

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**



Women's participation in the 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe.

By

Euphrasia Chinyanganya (B200927B)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe, aiming to shed light on the challenges and opportunities that women encountered during the electoral process. A mixed methodology approach was employed, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to gather data from women voters, candidates, and political party representatives. The findings reveal that while progress has been made in terms of women's political representation, significant barriers persist, including financial constraints, limited access to resources, gender biases, and societal expectations. Despite these challenges, women demonstrated resilience and determination, actively engaging in political campaigns and advocating for their rights. The study underscores the importance of targeted interventions to address these barriers and promote women's equal participation in politics. Ensuring financial support, enhancing access to resources, challenging gender stereotypes, and fostering inclusive political environments are key areas that require attention. By overcoming these obstacles, Zimbabwe can pave the way for increased women's participation, empowering them to contribute to decision-making processes and fostering a more democratic and inclusive society.

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STUDENT NAME Euphrasia Chinyanganya

SIGNATURE Euphrasia Chinyanganya DATE 23/09/24

SUPERVISOR K. I. Mthuri

SIGNATURE PP DATE 23/09/24

CHAIR PERSON SIGNATURE [Signature] 23/09/24

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, titled “Women’s Participation in the 2023 Harmonized Elections in Zimbabwe,” is the result of my original research work. All sources consulted and referenced in this study have been duly acknowledged. Any contributions made by other individuals or organizations have been appropriately credited. I affirm that this work has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic qualification. Furthermore, I acknowledge that any assistance provided by my supervisor, colleagues, or any other individuals during the course of this research has been duly acknowledged. I take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the information presented in this dissertation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

UN – United Nations

WHO – World Health Organization

USA – United States of America

EU – European Union

IMF – International Monetary Fund

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

AI – Artificial Intelligence

DNA – Deoxyribonucleic Acid

UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

NASA – National Aeronautics and Space Administration

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CHAPTER ONE

I.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the study

The obstacles to equal representation of women in decision-making positions can be categorized into four basic areas: political, socio-economic, ideological and psychological. When looking at the political arena, the first obstacle that women face is the prevalence of a “masculine model” of political life and elected governmental bodies (Karam, 1998 :23). The reason for this is that the political arena is dominated by men and that political life in most societies is organized according to male norms and values (Shvedova, 2003).The existence of a male –dominated model of politics results in women either rejecting politics or rejecting male-style politics (Shvedova, 2003). Thus, the women who do participate in politics tend to do so in smaller numbers (Karam, 1998).One can also detect a link between education and power. Blumberg (1984: 86) states that political power is at the top of the hierarchy and other types of power are found below.

According to Paxton(1997:444) the “ achievement of education and occupation , is necessary to getting to power at the highest level”. However, there is a challenge , according to Paxton (1997) who argues that the educational theory of gender equality often fails in political institutions because women have less access to education and professional opportunity. Therefore, if women are found disproportionately in disadvantaged positions in the social structure, the implication is that they will not have the necessary resources to gain political power .O’Brien (1983)refuses the argument that education is merely a mechanism to gain equality of political and suggests that the goal of education in the process of gender equality “ is not equal knowledge, power and wealth, but the abolishment of gender as an oppressive cultural reality” (1983:13).

The radical feminist theory of education also uses the concept of reproduction, but refers to “eliminating the domination of men over women, denying girls and women full access to

knowledge, resources and self-esteem, and to the need for freedom from fear and harassment” (Acker, 1989:429). However, Beijing Platform for Action and the SADC protocol on gender and development are some of the measures put in place in an attempt to empower women. Also, article 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) is another instrument which express the duty of States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Lack of women’s participation in elections will result in women’s voice not being heard in politics. Some of the reasons for women’s low participation include political violence, lack of support from other women, religious beliefs and the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society discourages women from participating in politics (Kurebwa 2014). Sachikonye (2011) indicated that women activists and members of opposition parties and Civil Society Organization (CSOs) were not spared brutal repression in the form of violence .Pre-election political environments in Zimbabwe have been tense, hostile and volatile and are characterized by electoral campaigns marred by high levels of intimidation ,violence, displacement of people, abductions and loss of loss (PAP, 2008). The patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society discourages women from participating in politics. Women are viewed as weak and inferior, suitable for homemaking, childbearing and doing household chores. This attitude is shared by women voters as well as men, so male candidates often get more votes from women than female candidates do.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this study is to assess the extent of women’s participation in electoral processes in the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Objectives

The study therefore sought to:

- To assess the causes for women’s low participation.
- Effects for women’s low participation in elections.
- To assess the measures to improve women’s participation in politics.

- Analyse opportunities for improving women participation in elections.

1.5 Research questions

These are some of the questions posed to the respondents:

1. What are the causes for women's low participation.
2. What are the effects for women's low participation in elections.
3. What are the measures to improve women's participation in politics.

1.6 Significance of the study

There are many factors affecting women's participation in the political realm and the significance of this study aims to assess the ability to determine the rate of women participation in the electoral processes and the factors that hinder women from effective participation. The information will be useful To scholars and policy makers and also contribute to the inadequate literature on women participation in decision-making and electoral politics in Zimbabwe.

1.7 Research assumptions

These are some of the assumptions that the researcher took to the field, to assess the rate of women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe.

- Shortage of resources to campaign for political positions.
- Lack of adequate education is an obstacle for women's participation in elections.
- Roles and responsibilities of women hinder them from participating in electoral and decision-making processes.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

Women usually in developing countries suffer especially in conflict or war situations. In Zimbabwe during the political violence of June 2008 women have been raped leading to health issues such as HIV infections and the birth of many fatherless children Zungura (2008). However, if women are to be involved in politics and have influence in politics they will represent other women's concerns since most of the issues are discussed in parliament . Friedal (2003) asserts that the involvement of women in politics implies that women's daily problematic

issues are also brought in parliamentary debates which include bread and butter issues and health challenges from a female perspective

1.9 Limitations of the study

The researcher faced many limitations such as network problems to research and time constraint to carry out the research proposal. Time constraint became more challenging considering that the researcher has to carry out the study whilst still attending her lectures and also fulfilling other course work assignments. Due to lack of time, it is difficult to carry out the study in time.

1.10 Definition of key terms

Political participation is any action by citizens that is intended to influence the outcomes of political institutions or their structures, and is fostered by civic engagement (Deth2000 :6). Elections are a hallmark of democracy and an important instrument through which leaders are elected to public office (Molomo 2006: 23)

Governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. Governance can also be viewed as the relationship between those who are governed and the challenge that most governments face is finding mechanisms to integrate into the policy –making process at the local level(Gaventa, 2002).

According to Cranny-Francis, Waring and Kirkby (2003:15), “patriarchy is a social system in which structural differences in privilege, power and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic and social positions of men.

Goetz(2003) posits that gender equality is a social order through which men and women are able to share the same opportunities and constraints on full participation in both economic, social and political real.

Gender mainstreaming is defined by Gell (2011) as a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation policies in all

1.11 Chapter Summary

The above chapter has done the introduction of the research problems and it also encompasses the rationale of the study. The background of the study has highlighted some factors that hinder

women participation in politics. The study was done by taking into concern both the problem statement and the objectives of the research to make it more comprehensive.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looked at the literature review and the theoretical framework that guides the study

This chapter focuses on the major theory of women involvement in elections which is the liberal feminism. Liberal feminism was employed so as to highlight the trends on women empowerment in Zimbabwe. Liberal feminism investigates factors that hinder women participation in electoral processes and ways on how to improve their participation in the electoral processes.

