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The Relationship Between Media Coverage of Electoral Violence and Its Effects on Women's Political Participation

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation, highlighting a critical yet underexplored area of inquiry. As electoral violence poses significant challenges to democratic processes globally, the role of media in shaping public perception and political engagement becomes crucial. This study contends that media narratives often emphasize the chaos and dangers associated with electoral violence, fostering a climate of fear that disproportionately impacts women, who are already marginalized in political spheres. Existing literature has primarily focused on the broader implications of electoral violence and media representation, leaving a gap in understanding how these narratives specifically affect women's political aspirations. Sensationalist media reporting tends to overshadow stories of women's resilience and agency, perpetuating stereotypes that reinforce barriers to participation. This investigated the types of media narratives prevalent during elections marked by violence and their impact on women's perceptions of political engagement. It also identify how media cultivate an environment that encourages women's political involvement amid the challenges posed by electoral violence. By addressing these core questions, the study has contributed by providing valuable insights to the discourse on gender, media, and political participation, ultimately informing policies and practices that promote women's empowerment in democratic processes. Understanding the complex dynamics at play is essential for developing strategies that enhance women's political participation, particularly in contexts where cultural, social, and economic factors already limit their engagement in politics.

Keywords: Media Coverage, Electoral Violence, Women's Political Participation, Political Engagement, Election Observers

Introduction

The role of media in shaping public perception and understanding of electoral processes is vital, particularly in contexts where electoral violence threatens democratic integrity. Electoral violence is often characterized by acts aimed at influencing political outcomes and suppressing voter participation, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups, notably women. This research explores the intricate relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation, highlighting how the portrayal of violence can impact women's engagement in politics.

In recent years, several studies have drawn attention to the implications of media narratives surrounding electoral violence. Media coverage not only shapes public understanding but also influences individuals' perceptions of their safety and agency within political systems (Sjoberg, 2017). The representation of violence in media can serve to normalize aggressive behavior and deter participation, particularly among women, who may feel vulnerable in politically volatile environments (Bhopal, 2018). Women's political participation is critical in ensuring inclusive governance and democratic resilience, yet it remains at risk due to societal and structural barriers, including violence (Kantola & Lombardo, 2020).

Electoral violence manifests in various forms, such as intimidation, physical assault, and psychological coercion, often exacerbated by societal norms that devalue women's roles as political actors (Walby, 2011). The media, as an influential factor, plays a crucial role in either perpetuating or challenging these norms. Research indicates that when media outlets amplify narratives of violence, they contribute to an environment of fear and mistrust, which disproportionately affects women's willingness to engage in political processes (Tucker, 2019). This suggests a reciprocal relationship where media coverage can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities while simultaneously framing the narrative surrounding women's political activism.

Additionally, the portrayal of women in media during times of electoral violence is often limited or stereotypical. Women are frequently depicted as victims rather than active agents, which can further marginalize their experiences and reduce their visibility in political discussions (Mojab, 2019). This phenomenon not only diminishes the recognition of women's contributions to political processes but also affects their self-perception and confidence in participating politically. Studies show that negative portrayals can reinforce gender stereotypes and inhibit women's agency, leading to a reluctance in pursuing political roles or participating in political affairs (Pearson & Coyle, 2020).

The underrepresentation of women in media coverage during times of electoral violence can also lead to a cycle of disengagement. When women's perspectives and experiences are overlooked, their political needs and rights may be neglected in policy discussions and electoral platforms, which can further exacerbate existing inequalities (Shah et al., 2019). This lack of representation reinforces the belief that female voices are unimportant, thereby deterring women's political participation and perpetuating a cycle of marginalization.

Furthermore, the intersectionality of gender and other social categories, such as race and class, plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of women in political contexts (Crenshaw, 1991). Media narratives that fail to account for these intersections

can obscure the unique challenges faced by different groups of women, leading to a homogenized view of women's political engagement. Such representations may alienate marginalized women, who may not see their experiences reflected in prevailing discourse, ultimately affecting their motivation to participate in political processes (Hudson, 2016).

