identifies which contributions most directly support women's political participation in Yambio. The researcher used percentages to represent participants' responses. The researcher interpreted 'YES' as a confirmation of a given activity in the area, and 'NO' as a denial of a given activity in the area. Two contributions with the most evident linkage to political participation are consistently reported: (i) support for party-list measures ensuring at least one woman in every five candidates and (ii) replacement of a withdrawing female candidate by another woman. Table 4 summarizes the findings.

Table 4: NGOs' contributions

Variable list in descending order of YES	YES	NO	Total
Gender equality programs			
1. NGOs in this area ensure that at least one woman in every five candidates on a partylist	109 72.2%	42 27.8%	151 100.0%
2. NGOs in this area ensure that if a woman withdraws from a political race, she is replaced by a woman	98 64.9%	53 35.1%	151 100.0%
3. NGOs in this area ensure women benefit equally from government	66 43.7%	85 56.3%	151 100.0%
4. NGOs in this area ensure that women do not attend late night working sessions	65 43.0%	86 57.0%	151 100.0%

5. NGOs in this area fund women to stand in elective positions	47	31.1	104	68.9%	151	100.0
		%				%
Average	77	51%	74	49%	151	100%

Human rights programs

6. I am aware of NGOs that offer training on civil rights.	112	74.2	39	25.8%	151	100.0
		%				%
7. I am aware of NGOs that prepare women to lead	95	62.9	56	37.1%	151	100.0
		%				%
8. I am aware of NGOs that expose violence against women	85	56.3	66	43.7%	151	100.0
		%				%
9. I am aware of NGOs that encourage women in decision-making	41	27.2	110	72.8%	151	100.0
		%				%
10. I am aware of NGOs that advocate for the rights of women	37	24.5	114	75.5%	151	100.0
		%				%
Average	74	49%	77	51%	151	100%

Development programs

11. The NGOs in this have helped women attain income security	102	67.5	49	32.5%	151	100.0
		%				%
12. The NGOs in this area have helped women rebuild their lives after war	97	64.2	54	35.8%	151	100.0
		%				%
13. The NGOs in this area have helped women prevent conflict	91	60.3	60	39.7%	151	100.0
		%				%

14. The NGOs in this area have helped women contribute to peace building	74	49.0	77	51.0%	151	100.0
		%				%
15. The NGOs in this area have helped women prevent natural disasters	71	47.0	80	53.0%	151	100.0
		%				%
16. The NGOs in this area have helped women obtain decent work	67	44.4	84	55.6%	151	100.0
		%				%
17. The NGOs in this area have helped women secure economic independence	29	19.2	122	80.8%	151	100.0
		%				%
Average	75.8	50%	75.1	50%	151	100%
	6		4			

Source: Field data, 2023

The study examined the gender equality programs provided by NGOs and found that 51% agreed with the claims the researcher raised while 49% were not. While the statistics do not show significant variations in the responses, they provide some evidence of NGO contributions in Yambio town. From the highest extreme, 72.2% of the participants agreed that in every five candidates on a party list, NGOs ensure that at least one is a woman. However, 27.8% of the participants do not see this as working in the area. Besides ensuring women candidates on the part list, if a woman withdraws from a political race, 64.9% of the participants agreed that NGOs ensure that she is replaced by a woman. However, 35.1% of the participants do not see the effectiveness of this measure. Taken together, these results indicate evidence of NGOs' contribution to women's political representation mechanisms, even as financial support for candidates appears limited. This is possibly because notable organisations like the United Mission in South Sudan including National and INGOs working closely with the government to support the implementation of the 35% women presentation agenda provided for by the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCISS).

From the lowest extreme, the findings indicate that only 31.1% of the participants agreed that NGOs fund programs towards and advocate for women's participation at the grassroots level. Despite this, this study finds little evidence that NGOs ensure women do not attend late-night working sessions (43.0%) or benefit equally from the government (43.7%). These statistics imply that though NGOs desire to see women in active politics, their financial support towards women's participation in politics is least observed. Similarly, while there is some evidence that NGOs promote women's participation in political activities, women are still tied up in late-night working sessions. The state of the political sphere in South Sudan and in Yambio makes it hard for anyone to measure the progress towards women's participations. This is because the positions at all levels are filled based on appointment by party leaders. While this expose how women are denied the opportunity during appointment, women do not have an opportunity to lobby for appointment since most political discussions are carried behind doors –

“Men do their politics at night when women are home, taking care of their families; when women do the same, they will be accused of cheating or not being a good woman” one respondent stated

The low financial support of NGOs towards women's participation in political activities Yambio was observed in one interview:

“...given the increasing financial shocks that marred the entire world during and post covid-19, most of the NGO funders are withdrawing. The little funding received can be directed to activities and programs that have a universalized effect. Activities such as training, sensitization, and campaigns attract funding compared to political participation...” (Key Informant 6)

Besides the general decline in funding NGO activities, the relationship between the government and the NGOs seems to deter international efforts towards improving the lives of the Sudan community. This view appeared in one interview:

“...I am sure you recall how some Red Cross staff were killed by rebels when they went to offer help to the victims of war. We as NGOs are not partisan and non-governmental. We come in to improve the well-being of humanity regardless of political orientation. It really saddens when an innocent staff is killed in his line

of duty. No funder can be proud of such an experience and would consider increasing the funding. We lost three of our staff when Machar during 2013 conflict...” (Key Informant 2)

While the attack on the staff of NGOs can be a solid explanation for the failure of NGOs to fund political activities, it depends on the overriding objectives of the NGOs. In most practices, NGOs are mission oriented and unable to fund all activities in their areas of operation. This view appeared in some interview:

“...we are not funding political activities. CARE South Sudan is focused on helping women become independent socially, economically, and financially. We fund children’s activities, youth activities, and women activities but not politics. Much of the finance goes to educating children, giving small start-up capital to women and mostly in groups...the position of politics is outside our vision. But there are some NGOs that fund that...” (Key Informant 9)

The interviews front different reasons for NGOs not funding political activities, and particularly women’s participation in politics. From these interviews, it emerges that NGOs operate under defined missions, most of which are outside political funding. Secondly, it emerges that the economic tensions across the globe have affected the amount of funding flowing to least developed countries.

