



Women's Political Participation in Nusaniwe's 2024 Legislative Election: A Networked Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study examines how women activate family, community, and digital relationships in the 2024 legislative election in Nusaniwe, Ambon, and how these practices shape opportunities for political participation and the limits of political autonomy.

Methodology: A qualitative case study used interviews, observation, and documentation. Five informants are identifiable in the reported evidence, predominantly women candidates; the full interview count requires confirmation. Analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing/verification, with attention to source comparison and the boundaries of documentary corroboration.

Main Findings: Candidates described mobilizing extended-family ties, women's community relationships, and messaging groups alongside informal meetings. Financial constraints and gender expectations coexisted with adaptive outreach strategies. These accounts show how relationships support electoral mobilization, while providing insufficient evidence to establish independent voter choice, a causal effect on votes, or post-election substantive representation.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Networked women's political participation is developed as a case-based proposition linking relationship access, resource activation, and political obligations across household, community, candidate, and digital settings. The contribution distinguishes mobilization from autonomy and substantive representation, providing an analytical basis for comparing who controls network resources and whose political demands can be expressed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Women's political inclusion involves equal opportunities to participate, articulate interests, and influence public decisions. Democratic equality therefore requires attention to both access to political institutions and the distribution of the resources needed to use that access [1], [2]. Gender scholarship also shows that political opportunities are connected to household arrangements and social expectations about women's public roles [3], [4], [5]. These relationships make local electoral participation a useful setting for examining how formal inclusion becomes practical political capacity.

In Indonesia, Aspinall, White, and Savirani [6] identify patriarchal attitudes and structural disadvantages in women's electoral competition. Siahaan et al. [7] locate exclusion earlier in political careers, in unequal opportunities to acquire experience, networks, and pathways into representative politics. These studies establish that women's electoral opportunities cannot be explained by individual motivation alone. However, they do not resolve how particular combinations of family ties, community organizations, and digitally maintained relationships are activated within Nusaniwe's local electoral setting.

Research around the 2024 election identifies related barriers across Indonesian regions. Lestari et al. [8] examine recruitment and participation in the Riau Islands, while Kholifah [9] addresses changing participation in Malang. Martini et al. [10] identify family support, political education, party discrimination, and campaign costs as problems in Yogyakarta. Kamal et al. [11] examine representation in Bone, and Mulyana et al. [12] explore perceptions of female candidates in Palu. Together, these studies show that formal openings coexist with unequal resources. Their different locations and research subjects also limit direct assumptions about the mechanisms operating in Maluku.

Institutional studies add a second dimension. Fauziasyah and Adiwilaga [13] discuss an electoral commission's participation strategy, Talaba [14] examines technical electoral barriers, and Halimatusa'diyah and Jannah [15] investigate women's representation within election management bodies. This literature directs attention to organizational gatekeeping and informal relationships. The present study connects those concerns to everyday campaign practices: who introduces candidates to voters, how relationships are maintained, and whether network access allows women to exercise independent political influence.

Digital participation raises a further question. Assaefi et al. [16] examine social media in Indonesian campaigning, while Suratnoaji and Alamiyah [17] identify geographically uneven women's political discussion on Twitter during the 2024 presidential election. Kartiasih et al. [18] likewise document unequal regional digital development, including disadvantages in eastern Indonesia. These studies warrant examining online and face-to-face participation together. They do not establish the digital skills of women in Nusaniwe, nor do national platform patterns explain how a specific local candidate converts digitally maintained relationships into support.

The research gap is therefore specific: the literature reviewed here does not explain how family networks, women's community ties, campaign resources, and digital interaction work together in the reported experiences of women contesting the 2024 legislative election in Nusaniwe. The gap concerns a local mechanism and its implications for autonomy, rather than an assertion that women's participation in eastern Indonesia has never been studied. The empirical material is particularly useful for examining candidate-led mobilization, while offering more limited access to ordinary voters' independent interpretations.

