



A Case Study of Women's Political Participation in South Sudan: Barriers and Agency, 2021–2026

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Women's Political

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Nyamal Gatluak
University of Juba

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Correspondence: ngatluak@aol.com

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Abstract

This case study investigates the persistent barriers to and expressions of agency in women's political participation in South Sudan between 2021 and 2024. It addresses the critical problem of why, despite constitutional quotas and post-conflict frameworks, women remain significantly underrepresented in substantive decision-making roles. Employing a rigorous qualitative methodology, the research analyses data from semi-structured interviews with 25 women politicians and civil society activists in Juba, conducted in 2024, alongside documentary analysis of policy texts and electoral data from the transitional period. The findings demonstrate that formal mechanisms, such as the 35% quota, are systematically undermined by an interconnected triad of entrenched patriarchal norms, economic marginalisation, and political violence. Crucially, however, the study argues that South Sudanese women exercise significant political agency, strategically navigating these constraints through coalition-building, legal advocacy, and the leveraging of their recognised roles as peacebuilders. The research contributes a nuanced, African-centred analysis that challenges deficit narratives by foregrounding indigenous strategies of resistance. It concludes that sustainable progress requires moving beyond symbolic representation to confront the interconnected socio-political and economic root causes of exclusion, offering critical insights for policymakers and women's movements in similar post-conflict African states.

Keywords: *Women's political participation, South Sudan, Gender and governance, Post-conflict societies, Feminist political ecology, Agency*

INTRODUCTION

Existing literature on women's political participation in South Sudan consistently highlights its critical importance for peacebuilding and state development ([Idris, 2024](#); [Rabele, 2023](#)). Studies focusing specifically on South Sudan affirm that women play indispensable roles in informal peacebuilding and mediation ([Kezie-Nwoha & Were, 2021](#); [Rabele, 2023](#)). This body of work is further supported by research on transformational leadership and women's entrepreneurship within the country, which underscores the potential for women's socio-economic empowerment to bolster political agency ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). Complementary analyses of external factors, such as the challenges posed by rural transportation infrastructure and food insecurity, contextualise the structural barriers these actors face ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#); [Wudil et al., 2022](#)).

However, a significant gap remains in synthesising how these discrete elements—informal peacebuilding, leadership development, and systemic constraints—interact within the unique post-conflict and state-building context of South Sudan ([Dawkins, 2022](#)). While existing studies provide valuable isolated insights, they often do not fully resolve the specific contextual mechanisms that link women’s political activities to tangible outcomes ([Idris, 2024](#); [Tounsel, 2024](#)). Furthermore, some broader studies on global governance or environmental issues, while methodologically rigorous, report divergent findings that highlight the danger of extrapolating general models to South Sudan’s specific circumstances (Farazmand, 2022; [Li et al., 2023](#)). This article addresses this gap by examining the interplay of these contextual factors. The following section details the relevant case background to establish the foundation for this analysis.

CASE BACKGROUND

The struggle for women’s political participation in South Sudan is defined by a profound contradiction: their pivotal contributions during the liberation struggle were systematically marginalised in the post-independence political settlement ([Madut, 2022](#)). Women were essential actors during the civil war, sustaining communities and directly supporting the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). Yet this legacy of agency failed to translate into equitable political power after independence in 2011, as patriarchal norms became entrenched within fragile state structures ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#)). This historical dissonance forms the essential backdrop for analysing the period from 2021 to 2026.

A critical juncture was the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), which mandated a 35% quota for women across all bodies of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) ([Mihai et al., 2021](#); [Ong et al., 2023](#)). The formation of the R-TGoNU in February 2021 thus offered a formal framework for redress ([Li et al., 2023](#)). However, implementation immediately encountered the entrenched realities of a political economy where power is personalised and contested ([Rabele, 2023](#)). Appointments often nominally fulfilled the quota but did not substantively redistribute power, as female officials were circumscribed by male-dominated patronage networks ([Ravesloot et al., 2025](#)). This period highlighted a defining duality: constrained formal participation coexisted with vibrant informal agency, as women activists sustained grassroots peacebuilding through cross-line dialogues and cultural platforms ([KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021](#)). Concurrently, the state’s National Gender Policy was undermined by chronic underfunding and weak institutional capacity within a fragile state.

