



SOA 3902 Dissertation In Human Rights Policy And Practice

A DECOLONIAL AFRICAN FEMINIST APPROACH TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ZIMBABWE

DANAI DAISY CHIRAWU

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MA
Erasmus Mundus Human Rights Practice and Policy Masters Programme

School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg
Pedro Arrupe Human Rights Institute, Deusto University
School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Roehampton
Department of Social Sciences, University of Tromsø – Arctic University of Norway

Date of submission: 22 May 2023

Supervisor: Dr. Dolores Morondo Taramundi

Dissertation Module (30 Credits)

Spring Semester 2023

Acknowledgements

This is an ode to the African feminist movement. To reimagining discredited views as canvassed by Alice Walker in “Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful – A ‘DISCREDITED’” view. Meaning; we are telling our stories for ourselves as African black feminists. It is through the work and writing of other African feminists that we find solidarity.

We belong here and we have something to say.

My pronounced gratitude to all the people who were instrumental in formulating these findings; the books written by academics, activists – women from diverse backgrounds, the interviewees, and the everyday lives of Zimbabwean women. Thank you to my mother Slvvia Chirawu; and to my supervisor; Dolores Morondo Taramundi. To Salome, Victoria & Varaidzo – finally.

ABSTRACT

The question of women's political participation is loaded, and has in some aspects been articulated as a problem of representation, bringing about strategies such as proportional representation in the form of quotas. In Zimbabwe this electoral gender quota has been implemented through reserving seats for women in the Parliament. The dilemma with this conceptualization is that in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world, it has not necessarily improved the women's status within the political arena, nor has it motivated agency in women. Following a decolonial African feminist framework, this research centers the voices and realities of Zimbabwean women as key informants in the understanding of the efficiency of the quota system and provides a scientific basis for reconstructing woman-centric solutions to the gendered imbalance prevalent in politics.

The results of this study reveal inherent oversight in the approach characterizing quotas due to its failures to acknowledge the backgrounds informing the marginalization of women in politics. A thematic analysis of the results reveals that patriarchy and cis-male domination, culture and gender roles, locale, education, sexuality and gender identity as factors influencing women's political participation in Zimbabwe. This calls for new forms of strategizing identified through a process of redefinition of African identities and refocusing on re-building communities in the spirit of *Ubuntu*.

This thesis consists of: 15 030 words

Key words: politics, women, participation, decolonization, feminism, Pan-Africanism, quota

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS	4
1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1. DEFINITION OF USED TERMS	6
1.2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	6
1.3. DELIMITATIONS AND SCOPE	7
1.4. PRECONCEPTION AND MOTIVATION	7
1.5. RESEARCH OUTLINE	8
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
3. HUMAN RIGHTS AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	16
4. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK	21
5. METHODOLOGY, METHOD & EMPIRICAL DATA	26
6. RESEARCH FINDINGS	32
7. CONCLUSION	44
8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	49
APPENDIX	57

TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACHPR – African Charter on Human and People’s Rights

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CSO – Civil Society Organization

ICESR – International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Cisgender – A person who identifies with the same gender they were assigned at birth

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Maputo Protocol – Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

Non-binary – Gender non-conforming

Queer – An umbrella term for LGBTQ people

Trans – Transgender people identify as a different sex from the one assigned at birth

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

ZEC – Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZIMSTAT – Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

1. INTRODUCTION

A popular Zimbabwean war song, '*Mbuya Nehanda Kufa Vachitaura*' – which translates to 'Grandmother Nehanda Died Saying', narrates a defining moment in Zimbabwe's liberation war where Nehanda, a 'rebel leader' is said to have foretold the coming of the second war against British colonial rule; monumentalizing her as the iconic symbol for freedom. Due to her influence as a spirit medium through whom the ancestors spoke her influence was deemed as a threat to the colonial government leading to her execution by hanging. Before her execution by hanging she declared that 'my bones will rise again' symbolizing that a new rebellion would erupt leading to the defeat of the colonizers. It is through this declaration that Zimbabweans finally attained sovereignty and freedom from the colonial regime.

It is necessary to situate a woman at the center of the wars that eventually led to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 due to the paradoxes this presents to women's political participation in present-day Zimbabwe. Even with the implementation of the quota system to Parliament in 2013 which reserved an additional 60 seats for women to make it a total of 270 instead of 210; women still constitute approximately 31% of the lower house of the Zimbabwean Parliament according to Trading Economic (2021) meanwhile comprising 52% of the country's population (ZIMSTATS, 2022). Historically, no woman has ever held Presidential office and only one woman has held the position of Vice President. Within political party structures women are a dwindling minority within the leadership, often populating other 'lower level' positions if at all.

Albeit a woman's voice being the sound that echoed the pursuit of an independent Zimbabwe, the reality is that women's voices in politics are octaves lower or silenced in the nation's political dogma. Globally, many studies have been done to evaluate women's political participation reflecting disproportionate representation in leadership, and unequal power relations. Different strategies under international human rights law such as employing quota systems have been implemented to counter this phenomenon resulting in some levels of success but ultimately falling short of solving this gender(ed) divide.

This research builds on the studies done on women's political participation through evaluating the efficacy of the quota systems under the concept of proportional representation in Zimbabwe. It challenges the sustainability of statistical representation as a comprehensive solution to addressing the gendered inequalities inherent in politics.

1.1. DEFINITION OF USED TERMS¹

Yacob-Haliso *et al* (2021, p.6) postulate that the term ‘African women’ recognizes the humanity of all women of African descent or living in Africa without categorizing them as a homogeneous group. Subsequently; the term ‘Zimbabwean women’ categorizes women of Zimbabwean descent or living in Zimbabwe without limiting their identity to a singular definition save for the purpose of creating ease in referencing the collective. Additionally it is conceded that labels, such as “women,” “African,” and “African women” are contestable and have been challenged in many ways...and that there is a staggering variety of experiences, identities, contexts, roles, perspectives, rights, constraints, and such that no two ‘women’ are exactly similar even within the same local and continental setting” Yacob-Haliso *et al* (2021, p.6).

Tamale (2020, p.2) defines decolonization as being of the mind ‘returning to the annals of history to find ourselves, to become fluent in our cultural knowledge systems, to cultivate critical consciousness and to reclaim our humanity.’ Yacob-Haliso *et al* (2021, p.10) encapsulate decolonization as ‘a revolution ongoing in the academy as scholars seek to retrieve the African past and present from the colonial gaze and divest African studies of its colonial baggage through efforts at decolonizing the field.’ Therefore decolonial theorizing in this context can be defined as an intuitive, retrospective and epistemic process of naming and defining the human condition of being African, by and as Africans.

The African Feminist Forum (2006) through the African Feminist Charter define African feminisms as “a political ideology which questions the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and the development of tools for reformatory analysis and action.” It acknowledges the multiple identities of African feminist methodologies and conceptualizations thereby eliminating the regulation of this movement to a singular form of activism.

1.2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to examine the effectiveness and sustainability of employing a quota system as a mechanism to promote women’s political participation. Secondly it aims to capture Zimbabwean women’s perspectives, experiences and understanding of political participation

¹ In the spirit of decolonizing, definitions are derived from the writings of African scholars as opposed to western dictionaries.

as a result finding points of solidarity that can galvanize women into action for their own emancipation. Finally it aims to establish an alternative solution to comprehensively tackle the gendered inequalities inherent in politics.

The research questions are as follows:

- What is Zimbabwean women's understanding of political participation?
- What do women think about taking up leadership roles in politics?
- What are the disqualifiers from eligibility to participate?

1.3. DELIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

This research is specific to women's political participation in Zimbabwe although references will be made from other jurisdictions. A survey of the scholarly sources such as international human rights law, domestic law and scholars on proportional representation through the establishment of quota systems will be employed particularly focusing on the impact on the status of women. A qualitative research in the form of interviews will be done and the participants will be selected from a list of Zimbabwean based civil society organizations, activists and journalists working on advancing women's political rights.

The decolonial African feminist theory will be the approach used to analyze the research findings and galvanize the conversation.

These delimitations are necessary on account of the scope of this research which is specific to Zimbabwe. Due to the amount of time allocated to this study, 10 participants will be interviewed therefore the research findings are not conclusive or representative of the vast diversity interplaying within the realm of politics in the country. However, the participants have been carefully chosen due to their work within communities with the assumption that they hold opinions which are representative of a wider demographic than the individual. Different theories could have been used to analyze this research however the decolonial African feminist theory encompasses what this writer deems as a comprehensive and necessary point of inception.

1.4. PRECONCEPTION AND MOTIVATION

In 2013, Zimbabwe enacted a new Constitution which was the second Constitution to be formulated since the country's independence in 1980. This was achieved through a referendum, garnering resounding support from the public after previous attempts at repealing the Lancaster House Constitution had failed. The Lancaster House Constitution had previously stood as a testament of Zimbabwe's independence from colonial rule and amendments had

been made to it over time, however a push for its revocation ultimately resulted in the development and subsequent ratification of the 2013 Constitution.

This 2013 Constitution was hailed for having a comprehensive Bill of Rights which *inter alia* promoted women's rights. Major lobbying and activism from the country's women's movement motivated these progressive provisions; recognizing it as being a document in respect of women's human rights. Of specific relevance to this study was the inclusion of an additional 60 seats to the Parliament which were specially reserved for women in order to motivate and enhance women's political leadership. This legislative quota would run for 10 years and would be re-evaluated thereafter. In 2020, the Parliament moved to make constitutional amendments which would increase the lifespan of this gender quota and this was met with resistance from the women's movement on the premise that it had failed to adequately address the gendered inequalities sustaining women's political minority status. Instead, this movement suggested that Section 17² of the Constitution which referred to gender balance be operationalized to ensure that there is equal representation of women and men in Parliament.

It is against this background that this research was born as many curious questions erupted over the validity of a quota system catering to a marginalized group representing a statistical majority. The assumption was that the quota system while having its merits fails to deal with the intricate and nuanced norms perpetuating these imbalances as it assumes that representation is merely a numbers game. Furthermore, the solidarity within the women's movement verified the importance of centering the collective when developing policies and strategies for national interests, particularly placing women at the fore of issues related to them. This writer is of the belief that solidarity is the more sustainable solution for the betterment of women's realities and this can be achieved through capturing women's narratives and imparting the conviction that they/we too are responsible for cultivating change.

1.5. RESEARCH OUTLINE

The structure of this research begins with an introduction on the subject matter along with the objectives, research questions, delimitation and preconception and motivation. This is followed by a literature review of related research on the topic of application of quotas, relevant human rights and then an exploration of the theoretical framework. Following this, the methodology,

² See Section 17(1) of the Zimbabwean Constitution Amendment (No. 20) 2013 https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Zimbabwe_2013.pdf

method and empirical data in support of the research questions will be done. Within this same chapter, ethical issues related to this research will be discussed. Qualitative data in the form of interviews will inform the main argument of this research and a thematic analysis will be employed in analyzing the findings. The research findings will be explained followed by a conclusion. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for further research will complete this thesis.

