

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**



**Socio-cultural Challenges to Women's Participation in  
Leadership Positions in Manicaland**

**By**

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### **Declaration**

I, Judith Mutangirwa, declare that this study, **‘Socio-cultural challenges to women’s participation in leadership positions in Manicaland’** is my own work and has not been previously submitted to any university. The sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

Signature.....

Date .....

## **Approval**

This dissertation entitled **‘Socio-cultural challenges to women’s participation in leadership positions in Manicaland’** by Judith Mutangirwa R136059A, meets regulations governing the award of a Masters Degree in Development Studies at Midlands State University, and is approved by its contribution to knowledge and literal presentation.

Supervisor.....

Date.....

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Charles and our three children, Hazel Kumbirai, Gerald Kundai and Jayden Anotidaishe for believing in me and encouraging me when pressure seemed intractable due to the scholarly and workplace anxieties. Thank you guys for your support and love!

## **Acknowledgements**

I am highly indebted to my supervisor, Mr. C.D. Hahlani for his availability in offering academic guidance and constructive criticism throughout this study. Heartfelt thanks also go to my colleagues at work who understood the academic pressure that I was going through and offered the necessary support and encouragement. I also wish to acknowledge the encouragement from my classmates at Midlands State University who provided the much-needed humour and scholarly insight each time I felt the going tough. Last but not least, I wish to thank the study participants that took time off their busy schedules to accommodate me for the purposes of data collection, and for sharing their rich personal experiences with me.



## **Abstract**

*This study is a qualitative study which explored the experiences of female leaders in Manicaland Province in an attempt to establish challenges related their socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society that upholds male values, and this is the context female leaders have to operate in and excel. There are cultural and societal expectations that have an impact on female leaders considering that cultural values give them a subordinate position while men are the natural leaders (Hlatywayo & Hlatywayo, 2014). The study purposively sampled thirteen women that occupied provincial level positions in Manicaland for in-depth interviews. Information from in-depth interviews was complemented with data generated from three FGDs with a group of women in college as well as ordinary women. The study found that while there are supportive international conventions and national protocols guiding gender issues, women in Zimbabwe are marginalized by in key decision making positions through practice, attitudes and gender stereotypes that are deeply entrenched in the country's traditional culture. Despite the efforts of government and civil society in mobilizing and conscientising women and men on gender issues, the findings of this research suggest that patriarchy is still deeply entrenched in the socialization process. The research shows that the early socialization process that only prepared girls for marriage and motherhood has had such a huge impact in women's adult life, where they think twice before they venture into leadership because of low self-esteem and fear of judgmental attitudes from their communities. Or if they find themselves in leadership, they come back home to a paranoid husband with a wounded ego who feels threatened by the success of his wife. This study argues that unless these patriarchal systems are dismantled, achieving gender equality in key decision making will be a long and winding process.*

# **CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter identifies the pertinent issues underlying the research problem, such as the context in which the problem occurs, whom it affects and the negative impact of the problem. The chapter also identifies the theoretical framework and provides a brief synopsis of the literature review that will be elaborated in chapter two.

Gender equality has always been visible in the development discourse as reflected in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) where parties pledged to promote gender equality and women empowerment by 2015. The sequel to the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have maintained the momentum by keeping the gender question on the agenda where the parties look forward to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. By keeping the gender equality question high on the development discourse agenda, the world leaders acknowledge that women play a central role in tackling poverty, hence the need to address challenges that marginalize them from the main development arena and reduce them to mere spectators. The former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan observed that gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but it is a precondition for poverty reduction, sustainable development and an essential building block for good governance. However, gender equality in leadership still remains a pipedream despite the proliferation of various global, regional and national legal instruments promoting gender equality. Female representation might somewhat

have improved in key decision making positions, many women continue to face challenges in dispensing their leadership responsibilities (Maseko, 2013).

In Africa, women constitute about half of the total population but previous studies have indicated that women continue to be socially, politically, economically and culturally marginalized. African tradition, culture and religion have been found to have a direct impact on men and women relations, thereby entrenching male domination at different levels of leadership. Patriarchy has been found to justify the subordination of women in both the private and public sphere (Salaam, 2003). This study shall enunciate these various challenges that are faced by women in leadership, compromising their capacity to dispense their duties.

In Zimbabwe, women constitute 52% of the population, but there are discrepancies in terms of leadership which is characterized by male domination (Africa Gender Equality Index, 2015). Parents' attitudes towards the education of the girl child have shifted for the better with the passage of time in Zimbabwe, but many women with high educational qualifications still occupy less challenging positions in terms of management and key decision making (Mapolisa and Madziyire, 2012). It is this stark inequality in terms of female leadership that has motivated this study; which focuses on female leadership at Provincial level in the politics and government's public departments, educational and church institutions. The study seeks to endorse or contest this notion that female leadership faces a lot of challenges in getting into positions of authority and exercising their authority for those few that would have broken into the male dominated world of leadership. This is despite a strong argument that empowering African women is key to

enabling African societies to realize their developmental potential (African Gender Equality Index, 2015).

There have been global, regional and national legal statutes and policy commitments that are meant to ensure women's participation in key decision making positions, but the Global Gender Gap Index (2014) reports that glaring gender inequalities still exist in many parts of the world. Despite an improvement in terms of education, healthcare, employment and political empowerment, gender inequality is still prevalent throughout the world. The Convention for Affirmative action and the quota systems have helped women to break challenges to participation, but challenges still exist across different societies that block women from realizing their full potential in the public sphere. Women continue to suffer from occupational discrimination in their workplaces and this somehow reinforces existing stereotypes of women's lack of capacity to perform as top level managers in the public sphere (Maseko, 2013). This study therefore aims to elucidate the challenges that are faced by women in key decision-making positions today.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

There have been significant breakthroughs for women in leadership around the world in terms of achieving equality in representation, but structural, institutional and cultural challenges are still major obstacles in achieving gender equality around the world (Norris, et al., 2008). This sad scenario is regardless of the commitment of 181 states that have to date ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW). There have been follow up conventions too! The United Nations' (UN) Beijing Platform of Action

considers as top priority sharing of power and decision making at all levels by men and women (Women Watch, 2000).

Although the number of women in leadership has increased, there is still low representation in key decision-making positions because of the deep-rooted belief in male supremacy and the historical perception that men make better leaders than women, and this belief is still prevalent even today (Kiamba, 2008, Longwe, 2014). Societal conventions still perceive leadership as a male domain and this the set up that is contested by activists who argue that leadership can be learned. As a result of this stereotyping, there is skepticism and doubt when women are in leadership positions, although research has shown that such fears are baseless since women performed better as managers than men because they were found to be open, warm, more democratic, good listeners and encouraged participation; traits that are overlooked and viewed as weaknesses. Studies have shown that this hostility has made it difficult for women to access and stay in key decision-making positions (Kiamba, 2008).

Many institutions who have managed to propel women into positions of leadership, did so through implementation of employment equity policies and affirmative action, and this has somehow worked against female leaders as they are viewed as having been “let in” hence even the most capable woman leader is viewed with suspicion and their work is no stroll in the park (Moutlana, 2001).

At Southern Africa level, member states have committed to addressing gender inequality by instituting a number of instruments that agitate for women participation in leadership. The

Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development is one such instrument that challenges parties to put in place affirmative action measures to eliminate challenges and facilitate women's meaningful participation in all spheres of life. Zimbabwe is a signatory to these international and regional gender instruments and the country has responded by instituting policies such as The National Gender Policy (2013-2017), and putting up structures such as the Ministry of women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, to address gender inequality. However, the level of women's participation in politics and other key decision making positions remains of major concern in Zimbabwe. Studies have shown that women in leadership suffer dilemmas related to their offices and they do not enjoy being in those powerful positions. Other women are reported to already shy away from the leadership due to the stigma that is associated with women in leadership. They have negative tags of immoral behaviour attached to them and the environment they work is generally hostile (Maposa *et al.*, 2013). This research shall document the experiences of women leaders in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe, as well as perceptions of ordinary women on socio-cultural challenges to women's upward growth. There are several women who hold influential positions in both the private and the public sector, and their stories shall refute or consolidate the argument that women continue to be frustrated out of the leadership space by the patriarchal attitudes that deliberately create a hostile institutional environment.