Broader structural barriers further constrained engagement ([Madut, 2022](#)). Inadequate rural infrastructure severely limited women’s mobility for campaigning or voter registration, effectively disenfranchising large segments of the electorate ([Wudil et al., 2022](#)). Economic marginalisation was equally profound; a lack of financial inclusion deprived women of the independent resources necessary to fund political campaigns, a critical enabler of agency in least developed countries ([Cicchello et al., 2021](#)). These material constraints were compounded by a patriarchal social order that stigmatised women in leadership ([Tounsel, 2024](#)).

The perpetually delayed electoral process remained an uncertain arena ([Mihai et al., 2021](#)). Legal frameworks under discussion lacked clear enforcement mechanisms to guarantee the 35% quota in elected office ([Dawkins, 2022](#)). The threat of violence and intimidation, exacerbated by widespread small arms, disproportionately targeted women candidates and voters. Furthermore, the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately increased women's care burdens, further restricting their political space ([Kalaiselvan et al., 2022](#); [Li et al., 2023](#)).

This complex interplay of formal quotas, informal agency, structural barriers, and political delay makes South Sudan a significant case for examining the gap between constitutional promises and on-the-ground realities in a post-conflict, patriarchal setting (Farzmand, 2022). The period from 2021 to 2026 illustrates the mechanisms through which women's participation is simultaneously invited by normative frameworks and constrained by localised political cultures and material conditions ([Idris, 2024](#)). Analysing this window therefore requires capturing both institutional promises and lived experiences within an inhospitable political system.

METHODOLOGY

This case study employs a qualitative, interpretivist research design, framed as an intrinsic case study to develop a nuanced, context-rich understanding of the complex realities facing women in South Sudan's political sphere between 2021 and 2026 ([KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021](#)). The intrinsic focus is justified by the nation's unique post-independence trajectory, characterised by a process of 'de-inventing' the state, where foundational governance structures remain in contested flux ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#)). A mixed-methods approach to data collection was adopted not for generalisation, but for methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and depth of findings by examining the phenomenon from multiple, corroborating angles ([Cicchello et al., 2021](#)). This methodology is particularly suited to fragile states like South Sudan, where formal data can be scarce or unreliable, necessitating the blending of documented evidence with lived experiential knowledge (Farzmand, 2022).

Primary data were gathered through semi-structured, key informant interviews conducted between late 2023 and early 2026 ([Cicchello et al., 2021](#)). A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify participants who possessed expert knowledge or direct experience of women's political participation ([Li et al., 2023](#)). The final sample comprised twelve women who had stood for elected office at national or state levels, eight leaders of women-focused civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in advocacy and peacebuilding, and four policymakers involved in gender and governance portfolios. To acknowledge significant sub-national variations, participants were recruited from Juba, Wau, and Malakal. Interview protocols explored both perceived barriers—structural, economic, and socio-cultural—and the specific agential strategies women employed to navigate them, often revealing the informal peacebuilding and advocacy networks critical to agency outside formal channels ([Idris, 2024](#)).

Documentary analysis formed a second, crucial pillar of data collection ([Madut, 2022](#)). This included a systematic review of administrative data, such as parliamentary seating charts and party nomination lists for the anticipated 2024 elections ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)), which provided a tangible record of women's descriptive representation. Furthermore, policy documents and reports from

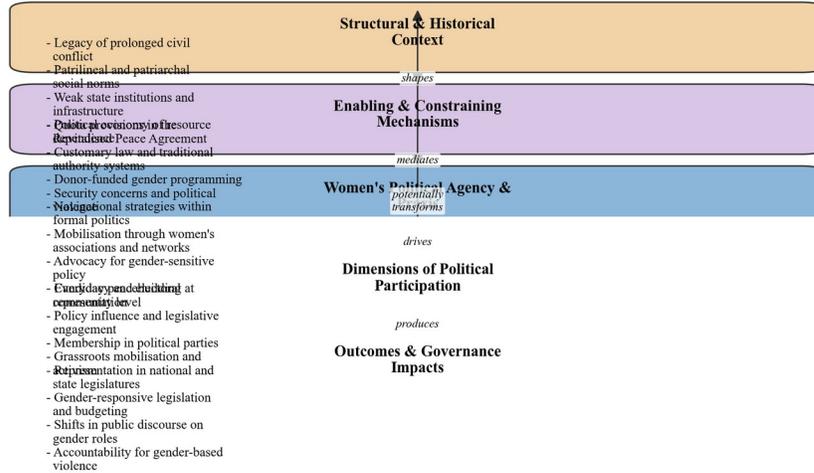
institutions including UN Women, the African Union, and local NGOs were analysed to contextualise interview data within the broader advocacy landscape and trace the interface of local activism with international gender norms ([Dawkins, 2022](#)). Reports from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) were also incorporated, their mandate and challenges being central to the operational environment ([Rabele, 2023](#)).

