

An Analysis of the Inclusion of Women in Political Leadership: A Case of Zanu (PF) (2019-2023)

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000308>

Received: 21 August 2025; Accepted: 28 August 2025; Published: 11 November 2025

ABSTRACT

The research attempted to examine the representation of women in political leadership within ZANU PF between the year 2019 and 2023. The paper concentrated on the degree to which women are in the top positions in the party, how the male party leaders regard the leadership abilities of their female counterparts and the obstacles that face the women in leading the party. The researcher applied the qualitative research design and it was deemed the most appropriate bearing in mind the study into the inclusion of women through leadership in politics. A maximum population of 20 ZANU PF executive members comprising of one member of the three ZANU PF executive organs namely the Central Committee, Politburo and the Women League members were incorporated in the study to participate in the study. The researcher adopted the purposive and random sampling method to derive the optimal results to represent the population at large and the tools of data collection or gathering of data also was done through interviews and the focus discussion group. The results of the analysis reach a conclusion due to the fact that the proportion of women participating in politics and taking positions in decision-making process is very crucial. Findings reflect that in order to facilitate more women to join political leadership, ZANU PF must consider the following: graft, gender gap in political empowerment, political freedom, and other cultural factors such as performance orientation, collectivism and power distance.

Keywords: Inclusion, Political leadership, Politburo, Empowerment, Women in politics

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The problem of gender imbalances not only in political leadership predate the times immemorial. A number of factors and sources have been avoided as properties of the omission of women to be equally represented in national and party politics as their male counterparts. This aspect of the formation of political structures and processes in the political parties or grouping forms part of this scope in which inequality of representation between males and females has been made. This is regardless of the deep-rooted socio-cultural benchmarks that discriminated women to be wholly represented in the political scene. There are three unique eras in which the historical events behind the exclusion of women to take up leadership positions in politics can be traced. They are in pre-colonial period and the colonial period in which women were just being bestowed upon with political position that carry less weight like cooking, dancing and singing during wars. This is contrary to their male counter parts who make the decisions and plans of wars as well as the post-colonial era which is the time of this study where their primary responsibility when it came to politics was voting. The political inequalities which were in existence determined the roles played by both women and men based on the social construction (Makombe, 2020).

History has it that, the early societies were characterised by highly centralised monarchical government that was dominated by males. Gaidzanwa (1994) underscores the fact that, females did not have a role to play in the political determinants, but rather they were mere beneficiaries of such decisions. In the pre-colonial period, the male gender ruled the roost in the political organisation of such societies compared to the female gender. This was observed during the formation of a council that served the king in managing all the activities of the societies; also, the soldiers of the societies were dominated by the males, in contrast to the women who still played minor roles such as cooks, dancers and singers in the army to entertain the soldiers. This will then indicate that the position of women was not equivalent with the position of their men counterparts. Kambarami (2006) goes

further to say that although there existed an advisory role of the king played by the king queen (iNdlovukazi) the decision of the king and that of the council was the ultimate.

As an illustration, ZANLA and ZIPRA Armies took on board more females to train as guerilla fighters and numbers summed up to over 10 000 (Gaidzanwa 1994). The establishment of the Political parties too which is ZANU-PF and the ZAPU was largely contributed by the men. Because although women were permitted to participate in national politics, they were assigned roles that were minor towards decision making formulation and making of policies that fit their needs and interests as a gender in a political system hence constitution making processes, the electoral system of a state, legal framework or institutions of a state. The end result is that women were assigned the positions that were more bent towards their staying-at-home duties as a consequence of their biology and the cultural expectations of them.

There are numerous conventions, declarations and protocols which Zimbabwe has signed and thus include the Beijing declarations, SADC protocol on gender, millennium development goals on gender and the CEDAW (UNDP 2010, ZESN 2009, WIDSA, 2008). There are no actual, significant gains that have been made to help stem out the exclusion in political leadership representation. This led to the emergence of the women civic groups in the politics who demanded the rights of women in politics to be well represented. This led to the establishment of different women organisations to advocate their political interest like the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and the Women in Politics Support Unit. Women are recruited in active participation in voting but not much of campaigning towards political offices. The study therefore is to clearly exclude the casualties that militate against women participation in the politics.

Between 2013 and 2017 ZANU PF was a very precarious time having succession disputes, as Matyszak (2016) says there was more heat than light in the minds of the media and due to deficiency of knowledge of the legal niceties that surround the question of what happens when the President dies, is too infirm to govern, or even when he decides that he/she wants to retire. The presidential succession became even thorny. The so called Mujuru faction consisted of hardliners within ZANU PF who were reported to have spearheaded a giant campaign that was aimed at seeing Mujuru into the position of being made president of Zimbabwe. It was thought that Joice Mujuru was the one leading this faction. In addition to the few ZANU PF hardliners, it was also thought that Joice Mujuru had majority of the provincial leaders behind her (The Herald, 17 Nov 2014). This started with the cleansing of Joice Mujuru and eight of the cabinet ministers in 2014 and the bitter struggle between the two so called factions went full swing, namely Lacoste which was rallying behind then Vice President Emerson Mnangagwa affectionately known as Ngwenya (crocodile) and the G40 which was composed members of the young generation rallying behind the former first lady Dr Grace Mugabe. This sparked off concerns on the reasons behind the absence of women leadership in political parties as this time around the party (ZANU PF) was once again unable to have a woman in its presidium (Matyszak, 2016).

