

Report summary



Summary:

Women leaders face challenges in political participation due to lower literacy levels, intimidation within families/communities, limited financial resources for campaigning, and an absence of a focus on gender equality in leadership. This report brief provides evidence that women suffer from patriarchal, cultural, and traditional perspectives that question their political leadership.

Background:

Online violence manifests during periods of political activity, and, when directed at women in public life and political discourse, is an example of Violence Against Women in Politics (VAW-P). It is, therefore, referred to as Online Violence Against Women in Politics (OVAW-P). In order to understand how online violence against women in politics manifests we identified and analysed social media accounts of selected women political candidates and high profile individuals during the January 2021 general elections in Uganda. The report also sought to determine how this online harassment might impact their use of social media platforms for political activity during the elections.

For this purpose, 202 social media accounts belonging to nominated candidates and high-profile individuals were identified and monitored during the campaign and election period on the two most widely used public platforms, Facebook and Twitter. Methodologies used include lexicon building focus group discussions, data scraping of publicly available profiles, qualitative data analysis, and development of a Machine Learning model to identify and tag instances of OVAWP present in posts and comments on social media.

AMPLIFIED ABUSE

Report on Online Violence Against Women in the 2021 Uganda General Elections.

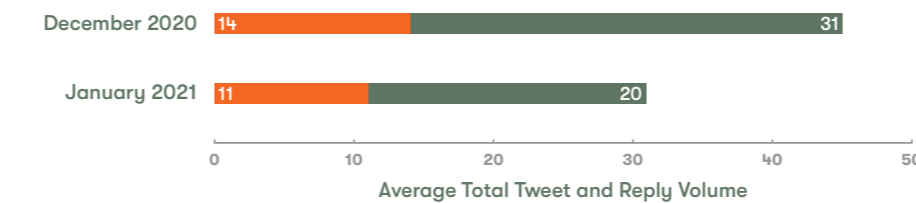
Kakande, A., Achieng, G., Iyer, N., Nyamwire, B., Nabulega, S., and Mwendwa, I. (2021)

Key findings:

Use of platforms

The use of social media platforms for engaging with voters and constituents by women politicians remains low in Uganda. On Twitter, men candidates generated twice as many tweets averaging 31 total tweets and replies per account during December 2020, compared to their women counterparts at 14.

Average Total Tweet and Reply volume by women and men nominated candidates during December and January

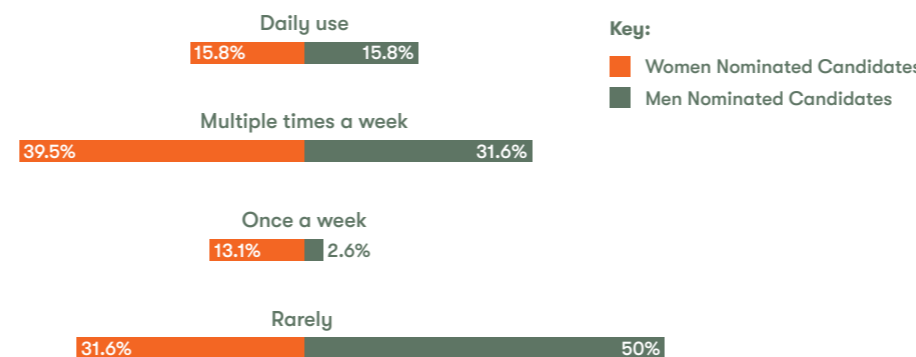


Key:
■ Women Nominated Candidates
■ Men Nominated Candidates

Platform Preference

Women politicians in Uganda prefer using Facebook compared to Twitter for engaging with voters. Sixty-eight (68) percent of women's Facebook accounts monitored were used at least once a week during the campaigns compared to fifty (50) percent of men's Facebook accounts.

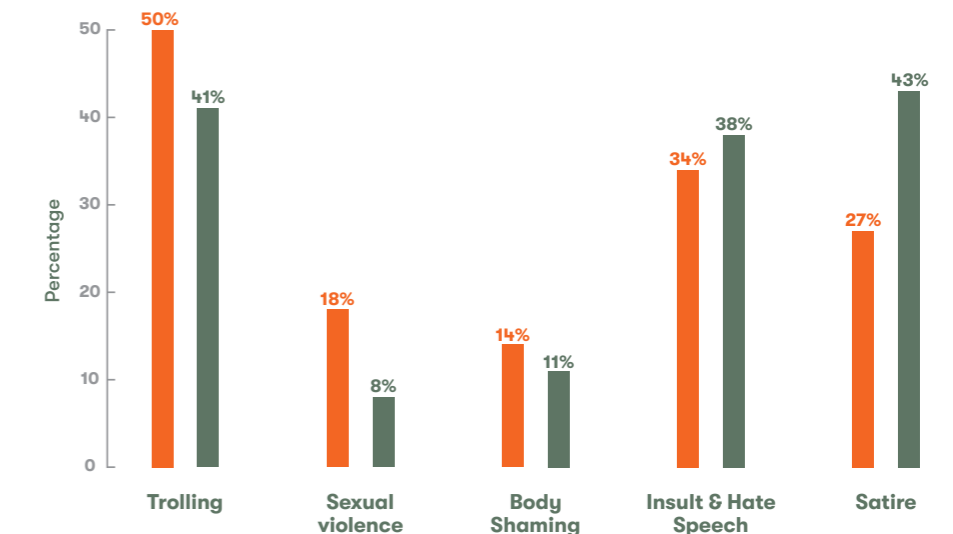
Facebook usage by women and men nominated candidates during December and January