The study examined the human rights programs provided by NGOs and found that 49% agreed with the claims the researcher raised while 51% were not. From the highest extreme, participants confirmed that NGOs provide training on civil rights (74.2%). Besides training the populace on civil rights, NGOs prepare women to lead (62.9%) and expose violence against women. These statistics imply that NGOs in Yambio sensitize women on their rights in civic activities, leadership, and freedom. Cases of these sensitizations include awareness raising on gender stereotypes, addressing structural barriers that affect women’s participation and growth, and building the knowledge of women to be resilient during some biological factors like menstruation, pregnancy and child-bearing. From the lowest extreme however, only 24.5% of the participants confirmed that NGOs advocate for the rights of women. Besides advocating for rights of women, only 27.2% encourage women in decision-making. The above statistics imply that NGO activities are still lacking in advocating for the rights of women. This is because most

conflict induced humanitarian condition in South Sudan, women are faced with increased care-related task such providing food, taking care of the children hence NGOs are faced with the major challenge of prioritizing equitable access to basic needs rather with less attention to promotion girl child education and women's participation.

The view that NGOs are lacking in advocating for the rights of women featured in some interview with one active woman politician:

"...you won't believe that some women will rally behind a man who is standing against women in a political race. We offer ourselves to uplift ourselves but also the women in general. But you will find a woman supporting a man just because their husbands are supporting fellow men. Our women cannot stand on their own when it comes to political issues. They still have little choice even in at family level..." (Key Informant 13)

Besides failure to make decisions on who to support, man or woman in a political race, most of our women still suffer in the hands of their husbands for ignorance of their rights women. This view came out in one interview:

"...Naume (not real name) was married to Hassan (not real name) for over 14 years, a period in which they bore five children. All this time, Naume recalls that they were sleeping on the mat on the floor as husband and wife. When Naume joined some women savings group, she mobilized her savings and bought a mattress. Barely, three months, Naume's husband marries a second wife. The husband forced Naume off her mattress and gave it to the new wife. Naume recalls this account with pain and tears! This is just an example, but many women do not know their rights..." (Key Informant 8).

A related experience regarding women lacking in decision-making featured in another interview:

"...Gorret (not real names) has lived with her husband for 21 years. In this period, they two have seven children. In every pregnancy, Gorret's uterus bulges to the point of coming out. Whenever such pains come, the husband carries her to her parents until giving birth. Gorret does not remember any single day her

husband ever stood with her during such painful pregnancies. But whenever Gorret has delivered, there comes the husband to take home. She finds when every little asset (goats, chicken, ducks, and food) is sold. She starts from nothing again...”

These interviews provide some evidence that women are still lacking in human rights and decision-making. The extent to which NGOs have failed in this is not clear. However, when women continue suffering this much in an area where NGOs appear to operate, it presents some gap in their success in fighting for the rights of women.

The study examined the development programs provided by NGOs and found that as many as 50% agreed with the claims the researcher raised. While the overall position of participants on the development programs provided by NGOs does not differ among the participants who agreed and those who disagreed, there are variations among the different development programs. From the highest extreme, for instance, 67.5% confirmed that NGOs have played a big role in helping women attain income security. Besides helping women attain income security, NGOs have helped women rebuild their lives after war (64.2%), and help women prevent conflict (60.3%). These statistics provide some evidence that NGOs have achieved in terms of empowering women economically. This achievement is evident in the joint support for recovery and Resilience in the Masia market, which has developed economic opportunities for women. This scenario can be attributed to the effort put in by partners including UNDP, Kingdom of Netherlands Director for International Cooperation, the government of Japan and The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the World to engage critical stakeholders to engage citizens as peace mediators and help them come up with a grassroots solution to political, social, and economic issues.

Overall, this study observes that while NGOs have made strides in women in the perspectives of gender equality, human rights, and development, there is more evidence of these strides in gender equality. NGO success in gender equality in Yambio town can be attributed to the effort to mainstream gender through participation, equitable access to humanitarian assistance and inclusive, gender-segregated consultation, awareness and advocacy for women’s rights, gender-based violence and girl child education. While this observation is evident among the women who took part in the study, it cannot be generalized to all women in Yambio.

4.5 The impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan

The study examined the challenges which women encounter in their attempt to participate in political activities. The researcher designed an instrument that required participants to identify as many challenges as they thought affect their participation in political activities. Findings identify two primary impediments to women's participation: limited formal/political education and access to information, and male-dominated party structures that devalue women's contributions. The researcher presented a **multiple response question** to participants and findings are presented in percents. The interpretation of the findings is based on the **percent of cases** instead of the percent of responses. The researcher used the percent of cases to bring out the number of participants who responded to a particular challenge in the questionnaire. Table 5 summarizes the findings.

Table 5: The impediments to women's participation

Variable list in descending order of percent of cases	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
1. Lack of formal or political education and limited access to information.	103	17.2%	68.2%
2. The male-dominated model of politics that tends to undermine the value of women's contributions and their participation.	93	15.5%	61.6%
3. Unfavorable electoral systems.	59	9.8%	39.1%
4. Lack of campaign funds.	53	8.8%	35.1%
5. Lack of media coverage and gender-based stereotypes and bias in the media.	44	7.3%	29.1%
6. Gender blind legal framework.	42	7.0%	27.8%

7. In countries where candidates are responsible for deploying their own party monitors during Election Day, lack of party monitors safeguarding the interests of women’s candidatures.	40	6.7%	26.5%
8. The dual burden and a disproportionate share of domestic work.	36	6.0%	23.8%
9. Lack of party support and exclusion from decision-making party structures.	31	5.2%	20.5%
10. Lack of political experience.	23	3.8%	15.2%
11. Traditional gender roles, gender-based stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and norms.	22	3.7%	14.6%
12. Lack of financial resources to be considered as meaningful members of political parties.	21	3.5%	13.9%
13. Violence from within and outside the party	19	3.2%	12.6%
14. The perception of politics as “dirty”.	14	2.3%	9.3%
	600	100.0%	397.4%