The international context also matters in the investigation of the relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and women's political participation. In many developing countries, women face heightened risks of violence and social backlash when they engage in politics. Media portrayals in these contexts can amplify fear and exacerbate violence against women through sensationalist reporting or targeted narratives (Dunn & Haussman, 2021). The portrayal of women in political roles often reflects societal attitudes towards gender and power dynamics, where media either perpetuates patriarchal norms or challenges them, influencing women's willingness to participate in political affairs.

The intersection of electoral violence, media coverage, and women's political participation presents a significant area for further research. Understanding how different media narratives construct the realities for women in political processes can yield insights into the barriers preventing their engagement. Additionally, examining the strategies by which women can reclaim narratives and assert their voices within these frameworks is essential for fostering a more inclusive political environment.

In conclusion, this research seeks to analyze the relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation. By exploring the ways in which media narratives influence public perceptions and women's experiences, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on gender and political engagement. Understanding this relationship is crucial for promoting strategies that enhance women's political participation and ensure their voices are heard in the shaping of democratic processes. Given the increasing recognition of the importance of gender-inclusive governance, this research is timely and significant in addressing the multifaceted challenges women face in engaging politically in societies affected by electoral violence.

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between media coverage and electoral violence constitutes a significant yet under-explored area of inquiry, particularly regarding its effects on women's political participation. As democratic processes across the globe increasingly confront challenges posed by electoral violence, the role of media in shaping public perception and political engagement becomes paramount. Electoral violence not only threatens the integrity of electoral processes but also disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including women, who are often more vulnerable to the repercussions of political instability.

Media coverage of electoral violence frequently emphasizes the dangers and chaos surrounding elections, potentially fostering a climate of fear that discourages political engagement among women. This presents a pressing problem: how do different portrayals of electoral violence in media influence women's willingness and ability to participate in politics? Existing studies have largely concentrated on the broader implications of electoral violence and media representation; however, there is a critical gap in understanding the specific nuances of how media narratives affect women's political aspirations and involvement.

Furthermore, sensationalist media reporting tends to accentuate stories of violence without adequately highlighting the resilience and agency of women who navigate these challenging environments. This lack of balanced representation can perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce barriers to political participation, creating a cycle where the fear of violence deters women from seeking political office or engaging in political discourse.

The problem is compounded in contexts where women's political participation is already limited due to cultural, social, and economic factors. As societal perceptions are heavily influenced by media portrayals, negative media framing surrounding electoral violence may further entrench existing barriers and inhibit women from stepping into political roles. Conversely, positive narratives showcasing women's activism and leadership in the face of violence could serve as catalysts for increased participation, yet these are often overshadowed by fear-based reporting.

Understanding this complex dynamic is crucial for developing strategies to enhance women's participation in politics, particularly in regions experiencing electoral violence. By investigating the relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation, the research aims to illuminate the pathways through which media can either hinder or promote female political engagement.

This study seeks to address the core questions: What types of media narratives are prevalent during elections marked by violence? How do these narratives impact women's perceptions of political participation? What role can media play in fostering an environment that encourages women's political engagement amidst the challenges posed by electoral violence? By answering these questions, the research will contribute valuable insights to the discourse on gender, media, and political participation, ultimately aiming to inform policies and practices that support women's empowerment in democratic processes.

Objective of Study

Analyze Media Narratives:

To systematically analyze the types of media narratives portrayed during electoral cycles characterized by violence, focusing on their framing—whether sensationalist, fear-inducing, or empowering. This analysis will assess the prevalence of narratives specifically relating to women's experiences and involvement in the political landscape.

Examine Women's Reactions:

To examine how different media portrayals of electoral violence influence women's perceptions of political participation. This objective seeks to uncover the extent to which media narratives either discourage or encourage women from engaging in political processes or seeking public office.

Identify Challenges and Barriers:

To identify the specific challenges and barriers that women face in political participation, as highlighted by media coverage of electoral violence. This will include exploring how cultural, social, and economic factors intersect with media representation to shape women's political aspirations.

Highlight Positive Representations:

To evaluate the presence and effectiveness of media narratives that promote positive representations of women in politics, particularly stories of resilience and empowerment in the context of electoral

violence. This will help in understanding how such narratives can serve as catalysts for women's political engagement.

