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African women in politics: An analysis on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe

By

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Abstract

Since time immemorial, the rights of women in politics and their equality in political representation has always been a case of struggle and this have been reflected in the focus of the study which was to analyse the challenges facing the representation of women in politics in Zimbabwe. The study utilised the qualitative approach where the perceptions, insights and experiences of participants was tabulated. Through the use of qualitative research methods where purposive sampling was used on a sample of 15 participants, it was discovered that women participation in politics is important for it enhances representation and informed decision-making. The study also noted the importance of S124, which is relevant on women representation in politics in Zimbabwe. this clause gives voice to women in parliament and it inducts them into political processes so that when this expires, women participation would have heard a threshold for success. However, there are numerous challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe. The patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society, socialisation and cultural process and lack of resources are challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe. Therefore, from the study, it was noted that there is need for an increased role of political parties in supporting women in politics. In addition, to increase women representation in politics in Zimbabwe, there is need to initiate a discourse of socialisation from all spheres of the community.

Declaration form

I, Caroline Mutapaire, B200664B, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own solemnly work and that it has not been copied or lifted from any other sources without acknowledgement.

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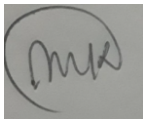
Chairperson:  Date:

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my parents, brother and my sisters. Thank you for your prayers, continued and unwavering support.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, the giver of life for the ability to complete my studies. I would also like to acknowledge my supervisor and I feel deeply indebted for his time, commitment and tireless efforts to see this project come to an end. Special thanks to the Department of Peace and Governance all staff members at Bindura University of Science Education.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AWP- African Women's Protocol

AU- African Union

BDPA- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

CCPR- Convention on Civil and Political Rights

CDF- Constituency Development Fund

CSO- Civil Society Organization

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

MDG- Millennium Development Goal

NGP- National Gender Policy

SADC- Southern African Development Community

UN- United Nations

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

ZEC- Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZESN- Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the Study

The world is currently facing an increase in women in active politics due to influences of liberal feminists that believe in the political, social and economic equality of men and women. In as much as these theoretical claims have dominated the discourse of politics and beyond, practically, this has just remained sentiments considering that from all levels of politics, women are still underrepresented. The underrepresentation of women is experienced both in the developed and the developing world, with the gap increasingly higher in the developing world. In Zimbabwe for instance, women according to Zimbabwe Statistics (2025), comprise of over 52% of the population but on both levels of politics, they occupy less than 30% of the decision-making seats. This means that there is a wide disproportionate gap affecting women in politics in Zimbabwe, which requires an interrogation of factors that may affect their political status.

From an international perspective, Zimbabwe is party to various legislation and principles that are aimed at increasing the participation of women in politics. Amongst these include Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA). Furthermore, the country is party to the United Nations (UN) are guided by Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in which the third goal seeks to promote on women representation in politics (Dube, 2016). Zimbabwe is also party to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Declaration which stipulates that states must ensure at least 30% women in political decision-making by 2005, and 50% by 2015 (ZESN, 2024).

In addition, Zimbabwe is part to the African Women's Protocol of 2003 (Article 9) where the AU set targets of 50% women representation in decision making bodies by 2012. There have been national policies as well in Zimbabwe to increase on women's representation in politics such as the 2004 National Gender Policy (Section 6.2.3.2), which advocates a 52% representation of women in decision-making positions.

It is imperative to note that the representation of women in politics is critical for it enhances community development as well as the achievement of socio-economic goals (Murray, 2023). This is confirmed by HIVOS (2021) which articulated that when women are represented at all levels of government, there is more equitable distribution of community resources, including gender-sensitive spending on socio-economic programmes such as healthcare, education and nutrition.

To address the issue of lack of women representation in politics in Zimbabwe, the 2013 constitution implemented the quota system which was supposed to run for ten years, and was subsequently furthered in the 2023 elections. Accordingly, Section 124 postulates that there are 60 seats reserved for women in parliament and these seats are uncontested. The rationale of the clause was to ensure that women develop their capacities and skills in parliament (Sithole, 2018). In addition, the quota system in parliament was put forward so as to address the socio-economic and cultural barriers that women are facing in politics and these are impacting on their representation. However, after two election cycles, the number of women elected out of 210 constituencies was on 22, translating to only 10%, showing the continued challenges being faced by women in politics.

There are a plethora of factors affecting the participation of women in politics. Amongst these remain the ever-constant patriarchal nature of society, which stereotypes against women. HIVOS (2021) observed that Zimbabwe has a strong patriarchal base which makes it next to impossible for women to achieve higher positions in all walks of life, including politics.

This is because women who compete for political office are often associated with negative labelling, being termed immoral or their family orientation being brought up during campaigns. Those that make it in politics are often associated as unfit in the society (Dube, 2016). Since Zimbabwe is still experiencing high levels of patriarchy, women are still holding dear the norms and beliefs of society hindering on their chances to become politicians.

The underrepresentation of women in politics is also associated with capacity gaps. Murray (2023) argues that women face limitations in education, preparation for political office, contacts and even the resources required for them to be effective in politics. Unlike their male counterparts, women also face strategic barriers that impact their political careers, with such including sexual stereotyping, political socialisation as well as balancing her roles of career and family (Seth, 2022).

To address the barriers impacting on the representation of women in politics, various methods and principles have been implemented. Amongst these include the reservation of 60 seats for women in parliament, which albeit offering women with experience in parliamentary affairs, it is still to achieve tangible results (Zim Stats, 2025). Civil society organisations (CSOs) have also proffered their solutions through research and development to emancipate women and ensure their political involvement. These efforts have also been supported by government efforts which through capacity building and resource mobilisation, have sought to enhance the participation of women in politics (Murray, 2023).