Manifestations of OVAW-P

The common and categories of OVAW-P experienced included but were not limited to trolling, insults, body shaming, sexualised, and gendered abuse. Men and women experience online violence differently.

Women are more likely to experience trolling, sexual violence, and body shaming. Men are more likely to experience hate speech and satirical comments. Eighteen percent of the accounts belonging to women experienced sexual violence compared to 8 percent of those belonging to men.



Key:
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Women politicians were more likely to experience OVAW-P on Twitter as compared to Facebook.

Distribution of Accounts Experiencing a Specific Form of Online Violence based on Sentiment Analysis across Two Social Media Platforms

	Twitter (n = 118)		Facebook (n = 84)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Trolling	22%	16%	27%	12%
Sexual violence	11%	6%	6%	1%
Body Shaming	7%	8%	7%	2%
Hate Speech & Insult	20%	25%	12%	11%
Satire	23%	36%	5%	21%

Whereas both men and women used online tools for engagement, greater online activity was linked with higher levels of online violence for women as opposed to men. And online violence was highly associated with older women and women belonging to FDC, NRM, and NUP

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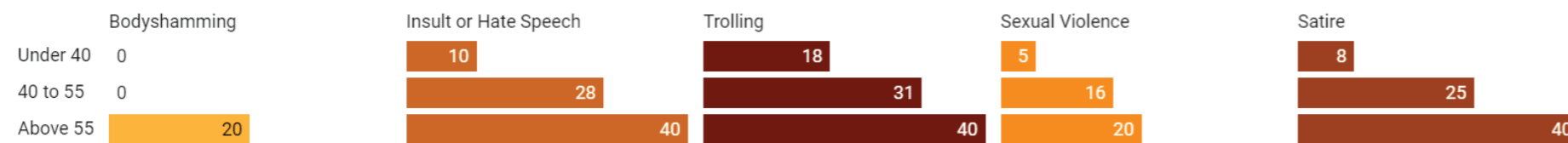
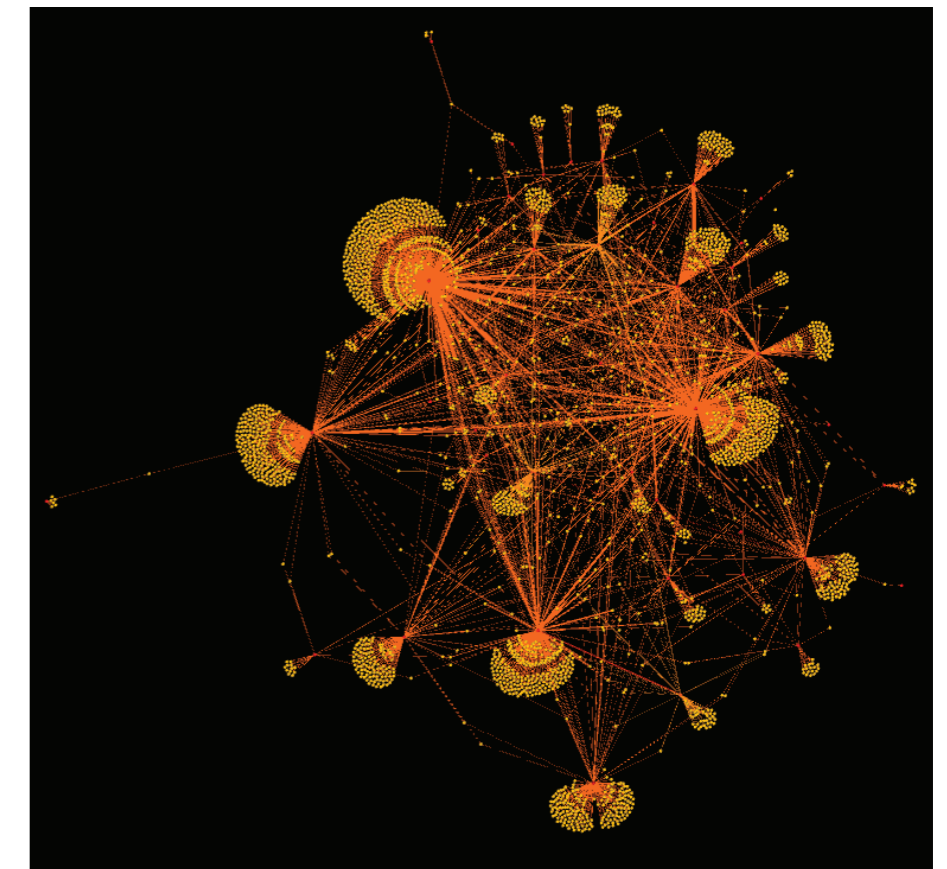
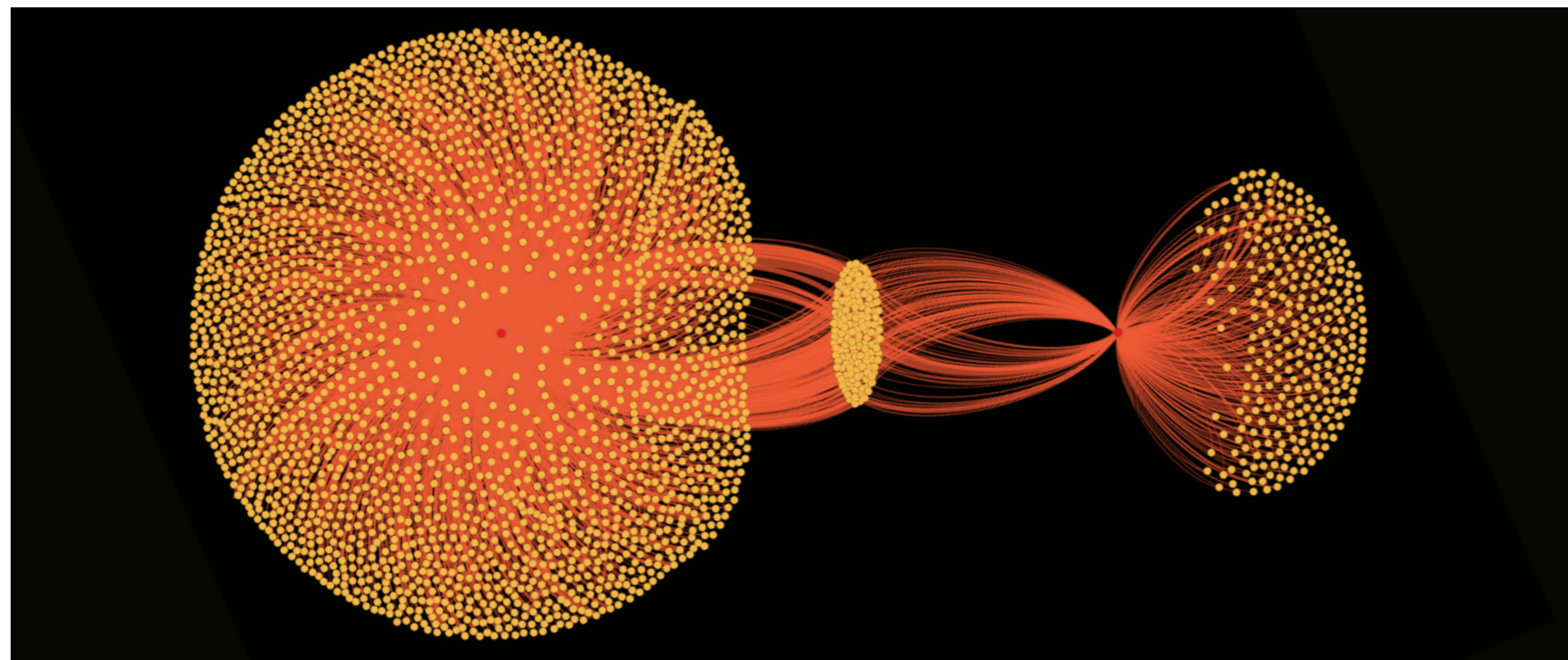


Chart: Pollicy • Created with Datawrapper

Political party	Sexual violence	Trolling	Insult and Hate speech	Satire	Body shaming
FDC	25	38	38	13	0
NRM	10	27	20	23	3
NUP	15	23	39	23	0
INDEPENDENT	5	21	5	16	0
OTHERS	0	21	0	0	0

The research also found that some individuals targeted a specific individual or a specific gender. The presence of cones-shaped networks is an indication of some users targeting specific individuals and where more yellow nodes are linked to a red node, that's an indication of more perpetrators leaving violent or negative comments on that individual's account.



Recommendations:

We identified a number of recommendations for women actors, civil society, political organizations, the electoral management body, national processes such as UWOPA, women's groups, and telecom companies to implement. Generally, there was a growing need for systematic improvements in how technology companies address content moderation in terms of increasing their reliance on localised inputs for hate speech lexicons, improvement of reporting mechanisms as well as the adoption of local languages in content moderation. For civil society and governments, we recommend that extensive training be provided on digital safety and general usage of digital tools, especially among aspiring and incumbent women politicians. In addition to that, civil society organisations should increase research on online behaviors and online violence as well as outreach in order to de-stigmatize talking about violence.

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