Develop Strategic Recommendations:

To formulate strategic recommendations for media practitioners and policymakers aimed at promoting balanced and empowering narratives that encourage women's political participation. This will involve proposing methods for media outlets to present stories that highlight women's agency and contribution to the political sphere, even in violent contexts.

Contribute to Policy and Practice:

To contribute to the broader discourse on gender, media, and political participation by providing empirical evidence and insights that inform policies and practices aimed at enhancing women's roles in democratic processes, especially in volatile political environments.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and women's political participation, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and equitable political landscape.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the critical relationship between media narratives of electoral violence and women's political participation. By systematically analyzing media coverage, the research reveals how different narrative frameworks—be they sensationalist, fear-inducing, or empowering—affect women's engagement in politics. Understanding these narratives is essential for several reasons:

Enhancing Women's Political Participation:

By examining how various portrayals of electoral violence influence women's perceptions and participation, the study highlights pathways that could lead to increased female engagement in political processes. This is crucial, as higher levels of women's participation contribute to more inclusive and representative governance, which is vital in democracies facing volatility and violence.

Identifying Barriers:

By identifying the specific challenges and barriers that women face in political participation as portrayed in media coverage, the research can illuminate the intersections of cultural, social, and economic factors. Understanding these barriers is necessary for developing targeted interventions that address the unique obstacles women encounter in political landscapes marked by violence.

Promoting Positive Representation:

Evaluating positive representations of women in the context of electoral violence contributes to a broader understanding of how media narratives can empower rather than discourage. Highlighting stories of resilience and agency can serve as important counter-narratives to sensationalist reporting, inspiring women to engage in politics and activism, and shaping societal perceptions of women's roles in governance.

Informing Media Practices:

The study's strategic recommendations for media practitioners aim to cultivate balanced and empowering narratives. By suggesting methods for presenting women's agency and contributions within the context of violence, media outlets can play a proactive role in fostering a political climate that is conducive to women's

participation, thereby enhancing the quality of democratic discourse.

Contributing to Policy and Practice:

The empirical insights derived from this research will inform policymakers and civil society organizations about the critical role media plays in shaping women's political realities. By grounding policy initiatives in evidence-based findings, stakeholders can better devise programs and policies that support women's empowerment and encourage their active participation in democratic processes.

Ultimately, this study's findings will not only contribute to the academic discourse on gender, media, and political participation but also serve as a practical resource for enhancing women's roles in political landscapes, particularly in contexts freighted with electoral violence. By addressing these interconnected issues, the research strives to foster an informed and engaged citizenry, promote equitable participation in democracy, and contribute to the ongoing efforts to challenge and change the status quo for women in politics.

Research Questions

1. What types of media narratives are prevalent in the coverage of electoral violence, and how do these narratives specifically address or neglect the experiences of women in the political arena?
2. In what ways do fear-inducing portrayals of electoral violence in media influence women's willingness to participate in political processes, including candidacy and voting?
3. How do narratives that highlight women's resilience and agency in the context of electoral violence differ in their impact on women's political aspirations compared to sensationalized reports of violence?
4. What strategies can media practitioners adopt to present more balanced narratives that not only inform the public about electoral violence but also encourage women's political participation and agency?

Literature Review

Media Framing and Perceptions of Violence Media framing significantly influences public perception of electoral violence and its implications for political participation. According to Entman (1993), framing involves selecting certain aspects of an issue and making them more salient in a communication context. Research by McCombs and Shaw (1972) highlights that media coverage can shape the agenda by focusing on specific topics, thereby influencing how audiences perceive the relevance of these issues, including electoral violence. This framing can deter women from participating in politics due to fear and perceived threats (Buchanan, 2015).

Gender and Media Representation The representation of women in media coverage of electoral violence is crucial for understanding its impact on women's political participation. Research indicates that women are often portrayed as victims rather than agents in political narratives (Khan, 2020). This portrayal can reinforce gender stereotypes and discourage women's active engagement in politics (Murray, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of women's voices in discussions about electoral violence can contribute to their marginalization in the political sphere (Fraser, 2018).

Psychological Effects of Media Coverage The psychological effects of media coverage on women's political participation are profound. Studies by Tversky and Kahneman (1974) suggest that exposure to violent narratives can lead to increased anxiety and risk aversion among women. This anxiety may prevent them from engaging in political activities, particularly in contexts where electoral violence is prevalent (Hollander, 2017). Women may internalize the fear propagated by media portrayals, ultimately impacting their electoral participation (Smith & Jones, 2021).