In addition, aspects such as affirmative action, access to education, ending early child marriages have been put to place but the numbers of women participating in politics still has not reached a representation threshold.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to analyse the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe

1.3 Statement of the Problem

There are traditional, strategic and systematic barriers deterring women from political participation in Zimbabwe. In the 2023 elections in Zimbabwe, women who contributed 56% percent of the electorate managed to garner only 22 seats out of the 210 in parliament (ZimStats, 2025). This is despite calls from political parties and activists to field more women in competitive sets apart from the 60 reserved for women in parliament. Of note is that the 60 reserved seats are only procedural as such do not have voting powers and do not receive Constituency Development Funds (CDF). Women in politics face numerous challenges such as lack of capacity, lack of support from both the party and the constituency, stereotyping and the patriarchal nature of the society amongst other challenges (Seth, 2022). Given the deep-rooted socio-cultural challenges that women face, there is therefore need for affirmative policies be strengthened to ensure the participation and representation of women in politics. The clause of women representation in parliament need to be meaningful and also be translated to local authorities for that is where grassroots level politics flourish.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study seeks to address the following objectives:

1. To determine the importance of women participation in politics in Zimbabwe.

2. To determine on the relevance of S124 on women representation in politics in Zimbabwe.

3. To analyse on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe.

4. To come up with interventions to address on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions

1. What is the importance of participation of women in Zimbabwean politics?

2. What is the relevance of S124 on women representation in politics in Zimbabwe?

3. What are the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe?

4. What are the interventions to address on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe?

1.6 Assumptions of the study

The following are assumptions of the study:

1. Women in politics in Zimbabwe face structural, patriarchal and strategic barriers, impacting negatively on their political careers; and

2. Section 124 of the Constitution reserving 60 seats for women in parliament has done more harm than good towards enhancing women participation in politics.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study is significant to a number of stakeholders in a different manner. To literature, the study is important for it will add in the dearth of knowledge on the factors challenging the participation of women in politics. Albeit numerous schools of thought having opined their perspectives on the matter, this study will add to literature as it will address the research question from the context of strategic, contextual and patriarchal challenges impacting women

participation in politics, also considering the role of S124 of the constitution.

To active women in politics, CSOs, government institutions and other relevant stakeholders, the study is important for it will unpack challenges being faced by women in politics, offering practical solutions from the research on how to address this gap. For the researcher, advanced research skills on a practical problem will be the outcome of conducting the study.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations of the study inform on the scope of the study and this study is limited to Mashonaland Central in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the study focuses on barriers facing women in politics in Zimbabwe.

1.9 Limitations of the study

Babbie (2010) argues that limitations of the study are those characteristics of the research design or methodology that have an impact on the interpretation of the findings within the research. The basic limitation of this study includes the use of interviews as the data collection instrument, which can be prone to bias. However, through investigating a wide sample, this limitation was countered. Furthermore, another limitation of the study included the tabulating and making sense of vast data collected through secondary sources. This process was time consuming and has the ability of leaving some information.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

This section defines the key terms underpinning the study.

Women in politics

Murray (2020) defines women in politics as those females that active in politics, attaining positions as leaders of political parties, parliaments or are part of formal structures within a political party. Women in politics are also defined as those women that have positions of power and authority to be effective in decision making.

Affirmative Action in politics

In politics, affirmative action refers to those policies, practices or laws that are promulgated so as to enhance representation of historically disadvantaged groups such as women or the youth in government offices or in the decision-making processes (Nerd, 2024).

1.11 Dissertation Outline

The study is structured in the following outline

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings, Discussions and Analysis

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The literature review plays a critical role towards understanding the research process as well as towards addressing and understanding the research problem. This is because the literature review ensures that there a synergy between the sources consulted and ensuring that the pertinent terms, theories and models underpinning the study are comprehended. In addition, the literature review is relevant in filling the gaps of existing literature within the study (Toracco, 2016). This process ensures that from the sources consulted, there is a comprehension on the factors and processes underpinning the research and the possibility of filling the gaps in literature from the current study. Furthermore, the literature review also helps in decision making in the research where all research variables are addressed and the understanding of the research problem. This section therefore is purposefully structured to detail on the importance of women participation in politics, the relevance of S124 on women representation in politics in Zimbabwe, the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe and the interventions to address on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe. The feminist theory will also be utilised to conceptualise on the theoretical framework relevant within the study.

2.2 The importance of women participation in politics

The participation of women in politics is imperative in each and every aspect of societal development across the globe. As noted by Tsanga (2019), women constitute more than half of the population across the globe and their representation and active participation in politics is an avenue for egalitarianism, legitimacy and the proficient use of the human capital resources of a country. In addition, Yoon (2021) is of the view that there is need to enhance the

participation of women in politics through addressing the challenges that they face. In addressing these issues, participation of women elevates on the status and their position, preventing societal issues such as gender-based discrimination, poverty and enhancing that they are active in national and community peace-building efforts in the male dominated societies (Badri and Tripp, 2017). This, thus serves as the importance of women participation in politics.

In addition, the participation and representation of women in politics defines the true nature of democracy, which most country aspire to achieve. As noted by Badri (2017), a country cannot claim that it embraces democracy without allowing for equal participation between male and female. Genuine democracy thus reflects the equal representation of both sexes in politics and decision making. This value has been aggressively applied in terms of race and regional pictures but it has not received the requisite attention when it comes to parity between men and women in politics and decision-making (Paxton and Hughes, 2016). Excluding women from positions in politics and power weakens the development of democratic principles.

The importance of women participation in politics is also perceived from the decision-making point of view. Politics is defined as the scarce allocation of resources and this allocation requires that the most populous gender be represented in the process (Paxton and Hughes, 2016). Furthermore, politicians in their portfolio hold power and influence over social institutions such as family or education and they are able to codify particular practices into law. Therefore, when women are included in the process, their views and perspectives will advance their development.

2.3 The Relevance of Section 124 on Women Representation in Politics in Zimbabwe

The relevance of S124 in the representation of women in politics in Zimbabwe stems from the genesis of the implementation of that clause in the 2013 constitution. As noted by Dube (2016), there was a realisation that it was difficult for women to win party nomination for participation in general elections. This, compounded with information from electoral results from 1980 to 2005, led to the argument for the need to create a clause, allowing 60 seats to be reserved for women in parliament.

Figure 2.1: Women Participation in the National Assembly between 1980 and 2005

	1980-84	**1985-90**	**1990-95**	**1995-00**	**2000-05**
House of Assembly: Total	100	100	150	150	150
Men	91	92	129	128	136
Women	9	8	21	22	14
% Women	9	8	14	14.1	9.3

According to Butaumocho (2024), the relevance of such a clause is that it gives voice to women in parliament and it inducts them into political processes so that when this expires, women participation would have heard a threshold for success.

This clause at first had an idea of making women and men participation in politics a reality but in practice, it has not achieved any desired goals. Of importance to note however is that the clause does not apply for the 210 seats in parliament and these 60 seats are given to women proportionally. This has had a challenge on the participation of these women as they

do not vote on substantial matters and also do not have access to CDF (Tshuma, 2023). Albeit being extended in 2023 due to the realisation that women participation was not improving, the clause has not yet achieved any substantial gains in enhancing the participation of women in politics in Zimbabwe.