### **1.2.1 Gender inequality in leadership: A Global Perspective**

Globally, a lot has been done to ensure that women participate at different levels of governance and key decision making positions, but they still remain underrepresented in positions of authority and leadership as noted by De La Rey in Maseko (2013). The marginalisation of

women is not only peculiar to the developing world, but it is a universal phenomenon as observed Igbuzor in the Gender Index, and the following table shows that even the world's most advanced democracies have had to grapple with gender inequality. A cursory look at the electoral issues below show that women have historically been marginalized, in all parts of the world and it is only recent that female leaders in government have been embraced (Global Gender Gap Report, 2014).

<b>Country</b>	<b>Male Universal Suffrage</b>	<b>Female Universal Suffrage</b>
Australia	1903	1908
Canada	1915/1918	1920
France	1860/71	1946
Great Britain	1877	1928
Italy	1925	1946
Sweden	1423	1921
Portugal	1911	1974
Japan	1918/19	1947
Nigeria	1922	1979

***Source: Otive Igbuzor, Redefining Winning: Women's Emergence in Political Leadership Positions.***

A leading international organisation, Grant Thornton (2015) argues that there has been little global progress in terms of women occupying senior positions since 2004 when the organisation started tracking gender diversity in leadership. The graph below summarises their observations:

<b>Year</b>	<b>% Women in management positions</b>
2004	19%
2007	24%
2009	24%
2011	20%
2012	21%
2013	24%
2014	24%
2015	22%

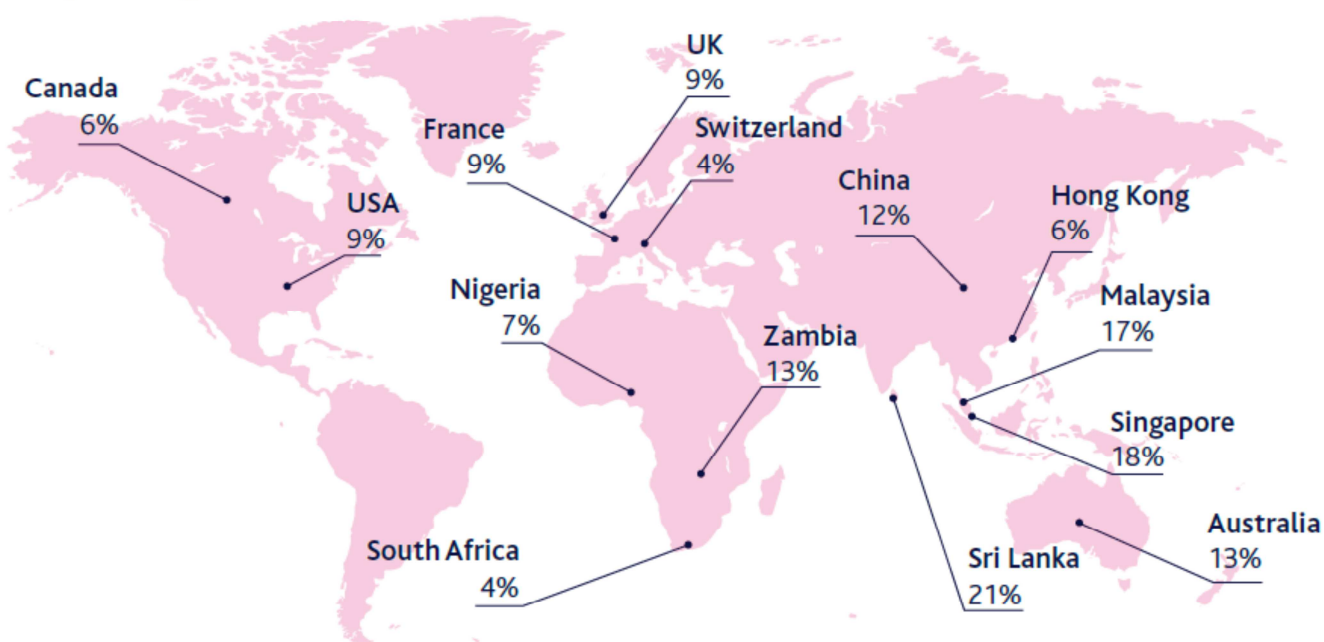
*Source: Grant Thornton International Business Report (2015)*

It is not only in governance that women are sidelined, but worldwide they still hold secondary positions and are still underutilized in the labour market and continue to be a wasted resource, and challenges to women’s advancement still linger (Maseko, 2013). In the United States, the Civil Rights Act (1964) opened opportunities to increase women’s representation in male dominated occupations, yet advancement into top-level management has been pretty slow (Nelson & Michie, 2004). For example, an assessment of Fortune 1500 companies in 2000



showed that 93% managerial positions were held by men (Catalyst, 2000). The graphic below provides insight into the status of women in the public sector, globally:

**The percentage of CIMA fellows\* that are women in selected countries**



\*CIMA fellows are members with considerable leadership experience.

**Source: World Congress of Accountants (2010)**

Although there is a dearth of information regarding statistics in the private sector, the global picture portrayed here by the Chartered Institutes of Management Accountants (CIMA) shows that women have barely made it into leadership. They are yet to negotiate structural and institutional challenges in order to find their space in the male dominated world of leadership.

The International Labour Organisation has observed that women's overall share of the public and private sector management positions was between 20 and 40%, a figure that is considered very

low considering overall share in employment (Platform for Action). In China, equality remains a pipedream as women still face major challenges in negotiating the managerial hierarchy (Cooke Fang, 2004). China is found to be unique in that women do find the right track to a management career in terms of education and exposure, but they were found to be not promoted as fast or as frequently as men, and this has been attributed to China's feudal traditional system that prevents women from venturing into male dominated spheres (Cooke Fang, 2004). Omoye (2012) also posits that there is a general belief that marginalization of women and exclusion of their interests in the development paradigms is reinforced by patriarchy, poverty, illiteracy, religious and cultural norms and values, hence this research focused on validating these views with regards to women in Manicaland Province. However, studies concur that there is insufficient information on the progress that has been made so far hence the added value of this research. Findings from a study in Bangladesh also show that challenges still exist for women to function effectively because their participation is not yet well supported by their male colleagues (Platform for Action).

Various theories of socialization have for a long time underscored sex roles particularly in traditional societies. This has gone on to shape society's attitude towards women and to define limits as to the capacity of women thereby limiting them to the private sphere. These attitudes are acquired in the early years of life through various agencies such as the family, and the community (Norris, et al., 2008).

In a World Values Survey conducted between 1995-2005, it was noted that developing societies with strong traditional attitudes such as North and West Africa tended to have strong preferences for male leadership, and this would probably explain why women that would have broken the

glass ceiling into the key decision making positions face antagonism and challenges in discharging their duties (Norris et al., 2008). However, some scholars have noted in previous research that men and women in African communities occupy different leadership positions that are culturally determined. As such, continued reference to culture and religion as a basis for gender inequality in leadership is just but a scapegoat for insecure individuals who may feel threatened by female leadership (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui, 2010).

Other scholars also weigh in with evidence on this debate on the culture inhibiting female empowerment. In Zimbabwe, formal leadership has largely been male-dominated with the belief that men made better leaders since they were stronger than women, and they headed families (Dodo, 2013). The author however, notes that these attitudes are changing; and this study provided some insight into the magnitude of this change in attitude if at all it exists. This study added some evidence to this existing body of knowledge, whether Zimbabwe's socio-cultural values and practices are obstacles to women's participation in leadership in the public sphere.