ZANU PF structure is highlighted by the presidium comprising the first secretary who is the President and this has been occupied by a male (Robert Mugabe until his resignation in November 2017) succeeded by the two 2nd Secretaries which up until 2014 has been occupied by males Matyszak (2016) postulates that she was once a potential successor to the former President before she was denounced in 2014 as engaging in plotting against Mugabe. Due to the allegations leveled against her and the practical battles Mujuru has lost her position as a Vice-President as well as her party leadership position before being thrown out of the party. This provoked the appointments of Phelekezela Mphoko as well as Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa into the presidium of the party.

But after the controversial military move branded by some quarters as a coup d'etat which targeted the criminals around Robert Gabriel Mugabe on an evening of 14th November 2017. The African Union (AU) was facing a scenario where a coup could bring about a political change within Zimbabwe which was not just popular at home but regionally as well and this would be the results of years of ignoring the subversion of democracy that had occurred in Zimbabwe.

In addition, rather cleverly, the ZDF was not too forthcoming in their overturning of AU red line of grabbing executive power preferring to hand over the rules of removal and replacement of Mugabe as president to constitutional routes (www.theindependent.co.zw). The forced removal of Robert Mugabe as the first secretary

and his diminishing to an ordinary member and expelling of his wife Dr Grace Mugabe on 19 th November 2017, an impeachment was planned against Mugabe on 21 st November 2017 in the joint session of parliament and senate whereby Mugabe sent a letter to Zimbabwe s parliament to resign the presidency leaving behind only the male led Lacoste faction (Bbc.co.uk. 21 November 2017).

Statement of the problem

In spite of all the conventions, protocols and declarations pushing women into political emancipation no actual progress has been thwarted. The political arena still remains under-represented in terms of women as opposed to the male counterparts. This especially was demonstrated by the fact that few women were vying political offices in the 2000, 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2023 elections in Zimbabwe. An analysis and a study into the causal factors behind women exclusion in the political leadership position of Zimbabwe in ZANU- PF is the paper.

Research objectives

- To establish the extent to which female leaders hold party executive posts.
- To explore the perceptions of male leaders towards female leaders.
- To identify challenges faced by women holding party leadership positions.
- To proffer ways by which the participation of women in political leadership can be improved.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks guide this study. These are the Relative Deprivation Conflict Theory and the Patriarchy theory.

Relative Deprivation Conflict Theory

Stouffer (1900 1960) is said to have come up with the Relative Deprivation Theory post the World War II, however, in his book titled *The American Soldier* (1949) we find him mentioning the relative deprivation theory. Relative Deprivation Conflict Theory is an account of the social change desire that drives social movement whereby a group of individuals attempt to bring a social change in the pursuit of the acquisition of something like opportunities, status, wealth or political leadership as is the case in this study whereby men are enjoying this factor and the women believe they are supposed to get it too (Heck and Wech, 2003). Relative Deprivation Theory (Walker and Smith 2001) on the other hand is a notion that the attitudinal substitutions of feeling deprived and unhappy is associated to a representative reference point. Relative deprivation evolves when the desire turns into legitimate expectations and it is then hindered by the society which implies that social satisfaction is the reverse of relative deprivation.

Although Rummel (1977) has the opinion that the given theory of relative deprivation proves the fact that people tend to join social movements or promote and advocate social change. Dambrun and Taylor (2013) lament at this and state that the relative deprivation theory has failed to explain why individuals get themselves involved in movements that seemingly cannot affect them directly like the animal rights and males who have been identified to actively participate in women organisations. According to Khadar (2013) deprivation is visible, dependent on an individual in terms of his perception, needs, and knowledge. It is the fixation of deprivation on a goal or objective and denied thing, freedom, equality, or sustenance, the ignoring that definition of this shift, in terms of historical period, culture, society, position, and person. This statement is true according to the researcher through the background of this study because the roles played by women have changed considerably and there is no outright absence of women in politics. Therefore, this paper will discuss the participation of women in politics and political leadership.

Patriarchy theory

This theory which Millet (1969) propounded explains how a society operates, who makes a decision and the historical fact of the dominance of males on all spheres of life. It is based on the biblical quoting of the creation of human beings that man was first to be made and a female could only be created after a man as a helper to a man. This has seen males control all channels or means of accessing centers of power. The patriarchal ideology

works on the level of economy and socio-cultural structure and forms inequality in social capital and political opportunities of women and men. The term Patriarchy according to Bhasin (1993) is a set of regulations regulated by the male figure or patriarch. The expectation the society has towards women as argued by Alidade (2012) is a social construct since the society has been dominated by patriarch.