This study develops "networked women's political participation" as a case-based analytical proposition. It refers to women's political action organized across household, community, candidate, and digital relationships, with attention to who controls the resources circulating through those relationships. Its urgency follows from the distinction between gaining electoral access and gaining the capacity to influence decisions. Networks that help a woman win support may also create obligations or dependence; identifying that tension can inform political education and support for women beyond nomination.

Accordingly, the study asks: how do women activate family, community, and digital relationships in the 2024 legislative election in Nusaniwe, and what do these practices reveal about the opportunities and limits of political autonomy? It seeks to identify participation practices, explain the interaction of resources and barriers, and assess the analytical implications of network-based mobilization. It does not estimate participation rates or evaluate the subsequent legislative performance of elected women.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Participation, Descriptive Representation, and Substantive Representation

Political participation comprises activities intended to affect political selection or decisions, including campaigning, discussion, mobilization, and voting [2]. Gender inequalities in time, resources, and recruitment can shape participation before individuals enter formal political organizations [3]. This study uses participation to identify what women do and through which relationships they act, rather than treating electoral presence as a complete measure of influence.

Descriptive representation concerns who occupies representative positions; substantive representation concerns action on interests and demands [19], [20]. A higher share of women in office can improve inclusion, but does not by itself demonstrate responsiveness to women's diverse priorities. Franceschet and Piscopo [21] show, in Argentina, that quotas can affect substantive representation in contradictory ways. Here, electoral success is treated as evidence of access to office. Claims about substantive representation would additionally require evidence about agenda setting, deliberation, constituency responsiveness, or policy decisions after election.

Political autonomy is used more narrowly to mean the capacity to express preferences and act without being compelled by a network patron, family authority, or material dependence. Campaign narratives can indicate opportunities for such autonomy, but cannot establish how freely all voters decided. Gender norms and cultural change supply contextual explanations [4], [5]; scholarship on cultural backlash also cautions against assuming that social change produces uniformly progressive political outcomes [22]. These perspectives guide interpretation without making gender identity a substitute for evidence of political action.

2.2. Capital, Network Access, and Conversion

Bourdieu's concept of capital provides the main explanation of unequal capacity within the political field [23]. The analysis focuses on economic capital, social relationships that provide usable resources, and symbolic recognition that makes a candidate credible. It asks how these resources are activated and converted into campaign access and support. The existence of a relationship is distinguished from the ability to mobilize it, and both are distinguished from the political result attributed to it.

Coleman [24] helps explain how obligations and trust can facilitate action, while Granovetter [25] draws attention to connections that extend beyond a close circle. These complementary concepts allow a distinction between family-based support and outreach to additional communities. They do not establish which type of tie is more effective in Nusaniwe without comparative evidence. Consistent with Indonesian research [6], [7], the key issue is whether women can use available ties to gain recognition and resources within organizations and electoral competition.

2.3. Digital Participation, Literacy, and Inequality

Digital communication is treated as a means of maintaining and extending relationships. Bennett and Segerberg [26] explain how personalized sharing can organize political action, and Boulianne [27] finds an association between social media use and participation across studies. Neither perspective makes online activity equivalent to electoral success. In this case, the analytical question is how messaging groups interact with meetings, introductions, and the costs of maintaining support.

Digital literacy and the digital divide must be distinguished. Hargittai [28] shows that inequalities in online skills remain relevant beyond access alone. Kartiasih et al. [18] document regional digital inequalities in Indonesia, while Suratnoaji and Alamiyah [17] report uneven geographical participation in online political discussion. For an eastern Indonesian setting, these findings justify attention to connectivity, affordability, skills, and the ability to evaluate information. They are contextual evidence; the present interviews do not measure the prevalence of these disadvantages in Nusaniwe.