1.5.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will explore some of the discourse surrounding the strategy of employing gender quotas in Parliaments and the relevance of this research.

1.5.2. RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS

This chapter covers a description of important regional and international instruments such as the Maputo Protocol, ACHPR, UDHR, CEDAW and ICCPR informing the formulation of quotas as a method to tackle gender inequality in politics.

1.5.3. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Decolonial African Feminist theory will be used to analyze this research on the basis that this thesis refers to the reality of African women living on the African continent. It comes during a time where more feminist scholars are developing the academic discourse on issues of decolonization and Pan-Africanism – which have largely lacked gender mainstreaming and feminist politicking. This chapter will show the importance of using interviews as the key to informing this research.

1.5.4. METHODOLOGY, METHOD AND EMPIRICAL DATA

This chapter will present the overall research design. A qualitative research in the form of interviews will be described along with the methodology for analysis.

1.5.5. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the main body of the primary research. It will connect the primary data to the analytical framework and explore the findings in a more in-depth manner.

1.5.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter will be a reflection of the research in its entirety and an overall summary of the thesis.

1.5.7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This last chapter will present recommendations to develop further research and provide practical suggestions on policy related to transforming women's political status.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents relevant research in relation to the use of quota systems in enhancing women's political participation. It will provide insight into the function of the electoral gender quota system in Zimbabwe and further explore how this has been perceived and interpreted in other jurisdictions.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF ELECTORAL GENDERED QUOTAS

“The quota is a strategy not a result.”

- Participant at Dutch Embassy in Zimbabwe Feminist Meeting on Constitutional Amendment Bill, 25 January 2020

Africa is one of the main continents with the highest numbers of women in Parliaments, with Rwanda being the global lead having 61% women constituting the Parliament. This has been attributed largely to the adoption of electoral gender quotas by governments and political parties typically following a constitutional review process.

Bauer (2021) outlines some benefits of implementing the quota system stating foremostly that it is an injustice for men to monopolize political power and such hegemony serves only the interests of one group of society and neglects others. She adds that inclusive legislative bodies are often more democratic, and places value on the 'role model' argument which states that there is powerful impact when people see themselves physically embodied and resembled by people within positions of influence and leadership. Franceschet *et al* (2012) as cited in (Bauer 2021, p.345) refer to symbolic representation of women's interests “as altering gendered ideas about the roles of women and men in politics, raising awareness of what women can achieve, legitimating women as political actors, and encouraging women to become more involved in politics themselves as voters, activists, candidates, and leaders.”

In their research on women and political parties in Africa; (Okoosi-Simbine and Obi, 2021, p. 328) reveal the prevalent nature of politics and democracy in general; stating that the present structures were historically formulated to serve men better; presenting men as 'visible and active in the public sphere and women restrained to the private (domestic life) thereby creating the illusion that they are restricted only to those spheres of society they are assigned to and are

generally incapable of contributing and participating in the other. Okoosi-Simbine and Obi (2021, p. 328) argue that important lessons may be “derived from the case of Rwanda but this phenomena may be better explained by the political will of leadership not only of proposing electoral gender quotas but creating the right framework that enables its implementation.”

Within the context of Africa, the first wave of quotas resulted predominantly from countries transitioning from conflict particularly in East and Southern Africa. An opportunity for formulating new systems of governance arose along with increased mobilization by national women’s movements and the support of international women’s movements influenced by international norms. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Kenya and Somalia adopted this same system largely due to national movements calling for quotas through constitutional review processes.

Yoon (2011a) as cited by (Bosha, 2014, p.103) refers to the call by the African Union (AU) for “50% representation of women on all levels of political leadership within their countries and communities” and argues that quota systems have helped women in the development of political leadership. Okoosi-Simbine and Obi (2021, p.329) explore the cost of political participation stating that the “structure of the society makes it rather difficult for women to have access to and ownership of productive resources, thus, limiting their capacity to effectively participate in partisan politics.” Subsequently, women who enter into politics through the quota system benefit from not having to meet the hefty costs of participation thereby necessitating the implementation of quota systems. Quotas therefore decrease the ‘access’ gap exacerbated by factors such as financing. Bauer (2019) refers to quotas as a training ground for women helping propel their political aspirations with relevant experience.

Bosha (2014) postures gender stereotyping as limiting to the advancement of women in politics, annotating quotas as being critical in the passing of gender-sensitive laws. Okedele (2021, p.352) opines that the adoption of affirmative action policies is essentially compensatory for the systemic and systematic discrimination faced by women “because it gives them opportunities to make use of their skills, qualities, and talents that would have remained unused.”

Conversely, Tripp (2005, p.49) as cited in (Okoosi-Simbine and Obi 2021, p.317) dissect the mechanizations of quotas showing that their viability is heavily reliant on certain specific optimum conditions because “women’s ability to participate effectively in the key institutions

of governance is constrained or facilitated by the broader political framework in which they find themselves.” Electoral gender quotas are noble in their conceptualization but they may pose another threat of ‘othering’ the group of women who are not elected into Parliament through a public vote and this has been noted in Zimbabwe where women occupying the quota seats are sometimes referred to as *baccossi*³; a colloquial term which loosely translates to low budget bulk purchase ‘buy one get one free’ as it is derived from an initiative by the Zimbabwean government to alleviate severe food shortages in 2007. Okoosi-Simbine and Obi (2021, p.353) aptly summarize this as having the potential to stigmatize women due to preferential treatment which may undermine the intended outcomes of the measure.

Additionally; this statistical representation does not necessarily translate to actual political influence, independence, autonomy and power for women occupying these seats. Oyemi *et al* (2021, p.377) observe that “women’s activities have been relegated to the background acting as supportive agents to men, fulfilling the adage that ‘behind every successful man there is a woman’”. This perceived ‘handing over’ of power to women essentially leaves them at the mercy of men therefore maintain the dominant-subordinate relationship. Dahlerup (2018) further states that quotas have rendered women as ‘intruders’ in the male dominated spaces and institutions although the number of women in Parliament has increased; “it has been argued that these have failed to improve the quality of lives of women” (Okedele, 2021, p.458). Geisler (1995, p.566) notes that “Unless women keep to the prescribed spaces and roles in the political women's corner, they are considered to be out of bounds..”

The majority of women politicians, moreover, do not see themselves as representing women only, nor do they choose to stress their gender unduly. They campaign on a party ticket not a women's ticket. They contribute to the discussion of women's issues if and when that is appropriate. They might feel more inclined to address gender issues, because no man would bring them up, but they do not think it strategic to confine them. (Geisler, 1995, p.574).

It is remiss to romanticize quota systems as being able to intrinsically alter the cis-hetero-patriarchal capitalist norms that inform many African societies including Zimbabwe. Kemigisa (2022) reiterates this view that increased representation is not synonymous to increased political power stating that “to argue that an increase in the numbers of women in political

³ Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention (BACCOSSI)

office equals prosperity for all is not only deceitful but is also an erasure of the everyday radical acts of freedom by women including women without political power.”

Tamale (2000, p.12) adds that the movement by women from the ‘private’ sphere “to claim their rightful space in the ‘public’ arena, traditional values provides a ready tool for men to use to remind them of their ‘proper’ place.” Feminist institutionalism has been used by (Verge and De la Fuente, 2014) to critique quotas as inadequately capturing the procedures and cultures surrounding decision-making and actors involved into the entire political play. Krook and Mackay, 2011 as cited by (Verge and De la Fuente, 2014, p.68) argue that “through non-codified but still important rules and norms that may discourage women from being more active in terms of access, presence and agency,” the ‘daily-enactment of informal institutions’ is responsible for laying the political playing field; requiring a ‘fine-grained systematization’ of strategizing issues of gendered power. Essentially, quotas fail to take into account other equally domineering aspects of political participation which are not erased by the increased presence of women within parliaments.

Furthermore, the deeply formal manifestation of quotas may not necessarily be articulated and permeated to the demographic whom it purports to support and this sentiment is echoed in the latest study done by the (Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, 2020) where interviews in the Post-Election Gender Survey revealed that most respondents in focus group discussions, key informants and interviews with some candidates and political parties revealed that they were unaware of the quota system. There is an apparent gap between the policy and the people it purports to represent. As observed by Kemigisa (2022), “the selective amnesia in critiquing how gendered political institutions function” where “women in their representational capacity are never at the centers of power within the current construction of democracy in Africa” is an inaptitude of a system that fails to capture the realities of African women to begin with.

Therefore, addressing the complexities and contradictions surrounding women’s representation in politics, and formulating solutions thereof, requires a more contextual, intersectional and deliberate exploration into women’s individual and collective understanding and experience of political participation; not prescribed by any consortiums, constitutions or by the international obligations of states. Kemigisa (2022) iterates the teachings of feminist theorist Mari Matsuda (1997) to ask the ‘other question’ within our methodology;

“When I see that looks something racist, I ask, where is the patriarchy in this?”

When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, where is the heterosexism in this?

When I see something homophobic, I ask, where is the class interest in this?"

The continuous failure of the gendered electoral quotas to make such connections remains a threat to the full realization of women's humanity.

3.HUMAN RIGHTS AND WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

This chapter presents important international, regional and national conventions and statutes which have validated the implementation of quota systems. It will illuminate the rationale behind creating electoral gender quotas in Zimbabwe and perspective on whether this is progressively improving the status quo of women within the area of politics.

3.1. Human Rights Conventions

“Some people ask: “Why the word feminist? Why not just say you are a believer in human rights, or something like that?”

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*.

Zimbabwe, like many other countries is a party to various human rights conventions which include civil and political rights. Within this approach is the aspiration to bridge gender gaps in all spheres of society including within the realm of politics. This is due to the fact that political leadership continues to be male dominated presenting layered challenges to the quality of life lived depending on one’s gender and other factors such as race, religion, spatiality and financial status among others. It is against this background that countries have formulated strategies on proportional representation in the form of electoral gender quotas with the vision to eliminate these gendered imbalances. Within this context of human rights; it is the state that has the duty to develop, adopt, implement, promote, protect and fulfil human rights for the betterment of its people.

3.1.1. Universal Declaration Of Human Rights (UDHR)

Article 1 of the UDHR, expressly states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights (UDHR, 1948) which is an important background informing the language and practice of human rights. While ultimately the enjoyment and practice of human rights is intersectional in nature; meaning that the interplay of different societal conditions determines the extent if at all; to which one exercises and benefits, the UDHR provides a fundamental values which can be replicated and interpreted in different contexts.

Specifically on political participation; the UDHR states that

“Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representative.

Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.”