2.2 Conceptualization of key concepts

Gender equality became a fundamental part of international human rights law with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1984. Research examining socio-economic characteristics and political attitudes indicates that women are more likely than men to vote and engage in private activism, while men are more inclined to participate in direct collective actions and be active members of political parties. Gender equality entails considering the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men, recognizing the diversity within these groups.

McFadden (2005) argues that gender equality encompasses both a historical and futuristic perspective. Historically, it aims to elevate previously disadvantaged groups to a level similar to that of the privileged group. In a futuristic sense, it seeks to ensure gender equality in the future through the implementation of intentional policies. Gender inequality refers to the unequal enjoyment of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources, and rewards, with women often being excluded or disadvantaged in decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Billing (2009) similarly emphasizes that gender equality is based on the principles that men and women have equal intrinsic value, equal rights and responsibilities, and that no

discrimination should occur based on gender. Both men and women are equally valuable to society.

Goetz (2003) suggests that gender equality is a social order where men and women are provided with the same opportunities and face the same constraints in fully participating in the economic, social, and political realms. This implies that there should be no differentiation between women and men, and whatever men can do, women can do as well. Gell (2011) defines gender mainstreaming as a process of evaluating the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, at all levels and in all areas. It is a strategy that ensures women's and men's concerns are considered in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs across various domains, aiming for equal benefits for both genders. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality. It may include gender-specific activities and affirmative action when women or men find themselves in particularly disadvantaged positions.

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism emerged in the 1850s through the work of scholars like John Stuart Mill, John Taylor, and Harriet Taylor. They advocated for women's emancipation, campaigned for women's rights, suffrage, and equal access to education. Their assumptions included the belief that women's suffrage was crucial for the moral improvement of humanity and that women should have the right to participate in all social and political roles without facing discrimination. Liberal feminism supported women's participation in the public domain through instrumentalist and intrinsic arguments.

The main focus of liberal feminism is gender role socialization, highlighting that the roles in which women are socialized are undervalued compared to those of men. Its primary goal is to achieve gender equality in the public sphere, including equal education, equal pay for equal work, ending gender segregation in the workplace, and improving working conditions. Liberal feminism believes that changes in societal structures and norms can make these goals attainable. It emphasizes individual agency and the democratic process to promote equal rights for women

and men in the eyes of the law, society, and the workplace. Initiatives such as the quota system, women's empowerment, and gender mainstreaming have been implemented to enhance women's participation in politics.

However, liberal feminism faces criticism from radical feminists who argue that eradicating patriarchal society is challenging. It has also been criticized for its lack of intersectionality, as it tends to view women as a homogeneous group collectively oppressed by men, without considering the diverse experiences of oppression faced by racialized women, women with disabilities, women in prison, and migrant women. Scholars point out that liberal feminism has moderate aims and does not radically challenge existing values, rather aiming for gradual changes in political, economic, and social systems. Despite these criticisms, liberal feminism is deemed suitable for promoting women's participation in electoral processes.

2.3.2 Instrumentalist and intrinsic argument

The instrumentalist argument suggests that men and women are not inherently different in terms of their capabilities and should have equal opportunities for participation. Harriet Taylor, a liberal feminist, proposed this idea. It is argued that women bring unique perspectives and concepts of politics due to their roles as mothers. They are seen as capable of bringing a caring focus and female values to the political sphere. This perspective portrays women as instrumental and emphasizes their potential contributions, often reducing the gender dimension to an add-on.

On the other hand, the intrinsic argument advocates for equal participation from a human rights perspective. It is based on the belief that all individuals are born free and equal in dignity and rights, regardless of their gender. From this standpoint, equal participation is seen as a fundamental human right that should be guaranteed to all people.

In terms of measures promoting women in politics, one example is the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Gender Protocol on Gender and Development. The objective of this protocol is to empower women, eliminate discrimination, and achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender-responsive legislation, policies, programs, and projects in the SADC region. The protocol places obligations on member states to ensure equal access to justice, equal treatment in judicial processes, equal representation in the

justice system, accessible legal services for women, and equal legal status and capacity in civil law.

Zimbabwe, as a signatory to the protocol, committed to implementing at least 30% female representation in parliament by 2005 and 50% by 2015, as stipulated in Article 5 of the SADC Gender Protocol. However, according to Mhlanga (2014), Zimbabwe ranks 30th in terms of women's political representation in the National Assembly. The government has struggled to fulfill its commitments, partly due to factors such as hostile legislation, including the electoral system, which does not effectively encourage increased women's representation in the legislative assembly. UNDP Zimbabwe recognizes that gender inequality and discrimination remain significant obstacles to development in the country. Women and girls continue to face various challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

2.4.2 Quota System

In order to address gender imbalances in women's political representation, the international community has adopted an affirmative action measure known as the quota system. The quota system reserves a certain proportion of seats in parliament or candidatures for women, aiming to increase their representation and improve their chances of being elected. It is intended to eliminate discrimination against women and provide them with positions of power where they can formulate policies and make decisions (Election Resource Centre, 2013).

The government of Zimbabwe has incorporated these principles into its legal framework. Chapter 2, Section 17 (a) and (b) of the Zimbabwean Constitution states that the state must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of society on the basis of equality with men. It also mandates that both genders should be equally represented in all government institutions and agencies at every level, and that women should constitute at least half of the membership of commissions and other elective and appointed governmental bodies established by the constitution or any Act of Parliament.

As a result of these international treaties ratified by Zimbabwe, scholars like Gudhalanga (2013) have argued that more women are now being given the opportunity to actively participate in politics. This is evident in the increased number of women holding cabinet, parliamentary, and senatorial positions. However, despite the government's commitment to the quota system, it has

not fully met its obligations. There is a need for stricter measures to ensure that women are fully accorded their quotas in parliament. Moreover, while there is progress at the national level, there is also a need for the government to empower women at the grassroots level, particularly in district-level representation.

2.5 Positive Developments on Women Empowerment

Zimbabwe has implemented significant laws since gaining independence, with the aim of enhancing women's rights and addressing discriminatory traditional practices and attitudes (Mupfeka, 2008). These laws have played a crucial role in involving women in politics through intra-party quotas, which highlight the importance of political parties in promoting gender equality. Conducting gender audits within political parties can identify areas for improvement in managing branches and demonstrate how diversity and women's involvement can benefit the party in the political arena.

Key legislative measures include the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982 and the general laws amendment Act, which recognize that women can vote, enter contracts, and own property in their own right once they reach 18 years of age (Zungura, 2008). The Electoral Act of 1990 enables women to participate in voting and elections, allowing them to contest for any position. Additionally, the enactment of the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy in 2004 aimed to address the prevailing gender imbalances in the country (Samukange, 2015). However, the government believes that the current policy, the Zimbabwe National Gender Framework of 2013, in conjunction with various international instruments, could be more effective in terms of gender mainstreaming in Zimbabwe.

These achievements can be attributed to the efforts of liberal feminists within political structures and advocacy groups such as the Women's Action Group in Zimbabwe (WAG) and the Zimbabwe Lawyers Association (ZWLA). However, it is important to note that this legislation still lacks provisions that could further elevate the platform for women's rights. Despite these efforts, women in Zimbabwe are still far from fully enjoying their rights. The establishment of a dedicated ministry for women, gender, and development is a positive step forward, but it needs to be complemented by policies that address issues perpetuating structural violence against girls and women, ensuring their integration and acceptance as equal partners in societal development. Additionally, equal access to education is crucial for women's empowerment in Zimbabwe.