### **1.2.2 Gender Inequality: A Regional Perspective**

While the North has generally made huge strides in terms of female representation, African governments are largely patriarchal and are characterised by discriminatory laws which restrict women to the domestic sphere (Longwe 2002). The author displays exasperation with African governments that she accuses of only paying lip-service to the Beijing Platform for Action. Despite the significant progress made within the SADC region in the last 20 years, gender inequality is still prevalent with regards to male and female representation in decision making positions in both the private and public sector. The SADC Protocol on Gender was targeting 50-

50 representation in political and decision making positions by 2015, but performance is mixed across the region and gender parity remains a major challenge in the region (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). In Zimbabwe, women constitute less than 30% (25.8%) in terms of parliamentary representation, and the country is ranked 10 out of the 15 SADC members in terms of gender parity in parliament and other key decision making positions (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). There is a dearth of information with regards to women participation in the private sector and parastatals in Zimbabwe (Gender Links Regional Barometer Report, 2009), but the situation is not likely to be a major departure from the global perspective where women representation hovers around the 30% threshold.

The SADC Gender Monitor also notes a trend which the report describes as alarming; the feminization of deputy positions which may give the impression of shared power, yet women have limited power and control in those positions. The report argues that women make up more than half of the world's population, hence they should have the right to half of the key decision making positions to fulfill self-representation and ensure articulation of women's issues. Studies have shown that women inclusion in power adds value to specific policies to be addressed as has been the case with the Scandinavian countries (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). The five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) are the world leaders in gender equality (Niskanen, 2011).

In relation to feminisation of deputy positions phenomenon, researchers have also noted that women in management have risen largely due to the retitling of positions in some large organisations. Miller in Maseko (2013) aptly names this trick the "glorified secretary hypothesis" which has resulted in secretaries being called administrative assistant thereby earning them a

managerial grade in the United States (US). In reality, these positions are not influential in the decision making process. Maseko, (2013) also argues that women that occasionally serve as party executives have been roped in as exofficio members hence they do not yield any significant power to make decisions. This study also identifies the existence of such practices that show lack of genuine commitment to women's participation in the decision making process.

Studies have shown that the region has also performed below par on the education and academic arena where girls numbers fall with higher education, hence denying them access to the citadel of learning and transformation (Maseko, 2013).

### **1.2.3 The Gender Legal Framework**

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international bill of rights for women. It was adopted for signature and ratification in 1979 and it came into force in 1981, and Zimbabwe went on to ratify the convention in 1991, but it is yet to be domesticated into law, a development that is interpreted by feminists to imply lack of commitment to promoting gender equality in Zimbabwe (CEDAW Zimbabwe Report, 2012).

CEDAW defines discrimination against women as :

....any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social,

cultural, civil or any other field (CEDAW, Article 1)

Article 3 of the convention requires all signatory states to take appropriate measures including legal reform, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men (CEDAW, Article 3).

This qualitative study attempted to explore the socio-cultural challenges that are faced by women in attaining key leadership positions after CEDAW and other legal frameworks have paved the way for the promotion of gender equality. CEDAW was the first powerful legal framework to fight gender injustice adopted by the UN in 1979, but 37 years down the line, the world is still falling short in terms of gender equality, and Zimbabwe is no exception (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). Zimbabwe has been criticised for its half-hearted efforts in addressing gender equality as noted in the CEDAW Zimbabwe Report (2012). The country was alerted of its insufficient progress in achieving gender equality in employment, participation in political and public life and other areas where women are under-represented and disadvantaged.

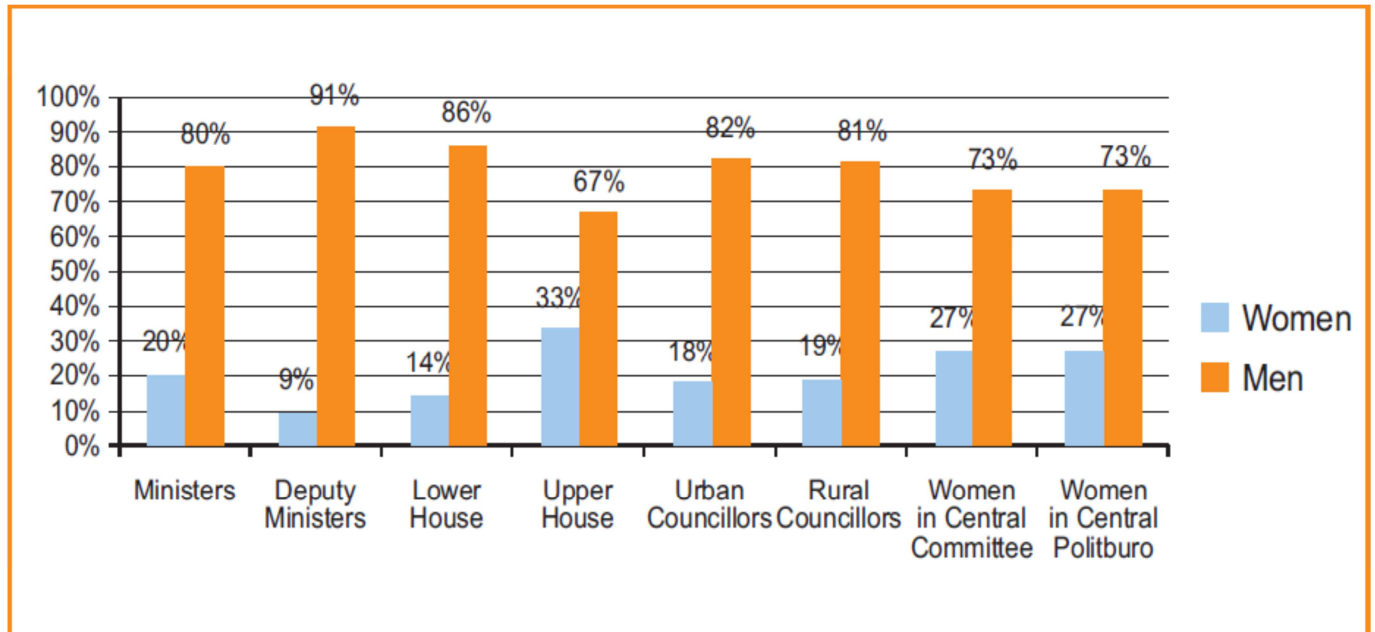
The report on Zimbabwe was also concerned about the country's seemingly lack of action to address the persisting harmful traditional norms and practices, patriarchal attitudes and deep-seated stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men. The report argued that such practices perpetuated discrimination against women in areas such as education, public life and decision making hence the need to eliminate these stereotypes and harmful practices. This study therefore, sought to interrogate the disconnect that exists that works as a barrier to gender equality in the face of supportive legal conventions such as CEDAW. This study attempted to find answers by

documenting the lived experiences of female leaders and other ordinary women on the socio-cultural challenges that block women's advancement into leadership, even though the delegation to the United Nations (UN) failed to provide answers and gave vague answers when quizzed on the lack of fair representation in the country (CEDAW Zimbabwe Report, 2012).

#### **1.2.4 Zimbabwe Country Analysis**

While the country has done well in terms of legislative reform, there are outstanding principal areas that need attention in order to address gender inequality in the country. The country has a range of legislative measures such as the National gender Protocol (2013-2017), The Gender Implementation Strategy, but it has been found wanting in terms of female participation in political and public life. The CEDAW Report on Zimbabwe (2012) argues that while the country has reached a 30% female representation in ambassadorial posts, that level of progress is yet to be seen in the public and professional areas of women such as the judiciary, local government and the private sector. The UN Committee noted that there are systematic challenges such as negative cultural attitudes that impede women's equal participation in the public life. As such, Zimbabwe has been challenged to accelerate equal representation in key decision making positions by, among other strategies, training on gender equality so that traditional and religious leaders appreciate the equal and democratic participation of women in the development discourse (CEDAW Report, 2012).