The prevailing patriarchal order at every strata of the society is inclined to ruin the greater involvement of women in the leadership roles within the society. This is due to the tendency to strengthen the gender stereotypes. The socio-cultural issues caused by the patriarchal society have been excellent barriers to women in the Zimbabwe political parties. And the women getting into politics also have to actually show that their calibre is tough enough to bear with the pressure that comes with patriarchal attitudes that define women as weak citizens and thus not fit to hold office (Makombe, 2020). Due to this, woman was low ranked and was assigned with offices of little importance hence the political rights granted to the woman are not equal to their male counterparts thereby causing gender imbalances. Women at this stage are likely to perceive politics as a male only play since most political seats of utmost importance regarding decision making whether in army, policy, universities, finance or any other political office is occupied by man.

Extent to which Female Leaders Hold Party Executive Posts

Women in political parties have been a subject of great academic interest and much of this body of research has come to the conclusion that despite the gains of women in politics the political arena is still treated to a masculinised ethos and good old boys clubs (Lawless and Fox, 2005). Regarding party leadership there has been comparatively few considerations as regards gender. Women remain less successful than men in becoming members of a political party, much less successful in becoming an elected parliamentarian and very unlikely to provide leadership in government as a chief of government. It is apparent that the trend of the higher the fewer is being maintained (Black and Erickson, 2000). Regarding party leadership in particular, Trimble and Arscott (2003) indicate that parties do not tend to be accommodating to female leaders, but instead they resort to employing women party leaders as an experience, and ditch them immediately when they do not perform miracles on their elections. In this case under the same circumstances, men would not attract such critic. It is therefore comparatively not common to find women leading governments or fronting parties that may take up governments.

Zimbabwe

Evidence has indicated that no single political party in Zimbabwe, i.e., ZANU-PF and MDC have ever made any positive strides aimed at involving women in decision making in the respective parties. The management roles are yet to be dominated by women. Women remain political marginalised. No wonder therefore, lots of lobbying has gone into support of women in politics. According to ZANU PF web site <http://www.zanupf.org.zw> (18/12/13), the party presidium consisted of three males and a female who were also a vice president of the party, namely Joice Mujuru; and the political decision-making organ of the party between congress, the Politburo, consists of 26 males and 7 women.

The same scenario occurs in the MDC-T where the party has a gender imbalance since the National Standing Committee is made up of nine people of whom only Thokozani Khupe, who is also the Deputy President of the party, is the only female member according to the MDC-T website <http://www.mdc.co.zw/> (18/12/13). The National Executive of MDC-T is comprised of 40 members of which 26 are male and 14 female. The EISA Report (2004) also shows that parties are compelled to take into account the reservation of seats in nomination part and primary elections and the adoption of the quota system. This will in turn be used to contain the inequalities of gender imbalances in political representation. Women political representation is supposed to have political parties as the foundations to hold it. No matter the fact that all the big political parties in Zimbabwe have already acquired women wing league body that handles development of their interests in policy-forming trajectory pool, the women are still malrepresenting in their numbers.

Although they form big support base of these political parties, they are left out of the key decision making ranks of these political parties. The party structures are the ones ending up crossing the way of selection of the candidates by the party in an election. Mair and Sithole (2000) research displays that there has been the existence

of democratic centralism in ZANU-PF. Because the decision on the candidates to be fielded rests with the Politburo hence the comparison is made with the National Executive Council of the MDC which is the highest decision-making body of the party as well. Such institutions in such parties dictate the nomination process. The structures which support women during primary elections against the opposition of the male candidates with supportive resources and, eliminating other socio-cultural biases which are held by the voters against the women. In research, a role of political parties in discouraging women representation in Legislative and Executive arm was discovered.

Women and Men Report (2012) report by ZIMSTAT says, though women have made concerted effort to fight against the status quo over the past years to ensure that more women find themselves in influential positions, women have not been represented equally in all spheres of decision-making including religion, media, culture, law and military services. The report reads that, women involvement in political decision-making as equal partners to men has not been realized. Despite the fact that women constitute about half of the electorate and have gained the right to vote and contest in close to all the nations of the world, women are still under-represented as members of decision-making political bodies.

Africa

Based on the research done by Okello (2013) on the subject of The Roles of Women Organisations in political participation, results found were dependent on the past experience through examination of the women in parliament and the party leadership; one can tell that the women were content with the positions and the numbers. The women actually held the belief that it was part of the norm that men would take the initiative thus abiding by the stereotype imposed by the society or the wings of the women. In the study, one of the Women organisations called Women Political Alliance of Kenya liaised with several political parties to have the manifestos reviewed. This was meant to correct the stereotype presumption of the positions that were attributed to women in the parties. This is the pronouncements of the fact that the women will be incorporated in the parties and this will be ingrained in the women wings/leagues. It was observed nonetheless, that the organization was only able to collaborate with five opponents, making reference to the absence of collaboration with other party heads since they saw nothing to be ashamed in their manifestos (Chweya, 2002).