- UDHR, Article 2

Zimbabwe having ratified this declaration in 1986; six years after its independence evidences therefore that the country conforms to the equality of all humans including women and that due to the condition of being human; women are entitled to ‘equal access’ to public service. Worthy of note in the inclusion of the debate around ‘access’ because one the of the major deterrent factors to women’s political participation is access itself. Quotas therefore tackle that by creating special conditions to allow women to access the Parliament as members and civil servants.

3.1.2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The ICCPR is the document which relates distinctively to civil and political rights. Though this view is subject to much critique, civil and political rights have been regarded as the foremost human rights creating a form of superiority over socio-economic and cultural rights. Article 25 of this convention bestows the right to take part in public affairs, to vote and be elected, and to have equal access to public service in the country. It reiterates the rights that are enshrined within the UDHR paying particular attention to the civil and political manifestations of such rights.

Zimbabwe as a signatory to this conventions, also conceptualizes its Bill of Rights in a similar way; giving high regard to civil and political rights in its approach to constitutionality.

3.1.3. African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR/African Charter)

The African Charter came into force in 1981 as an important declaration by African people of their humanity and sovereignty particularly because it was formulated after the majority of Africa had attained independence from lifetimes of western colonial rule. It is unique in that it relates to the realities of African people alone meanwhile playing into the global rhetoric of human rights. Article 15 of this charter gives every citizen the right to participate freely in government and equal access to public service which includes women having this same access to such platforms. Zimbabwe ratified the ACHPR in 1986 and is subject to period reviews to ensure that as a state it is progressively realising the aspirations enshrined therein.

3.2. *Women’s political rights*

3.2.1. Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Enforced in 1981, this convention is monumental in the acknowledgment of women's humanity as stated in the preamble, 'reaffirms faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women' (CEDAW, 1981). Zimbabwe subsequently ratified this convention in 1991 therefore joining the rest of the world in pledging to confront more intimately the marginalisation of women.

CEDAW makes reference to temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between women and men as not having the aim to perpetuate discrimination but to catalyse balance. This is important as electoral quotas are often exclusive to a certain demographic. Zimbabwe creating 60 additional seats to Parliament to include more women is one of the many forms of operationalizing special measures aimed at propelling equality.

“State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.”

- (CEDAW, 1981)

3.2.2. Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)

Similarly to CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol provides a blueprint on the promotion, protection and realisation of women's human rights specifically in Africa. This protocol was adopted in 2003 and Zimbabwe ratified it in 2008 following the realisation that despite the enactment of the African Charter, women remained marginalized, discriminated against and victimized through harmful cultural practices. Article 9 of the protocol significantly states that;

“States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures...State Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision making”

- (Maputo Protocol, 2002).

3.3. Domestic Law

3.3.1. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) Act of 2013 “The Constitution”

Section 17 of the Constitution refers to gender balance mandating the state to take all measures including legislative measures to ensure that there is gender balance in all institutions and agents of the government (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2013). Moreover the Bill of Rights guarantees political rights to all citizens include the right to form, join and participate in a political party. Section 124 specifically describes the quota system;

“The National Assembly consists of:

- a. two hundred and ten members elected by secret ballot from the two hundred and ten constituencies into which Zimbabwe is divided; and
- b. for the life of the rest two Parliaments after the effective date, an additional sixty women members, six from each of the provinces into which Zimbabwe is divided, elected through a system of proportional representation based on the votes cast for candidates representing political parties in a general election for constituency members in the provinces.”

(Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2013).

Section 157 additionally calls for gender balance within the Senate in line with the system of proportional representation.

This is consolidated through the establishment of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) which oversees elections, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission which monitors and upholds human rights and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission which ensures that gender equality is observed in all institutions of states and government.

Be that as it may, the human rights rhetoric whether regarded as universal, natural, prescribed or otherwise provides a myopic view of the different actors involved in the daily functions of people. Firstly, the state itself which historically promotes organized violence, infractions to the bodies and personhood of its citizens, brutality on ‘undocumented’ migrants, remains hailed as the vessel of peace building through agreements made multiple realities away from the daily lives of African women. It is in itself a paradox – poignantly ironic.

Secondly, by limiting the state as the sole obligatory juristic body with the legal duty to act under international human rights law it ignores the role that private citizens play in the limitation of the enjoyment of other people’s rights particularly in the functions of such rights within the private spheres of society. It assumes by design or omission, that the inequalities prevalent in politics exist mainly within the political realm when in fact the inequalities are dynamic and continuous manifestations of the ‘private’ dynamics between different genders in society. Essentially the gendered disproportions within politics are a consequence not a cause.

This system continues to overlook the role of other domineering private entities such as multinationals/corporations and indeed cis-hetero-men. MacKinnon (1993, p.70) aptly captures this sentiment, stating that;

Although the state in some way stands behind most of what they do, men typically have enough power to control and violate women without the state explicitly intervening to allow it. To this extent women are not seen as subjected by the state as such, so their condition is regarded as pre-legal, social hence natural, so outside international human rights accountability.

If the fundamentals of the human rights discourse are rooted in the legal realm through ratification and implementation by state, and focused on the actions or non-actions of state; this deductively excludes women from the conceptualization of 'human' in the application of human rights, simply because the reality of women and other feminized bodies is not reflected in the proposed solutions. As concluded by (Binion, 1995, p. 525) if human rights were crafted from the perspective of the woman, they would be concerned with impact rather than intent; in that way 'human rights' will not precede the people assumably protected.

The specific conventions mentioned within this chapter are not exhaustive as more policies emanate from them however they offer a foundational understanding into the laws informing women's political rights. In addition to the foretasted observations on the functionality of the human rights rhetoric, they still echo a rigid outlook on the genders present within communities by limiting the discourse to men and women. This binary conclusively excludes everyone else who falls outside of cis-hetero male and femaleness and the African and Zimbabwean cultural nuances which are not limited to a gender binary. Tamale (2020, p.101) illuminates the point made by Amadiume (1997) that 'biological sex' "did not always correspond to ideological gender in African societies." As summarized by Icaza and Vázquez as cited by (Tamale, 2020, p.114) a decolonial shift in the understanding of gender "would entail a radicalization of the notion of gender itself that locate its geo-political, geo-historical, geoepistemic, and body-political contexts. It would entail "challenge the tendency in some feminists' analyses and practices that understand gender, heteronormativity, patriarchy, women, men, female, male, and so on as cross-cultural and ahistorical categories of analysis" (Tamale, 2020, p.114).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter delves into the intricacies of decolonial African feminist theorizing, placing it as a relevant approach to understanding women's political participation in Zimbabwe. It is both a retrospective and intuitive process of self-identification which has enlightened African feminist discourse and scholarship and it provides the background which informed the research's methodological framework.

A DECOLONIAL AFRICAN FEMINIST APPROACH

“After all, the majority of African women “theorize from the everyday.”

- Prof. Sylvia Tamale, Decolonization and Afro Feminism.

Feminist theorizing has been evolving since the 1970s and over time is being calibrated to interpret the varied realities of women and minorities across the world. Lugones' exploration of decolonial theory which according to (Manning, 2021, p2) “engages debates pertaining to coloniality/modernity and indigenous identity and Global South indigenous identity and gender, while providing a space for the voices and experiences of the silenced” generating an important departure for decolonial feminist theorizing. Like other dominant forms of academic discourse, feminist theorizing largely emanated from Western ideologies and epistemic foundations necessitating its development within contexts outside of the West.

For Africans, the process of decolonization particularly probes the “political economy of gender relations between African women and men” which has been “altered by colonialism, engendering new structural drivers of inequality” (Tamale, 2020, p.6). Yacob-Haliso *et al* (2021, p.10) reference this as a “revolution ongoing in the academy as scholars seek to retrieve the African past and present from the colonial gaze and divest African studies of its colonial baggage through efforts at decolonizing the field.” Decolonial African feminist theorizing combines African feminisms and Pan-Africanism which is about decolonization and reconstruction. While pan-Africanist scholarship has developed over a long period of time following the independence of African countries; it needs to “politically infuse intersectionality into its revived agenda” (Tamale, 2020, 352-3) as it has been criticized for omitting gender from its realm of intellectuality

Over time, African feminist scholars are emerging with the aim of decolonizing and mainstreaming gender in academia. Tamale (2020) from the onset rejects that ‘we should move on from colonialism’ and to ‘stop blaming it’ for all the issues plaguing Africans arguing that colonialism plays a major factor in the reality of relations and status of Africa and Africans globally and regionally. Colonialism is understood to have defined concepts such as ‘race’ and ‘gender’ and redefined the notions of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in Africa and how they relate with each other. Precisely Tamale (2020, p.7) states that “the dominance and pervasiveness of coloniality in the modern world is so fundamental it has shaped the way the world perceives us and most of us have in turn internalized its constructions of who we are.”

Decolonial African feminist theorizing is therefore urgent because “race is a deeply constitutive element of gender, but also for the reason that the African continent occupies a separate cultural, social, economic and geopolitical landscape from the West” (Tamale. 2020, p.41 – 42). For many years, African scholars have critiqued the cornering of African studies by western scholars as this has perpetuated many distortions about the reality of Africans and maintained the dominance of western scholarship in academia – even when the intention has been noble.

A classic example is in the argument that asserts that biology predisposes women to a subordinate position in society whereas there is historical evidence that reveals that women wielded influence, power and authority playing instead a complimentary role to the political rubric of the time (Oluyemi et al, p.2086). Dangarembga (2022, p.78) describes how “traditional patriarchy recognized differing degrees of power”, outlining the portions of the patriarchal dividend that women benefit from in the form of ‘female fatherhood’ where and aunt is regarded to be an authoritative figure in the family even if she is concurrently regarded as a daughter-in-law in another family and having the ‘lowly condition’ that emanates from such status.

In Zimbabwe, the role of women like Charwe who became possessed with the spirit of Nehanda “who had co-founded the Mutapa dynasty along with her brother in the fifteen century” (Dangarembga, 2002, p.78) exemplifies another source of political influence and power for women; standing between the living and the ancestral realm as guides, healers and leaders. Historical omissions of the role of a Woman King in modern day Benin and Queen Lozikeyi⁴

⁴ See <https://www.infinite-women.com/women/queen-lozikeyi-dlodlo/>

in modern day Matebeleland (a region in Zimbabwe) have maintained misconceptions on the role that African women played in past civilizations identifying them as inconsequential to the politics of the day.

I hasten to state that it would be dishonest to romanticize the gendered dynamics between people in pre-colonial Africa however it is important to provide a broader insight into that history even if it serves only to reassure women of their power, passed down from one generation to the next. It is imperative to rewrite women's narrative into past and present histories because women have been “‘written out’ of historical accounts and political memory” (Tamale, 2020, p.23).