## Political Positions By Gender in Zimbabwe



*Source: UN Country Analysis Report for Zimbabwe (2010)*

The graph above shows the stark realities that characterise Zimbabwe's political landscape. The average female representation in politics stands at 21%, far below the 50:50 representation reflected in the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013. The 2013 elections did not usher in a new era in terms of female representation; Zimbabwe still operates below the minimum 30% target set out in the National Protocol on Gender. The gender inequality is glaring and there ought to be empirical evidence on what presents as challenges that inhibit female participation in politics and other key decision making positions.

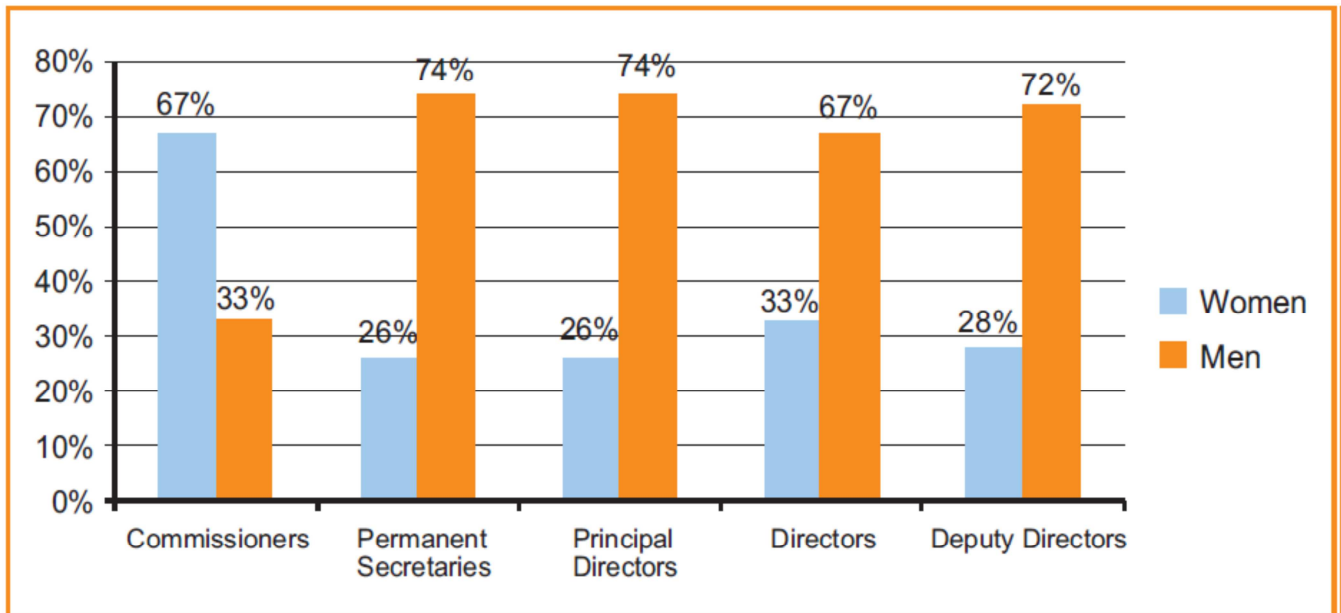
## Public Sector Compositions By Gender

The graph below shows female-male representation within the public sector in Zimbabwe. Apart from the Commissioners where women have 67% representation, the rest of the areas average 28% far below the 50:50 target set out in the National Gender Policy (2013-2017). The Commissioners are excelling in terms of female representation perhaps because they are



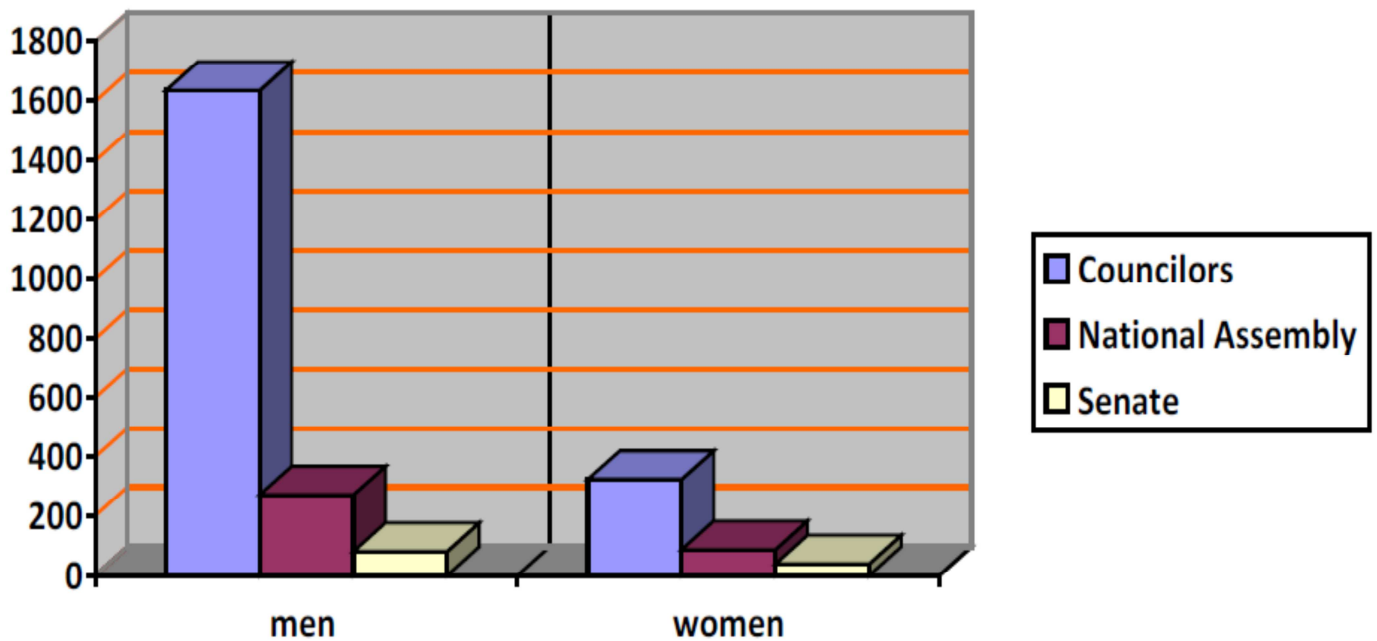
specified in the Constitution of Zimbabwe that at least half of the commissioners should be women whereas other areas are silent and are just bundled up together in a statement that says Zimbabwe must take measures to ensure that both genders are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level.” (Article 17). Zimbabwe has failed to fulfill its constitutional mandate as far as equal representation is concerned, hence the need to find out more on why men continue to dominate the leadership arena.