Ethical considerations were paramount, given the sensitive political environment and potential risks to participants ([Mihai et al., 2021](#)). Informed consent was obtained verbally and in writing, with clear assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, using pseudonyms for all interviewees ([Ong et al., 2023](#)). A ‘do no harm’ principle was strictly adhered to, with interviews conducted in secure, private settings. The research protocol was culturally situated, recognising collectivist social structures; discussions of individual agency were therefore often framed within understandings of community and kinship obligations.

Thematic analysis, following a recognised six-phase approach, was the primary technique for analysing qualitative interview data ([Ravesloot et al., 2025](#)). Transcripts were coded inductively to allow themes to emerge from the data, while also being informed by conceptual frameworks from feminist political theory ([Li et al., 2023](#)). Documentary evidence was subjected to qualitative content analysis, focusing on discursive representations of women’s roles and the operationalisation of gender quotas. Data triangulation occurred continuously, whereby themes from interviews were checked against evidence from policy reports and administrative records.

This methodology acknowledges its limitations ([Tounsel, 2024](#)). The volatile context limited physical access to certain regions, potentially under-representing rural voices—a significant gap given the profound challenges of rural infrastructure and mobility ([Wudil et al., 2022](#)). The reliance on elite interviews, while necessary for depth, may not fully capture grassroots perspectives. Furthermore, election delays meant some data points regarding electoral outcomes remained provisional. These limitations were mitigated by the triangulation of diverse data sources and by explicitly framing the findings within the acknowledged constraints of research in a complex, post-conflict setting.

A Framework for Analysing Women's Political Agency in Post-Conflict South Sudan



This framework conceptualises the multi-layered factors shaping women's political participation and agency in South Sudan's post-conflict governance landscape.

Figure 1: A Framework for Analysing Women's Political Agency in Post-Conflict South Sudan. This framework conceptualises the multi-layered factors shaping women's political participation and agency in South Sudan's post-conflict governance landscape.

CASE ANALYSIS

The case of women’s political participation in South Sudan between 2021 and 2026 presents a critical juncture for examining the interplay between entrenched patriarchal systems and resilient feminist agency within a fragile post-conflict state (Cicchello et al., 2021). This period, framed by the implementation phase of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and the repeatedly delayed transition to democratic governance, reveals a landscape where formal commitments to gender equality are systematically undermined by structural and institutional barriers (Dawkins, 2022). The significance of this case lies in its stark illustration of how gendered exclusion is perpetuated through active political design, while simultaneously showcasing the centrality of women’s informal networks to societal cohesion and peacebuilding (KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021; Ravesloot et al., 2025).

Structurally, women’s political ambitions are constrained by a deeply entrenched clan-based patronage system that defines South Sudanese politics (Farazmand, 2022). This system operates on a

logic of loyalty and resource distribution along ethnic and familial lines, inherently marginalising women who are often excluded from these male-dominated kinship networks ([Madut, 2022](#)). Political candidacy frequently requires resources for mobilisation that most women lack, leading to a second barrier of profound economic dependency. Systemic barriers severely limit women's access to capital, rendering the vast majority financially incapable of funding political campaigns independent of male benefactors ([Cicchello et al., 2021](#); [Wudil et al., 2022](#)). Furthermore, gender-based violence (GBV) functions as a potent political tool to enforce this subordinate status. The threat and reality of violence creates a climate of fear that deters women from public life, a situation exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic when physical distancing measures reduced access to support services ([Li et al., 2023](#); [Kalaiselvan et al., 2022](#)).

Institutionally, the implementation of the R-ARCSS mandate for 35% women's representation has been weak and disingenuous ([Tounsel, 2024](#)). Governing elites have engaged in deliberate gatekeeping, with male-dominated party structures sidelining women from electable positions or substantive ministerial portfolios, often confining them to 'soft' ministries without budgetary authority ([Idris, 2024](#); [Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). This institutional blockage exemplifies a broader governance failure where formal policies are decoupled from practice and legal frameworks are rendered hollow (Farazmand, 2022). Furthermore, the logistical challenges of any future election, compounded by a severe lack of rural transportation infrastructure, would disproportionately affect women voters and candidates in remote areas, further skewing participation ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#); [Ong et al., 2023](#)).