The framework consequently examines three connected processes: access to relationships, activation and conversion of resources, and the opportunities or dependencies that follow. Electoral mobilization is the directly reported outcome. Autonomous choice and substantive representation remain separate questions requiring evidence beyond the volume of campaign activity or the number of seats won.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Research Design and Setting

The study used a qualitative case-study design to examine political participation within the bounded setting of the 2024 legislative election in Nusaniwe District, Ambon City, Maluku [29], [30]. The unit of analysis is the practice of political participation through relationships, rather than the electoral performance of a statistically representative sample. The case approach allows interview accounts to be read in relation to the social settings and political positions described by participants.

Nusaniwe forms part of Ambon's urban political environment. The city government reports a district population of 91,574 for 2024 [31]. Within the interview material, Amahusu appears as a localized support base, while Benteng appears as a setting for digitally coordinated social gatherings. Extended-family relationships and a women's community are also mentioned. These features locate the reported political practices in particular social networks; they do not establish the religious, occupational, or income composition of all participants. District population figures provide context and are not the study's sampling frame.

3.2. Research Subjects and Selection Boundaries

The original study reports purposive selection on the basis of experience or knowledge of women's participation in the election [30], [32]. Five identifiable informants appear in the reported material: YL, ET, RR, AYS, and JM. Four are described as women candidates who were elected, and JM is described as an incumbent candidate who lost. Five is the number identifiable in the presented evidence, not a verified count of everyone interviewed. The broader description of voters and community members cannot be quantified from the available participant information.

For the present analysis, accounts are included when they concern direct involvement in the Nusaniwe contest or firsthand knowledge of the campaign relationships examined. Statements without an identifiable connection to that setting are not used to establish local findings. These are analytical inclusion and exclusion boundaries; the original recruitment log is needed to confirm the fieldwork eligibility rules, refusals, and total sample. Sample adequacy cannot be inferred from the number of quoted voices alone: information power also depends on the specificity of the sample, quality of dialogue, and analytical purpose [33].

Table 1. Informants identifiable in the reported evidence

Initials	Age	Political position reported
YL	58	NasDem; woman candidate reported elected
ET	Not reported	Golkar; woman candidate reported elected
RR	Not reported	Democratic Party; woman candidate reported elected
AYS	Not reported	Gerindra; woman candidate reported elected
JM	59	Incumbent competitor reported defeated

The available material identifies YL as a 58-year-old NasDem candidate and JM as a 59-year-old incumbent competitor. It identifies ET with Golkar, RR with the Democratic Party, and AYS with Gerindra, but does not give their ages or occupations. The reported evidence therefore privileges candidate perspectives. It is not treated as a representative account of ordinary women voters, community members, or women who did not participate.

3.3. Instruments and Data Collection

The study reports in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation [30]. Interview topics concern campaign involvement, family and community influence, resource constraints, digital communication, and political choice. Observation and documentation were described as complementary sources, but the submitted account does not list the observed events, document titles, interview durations, or recording procedures. Table 2 organizes the stated interview domains into an instrument matrix for transparent reporting. It reconstructs the domains present in the manuscript and does not claim that this exact table was a validated instrument used before fieldwork.

Table 2. Interview-domain and evidence matrix

Domain	Interview focus	Evidence and analytical boundary
Participation	Voting, meetings, discussion, outreach	Describe actions; do not infer population rates.
Family and community	Introductions, trust, group activities	Identify ties and roles; distinguish members' voices from candidates' accounts.
Digital communication	Platforms, information sharing, offline contact	Describe use; verify skills and outcomes separately.
Resources and barriers	Time, costs, gender expectations, access	Compare constraints and adaptive strategies.
Autonomy and exchange	Choice, obligations, assistance, disagreement	Distinguish voluntary support from documented conditional exchange.

The matrix separates questions about practices from questions about outcomes. For example, accounts of meetings and message circulation support descriptions of mobilization, whereas claims about electoral totals require official results, and claims about policy influence require post-election records. No new interviews, observation events, or participant attributes are introduced in this revision.