### ***Female Representation in the Public Service***



*Source: UN Country Analysis Report for Zimbabwe (2010)*

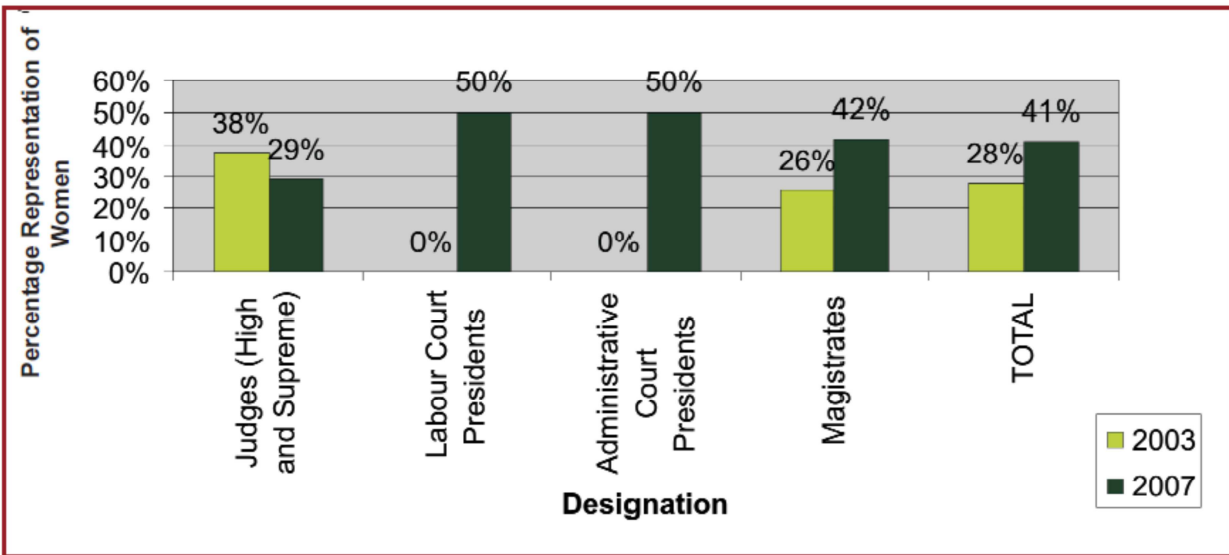
***Gender Composition in Local Government, National Assembly and The Senate.***



***Source: USAID Gender Analysis Report, 2014***

This graph shows the distribution of female leaders in local government, National assembly and the senate. Of particular interest is the local government which shows that even at the grassroots decision making level, women are excluded and the pattern continues right up to high level public office. This domination by men implies that patriarchal tendencies run through the institutions and culminate in gender prejudices against women.

### *Trends: Women in the Judiciary (2003-2007)*



*Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)*

This graph shows unequal appointment of women and men in the judiciary; higher numbers of women are only seen in the lower courts while the high court and the Supreme Court are dominated by men. This scenario exists despite having qualified women who could take up these posts, but it shows that Zimbabwean patriarchal perceptions are not ready for female leadership in such areas as the judiciary.

### **Women in the Uniformed Forces in Zimbabwe**

The four graphs below show the distribution of female leadership in the defence forces and the police in Zimbabwe. There is low representation of women, and the women are conspicuous with their absence in the very top positions. The very top positions are appointed by the President with guidance from commissions within the sectors (Zimbabwe Report on CEDAW, 2009). The distribution pattern validates the argument that there is no political will to achieve gender equality in leadership, and the Zimbabwean society is not ready to shed powerful posts into the hands of women as they feel that these are areas women could not handle (Kwinjeh, 2010). The

patriarchal structures will pacify women with lower-level positions that do not involve any significant decision-making, but it is done only for cosmetic purposes. However, the report also notes the challenges that bedevil married women who were reportedly turning down promotion that came with geographical movements away from their families. While this may be true, the same cannot be said about the absence of female commissioners who would normally be based in the capital, and movements to the capital would rarely be turned down. This leaves the Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces with a challenge to ensure that there is equality at the level of commissioners if indeed there is political commitment to gender equality.

### ***Women Leaders in the Zimbabwe National Army***

RANK	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
Lieutenant General	0
Major General	0
Brigadier General	0
Colonel	6.6
Lieutenant Colonel	5.9
Major	3.8
Captain	2.7
Lieutenant	17.0

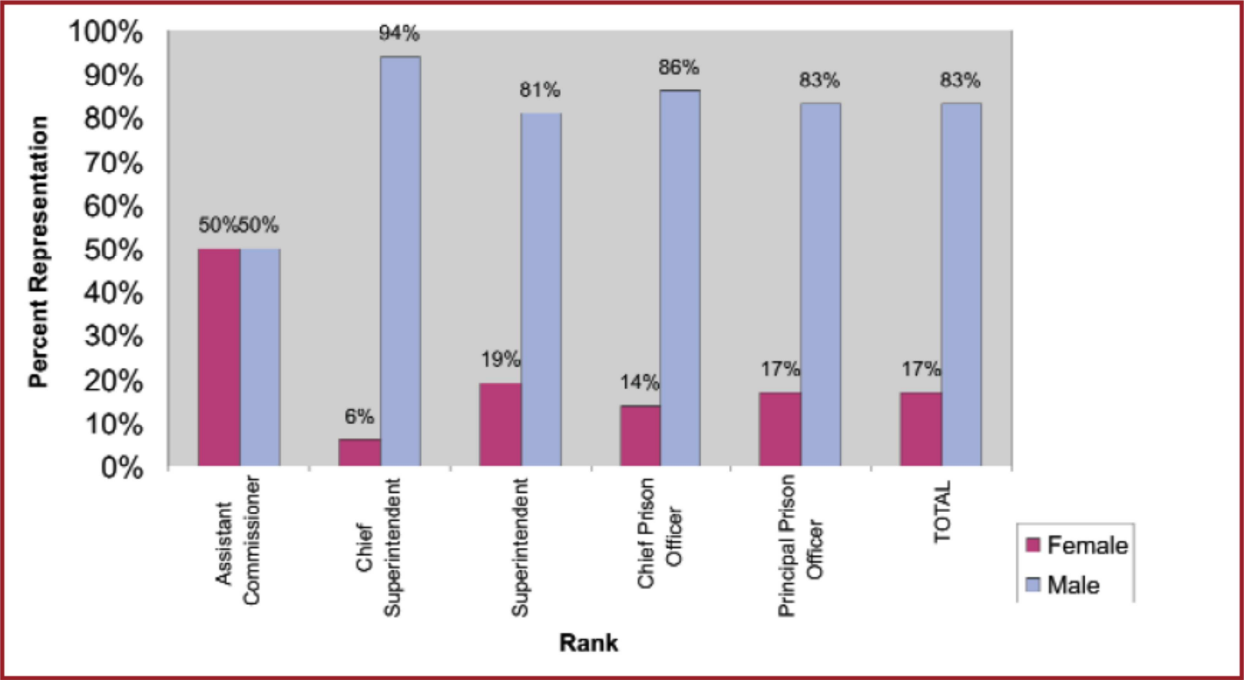
*Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)*

### ***Women in the Airforce of Zimbabwe***

RANK	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
Air Marshal	0
Air Vice Marshal	0
Air Commodore	0
Group Captain	4.76
Wing commander	12.50
Squadron Leader	8.57
Flight Lieutenant	16.03

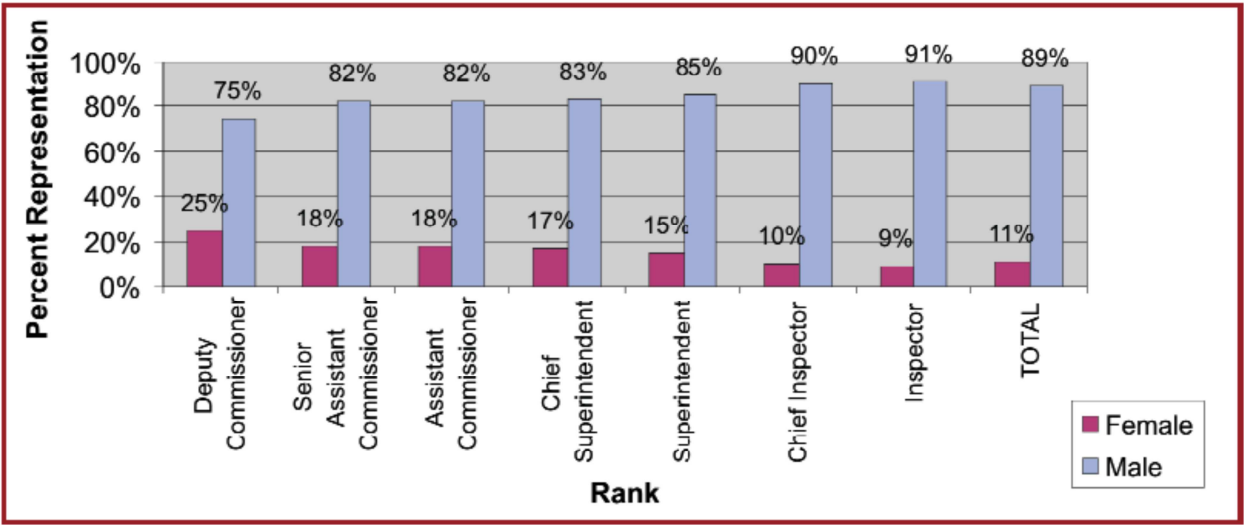
*Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)*