SI124 and its relevance in Zimbabwean politics can also be understood from a utility point of view. This argument as postulated by Paxton and Hughes (2016) focuses on the usefulness of having women representation in politics. On theoretical basis, this argument is divided into two types, the first one being arguments that increasing women participation in politics improves the quality of deliberation and arguments that visible women in politics act as a role models for younger women. It is the first argument that is noticeable in the Zimbabwean context in which it is argued that SI124 was implemented to ensure that women have an understanding and representation towards the crafting of laws and what happens within the parliament (Godfrey, 2015). Accordingly, the framers of this clause argued that including women in politics can ensure on the quality of political decision making. As postulated by Nerd (2022), when women are included and are participating in politics, it doubles the pool of talent and ability from which leaders can be drawn. Ideally, this argument was framed from the standpoint that without women's full participation in politics, political decision making will be of lower quality than it could be or should be. The SI124 in the Zimbabwean constitution therefore can be detailed from the utility perspective on women participation in politics.

2.4 Challenges faced by Women in Politics in Zimbabwe

Amongst the challenges being faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe include lack of resources. In generic terms, candidates fund their own campaigns during primary elections and in a society characterised by vote buying, women tend to find it difficult to pass the primary election button (Dube, 2016). Running campaigns whilst shouldering domestic requirements

for married women is cumbersome to an extent, leading to structural challenges women face in politics.

In addition, the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean politics requires that women be married to stand a chance in elections and this responsibility that further challenge the political advancement of women (Badri, 2016). This serves as a challenge being faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe.

Capacity gaps also act as a barrier to women representation in politics. Gaidzanwa (2024) argues that women face limitations in education, preparation for political office, contacts and even the resources required for them to be effective in politics. Unlike their male counterparts, women also face strategic barriers that impact their political careers, with such including sexual stereotyping, political socialisation as well as balancing her roles of career and family (Seth, 2022). Zimbabwe has done fairly well in this area especially in primary school education. The low representation of women at high school and tertiary education levels also affects their ability to access and hold decision-making positions in politics (UNDP & GoZ, 2010; Millennium Development Goals Status Report for Zimbabwe, 2010).

The political ideology of communities also stands as a stumbling block towards women participation in politics. In Zimbabwe for instance, the popularity of a candidate is based on their credentials, where in the ruling party, war credentials serve as a yardstick and in the popular opposition, alignment with leaders is considered a political ticket (Murray, 2023). This was experienced in the run-up to the 2023 elections in the opposition where the 'Bereka Mwana' strategy saw candidates who are aligned to Nelson Chamisa win, without any clarity or vision being put to test. In the ruling Zanu PF, those that emerged victorious in primary elections had strong war credentials or had been endorsed by party heavyweights. From this perspective, the ideology of political parties impacts negatively on the participation of women in politics.

2.5 Interventions to Address on the Challenges faced by Women in Politics in Zimbabwe

There is a plethora of interventions that can be implemented to address the gaps in women participation in politics in Zimbabwe. as noted by Mutisi (2024), the quota system is one of the critical measures to address on the challenges facing women in politics in Zimbabwe. Apart from Section 124, there is need to come up with a quota system in party politics as well as national politics. According to Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (2013), quotas compel parties actively to recruit women rather than merely leaving it to the party's women's league.

Furthermore, quotas ensure that women constitute a 'critical mass.' In addition, Mhlanga (2013) is of the view that there is need for political will of political parties and the government to move beyond the rhetoric of equal representation in politics. This will ensure that all mechanisms and frameworks are put forward to ensure that women participation in politics is ensured.

In addition, Pratt (2015) cited in Badri and Tripp (2017) is of the view that there is need to come up with an effective system to ensure capacity building for women so that they effectively participate in politics. In this regard, there is need to ensure that capacity building is focused on team-building, partnership, leadership skills and networking (Gaidzanwa, 2024).

In addition, there is also need to target young women who are now being influential in politics to equip them with the required knowledge, understanding tools and effective skills for interpersonal communication, conflict prevention, management and resolution (Paxton and Hughes, 2008). The importance for this is that women will be able to understand politics as they would be capacitated to do so.

Media inclusivity for women is also part and parcel of methods and practices that can be utilised to increase the participation of women in politics. Gonda (2009) is of the view that the media has a role to play towards raising public awareness on the need for gender equality,

emancipation of women, political representation as well as increasing the plight of women in all spheres of life. In conformity, Hayes (2015) argues that the media has a role to play in the society until gender equality and participation of women becomes a norm in the society. The role of the media in this stead is that it would help in the creation of a balanced society where both men and women enjoy the same opportunities. Badri and Tripp (2017) further points out that the media should start a comprehensive discussion in their opinion columns and current affairs programmes on the unsuitability of traditional gender roles today that society uses to either discriminate or have negative perceptions about women in politics. Media therefore has an increasing role to play towards the improvement of awareness on the role of women in politics.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is an important aspect in research studies. This is because having a theory ensures that there is the identification of the limits to generalisations underpinning the study (Creswell, 2014). In addition, a theoretical framework specifies on which key variables influence a phenomenon of interest and highlights the need to examine how those key variables might differ and under what circumstances. The feminism theory is utilised in this study.

2.6.1 The Feminism Theory

As a theory, feminism is premised on empowering women and advocating for the rights of women and equality in the social, political and economic sphere of life. As a theory, feminism entails a lot of politics as far as picking out fundamental relationships in politics that deals with gender and power relations for women to be given equal privileges as men is concerned (Badri, 2016).

In this context of feminism theory one can say that this is a theory that concentrates on women having equality through responsible actions and choices (Brookes, 2008). One can confidently observe that the journey towards the achievement of the various rights of these groups is still far from being realized. The fact that women continue to be judged not on their capability but sometimes based on the prejudice of the men in their lives is one way through which this could be seen.

2.7 Summary

This chapter focused on the literature review underpinning the study. The literature review is an important aspect within research studies as it focuses on the theories, models, and principles underpinning the study. The literature review also ensure that there is evidence based decision making in the research study making it ideal in understanding the research problem. This chapter therefore focused on the fundamentals towards the role of women in politics and the relevance of the SI124 in the Zimbabwean context, challenges women face in politics and interventions towards addressing these challenges. The feminism theory was also utilised as it is relevant towards the study.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the literature review and theoretical framework underpinning the research. This chapter, however, focusses on the research methodology critical towards the conceptualisation of challenges being faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe, with the case study of Mashonaland Central Province. The research methodology and design are important in research studies as it offers the threshold on how information in respect to the study is collected, analysed and interpreted. In essence, the research methodology offers a platform on how data was gathered, who was part of the data collection process, techniques used to collect data and methods used in the interpretation of the data collected. In this regard, the methodology will thus focus on the research philosophy, research design, research approach, target population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations adhered to in the research.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Creswell and Creswell (2018) are of the view that a research philosophy is an element critical in research studies that articulates on the beliefs and assumptions on how knowledge is created, developed and understood. The aim of the research philosophy is to guide the approach of the researcher on how to approach data collection and analysis as well as influencing choices in the entirety of the research methodology. There are basically two philosophies in research which are positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is usually associated with quantitative research which seeks to achieve objective and unambiguous findings (Kumar, 2014). The study utilised the interpretivism research philosophy due to the mature if the research problem.