Okello (2013) affirms that until 1990s, women running to hold either the leadership position in the party or presidency in African continent was unheard of. Charity Ngilu and Wangari Maathai participated in the 1998 Kenyan presidential election in 1998 and Ngilu was a candidate again in 2002. In 1995 Rose Rugendo of Tanzania party Chama Cha Mapinduzi attempted to be nominated by her party during presidential primaries as did Sarah Jibril in Nigeria in 1989. Even though every one of these bids was unsuccessful, these women made a very crucial precedent in their countries and Africa in general. In this case, Mari (2011) opines that it was during the 1990s when women started initiating politics parties of their own partly due to the failure of other existing parties in the multiparty context. Women in most circumstances possessed another political vision that was not incorporated in the pre-existing parties; and in other circumstances, women desired to establish greater multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalitions than were available in given parties. Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika founded the National Party in Zambia in 1991; Margaret Dongo founded the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats in 1999 and Limakatso Ntakatsane founded the party, Kopanang Basotho in Lesotho.

In a similar way, Andersen, (1992) indicates that there are parties in Kenya whose leaders were Charity Ngilu and Dr. Wangari Maathai in the 1990s and Ruth Rolland-Jeanne-Marie led a party in Central African Republic and AmlA de Vitoria Pereira led an Angolan party. In Zambia, Kenya among other states, the unwillingness by political parties to make efforts towards enhancing the number of women has amounted to grave consideration of the formation of a party dominated by women, with wide based constituencies among both men and women (Andersen, 1992). In the present day Zimbabwe in anticipation of the elections in September 2018, a report conducted by the Research and Advocacy Unit, a non-governmental organisation that carries out studies and advocacy work in three areas women, displacements and governance in the country there are more than 50 political parties with which to contend on this occasion three of the political parties are headed by women, a first in the history of the country. The National People Party headed by Joice Mujuru, the African Democratic Party headed by Marcelline Chikasha and Progressive Democrats of Zimbabwe characterized by Barbra Nyagomo.

America

According to Palmer and Dennis (2012), the political parties play a very important role in American politics because they give hints to the voters concerning the stance of the candidates, assist in carrying out elections, and coordinate the government. Unlike in most other democracies, parties play an influential role in choosing many nominees in the United States; voters are normally the people who choose the party nominees in primary elections, and they vote for a candidate and not a list of parties in general elections. However, the party issue in American elections cannot be overlooked. Parties are able to seek and groom candidates, endorse and finance them and serve as gatekeepers to the nomination.

Party politics is not a departure of women. Earlier than women got a right to the vote, they participated in Democratic and Republican parties (Palmer and Dennis 2012). Female voters are now more likely than male voters to characterize themselves as a person in one of the important parties, And men are more likely than women voters are independents. Women however do not normally lead their parties. This has both direct and indirect impacts on the number of women who get elected to office as we shall soon see. More specifically, Republican women have not enjoyed equal developments in terms of gains that the party has enjoyed against men. The number of women in the Democratic presidency is way higher than the number of women in the Republican one (Palmer and Dennis 2012).

The UN (2015) has estimated that the United States is one of a few countries that have never had a woman in the leadership of a party except the first presidential candidacy of a leading political party by a woman Hillary Clinton. Although it is a historical moment to the U.S, there are over 70 countries that can pride on having had women in office as presidents and prime ministers with majority of them being in Europe and Asia. This data of women in national politics is a report on the party leadership, UN (2015) claims that majority of the female heads of states or party heads were left in the lonesome to be on top and had no good number of women to carry their voices or it was to vote a decision. This too depicts that one step forward and two take backward movement described above, this review shows that majority of women leaders did not pave way to other women but men and few states to date are still governed by women.

Factors which Militates against Women Representation in Politics

These factors can be categorized into three thus socio-economic and political factors have attributed to hinder women's political representation.

Lack of Financial Support

It is a determinant factor because it has led to an adverse effect on the political desire among women. This is given the fact that many women in Zimbabwe lack the economic muscle and many of them lack high earning salary jobs. Only a few of them are industry captains and political participation requires lots of finance in case one wants to make noise in such positions of power. Thus, absence of funds is an issue that limits the political power of women. Money to finance the election: It includes payment of registration fee and nomination fee, the money to finance the process of the election such as to mobilize the followers, purchase and printing of campaign regalia. But in Africa, poverty is mostly in female face as per, UN Economic Commission in Africa (2009:3).

Scarcity of the resources is among the reasons as to why the women have failed to engage in politics fully. That is, women have to be at par economically before they can scale the heights and reach to political power and authorities Oakes and Almquist (1993). This perception finds solid backing by Blumberg, Stratification theorist (1984, 1991) and Chafetz (1984, 1990) who comes up with the conclusion that economic power is a must in the case of assessing economic might of women in form of visibility in the professional sphere as it is a significant factor in the status and attainment of the political power of women. In this work the researcher aimed at knowing the economic status of the women in political leadership and whether it is relevant in their leadership positions.