**Women in the Prison Services**



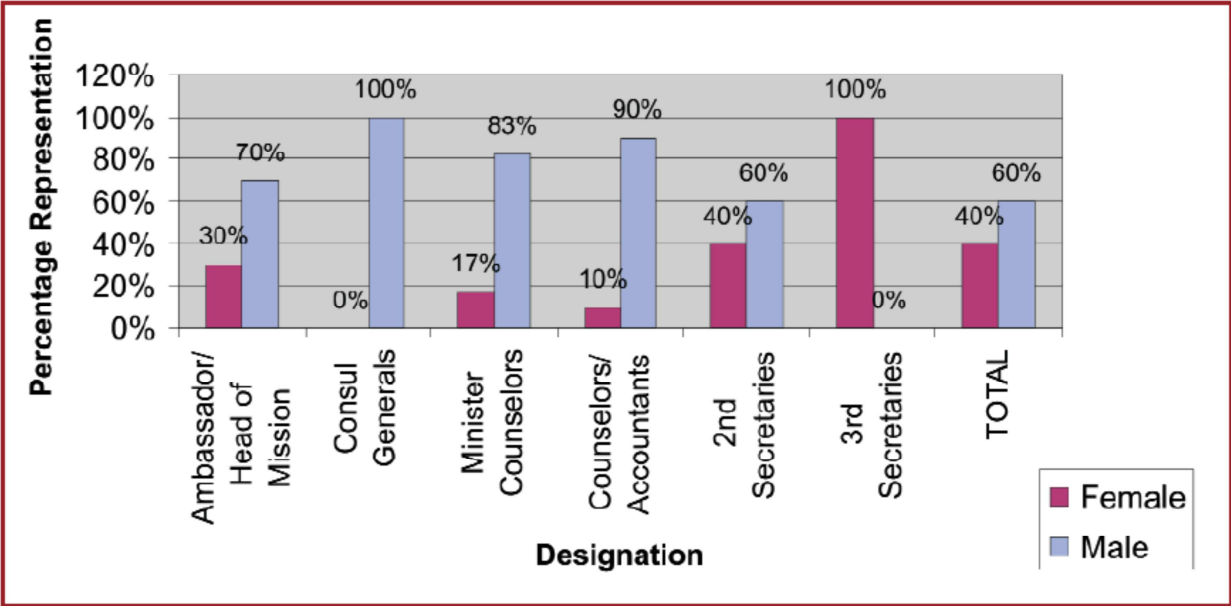
Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)

**Women in the Zimbabwe Republic Police**



Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)

**Women in Diplomatic Missions**



*Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)*

Just like other areas in Zimbabwe, female representation is low in the diplomatic service as shown by the above graph. Although no explanation is provided, it can be inferred that the main challenge still remains patriarchy and the stereotypical beliefs that women cannot take up challenging leadership positions. While marriage and family remain serious challenges (Mapolisa & Madziyire 2012), diplomatic missions are known for catering for family and spousal support; hence it is expected to see improved numbers in this sector.

**1.2.5 Why agitate for female representation?**

Eckmann (2005) presents a logical argument for inclusivity with regards to leadership. The author posits that men and women have different leadership styles; men are competitive and they

focus on themselves, while women are more inclusive and collaborative, hence women stand to benefit with leadership of inclusion as their interests will be represented.

Men are criticised for leading as if their subjects were blind by exercising indiscriminate command and control style which is not well received in female dominated settings. Women were found to be more democratic and inclusive in their approach, and these studies indicate that this style works better in female-oriented settings (IAAP, 2009, Eckmann, 2005, Eagly and Jonson, 1990). As such, considering that the women constitute more than half of the world's population, there is every reason to achieve fair representation in the socio-political and economic spheres, hence the motivation of this study to examine socio-cultural challenges that block women from achieving gender parity.

A country will not pay attention to gender relations at its own peril as it runs the risk of lop-sided development (Mudeka lecture notes, n.d). Genuine involvement of women enables people to take charge of their own lives and escape poverty, and participation of women in leadership is one key way of ensuring that women participate in the development discourse.

This study firmly believes in the views of Michelle Bachelet (Former Under-Secretary and Executive Director of UN Women) and Amartya Sen in (De Silva de Alwis, 2013):

“By making full use of half the world's intelligence – the intelligence of women – we improve our chances of finding real and lasting solutions to the challenges that confront us.” (Michelle Bachelet).

“Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic, and social participation and leadership of women.” (Amartya Sen).

This study believes in the involvement of women in decision making, and that this inclusivity will indeed make a difference to mankind. But for as long as more than half of the world’s population is made to only play the role of cheer-leader as dictated by culture, the world will be shooting itself in the foot.

### **1.2.6 A Brief History on the Role of Women in Zimbabwe**

Women’s participation in leadership needs to be supported by a vibrant women’s movement, but in Zimbabwe, women have failed to thrive due to historical factors and the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society (Kwinjeh, 2010). A cursory glance at Zimbabwe’s history in relation to the role of women shows that gender inequality is not only a result of socio-cultural factors, but also a result of the country’s colonial history.

#### ***Pre-colonial Zimbabwe***

Just like many pre-colonial African states, the role of women and girls in pre-colonial Zimbabwe was to till the family land, care for children, maintain the homestead and tend to their husbands. They did not participate in the community decision making systems, which role was played by the chief and a council of elders which were exclusively male dominated (Kariuki, 2010). This shows the origins and magnitude of challenges of gender inequality in Zimbabwe; which background facilitates understanding of the challenge and mapping of strategies to address it.



## ***Colonial Zimbabwe***

Under colonial law, women were not expected to participate outside the home (Zvobgo in Rutoro, 2012). The education system was characterised by a strong colour and gender band, and this would become one of the daunting tasks for government at independence; to abolish these inequalities.

Kwinjeh (2010) also observes that under colonial rule, there was a silent conspiracy between white males and black males to oppress black women as the white Victorian principles of the subservient and domestically productive woman found resonance with the traditional African values. The author argues that the complicity of black and white patriarchy resulted in the formulation of legal systems that oppressed women and perpetuated male supremacy.

These debates show that the origins of Zimbabwe's gender disparities are deeply rooted in the country's colonial history. Attempts to address gender inequalities should, therefore, also focus on undoing the damage of the colonial past.

## ***Post-Colonial Zimbabwe***

Feminist critics argue that women who fought in Zimbabwe's revolution thought gender equality would be certain, but their status actually fell as male nationalist leaders soon engaged in competition for political power and accumulation of wealth. Women were soon relegated to be wives, mothers or mistresses of the emerging ruling elite as there was an expectation to preserve tradition (Chogugudza in Kwinjeh 2010). Rutoro (2012) argues that after independence, the Zimbabwe government actively sought to address gender disparities such as sex discrimination

in education as was reflected in its election manifesto of 1980. The country has also signed various conventions on the rights of women such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, CEDAW and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality.