Flick (2016) argues that the interpretivism philosophy believes in the generation of knowledge in a subjective and socially constructed environment. The philosophy seeks to gather knowledge from the actions and experiences from how human beings act and thus attach meaning from the interpretation of such actions. Neuman (2014) argues that this philosophy is the direct opposite of positivism, which is objective and accurate in gathering information.

Key principles of this philosophy include the understanding of reality through the lived experiences of participants focusing on motives and meanings and the acknowledgement that knowledge is co-created within specific social and cultural settings (Creswell, 2014). This serves as the reason why this approach was utilised in the study as it ensures that the setting, culture and experiences of women in Mashonaland Central inform on their perspective on the challenges being faced in politics.

3.3 Research Approach

Three methods are basically used in research studies: mixed, qualitative, and quantitative. The belief of the quantitative approach is that numbers and figures produce reliable conclusions, guaranteeing understanding of the research problem through the application of mathematical and statistical measures (Creswell, 2014). The argument, thus, is that objective and accurate findings are the essential goal for any research, thus the basis of the approach. Conversely, mixed techniques include qualities and traits of both qualitative and quantitative research, with the belief that both approaches are necessary to properly examine a phenomenon (Kumar, 2014).

The study, however, utilised the qualitative research approach to enquiry. Creswell and Creswell (2018) are of the view that the approach utilise shared experiences and attitudes of participants to have their comprehension of the matter under investigation.

This is confirmed by Flick (2016) who argues that the approach seeks to collect information from people who are experiencing the phenomenon being investigated.

The approach was used in this research for it allows the researcher to focus on perspectives and experiences of participants who are relevant in the study and comprehend their shared feelings and experiences. Furthermore, the qualitative approach has an advantage for the data collection instruments used ensure an in-depth analysis of the matter (Flick, 2016). The researcher is deeply involved in the data collection process and through either conversation with participants or observing participants; data in its deep form is obtained. Through interaction with the participants, the researcher will have a comprehension on the challenges facing women participation in politics in Zimbabwe.

3.4 Research Design

The research design is the blueprint of the study, presenting on how the study is going to be conducted. In other words, the research design is the master-plan of the study showing methods of how data will be collected, analysed and interpreted to effectively address the research problem. There is various research designs used in research studies and amongst these include descriptive, cross-sectional and narrative designs.

The study adopted the case study research design. According to Babbie (2010), a case study research design investigates an enquiry in its real-time context. Case studies are based on an in-depth investigation of a group of individuals to explore the causes of underlying principles (Davis and Craven, 2016: Flick, 2016). In addition, Saunders postulates that a case study design is an approach used to narrow down a research phenomenon and study the issue

in a particular context. The case study design is thus used in the study for it allows for an in-depth, holistic and contextual analysis of the research problem through use of flexible data collection techniques such as interviews. In addition, the use of the case study design ensures the exploration of the how and why questions in understanding challenges being faced by women in politics, helping in the process, the development of theories and providing of concrete answers pertinent to addressing the research problem.

3.5 Target Population and Sampling

3.5.1 Target Population

Creswell (2014) argues that the target population in research represents the elements, units, people or group of people that the study seeks to research based on the phenomena under investigation. The target population of the study, therefore, are active women politicians in Mashonaland Central, ranging from political party members, civil rights members and various stakeholders.

3.5.2 Sampling

Researching on the entire target population is challenging, hence sampling was used. According to Creswell (2014), sampling is the process of choosing a subset of the target population to include in the study. Investigating a sample has an advantage over investigating the target population as a whole since samples provide precise and comprehensive results regarding the research subject. Therefore, both probability and non-probability approaches can be used for sampling.

Non-probability sampling techniques were used in the investigation. Since the researcher actively chooses who is most qualified to participate in the study, non-probability procedures are employed in qualitative research since members of the target population do not have an equal chance of being chosen into the sample (Neuman, 2014).

Although this approach is frequently advised since it results in the gathering of comprehensive data, it is believed to have bias in participant selection. Convenient sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, and purposive sampling are examples of non-probability sampling techniques.

3.6 Sampling Method to be used

Purposive sampling was used in the study, and individuals are going to be chosen according to their experiences in active participation in politics. This approach guarantees that the people chosen have first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon and are most qualified to guarantee a thorough comprehension of the subject under study. In order to fully understand the research, the participants included members of ZANU PF Women's League Mashonaland Central, civil society activists and stakeholders from non-governmental organisations promoting women's rights. The sample size will be 15 participants. Of note is that Creswell abd Creswell (2018) are of the view that qualitative research requires a sample size between eight and fifteen participants for the findings to be a reflection of the target population. In this perspective, this size will also lead to data saturation in respect to the matter under investigation.

3.7 Data Collection

Data collection is the process of collecting information in relation to the research problem. Data collection in research can be conducted through primary or secondary means (Zikmund, 2015). Primary data collection entails collecting data in its raw form from participants and in research, methods of collecting primary data include interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Furthermore, data can also be collected through secondary methods such as journal articles, books, scholarly work and various published and even unpublished sources, detailing on the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The most popular method for gathering data in qualitative research is interviews. According to Flick (2016), there are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured.

The study used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection instrument. Semi-structured interviews were used as a method of data collection in the study. Semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are those interviews that have a structure and this is leveraged in semi-structured interviews as the interview process has a structure that it follows Creswell (2014). Creswell and Creswell (2018) are of the view that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to develop questions in relation to the research question, with a degree of flexibility, allowing participants to add their views and perspectives on the research problem. This instrument also allows for probing, where the researcher can actively comprehend the research problem.

Interviews were conducted at a restaurant in Bindura and an interview guide will be used to collect information. The interview process will take between 30 and 45 minutes. The researcher will also ask permission from participants to also use an audio tape recorder to capture effectively their responses. The researcher used the following research questions on participants:

1. The importance of participation of women in Zimbabwean politics;

2. The relevance of S124 on women representation in politics in Zimbabwe;

3. Challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe; and

4. Interventions to address on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe.

3.7.2 Secondary Sources

The study also utilized secondary sources to collect data. The importance of secondary sources, when used with primary data is that they corroborate information, helping effectively address the research problem. Therefore, secondary sources such as journal articles, books and other published materials were used to collect data.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research presents the study's credibility, while quantitative research focuses on validity and dependability. Since qualitative research does not employ metrics like quantitative research, the study's trustworthiness is investigated in an effort to comprehend the reasoning behind the findings. As a result, the study followed important principles that supported its reliability. Aspects including reliability, transferability, conformability, and credibility were determined.