Source: Field data, 2023

The researcher recorded a total of 600 responses on all the 14 challenges presented to the participants. From the highest extreme, 68.2% of the participants pointed to lack of formal political education and limited information as the most dominant challenge affecting women’s participation. Besides the lack of formal political education, the male-dominated mode of politics tends to undermine the value of women (61.6%). These statistics imply that women find it a challenge to participate in politics for lack of political education that would have provided them with information. The lack of information affects women in a way that most women are not aware their rights to participate in governance and political activities. In addition, lack of education limits their opportunities to be appointed into governance and political positions.

The view that women have little political information and little formal education was raised in some interaction with one Key Informant:

“...the persistence of war in South Sudan for almost half a century has affected many social institutions including education. Few girls have had the chance to go to school, and I can tell you that the learned women you see here, most of them got the chance from Uganda. We have South Sudanese in Kayunga. They study from there. The ones in South Sudan marry at tender age, as low as 14. School here is really a problem...” (Key Informant 8)

In another interview, the aspect of education was supported but from the Islamic faith. Most of the Muslim communities provide some Islamic teaching and Sharia at the mosques:

“...it is not news to find a woman speaking Arabic and ably quoting the Quran and other books of the Islamic faith but without formal education. Such women know how to read and write in Arabic but cannot express their ideas in group meetings or assemblies...even when NGO programs to sensitize women come to the area, few women will attend. They normally ask if they will be paid for attending the training...you will never see women in a training if you do not promise them to train allowance...” (Key Informant 1)

The accounts above provide some evidence that education among women in Yambio is still lacking. However, in blocks and quarters, there are significant numbers of the educated women, some of whom are ready to participate in active politics:

“...I hold a bachelor’s degree in development studies from Gulu University in Uganda. I lived as a refugee in Moyo, and with the help of World Vision in Moyo, I was sponsored until I reached the university. I joined politics with the support of my husband, who was a Counsel at Adjumani High Court. My dream is to represent women at the national level. I am now 34 years, still youthful...” (Active Woman Politician)

From the above quotes, it emerges that the lack of formal education impedes women from actively participating in politics. Secondly, it emerges that the education systems in South Sudan

are too weak to produce potential women activities. Thanks to the good neighborhood between Uganda and South Sudan

“In moderations, 39.1% of the participants pointed to unfavorable political party systems and lack of existing parties with gender ideology (35.1%) as challenges impeding women’s participation in political activities. The statistics suggest that male dominated party leadership and ideas disfavor women recognition and opportunity to actively participate in party politics”

Besides the unfavorable political party system, which seem to disfavor women, there are gender-based stereotypes in media, which engender bias (29.1%), gender blind legal framework (27.8%), and lack of party monitors to safeguard women’s candidates (26.5%). From these statistics, there is some evidence that the institutions that must fight for the rights of women are lacking in function and policy. The particular incidences that support the weak laws and institutions regarding women include the failure of the law enforcement institutions to implement Section 14 (4) paragraph A of the Transitional Constitution 2011 which provides for the promotion of women’s participation in all public and private offices.

From the lowest extreme, the perception that politics as ‘dirty’ (9.3%) is the least among the challenges affecting women’s participation. Besides the perception that politics is dirty, violence from within the party (12.6%), and financial resources to contribute to political parties (13.9%) have little effect on the women’s participation in political activities. The statistics suggest some bickering within parties, mostly driven by those who financially contribute to party activities. These experiences can be attributed to party politics at national, state, county and lower levels are capital intensive while in Yambio (as in most parts of South Sudan), women depend on their because men own properties and wealth.

Overall, the statistics confirm that the lack of formal or political education and limited access to information are the most persistent impediments to women’s active participation, compounded by male-dominated political practices such as exclusion from party structures. While the perception that politics is ‘dirty’ has negligible effect, and bickering within parties adds further constraints, the dominance of education/information deficits alongside entrenched male

dominance constitutes the core impediment set that the subsequent strategy recommendations must target.

4.6 The strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan

The study examined the strategies to promote women's participation in Yambio. The researcher designed an instrument that required participants to identify as many strategies as they thought can improve their participation in political activities. The researcher presented a **multiple response question** to participants and findings are presented in percentages. The interpretation of the findings is based on the **percent of cases** instead of the percent of responses. The researcher used the percent of cases to bring out the number of participants who responded to a particular challenge in the questionnaire. Table 6 summarizes the findings.

Table 6: Strategies to improve women's participation.

Variable list in descending order of percent of cases	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
1. Make laws for women to combine the roles of childbearing, breastfeeding, and child-rearing with participation in the workforce	141	13.1%	93.4%
2. Eliminate discriminatory practices by employers against women who use contraceptives use or pregnancy status;	133	12.4%	88.1%
3. Eliminate violence against women;	128	11.9%	84.8%
4. Adopt appropriate measures to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations	124	11.5%	82.1%
5. Eliminate all practices that discriminate against women	94	8.7%	62.3%
6. Establish mechanisms for women's equal participation	91	8.5%	60.3%

7. Assist women to realize their rights on reproductive health	57	5.3%	37.7%
8. Give paramount importance to the elimination of ill health among women;	53	4.9%	35.1%
9. Adopt appropriate measures to ensure women's equal access to the labor market and social security systems;	49	4.6%	32.5%
10. Promote women's potential through skill	41	3.8%	27.2%
11. Adopting appropriate measures to ensure women's equal access to social security systems	40	3.7%	26.5%
12. Promote women's potential through employment,	37	3.4%	24.5%
13. Promote women's potential through education	36	3.3%	23.8%
14. Establish equitable representation at all levels of the political process	21	2.0%	13.9%
15. Give paramount importance to the elimination of among women;	12	1.1%	7.9%
16. Give paramount importance to the elimination of illiteracy among women;	12	1.1%	7.9%
17. Eliminate discriminatory practices by employers against women who are pregnant	6	0.6%	4.0%
Total	1075	100.0%	711.9%