However, despite having mechanisms to address gender inequality in leadership and other areas, the country is still struggling to reach its target; research shows that only a small number of elite women have been able to attain senior management positions in Zimbabwe despite Zimbabwean women having penetrated the workforce (Makombe and Geroy in Rutoro, 2012). Women make up only 21% of Legislators, senior officials and managers in the country although 85% of them take part in labour-force participation (The Global Gender Report, 2014). This shows that the country is moving slowly in achieving gender parity despite signing, ratifying and domesticating various conventions and having quota systems in place. Women in Zimbabwe play a pivotal role within their communities but their voices are largely not heard despite having in place legal instruments to address women's right to participate in decision making. Women in Zimbabwe are still lagging behind and are yet to achieve gender equality in decision making ((Dodo, 2013).

Zimbabwe has been party to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Discrimination (2010) which enunciated that by 2015, 50% of decision making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women. The country also has a National Gender Machinery, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWGCD) which is mandated to execute and monitor gender related policies such as the National Gender Policy. Despite having these legal statutes in place, women in leadership in Zimbabwe continue to face challenges in the implementation of their leadership role. Maseko (2013) notes that women in leadership positions face the challenge of double workloads due to the patriarchal nature of societies that they come from; their

domestic responsibility heavily weighs them down in addition to the workplace responsibilities. Maseko (2013) also noted that there is a belief among men that women lack the requisite leadership skills, and the socialization process has not adequately prepared them for the role. Women in leadership themselves were reported to argue that they are professionally isolated and are not integrated into male leadership structures. This shows that the challenges that are faced by women exist at different levels, ranging from deeply rooted traditional values to the workplace, and this study seeks to tell the stories of these women.

This means there is more to the problem hence the focus of this research to articulate socio-cultural challenges since institutional obstacles have somehow been addressed through legal reform and quota systems.

### **1.2.7 Impact of National Gender Machineries (NGMs)**

Apparently, the national gender machineries (NGMs) in Africa have been criticised for failing to promote gender equality in the region. National gender machineries represent the institutionalization of the gender response, and their main task is to ensure gender perspectives in policy and legislation (Mama, 2000). These NGMs have been criticized for being dysfunctional as they are under-resourced, fail to maintain meaningful links with civil society that agitates for gender equality, and they have no real influence on the mainstream policy-making process on issues that affect women. Further criticism has also emanated from their seeming docility in accepting the state's gender agenda which did not really benefit women as it is criticized for its haphazardness (Gouws, 2008). Some previous studies are pessimistic that the NGMs in Africa will become allies for women in leadership, and they hint that women in key-decision making

positions will have to find other ways of challenging patriarchal institutional cultures (Dodo, 2013).

This study takes a cursory look at Zimbabwe's NGM to find out whether they are playing any significant role in spearheading women's issues as a matter of national priority, and whether female leadership gets any form of support in terms of the challenges they face in the male dominated field leadership.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The involvement of women in key decision making positions is integral to development as it presents an opportunity for addressing women's practical and strategic gender needs, yet there is unequal representation in key decision making positions. Women's effective participation in key decision making is pivotal in the transformation of lives as posited by scholars of "smart economics." Studies have shown that women tend to give priority to social problems such as social security and healthcare issues, thus their involvement in key decision making positions would strengthen key developmental priorities which men would not normally put high on the development agenda. This research examines the socio-cultural challenges that are encountered by women to rise up the politico-socio-economic ladder of leadership, despite them making up the majority of the world's population. Feminists argue that apart from facing challenges in accessing the key decision making space, those that manage to break the glass ceiling and make it into management positions remain discriminated against in the workplace, and are elbowed out of leadership despite having various pieces of legislation in place to support women empowerment. This study seeks to verify and authenticate this outcry by gender equality activists

by examining the nature of socio-cultural challenges women face in rising up the leadership ladder and in dispensing their management mandate.

## **1.4 Research Aim and Objectives**

### ***Aim***

The aim of this research was to interrogate the socio-cultural challenges that are faced by women in positions of leadership within Manicaland; that lead to gender inequality and discrimination. Previous studies have indicated that there are certain dilemmas that are rooted in socio-cultural beliefs that work as obstacles for women in key-decision making positions, so this research seeks to refute or validate this position.

### ***Objectives***

1. To determine the extent to which women occupy leadership positions in Manicaland Province.
2. To assess challenges to women's participation in leadership positions in Manicaland Province.
3. To identify measures that can be adopted to address challenges that are faced by women in leadership.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How far do women occupy leadership positions in Manicaland Province?

2. What are the challenges that are faced by women in participation in leadership positions?
3. What measures can be put in place to address challenges that are faced by women in their quest to participate in leadership?

## **1.6 Justification of the Study**

This research is motivated by the belief that countries and companies would thrive if women were educated and engaged as significant pillars in the development discourse. The study, therefore, informs policy makers on existing socio-cultural challenges so that they strengthen affirmative action and initiate strategies that could bridge the gap between men and women in leadership in order to harness this underutilized resource.

Furthermore, the findings of this research inform Women's organisations that agitate for, and articulate women's needs and interests on existing gender inequalities in terms of leadership and this forms the basis for their advocacy agenda. Relevant national gender machinery such as the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development will also be made aware of existing challenges, and they will re-strategise on their implementation of gender programmes at national and community level. Ordinary communities also stand to benefit from this research since it aims to strengthen female participation which is believed to contribute to female empowerment and development.

## **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The research was qualitative in nature; hence it took considerable time to collect and analyse data. Therefore, time constraints somehow affected the size of the sample, although the vision

was to continue data collection until new data no longer reflected insight into the research question. Some women's organisations such as Msasa Project that were targeted for data collection were not resident in the area of study; hence the researcher conducted the in-depth interviews over the phone with representatives of these organisations.

This study used purposive sampling to recruit study participants. As a result, the research findings cannot be generalized to the wider population of women in leadership. However, even though the results cannot be generalized to other contexts because of socio-cultural diversity and difference, the material can still have relevance in terms of informing on socio-cultural challenges to female leadership in traditional male-dominated societies. Some leaders that had been targeted for in-depth interviews were not available but this did not affect the outcomes of the study since the ones that gave interviews provided rich data that gave a comprehensive picture as far as the research problem was concerned.

Furthermore, statistical data could not be obtained due to bureaucratic procedures, but again, the outcome of the study was not jeopardized. Secondary statistical data could still be obtained from literature and they provided a snapshot view of the extent of female leadership in Manicaland, which showed a huge gap in terms inclusivity.

There are different dimensions of leadership, socio, political, institutional and economic; this research examined the first three due to the limited time available to carry out the study.

## **1.8 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations help to ensure that researchers explicitly consider the needs and concerns of the study participants (Ellis & Levy, 2009). As such, this research respected the dignity of the women in leadership by doing individual in-depth interviews while protecting their identity through use of codes so that they did not risk receiving a backlash upon the publishing of this study. However, this study is highly unlikely to bring harm to the study participants. The participants' informed consent to take part in the study was sought and they were asked to sign an informed consent form after the nature of the study and objectives were explained to them.

## **1.9 Structure of Dissertation**

This dissertation is structured in the conventional social science format.

Chapter One consists of the introduction, the background to the study, the statement of the problem and the objectives of the research. The chapter also provides an overview of the nature of the subject under research.

Chapter Two reviews relevant literature that reflects the dilemmas that are faced by women in leadership positions. The chapter further discusses the theoretical framework that explains gender inequality in leadership in relation to the women.

Chapter Three explores the study methodology and the key steps that were followed in carrying out the research.

Chapter Four focuses on the presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of data from the study.