3.8.1 Credibility

The study's credibility is determined by how certain the research findings are in their veracity (Flick, 2016). The researcher's level of confidence that the results are accurate for the specific participants and study setting is determined by the truth value. In an effort to ensure the validity of the research findings, the study used triangulation.

3.8.2 Transferability

According to Leedy and Omrod (2014), transferability is the ability of research findings to be applied in different situations. To put it another way, transferability aims to ascertain

whether the results may be applied to different populations, samples, or comparable circumstances. Thick description was therefore used in this investigation to guarantee that the results could be applied elsewhere.

3.8.3 Dependability

According to Kumar (2014), reliability is the ability of the study to be replicated by other researchers and the consistency of the results. Therefore, by requiring an outside party to evaluate the research process, the study ensured reliability.

3.9 Data Presentation and Analysis

According to Van Wyk (2011), data analysis within a qualitative study entail "the range of processes and procedures whereby researchers move from the qualitative data that has been collected, into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations that are been investigated." The idea of data analysis therefore is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data.

In this perspective, data was analysed through the thematic process, where themes generated from the study will inform the findings of the research. To Creswell (2014), thematic analysis is essential in social science research for it highlights the analytical, examining, and recording patterns, themes within data gathered. Themes thus are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to specific research questions. The study followed the following steps specifically;

3.9.1 Familiarity with data

This was conducted in which familiarity with data was ensured through reading and re-reading data to be in sync with information collected

3.9.2 Generation of Codes

This step saw the creation of codes from the patterns of data gathered. The process was characterized by data reduction where information was compressed into meaningful categories.

3.9.3 Compiling Codes

The third step saw compilation of codes where data was classified into meaningful themes

3.9.4 Coherent Recognition of themes

This is the stage in which the researcher looks at how data collected supports theory and literature reviewed. There is going back to list of information collected, abbreviation of topics and writing codes next to relevant sections.

3.9.5 Definition of themes

The fifth step comprised of definition of themes to determine what each and every theme entails, how data captured reflect to and what is important within each and every theme

3.9.6 Report Writing

This step is where the data collected is presented. Topics that are significant in the research are recorded and presented to correspond towards addressing the objectives of the study.

3.10 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing is a small-scale trial run of a research interview or observation (Holloway & Wheeler 2010). Pilot testing is also a smaller version of a proposed study conducted with the aim of trying out the research methods of data collection to identify potential problems that could affect the quality of the research study (Creswell, 2014). The pilot testing will assist the

researcher to ensure that the research participants easily understand the research questions and data collection methods. In this regard, the researcher intend to approach three women in the Province, each from ZANU PF, Civil society organisations and Non-governmental organisation in order to test the research questions and methods of data collection prior to the actual data collection. However, the three women identified for pilot testing were not part of the actual research data collection.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

According to Maree (2015), it is important that researchers minimize any harm that may occur to respondents participating in the study. According to Saunders et al. (2016), ethical considerations have become an increasingly important part in research studies. Ethical considerations give value to the research findings to ensure that the findings can be used. The study ensured the following ethical issues:

3.11.1 Informed Consent

Participants were sent consent forms and indicative questions and a synopsis that will give background of the study. The plan is also to record the interviews, for the researcher to use when analysing data and building theories. The participants were asked for permission to record the interviews.

3.11.2 Protection from any form of Harm

The study ensured that there is protection from any form of harm that may come to participants. This means that the study ensured that participants can withdraw from anytime in the study if they feel the need to.

3.11.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The study-maintained confidentiality and anonymity of the research by making sure that the participants' names were substituted and used pseudonyms. When conducting research, researchers make a commitment to maintain participants' confidentiality and anonymity by not disclosing the names of participants who have taken part in the research as well as not reporting participants' comments in ways that will make them identifiable

3.12 Summary

The methodology is an important element in research studies as it presents the methods and practices that will be used to address the research problem. This chapter therefore presented the qualitative approach to be used in the study, the case study research design, target population and sampling methods, semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments and thematic analysis as the data analysis method. Ethical issues to be ensured in the study were also presented. The following chapter presents and analyses the findings in respect to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the presentation of data, analysis and discussion of findings in relation to the study on African women in politics: An analysis on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe. The purpose of this chapter is to comprehend from participants from the study their views, experiences and perceptions towards challenges being faced by women in politics in Africa, Zimbabwe and Mashonaland Central in particular. Of note is that data was collected through semi-structured interviews where participants were asked open ended questions. The participants were purposively selected based on their experiences with the research problem. Through thematic data analysis, data will be presented emanating from codes, categorises and eventual themes, subsequent to research objectives. In essence, the research objectives guided the collection and analysis of data. The findings from the study were linked to critical literature collected from the study.

4.2 The importance of women participation in politics in Zimbabwe

The first objective of the study sought to identify the importance of women participation in politics. To address this objective, the study so to gather insights the importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central as well as in Zimbabwe.

4.2.1 Importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central

From the study, it was noted that the importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central is that it includes women in the decision-making process. One of the participants noted that:

Women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central leads to inclusion of women. This is because those that would be making decisions are informed and have experiences that lead to socio-economic growth of women.

From this understanding, it can be noted that women should be represented in politics in Mashonaland central for it enhances inclusion. This claim is supported by the feminist theory which calls for the empowerment of women through the creation of equal opportunities in all societal aspects. When women have equal access, they would also have a voice that can be directed towards their empowerment.

Furthermore, other participants noted the importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central through enhancing economic development. One of the participants noted that:

The inclusion of women in politics ensures that there is access to economic opportunities as policies and programmes would be tailor-made with women in mind. In Mashonaland Central, there have been increase in setting up of gender specific programmes to promote women empowerment.

This notion was shared by another participant who claimed that:

The inclusion of women in politics enhances economic development through equality. Access to economic opportunities through reform policies that support women gender is important. For example, there is has been consistent advocacy that the girl child be empowered to access education and this has direct translation to economic development.

From these perspectives, it was noted that inclusion of women in politics in Mashonaland leads to economic development. This is through access to opportunities in education and other socio-economic development initiatives. This perspective is supported by, Yoon (2021) who is of the view that there is need to enhance the participation of women in

politics through addressing the challenges that they face. In addressing these issues, participation of women elevates on the status and their position, preventing societal issues such as gender-based discrimination, poverty and enhancing that they are active in national and community peace-building efforts in the male dominated societies (Badri and Tripp, 2017). This, thus serves as the importance of women participation in politics.