Political Violence

As Wolf (1969:33) explains, he defines violence as: that is the unauthorized, illegitimate use of force to the making of decision contrary to the will or wishes of the others. Then political violence consists then of all the

unsanctioned attacks against a political community directed against the political regime, its players such as other political groups or even the civil society. The political scene has been threatened with politically motivated violence cases rising as the emergence of a strong opposition party namely the MDC in 1999 has flared up the political environment. This has led to mean spiritedness as a common occurrence. The process made women to be its victims who are feeling the heat. This has influenced adversely the figures of women that demand power positions. The political violence that has characterized the political arena has seen most women withdraw to clamour over positions of powers. Political violence is reported in majority of election arising due to the primary election and also election of local party structures leader. The statistics of the results presented by ZESN in 2011 properly demonstrates the abandonment of the elections by the women due to the tainted political violence.

As reported by ZESN electoral violence report the post-independence hence the elections have been blighted with political violence thus between 1980 and 1985 parliamentary sessions recorded 9 percent of the members who sat in the august house and in 1990-95 grew to 14 percent yet the figure worsened in 2000 due to the charged political scenes registered 9, 2 percent electoral violence. This therefore clearly reflects to the negative effects of violence that has a bearing on women involvement in politics. Supporting the same issue Kellow (2010:19) has himself added several characteristics he believes to be contributed by political violence to the reasons why women fear to join politics; they fear rejection, disowned or even violence by husband and family. There is also evidence in matters that support the researcher Reeler of Research and Advocacy Unity (2011), who made a clear position on how violence in Zimbabwe militates against the application of women in politics. Notwithstanding the fact that a number of factors pose as obstacles towards women participation and these factors include administrative barriers like the failure to register due to economic limitations like shortage of resources. Nevertheless, the statistics that can be found below evidently demonstrate the gross impact of violence on women political representation.

The Patriarchal and Cultural Attitudes

Culture has been attributed to many deprivations as the revered standard that is now denying women the accessibility to enter into politics besides enabling them to take part in the politics to become administrators. It is of this glass ceiling that has barred women to have a taste of public life. Culture is a confusing term that has varied interpretations and no universally accepted definition of the term could be present although it can be said to be belief, attitude, values, customs, institutions and accomplishments of a given nation, a spectrum of people in the society or group as described by South African Concise Oxford dictionary (2002:282). Because culture implies a maintenance of the values, customs and beliefs that are practiced by a given group of individuals that are together.

The social structure is the one which yields to custom in Africa thus custom is then more powerful than domination or even than the law and custom is even above religion. The traditions, the beliefs and the values have over the years been veiled into the religion and eventually have become what their adherents perceive that they ought to obey as based on Lightfoot Klein (1989:47) as quoted by Norris 2000). The perceptions of social construction consider the home as the sole venue of the woman where she can only show her talent and skills as compared to that experience of the life of the public by their male counterparts. This has therefore led to dominance of men. It is then that a woman takes the passive roles. Patriarchy then plays the upper hand over the way in which women operates in their own interests, besides the role that is removed out of their hands.

Partial Legal Framework

There is also a necessity of considering the fact that the legal system arrangement of the country has been a key factor that has deterred the participation of women in politics. According to Chiware quoted in Mpavirihwo (2010), it has been argued massively that the laws in the country such as the Public Order Security Act (POSA), Access to Information Privacy Protection Act (AIPPA) and the Broadcasting laws among others are contributing to this interest in the country. All these services, BSA have a negative impact in the sharing of information to the individuals and violated the liberties of individuals to freely associate. This has had an enormous impact since citizens cannot be well informed on relevant information hence fails to enable women to cheat in politics of the day since they fear victimization by government machinery.

Lack of Political Will

This is the other one as well since it is this one that has caused women to be under represented in the political field such as the legislature, the executive, senatorial and the rural and the urban council. The issue of a passive attitude towards politics has been acquired by the majority of women as opposed to being satisfied with just casting the vote than taking part in the political systems and procedures. They are more inclined towards the cheering job. Women have developed a bad attitude towards politics where they consider politics as a game of men. They cannot also be as politically ambivalent and determined to make it to the front benches to be given the powers of decision making. That is why in turn this leads to the underrepresentation of women in the political arena. As possible solutions, funding of the initiatives and campaigns of such actively engaged but not the so-called elite women in order to support their further rise to power in political parties, the sphere of the government and the organizations engaged in civil society, which is in need of financing. Beginning at schools a suitable education programmes that foster leadership of girls and the appreciation of their active participation in the country life.