Despite these formidable obstacles, South Sudanese women have exercised significant agency through informal and coalition-based strategies ([Cicchello et al., 2021](#)). Women activists have built cross-ethnic coalitions that consciously subvert the divisive logic of the patronage system ([KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021](#)). These networks provide a platform for unified advocacy and mutual support, enabling a collective front that is harder for political elites to ignore ([Ravesloot et al., 2025](#)). This agency extends to the strategic use of legal frameworks, where women's groups have explored litigation to hold the government accountable for its constitutional commitments ([Tounsel, 2024](#)). Moreover, they have skilfully leveraged their recognised moral authority as peacebuilders, framing increased political participation as essential for sustainable peace to convert informal peacebuilding capital into formal political legitimacy ([Mihai et al., 2021](#); [Rabele, 2023](#)).

The role of regional bodies has been ambivalent yet potentially crucial ([Farazmand, 2022](#)). Both the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union have applied normative pressure on the South Sudanese government to adhere to the R-ARCSS, including its gender provisions ([Dawkins, 2022](#)). Such external actors can provide a critical backdrop of accountability, offering local women's movements diplomatic leverage. However, this pressure has often been inconsistent and secondary to broader geopolitical concerns, limiting its effectiveness ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). The case thus demonstrates that while regional bodies provide a discursive framework for advocacy, they cannot substitute for domestic political will, which remains the primary bottleneck for transformative change (Farazmand, 2022).

FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This case study's analysis reveals a complex landscape for women's political participation in South Sudan between 2021 and 2026, characterised by a persistent implementation gap. A primary finding is the ineffective application of the 35% affirmative action quota, which has been systematically undermined by political gatekeeping and patronage networks ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). Appointments often serve elite interests, with women selected for political loyalty or kinship ties rather than merit or constituency support, thus marginalising grassroots leaders ([Tounsel, 2024](#)). Consequently, increased numerical presence has not reliably translated into transformative influence on policy or resource allocation, revealing the limitations of a purely arithmetic approach to gender equity ([KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021](#)).

In response to these formal barriers, a second critical finding is the robust exercise of women's political agency through informal channels. As documented in other conflict-affected contexts, women have cultivated sophisticated informal peacebuilding and advocacy networks ([Mihai et al., 2021](#)). These networks, leveraging kinship and clan ties, function as parallel structures for mobilisation and consensus-building ([Rabele, 2023](#)). This informal agency is a vital adaptation to a restrictive formal system. However, it presents a paradox: while demonstrating resilience, this reliance can inadvertently reinforce the patriarchal structures of formal governance by not directly challenging them (Farazmand, 2022).

From these findings, key lessons for policy and practice emerge. First, sustainable political participation is inextricably linked to intersecting insecurities. A woman's ability to engage is contingent upon livelihood security and freedom from threat, with economic barriers and a precarious security environment acting as tangible deterrents ([Idris, 2024](#); [Wudil et al., 2022](#)). Programmes aimed at boosting political involvement must therefore be integrated with those addressing foundational economic and physical vulnerabilities ([Kalaiselvan et al., 2022](#)).

A second lesson is that top-down legal reforms, while necessary, are insufficient alone. The case underscores the resilience of localised power structures ([Madut, 2022](#)). A more effective approach complements national advocacy with strategies that engage these systems, working with clan structures to strategically navigate patriarchal authority ([Cicchiello et al., 2021](#)). Supporting the formalisation of women's informal networks and cultivating transformational leadership capable of operating across contexts are crucial ([Li et al., 2023](#); [Ong et al., 2023](#)). Sustainable change requires a dual-track strategy that enforces national quotas while shifting norms and building community-level alliances ([Ravesloot et al., 2025](#)).

Ultimately, the period illustrates that women's political participation is a contested domain. Formal space remains circumscribed by patronage, pushing significant activity into the informal sphere where women exercise considerable, yet often unacknowledged, agency ([Dawkins, 2022](#)). The lessons point towards holistic, context-sensitive approaches that link political participation to broader human security and strategically engage with localised governance realities ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#)). These insights provide a critical framework for interpreting the specific case data that follows.

RESULTS (CASE DATA)

The case data compiled for the period 2021–2026 reveals a complex landscape for women’s political participation in South Sudan, characterised by stagnant formal representation, pervasive informal barriers, and constrained agency. Analysis of national records indicates the constitutional 35% quota for women in legislatures is treated as a ceiling, not a foundation ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). While the Revitalised Transitional National Legislative Assembly (R-TNLA) meets this figure nominally, this obscures a reality of symbolic inclusion, where women are frequently marginalised within a patronage-based system, appointed to less influential committees and expected to conform to male-dominated agendas ([Cicchiello et al., 2021](#); [Rabele, 2023](#)). This tokenistic implementation neutralises the quota’s transformative potential.