4.2.2 National Importance of Women participation in politics

From the study, it was noted that women participation in politics has significant importance in the context of Zimbabwe. This is through promotion of democracy. One of the participants argued that:

The participation of women in politics in Zimbabwe conforms to the ideals of democracy where every individual should be part of decision-making processes. Zimbabwe is making positive strides towards attaining development goals such as gender equality and this is being observed in politics.

The notion of democracy was framed from a different understanding by one of the participants who noted that:

Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people and women are more than half of those people in Zimbabwe. Therefore, there is need to hear their voices in decision-making processes and support gender initiatives. This is the reason why policies such as legal age of sexual consent was raised and women are also now able to inherit property amongst others.

From the study, it was noted that the fundamentals of women participation in politics is to foster democracy and good governance. Democracy demands that the voice of all concerned is heard and through indirect democracy as practiced in Zimbabwe, the influx of

women in both parliament and council is important. Furthermore, through active participation of women at grassroots levels, informing and shaping policy, democracy would be realised.

In addition, Badri (2017) argues that a country cannot claim that it embraces democracy without allowing for equal participation between male and female. Genuine democracy thus reflects the equal representation of both sexes in politics and decision making. This value has been aggressively applied in terms of race and regional pictures but it has not received the requisite attention when it comes to parity between men and women in politics and decision-making (Paxton and Hughes, 2016). Therefore, democracy is realised through women participation in politics.

4.3 The relevance of S124 on women representation in politics in Zimbabwe

The second objective of the study sought to determine the importance of S124 of the Zimbabwean constitution on representation of women in politics. To address this objective, the study sought to determine the relevance of SI124 towards women representation in politics as well to ascertain if SI124 has achieved its required goals and objectives.

4.3.1 Relevance of S124 on women representation in politics

The study noted that S124 is important as it gives women induction in parliamentary procedures and affairs. This was noted by one of the participants who noted that:

S124 ensures that women are inducted in parliamentary procedures and affairs, empowering them in the process. Women now have experience in what is done when bills are passed and debated and how policies are shaped. This has a direct translation towards their zeal and energy to actively participate in politics.

This notion is supported by Butaumocho (2013) who defended this provision claiming that the relevance of such a clause is that it gives voice to women in parliament and it inducts them into political processes so that when this expires, women participation would have heard a threshold for success. This clause at first had an idea of making women and men participation in politics a reality but in practice, it has not achieved any desired goals.

In addition, the study also noted the importance of S124 on women participation in politics as it promotes gender equity. One of the participants noted that:

Through political history, women have been under-represented in all sectors of politics and the government saw it worthy to reserve sixty seats for women. This has been critical in fostering an inclusive community where the views and perspective of women are comprehended in the lawmaking body.

From this understanding, the rationale of S124 translates to the need for empowerment of women so that they become active political participants. Through giving women such a platform to be learn, there is a possibility of engaging with them, in the process comprehending all their requirements. As postulated by Nerd (2022), when women are included and are participating in politics, it doubles the pool of talent and ability from which leaders can be drawn. Ideally, this argument was framed from the standpoint that without women's full participation in politics, political decision making will be of lower quality than it could be or should be. The SI124 in the Zimbabwean constitution therefore can be detailed from the utility perspective on women participation in politics.

4.3.2 The effectiveness of S124 in promoting women representation

The study discovered that despite the noble intentions of S124, it has not been successful in enhancing women representation in politics. One of the participants noted that: Statistics from 2023 elections where the clause was supposed to be expire showed that the

number of women representatives in parliament had not increased but rather reduced. It seems as if parties removed most women from competitive politics to settle for proportional representation of those 60 seats.

This view argue that S124 led to the decrease of women representation in parliament as the number of elected females in Zimbabwe is less than 30%, way below the expectations of gender equality in politics. Political parties are alleged to be not promoting women through failing to have structures that are reserved for women.

Another perspective on the lack of effectiveness of S124 was that of lack of tangible progress in parliament made by selected representatives. One of the participants noted that:

Women selected to be in parliament on the reserved seats are in parliament just for benefits and are not making any structural developments. This is despite the fact that they do not vote in parliament but are included in all procedures from debate to policy formulation. However, they are doing little to make their voices heard.

Of importance to note is that the clause was originally set to expire in 2023, with the hope that women empowerment in politics would have been achieved. However, through noting lack of progress on women securing directly elected, single member constituent seats, the women's quota was extended for 2023–2038. This decision by the government of Zimbabwe albeit seeking to realise the role and importance of women participation in politics, it ideally confirms that for the past 13 years, there has been no notable relevance of the section. Therefore, the goal to achieve diversity and inclusion has failed, challenging the importance of S124.

4.4 Challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe

The third objective of the study sought to identify the challenges being faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe. To address this question, the study sought to identify community

specific challenges as well as general challenges being faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe.

4.4.1 Community challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe

The study discovered that the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean community is affecting women participation in politics. One of the participants revealed that:

Zimbabwe has a strong root in tradition in which part of this tradition conforms to the patriarchal nature of the society, claiming that there is a clear distinction between the roles of men and women in Zimbabwe and there are certain expectations that are considered the privy of males and that of females.

This was supported by another participant who noted that:

The patriarchal nature of Zimbabwe is affecting the participation of women in politics. If an individual is seen over stepping on that role, ridicule often follows and this is the case with women in politics who are still facing a challenge of the patriarchal and uncompromising nature of the society.

Politics in Zimbabwe is classified as a masculine job that requires men and not females. This has seen a lot of women not participating in politics from the family, community and local levels. Msipa (2019) noted that Zimbabwe is still living in the traditional days where men would make all decisions at the male gatherings and would come home to their wives and delegate on what was being said. This is still the nature of the society where females who enter into politics apart from societal ridicule, do not have the support that male candidates have. When a female candidate be at primary elections or at national elections are matched against a male candidate, the male candidate receives votes from female candidates and these female voters would believe that their keen cannot handle politics.

Societal roles have therefor left women to cater for children, the household and other minor tasks since women cannot handle the power and activism required in politics (Gonda, 2019). In addition, Gahidzanwa (2014) is of the view that this is expressed especially in the allocation of gender roles in which if women are to have time to explore opportunities in politics and other sectors that are traditionally considered 'male', they must actually be relieved of some of the many roles thy play in Zimbabwean society. In this perspective, the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society is a challenge on women representation in politics.

Another community challenge affecting women participation in politics is Zimbabwe's socialization and cultural process. One of the participants claimed that:

In Zimbabwe, there is a clear distinction of roles and responsibilities of the boy child and girl child. From birth, the girl child is cultured to focus on being submissive and leave perceived masculine issues such as politics to men. Those who challenge this norm are often ridiculed and stereo-typed.