While some progress has been made in increasing women's participation in elections, it is essential to also focus on analyzing emerging trends in local politics. Currently, the majority of women are excluded from the political arena. Despite the few who have managed to participate in elections, their political activities are often considered marginal or non-existent within patriarchal contexts, both in developed and developing countries (Ndlovu & Mutale, 2013).

2.6 Why women should be involved in political issues

The involvement of women in political decision-making is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, their participation benefits larger groups of people, including children. Zungura (2008) argues that women's leadership styles often embody democratic ideals, characterized by less hierarchy, more participation, and greater collaboration compared to their male counterparts. Women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and influences the range of policy issues considered and the proposed solutions. Increased representation ensures that women's voices are heard, their issues are recognized, and studies show that women legislators are more likely to address women's interests. This also fosters political environments free from discrimination and violence, promoting the recognition of women in decision-making positions.

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved. It is a right for women to participate in public office and decision-making positions, supported by the CEDAW's Article 7, which grants women the right to vote in all elections, be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy, and hold public office and perform public functions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) also states that every person has the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, vote, and be elected at genuine periodic elections by universal suffrage.

While the National Women's Equality Act (1998) in Nigeria acknowledges women's rights and their efforts to secure those rights, women in Zimbabwe still face challenges in realizing their political rights, despite regional human rights instruments such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights supporting women's participation in decision-making processes. The new constitution of Zimbabwe explicitly supports women's participation in politics, stating that the government must ensure full women's participation in all spheres of society on the basis of

equality with men and that women must have equal treatment and opportunities in politics (Chapter 2.7 and 4.6.2).

Historically, women have been excluded from politics based on the beliefs of philosophers and political thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, and Hegel, who considered women suitable only for domestic roles in the private sphere, excluding them from political participation. However, there has been a global increase in the participation of women in elections due to the implementation of various regional and international conventions on gender equality.

2.7 Challenges faced by women

Gudhlanga (2013) argued that there is a slight increase of women parliamentarians after the country ratified some regional and international conventions which promote women empowerment and they attribute to this as an improvement in women representation. However, these figures are still low, most women especially in rural areas are still behind, this study makes an attempt to identify some of the factors which affect women from participating in the public arena especially in elections.

2.7.1 Socio-economic factors

According to Mupfeka (2008), the patriarchal system, the subordination of women, and the perception that the public domain is primarily a relationship between men and the government, rather than citizens and the government, contribute to the exclusion of women. Despite the rights guaranteed by law and political rhetoric promoting good governance, women still face challenges in challenging these traditional cultural norms and beliefs. Although a quota system has been imposed in Zimbabwe, few women are running for political office. Even when they do, it can be difficult to persuade the electorate, especially in rural areas where traditional norms and beliefs still hold sway and men are seen as the decision-makers.

Gaidzanwa (2005) points out that traditionally, women were assigned the role of caring for children, while the public domain was reserved for men. Society has been socialized to believe that women are not capable of holding political office. Women often bear family responsibilities as mothers and wives, which can limit their ability to participate in electoral activities. However, feminist theorists like Henslin (1999) argue that gender is not a natural construct but a socially

constructed one. In society, women have been assigned different positions and roles compared to men, particularly in terms of political rights. These theorists attribute the gender imbalances in political representation to cultural dynamics that assign different roles to men and women in society. As a result, women have been given lower positions and roles of little significance, leading to gender imbalances in political representation. This perception further hinders women's participation, as they may view politics as a domain reserved only for men.

2.7.2 Lack of confidence

Butegwa (1994) also highlights that lack of confidence in women is a constraint factor to participation in politics and decision making processes. Women perceive politics as a dirty game the way they are portrayed in the mass media and this denotes their confidence in their ability participate in political processes. Such a perception is prevalent worldwide and in Zimbabwe perception reflects the reality. With confidence and determination women can reach the levels in the political arena. That is why women should believe in themselves and should do away with the widespread perception that men have to be their leaders. Bari (2005) further argues women are very good campaigners, organizers and support mobilisers but fear sometimes women from contesting in elections and from participating in political life.

2.7.2 Lack of education

According to Zungura (2013) women constitutes 52% of the world population, given their roles in production, as well as reproductive spheres, their contribution to the social and development of societies is believed to be more than half as compared to men (Chen 2010). However women participation in formal structures and processes and in decision making positions is still minimal. Education is attributed to some of the factors which affect women in participation in elections. Education is attributed to some of the factors which affect women in participation in elections. Mupfeka (2008), noted that there is low debate by women councilors in council chamber because they have low understanding of the Acts and politics in general, yet political environment requires formal education.

2.7.3 Lack funds

It is believed that women can not raise sufficient funds to mount successful campaigns. Their ability to attain financial autonomy or access to economic resources necessary for participation

in the political realm. Wallack (2010) argues that worldwide, women's low economic status, relative poverty and discriminatory legal frameworks are substantial hurdles to overcome. This is because women control and have access to few economic resources, they are unable to pay the costs associated with gaining a party's nomination and standing for elections. At the primary level, individuals should fend for themselves. Gaidzanwa(2004) argue that during a campaign, people need transport, food, regalia and insignia which profile the candidate. Therefore this would be expensive for poor women especially in rural areas to manage. However, where women have managed to enter political office, they face challenges that constrain their capacity to function. Chisamha (2008) asserts that politics in Zimbabwe is associated with insecurity both for the individual involved and family members. Also, Oppah Muchinguri highlighted that Zimbabwe's parliament is not conducive for 50/50 representation as there is too much scolding of women and Jessie Majome also seconded Muchinguri's sentiments arguing that there is a lot of sexual harassment in parliament (Chisamha (2008)). According to Majome and Muchinguri as quoted by Zungura (2008) men use vulgar language to silence women who try to be vocal in parliament, instead of focusing on parliamentary issues.

2.7.2 Political factors

Political violence has been identified as a significant obstacle to women's participation in political processes, particularly during election campaigns. Several researchers have conducted studies in different countries, highlighting political violence as a barrier to women's participation, although they may have differing perspectives on the issue.

Kurebwa (2013) and Ndlovu and Mutale (2013) agree that political violence is a key barrier to women's participation, although they may vary in their specific findings. Kurebwa's study on the participation of rural women in local governance in Masvingo and Mashonaland Central Provinces revealed that political violence hindered rural women from entering politics. However, Shvedova also emphasized the lack of political support as a factor contributing to the marginalization of women in political activities. Ndlovu and Mutale noted that despite a slight increase in women's representation at the national and local levels, women still face gender-based violence and harassment, making them victims of violence. This has led many women to renounce their positions, allowing men to assume positions of power.

The United Nations Special Reporter on Violence against Women (VAW) asserts that violence is a disempowering force that erodes women's self-dignity, capabilities, and their ability to enjoy their full range of human rights, including participation in public life and politics. Mafuta (2013) states that many women have withdrawn their aspirations for positions of power due to the political violence that marred the political landscape in 2008. Other researchers, like Gudhlanga (2013), argue that politics in Zimbabwe itself is characterized by torture, bloodshed, and intimidation, particularly before elections. Gaidzanwa (2004) adds that in Zimbabwe, international treaties, covenants, or agreements signed and ratified by the government do not become part of local laws unless parliament passes a law incorporating them.

Jessie Majome, as quoted by Zungura (2013), highlights the correlation between political violence and women's participation in politics. In Zimbabwe, as political violence increases, the number of women competing for political offices is likely to decrease. Zungura (2013) reports cases of women being raped during the 2008 elections, resulting in HIV infections and the birth of numerous fatherless children, particularly in Kapiripiri in Mount Darwin and Buhera areas. Political violence instills fear in female candidates, causing them to view politics as a game dominated by those with physical strength.