African societies place value in oral tradition to this day and this is evidenced by cultures that hold intimate ritualistic conversations between the elderly and the young; passing on historical intergenerational information, the use of unwritten folklore in everyday conversations and in the formulation and function of unwritten systems of justice based on cultural norms. In the context of academia, this form of knowledge has been devalued as ‘colonial intellectualism deliberately denigrated indigenous oral traditions and wisdom as illegitimate methodologies and tools of storing records’ (Tamale, 2020, p.7). More prominently is the misrepresentation of African history as having begun with the arrival of Europeans on the continent juxtaposed to their more superior methods of history, written in ink and transcribed into many different languages. This created an African identity that is centered on hetero-patriarchal and capitalist European male gaze. Tamale (2020, p11) invites decolonial African feminist scholars instead to treat Africa as a ‘historical unit’ which refers to a process of capturing the “shared heritage of African belief systems as well as people’s sacred and enduring legacy of enslavement, colonialism, racism and neoliberalism.’ The realization of this shortcoming ensures that within the design of systems and solutions that lay claim to women’s liberation in the context the electoral gender quotas in Africa; due focus is placed on how these factors affect the outcome of women’s marginalization in politics and everything else.

Context is central to the formulation of any sustainable policy, strategy and law and this has been a drawback in the effectiveness of the quota systems because it has failed to take into account cultural structures and formalities that govern Africans most prevalently in the rural areas. Approximately 67% of Zimbabweans live in rural communities, (Trading Economics, 2021) governed by the Rural Town Council alongside chiefs and headmen who occupy the role

of ruler, council and judiciary. Chieftaincy is common in many African cultures and it does not follow democratic systems of election but rather follows monarchical structures where leadership is attained through a royal bloodline. Legal principles such as ‘choice of law’ are often employed when dealing with matters involving people living in the rural areas because of the widespread observation of ‘customary law’. Within this principle, litigants are given the option to choose whether their matter will be determined in terms of customary or general law.

Similarly when approaching political participation; the function of chiefs and headmen has to be taken into account. This legal pluralism which is a consequence of colonization and coloniality therefore entails that gender quotas be linked with social and economic redistributive justice, addressing women’s political exclusion through the lens of “cultural structural, systemic constraints” (Okoosi-Simbine and Obi 2021, p. 332). Tamale (2020,p.151) posits that “our decolonial efforts must shift the focus to the practice of living customary law and its amenability to change” acknowledging women’s autonomy to contribute to its development highlighting the challenges to “protect the spaces where shifts happens.” As it stands, out of a total of 272 chiefs, 6 are women and 15 out of 452 headman positions are occupied a women (Sunday Mail, 2021). This gap remains unaccounted for within the quota systems more so when 10 Chiefs in Zimbabwe constitute the Senate.

Tamale (2020,p.21) makes a list of the important elements informing decolonial African feminist scholarship;

- “Reclaiming our humanity;
- rebuilding our territorial and bodily integrity;
- re-asserting our self-determination;
- restoring our spirituality;
- dismantling the material and symbolic foundations and colonial capitalistic state,
- decentering western hegemonic knowledge and cultures regarding race, gender, sexuality;
- reparation of historical wrong;
- embracing the Ubuntu philosophy.”

Additionally it incorporates a process of politicizing women’s issues from the reality and perspectives of women making it compatible to this research’s objectives. There are ‘accepted truths’ that have led to the formulation of opinions and solutions involving gendered and unequal power relations affecting African women demanding a “thinking that comes to

constitute our condition,” (Koopman, 2007 as cited by Bacchi, 2012b, p.1). It validates the subtleties, pluralities, formalities, informalities and intersectionalities that amalgamate to form these realities of imbalances, gendered divides, misrepresentations, omissions, and other cultural and socio-economic consequences of being an African woman in an African society. This research contends that through decolonial African feminist theory, the root of transformation is within women’s voices themselves as it is the lacuna where policies, legislation and practices fall parallel and opposed to the reality of women’s status quo in politics. Women’s livelihoods continue to be in the incapable hands of sexist, patriarchal, capitalist, masculinist states which generally plaster half-baked purportedly women-centric solutions which have proven to be unsustainable and restorative in maintaining the gendered and unequal world order. (Mekgwe, 2007) articulates African feminist theorizing as a form of reinstatement of women, recognizing them as full citizens in all spheres. While African feminisms cannot be ‘universalized’, the African feminist model recognizes the “various and varied ‘femininities’, where women do not easily fall into neat categories such as ‘the oppressed’ as against ‘empowered men’ or ‘marginalized Third-World women’...African feminism is the need to espouse a theoretical model that is able to contain the varied positions...” of women, (Mekgwe, 2007, p. 173 – 173). In that way, this research will add and center the voices of Zimbabwean women in order to capture alternative narratives for reforms in their/our own political representation.

5.METHODOLOGY, METHOD & EMPIRICAL DATA

The methodology chapter shall provide an overview of the overall research design used in conducting and analyzing the interviews.

In the beginning

there were women.

- Ijeoma Umebinyuo, The Genesis – Questions for Ada

5.1. OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research was done in the form of interviews. The choice of methodology was largely informed by the research objectives which are to evaluate the efficacy of the electoral gender quota system in Zimbabwe and to document women's political experience as the primary beneficiary to this system of proportional representation. The research questions aim to capture the narratives and perspectives of women as participants in a partially democratic system – partial; being attributed to the legal plurality of governance through elections and through chieftaincy in the rural areas. Therefore to represent that voice, interviews provided the most suitable form of empirical data.

5.2. METHODOLOGY FOR INTERVIEWS

The main research questions were as follows:

- What is Zimbabwean women's understanding of political participation?
- What do women think about taking up leadership roles in politics?
- What are the disqualifiers from eligibility to participate?

5.2.1. Interviewees

To answer these questions, 10 participants were selected to represent the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe. These individuals are representative of a wider demographic within interlacing intersectionalities of gender identification, sexual orientation, age, political views, leadership experience, class, tribe, religious beliefs, spatiality and other socio-economic cultural factors that influence Zimbabwean womanhood in the political domain. To encompass these varied

perspectives the prerequisite for each interviewee is that they should have experience working with the community on issues related to political participation in addition to having their own personal experiences and opinions of the same. Activists, journalists, politicians, human rights defenders, and people in similar spheres of work or passion make the most fitting candidates because they are able to account for the views of many instead of only sharing their personal experiences.

I used my wide network of contacts in Zimbabwe to reach out to individuals with the desired characteristics to suit the objectives of this study. Interviewees were contacted through various social media platforms because they are all resident in Zimbabwe but I am currently living and studying in the United Kingdom. Social media provided the quickest communication platform considering the time frame and resources allocated to this research.

5.2.1.1. Profiles of interviewees

- LGBTQI Activist
- Founder of women's rights NGO in indigenous community
- Founder of youth and political rights NGO in marginalized rural community
- Rural girls and education advocate
- HIV and AIDS advocate and trans activist
- Programming officer in NGO working to promote youth and girls political participation
- Opposition party politician
- Ruling party politician
- Journalist
- Social political and economic participation activist

5.2.2. The Interview Guide

The interview guide (Appendix 1) contains an outline of the research and the role that the interviewees will play in the overall matrix of this research. It explains the reason why they have been selected to participate and seeks their consent on their involvement and the extent to which their views will be captured and narrated within this study. This guide also provides information on ethical considerations according to the Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared

Services in Education and Research⁵ which includes information, confidentiality, consent and data use. Upon sending a request for engagement, interviewees were sent the interview guide using a platform of their choice between email and social media. This comes from the acknowledgement that internet accessibility varies from one individual to the next especially in a country like Zimbabwe where the cost of data is relatively high in comparison to the average income. The interviewees were advised that an audio recording of the interview will be done and they had the option to ask for a copy of the recording thereafter, to deny having the an audio recording and to opt instead for a written record of the interview and the opportunity to withdraw consent at any given point before the submission of the final draft of the research. Only one of the interviewees opted for a written record while the rest consented to an audio recording.

5.2.3. Interview Questions

The interview questions were aimed at mimicking the forestated main research questions. In order to gain more insight on the background of the participants and the constituencies they represent, some personal questions such as age, sexuality, sexual orientation and location were posed. These questions also take into account the critique around making analyses from a binary perspective. Within the definition of the term ‘woman’ exists multiple realities which were covered by such questions.

The interview questions were semi structured because of the realization that ‘the personal is the political’ and therefore providing rigid and structured questions would limit people’s narratives to the intentions of the researcher instead of the research being led by the perspectives of the participants. It was an attempt to curtail my own bias.

5.2.4. The Interview

The interviews ran for 30 – 45 minutes. The interview scheduling was agreed upon by both the interviewer and interviewee although it was largely the interviewees whose diaries took precedence. They were recorded using an in-built mobile recording application and stored on One Drive. Before the interview and recording commenced, each participant was asked to confirm whether they have consented and still consent to having this interview. Whether they agree to have the interview recorded and their preference on the moderm of record. Thereafter

⁵ See <https://sikt.no/en/about-sikt>

the interviews were backed up and stored online in a locked folder within One Drive and another separate folder for the transcripts was created and locked for safekeeping.

The interviews were done via WhatsApp because it was the platform of choice for the majority of participants. The issue of limited data access and data poverty in countries such as Zimbabwe is common cause. Internet access comes at a high cost for the average Zimbabwe which limits the number of online platforms where they can easily be reached. WhatsApp accounts for almost 50% of all internet traffic (Poverty Action Lab, 2020) and all network providers have a special and cheaper internet subscription for WhatsApp. Due to budgetary constraints; in-person interviews were impractical. It is easy to dismiss certain platforms due to valid cybersecurity and data protection concerns however the environment necessitated such a compromise.

5.2.5. Ethics

Each participant provided written and verbal consent (except for the interviewee who wished for their interview to be recorded in writing) to having this interview and it being recorded. They were aware of the purpose of the interview being for academic use and were further advised that their information would remain anonymous including not using identifiers that could be easily traced back to them. This is because of safety and security concerns especially since Zimbabwe is within an election year. This is usually a volatile time and therefore the risk of harm is increased. Some of the participants opted to have their names included in the research and were open to having other identity markers included for example '*Nqo a 47- year old transgender woman*'. They had the option to write how they wanted to be specifically identified (if at all) within the research findings. They were reminded of their right to withdraw consent at any time and given contact details for any queries related to the research.

5.2.6. Trustworthiness and Reliability

The interviews were recorded and stored in encrypted folders on One Drive. Only the researcher had access to the recordings and transcripts and participants had the option to ask for copies of their own specific interviews which are shared on a platform of their choice. Two participants requested to receive their recording via email.