The global south has seen the distinction in the development and socialization of both boy and girl child classified by gender roles and specific socio-cultural beliefs (Nzomo, 2014). The boy child is raised to be the man of the house and is taught on the importance of power and making decisions. On the other hand, the girl child is being taught to be the mother and caretaker of the family, taking care of children and being submissive to the husband.

This translates into politics as the girl child is taught that politics is for men and the female has no role in politics. The history of society has seen women marching for universal suffrage and then marching for equal representation and they are still marching for gender equality. This is because the history of women has been that of struggle and this is clearly seen in women representation in politics where women are underrepresented based on social and cultural norms (Tembo, 2019). In Zimbabwe, the socialization process between males and

females is different and this is contributing towards the challenges faced by women in politics. In most households, the girl child is taught to stay away from politics and there are still cases of males who believe in this system even those who are at the echelons of power.

4.4.2 Common challenges being faced by women in politics

The study discovered that lack of resources is a common challenge being faced by women in politics. One of the participants noted that:

Women in politics in Zimbabwe are also facing the challenge of lack of resources. The government of Zimbabwe disperse political grants to political parties but these parties have outstanding bills and other fees they have to settle thus challenges in dispersing funds for campaigns. When these scarce funds are made available, they are often not dispersed equally

This means that women in politics are facing challenges in lack of funding, which is critical towards managing their campaign trail. The lack of resources even translates to political parties, challenging women participation in politics. As noted by another participant:

Political parties in Zimbabwe are fighting for resources, especially in opposition political parties which in turn translate, to lack of equal access to such resources for women.

This is a challenge to women especially who are comprehensively the poorer of the classes in society. As postulated by Tshuma (2013) campaigning is a privy for the rich and established in society and the demographic composition of Zimbabwe has seen male candidates being able to win primary tickets to national elections because they have more resources than women (Afrobarometer, 2017). This challenges on the representation of women into politics because they are facing resource challenges to manage and sustain their campaigns.Another challenge being faced by women in politics are capacity gaps. Another Participant revealed that:

There is a clear distinction between males and females in education for example in Zimbabwe where the majority of students are males despite women comprising more than half of the population. In politics, males are often given an unfair advantage, creating a large capacity gap between males and females.

The nature and structure of politics in Zimbabwe is more leaned towards the support of men, creating capacity issues for women. Murray (2015) notes that females are not afforded equal opportunities to access education in Zimbabwe and this translate to challenges towards women representation in politics. This comes from the fact that women especially in rural areas are not educated and are illiterate thus they vote for male candidates because they believe that politics is for males not females. This general lack of support and understanding the impact a female candidate can bring to the constituency is widely affected by this capacity gap in education (Badri and Tripp, 2017). This is confirmed by Millennium Development Goals Status Report for Zimbabwe (2010) which note that the low representation of women at high school and tertiary education levels also affects their ability to access and hold decision-making positions in politics. In this perspective, capacity gaps are a challenge towards women representation and participation in politics in Zimbabwe.

4.5 Interventions to address on the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe

The fourth objective of the study sought to come up with interventions that can be put forward so as to address the challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe. It was noted that there is need to ensure that political parties have a quota system for women representation in politics that they strictly adhere to. One of the participants noted that:

There is need to come up with a quota system starting from political parties and in all levels of representation (local and national elections). A quota system means that the party is

reserving certain constituencies for women to campaign against each other so as to ensure representation of women.

This is confirmed by the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) (2013) which noted that political parties have to ensure that within candidates that will compete for national elections, a substantial number of these have to be females. The parties therefore have to make sure that adequate resources and all support is afforded to ensure that this is achieved. The quota system however cannot be effective without the support from women in general.

Therefore, political parties have to also ensure that there is the massive conscription of women into political spheres and that there are developmental goals and objectives to be set aside to ensure that women are taught on their role and importance in politics (Mhlanga, 2013). If political parties come up with a comprehensive mechanism to achieve this, women representation in politics in Zimbabwe can be enhanced.

Another intervention from the study was the need for capacity building for women. One of the participants revealed that:

Another effective way to ensure the role and development of women in politics in Zimbabwe is capacity building for women. Capacity building for women participation in politics is understood as the process of coming up with mechanisms and instruments that seek to protect and promote the development of women in politics

Capacity building means that women are given the support and instruments that ensure that they are effective in all political processes. In this regard, there is need to ensure that capacity building is focused on team-building, partnership, leadership skills and networking (Murray, 2020). In addition, there is also need to target young women who are now being influential in politics to equip them with the required knowledge, understanding tools and effective skills for interpersonal communication, conflict prevention, management and

resolution (Paxton and Hughes, 2016). The importance for this is that women will be able to understand politics as they would be capacitated to do so.

4.6 Summary

The focus of this chapter was the presentation of findings and discussions pertaining the role of women in politics in Zimbabwe. The findings were derived from the use of a semi-structured interview that was sent to purposefully selected participants. Through thematic analysis, the study analysed codes, categories and themes from objectives of the research. The following chapter thus focuses on the summary, conclusion and recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further study in relation to the research. The rationale of this chapter is that it gives perspective on what the research focused on. The recommendations from the study are informed by the research findings.

5.2 Summary

The first chapter focused on the introduction and background of the research. The important element in this chapter was the identification of the research problem which reveals that in as much as there have been instruments and policies meant to enhance the participation of women in politics, there is still a general lack of women participation in politics in Zimbabwe. There are various reasons attached to such include community perception, lack of funding and capacity gaps. In this regard, the aim of the study was to understand these challenges and implement an effective plan or strategies to enhance women participation. The chapter therefore presented the objectives of the study and research questions which guided the research. The significance of the study was also part of the chapter.

The second chapter of the research focused on the literature review and theoretical framework underpinning the research. Through consultation to various literature, theory and models of other scholars in the field of women representation in politics. The review of literature was guided by the research objectives of the research which allowed for zoning of information as well as crafting of delimitations of the study. The feminist theory was thus

leveraged in the research where it detailed on the requirements for equal access of opportunities for both males and females, even in politics.

Chapter three of the study focused on the research methodology. This important aspect of the study guided how data was collected, analysed and interpreted. The study utilised the qualitative research to inquiry which uses participant's views, perceptions and attitudes to understand a research phenomenon.

This approach led to the selection of a sample of 15 participants purposefully selected. In addition, data was collected through semi-structured interviews where open ended questions framed to address the research questions where used. The responses of participants where then tabulated through thematic analysis and presented in relation to codes and themes. The chapter also presented the measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study as well as ethical issues.