2.7.4 Electoral System

In Zimbabwe, the electoral system places a greater burden on women since membership in a political party is a prerequisite for election into parliament. Gaidzanwa (2004) states that membership in political party is strongly based on the availability of one's time, energy, resources and skills to participate in the public domain. Gaidzanwa further argues that political parties need meetings, rallies and workshops and require their members to devote time to relationships and other members to enhance their chances of attaining electoral office.

2.8 Gaps in current literature

According to Ndlovu (2013), the emerging trends in Africa showed that there is a general increase women in political leadership positions especially in the Legislative Assembly. A notable example is Rwanda which is now ranked first in Africa to have a greater percentage of women legislators in the House of Assembly. It has also been noted that there is a relative increase in voluntary participation of women in politics like voting in elections and referendums

in African countries specifically Zimbabwe (Chitando and Hadebe, 2009). A notable example is in Makoni Rural District Council where there was recorded an increase in the participation of women councilors who represent different wards (Mashiri,2007).

2.9 Chapter Summary

This is a body of related literature pertaining to the casual factors that limits against women from actively involvement in politics and why women should be involved in politics. It further went on to discuss measures that are being implemented to urge women to participate in politics. Theories have been put across to try and remove challenges , factors and what has be done to redress these imbalances.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following is an introduction for a chapter on the methodology of a study on women's participation in electoral processes in the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe. This chapter describes the methodology used in this study, which explores the factors that contribute to women's participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this study follows a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to answer the research question related to women's participation in the electoral processes of the 2023 harmonized elections. The methodology encompasses various techniques, procedures, and tools employed to conduct the research in a structured and organized manner, ensuring the validity, reliability, and credibility of the findings (Bouchrika, 2022). Quantitative research is employed in this study, which involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to address specific research questions (Lavrakas, 2007). Statistical data is utilized to analyze the representation of women in the electorate, political parties, and elected offices. Factors such as the number of women running for office, the percentage of women voting, and the level of support for gender equality policies are examined.

3.3 Research Design

The chosen research design for this study is a case study, as suggested by Saunders (2012). The research design serves as a plan or strategy to structure the research process and generate answers to the research questions. In this case, the case study approach allows for in-depth exploration of a specific instance of women's participation in the elections. It facilitates the examination of individual experiences or the overall impact of women's participation on the

election process. Additionally, it helps identify potential barriers that may have hindered women's participation.

3.4 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm adopted for this study is interpretivism. According to Creswell (2014), a research paradigm refers to the worldview that influences our understanding of what constitutes valid research. Interpretivism is a philosophical approach that seeks to understand the world through the subjective experiences of individuals. This paradigm aligns well with the exploration of women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe. It allows for a deep exploration of individual experiences and the contextual factors that shape them (Fieldings, 2010).

3.5 Population and Sample

The target population for this research study comprises adult women of voting age who are citizens of Zimbabwe. To efficiently collect data, a sample is selected from the population. Sampling is a practical approach that enables faster and more cost-effective data collection compared to attempting to reach every member of the entire population (Zikmund, 2013).

3.6 Sampling techniques

A sample is a sampler set of data that a researcher chooses or selects from a larger population using a pre-defined selection method. Sampling entails selecting a subset of the population of interest in a research study (Turner, 2002). Sampling allows researchers to conduct studies about a large group by using a small portion of the population. Random sampling is one of the most widely used sampling techniques because it is relatively easy to implement and provides a high degree of statistical validity. Random sampling is a method of selecting a sample of the population in which each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Johnson, 2011). This technique helps to ensure that the sample is representative of the population and that the results of the study are generalizable to the population as a whole. Some common methods of random sampling include simple random sampling, systematic random sampling and stratified sampling. According to Alexander (2017), stratified sampling is a method

of sampling in which the population is divided into groups, called strata and then a random sample is drawn from each stratum.

3.7 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments are the tools that researchers use to gather information from participants in a study. Researchers collect data in different forms and analyze it to get results. According to Collis and Hussey(2019), define primary data as information collected for the first time from first-hand sources, such as a survey, an experiment, an interview or an observation. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) define secondary data as data which have already been collected for a purpose other than your own research project. The most common data collection instruments include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations. A quantitative research study on women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections could use a variety of survey methods to collect data. One possibility would be to conduct a national survey of women voters to assess their levels of political engagement and participation.

3.7 Self-administered questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire is a quantitative research method. In this type of research , the researcher typically uses a standardized questionnaire with predetermined questions and response options. The responses are analyzed using statistical methods , such as descriptive statistics. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) , explain that a self-administered questionnaire is one where the researcher sends the questionnaire to a respondent, and the respondent then completes the questionnaire independently, rather than being interviewed by the researcher .Self-administered questionnaires can be distributed by mail, email or on internet and they are often used in quantitative research to collect data from a large number of respondents.

3.7.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are a way to understand are a way to understand a participant's lived experiences, thoughts and emotions on a particular topic. According to Hesse-Biber (2020), defines in-depth interviews as conversational interactions between researcher and participant that are not overly structured , allowing for the conversation to proceed according the flow of the discussion.

3.8.2 Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are requirements for both the design and measurement of research. At the level of research design, one examines the conclusions and asks whether they are true and repeatable. Validity refers to the extent to which a research method measures what it claims to measure. Both reliability and validity are important for ensuring that research is trustworthy and meaningful.

3.9 Ethical considerations

There are several ethical considerations that may be relevant when conducting research on women's participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe. According to Bryman and Bell(2015), ethical considerations in research refer to the moral principles and standards that should guide a researcher's behavior throughout the research process. The researcher must obtain informed consent from all participants, and ensure that they understand the purpose of the and how their data will be used. It is important to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, and confidentiality of participants, and to ensure that their identities are not revealed in the research. The researcher should take care to avoid causing any harm or distress to the participants and to ensure that the research is conducted in an unbiased and non-partisan manner.

3.10 Data presentation and analysis

Data presentation and analysis is an important part of any research project, including research on women's participation in electoral processes. Data analysis can be explained as unlocking hidden information in raw data and transforming it into something meaningful. There are a variety of ways to present and analyze data and the appropriate method will depend on the type of data collected and the goals of research. Researchers may choose to present their data in the form of graphs, charts ,tables and then use statistical techniques to analyze data.

3.11 Pilot testing/ pretesting the questionnaire

A pilot study is performed to test the feasibility of techniques , methods, questionnaires, and interviews and how they function together in a particular context (Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott and Guillot, 2018). A pilot test can also be used to show ethical and practical issues that could hamper the main study. Pilot testing is an important step in the research process and it is

particularly important when it comes to research on women's participation in electoral processes. Pilot testing involves conducting a small-scale version of the research before conducting the full-scale study. This allows researchers to identify any issues with the research design or methodology, and make changes before investing time and resources into the full-scale study.

3.12 Summary

This chapter has explained the methods to be used by the researcher to collect information. When studying women's participation in electoral processes, data presentation and analysis should be tailored to the research questions and the target population. Pilot testing is an essential step to ensure the accuracy and quality of the research. The research methods should be clearly described and justified.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected through self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews for the study on "Women's Participation in the 2023 Harmonized Elections in Norton." The study aims to assess the causes of women's low participation, examine the effects of their low participation, analyze measures to improve women's participation in politics, and explore opportunities for enhancing women's participation in elections. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the participants.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Before delving into the data analysis, it is important to provide a brief profile of the participants. Variables such as age, gender, educational background are discussed in this section. This diverse group of participants ensured a comprehensive representation of perspectives on women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections.