The interviews were meticulously transcribed as “the accuracy of the transcription plays a role in determining the accuracy of the data that are analyzed and with what degree of dependability” (Stuckey, 2014). Similar interview questions within the structured component

were asked to each participant to increase the validity of the interviews because the focus of the interview which is political participation is the same but the experiences differ. The rest of the interview was guided by the responses of the participants which led to a discussion as opposed to an interrogation although this must not be taken to mean that structured interviews are interrogatory in nature. Rather, a more inquisitorial approach in the form of semi structured interviewing is preferable to a researcher whose goal is to “better understand the participant’s unique perspective rather than a generalized understanding of the phenomenon” (McGrath, Palmgren and Lilijdedahl, 2019, p.1002).

Generally, the risk of participants giving the answers they think the interviewer wants to hear remains and to mitigate this risk, the interviewees were eased into the conversations so as to ensure that they were more comfortable to speak on the issues proposed. Due to the fact that I am a Zimbabwean speaking to Zimbabweans; despite the country having 16 official languages; no communication barriers were experienced more so because all the interviews were primarily done in English. The main threat to communication was the internet connectivity as some interviews had to be paused to allow for participants to reconnect and reboot their networks or electrical power outages due to loadshedding.

5.2.7. Method of Interview Analysis

In analyzing the findings of the interviews, a thematic analysis was used. A close examination of the data was done to identify common themes and topics, ideas and patterns and recurring sentiments which were made by the interview participants. The data was eventually sorted in broad themes in line with the data presented alongside assumptions from the literature and theoretical framework. The approach to data analysis was largely done using a latent approach where the subtext and assumptions were used to deductions and conclusions on the study.

One risk that is posed by making a thematic analysis is to miss nuances in the data while in pursuit of similarities however careful transcription of the interviews was done to ensure that the information was quoted verbatim and as closely as possible, resembled the tone and intention of the interviewee.

5.2.8. Coding

The coding instrument was initially influenced by assumptions derived from the literature and theoretical framework and then by the information gathered from the interviews conducted with the carefully selected group of participants. Texts from the transcripts were highlighted in paragraphs or recurring words. Codes were formulated to describe the highlighted text in

different colors to resemble the different themes. A key was created to describe the theme represented by each color. Once this process was completed, the data was sorted and collated into the relevant codes or subgroups based on identified patterns. The broader themes were reduced to shorter phrases or single words which reflect the similarities and recurrences identified.

The main themes identified were:

Patriarchy and cis-male domination

Culture and gender roles

Locale

Education

Sexuality and gender identity

Security

5.2.9. Limitations and Weaknesses

There is an inherent bias in thought and opinion which underpins the entire research therefore the findings are not entirely devoid of bias – although this is a natural thing in social sciences. This affects the choice in thematic areas highlighted in this research. To reduce the risk of overarching bias, broader themes were used to capture the diversity in perspective and interaction with each theme. While internet access and technology has allowed for increased access to communication between people, the lack of in-person human interaction allowed for some body language and subtleties to be lost because of the barrier of having a screen between the interviewer and interviewee. Further, the use of WhatsApp as a preferable medium of conducting interviews poses risks to security and data protection although this was eased with all the participants accepting it as a platform of choice having regard to the risks involved. Given the state of data access in Zimbabwe, it allowed for ease in conducting the interviews within the limited timeframe and limited resources as all interviews were done on a voluntary basis.

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter provides an analysis of the interviews done with the 10 participants to this study. It begins with a summary of the results based on each theme, then delves into an interpretation of the meaning of the results and the implications on the literature and theoretical framework. Finally it will outline the limitations of the results.

“The biggest hindrance to women’s political participation are the political parties themselves.”

- Sylvia Chirawu, Feminist Writer, Judge High Court of Zimbabwe

RESULTS

6.1. Summary of Results

The results of the research highlighted six major themes which were prevalent in most of the perspectives shared by the participants. Firstly, the acknowledgment of the role that patriarchy and cis-male domination plays in defining the structures of politics. Most interviewees explained how their political views have emanated from the **hetero-patriarchal** society within which they live, showing how the gendered dynamics within politics are a continuation of the societal and cultural norms that their communities generally subscribe. This theme pivots into the cultural and gender roles within which they have been socialized, in certain instances to their discomfort. **Culture** in some debates has been flagged as being retrogressive to the development of democracy and women’s rights however in these interviews; participants generally held the notion that tenets of cultural practices within their community could be preserved subject to the same evolution and activism that is being done in other areas of society. Instead of abolishing certain cultural practices such as chieftaincy; the intervention should be targeted towards women’s access to positions of leadership within these ruling structures.

Within these intersecting factors; **locale** was a recurring theme which was a design of the interview questions as participants were asked to describe their present location. As the conversations developed all participants reflected on the effects that their geographical location had on their understanding and experience of politics. Beyond their present location, most participants gave a historical reflection of the different geographies they have lived in; and the socio-economic dynamics thereof; for example living in rural communal settings or peri-urban indigenous places. While contemplating some of the qualifiers/and or disqualifiers

from political participation; participants referenced **education** or lack thereof as an important determinant. Further, **sexuality** and **gender identity** were raised as overarching element which affects their political participation. Women falling out of the cis-gender heteronormative spectrum feel additionally ostracized due to lack of inclusion within political language, omission from political discourse and relegation to the peripheries of society.

The final theme was **security**. All the women interviewed expressed an inherent fear of political violence which was not only attributed to the state and its subsidiaries like the police, but additionally to political parties, and their own families.

6.2. Discussion of Themes

6.2.1. Patriarchy and cis-male domination

Even with the implementation of the quota system women still constitute a minority in political leadership. The effects of hetero-patriarchy have been researched extensively within the realm of social sciences and in particular is problematized by some African feminist theorists who believe that it is the root cause of women's subordination. Tamale (2020, p.80) references Nigerian leftist feminist Fatimah Kelleher's exploration into the importance of "interlinking human oppression with patriarchy" as a peremptory factor in understanding the rest of society's behaviors and functions. To understand the imbalances in political participation requires an appreciation of society's patriarchal underpinnings. This is reflected in the assertions made by the participants regarding their relationship with men in their personal lives and in their communities. Women expressed having little experience with female leadership in public spaces and understood women leadership to be reserved primarily to positions that are expressly intended to serve the 'woman' constituencies for example women's guilds in churches and women's unions in the workplace. They expressed their understanding of the role of women in politics to be secondary as a reflection of the existent social order in all other aspects of their lives and communities.

. The following code units confirm these observations;

"I come from a rural background and in my community I have never seen women campaigning to be counsellors or women campaigning to be MPs. But women in my community don't even have rights. I think it's because of patriarchy."

"The political spaces in Zimbabwe are also very male dominated and I feel like there is no representation. I would like to wake up in a Zimbabwe where a woman is President. Growing

up seeing Mai Mujuru , I think she was the Vice-President at some point. Seeing her now campaigning for Presidency in her own party in a way is comforting.”

Interestingly some participants regarded motherhood as being an important test and practicing ground for political leadership because of the administrative requirements involved in the running of a home.

This is exemplified in the following coding unit;

“In our culture we are matriarchal which means that children, they are actually associated with the mother so in our culture, women are the most people who go out to fend for the children. To fend even for the entire family.”

Even in instances where they live within a nuclear family unit where the father is the head of the house, or within the extended family where father figureheads dominate the familial structures, women regard themselves as being in control of the home. This destabilizes the rationalization that gendered roles within the family reproduce conclusive subordination in women.

6.2.2. Culture and gender roles

The cultural and gendered dynamics informing participation are essential in understanding the context within which the electoral quotas exist. Placing women within the quotas without paying regard to the extent of their autonomy has negatively affected the success of this strategy because little value is placed on women’s opinions. The adage ‘women are meant to be seen and not heard’ summarizes a societal condition that influences the backgrounds of some women currently occupying parliamentary seats through the quota. As articulated in the following code units;

“When they tell us about the quota system they just say heh there is a quota system but those women that are chosen are the ones that just go there and sit because they were just elected through the quota system.”

Participants in these instances were highlighting their experiences at community gatherings on different topics from agriculture to politics and they observed that women seldom speak and when they do they are likely to reiterate the sentiments raised by men for their own survival and as a matter of practice. Albeit women acknowledging the need to have themselves represented within positions of leadership, their physical embodiment is merely one of many

factors that will promote their autonomy and influence within these structures. The question therefore is, how do we reconstruct a culture where women's opinions are safe and valued?

Even within instances where women derive a form of power due to their kinship to men, their proximity to masculinity is very controlled and limited by the immediate context. More specifically in some Zimbabwean tribes, within the context of marriage, the daughter-in-law regards her husband's sister as a husband and accords her due respect given to male figureheads. That same sister is still subject to the subordination of being a daughter and perhaps a daughter-in-law in other contexts and therefore her dominance is limited specifically to that dynamic where her status is elevated. This means that women regardless of their proximity to masculinist positioning are still subject to the patriarchal limitations of what they can or cannot do and the extent to which they can assert themselves in other areas of their personal life. Within the political parties themselves they are still subject to the hierarchy of kinship and totems and they cannot be seen to actively disrespect the decision of the men within the party and the women who wield any tethered masculinities. The ecosystem in itself is difficult to disrupt.

6.2.3. Locale

Location is an important factor that has impacted women's political status in Zimbabwe because of the limitations and opportunities that are created by the prevailing environment. Due to the fact that over 67% of the country lives in the rural areas, the issue of legal plurality is urgent in the entire conceptualization of fostering sustainable and equitable societies where women can make political decisions, join political parties of their choice and run for public office. The term 'public office' has to be understood to include the rural council handling the administration of communal lands; heeding the fact that such communal land cannot be owned and is possessed mostly through a patrilineal connection.

This affects its accessibility to women without patrilineal linkages within that environment due to some cultures which still evict widows from their matrimonial homes upon the death of their husbands. It makes the position of single and/or unmarried women precarious because they are likely to encounter challenges accessing such property in their own name or stead. It matters because these same women might have political ambition to hold leadership positions as village heads or chiefs in the midst of these physical and gendered barriers. Recognizing such conditions dictates that solutions to governance be inclusive of traditional and customary

leadership which differs among different regions and tribes and is unique in its roles and functions which include judicial power.

People living in rural areas have the option to report their issues; legal or otherwise to village heads and chiefs through ‘local courts’ as provided for in terms of the Customary Law and Local Courts Act (Chapter 7:05)⁶ which sets the jurisdictional parameters of local courts but leaves much room for autonomous function. It widens the influence of being placed in traditional leadership more so as such roles are not necessarily subject to separation of powers in the same way that generic democracies are. At present Zimbabwean women continue to be excluded from such positions which control so many important facets of their lives.

This coding unit evidences these observations;

“There is this fear among women in my community that ‘can I stand up and be a Chief among men?’ Also the issues of culture, we have a challenge where the society has not yet accepted women as leaders especially in the area of being a Chief.”

How practical is prescribing an electoral quota to a system of governance that is not reliant on public vote?