Source: Field data, 2023

This study recorded a total of 1075 responses on the strategies to improving women's participation in political activities and governance. Respondents most strongly (93.4%) support strategies that reduce structural barriers: enacting work–family balance laws, prohibiting

employer discrimination related to pregnancy/contraception, eliminating violence against women, and expanding women's income beyond traditional occupations.. The importance of making laws that help women balance child-rearing and work is important because it will reduce the heavy burden imposed by the patriarchal society hence allowing to access to education and be able to participate in governance and political activities. Besides the laws that help women in family-work balance, eliminating discriminatory practices by employers against women who use contraceptives (88.1%), eliminating violence against women (84.8%), and adopting measures that improve women's income beyond traditional occupations (82.1%) can promote women's participation in political activities and governance in Yambio. These statistics provide some evidence that making laws that promote work-family balance can improve women's participation. This implies that women in Yambio suffer some form of discrimination at work because of their feminine roles.

In investigating the strategies to improving women's participation, one the questions that guided the interviews was: **Women have the potential to represent their communities however, they are still limited to the discrimination against women from men. What is your take on this?**

The emerging themes to the question included, work in agriculture, earn low salaries, suffer during pregnancy, lack access to resources, unpaid work, and no access to education. While these patterns of ideas seem to indicate challenges associated with discrimination, the researcher observed a relationship between work and family that is work-family balance. Women undergo discrimination at the workplace and the labor market because of their roles as wives. The labor laws do not cater for women as child-bearing mothers, breast-feeding mothers, or pregnant mother. If such clauses exist in the labor laws, their existence remains on paper but not in practice. This view is consistent with one revealed reported in an interview:

"...Jamila (not real name) reported to us the challenges she faced at the workplace when she got pregnant. She works with some company in the flowers. The supervisor would not give Jamila a break even when Jamila was about to give birth. Digging around flowers is convenient in the morning hours, but the supervisor would hang this woman in the scorching sun! You know the sunshine of Yambio. This affected the Jamila that she ended up with a still birth..." (NGO Support Officer)

A related story suggests the need for promoting work-family balance laws revealed:

“...Pita (not real name) joined some organisation as a receptionist. Pita was HIV positive, who needed to keep down her viral load by taking ARVs. One day, a fellow staff found her taking drugs and inquired. Not worried of stigmatization, Pita told her fellow staff of her HIV status. In a month’s period, Pita was terminated. She reported the case to us and were still in court...” (NGO Counselor)

These strategies directly address the primary impediments identified, closing information/education and institutional gaps, and are therefore most likely to translate into increased political participation. From these extracts, the researcher observes a dire need for revising the labor laws to protect women at the workplace. While this research could not access the labor laws in South Sudan, there are possibilities that such laws exist, but implementation is still lacking. More women are likely to be suffering silently under the weak labor laws.

In moderate responses, this study found that eliminating all practices that discriminate women (62.3%) and establishing mechanisms for women’s equal participation (60.3%) can help in improving women’s participation in political activities and governance. Besides discrimination at the workplace by employers and fellow male employees, the statistics suggest that there exist many forms of violence in Yambio town.

From the lowest extreme, there is little evidence that eliminating discriminatory practices by employers against women who are pregnant (4.0%), can improve women’s participation. Besides eliminating discrimination against pregnant women by employers, there is little evidence that eliminating illiteracy among women (7.9%) and establishing equitable representation at all levels (13.9%) can improve women’s participation. The statistics imply that eliminating discrimination of pregnant women and eliminating illiteracy among women are not sufficient strategies to improving women’s participation.

Overall, the analysis shows that working women are potential political candidates whose participation can be improved if the working environment is supportive enough. In short, strategies that rebalance care and work, safeguard women in workplaces, and reduce violence are viewed locally as necessary preconditions for sustained political engagement.

4.7 Data Discussion

This section discusses the findings on NGO contributions and women's participation in Yambio. Interpreted through Feminist Theory and Social Dominance Theory, the results suggest that NGOs' contributions operate as counter-measures to patriarchal norms and legitimized hierarchies that impede women's participation. The discussion follows three objectives: contributions, impediments, strategies, and links results to the theoretical frameworks.

4.7.1 NGO Contributions

The first objective of the study was to examine NGOs' contributions to women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. The study investigated human rights, development, and gender equality as key dimensions towards empowering women in decision-making. The findings are consistent with Toal (2019), who shows that the challenges of women's empowerment, dimension of women's empowerment, and strategy of women's empowerment can help women to bring a remarkable change in a given time as an intervention on its own.

This study found the strong success of NGOs in streamlining gender equality. The findings are consistent with Lewis (2010) who shows that NGOs provide alternative actions and interventions to the status quo, and societal needs, especially those that are not adequately met by the government. Acting outside the government, NGOs mobilize communities to participate in social and development activities, which governments ignore.

This study found that NGOs are supporting the implementation of the R-ARCSS by ensuring a gender quota - 35 percent presentation of women in public engagement. The findings agree with the UN Resolution on Women and Political Participation (which urges all state actors to fight against all forms of discrimination based on sex, as these hinder women from full participation in the political sphere (IDEA, 2021). The findings showed that if a woman withdraws from a political office, NGOs ensure that she is replaced by a woman. The findings are consistent with OECD (2018) and Gjermeni (2021) who show that NGOs provide space that allows for social development. Women's participation at parliaments, local councils or government helps women to laws that influence their rights, lives, and behavior. Women's participation improves the

representation of minority groups and the underrepresented. Put differently, the more women participate at decision-making levels, the more the interests of diverse communities are reflected in policy and service delivery.