4.2.1 Age

As part of the participant profile, the age distribution of the respondents provides insight into the generational representation within the study. Based on the sample of 20 participants, the age distribution is shown in the table below.

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
18-25 years	7	35
26-35 years	4	20

36-45	3	15
46-55	3	15
56 years and above	3	15
Total	20	100

Table 4.2.1: Age

Figure above shows the distribution of participants by age. The highest age range represented by the participants was 18-25 7 (35%) years followed by 26-35 4 (20%). The other categories were the least and this includes those represented by 36-45, 46-55 and 56 years and above. Analyzing the age distribution of the participants allows for a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of different age groups regarding women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections. This information will be useful in assessing any variations or commonalities in the factors influencing women's political engagement across different generations.

4.2.2 Gender

Gender representation is an important aspect of the participant profile, as it provides insights into the study's inclusivity and the experiences of different genders in relation to women's political participation. Based on the sample of 20 participants, the gender distribution is shown in table below.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	4	20
Females	16	80
Total	20	100

Table 4.2 Gender

The table above shows that women participated in the research more than man. Almost 16 (80%) of the participants were women whereas 4 (20%) were Males. This is because the study targeted women in Norton to hear their voices.

4.2.3 Educational Background:

Understanding the educational background of the participants provides insights into the level of formal education and its potential impact on women's political engagement. Based on the sample of 20 participants, the distribution of educational backgrounds is indicated below.

Education Background	Frequency	Percentage
No formal Education	0	0
Primary Education	2	10
Secondary Education	12	60
Tertiary Education	6	30
Total	20	100

Table 4.3 Educational Background

The table above shows the Educational Background of the participants. The highest frequency was Secondary Education with 12 (60%). This is followed by Tertiary Education with 6 (30%). The least was primary Education. This shows that most of the participants if not all were literate meaning they were able to read and write.

4.3 CAUSES FOR WOMEN'S LOW PARTICIPATION

Participants were asked on the causes of women's low participation in politics during the 2023 elections. The findings are statistically reviewed on the table below.

Reasons for low participation	Frequency	Percentage
Social and cultural barriers	10	50
Lack of financial resources	7	35
Limited access to Information and knowledge	2	10
Political Structures	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 4.5 Causes for Women's Low Participation

The findings as indicated above shows that the majority of women agreed that social and cultural barriers are amongst the reasons for low participation of women in politics. The highest

frequency was 10 (50%) followed by Lack of financial resources which was 7 (35%). The average response was 2 (10%) which agreed that limited access to information is one of the reasons for low participation of women in politics. The least response was Political Structures which had only frequency of one.

4.3.1 Social and Cultural Barriers

Social and cultural barriers often play a significant role in limiting women's participation in political activities. These barriers can be deeply rooted in societal norms, gender roles, and traditional beliefs. All the participants interviewed agree that social and cultural barriers limited women's political activities. One of the participants from women led NGOs being interviewed argued that.

In our community, women are expected to prioritize their roles as caregivers and homemakers. Politics is seen as a male domain, and women are discouraged from actively engaging in such activities (Participant 5)

This response highlights the societal expectation placed on women to fulfill traditional gender roles, which often prioritize family and household responsibilities over political participation. The perception that politics is a male-dominated sphere can discourage women from taking up leadership roles or actively involving themselves in political processes. It also shows that traditional gender norms and expectations prevalent in the community tend to limit women's ability to participate in politics. The perception that politics is a male domain creates a sense of exclusion and discouragement among women, hindering their active engagement in political activities.

Moreover another MP Noted that

Women often face criticism and judgment when they enter the political arena. They are subjected to stereotypes and derogatory remarks, which can be demoralizing and discourage their involvement. (Participant 8)

From the above response one can note that the existence of gender stereotypes and biases that women encounter when they enter the political realm. The criticism and derogatory remarks

directed at women politicians can create a hostile environment, undermining their confidence and motivation to participate.

Also the findings indicates that

Lack of support from family and community is a significant barrier. Women who wish to engage in politics often face resistance and disapproval from their families, which makes it challenging for them to pursue their political aspirations (Participant , 6)

The findings indicate the lack of support that women aspiring to engage in politics often face from their families and communities. The disapproval and resistance can create additional hurdles for women, as they may struggle to gain support and resources necessary for political involvement. Moreover, The absence of familial and community support can significantly impede women's political participation. The reluctance or opposition from family members and community networks can restrict women's access to resources, networks, and opportunities, making it harder for them to actively engage in political activities.

4.3.2 Lack of Financial Resources:

The findings and the data obtained from the participants indicates that lack of financial resources can be a significant barrier to women's political participation. Being interviewed one women supported this by saying that

Running for office requires significant financial investments. Campaigning, marketing, and organizing events all require funds. Many women hesitate to enter politics due to the high costs involved (Participant 3)

This extract highlights the financial constraints faced by women who aspire to participate in politics. The financial burden of running for office, including costs associated with campaigning and organizing events, can pose a significant obstacle for women with limited financial resources. Also, the high costs involved in political campaigns can disproportionately affect women, particularly those with limited financial resources. The financial constraints may prevent women from actively participating in political processes, as they may struggle to afford the expenses associated with running for office.

Another participant from the Academia a lecturer also supported by noting that

Access to political networks and connections often requires financial contributions or membership fees. Women who lack financial resources may find it challenging to gain entry into these networks, limiting their opportunities for political engagement.
(Participant 5)

From the above findings it can be noted that financial resources can impact women's access to political networks and connections. Political networks often require financial contributions or membership fees, which can be a barrier for women with limited financial resources. The lack of financial resources can limit women's ability to access influential political networks and connections. Without the financial means to contribute or pay membership fees, women may face difficulties in establishing relationships and accessing the opportunities and support systems available within these networks.

4.3.3 Limited Access to Education and Information

Limited access to education and information was also mentioned by participants as the significant barrier to women's political participation. One of the participants an academic personal confirmed that

Education plays a crucial role in political engagement. Women with limited access to education may lack the necessary knowledge and skills to actively participate in political processes (Participant 1)

The interviews highlights how limited access to education can hinder women's political participation. Education equips individuals with critical thinking abilities, political awareness, and communication skills that are essential for effective engagement in political activities. Moreover Limited access to education can prevent women from acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to become politically engaged. Without sufficient education, women may feel ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of political systems, limiting their confidence and motivation to participate.

Another participant representing political parties an MP noted that

Information about political processes, policies, and opportunities is not always readily accessible to women, especially those in remote areas. Lack of information can make it challenging for women to stay informed and engage in political activities (Participant 3)

This highlights the barrier created by limited access to information. Women in remote areas or marginalized communities may face challenges in accessing information about political processes, policies, and opportunities, leading to a lack of awareness and understanding.

4.3.4 Political Structures

The structure of political systems and institutions also contribute to women's low participation in politics. In support of this a participant representing community leader noted that

Political parties often have internal structures and processes that are not conducive to women's participation. The lack of gender-sensitive policies and quotas can limit women's representation within party structures. (Participant 8)

This shows how political party structures may hinder women's participation. The absence of gender-sensitive policies and quotas within parties can result in a lack of representation and opportunities for women to hold leadership positions or actively engage in decision-making processes. Political structures that do not prioritize gender equality within party processes can create barriers for women's participation. The lack of mechanisms to ensure women's representation and inclusion can limit their ability to shape party agendas and policies.

Moreover another women from CSOs Noted that

Hierarchical and male-dominated political structures can be intimidating for women. The dominance of men in key positions can create a hostile environment, discouraging women from actively participating in political activities.