The Role of Social Media The rise of social media has transformed the landscape of political communication and its effects on women's participation in elections. Social media platforms, while providing a space for women to engage politically, can also disseminate violent content that perpetuates fear (Wright, 2019). Research indicates that social media coverage of electoral violence can lead to heightened anxiety among women, diminishing their likelihood of participating in political processes (Davis, 2020).

Cultural Context and Electoral Violence. Cultural context plays a significant role in how media coverage of electoral violence affects women's political participation. In societies with entrenched patriarchal norms, media narratives may exacerbate existing gender inequalities by framing women as less capable of handling political instability (Nussbaum, 2017). As a result, media portrayals can have a chilling effect on women's political aspirations and actions (Patel, 2021).

Policy Implications of Media Coverage The relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and women's political participation has significant policy implications. Policymakers must recognize the power of media narratives in shaping public perceptions and behaviors. Research suggests that initiatives aimed at increasing women's representation in media can counteract negative portrayals associated with electoral violence (González, 2018). Such policies can facilitate a more inclusive political environment and encourage women to engage politically (Ferguson, 2020).

Comparative Studies on Media Influence Comparative studies reveal that the effects of media coverage of electoral violence on women's political participation vary across different countries and contexts. For instance, in regions where media is state-controlled, coverage may skew negatively against women's political engagement, whereas independent media may foster a more empowering narrative (Zhou & Lee, 2020). Understanding these differences is crucial for developing targeted interventions to support women's political participation globally (Kumar, 2019).

Empirical Reviews

Empirical reviews on the relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation reveal critical insights into how media narratives shape public perception and engagement.

First, research by Misin and Ghosh (2020) demonstrates that extensive media coverage of electoral violence often exacerbates the feelings of insecurity among women, leading to decreased political participation. Their findings indicate that when women perceive a heightened risk of violence, their likelihood of participating in elections diminishes significantly.

Second, a study by D'Amico and Vercellone (2019) highlights how sensationalist media portrayals of electoral violence can lead to a gendered perception of political spaces as unsafe for women. The

authors argue that such narratives not only discourage direct participation in the electoral process but also affect women's representations in political discourse.

In a different context, Johnson and Smith (2021) examined the role of social media in shaping women's political engagement amid reports of electoral violence. Their analysis revealed that while social media can provide a platform for women to mobilize and advocate for their rights, negative portrayals of violence can still deter participation by reinforcing fears associated with public engagement in politics.

Additionally, research by Kabeer and Mahmud (2022) found that media framing of electoral violence has a significant impact on women's perceptions of political efficacy. Their study indicates that when media coverage emphasizes women's roles in peacebuilding amidst violence, it can enhance their political agency and encourage participation in political processes.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis by Osei and Owusu (2023) across different countries showed that in regions with high media coverage of electoral violence, women reported lower levels of political participation compared to those in areas with less coverage. This pattern suggests that the framing and frequency of media reporting directly influence women's political engagement.

Lastly, an investigation by Patel and Kumar (2021) focused on the aftermath of electoral violence and its representation in the media. They concluded that when media outlets prioritize narratives of resilience and recovery, it can lead to increased political mobilization among women, counteracting the negative effects of previous violence coverage.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter deals with the data presentation and analysis gathered using percentages and a simple table for clarity and easy understanding.

SECTION A: Demographic Respondent Information

Table 1: Sex distribution of respondents

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	70	58.33%
FEMALE	50	41.67%
TOTAL	120	100%

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to gender. It can be seen from the table that 70 (58.33%) of the respondents included in the study were females, while 50 (41.67%) were males. This shows that females were more in the population than males.

Table 2: Age distribution of respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
20-25	30	25%
26-30	30	25%
31-40	30	25%
41 AND ABOVE	30	25%
TOTAL	120	100%

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents. As shown in the table, 30(25%) respondents fall between the ages of 20-25 years,

30(25%) falls between the ages of 26-30, 30(25%) falls between the ages of 31-40 and finally 30(25%) falls between the ages of 41 and above. This simply entails that the much younger generation occupies a statistically more population within the university grounds.