Challenges Faced by Women Holding Party Leadership Positions

Notwithstanding these protocols, quota-agreement systems and positive trend, women still experience numerous difficulties and obstacles in order to fully participate in the decision-making structures of political power. The question of the symbol and visibility of women in the partying leadership and decision making is one of the greatest gaps. The ascension of women to the top leadership in certain nations in Africa has not really seen any gains in the parliamentary arena. Liberia is headed by a female president, who, however, only has 11 percent of females in the lower house and 13.3 percent in the upper house (IPU: 2013). This is assuring the loopholes that are yet to be filled in since women in politics still have a different set of challenges to resolve. The high figures of women in elected positions have not yet completely turned over into significant gains in legislation and materials. In this respect, although quotas have played an essential role in ensuring that women who have been excluded in the political arena in the country are accommodated, women have yet enjoyed much of the system. The women in the reserved seats in most of the African countries due to quota systems have been comparable to the chess pieces as they have been moved by men (Cole, 2011).

In their study Cole, (2011) found out that there are problems that women interested in political offices have faced including low scores in literacy tests, insufficient funds to conduct their campaigns, inadequate political experience and cultural and traditional issues that continue to keep women in the domestic arena rather than in politics as leaders. The presence of women in the line of leadership in the political parties has also been hesitant attribute to the economic, cultures and the political environment that has been at times marred with violence. According to IPU (2013), the other challenge is the intimidation of female voters by their husbands thus making some women fail to listen to campaigns and vote the candidates of their choice. Moreover, not all women are supported by their spouses when they feel like taking part in politics. This deters some of the qualified women to join politics. Certain women directors in Parliament and local councils fail to express interests of women and to represent interests objectively in promoting the common good of people due to low levels of literacy, low capacity, low exposure among other reasons.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research design was used to enable the researcher to get more insight on the issue and come up with ideas on how the issue of gender inequality in ZANU PF executive can be resolved. Two main sources were used in the generation of data which included personal interviews and an in-depth literature and it was regarded as the most adequate one in consideration to the analysis to inclusion of women in political leaderships. This study was aimed at targeting the members of ZANU PF who were members of the executive. The researcher adopted the purposive and random method of sampling to yield the most optimal results that characterize the whole population. So, to find the opinion of women in the political sector and other administrative posts, the researcher only sampled men and women whom I considered were in a better position to give me the fertile data on the subject. The main objective was to identify those participants who were accessible, and willing to share something to enlighten the topic under investigation or answer some study questions of the research. Questionnaire and interview guides were the instruments of the research.

FINDING

The Extent to which Female Leaders Hold Party Executive Posts.

Approximately 60 per cent of the respondents opined that although the current population of the country is 51 per cent female, women are the least represented in the political arena since male counterparts have always orchestrated themselves as the main contenders and political heads. 40 per cent of the respondents claimed that the levels of participation of women in the political arena and positions of decision-making remains a big issue not only in Zimbabwe, but also across the globe since women are grossly under-represented in parliaments and governments.

Interviewees agreed that the world is more aware about the historic marginalization of women in the circles of power, thus the pledges being made to equalize the gender imbalance in politics. When facilitating women empowerment, it is impressive to see that the world has its pieces at place but the reverse is the case in Zimbabwe and political parties are apparently doing the opposite. The interviews detected that ZANU PF has put in place women leagues which have featured in the parties constitution. The constitution of the Women League of ZANU PF besides having a general running method supervised by the party constitution, has incorporated their interests, intentions and goals as well as their membership and functions of the different organs, structures and leadership. The concept of membership that constituted the integral element of the leagues is also differently interpreted by various political parties. One must be 18 years and above and a member of the political party to be a member of the ZANU PF Women league. Additional payment of membership fee gives one the privilege to receive membership card of the Women-s League. This implies that a woman is unable to join the league looking forward to joining the party as well. In the given case, ZANU PF Women League is also an entire part of the structure of the party as the Women League of ANC is.

Perceptions of male leaders towards female leaders.

Interview findings reveal that, female do not make good leaders as seen in figure 4.2 The focus group discussion indicates that gender equality is just a rhetoric which the male dominated political leadership in Zimbabwe never believed in. Mujuru was guilty of a supposed desire to take over the seat of the sitting president. All these unbelievable changes of political forces in the ruling party turned women into a sort of pieces in the political mind game of men.