This study found no evidence of NGOs funding women who participate in politics. The failure of NGOs operating Yambio to fund women in politics can be attributed to the lack of funding and prioritization by donors who are willing to support humanitarian services over politics. The findings are consistent with OECD (2016) which showed that some NGO programs lack specific budgets for gender equality, which hinders their significant influence on supporting women's rights organisations. The weak outcomes and lack of budget for funding women activities in the country offices, most of which lack corporate guidelines funding women.

The findings agree with Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe et al. (2018) who showed that funding as a key challenge to promoting women in the political arena. Due to funding gaps, many NGOs fail to allocate resources for women's human rights work, to the point of ignoring the broader areas of leadership.

The importance of NGOs in empowering women agree with (Toal, 2019) who show that Non-governmental organisations empower women to stand for themselves. This can bear a trickle effect on women empowerment through decision making. Thus this review is an attempt to study the role of NGO for women empowerment through decision making, the challenges of women empowerment, dimension of women empowerment and strategy of women empowerment. The review concludes that NGOs should increase working on women empowerment and decision making through different training since training helps women to bring a remarkable change in a given time as an intervention on its own

The findings disagree with Mlambo & Kapingura (2019) and Oguadimma et al. (2021) who argue that political parties require women to pay nomination fees to vie for political offices at the party level, which are resources women do not have. While the media can increase the visibility of women candidates and politicians, they are often misrepresented in the media. Similarly, the findings disagree with Frost (2020) who argues that while NGOs are known for improving women's political leadership and adding value to democratic institutions, their roles suffocate

age-old power relations. For instance, the creation of quotas and affirmative action means that governments must incur additional expenses to meet such goals.

The contribution of NGOs in empowering women economically, as a weapon to strengthening their participation in political activities and decision making disagrees with Christopherson, et al. (2022) who show that the laws in many countries often reflect and promote gender norms that limit women's economic participation. Efforts to remove these impediments through legal reform have been shown to be an effective method to catalyze greater participation of women in the economy—along with the related macroeconomic benefits. Once legal barriers are removed and provisions for more equal treatment under the law are embedded, the law can also be employed as a powerful tool to incentivize women to pursue equal opportunities, change mindsets regarding the role of women, and hold institutions and individuals accountable for achieving results.

From the perspective of human rights programs, the study found that NGOs provide training to women and other groups like the youth, and local leaders on civil rights. The results coincide with the Council of Europe (2019) which show that NGOs focusing on women's equality issues is important in bringing about and supporting change. Women who know their rights can act as a catalyst for change at the legislative level, and by promoting understanding and acceptance of the importance of women's equality, they can change the perception of citizens. They can also provide a useful monitoring mechanism to ensure that existing policies are effective in their application and outcome. They can also play an important practical role in raising awareness, recruiting, and training potential women candidates. These contributions are consistent with our first objective and illustrate theory-congruent mechanisms (awareness, representation measures, and skills) through which NGOs expand women's political participation.

4.7.2 The impediments to women's participation

The second objective of the study was to determine the impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. This study found that the lack of formal political education and limited information is the most dominant impediment to women's participation. The findings agree with O'Neil et al. (2016), who show that higher education and political capital

are key instruments to equipping women with political skills and resources. As such, NGOs persuade party leaders at both national and subnational to attract women. Research has shown that increasing the social and economic capabilities of women is essential in orienting them to political power.

Besides the lack of formal political education, the findings show that the male-dominated mode of politics tends to undermine the value of women. This is consistent with World Federation of United Nations Association (2017), which reveals that the dominant factors limiting women's participation in politics include household responsibilities, the demeaning role of women in society, low family support, low self-esteem, and low finances.

The findings that lack of formal education and political information impede women's participation disagree with Shreeves and Prpic (2019), who identified political parties and media as the main barriers to effective women's participation. Political parties require women to pay nomination fees to vie for political offices at the party level, which are resources women do not have.

The findings show that politics is male-dominated agrees with Watkins and Smith (2014) who show detriments for women working in workplaces where powerful positions are held largely by men. Women working in male-dominated organisations were less likely to advance to positions with authority. However, those women with high political skill were more likely to elude the challenges of working in male-dominated organisations and obtain positions of authority. The authors did not only demonstrates that political skill may be an important tool that assists women as they attempt to navigate the often complex maze that presumably leads to powerful positions, but also that a consideration of the context is critical.

The findings that politics is male-dominated coincides with Born, et al. (2018) who show that despite the significant growth in female labor force participation and educational attainment over the past decades, few women reach leadership positions. Women randomly assigned to male majority teams are less willing to become team leaders than women assigned to female majority teams. Women in male majority teams are less confident in their relative performance, less influential, and more swayed by others in team discussions. Given the experience of politics in

Yambio, women believe that they are more likely to lose in a political race if contested against male opponents.

The findings are consistent with Banks (2020) who show that a deeply managerial-driven aid system has constrained NGO effectiveness to the extent of prioritizing service delivery over social justice. The lack of systematic analysis of development NGO sectors within donor countries makes it impossible to measure their full contributions to development cooperation. However, some NGOs are moving away from managerial assistance to a transformative ideology for civil society funding. According to European Institute for Gender Equality (2016) argue that unless more young women are attracted to political life, the under-representation of women in elective office will continue. Mentoring, training courses, public campaigns and professional networking can play an important role in encouraging more women to stand for office and prepare them for a political career.

The study agrees with IDEA (2021) who shows that girls and women have limited economic resources, and even when the chance to have resources exist, there is an unequal distribution between men and women. Women have fewer financial resources to inject into their political careers. According to Potapkina (2009), NGOs depend on the financial support of donors and fundraising drives by media companies. The findings support Mukasa (2022) who that most women are illiterate, and lack capital, besides men refusing them from working. Most of the loans women obtain are often misused by husbands. The study however, lacks evidence of women's participation in decision making.