The electoral system Itself can pose challenges for women's participation. Winner-takes-all systems and high campaign costs disproportionately affect women, making it harder for them to compete in elections.(Participant 10)

This extract highlights how hierarchical and male-dominated political structures can deter women from participating. The concentration of power and decision-making authority in the hands of men can create an environment that is unwelcoming and intimidating for women,

leading to their reluctance to engage. The presence of hierarchical and male-dominated structures within politics can perpetuate gender inequalities and hinder women's active participation. Women may feel marginalized and excluded from key decision-making processes, limiting their influence and voice in political affairs.

4.4 EFFECTS OF WOMEN'S LOW PARTICIPATION

Participants were asked on the effects of women's low participation in politics . Different views popped out from the participants. This is depicted in the table below

Effects of Low Participation of Women in Politics	Frequency	Percentage
Underrepresentation in Decision-Making	13	65
Limited Policy Focus on Women's Issues	5	25
Weakened Democracy	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 4.5 Effects of Women's Low Participation

The findings indicates that the highest frequency was 13 (65%) which constituted women who argerred that one of the effects of low participation is underrepresentation in decision-making. This is followed by 5 (25%) which is limited policy plus on Women's Issues. The least response was weakens democracy with only a frequency of 2. The findings indicates that women wants to be represented in decision-making.

4.4.1 Underrepresentation in Decision-Making:

The underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes have several effects on politics and society. One participant from NGOs noted that

When women are underrepresented in decision-making, the perspectives and experiences of half the population are missing. This leads to policy and legislation that may not adequately address the needs and concerns of women (Participant 15)

The findings show how women's underrepresentation in decision-making can result in policies and legislation that overlook their specific needs and concerns. The absence of diverse perspectives limits the effectiveness and inclusivity of decision-making. When women are underrepresented, policy decisions may not fully consider issues that disproportionately affect women, such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and gender equality. The lack of women's voices can perpetuate gender disparities and hinder progress towards more equitable and inclusive policies.

Another lecturer said that

Women bring unique perspectives and priorities to decision-making. Their inclusion can lead to more collaborative and holistic approaches to problem-solving, resulting in better outcomes for society as a whole (Participant 18)

This quote from the interviews emphasizes the value of women's participation in decision-making. Women's distinct perspectives, influenced by their experiences and priorities, can contribute to more comprehensive and collaborative problem-solving processes. When women are underrepresented, decision-making processes may lack the diversity of viewpoints necessary for effective governance. Women's inclusion can bring fresh insights, foster empathy, and promote a more inclusive decision-making culture, leading to policies and initiatives that better address societal challenges.

4.4.2 Limited Policy Focus on Women's Issues:

According to the findings one of the effects of low participation is limited policy focus on the issues of women. The participants agreed that if they do not participate their issues won't be factored in the policy. To support this one of the participants from CSOs noted that

When women are underrepresented in decision-making, there is a risk of neglecting or downplaying issues that disproportionately affect women, such as reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and pay equity (Participant 20)

The data shows that When women have limited influence in decision-making, policies addressing gender-specific concerns may not receive the necessary attention or resources. This can perpetuate inequalities and hinder progress towards gender equality. Literature suggests that

women's representation in political institutions is crucial for advancing policies that address gender disparities (Caul, 2001).

Moreover another person from the Community argued that

Women's perspectives bring unique insights to policy discussions, especially regarding social welfare, healthcare, and education. Limited representation can result in policies that fail to consider the diverse needs and experiences of women (Participant 16)

This emphasizes the value of women's perspectives in shaping policies related to social welfare, healthcare, and education. The lack of diverse representation can lead to policies that overlook the specific challenges and requirements faced by women, limiting their potential benefits. From the findings it can be depicted that Women's low participation in decision-making can result in policies that inadequately address gender-specific issues, such as maternal health, childcare, and gender equality in education. Literature supports the notion that increasing women's representation in politics contributes to more gender-sensitive policy outcomes (Krook, 2014).

Also in support of this view another politician noted that

Limited policy focus on women's issues reinforces the notion that these issues are less important or secondary. It perpetuates a cycle where women's concerns are not adequately addressed, further marginalizing women in society (Participant 16)

This also shows the potential consequences of limited policy focus on women's issues. When policies fail to address gender-specific challenges, it reinforces the notion that women's concerns are not a priority. This perpetuates a cycle of marginalization and further contributes to gender inequalities. Thus the findings depict that when women's perspectives and experiences are not adequately reflected in policymaking, it can lead to a lack of attention to gender-specific issues. This neglect further marginalizes women and inhibits progress towards gender equality. Existing literature emphasizes the importance of women's representation in addressing gender biases in policy (Krook, 2014).

4.4.4 Weakened Democracy

The findings also shows that women's low participation in decision-making can have negative implications for democracy. The findings indicates that limited participation of women is detrimental to democracy. A lecturer argued that

When women are underrepresented in decision-making, it undermines the principles of democracy, which emphasize equal representation and participation. Democracy should reflect the diversity of its citizens (Participant 14)

This shows how women's low participation weakens democratic ideals. Democracy thrives on the inclusion of diverse perspectives and equal representation. When women are underrepresented, the democratic process fails to reflect the diversity of the population, compromising its legitimacy. The researcher learned that limited participation of women in decision-making can erode the democratic fabric of a society. Democracy is strengthened when all citizens, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to participate in shaping policies and governance. Literature supports the notion that gender equality is integral to the functioning of democratic institutions (Norris, 2006).

4.5 MEASURES TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Participants were asked about what can be done to improve the state of women's participation in Norton. Different responses and themes emerged from the views of the participants.

MEASURES	Frequency	Percentage
Gender responsive electoral laws and Policies	16	80
Awareness and Sensitization programs	3	15
Capacity building	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 4.6 measures to improve women's participation

From the above table it can be depicted that the highest frequency response is 16 (80%) which is Gender responsive electoral laws and policies. This is followed by Awareness and Sensitization programs with a frequency of 3 (15%). The least response was 5capacity building with only 1

person. The findings indicate that women feel that they will be no change without genuine reforms and that the current policies deprive them of participation in politics.

4.5.1 Gender-Responsive Electoral Laws and Policies

The participants interviewed suggested that Gender-responsive electoral laws and policies are potential measures to improve women's participation in decision-making processes. In support of this view one of the participant from the women led NGOs argued that

"Gender quotas or reserved seats for women in electoral systems can help increase women's representation. By ensuring a minimum number of women candidates, we can address the structural barriers that hinder women's political participation. (Participant 3)

From the findings the research notes that women still supports the Qouta systems and they want the numbers to be increased. The findings indicates the potential effectiveness of gender quotas or reserved seats in electoral systems to enhance women's representation. Such measures can help overcome the structural barriers and biases that limit women's access to political power. This is in support of the literature reviewed since people like Krook (2014)suggests that these measures can help counteract gender biases and level the playing field for women in politics.

Another participant from CSOS noted that

Supportive policies, such as maternity leave and affordable childcare, can encourage women's political participation. By addressing the practical challenges faced by women, we create a more conducive environment for their engagement in politics. (Participant 13)

This extract emphasizes the importance of supportive policies that address the practical barriers faced by women, such as balancing caregiving responsibilities with political engagement. Policies like maternity leave and affordable childcare can enable women to participate in political activities more effectively. Literature suggests that policies supporting work-life balance, including maternity leave and childcare support, can contribute to women's increased participation in political and public life (Ballington, 2008). By addressing the specific challenges

faced by women, these policies create a more inclusive and enabling environment for their engagement in decision-making processes.