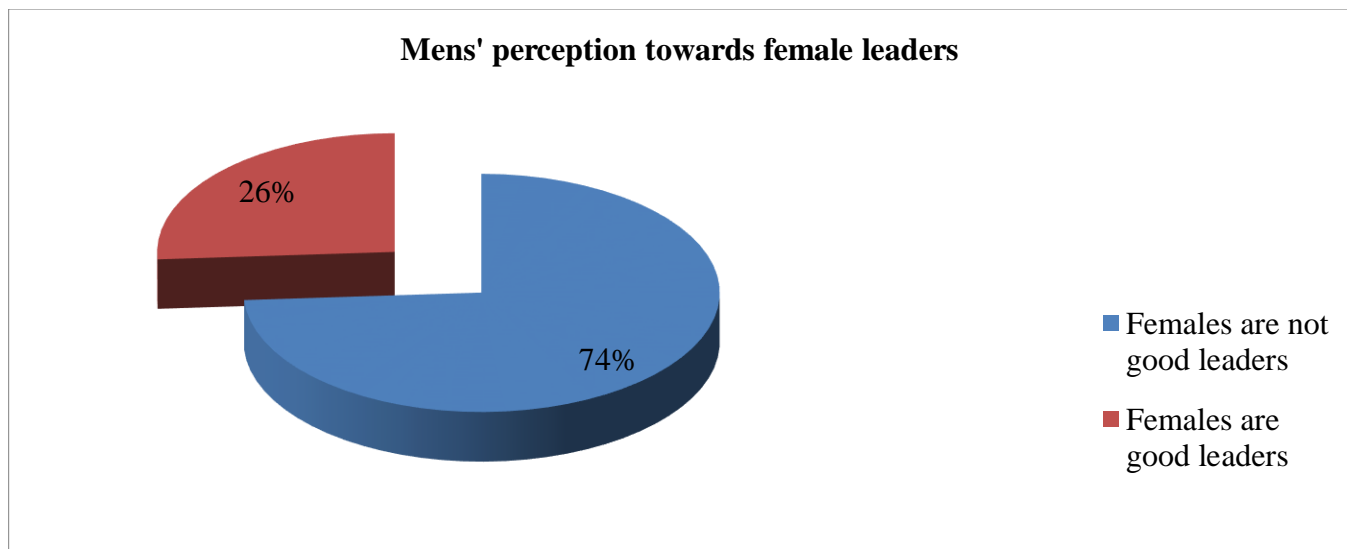


Figure 1.1 Men's perceptions towards female leaders

The participants also support this argument, the imminent time before and after the ZANU-PF 2014 congress has also seen the fast-track rise of Grace Mugabe in the national politics. Nevertheless, similar to other women politicians who preceded her it may be said that her political influence is based on male influence. On the one hand, she was riding on interests of the former President Mugabe in dealing with the dynamics of succession in ZANU-PF and the government.

Challenges Faced by Women Holding Party Leadership Positions.

The interviews made denote that even the Zimbabwe Constitution admits the gender and equal rights between the sexes as a burning factor of our democracy. The manner in which the media has preferred to portray women (and men), remains thus a matter of concern. The further struggle by individuals against trying to speak on gender and women rights is one of the greatest issues that the proponents of women rights confront today in Zimbabwe, and other places, in the world. We think at times that we are square one again.

According to the participants, over the years the gender or women rights movement has been so vocal and hence there has been so much resistance in talking about issues revolving around women and their rights since it attracts backlash. It is very likely that such attitudes also affect how the media in the general sense, editors, and journalists perceive women and gender and how they portray it. The stereotypes have once again popped up depending upon the same things that already existed but in certain cases with a vengeance.