The findings that women lack funds to participate in political activities agrees with (Tubei, 2018) who showed that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for a long time have relied on the generosity of donors to support their project activities through grants and donations. However, organisations have realized that such funding sources are often insufficient to meet needs and rising costs for project implementation. Women Local Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) try to fill sustainable development gaps while struggling with insufficient resources. This is consistently reiterated by Hiremath (2021) who confirms that inadequate fundings suffocates NGOs from funding women development programs and interventions.

The impediments identified in Yambio south Sudan coincide with Gupta (2021) who show that women are creative enough to start their own venture, but they are not able to explore the available opportunities because of male dominance, lack of education and proper government support. Thus, NGOs play a major role in training and empowering women to attain immediate livelihood. In Tunisia, Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), an international NGO based in Tunis implements projects and programs in the Arab world, in cooperation with local NGOs. CAWTAR aims at eradicating discrimination against Arab women and to reduce inequalities through the promotion of research, education and training (Bennis, 2016). These strategies lack a contextual application to South Sudan. Besides, these reports do not link training to women's political participation, which leaves a knowledge gap.

There are many NGOs in South Sudan whose operations aim at improving the well-being of the vulnerable categories of the population, including women and girls, children, and older persons. These NGOs appear to address the gap in gender inequality. The available literature lacks evidence on the implementation of the 35 per cent representation of women at different governance levels as provided for in the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement to the resolve conflict in South Sudan

In summary, education and information deficits, compounded by male-dominated political structures, remain the most persistent impediments, underscoring the need for strategies that directly address these systemic barriers.

4.7.3 Strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation.

The third objective of the study was to evaluate the strategies to address the impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. The findings suggested that laws combining child-bearing, breastfeeding, and child-rearing with workforce participation could be a remedy to improve women's participation in political activities. These strategies are best understood as targeted responses to the impediments identified—particularly the lack of education/information and entrenched patriarchal party structure

The findings agree with Avolio & Giovanna (2017) and Mohsin (2016) who show that the increase in women's participation in the labor force is attributed to several factors including increasing education, reduced fertility rate, and technological shifts. Notwithstanding, very few women hold top managerial positions.

The findings agree with Maguire (2018) who show that women continue in household and care roles, particularly young women and children. Consequently, women continue in part-time employment, are paid low, and work in low-paid sectors. The unemployment rate among women remains high, and even when they are employed, they are always underemployed, which limits their economic participation (Avolio & Giovanna, 2017).

The findings that work-family balance laws can improve women's participation in political activities agree with Africa Barometer (2021); Owusu, et al. (2020); and Council of Europe (2019) who argue that many African communities do not see women as potential contributors to social and economic development. Relatedly, European Partnership for Democracy (2019) argues that gender equality strategies can support women into political practice. This strategy can weaken the male-domineering effect on women and the extent of transforming women.

The findings that the laws that promote work-family balance can promote women's participation agree with Africa Barometer (2021) who show that women are engulfed in the bulk of domestic work, which gives them little time to participate in the community and decision-making arena. Similarly Avolio & Giovanna (2017) and Kemal (2021) argue that women are caretakers in their families, and their work is not recognized or paid. This cripples women's participation in political activities.

The findings coincide with Alemu et al. (2022) who showed that women are considered housewives who should do not participate in economic activities. Electoral Institute of Sustainable Democracy in Africa (2022) shows that women account for 50.2% of the population yet most of them dominate domestic activities. Consequently, the state of women representation in politics is very low. Due to the many activities in the family, which require a woman's touch women find little time to participate in community group activities. Women do most of the cooking, and taking care of children and the elderly, yet they lack family support to freely take

part to participate in programs that free women (ZOA and SUDIA , 2019; Gordon et al., 2021). The burden striking a balance between family-work life and the many hours spent at home bars women from establishing a political career. These studies however, fail to provide the practical estimates of how work life affect women's participation in political activities.

Besides the laws that help women in family-work balance, this study has found that eliminating violence against women can improve women's participation in political activities. The findings support UNFPA (2019) which argues that promoting gender equality focuses requires eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. The approach includes gender transformation programs, and policies that engage men and boys meaningfully. The support for work-family balance is consistent with International IDEA (2021) who argue that eliminating all forms of discrimination against women promotes decision-making among women even at the work place.

The findings disagree with Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2014) which fronts political party-related strategies that promote women's participation in political decision making. The strategies stretch from within the party, to the party immediate environment up to when the party is in office. The strategies are as follows: political parties can introduce rules that guarantee the representation of women in political party decision-making, influences the number of women that vie for party positions. Political parties can introduce sections of women (women wings) within the party to exploit the expertise of women in influencing 'women issues' in party statutes and by-laws. Political parties can ensure women wings actively participate in decision-making at all levels including nominations, development programs, party electoral campaigns, and recruitment.

The strategies to improving women's participation in politics in Yambio agrees with Preethi& Kumar (2022) who show that women empowerment can be attained through provision of adequate education facilities, political support, and effective legislation system and employment generation for women. While NGOs play vital roles in women's empowerment by providing basic education, vocational training, training for self-employment, and self-awareness programs, there is little evidence in south Sudan, given the increasing low levels of political information.

However, the findings in Yambio indicate that NGOs cannot provide financial support to women in politics, which detracts their financial capability to compete against men.

This study found that equipping women with income generating projects can empower women economically. These results coincide with Elsayed & Roushdy (2017) who show that NGOs provide business skills training and actual support in starting a business or gaining employment. It emphasizes soft and life skills acquisition, knowledge of legal rights and the importance of involving the women's gatekeepers (husbands and fathers) and community leaders. Women empowerment can be achieved through provision of adequate education facilities, political support, and effective legislation system and employment generation for women (Namurugai & Kumar, 2017). NGOs and the self-help groups (SHG) play a very vital role towards women empowerment by providing basic education, vocational training, training for self-employment, legal aid, protection for women and self-awareness programs. While these reports emphasize training, they offer little training on politics and political information, which are necessary for motivating women into joining politics.