3.4. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Analysis follows Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing/verification [34]. For this revised presentation, condensation retained the reported passages relevant to participation practices and grouped them under five domains: political engagement, family and community ties, digital communication, intersecting barriers, and financial competition. Passages jointly attributed to several informants were treated as group-level summaries rather than independent verbatim statements by each participant. The thematic organization is compatible with the distinction between coding and interpretive theme development discussed by Braun and Clarke [35].

Data display connects each domain to an identifiable account, the described action, the resource involved, and the boundary of the inference. For example, JM's account connects extended-family ties and a widows' community to perceived support for YL; YL's own account links social gatherings and messaging groups to campaign organization. Reading these accounts together indicates a shared emphasis on relationships, while retaining differences in speaker position and possible interest. It does not independently verify either campaign effectiveness or the number of votes obtained.

Conclusion drawing compares these accounts with the theoretical concepts of capital conversion and participation. Source triangulation considers convergence and disagreement between candidate and competitor accounts. Technique triangulation requires comparison with observations and documents on the same event or

claim. Although the original manuscript reports both forms of triangulation, it does not provide a claim-by-claim audit trail. Accordingly, the revision distinguishes interview-based interpretations from independently corroborated facts and does not label undocumented checks as completed. This approach follows the emphasis on traceability in Nowell et al. [36] and transparent qualitative reporting in Tong et al. [37].

3.5. Research Procedure

Figure 1 summarizes the reported research sequence and the analytical organization used in this revision. The arrows show the relationship between stages; verification feeds back into interpretation. The figure is a procedural summary, not a dated fieldwork record. Recruitment dates, the fieldwork period, and the sequence of actual visits require confirmation from the research log.

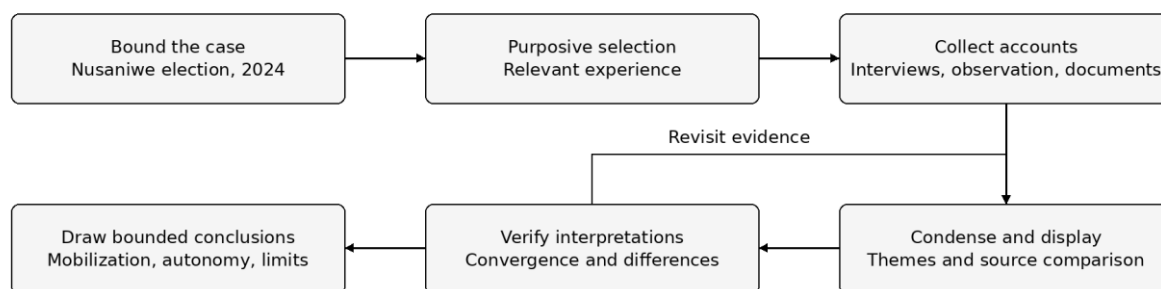


Figure 1. Research and analytical procedure

3.6. Research Ethics and Researcher Positionality

The reporting uses initials and retains only the participant characteristics supplied in the manuscript. Initials alone do not guarantee anonymity when age, party, and electoral position are combined. Public electoral activity also does not establish permission to publish interview material. The consent process, authorization to quote, and any institutional ethics approval or exemption are not documented in the supplied account and must be specified by the authors before submission. No approval number or consent procedure is inferred.

Reflexivity requires attention to how the researcher's position affects access, questioning, and interpretation [38]. The supplied material does not identify the interviewer's relationship to the participants or political organizations. In the revised analysis, candidate statements are therefore treated as situated accounts: elected candidates may emphasize successful strategies, while a defeated competitor may interpret another candidate's support through the lens of competition. This analytical precaution does not replace an author statement about institutional role, prior relationships, or procedures used to manage potential bias [37].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized into five empirical themes, followed by an integrated discussion. The directly reported voices are predominantly candidates' accounts of mobilization. Individually attributed extracts are retained where available; passages attributed collectively to YL, ET, RR, and AYS are summarized without quotation marks because the manuscript does not identify the individual speaker.