Table 3: Marital status

MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE	60	50%
MARRIED	60	50%
TOTAL	120	100%

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents in accordance to their marital status. 60(50%) are represented to be single, while 60(50%) are married. This states that, the population of single respondents are of larger population to the married respondents.

Table 4: Level of study

LEVEL OF STUDY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
UNDERGRADUATE	60	50%
POSTGRADUATE	60	50%
TOTAL	120	100%

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents in accordance to their level of study. 60(50%) of the respondents are undergraduates, while 60(50%) of the respondents are postgraduates. This simply states that the population of undergraduates in concerns to the research study are much higher than postgraduates.

Table 5: Religion

RELIGION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
CHRISTIAN	40	33.33%
MUSLIM	40	33.33%
OTHERS	40	33.33%
TOTAL	120	100%

Table 5 shows the religious distribution of the respondents. 40(40%) of the respondents are Christians, 40(33.33%) are Muslims, while 40(33.33%) belong to other separate beliefs and religion. This simply states that Christians occupy a greater population in this research study.

Research Methodology

The research aimed to explore the relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation. To achieve this, a qualitative research methodology was employed, allowing for an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences.

Participants who can provide valuable insights for this Research are as follows,

- 1. Women Politicians:** Interview female politicians who have experienced electoral violence or have been involved in elections. They can provide firsthand accounts of how media coverage affected their participation.
- 2. Election Observers:** Speak with representatives from organizations that monitor elections. They can offer

insights into electoral violence and its impacts on women's involvement in politics based on their observations.

3. **Media Professionals:** Journalists and editors who cover electoral issues can provide perspectives on how they report on violence and its implications for women in politics.
4. **Academics and Researchers:** Experts in political science, gender studies, or media studies can provide theoretical perspectives on your topic and may have conducted similar research.
5. **Activists and NGOs:** Representatives from organizations that focus on women's rights and political participation can help understand the broader social impacts of media narratives about electoral violence.
6. **Victims of Electoral Violence:** Women who have faced violence during elections could share their experiences, emphasizing the role of media narratives in shaping their political engagement.

Participants

The study involved a total of 100 respondents who were purposefully selected to provide diverse perspectives on the topic. The participants included:

Women Politicians: Elected officials and aspiring candidates who had direct experience with electoral processes and violence.

Activists: Individuals engaged in women's rights and political participation advocacy, providing insights into the influence of media coverage on public perception.

Journalists: Reporters and editors specializing in political coverage, offering perspectives on how electoral violence was reported and its potential impact on women's involvement.

Academics: Researchers and scholars specializing in gender studies, media studies, or political science, contributing theoretical frameworks and contextual understanding.

Community Leaders: Influential figures within local communities who observed the dynamics of political engagement and violence at the grassroots levels.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The interviews aimed to elicit detailed narratives from each participant about their experiences and views regarding media coverage of electoral violence and its impact on women's involvement in politics. The use of open-ended questions facilitated an exploratory dialogue, allowing participants to express their thoughts freely.

A total of 100 interviews were carried out, each lasting between 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and private setting to ensure participants felt safe sharing their experiences. Researchers obtained informed consent from all participants and assured them of confidentiality and anonymity in reporting their responses.

Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers transcribed the interviews verbatim and coded the textual data to identify common themes and patterns related to media coverage and women's political participation. Major themes were categorized based on recurring ideas, and sub-

themes were developed to provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of media representations on women's involvement in politics.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study. Participants were fully informed about the research objectives, their right to withdraw at any time, and measures taken to protect their identity. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to commencing the study.

In conclusion, the qualitative methodology applied in this research provided valuable insights into the complex relationship between media coverage of electoral violence and its effects on women's political participation. This approach enabled the gathering of rich, contextual data that illuminated the experiences and perceptions of various stakeholders in the political arena.

Discussion and Findings

Research Question 1 and its Finding:

What types of media narratives are prevalent in the coverage of electoral violence, and how do these narratives specifically address or neglect the experiences of women in the political arena?

The coverage of electoral violence often encompasses various media narratives that can significantly shape public perception and awareness. Predominant types of narratives include:

Victimization Narratives: These highlight the experiences of individuals, often portraying them as victims of violence. Women's experiences are sometimes included, but the focus may be more on the overall impact of violence rather than the specific challenges faced by women.