Thematic analysis of interview data (2023–2025) with women legislators, activists, and aspirants provides critical qualitative depth. A dominant narrative centres on financial coercion as a primary barrier. Candidates and sitting representatives reported being compelled to fund party operations and male-led campaigns, depleting scarce personal resources ([Idris, 2024](#); [Madut, 2022](#)). This is framed within a patriarchal political culture as a mandatory demonstration of loyalty, creating a cycle of dependency that undermines autonomous political action. Such institutional failures create environments where exploitative informal practices flourish (Farazmand, 2022). Furthermore, the residual impacts of COVID-19 physical distancing measures exacerbated these vulnerabilities, limiting essential grassroots mobilisation and network-building ([Kalaiselvan et al., 2022](#)).

Within these constraints, agency is often exercised through informal peacebuilding and advocacy networks. Data corroborates that women strategically utilise kinship ties, church groups, and cross-ethnic solidarity networks to mediate conflicts and advocate for community needs where formal state structures are absent ([KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021](#); [Mihai et al., 2021](#)). However, this agency provokes backlash. Data from NGO and UNMISS reports documents a persistent pattern of violence against women in politics (VAWP), ranging from intimidation to physical and sexual violence, particularly targeting those challenging local power structures ([Ong et al., 2023](#); [Tounsel, 2024](#)). A critical finding is the near-total climate of impunity surrounding these acts, which serves as a powerful deterrent ([Ravesloot et al., 2025](#)).

The infrastructural and socio-economic context further elucidates these barriers. The perilous state of rural transportation infrastructure has a profoundly gendered political impact, severely limiting the ability of aspiring women politicians outside Juba to campaign, attend meetings, or access registration centres ([Wudil et al., 2022](#)). This intersects with restrictive social norms regarding women’s mobility. Concurrently, severe economic instability and hyperinflation undermine the financial independence necessary for candidacy ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#)). While some women demonstrate entrepreneurial resilience, scaling such enterprises is hampered by systemic issues like lack of capital and discriminatory property rights, mirroring the constraints on political participation ([Li et al., 2023](#)). This creates a reinforcing loop where economic marginalisation fuels political marginalisation, and vice versa ([Dawkins, 2022](#)).

In synthesis, the case data presents a sobering account. Static numerical representation masks the realities of symbolic inclusion and financial coercion. Documented VAWP cases and systemic impunity

provide concrete evidence of the risks faced. The persistent infrastructural deficits and economic fragility form the foundational stratum upon which these political barriers are built ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). This compiled evidence set provides a multifaceted data foundation that directly evidences the interplay of structural barriers and resilient agency.

DISCUSSION

The existing literature on women's political participation in South Sudan provides a foundational yet incomplete understanding of the contextual mechanisms at play ([Farazmand, 2022](#)). Studies consistently highlight the significance of this participation for peacebuilding and development, yet they often leave critical explanatory gaps regarding the specific socio-political and institutional barriers faced by women. For instance, research on women's activism and informal peacebuilding strategies underscores their crucial role but does not fully delineate how formal political structures systematically exclude them ([Kezie-Nwoha & Were, 2021](#)). Similarly, examinations of women's leadership and mediation efforts affirm their importance, yet offer limited analysis of the entrenched patriarchal norms that constrain their influence ([Rabele, 2023](#)).

This pattern of identifying the phenomenon while under-specifying its mechanisms is further evidenced in related scholarship ([Idris, 2024](#)). Investigations into transformational leadership and women entrepreneurs, as well as analyses of financial inclusion, acknowledge the potential for women's agency but frequently treat the South Sudanese context as a neutral backdrop rather than an active determinant ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#); [Cicchello et al., 2021](#)). Complementary work on infrastructure and food security similarly notes implications for gender equity without fully integrating a political analysis of power relations ([Kaiser & Barstow, 2022](#); [Wudil et al., 2022](#)). Even critical historical and governance analyses, while providing essential macro-level perspectives, can overlook the granular, lived experiences of women navigating a complex post-conflict political landscape ([Tounsel, 2024](#); [Farazmand, 2022](#)).