4.1. From Voting to Campaign and Community Engagement

The joint account attributed to YL, ET, RR, and AYS describes participation extending from voting to meetings, political discussion, and organizing support. The four women are identified as candidates associated with NasDem, Golkar, the Democratic Party, and Gerindra, respectively. Their reported activities included approaching families and neighbors, working through women's groups, listening to community concerns, and presenting themselves as people able to speak for others. This material indicates that the informants understood campaigning as continuing social engagement. It also records an aspiration to influence decisions. The evidence does not establish a historical increase in participation among Nusaniwe women as a population: the interviews provide retrospective perceptions, without a baseline comparison. Likewise, candidates' accounts of reaching voters should not be substituted for voters' own accounts of political choice.

4.2. Family and Community Networks

JM, a 59-year-old incumbent candidate described as having lost to YL within the same party, emphasized the breadth of YL's relationships. The manuscript records JM's statement that "It was not only her own family, but also her husband's family and her mother's extended family, who are widely dispersed throughout Nusaniwe." JM contrasted that reach with a support base concentrated in Amahusu (interview with JM, age 59).

JM also described YL's establishment of a widows' community and referred tentatively to members being facilitated into work. The same account reported YL obtaining more than 2,119 votes, JM obtaining 1,900 votes in Amahusu, and NasDem receiving 6,657 votes. These numbers are retained as the informant's account, not certified electoral totals. They refer to different units—a candidate, a locality-specific support base, and a party—and are not used as directly comparable measures of network effectiveness.

The account identifies two distinct resources: extended kinship connections and an organized women's community. It does not specify the community's membership, decision rules, duration, or the nature of work facilitation. Nor does it establish how many members supported YL. Its empirical value lies in showing that a competitor perceived relationships formed around everyday social concerns as politically consequential. The precise conversion of those relationships into votes remains an explanatory question rather than a demonstrated causal effect.

4.3. Digital Media Combined with Face-to-Face Contact

YL, identified as a 58-year-old NasDem candidate, described using WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok alongside social gatherings. In the submitted interview extract, she stated: "For example, from time to time we would have coffee together, such as with members of a WhatsApp group in the Benteng neighborhood, or gather to eat rujak together, and so on." She also explained: "We exchanged information and regularly evaluated the development of electoral support, both for me and for other candidates, through these WhatsApp groups" (interview with YL, age 58).

YL's account describes a sequence in which existing groups, informal meetings, and ongoing communication supported outreach to relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Digital communication was connected to relationships maintained outside the platform. Her acknowledgment that costs were substantial also shows that online organizing was not described as cost-free. The account supports a finding about the combination of communication channels, rather than an isolated effect of a particular platform. No platform analytics, comparison group, or direct assessment of digital literacy is supplied. The study therefore cannot establish whether social media independently increased votes or whether all women had equal opportunities to participate online. The evidence is specific to the candidate's reported use of groups and interpersonal contact.

4.4. Intersecting Barriers and Adaptive Responses

The joint account attributed to YL, ET, RR, and AYS identifies financial limitations and perceptions that women are less capable in politics. The wider manuscript also reports domestic responsibilities and limited access to powerful networks as constraints. These barriers concern different resources but can interact: domestic work may restrict time for meetings, limited funds may reduce the ability to maintain contacts, and exclusion from influential networks may make it harder to gain campaign support.

The women's reported responses included maintaining community relationships, using social media for visibility, developing solidarity among women, and reaching younger people and workers. These are accounts of adaptation within constraints. They suggest that organizing across several groups could broaden access beyond a single constituency. They do not establish that all women could adopt the same strategies, or that financial and gender barriers disappeared for those who were elected.