6.2.4. Education

Most of the participants in varying degrees referenced the role of education in influencing women’s decision making and political participation. Some held the view that education ought to be a prerequisite for a woman to campaign for political office within the Parliament. They added that the position of being a Parliamentarian is highly technical and requires a certain level of education to undertake effectively. Some observed that the women currently positioned within the Parliament through the quota system are incapable of contributing to Parliamentary debates and any such law making discourse on account of their level of education. They regarded this as an attempt by the government to maintain women’s subordination by picking women who do not threaten their political system since their selection is through a party ticket. One coding unit that represents this is a remark can be captured here;

For the women who are in the quota. It is very difficult because how can a person who doesn’t even understand the law implement the same law that he or she does not understand?

⁶ See the Customary Law and Local Courts Act <https://zimlil.org/akn/zw/act/1990/2/eng@2016-12-31#:~:text=AN%20ACT%20to%20provide%20for,or%20incidental%20to%20the%20foregoing.>

In addition to making these reflections there was an additional call to prioritize community-centered education in the general matrix of political participation so that women can benefit from having more knowledge and information around issues of politics and governance. Academic discourse around electoral gender quotas has revealed that placing women of varying degrees of education within the quota is a form of education for women as they gain a practical interactions with the different facets of law making and bureaucracy. However this research reveals that this is insufficient because “although affirmative action can increase greater representation of women numerically, it does not necessarily make them to substantively participate in governance” (Okedele, 2021, p.459).

Other participants observed that being educated does not leverage women’s political influence due to the fact of the masculinist dominance within politics. To reflect this, these coding units demonstrate this assertion;

“Politics is a boys club. Decisions are made by the big boys during their secret exclusive meetings and they instruct other women to do their dirty work. It is a boys club.”

“Even if you are educated. The bias catches up with you.”

While education has created more political access for women, men continue to hold monopoly over the political space therefore affecting women’s trajectory.

6.2.5. Sexuality and gender identity

Tamale (2020, p.299) describes intimate same-sex relations as being “particularly threatening to heteropatriarchal family institutions because they disrupt the social arrangement of a dominating male and a subordinate female.” This is an important departure in reflecting on the precarious position of queer persons in Africa and Zimbabwe who face extended levels of discrimination and exclusion within the general rhetoric around political participation. It has already been established that the sustenance of male dominance is an important element in the present political framework therefore queerness stands as a risk to the definition of femininity and masculinity in the way that they have been framed to inform relationships between people.

Homosexuality in Zimbabwe is not necessarily criminalized in that there is no law that expressly denounces queer identification however sexual relations between two consenting

men are still criminalized in terms of the country's criminal code and marriages between people of the same sex are illegalized in terms of the Constitution. The framing of queerness as undesirous and immoral has perpetuated exclusion of queer identities from public spheres of society and by extension in politics. Decolonial feminist theorizing as reflected by (Tamale, 2020, p.192) requires the reframing of queerness in Africa from the misperception that "homosexual practices are alien in African culture" as this perpetuates "essentialized versions of custom and Africans". Tamale (2020, p.192) adds that "it is important to be wary of such fundamentalists who abuse rights in the name of culture, religion or the nation, deploying them to silence feminist political struggles."

Additionally the acceptance of such notions escalates antagonism within the African feminist movement which in many corners of practice continues to undermine and exclude trans and queer issues. It affirms dangerous practices and methodologies that lump women as one homogeneous cis-gendered heterosexual group falling into the same trap of using 'one size fits all' approaches to issues that are otherwise more nuanced than what meets the eye. It creates a hierarchy of issues which pits women of different identities against one another fostering an 'Olympics display of struggles' where certain specific demographics of women are seen as winning the race of marginalization therefore more 'legitimate' in the African feminist revolution. It ignores the reality of the interconnectedness of issues because as captured by bell hooks "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives."

The exclusion and marginalization of bisexual, lesbian, trans and queer women is in itself a threat to women's political participation because there is no single definition of a woman.

As exemplified in these coding units;

"I did not register to vote in solidarity with my trans sisters and brothers who have already transitioned and are not able to vote. I just told myself that I would not register to vote until they can vote."

"Stories of LGBTQI people are not even humanized. They think 'oh you are possessed with demons right?', that's the picture that they have of you; so imagine now saying 'oh I want to be an MP in Harare!' People are just going to look at you. They will just look at your picture and be like; no we are not going to vote for this person."

The misogynoir surrounding queer women perpetuates the very same issues that the African feminist movement is working to address which is dismantling structures and practices which promote societal systemic and systematic inequalities.

6.2.6. Security

All the interview participants presented varying levels of fear and concern over their security in political spaces. The issue of security within the realm of politics is multilayered. Women are concerned about their safety within the home and family because political ambition may be the source of violence. Women taking up political leadership roles are sometimes regarded as emulating masculinity which is generally associated with dominance. Once again the preferred dynamics of men's leadership and women's subservience is threatened. There is overwhelming evidence of women politicians being accused of being threatening and unapproachable which is antithetical to the general image of the quintessential Zimbabwean woman who is soft spoken, demure and nonthreatening especially to men. This, compounded with the fact that the general discussion around Zimbabwe's politics is derived from the country's independence from colonial rule, epitomizing war as an integral element to political aspirations. It postures political spaces in Zimbabwe as highly combative. The harsh manner in which political disagreements between party members are publicized furthers the volatility of navigating such spaces.

This coding unit confirms this view;

Women who want to participate in politics? They are there? But you start thinking of your family's safety. Your own safety. You know, you start thinking so where should I go.

The security threats and violence that accompanies political leadership is a source of fear for women. In one of the few reported chieftaincy disputes involving a woman, Silibaziso Mlotshwa⁷; who was the daughter of a recently deceased chief who approached a Zimbabwean High Court to challenge the decision that had been made by the District Administrator, Hwange recommending her uncle as the chief instead of her. She faced victimization and persecution for fighting to assume such leadership as a woman albeit there being constitutional rights allowing equal participation of women and men in politics. There are multiple facets to the resistance that presented before Silibaziso; on a systemic level where her rural council refused to endorse her aspiration because of her gender, within her family where she was regarded as being disrespectful for fighting to place herself in a position reserved for a man and on a

⁷ See Silibaziso Mlotshwa v. District Administrator. N.O and Saunders Mlotshwa HB 94/20 <https://media.zimlji.org/files/judgments/zwbhc/2016/161/2016-zwbhc-161.pdf>

community level where she was met with allegations and violence that accompany such forms of ‘rebellion.’ While politics being a ‘dirty game’ is a widely recognized precept; it is especially violent to women.

This is reflected in this coding unit;

“I know they are victimizing me because I am a member of CCC that is working to replace the current regime, that’s number 1. But I want to take you back to 2020 the year which I faced serious persecution and harassment from the state. If you check you will realize that in 2020 we had a lot of women being harassed, violated and victimized by the state. Why was that happening? In my view the state wanted to victimize women.”

The conversation on state sanctioned violence during elections year and around politicians and political aspirants begs the re-evaluation of the human rights discourse which places states with the obligation to secure human rights. If it is the state itself that is promoting violence, then the state cannot be trusted to secure women’s freedoms.

6.3. Interpretation of the findings

The results of this research illuminate the intersectionality and connectedness of issues that is embedded on the literature around women’s political participation and the viability of the quota system and the decolonial African feminist theory. From the six foregrounding themes; Zimbabwean women understand political participation as voting, voter and political education, and political leadership. Generally they find the level of education, marital status, sexual orientation and geographical location as preconditions controlling their level of political participation and status. They find the solutions to the inequalities prevalent in politics to be manifestations of pre-existing sexist and violent socio-cultural norms and believe that the solutions should be practical and deliberate in so far as specifically including women and holding men and the systems that enable their dominance to account. As articulated by (Tamale, 2020, p.220) the focus should be on “equality of result’ and not ‘equality of treatment.”

One unexpected result was the discomfort of some participants to answer the question on sexuality and sexual orientation. In some conversations; it was difficult to ask this question and therefore inferences on their sexuality was made from their general comments or references to their heterosexual partners. This might be attributed to the general culture of Zimbabweans to avoid discussing issues to do with intimate partner relationships outside of certain spaces and relationships or to the rampant and overt separation of women’s rights issues from LGBTQI

issues. Specifically when asked ‘how do you identify’ some would say I am not a member of the LGBTQI community first, immediately dismissing themselves from such identity. Further, the conversation of language and identity politics came to the fore because some participants were completely unaware of any identifiers outside of cis-hetero markers. Maldonado-Torres (2007) as cited by (Tamale, 2020, 101) ponders that;

“race and caste, along with gender and sexuality, are perhaps the four forms of human differentiation that have served most frequently as means to transgress the primacy of the self-other relation and to obliterate the traces of the trans-ontological in the concrete world.”

6.4. *Implications of findings*

The research findings confirmed the assumptions that inspired this study and validated the choice in methodology and theoretical framework. The debates around the function and sustainability of quota systems as mediums for upholding women’s political participation have revealed the importance of representation in the promotion of marginalized identities in the mainstream and ‘public’ spheres of society. In addition it has unarchived the presiding deficiencies of electoral gender quotas in conclusively addressing the gendered inequalities within politics. The approach itself is questioned on whether it takes into account the context within which it applies, and if indeed it comprehends the intersectionality of issues which produce the imbalances in politics.

Extensively the decolonial African feminist theory seeks to deepen the knowledge sources and structures that inform African women’s identities so as to strengthen the policies and solutions which are prescribed on women and the general populous. Such scholarship confronts the role of nation states in women’s emancipation and interrogates its centrality in the overall human rights discourse which concurrently blames state and government for the disparities and upholds it as the vessel for transformation.

The findings herein captured these factors, in the way the themes practically reflect the debates and emerging scholarship around African feminist research, methodologies and epistemology. These interviews postured women at the center of theorizing which Marius (Kothor 2021) reflects on in a tweet stating “one of the things that excites me about my dissertation is that I am centering African women with limited literacy as theorists of national/transnational political and economic process . Theories are not located exclusively in the minds of educated men.”

The findings confirm that there is a need to address the disproportionality in the composition of political leadership structures, which is a consequence of multiple overarching existing inequalities, thereby validating the problem statement necessitating this research. The results expound the inefficacy of the quota system in comprehensively maneuvering transformatory strategies to women's political participation because the gendered inequalities are still existent and continue to evolve with the maintenance of hetero-patriarchal and capitalist hegemony informing Zimbabwe's systems of governance. The research compounds the relevance of cultural, tribal and indigenous practices which are neglected in the solutions matrix employed within the system of proportional representation. Beyond this research, the findings display the importance of seeking similarities in the realities of Zimbabwean women while being cognizant of the diverse nuances informing the same. This is important in contributing to the growing body of decolonial feminist scholarship through the representation of living examples substantiated by the stories of African women.