The strategy that eliminating violence against women can empower women in politics agrees with Ghenwa, et al. (2022) highlighted four common understandings of women's empowerment including granting women a voice, challenging existing power structures, the radical transformation of lives and livelihoods, and gender mainstreaming. Actually, NGOs are limited to granting women a voice and gender mainstreaming, offering little information to empowering women politically.

Taken together, the findings suggest that strategies focused on work-family balance, workplace protections, and reducing violence are not only community priorities but also theory-consistent pathways for expanding women's political participation.

In synthesis, the findings reveal a coherent narrative across the three study objectives. NGOs contribute to women's participation through gender equality measures, rights training, and development programs, though financial support for political candidacy remains limited. At the same time, persistent impediments, especially education and information gaps and male-dominated political structures, continue to constrain participation. Strategies prioritised by

respondents, such as work–family balance laws, workplace protections, and the elimination of violence, directly address these impediments. Together, these results illustrate the interplay between NGO contributions, systemic barriers, and locally supported strategies, thereby providing a comprehensive evidence base to inform the discussion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings on NGO contribution to women's participation in Yambio. The chapter is structured according to the study objectives. Each section also reflects on how the findings align with existing literature and the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The first objective of the study was to examine the contributions of NGOs to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. NGOs have been successful in promoting gender equality, with about 72.2% of the participants agreeing that in every five candidates on a party list, NGOs ensure that at least one is a woman.

The second objective of the study was to determine the impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. The lack of formal or political education and limited access to information continuously impede women from active participation in politics. This was confirmed by 68.2% of the participants who pointed to lack of formal political education and limited information as the most dominant challenge affecting women's participation.

The third objective of the study was to evaluate the strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. Work-family balance laws emerged as the most strongly supported strategy, with 93.4% of the participants pointing to laws for women that combine the roles of child-bearing, breast feeding and child-rearing with participation in the workforce. This strategy received the greatest response.

5.3 Conclusion

This study was conducted on NGO contributions and women's political participation in Yambio town in South Sudan. The study focused on women in governance and active politics. Findings show that through gender equality programs, human rights programs, and development programs, NGOs contribute significantly to variations in women's participation in Yambio town in South Sudan. This conclusion is specific to women politicians in Yambio, and does not extend to the entire Western equatorial or South Sudan.

The first objective confirmed NGOs' contributions to women's participation. The strongest contributions were gender equality measures, such as ensuring quotas in party lists and replacement of female candidates, while financial support for women candidates was minimal. NGOs' advocacy aligns with the 35% representation agenda under the Revitalized Agreement (R-ARCISS), but gaps in direct resource allocation remain.

The second objective identified impediments to participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. The key challenge to women's participation in political activities is lack of formal political education and limited information. Besides the lack of formal political education, the male-dominated mode of politics tends to undermine the value of women. As a result, women with less information and education struggle to compete with men who dominate political networks. Issues such as "dirty politics" or intra-party violence were less frequently cited, though they remain relevant to broader gender dynamics.

The third objective evaluated strategies for addressing impediments to women's participation in Yambio Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. The key strategy to improving women's participation in political activities is making laws that promote work-family balance. Work-family arrangements that recognize women's dual roles, eliminating discriminatory practices by employers, and reducing violence against women are locally viewed as milestones toward improving participation. Other strategies, such as eliminating illiteracy or discrimination against pregnant women, were less prominent in the findings.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of NGO contributions, the study found little evidence of NGOs supporting women who stand in party politics. Therefore, NGOs should solicit for donor flexibility and involvement to support programmes that promote women's participation in community, high school and university organisations, and leadership bodies to increase their political participation. The engagement of young women in community leadership organisations could transform views and gender prejudices against women and leadership, which can benefit their formal political engagement in the long run.

NGOs should also advocate for transparent and accountable decision-making processes that allow women to participate fully, including ensuring that political activities are scheduled in inclusive and gender-sensitive ways.

In view of the challenges to women's participation, the study found strong evidence that lack of formal education impedes women's participation in political activities. NGOs should strengthen women-focused civic education and political skills training at all levels to equip women civic right awareness and governance and political activities. The government should make information about governance and political activities more accessible. Civil society and women-led organisations should expand capacity-building and information-sharing channels, including digital platforms, to reach young women.

In view of the strategies to improve women's participation, the study found that work-family balance can improve women's participation in political activities. Employers should adopt workplace policies to support employing to get the balance right through flexible and remote working arrangement, increase support for parents including extended parental/maternity leave, regularly review employee workload and encourage managers to focus on productivity rather than hours of work. The government should ensure that such policies are ratified into laws. Where gaps exist, NGOs should serve as advocates for gender-responsive work-family balance policies.

5.5 Areas for future research

This study found that NGOs do not offer financial support to women interested in elective politics. Future researchers should investigate the relationship between funding and women's participation in political activities in Yambio.

This study found the lack of formal education to be the primary impediment to women's participation in political activities. Future researchers should analyse the relationship between formal education and women's participation in political activities in Yambio.

This study found work-family balance to be the most important strategy for improving women's participation in political activities. Future researchers should consider investigating the role of work-family balance in promoting women's participation in political activities in Yambio.

5.6 Limitations to the study

Studying women's participation was cumbersome to the researcher since the phenomenon is socially constructed. However, the researcher used a case study design to generate adequate information for understanding this socially constructed phenomenon. This design made the project feasible.

Designing a sample size for a case study was not straightforward. For instance, this study investigated different categories of women politicians, including those in rural and urban local governments. While there were few formal records on these women, the researcher used saturation to arrive at a reliable and adequate sample.

Designing a standard instrument that passes validity and reliability tests was not simple. The researcher struggled to design a questionnaire that would gather relevant and complete data on women's participation. However, the researcher sought guidance from the research supervisor and conducted pretests to ensure validity and reliability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire on NGO contributions and Women's participation

Dear Participant,

I am conducting research on NGO contribution and women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria, South Sudan. You have been selected to part in this study because of your knowledge of the study area. Your opinions will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your opinions will be used for academic purposes only.