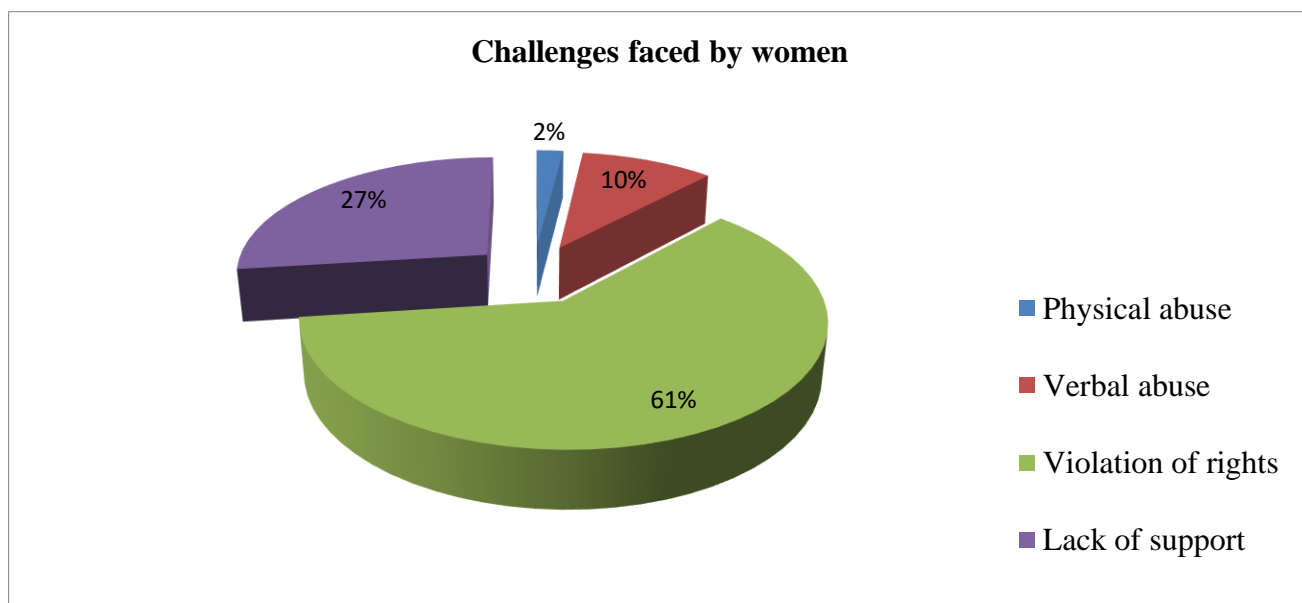


Figure 1.2 Challenges faced by women in party political leadership

The wave of venomous behaviour that women rights movements have had befallen them is an eye opener through which other people in some corners in the media have capitalized on abusing them. The study also found out that the Zimbabwean female parliamentarians do not correspond to any normal stereotypes. They talked when relating to various issues. This comprised the treatment of women in prison, women in decision making process of the country, politically instigated violence against women, citizenship, drafting of the constitution process, guardianship and human rights such as right to health.

This was confirmed by the interviews done with the ZANU PF politburo members who expressed that Zimbabwe had done a great job in dealing with the issue of female representation but it was purely ad hoc. It had to do mainly with morality considerations of political parties in reaction towards the pressures exerted by the constituency of women in political parties. This push received added momentum with the fact that Zimbabwe was present at the Beijing Conference in 1995 and as such, some amount of pressure was exerted during the course of the constitutional process in the late 1990s to have the rights of women enforced more than ever. This was terminated at the time the constitution was not accepted in the 2000 referendum, but the majority of these issues were brought back in 2009-2013 constitutional process together with the passage of the remaining ones in the amended constitution of 2013.

CONCLUSION

Such conclusion is the well thought result of information gained during research. Results have depicted that over the years; Zimbabwe has come a long way in ensuring gender equality. Quota system is one of the laws and policies put by the country to deal with gender imbalances and empowerment of women but the issue is that of the implementation lies. The outcome is such that the well-intended legislations and policies mostly exist on

paper. ZANU PF has gone ahead to achieve a lot in terms of the participation of women in leadership and decision making. Having a female vice president in the country, having the Women League, this provision has put many females in the leadership positions, and the long-time invisible women have been too much visible and consequently the society is now slowly coming to realities; women are just the same good leaders just like men.

Thanks to the ZANU PF, unfortunately, which has set its agenda back by two steps and countered most of its policies as there are now two male vice presidents because of the sucking of Joice Mujuru. Although quota system has brought up the number of women in the parliament, not so many women have been able to secure ministerial rank or even a seat of party leadership; the social change being promised has eluded most of the efforts. In some instances, the appointment of women into senior leadership roles has been considered as practicing a favour on them and appointments have been reduced to only women with male muscles in terms of either husbands or father supporting them and this has led to negative attitude of male leaders to their female counterparts and this is regarded as a major challenge in the political spectrum. Conversely, the activism of women in claiming a seat in politics has rather been on the reactionary front as opposed to being proactive. It is more on getting more women to leadership positions and not on building their confidence to be more vocal in the political arena and amendment of the charters and the constitution of political parties in support of participation in the political arena.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The case of the women politicians deserves a special consideration in the context of the findings made in this research study due to the trend of permanent stagnation which defines the state of women experiencing political leadership in their parties. No efforts would have been made to draw some recommendations, in which case the report would not be complete. Then there are the recommendations based upon the experience and findings of this study.

The extent to which female leaders hold party executive posts

- Expose more women to the way the government works and it boosts women confidence of being in the decision-making office because parties are usually scrutinised at the lower levels of the political ladder.
- To promote affirmation action policy of the public sector board at the island level and the establishment of internship opportunities with island council.
- Establishing cross party women caucuses
- The fact that females who have managed to get to party leadership posts should be able to be mentors of other female counterparts who are interested in gaining political office is vital.

Perceptions of male leaders towards female leaders.

- The way of thinking and thinking patterns regarding the role of women in the social realm should be changed
- The ministries of the government ought to be assisted to resume gender sensitivity programs in schools with role models who are both males and females
- There is also the need of further studies on how party organisations internally make decision.

Challenges faced by women holding party leadership positions

- There is necessity to take gender sensitisation in the curriculum of teachers in schools.
- Encourage communication by the community on how to identify the obstacles to female representation in politics.
- Further study to analyze the position taken by parties to support campaigns of female candidates;
- Mutual cooperation of the government, NGOs, faith-based groups, the media, civil society, and human rights organizations so the society could switch their perceptions and start to rate those who purport to run for political office more on what they represent and what they have accomplished rather than on their gender or how many campaign or party dollars they are able to dispense.

Ways to improve participation of women in political leadership

- Political parties must bring in more women in politics by conducting strategic planning meetings with women leaders on how the political parties can prepare their women candidates.
- Revise/change the political party constitutions/charters to enable women to participate.
- Women who want to become politicians must muster up the determination of the different challenges which accompany politics.
- Mentorship training would be most effective when it touches on the matters of positioning oneself within the political parties, raising campaign funds, engaging the media, dealing with matters relating to the security and so on.

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