The manuscript reports that four of the nine elected representatives from the Nusaniwe electoral district were women, equivalent to 44.4%. This reported outcome requires confirmation against the official list of elected candidates. Even if confirmed, it would establish a descriptive result for that electoral district, rather than the proportion of women in the entire Ambon City DPRD or proof of substantive influence. The 30% provision concerns women's inclusion in candidate lists [39]; it is not a guarantee that 30% of elected seats will be held by women.

4.5. Financial Competition and Transactional Pressures

The collective account attributed to the four women describes limited financial capacity, competition within and between parties, and sustained work until vote counting ended. The informants presented direct community engagement and maintaining trust as strategies for continuing their campaigns. These statements indicate how they characterized their political work and financial constraints.

They do not independently demonstrate the absence of material inducements, the prevalence of vote buying, or the motives of recipients of assistance. Likewise, JM's reference to possible work facilitation does not establish an illicit exchange. Community assistance, campaign expenditure, and conditional vote buying require different evidence. The defensible finding is that the informants described financial competition as a challenge and emphasized relational work as a response. This distinction also prevents treating trust and material resources as mutually exclusive explanations. YL's acknowledgment of substantial costs indicates that maintaining relationships can consume resources. Network-based campaigning may reduce dependence on some forms of expenditure while still requiring money, time, and organizational effort. Its relationship to transactional politics cannot be settled from self-description alone.

4.6. Capital Conversion and the Meaning of Networked Participation

The accounts are consistent with Bourdieu's argument that resources become consequential through their use within a particular field [23]. Extended family connections, an organized women's community, and digitally maintained groups were described as resources for gaining access and recognition. The reported practices help specify the conversion process: an introduction creates contact, repeated interaction supports familiarity, and a supporter can extend the campaign to additional contacts. The accounts identify these practices but do not isolate their electoral effects.

The Nusaniwe case qualifies an explanation based only on the amount of social capital available. What matters analytically is also the organization of relationships and the candidate's capacity to maintain them across settings. Coleman's emphasis on obligations [24] helps explain why recurring contact may sustain cooperation, while Granovetter [25] directs attention to outreach beyond close kin. Neither kinship nor a large digital group can be presumed to deliver support automatically. A network's political value depends on activation, credibility, and continued participation.

The widows' community is relevant because a shared social position may provide occasions for repeated interaction and recognition of practical concerns. If members themselves coordinate outreach, a candidate could gain organizational reach as well as personal visibility. Alternatively, if support depends primarily on assistance controlled by the candidate, the same network may generate dependence. These are two plausible interpretations of the reported account. Interviews with community members and evidence about the organization's activities are needed to determine which relationships operated in practice. Widowhood is not treated as evidence of political vulnerability or uniform political preference.

"Networked women's political participation" is therefore defined here as political action organized through linked household, community, candidate, and digital relationships, in which women activate resources and negotiate the obligations attached to them. It is a case-based synthesis, not a claim to have discovered that politics operates through networks. Its analytical contribution is to connect three questions usually separated in a count of participation: where access originates, how resources are converted into action, and whether that action expands women's autonomy or dependence.

The concept differs from an activity inventory by examining relationships between activities and resource control. It differs from a simple network-membership measure by asking who can initiate contact, speak, mobilize others, and refuse a request. Future applications could compare candidate-centered and member-led groups, successful and unsuccessful candidates, and women with limited network access. Such comparisons could test whether similar participation levels coexist with different degrees of autonomy.

4.7. Comparison with Indonesian and International Research

Aspinall et al. [6] show how Indonesian women's electoral opportunities are shaped by patriarchal and structural barriers as well as resources. The present accounts are consistent with that explanation: success is described alongside financial constraints and gender expectations. The case adds a localized account of how extended-family ties, a women's community, and messaging groups were combined. It does not demonstrate that networks are sufficient for success or that the same combination is available to less-connected women.

Siahaan et al. [7] emphasize the importance of experiences and opportunities that precede candidacy. YL's statement that groups were maintained before the election is compatible with that perspective. The local material suggests continuity between ordinary social interaction and campaigning. However, it does not reconstruct the informants' full political careers, and the finding should not be extended into a claim about the duration or sequence of their political apprenticeship.