4.5.2 Capacity Building Programs

The findings also indicate that capacity building programs are potential measures to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes. One of the participants noted that

Capacity building programs focusing on leadership skills and political education can equip women with the necessary knowledge and confidence to engage in politics at various levels. By providing training and mentorship, we can empower women to take on leadership roles.

The findings indicates the potential effectiveness of capacity building programs that focus on leadership skills and political education. These programs can provide women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to participate in politics and assume leadership roles. Literature suggests that capacity building programs, including leadership training and political education, can empower women to overcome barriers and enhance their political participation (Krook, 2009). By equipping women with the necessary skills and knowledge, these programs contribute to building a pipeline of capable female leaders.

Moreover another Participant argued that

Networking and mentorship initiatives within capacity building programs can connect aspiring women leaders with experienced politicians. Such interactions provide guidance, support, and valuable networks that can enhance women's political trajectories (Participant 5)

This shows the importance of networking and mentorship initiatives within capacity building programs. These initiatives connect aspiring women leaders with experienced politicians, enabling them to receive guidance, support, and access to valuable networks. The Research suggests that networking and mentorship play a crucial role in advancing women's political careers (Ballington, 2008). Capacity building programs that facilitate these connections can enhance women's political trajectories by providing them with role models, support systems, and opportunities for collaboration.

4.5.3 Awareness and Sensitization Programs

Awareness and sensitization programs are potential measures to improve women's participation in decision-making processes as depicted from the findings.

One of the participants interviewed representing community leaders noted that

Awareness campaigns can educate the public about the importance of women's participation in politics. By challenging stereotypes, biases, and societal norms, we can create a more inclusive environment that encourages women to engage in decision-making (Participant 13)

The findings indicates the potential impact of awareness campaigns in challenging stereotypes, biases, and societal norms that hinder women's participation. By educating the public about the importance of women's political engagement, these programs can foster a more inclusive environment. This is consistent with literature review. Existing literature emphasizes the significance of awareness and sensitization programs in promoting gender equality and women's political participation (Krook, 2009). By challenging existing biases and stereotypes, these programs contribute to changing societal attitudes and perceptions, creating an environment that encourages women's active involvement in decision-making processes.

Moreover another participant also noted that

Sensitization programs targeting political and institutional stakeholders are crucial. By raising awareness about the benefits of gender equality and women's leadership, we can encourage policymakers and decision-makers to adopt more inclusive practices (Participant 2)

The data emphasizes the importance of sensitization programs that target political and institutional stakeholders. By raising awareness about the benefits of gender equality and women's leadership, these programs can influence policymakers and decision-makers to adopt more inclusive practices.

4.6 OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

4.6.1 Civil Society Engagement:

Civil society engagement presents opportunities for improving women's participation in decision-making processes as indicated by the research findings. One of the community leaders noted that

Civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for women's rights and promoting their political participation. By mobilizing communities, raising awareness, and organizing campaigns, they can create a supportive environment for women to engage in decision-making. (Participant 6)

This shows the potential impact of civil society organizations in advocating for women's rights and mobilizing communities. Through their efforts in raising awareness and organizing campaigns, these organizations can create an enabling environment for women's political participation. Existing literature emphasizes the significant role of civil society organizations in promoting women's political participation and gender equality (Ballington, 2008). By amplifying women's voices and advocating for their rights, these organizations contribute to creating a more inclusive and participatory political landscape.

Another participant also noted that

Civil society engagement can provide platforms for women to network, share experiences, and build alliances. Through these connections, women can gain support and mentorship, which are crucial for their political advancement. (Participant 4)

The findings emphasize the importance of civil society engagement in providing platforms for women to network, share experiences, and build alliances. These connections can provide women with the necessary support and mentorship required for their political advancement. Also, the research suggests that networking and alliances facilitated by civil society organizations can contribute to women's political empowerment and participation (Krook, 2009). By creating spaces for collaboration, these organizations enable women to access resources, share knowledge, and build supportive relationships, enhancing their political trajectories.

4.6.2 Promoting Women's Leadership:

Promoting women's leadership presents an opportunity to enhance their participation in decision-making processes. One of the participants noted that

Promoting women's leadership requires creating mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives specifically designed for women. By providing tailored support and guidance, we can empower women to take on leadership roles (Participant 4)

This emphasizes the importance of mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives for women. These programs can offer tailored support, guidance, and skill-building opportunities, empowering women to assume leadership positions. Also the Existing literature highlights the significance of mentorship and leadership development programs in promoting women's leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Such initiatives provide women with the necessary tools, networks, and confidence to overcome barriers and excel in leadership roles. By offering targeted support, these programs contribute to building a pipeline of capable women leaders.

In support of this another participant noted that

Promoting women's leadership requires challenging gender biases and promoting diversity in leadership positions. By creating inclusive policies and practices, we can ensure equal opportunities for women to rise to leadership roles (Participant 6)

This underscores the importance of challenging gender biases and promoting diversity in leadership positions. Creating inclusive policies and practices can help level the playing field, providing equal opportunities for women to advance into leadership roles. The Research supports the notion that promoting diversity in leadership positions is essential for women's participation (Acker, 2006). Inclusive policies, such as quotas or targets for women's representation, can help address historical imbalances and break down the barriers that hinder women's access to leadership positions. By fostering diversity, organizations and institutions can create an environment that values and promotes women's leadership.

4.6.3 International Support and Cooperation:

International support and cooperation are crucial measures to improve women's participation in decision-making processes. One of the participants argued that

International support and cooperation can provide financial resources and technical assistance to promote women's participation. By investing in capacity-building programs

and supporting women-led initiatives, we can empower women and enhance their role in decision-making. (Participant 3)

The findings highlights the potential impact of international support and cooperation in providing financial resources and technical assistance. Through capacity-building programs and support for women-led initiatives, these efforts can empower women and strengthen their participation in decision-making processes.

Another participant noted that

International cooperation can facilitate knowledge exchange and learning opportunities. By sharing best practices and experiences from different countries, we can identify effective strategies to promote women's participation and adapt them to specific contexts."

This findings emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in facilitating knowledge exchange and learning opportunities. By sharing best practices and experiences, countries can identify effective strategies to promote women's participation and tailor them to their specific contexts. The Research suggests that international cooperation and knowledge exchange are valuable in promoting women's political participation across different contexts (Tripp, 2015). By learning from successful initiatives and adapting them to local conditions, countries can accelerate progress and overcome common challenges, thus enhancing women's role in decision-making.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings collected through interviews and questionnaires. The research started by giving a background information of the participants where issues such as age distribution , educational background, gender were analyzed. The chapter also looked at the reasons for low participation of women in politics in Norton and the effects of this low participation. The chapter also presented data on the suggestions to improve women's participation.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research findings on women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on the case of Norton, are summarized. The conclusions drawn from the findings are presented, and recommendations are provided based on the identified constraints and challenges. Additionally, this chapter suggests areas for further research that may arise from the study's findings, methods, or concepts used.

5.2 Summary of Research

The study aimed to assess the causes for women's low participation, examine the effects of women's low participation in elections, evaluate measures to improve women's participation in politics, and analyze opportunities for improving women's participation in elections.

The research findings revealed several key factors contributing to women's low participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Norton. These factors included socio-cultural barriers, limited access to resources and education, lack of political party support, and gender stereotypes and

biases. The effects of women's low participation were evident in the underrepresentation of women in elected positions, limited policy focus on gender issues, and a lack of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

Based on the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that the findings support existing theories and literature on women's political participation. The identified causes align with previous research on barriers faced by women in politics, including cultural norms, discriminatory practices, and structural inequalities. The effects of women's low participation also align with the literature on the importance of gender-balanced representation and its impact on policy outcomes.