Chapter four contains the findings from the study as well as their interpretations. The chapter highlighted the importance of women participation in politics in both Mashonaland Central and Zimbabwe at large. It was noted that women participation fosters inclusivity, ensures effective decision making as well as enhancing democratic ideals and tendencies. In addition, the chapter focused on the importance of S124 which has opened a pathway for women participation in politics, however, the effectiveness of such a clause is yet to be fully realised. From the study, it was noted that women ae facing community related challenges, they are stereotyped, facing financial challenges as well as facing capacity gaps. There is therefore need to address these challenges to enhance women participation in politics.

Lastly, Chapter five presented the summary of the dissertation, pointing out key highlights from the study. It also contains conclusions linking all the objectives and the literature, showing the link between the findings and literature.

5.3 Conclusions

From the study, it was noted that the importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central is that it includes women in the decision-making process. Women should be represented in politics in Mashonaland central for it enhances inclusion. This claim is supported by the feminist theory which calls for the empowerment of women through the creation of equal opportunities in all societal aspects. When women have equal access, they would also have a voice that can be directed towards their empowerment.

Furthermore, the importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central is through enhancing economic development. This is because the inclusion of women in politics ensures that there is access to economic opportunities as policies and programmes would be tailor-made with women in mind. In Mashonaland Central, there have been increase in setting up of gender specific programmes to promote women empowerment.

On a national scale, women participation in politics has significant importance in the context of Zimbabwe. This is through promotion of democracy. The participation of women in politics in Zimbabwe conforms to the ideals of democracy where every individual should be part of decision-making processes. Zimbabwe is making positive strides towards attaining development goals such as gender equality and this is being observed in politics.

From the study, it was noted that S124 is important as it gives women induction in parliamentary procedures and affairs. S124 ensures that women are inducted in parliamentary procedures and affairs, empowering them in the process. Women now have experience in what is done when bills are passed and debated and how policies are shaped. This has a direct translation towards their zeal and energy to actively participate in politics.

In addition, the study also noted the importance of S124 on women participation in politics as it promotes gender equity. The rationale of S124 translates to the need for

empowerment of women so that they become active political participants. Through giving women such a platform to be learn, there is a possibility of engaging with them, in the process comprehending all their requirements.

Be that as it may, the study discovered that despite the noble intentions of S124, it has not been successful in enhancing women representation in politics. Statistics from 2023 elections where the clause was supposed to be expire showed that the number of women representatives in parliament had not increased but rather reduced. It seems as if parties removed most women from competitive politics to settle for proportional representation of those 60 seats. Of importance to note is that the clause was originally set to expire in 2023, with the hope that women empowerment in politics would have been achieved. However, through noting lack of progress on women securing directly elected, single member constituent seats, the women's quota was extended for 2023–2038. This decision by the government of Zimbabwe albeit seeking to realise the role and importance of women participation in politics, it ideally confirms that for the past 13 years, there has been no notable relevance of the section. Therefore, the goal to achieve diversity and inclusion has failed, challenging the importance of S124.

The study discovered that the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean community is affecting women participation in politics. This is because Zimbabwe has a strong root in tradition in which part of this tradition conforms to the patriarchal nature of the society, claiming that there is a clear distinction between the roles of men and women in Zimbabwe and there are certain expectations that are considered the privy of males and that of females. Another community challenge affecting women participation in politics is Zimbabwe's socialisation and cultural process.

The study discovered that lack of resources is a common challenge being faced by women in politics. Women in politics in Zimbabwe are also facing the challenge of lack of

resources. The government of Zimbabwe disperse political grants to political parties but these parties have outstanding bills and other fees they have to settle thus challenges in dispersing funds for campaigns. When these scarce funds are made available, they are often not dispersed equally. In addition, another challenge being faced by women in politics are capacity gaps. The nature and structure of politics in Zimbabwe is more leaned towards the support of men, creating capacity issues for women.

5.4 Recommendations

The following are recommendations from the study:

5.4.1 Increased role of Political Parties in Supporting Women

To address the issues facing women representation in politics in Zimbabwe, there is need for an increased role of political parties in supporting women in politics. It can be noted that political parties are at the centre of women participation and if these organisations put in place mechanisms and structures to support women participation, then the role of women in politics can increase. These organisations however are facing systematic challenges that are impacting on the need to embrace women candidates in their structures.

The main political parties in Zimbabwe have men in their echelons of power and this is challenging on the role of women in politics. There is therefore need to come up with methods, practices and quota systems that allow for a proportion of women to be active and to be represented in politics.

5.4.2 Socialisation of the Society

To increase women representation in politics in Zimbabwe, there is need to initiate a discourse of socialisation from all spheres of the community. This comes from the gender roles, patriarchy and labelling that is privy in the Zimbabwean community where politics is perceived

to be masculine thus males are regarded as an effective voice in the discourse. This needs to change if women representation in politics has to be enhanced. Challenges come from the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean community where males dominate in all spheres of decision making and women, who are actively participating in politics, are labelled and stereotypes. There is therefore need to come up with a socialisation process that aims to dismantle the capacity gaps that exist between males and females and ensure that each and every individual understand from their tender ages the role they play in politics.

5.5 Areas for future research

Future studies could consider studying case studies such as Rwanda which has achieved gender equality in parliament. Through studying such jurisdictions, recommendations and interventions can be translated to Zimbabwe.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction

My name is Caroline Mutepaire and I am currently persuing an Undergraduate degree in Peace and Governance at Bindura University of Science Education conducting a study titled 'AFRICAN WOMEN IN POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE' The underlying assumption is that women in politics face numerous challenges despite existing instruments for gender inclusivity. The study therefore seeks to dig deep and understand this research problem. Participation within the study is voluntary and this serves as a letter asking for your informed consent to be part of the study.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. How long have you worked at your current Organisation?

Below 5 years 5 – 10 years Above 10 years

2. How old are you?

Below 35 years 35 to 45 years Above 45 years

3. What is your highest qualification?

Primary Secondary Tertiary

SECTION B: THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE

1. What is the importance of women participation in politics in Mashonaland Central?

2. Can you nationalise the importance of women participation in politics?

SECTION C: THE RELEVANCE OF S124 ON WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE

1. What is the relevance of SI124 towards women representation in politics?

2. Can you ascertain if SI124 has achieved its required goals and objectives?

SECTION D: CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE

1. What are the community specific challenges being faced by women in politics?

2. What are the other challenges faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe?

SECTION E: INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE

1. What recommendations would you proffer to the government of Zimbabwe to address challenges being faced by women in politics in Zimbabwe?

2. What do you recommend on the research problem in general?