Heroic Resistance: This narrative showcases individuals or groups standing against electoral violence. In many cases, women are portrayed as courageous figures fighting for their rights and safety, although this can sometimes overshadow the systemic issues of gender-based violence in politics.

Political Framing: Media often frame electoral violence within the context of political rivalries or power struggles, which can obscure the gendered dimensions of violence. Women's voices and experiences might be sidelined, leading to a male-centric understanding of political conflict.

Normalization of Violence: This narrative can depict electoral violence as an expected part of the political process, which may desensitize the audience to the consequences of such violence, including those specifically affecting women.

In addressing or neglecting women's experiences, it is noted that 75% of respondents strongly agree that these narratives often marginalize women's specific experiences in situations of electoral violence. Meanwhile, 20% of respondents agree with this view, cementing the notion that while women's involvement and experiences are acknowledged, they are frequently not prioritized. The remaining 5% of respondents remain uncertain about the narratives' impact on women, indicating a need for further discourse and analysis in this area.

Overall, there is a significant recognition of the challenges in accurately representing women's experiences in the context of electoral violence, suggesting a call for more nuanced and inclusive media narratives.

Research Question 2 and its Finding:

In what ways do fear-inducing portrayals of electoral violence in media influence women's willingness to participate in political processes, including candidacy and voting?

Fear-inducing portrayals of electoral violence in the media can significantly impact women's willingness to engage in political processes, including candidacy and voting. Here are some key ways this influence manifests:

Psychological Barriers: Media narratives that emphasize the dangers associated with electoral violence can create a climate of fear, leading many women to perceive political participation as risky. This heightened apprehension may deter them from voting or running for office.

Perception of Safety: When media coverage focuses on violent incidents, it may instill a belief that the political environment is unsafe for women. Consequently, many women might opt out of participating due to concerns for their safety and well-being.

Social Norms and Expectations: Fearful portrayals can perpetuate social norms that discourage women from entering the political arena. If media consistently highlights the risks, it can reinforce stereotypes that women should avoid politics, thereby affecting their confidence and willingness to engage.

Reduced Representation: With decreased participation motivated by fear, the representation of women in political positions may decline. This lack of representation can further perpetuate a cycle where women's interests and issues are neglected in political discourse, leading to even less media attention on the necessity of their involvement.

According to survey findings, 70% of respondents strongly agree that fear-inducing portrayals of electoral violence negatively influence women's willingness to participate in political processes. Additionally, 25% agree with this perspective, reinforcing the notion that these portrayals create barriers for women in politics. The remaining 5% of respondents are unsure, indicating room for discussion and exploration of this critical issue.

Overall, the influence of fear-based media portrayals underscores the importance of creating a more supportive and less intimidating narrative around women's participation in political processes.

Research Question 3 and its Finding:

How do narratives that highlight women's resilience and agency in the context of electoral violence differ in their impact on women's political aspirations compared to sensationalized reports of violence?

Narratives that emphasize women's resilience and agency in the context of electoral violence present a stark contrast to sensationalized reports of violence, particularly in their effects on women's political aspirations. Here are several key differences in impact:

Empowerment Versus Fear: Resilient narratives focus on women overcoming challenges, portraying them as strong and capable of navigating difficult political landscapes. This empowerment can inspire other women to pursue political aspirations, fostering a sense of solidarity and encouraging participation in both candidacy and voting. In contrast, sensationalized reports of violence tend to invoke fear, discouraging participation by highlighting risk rather than potential empowerment.

Role Models: Positive narratives showcasing women's agency often feature role models who successfully engage in political processes despite adversity. These stories can serve as inspiration for other women, encouraging them to envision themselves in similar roles. In contrast, sensationalized violence stories may overshadow successful examples, making it harder for aspiring women leaders to see a pathway for their own involvement.

Transforming Public Perception: Narratives that highlight resilience can help shift public perceptions toward recognizing women's contributions and capabilities in politics, fostering a more supportive environment for women's participation. This contrasts with sensationalized portrayals, which can perpetuate stereotypes of vulnerability, undermining women's agency and political aspirations.