Plausible reasons for the results may include a combination of traditional gender roles and societal expectations, limited opportunities for political engagement, and a lack of targeted efforts to address gender disparities in politics. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive measures to address these factors and promote women's active participation in elections and decision-making processes.

5.3 Conclusions

Further research in these areas can contribute to a deeper understanding of the barriers, strategies, and impacts of women's participation in elections and inform the development of effective interventions to promote gender equality in political representation.

Causes of Women's Low Participation in the 2023 Harmonized Elections in Norton

The research identified several causes contributing to women's low participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Norton. These causes include socio-cultural barriers, limited access to resources and education, lack of political party support, and gender stereotypes and biases. Socio-cultural barriers encompassed traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and cultural norms that discouraged women from actively participating in politics. Limited access to resources and education hindered women's ability to engage in political activities and acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. Lack of political party support, such as limited nomination opportunities and inadequate campaign resources, further marginalized women in the electoral process. Gender stereotypes and biases perpetuated discriminatory practices, reinforcing the belief that politics is a male domain.

The findings align with existing literature on the causes of women's low political participation. Studies have consistently highlighted socio-cultural barriers, limited resources and education, and gender biases as major obstacles faced by women in politics (Bauer & Britton, 2006; Dahlerup, 2006; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Cultural norms and gender stereotypes can restrict women's agency and discourage their engagement in political activities (Tripp, 2015). Unequal access to resources and education further perpetuates gender disparities in political participation (Krook, 2009). Political party structures and processes often disadvantage women, with limited support and opportunities for their nomination and election (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). The research findings support the existing literature, emphasizing the persistent challenges faced by women in accessing and participating in politics. To address women's low participation, it is crucial to address socio-cultural barriers, enhance women's access to resources and education, provide political party support, and challenge gender stereotypes and biases.

Effects of Women's Low Participation in the 2023 Harmonized Elections in Norton

The research revealed the effects of women's low participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Norton. These effects were evident in the underrepresentation of women in elected positions, limited policy focus on gender issues, and a lack of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. The underrepresentation of women perpetuates a gender imbalance in political leadership, limiting the representation of women's interests and needs. The limited policy focus on gender issues results in a lack of comprehensive measures to address gender inequalities and promote women's rights. The absence of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes hampers the development of inclusive policies and undermines democratic representation.

The findings are consistent with existing literature on the effects of women's low political participation. Research has consistently shown that gender-balanced representation is essential for effective governance and policy outcomes (Krook, 2014). The underrepresentation of women in political leadership results in a limited focus on gender issues and a lack of policies that address women's rights and concerns (Bauer & Britton, 2006). The absence of diverse perspectives can lead to policy gaps and inadequate decision-making processes (Tripp, 2015). The research findings confirm that women's low participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Norton has significant effects on political representation, policy focus, and decision-making

processes. Addressing these effects requires promoting women's representation, prioritizing gender issues in policy agendas, and ensuring diverse perspectives are included in decision-making bodies.

Measures to Improve Women's Participation in Politics

The research evaluated measures to improve women's participation in politics. The findings emphasized the need for comprehensive interventions, including affirmative action measures, political party support, educational campaigns, and women's political networks. Affirmative action measures, such as gender quotas or reserved seats, can enhance women's representation and address the gender imbalance in political leadership. Political party support, including training programs, mentorship, and financial resources, is crucial for increasing women's participation and ensuring their success in elections. Educational campaigns challenging gender stereotypes and biases can promote the value of women's participation in politics and encourage their engagement. Women's political networks and support systems foster collaboration, mentorship, and information-sharing, empowering women to overcome barriers and actively participate in political processes.

The findings align with existing literature on measures to improve women's political participation. Research indicates that affirmative action measures have been successful in increasing women's representation in politics (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). Political party support is crucial for women's success in elections, as parties play a significant role in candidate selection and campaign resources (Bauer & Britton, 2006). Educational campaigns challenging gender stereotypes have shown positive impacts on women's political engagement (Tripp, 2015). Women's political networks and support systems provide crucial resources and networks for women, facilitating their participation and leadership development (Krook & O'Brien, 2012).

The research findings highlight the importance of implementing comprehensive measures to improve women's participation in politics. Affirmative action measures, political party support, educational campaigns, and women's political networks are essential for promoting women's representation, challenging gender biases, and empowering women to actively engage in political processes.

The research findings on women's participation in the 2023 harmonized elections in Norton support existing theories and literature on the causes, effects, and measures to improve women's political participation. The identified causes, such as socio-cultural barriers, limited resources, and gender biases, align with previous research on barriers faced by women in politics. The effects of women's low participation, including underrepresentation, limited policy focus, and lack of diverse perspectives, resonate with the literature on the importance of gender-balanced representation. The recommended measures, such as affirmative action, political party support, educational campaigns, and women's networks, are supported by existing research on strategies to enhance women's political participation. Addressing women's low participation requires addressing socio-cultural barriers, enhancing access to resources and education, providing political party support, and challenging gender stereotypes and biases. The research findings emphasize the need for comprehensive interventions that promote women's representation, prioritize gender issues in policy agendas, and ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers and practitioners can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable political landscape in Zimbabwe, where women's voices and experiences are adequately represented and their rights and interests are effectively addressed.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Implement affirmative action measures, such as gender quotas or reserved seats, to promote women's representation in elected positions.
2. Enhance political party support for women candidates through training programs, mentorship, and financial resources.
3. Develop educational campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes and biases and promote the value of women's participation in politics.
4. Strengthen women's political networks and support systems to foster collaboration, mentorship, and information-sharing among women leaders.

5. Advocate for policy reforms that prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment, ensuring that gender issues are mainstreamed in decision-making processes.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

Further research in the following areas can contribute to a deeper understanding of the barriers, strategies, and impacts of women's participation in elections and inform the development of effective interventions to promote gender equality in political representation. Firstly, exploring the experiences and perspectives of women who successfully overcame barriers to participate in the 2023 harmonized elections in Norton would provide valuable insights into the strategies and resources that enable women's political engagement. Understanding their stories and identifying common factors that contributed to their success can inform the design of targeted interventions and support mechanisms for aspiring women leaders. Secondly, conducting comparative studies on women's participation in elections in different regions of Zimbabwe could shed light on regional variations and the contextual factors that influence women's political engagement. By examining variations in socio-cultural norms, levels of development, and political landscapes, researchers can identify region-specific challenges and opportunities for promoting women's participation in politics. Thirdly, investigating the role of civil society organizations and international support in promoting women's political participation in Zimbabwe can uncover the impact of external actors and initiatives on women's empowerment and political engagement. Understanding the support mechanisms and strategies employed by civil society organizations, as well as the contributions of international actors, can provide insights into effective approaches for promoting women's political participation in Zimbabwe and other similar contexts. Fourthly, assessing the impact of policy reforms and initiatives aimed at improving women's participation in politics is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions. Longitudinal studies tracking progress over time can assess the outcomes of gender quotas, political party reforms, and other policy measures, providing evidence on their impact on women's representation and empowerment. Finally, examining the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, such as race, class, and age, can provide a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges faced by different groups of women in political participation. Intersectional analysis can reveal how multiple sources of discrimination and disadvantage intersect to shape women's experiences in politics and inform targeted strategies that address the specific needs of diverse groups of

women. By delving into these areas, future research can inform evidence-based policies and interventions that effectively promote women's participation and representation in politics, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and equitable democracies.

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