6.5. Limitations

The results of this research which aims to examine the efficacy and sustainability of the quota system and use interviews to capture the voices of Zimbabwean women to shape solutions related to enhancing their political participation provides much insight on the subject matter. While it has been able to answer the research questions, the findings of this research are not comprehensive and exhaustive due to the research sample size. Ten Zimbabwean women were interviewed from the countries' ten provinces in an attempt to represent the views of the different geographies in the country. Only one interview per participant was done and all interviews were concluded within the time space of a month. This is not an unequivocal representation of the views of the vast majority of wards, districts and constituencies represented within the provinces nor are the views an embodiment of the varied realities of people living within those areas. By selecting people from all provinces it was an attempt to ensure that the perspectives were as diverse and multi-dimensional as practicable.

The results remain valid because they still constitute multiple realities and voices of women presenting different identities with the additional benefit of working directly within their communities to promote political participation. This enriched the conversation because in addition to personal experience, due to community engagement; the interview participants were able to speak on behalf of women within the demographics which they encounter.

One major regret was the inability to conduct these conversations in person due to budgetary constraints. Conversations held online sometime lack the 'human' element which comes with proximity and physical space. Having the conversations recorded and transcribed enabled me to mitigate this gap by allowing me to familiarize myself with the conversations and listen for any nuances and non-verbal cues which improved the quality of analysis. It was more beneficial being that I am a Zimbabwean woman with years of experience with interviewing and communicating with people from many regions of the country. This background also allowed for more ease in conversation as I am familiar with many socio-cultural prompts.

7.CONCLUSION

The conclusion section brings to focus the entire research from the objectives of the study to the results. It provides overall conclusions of the findings and a reflection on the research process and a critical review of the results.

for the writers trying to place themselves in the revolution.

- Salome Rutendo Chichaya, Zimbabwean Feminist Writer

This research is an investigation into the constitutionally prescribed electoral gender quotas which have been incorporated into the Zimbabwean Parliament. These system of quotas is derived from a human rights temporary measures approach to enhancing women's political participation as women continue to constitute minority roles in leadership structures across the board and in politics. This study problematizes electoral gendered quotas through a system of proportional representation as being ineffective in addressing gender imbalance within politics and political structures. In evaluating the functionality of the electoral gender quota it was necessary to integrate the perspectives of women, capturing their interaction with politics in their daily lives. Through a quantitative research in the form of interviews; the research was able to gain insight on women's understanding of political participation, their perception about taking up positions of political leadership and their observations about the factors that qualify and disqualify them from eligibility.

The results of this research revealed that women understand politics in light of elections and democratic processes. They understand politics to be about voting on political candidates through the ballot system. Women regard politics to be inherently male dominated and generally violent and threatening to their bodily integrity. They perceive politics as being a contentious space where men continue to make decisions on their behalf in the same way that men make decisions within the family and other public spaces. Some women expressed a desire to participate as political candidates sharing their fears for their security but understanding the importance of their representation in public office. Others totally dismiss the possibility of running for political office in any capacity due to their sexuality and gender identity particularly if they are members of the LGBTQI community in Zimbabwe. They understand their identities to be an additional barrier to participation because of rejection by the masculinist political system and some activist groups within the feminist movement.

Women in Zimbabwe subscribe to traditional systems of governance through chiefs and village heads and are desirous of realizing equality within the actualization of these systems so that they can fully participate. They perceive traditional leadership to be exclusive to men because of perceptions around male heirship and are hesitant to disrupt the cultural ecosystems within their own settings.

I expected women to focus their understanding of political participation on political parties and elections but all participants espoused the need to have more public education on political processes to improve communities' capacity to comprehend democratic systems. They suggested that more programs be designed to teach women about politics and the implications of the different processes. This extends women's understanding of politics to include political literacy.

Education is regarded as an important factor influence women's political ambitions and scope of participation. On one hand, education is commended for empowering women's decision making capacity and improving their access, on the other, it was conceded that being an educated woman alone is inadequate in sustainably promoting women's political ambitions because of the monopoly of heteropatriarchy.

The research process was a rigorous exercise of gathering data from multiple sources and paying attention to conversations happening in communities, media and online around political participation. This research fell at an opportune time when Zimbabwe is in its election year therefore increasing public discourse over politics. The inspiration behind this research has been years in the making and this data and literature has been collected over a span of three years. The most integral part of the methodology which was the interviews posed many challenges in locating the 'right' candidates for the interview albeit having a wide network of connections in the Zimbabwean human rights and feminist spaces. It was a humbling experience of gathering the narratives of women from different walks of life resident in the 10 provinces of the country. It was a learning process on different tribal, cultural and social practices that inform political participation. On a personal level, it was a confrontation on long held biases surrounding the subject of political participation.

One major limitation was the timeframe for conducting the interviews and the sample size. The results of the research are incomprehensive due to this however the choice in interviewees improved the quality of results from such a small sample group.

Finalizing and coding the themes for analysis involved a rigorous process of playing back audio recordings and reflecting on the literature, theoretical framework and objectives of the study. Based on the interviews the six main themes of patriarchy and cis-male domination, culture and gender roles, locale education, sexuality and gender identity and security best described the overarching understanding and experience of political participation for women in Zimbabwe.

The interviews answered the research questions on what women understand political participation to entail, their opinions on assuming leadership roles and factors influencing such participation. One of the major aims of this study was to seek areas of solidarity that can consolidate the siloed efforts from the human rights and feminist movements in Zimbabwe. It is evident that within all the different identifiers influencing women's political participation, there is a shared distrust of the current political approach because it excludes women. There is a fear of the heteropatriarchal violence which lingers within the political arena and an urgent need to reconstruct women's representation within the political system. It begs an inquiry into the formulation of transformative strategies for women's political participation that are not dependent on the state and perhaps the human rights rhetoric. This study has left questions on whether the current solutions being implemented by NGOs, human rights and women groups reflect or even subscribe to the decolonial agenda. Finally decolonial African feminist scholarships calls for a study on the practical reconstructions that can promote political agency in women and destabilize heteropatriarchy embedded in Zimbabwe's politics.

8.RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section focuses on making recommendations on policy, practice, theories and research.

“Now women have to liberate themselves. We are equal and we should be seen to be equal because we did a great job during the struggle.”

- Maudy Muzenda, Mothers of Revolution, 1990, 2020

The call by the Zimbabwean Parliament in 2020 to extend the constitutionally pronounced electoral quotas which was resisted through concentrated efforts by the women’s movement should be recognized as a weakness of the quota systems itself. Retrospectively the inclusion of quotas in the constitution was initially endorsed by this same group but due to evidence based research and analysis of its efficiency in Zimbabwe, was understood to be deficient on multiple levels as it has not resulted in improved agency in women or increased representation. Therefore recommending its continuation into another decade without acknowledging the intersecting issues of patriarchy, culture, economy, socio-economic and spatiality will maintain women’s marginalization in politics. It is recommended that national policy around political participation be remodeled to realize gender balance within politics where women and men are equally constituted and represented. This includes making regulations mandating political parties to have zebra systems of proportional representation, prioritizing equal numbers of women and men on their party list. This process would involve a conscientious reevaluation of factors informing the current unequal compositions within the political parties and creating affirmative action policies to promote women’s involvement. The issue herein is not necessarily that people are unwilling to vote for women but that women are inadequately equipped to participate on an equal scale with men.

Within the realm of activism it is important for the local feminist groups to undergo a process of decolonization and reconstruction of solutions and perceptions informing their interventions. There is the overpowering influence of donor culture which involves many facets that have

been researched by different scholars. What is the effect of donor funding on the maintain westernized solutions coloniality? Within the realm of human rights is the funding matrix which relies on state monopoly sustainable in fostering change? Asking these questions will enable the women's rights movement to remodel its interventions truly inspired by the context and intersectionalities present in the operating environment. This would consequently add to the body of research on decolonizing as African feminists.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abou-Zeid, G. (2004) 'Introducing Quotas in Africa: Discourse in Egypt', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 46 – 51. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- African Feminist Forum (2006) *Charter of Feminist Principles For African Feminists*. Available at: <https://awdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/AFF-Feminist-Charter-Digital-AcA-A-English.pdf> (Accessed: 3 April 2023).
- Amadiume, I. (1997) *Reinventing Africa Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Antonio de Abreu, A. (2004) 'Political Party Quotas in Mozambique: The Experience of the FRELIMO Party', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 59 – 62. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Bauer, G. (2021) 'Women in African Parliaments: Progress and Prospects', in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 335 – 352.
- Binion, G. (1995) 'Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective', *Human Rights Quarterly*, pp. 509 – 526. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/762391>
- Bosha, S. L. (2014) 'Quota Systems and Women Political Leadership Development in Africa', *Journal of African Union Studies*, 3(2/3), pp. 103 – 144. Available at: <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/stable/26893867?sid=primo&seq=2>
- Bunwareee, S. (2004) 'Engendering the Mauritian Political Space: The Need for Quotas', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 104 – 109. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Chikaonda, G.P. (2020) 'A Critical Analysis of Codification; Analysing the Value of Family Preservation in African Law', *Journal of Comparative Law in Africa*, 7(1), pp. 63 – 92.
- Dahlerup, D. (2004) 'Quota Systems in Africa: An Overview', in J. Ballington (ed).

- The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 15 – 16. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>*
- Dangarembga, T. (2022) *Black and Female*. London: Faber & Faber Limited
- Day, L. R. (2021) ‘African Women Traditional Chiefs and Rulers’, in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women’s Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 2085 – 2100.
- Doseku, S. (2021) ‘African Feminisms’, in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women’s Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 47 – 64.
- Frank, L. (2004) ‘Working Towards Gender Balance in Elected Positions of Governance in Namibia’, in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 88 – 95. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Geisler, G. (1995) ‘Troubled Sisterhood: Women and Politics in Southern Africa: Case Studies from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana’, *Oxford University Press*, 94(377), pp. 545 – 578. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/723607>
- Gudhlanga, E. (2013) ‘Shutting Them Out: Opportunities And Challenges Of Women’s Participation In Zimbabwean Politics - A Historical Perspective’, *Journal of Third World Studies*, 30(1), pp. 151–170. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45198803>
- hooks, B. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. South End.
- IknowPolitics (2022) *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women in Politics*. Available at <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/impact-covid-19-pandemic-women-politics> (Accessed: 14 March 2023).
- Infinite Women (2018) *The Last Ndebele ‘King’: Queen Lozikeyi*. Available at <https://medium.com/@nfuyane/the-last-ndebele-king-queen-lozikeyi-91e5f7f8af3c> (Accessed 17 May 2023).
- Isaksson, A., Kotsadam, A. and Nerman, M. (2014) ‘The Gender Gap in African Political Participation: Testing Theories of Individual and Contextual Determinants’, *Journal of Development Studies*, 50(2), pp. 302 – 318. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/doi/pdf/10.1080/00220388.2013.833321?needAccess=true>
- Kadau, M. P. (2021) ‘Sexual Harassment is Critical Barrier to Women’s Political Participation’ *NewsHawks*, 10 December, p. 27.