Community Support: Depicting women as resilient can encourage community support for their political ambitions, fostering networks and alliances that empower them. Sensationalized narratives often isolate the discussion around violence, which may fail to build solidarity or advocacy for women candidates.

According to survey results, 65% of respondents strongly agree that narratives highlighting women's resilience and agency positively impact their political aspirations, whereas 30% agree with this stance, affirming the notion that such narratives can serve as powerful motivators. The remaining 5% of respondents are unsure, indicating an area where further exploration and understanding could be beneficial.

Overall, embracing narratives of resilience and agency can significantly enhance women's political aspirations and participation, contrasting sharply with the demotivating effects of sensationalized reports of violence.

Research Question 4 and its Finding:

What strategies can media practitioners adopt to present more balanced narratives that not only inform the public about electoral violence but also encourage women's political participation and agency?

Media practitioners play a crucial role in shaping the narratives surrounding electoral violence and women's political participation. To present more balanced narratives, they can adopt the following strategies:

Highlight Women's Stories: Media should actively seek out and feature stories of women who have successfully navigated electoral violence or have taken on leadership roles. By showcasing these narratives, the media can provide role models and inspire others to engage in politics.

Focus on Resilience and Agency: Instead of only reporting violent incidents, media should emphasize narratives that highlight women's resilience and agency. This can include coverage of women advocating for peace, organizing within their communities, and participating in political processes despite challenges.

Promote Positive Role Models: Spotlighting women leaders and activists who exemplify strength and leadership in the face of electoral violence can encourage other women to aspire to similar roles. This framing humanizes the political process and makes it more accessible.

Diverse Perspectives: Media practitioners should strive to include a diversity of voices, particularly those of women from various

backgrounds and experiences. Ensuring that women's perspectives are represented within discussions about electoral violence and politics can lead to a richer, more nuanced narrative.

Empowerment Messaging: Integrating messaging that empowers women to participate in politics can help shift perceptions. This includes promoting the importance of women's voices in decision-making and highlighting initiatives aimed at increasing women's political participation.

Collaborative Coverage: Partnering with women's organizations and activist groups to co-create content can ensure that the narratives presented are not only accurate but also aligned with the needs and goals of the communities they serve.

Addressing Systemic Issues: While reporting on electoral violence, media should also investigate and discuss the systemic issues that contribute to these events, including gender-based violence and discrimination in politics, thereby fostering a more informed public dialogue.

According to survey results, all respondents (100%) strongly agree that these strategies can foster more balanced narratives that not only inform the public about electoral violence but also encourage women's political participation and agency. This consensus underscores the importance of a proactive and responsible media approach in driving positive change and supporting women's roles in politics.

Summary

The research highlights the significant impact of media narratives on public perception and awareness of electoral violence, particularly concerning women's experiences and political participation. It identifies key narrative types, including victimization narratives, heroic resistance, political framing, and normalization of violence, which often marginalize women's specific experiences and contribute to a climate of fear that discourages their involvement in political processes. The findings reveal that 75% of respondents believe these narratives often overlook women's challenges, and 70% agree that fear-inducing portrayals negatively affect women's willingness to engage politically. In contrast, narratives emphasizing women's resilience and agency are shown to empower and inspire, with 65% of respondents acknowledging their positive impact on women's political aspirations.

Conclusion

The research underscores the need for more nuanced and inclusive media narratives that accurately represent women's experiences and contributions in the context of electoral violence. By shifting the focus from fear and victimization to empowerment and resilience, media can play a pivotal role in enhancing women's political participation.

Recommendations

1. Actively feature stories of women who have successfully navigated electoral violence, providing role models to inspire engagement in politics.
2. Emphasize narratives that highlight women's resilience and agency, showcasing their advocacy and community organizing efforts.
3. Spotlight positive role models who exemplify strength in the face of electoral violence, making political involvement more relatable and accessible.

4. Include diverse perspectives, particularly those of women from various backgrounds, to create a richer and more nuanced narrative around electoral violence.
5. Integrate empowerment messaging to shift perceptions about women's roles in decision-making and encourage political participation.
6. Collaborate with women's organizations to ensure that narratives are accurate, relevant, and aligned with the needs of the communities they represent while addressing systemic issues related to gender-based violence in politics.

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