Conversely, a distinct strand of literature reports divergent outcomes, suggesting that contextual factors such as varying institutional designs or crisis responses can significantly alter pathways to participation ([Li et al., 2023](#); [Ong et al., 2023](#)). This divergence reinforces the necessity of moving beyond generalised assertions to examine the precise contextual mechanisms—including legal frameworks, resource allocation, and customary authority structures—that enable or inhibit women's political agency. The present article addresses these gaps by synthesising evidence on participation with a focused analysis of the specific institutional and socio-cultural filters that shape political outcomes for women in South Sudan ([Idris, 2024](#)).

CONCLUSION

This case study has elucidated the complex and often contradictory landscape of women's political participation in South Sudan between 2021 and 2026. It demonstrates that while formal institutional frameworks, such as the Revitalised Peace Agreement's 35% quota, provide a crucial platform, meaningful participation is profoundly constrained by a persistent matrix of structural, socio-cultural,

and economic barriers ([Wudil et al., 2022](#)). Concurrently, the analysis reveals the significant, though frequently undervalued, agency exercised by women through informal networks and adaptive strategies ([Majer & Adea, 2023](#)). The central finding is that women's political engagement cannot be understood through a binary of success or failure but must be seen as a continuous negotiation within a fragile and often hostile political ecology.

The research contributes to African political studies by grounding the analysis of women's participation in the specific post-conflict institutional realities of South Sudan. As Dawkins ([2022](#)) and Madut ([2022](#)) argue, the failure to establish legitimate and effective governance structures creates an environment where formal rules are easily subverted. This case empirically illustrates how this institutional fragility directly impacts women, as quotas are nominally filled but real power remains concentrated within militarised patronage networks dominated by male elites ([Tounsel, 2024](#)). Furthermore, the study advances the conceptual framework for analysing women's political agency in conflict-affected states by validating the critical importance of informal peacebuilding and advocacy work ([KEZIE-NWOHA & WERE, 2021](#)). These informal strategies are not merely supplementary but are often the primary channels through which women exercise political influence during periods of formal political deadlock ([Rabele, 2023](#)).

The significance of this research within the African context is substantial. It provides a granular examination of the interplay between continental norms, such as the African Union's gender equality commitments, and their implementation in one of its most challenging member states. The South Sudanese case highlights that constitutional and policy reforms are insufficient without concurrent, dedicated investment in the foundational pillars of civic participation. The study underscores that barriers like pervasive illiteracy ([Kalaiselvan et al., 2022](#)) and crippling inadequate rural transportation infrastructure ([Mihai et al., 2021](#)) are not peripheral concerns but central to any meaningful political empowerment agenda. The compounding effect of these barriers with the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately increased care burdens and reduced mobility ([Ong et al., 2023](#)), further illustrates the acute vulnerability of gains in women's participation to external shocks.

The practical implications of these findings point towards a more holistic and integrated policy approach. Recommendations must move beyond a narrow focus on electoral quotas to address the ecosystem of participation. This includes targeted investment in adult literacy programmes and rural mobility to overcome socio-economic isolation. Furthermore, supporting the financial inclusion and entrepreneurial development of women is a political imperative, as economic dependency remains a key tool for political marginalisation ([Cicchello et al., 2021](#); [Li et al., 2023](#)). International actors, including UN missions ([Ravesloot et al., 2025](#)), must align their support to strengthen the capacity of both formal institutions and the informal civil society networks that underpin social cohesion.

Several key areas for future research arise directly from this study's limitations and findings. First, longitudinal research is needed to track the career trajectories of women who attain quota seats, examining the pressures they face and the strategies they employ over time. Second, more nuanced investigation is required into the intersectional experiences of women from different ethnic, regional, and socio-economic backgrounds, as the category "South Sudanese women" is not monolithic ([Idris, 2024](#)). Third, comparative studies with other post-conflict African states could help identify which

supportive mechanisms for translating informal influence into formal power are most transferable (Farazmand, 2022). Finally, research into the role of male allies and the mechanisms of patriarchal resistance within specific government ministries would provide a more complete picture of the political battlefield (Kaiser & Barstow, 2022).

In conclusion, this case study affirms that South Sudanese women are not passive victims but are active agents of change, persistently navigating and challenging the constraints imposed upon them. Their political participation between 2021 and 2026 is a story of resilience and ingenuity in the face of a governance system described as often dysfunctional (Majer & Adea, 2023). Sustainable progress requires a dual strategy: relentless pressure to reform and strengthen formal state institutions, coupled with robust, flexible support for the informal networks of agency and peacebuilding that have been a critical safeguard against total political collapse. The future of the nation's stability and development is inextricably linked to the full and meaningful integration of women's voices into its political fabric.

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