For further information, please contact the principal research on +211 926662226

Section A: Participant's profile

1. Governance unit:
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Age 18 – 34 35 – 49 50 and above
4. Marital status: Single Married Others
5. Highest level of education Secondary and below Tertiary University
6. The best description of yourself is :
 - A. Municipal and local government officer
 - B. Civic leader
 - C. Private sector member
 - D. Civil society organisation member
 - E. Community or citizen

Section B: NGO Activities

In the following section, tick to indicate your opinion on NGO contributions among women.

The contributions under this investigation relate to gender equality programs, human rights programs, and development programs.

a) Gender equality programs

Variable List		YES	NO
1.	NGOs in this area ensure that at least one woman in every five candidates on a part list		
2.	NGOs in this area ensure that if a woman withdraws from a political race, she is replaced by a woman		
3.	NGOs in this area fund women to stand in elective positions		
4.	NGOs in this area ensure that women do not attend late night working sessions		
5.	NGOs in this area ensure women benefit equally from government		

Given your experience as a woman leader, how does gender affect your participation in political activities in Yambio area?

b) Human Rights programs

Variable List		YES	NO
6.	I am aware of NGOs that encourage women in decision-making		
7.	I am aware of NGOs that expose violence against women		
8.	I am aware of NGOs that advocate for the rights of women		
9.	I am aware of NGOs that offer training on civil rights.		
10.	I am aware of NGOs that prepare women to lead		

As a defender of the rights of women in your area, how has your knowledge of human rights improved your participation in political activities?

c) Development programs

Variable List		YES	NO
11.	The NGOs in this have helped women attain income security		
12.	The NGOs in this area have helped women obtain decent work		
13.	The NGOs in this area have helped women secure economic independence		
14.	The NGOs in this area have helped women contribute to peace building		
15.	The NGOs in this area have helped women prevent natural disasters		

16.	The NGOs in this area have helped women prevent conflict		
17.	The NGOs in this area have helped women rebuild their lives after war		

There are many NGOs operating in your area. How have they contributed to the development of women?

Section B: Impediment to Women's Participation

Which of the following impediments prevents women from participating in political activities in your area? Tick only those common to your constituency.

Variable Claims		
1.	Traditional gender roles, gender-based stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and norms.	
2.	The male-dominated model of politics that tends to undermine the value of women's contributions and their participation.	
3.	Lack of party support and exclusion from decision-making party structures.	
4.	Gender blind legal framework.	
5.	Unfavorable electoral systems and lack of TSM.	
6.	Lack of campaign funds.	
7.	Lack of financial resources to be considered as meaningful members of political parties.	

8.	Lack of formal or political education and limited access to information.	
9.	Lack of political experience.	
10.	The dual burden and a disproportionate share of domestic work.	
11.	Lack of media coverage and gender-based stereotypes and bias in the media.	
12.	In countries where candidates are responsible for deploying their own party monitors during Election Day, lack of party monitors safeguarding the interests of women's candidatures.	
13.	The perception of politics as "dirty".	
14.	Violence from within and outside the party	

Given the number of times you have personally attempted to participate in political activities, what impediment have you encountered as a woman?

Section C: Strategies to Women's participation

Which of the following strategies can promote women's participation in your area. Tick only the strategies appropriate to your constituency.

Variable Claims		
1.	Establish mechanisms for women's equal participation	
2.	Establish equitable representation at all levels of the political process	
3.	Promote women's potential through education	

4.	Promote women's potential through skill	
5.	Promote women's potential through employment,	
6.	Give paramount importance to the elimination of among women;	
7.	Give paramount importance to the elimination of illiteracy among women;	
8.	Give paramount importance to the elimination of ill health among women;	
9.	Eliminate all practices that discriminate against women	
10.	Assist women to realize their rights on reproductive health	
11.	Adopt appropriate measures to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations	
12.	Adopt appropriate measures to ensure women's equal access to the labor market and social security systems;	
13.	Adopting appropriate measures to ensure women's equal access to social security systems	
14.	Eliminate violence against women;	
15.	Eliminate discriminatory practices by employers against women who use contraceptives use or pregnancy status;	
16.	Eliminate discriminatory practices by employers against women who are pregnant	
17.	Make laws for women to combine the roles of child-bearing, breast-feeding and child-rearing with participation in the workforce	

In your own experience, what needs to be done to encourage women participate in political activities?

Thank you for participating

Appendix 2: Interview Guide on NGO contributions and Women's participation

Dear Participant,

I am researching NGO contributions and women's participation in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. You have been selected to participate in this study because of your knowledge in the study area. Your opinions will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Your opinions will be used for academic purposes only. This interview will take between 20 – 40 minutes.

For further information, please contact the principal research on +211 926662226

1. The concept of 'women empowerment' is common in many publications on governance and social work. Briefly explain the terms and give it realizing equal representation at all levels of the political process and public life.
2. Women have the potential to represent their communities however, they are still limited to the discrimination against women from men. What is your take on this?
3. There are many NGOs operating in your town. Explain some of the ways in which these NGOs have contributed to the level of women's participation in political processes.
4. What are the major impediments which NGOs encounter in their pursuit of equitable representation at all levels of the political process and public life?
5. In your opinion, what strategies can be employed to promote the participation of women in political activities?

6. Comment on the importance of education and skills development in empowering women.
Does illiteracy increase the chances of women living in poverty?
7. What should NGOs do reduce the extent of violence against women, especially from their spouses and other family members?
8. Is It possible to improve women's ability to earn some income beyond traditional occupations? If yes, explain how.

End

Thank you for your cooperation.

		2023									
Sn	Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	D
1	Identifying the study area										
2	Developing the research proposal										
3	Designing instruments and Data collection										

Appendix 3: Work Plan

4	Data analysis and interpretation										
5	The draft report and make corrections										
6	Final report and submission										