The barriers reported in Yogyakarta [10] and the recruitment constraints identified in the Riau Islands [8] provide useful contrasts. In Nusaniwe, the reported women candidates describe strategies for working within barriers and winning office. This difference concerns the experiences selected for study, rather than evidence that Maluku has fewer structural obstacles. The prominence of successful candidates may itself explain the stronger emphasis on adaptive strategies in the interviews.

Internationally, Franceschet and Piscopo's Argentine study [21] demonstrates why changes in women's numerical representation and substantive representation must be examined separately. Mansbridge [20] likewise treats the value of descriptive representation as context-dependent. These arguments support interpreting the reported Nusaniwe outcome as a question about access and potential representation, while reserving judgment about later policy influence. The evidence neither contradicts nor confirms a direct relationship between women's seat share and women-responsive legislation.

The digital findings are compatible with connective action [26] because supporters were described as sharing information through personal contacts. Yet the continued importance of meetings and costs qualifies any interpretation of online participation as detached from established social relations. Boulianne's meta-analysis [27] supports investigating an association between media use and participation, not inferring a local causal effect. Regional inequality [18] and uneven women's online discussion [17] further suggest that a visible candidate's digital experience should not be generalized to all women.

4.8. Implications for Local Democracy and Political Education

The distinction between nomination, election, and substantive influence has practical implications. Indonesia's 30% candidacy provision opens a formal route into competition [39], while comparative quota scholarship shows that institutional design and implementation matter [40]. Local parties can complement nomination requirements with transparent recruitment, campaign training, and access to organizational resources. Electoral institutions and civil society can monitor who receives that support, including women outside prominent family or candidate networks.

For social and civic education, the findings point to training built around actual practices: discussing policy priorities, comparing candidate commitments, identifying the source of digital messages, and distinguishing community solidarity from compulsory political loyalty. Hargittai's distinction between access and skills [28] supports combining online communication training with source evaluation. In settings with unequal digital development [18], face-to-face formats remain necessary so that participation does not depend on platform access alone. Women's groups can also be supported to formulate their own agendas and maintain channels of accountability after elections. The relevant democratic question is whether members can present demands, disagree, and assess representatives' responses, rather than simply mobilize votes. These recommendations follow from the interpretation of the case and are not interventions whose effectiveness was tested in this study.

The analysis is bounded to one electoral setting and relies on the accounts presented in the manuscript. Only five informants are individually identifiable; the total sample and recruitment record are unavailable in the supplied material. Successful candidates dominate the reported evidence, while voters' and community members' independent perspectives are insufficiently detailed. Several passages are jointly attributed, and the underlying transcripts are needed to establish individual quotation provenance. These features limit claims about variation and autonomy. Official electoral records are needed to corroborate the reported totals and seat distribution. The interviews do not identify the independent effect of networks or digital media, establish the frequency of transactional practices, or measure post-election substantive representation. The proposed concept is consequently an analytical proposition for further study, rather than a validated general model. Confirmation of fieldwork procedures, ethics, and researcher positionality remains necessary for a complete research report.

5. CONCLUSION

The reported experiences in Nusaniwe show women candidates organizing political participation through family contacts, community relationships, informal meetings, and digital communication. Financial constraints and gender expectations coexisted with strategies that maintained visibility and extended outreach. Networked women's political participation captures how these relationships were activated and how their resources and obligations may shape political opportunities. The contribution is to distinguish network access and electoral mobilization from political autonomy and substantive representation. Reported success in gaining office does not establish independent voter choice or subsequent influence on policy. Parties and civic educators can use this distinction to support women's organizational access, critical digital skills, and constituency accountability. Future research should compare successful and unsuccessful candidates, include community members and less-connected women, and follow representatives after election to assess how network-based participation relates to substantive political influence.

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