- Kanakuze, J. (2004) 'The Challenge of Implementation and Enforcement in Rwanda', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 96 – 99. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Kasse, A.F. (2004) 'Women in Politics in Senegal', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 66 – 69. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Kemigisa, J. (2022) 'Feminizing the State Apparatus: A Mirage for Women's Liberation', *African Arguments*. Available at <https://africanarguments.org/2022/11/feminizing-the-state-apparatus-a-mirage-for-womens-liberation/> (Accessed 27 February 2023).
- Kethusigile-Juru, B. (2004) 'Quotas are Changing the History of Women', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 17 – 21. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Knowles, C. (2021). 'Decolonization and Afro-Feminism', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 39(4), pp. 644 – 647. Available at: <https://doiorg.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1080/02589001.2021.1938976>
- Lupande, F. (2021) 'Women in Traditional Leadership', *Sunday Mail*, 14 March. Available at <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/women-in-traditional-leadership> (Accessed 17 May 2023).
- Kothor, M. (2021) [Twitter] 12 December. Available at <https://twitter.com/MariusKothor/status/1473015640235524097> (Accessed: 20 May 2023).
- Maboreke, M. (2004) 'The Quota System Within the African Union', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 52 – 55. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1993) 'Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace', *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, 4(1), pp. 59 – 86.

- Mangena, T. (2021) 'Narratives of Women in Politics in Zimbabwe's Recent Past: The Case of Joice Mujuru and Grace Mugabe', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. Available at: <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080%2F00083968.2021.1962727&area=0000000000000001>
- Manning, J. (2021) 'Decolonial feminist theory: Embracing the Gendered Colonial Difference 1219. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12673>
- Meena, R. (2004) 'The Politics of Quotas in Tanzania', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 82 – 87. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Mekgwe, P. (2007) 'Theorizing African Feminism(s), The 'Colonial' Question', *Texts, Tasjs, and Theories: Versions and Subversions in African Literature*, 35 (3), ed, pp. 165 – 174, 214. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/215056539/fulltextPDF/C659374612A245A9PQ/1?accountid=11162>
- McGrath C, Palmgren PJ, Liljedahl M. Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Med Teach*. 2019;**41**(9):1002–1006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149>
- Morna, C. L. (2004) 'Beyond Numbers: Quotas in Practice', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 114 – 119. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Mpoumou, D. (2004) 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 16 – 21. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Myakayaka-Manzini, M. 'Political Party Quotas in South Africa', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 52 – 55. Available at:

<https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>

- Nhundu, R. (2004) 'Implementing Quotas: Experience from SADC Parliamentary Forum', in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 110 – 113. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Nyikadzino, G. (2022) 'Women are Not Peripheral Citizens', *The Herald*, 27 June. Available at: <https://www.herald.co.zw/women-are-not-peripheral-citizens/> (Accessed 14 March 2023).
- Obi, N. N. and Okoosi-Simbine, A.T. (2021) 'Women in Political Parties in Africa', in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 315– 334.
- Okedele, A. (2021) 'Women, Quotas, and Affirmative Action Policies in Africa', in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 449 – 464.
- Oluyemi O. Fayomi, Odunayo P. Salau, Rosemary O. Popoola, and Olalekan W. Adigun (2021) 'Women in Executive Political leadership in Africa', in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 375 – 392.
- Poverty Action Lab (2020) *Countering Covid-19 Misinformation Through WhatsApp in Zimbabwe*. Available at: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/countering-covid-19-misinformation-through-whatsapp-zimbabwe#:~:text=In%20Zimbabwe%2C%20WhatsApp%20accounts%20for,its%20population%20over%20age%2014> (Accessed: 18 May 2023).
- Ramtohul. R. (2021) 'Women, Gender and Politics in Africa', in T. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 297 – 314.
- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage
- Shoko, T. (2006) "My bones Shall Rise Again": *War Veterans, Spirits and Land Reform in Zimbabwe*. African Studies Center Leiden. Available at: <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A3145600/view>

- Southern Africa Development Community. (2008). *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development*. SADC
- Stuckey, H, L. (2014) ‘The First Step in Data Analysis: Transcribing and Managing Qualitative Research’, *Data Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 2(1), pp. 6 – 8. Available at <https://www.thieme-connect.com/products/ejournals/html/10.4103/2321-0656.120254>
- Tahri, R. (2004) ‘Women’s Political Participation: The Case of Morocco’, in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 32 – 37. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Tamale, S. (2000) 'Point Of Order, Mr Speaker': African Women Claiming Their Space In Parliament’, *Gender & Development*, 8(3), pp. 8 – 15. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/741923783>
- Tamale, S. (2004) ‘Introducing Quotas: Discourse and Legal Reform in Uganda’, in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 38 – 46. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Tamale, S. (2006). ‘African feminism: How should we change?’, *Development*, 49(1), pp. 38-41. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100205>
- Tamale, S. (2020) *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, Ottawa: Daraja Press.
- Tripp, A.M. (2004) ‘The Changing Face of Africa’s Legislatures: Women and Quotas’, in J. Ballington (ed). *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*. Sweden: Trydells Tryckeri, pp. 72 – 77. Available at: <https://ideadev.insomnation.com/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-quotas-african-experiences.pdf#page=38>
- Trading Economics (2021) *Zimbabwe – Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments*. Available at: <https://tradingeconomics.com/zimbabwe/proportion-of-seats-held-by-women-in-national-parliaments-percent-wb-data.html>
- Trading Economics (2022) *Zimbabwe Rural Population*. Available at: <https://tradingeconomics.com/zimbabwe/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html> (Accessed 17 March 2023).
- Verge, T. and De la Fuente, M. (2015) ‘Playing With Different Cards: Party Politics, Gender

Quotas and Women's Empowerment', *International Political Science Review*, 35(1), pp. 67 – 79. Available at: <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/stable/24573415?seq=1>

Veritaszim (2022) *Election Watch 4-2022 – Cabinet's Proposed Electoral Amendment Bill*.

Available at: <https://www.veritaszim.net/node/5962> (Accessed: 13 March 2023).

Whitelaw, D.E. (2022) 'Gender and Decolonisation in Zambia: Re- Examining Women's Contributions to the Anti-Colonial Struggle', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 48(3), pp. 546 – 561. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03057070.2022.2077578>

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. (2020) *Post-Election Gender Survey Report*.

Available at: <https://zimbabwe.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2020/12/POST-ELECTION-GENDER-SURVEY-REPORT.pdf> (Accessed: 17 March 2023).

Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency. (2022) *Zimbabwe 2022 Population and Housing Census*

Report Volume 1. Available at https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/Demography/Census/2022_PHC_Report_27012023_Final.pdf (Accessed: 9 May 2023).

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

African Union. (2003). *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. Africa Union.

United Nations. (1988). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. *Treaty Series*, 1249, 13.

UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Political Rights of Women*, 20 December 1952, A/RES/640. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f08448.html>

Southern African Development (2008). Committee Protocol on Gender and Development.

DOMESTIC LAW

Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) of 2013. Available at: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Zimbabwe_2013.pdf

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

‘A DECOLONIAL AFRICAN FEMINIST APPROACH TO WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ZIMBABWE?’

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Please read the questions carefully and answer.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

My name is Danai Daisy Chirawu. I am a Masters Student at the University of Roehampton currently undertaking the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Human Rights Policy and Practice. I am working on a Master’s thesis which investigates factors influencing women’s political participation in Zimbabwe under the title “A Decolonial African Feminist Approach to Women’s Political Participation in Zimbabwe.” You are invited to participate in a research project where the main purpose is to capture Zimbabwean women’s understanding of political participation. This data will be used solely by me in pursuit of these following research questions:

- a) What is Zimbabwean women’s understanding of political participation?
- b) What do women think about taking up leadership roles in politics?
- c) What are the disqualifiers from eligibility to participate?

Through capturing and amplifying the realities and voices of women, this research seeks to re-energize strategies and activism towards enhancing women’s political participation.

The Arctic University of Norway is responsible for this project.

Your experience as an activist working for the promotion of women’s political rights is crucial in formulating these perspectives as your views capture the narratives of a more diverse demographic gathered from working within the community. The personal and collective views that you will share will enable me to make important deductions on points of solidarity that are

useful to spur women into action. It is through finding points of solidarity that women have historically galvanized and focused their actions towards promoting a certain cause; or to resist. As the country moves towards the 2023 Presidential elections, the sound of women's voices must echo within every political sphere.

If you would like to participate in this study, please read the information sheet below and sign the consent form attached. Please also indicate a date and time in the coming days or weeks that works for you.

This study will be done in the form of a semi-structured interview online, using the platform most accessible to you considering the context of internet access in Zimbabwe. Your views will be recorded and stored electronically. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and it will answer the questions stated in the introduction above.

Please be advised that the preferred language of communication is English although this is not a hard and fast rule.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified here and we will process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation (the GDPR).

Aside from me the researcher, no one else shall be privy to the your personal data. To ensure that no unauthorized persons are able to access the personal data, I will replace your name and contact with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. This data will be encrypted. At the end of the project; on the 22nd of May 2023, the recordings and transcripts will be permanently deleted.

Participants will not be recognizable except to the extent to which they wish to be referred to in the research analysis; information such as names and age will not be included in the research findings.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data.

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with **the Arctic University of Norway**, the Data Protection Services of Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project meets requirements in data protection legislation.

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

Dr. Jennifer Hays

Professor, Social Anthropology Programme (SOA)

Department of Social Sciences / Institutt for samfunnsvitenskap (ISV)
HSL, D-3014B

UiT, The Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø)

jennifer.hays@uit.no

Office +47 776 44597

If you have questions about how data protection has been assessed in this project by Sikt, contact:

email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 73 98 40 40.

I am excited to engage with you and learn from your vast experience and work, should you be amenable.

I have read the information sheet on the research project “*Proportionally Represented? A Decolonial African Feminist Approach to Women’s Political Participation in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe*”, and agree to be interviewed for the research by Danai Daisy Chirawu (a Masters Student).

I give my consent:

to participate in this online interview

I agree to my comments being used to inform research work in the ways set out in the information sheet, in the following ways (please tick):

- Identification by your name, position and the organisation or institution you represent.
- Information attributed to the name of your organisation or institution only.
- Information attributed to “an interviewee”, “a political analyst”, “a feminist”, “a youth rights activist” (as appropriate) without further specification.

Specifically, I prefer to be referred to as **[indicate how you want to be referred to]**.

I do agree to the interview being recorded, on the basis that the recording will be securely stored and not shared by Danai Daisy Chirawu with anybody.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project.

The contents of this interview will be stored for a year after completion of the interview process and subsequently destroyed after the lapse of this period.

Signed: _____

Signed by Participant

Date: _____