Chapter Five wraps up the study by giving conclusions and recommendations and highlighting further areas for research. The chapter also discusses policy implications of the research findings and provides insight into areas of further study.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has raised the key issues surrounding the research question. The discussion has shown that gender inequality is a topical issue in the development discourse, and gaps still exist in female representation hence the motivation of this study to articulate the socio-cultural challenges preventing gender parity in leadership and decision making positions.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the two identified theories that explain gender inequality in leadership in traditional societies across the world and in Zimbabwe in particular. The chapter also presents an extensive review of relevant literature that reflects the global and regional perspective regarding gender equality; and also highlights the dilemmas that are faced by women in their quest to participate in leadership positions.

### **2.2 The Extent of Female Leadership and Power**

Power has been defined as the ability to control in situations when other human beings must comply with the call of duty (Hora, 2014). Werber simply calls it the ability to impose one's will in social relations regardless of resistance. Leaders provide direction in pursuit of organisational objectives and they bear the biggest responsibility, while the rest of the employees are followers (Byers in Hora, 2014). Traditionally, leadership has been perceived as a masculine terrain that demanded being assertive and departing from family life; qualities that contributed to a successful career as a leader (Vinkenbug *et al.*, 2011). The authors further argue that there are studies that showed women managers who were successful exhibited similar traits to male leaders, and they concluded that successful leadership demands a high degree of assertiveness and a sacrifice of family life. Studies have shown that women find politics intimidating as it is portrayed as a dirty game, which requires steely qualities. Women that find themselves in political leadership often face ridicule as they have defied societal expectation and beliefs that women are weak citizens (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). Throughout the world, these

perceptions of power and leadership as well as the existing power structures that shape sociocultural, economic and political life have formed a barricade for women advancement in leadership (Zimstat, 2012). This study was motivated to find out the degree to which female leaders concur with this notion.

### **2.3 The extent of female leadership in Zimbabwe**

Experience has shown that leadership is viewed from a patriarchal perspective since the beginning of time right up to contemporary gender practices (Mugweni et al, 2011). However, in the wake of gender equality, women have arisen to demand power and control thereby upsetting the social equilibrium that had existed for time immemorial (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012). Despite the lobbying and advocacy for gender equality and fair representation in Zimbabwe, the socio-politico and economic marginalisation of women has continued despite the country being endowed with many women with high educational and professional qualifications (Dodo, 2013). These women are still found occupying less challenging positions yet they could make key contributions to the development agenda at the leadership level.

Universities, colleges and vocational training centres are considered the preparatory paths for the journey to leadership, yet enrolment at these institutions in Zimbabwe has not been in favour of women (ZimStat, 2013). Although researchers such as Longwe (2009) query the added value of the male-offered kind of education, research has shown that education is an integral part of the grooming process into leadership, hence the lack of inclusivity in Zimbabwe's higher education signals a lack of commitment to grooming future female leaders (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012).

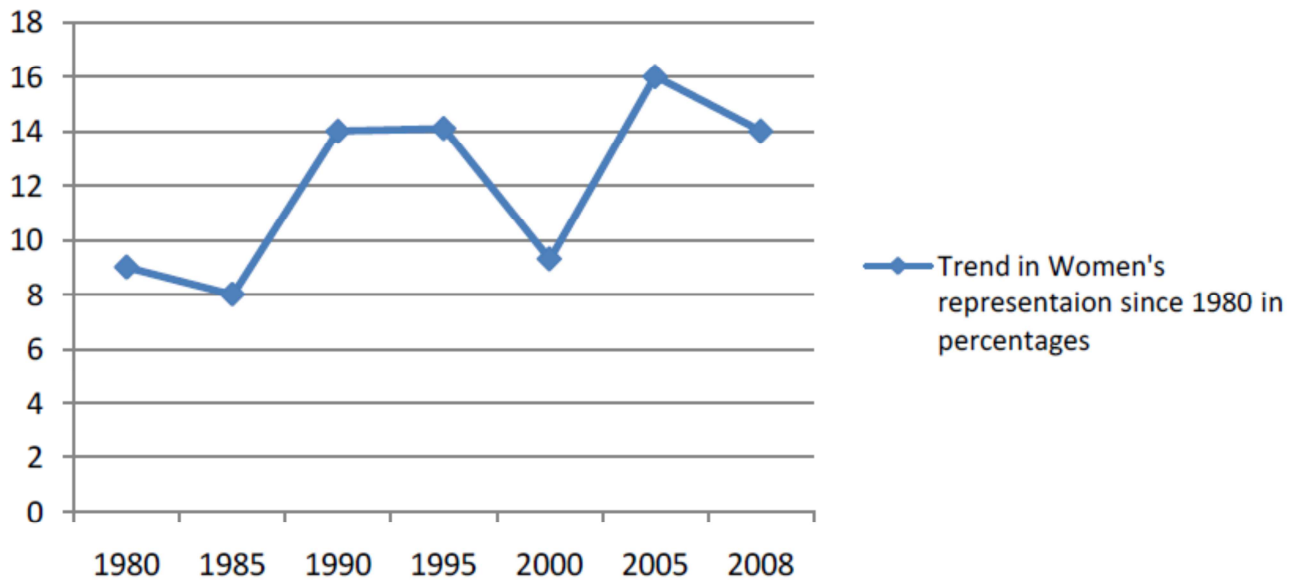
Zimbabwe's gender initiative is guided by the SADC Protocol on Gender (2008) which agitates for 50-50 representation in key-decision making positions. However, the protocol acknowledges that the reality falls far short of the target as there still exist disparities in a number of areas as shown in the table below. Data on the private sector could not be obtained.

### ***Public Service Institutions***

<b>Public Service Institutions</b>	<b>% Women</b>
Parliament of Zimbabwe House of assembly	24
Parliament of Zimbabwe Senate	14
Cabinet Ministers	12
Permanent Secretaries	26
Public Service Principal Directors	26
Public Service Directors	33
Public Service Deputy Directors	28
Supreme and High Court Judges	29
Zimbabwe Republic Police Deputy Commissioners (N.B. there is no female commissioner)	25
Zimbabwe Defence Forces Highest Levels	0
Councillors in local authorities	16

Source: *The National Gender Policy (2013-2017), Zimbabwe Country Analysis (2014)*

***Trends in Women's Participation in Parliament (1980-2008)***



***Source: Dube (2013) Engendering Politics in Parliamentary Representation in Zimbabwe.***

While the world has witnessed steady progress with regards to female participation in key decision making, Zimbabwe's story does not reflect the general trends of steadiness (Dube, 2013). Zimbabwe's narrative has been marked by periods of losses and periods of progress hence the country has struggled to satisfy international and regional protocols in terms of female representation. Dube (2013), notes that Zimbabwe's rugged pattern is a result of the country's highly patriarchal nature whose socio-economic structure restricts women from winning and participating in political positions. Furthermore, the politics of the country stands accused of having legitimized aggression and violence as part of anti-women strategies to keep them out of political leadership, hence the gains that were made in the 90's became losses because of the

intense political polarization. These tactics have been applied in election time and they have worked against women's participation in politics (Dube, 2013).

Research has also shown that the socio-cultural system of beliefs, norms and values stands as a barrier particularly in the field of politics in Zimbabwe, where politics is considered as a dirty game which modest women are not expected to play (Dube, 2013). Former Member of Parliament (MP) for Mabvuku, Timothy Mubhawu, is on record for intimating that women and men were not equal and equality was against God's principles. He even suggested that the Domestic Violence Bill that was being debated was diabolic as it stood to usurp power from men (Gonda, 2009). This shows that Zimbabwe is home to men that do not believe in the capabilities of women to participate in leadership hence the continued existence of gender disparities in leadership.

This study, therefore, set out to interrogate the socio-cultural factors that present as challenges to women's advancement in leadership by focusing on the experiences of women in Manicaland.

## **2.4 Challenges to gender parity in leadership**

### ***2.4.1 Culture, Patriarchy and Religion***

Tradition and culture are strong in Africa and they even dominate the law and religion; traditional practices have been incorporated into religious practices and they have come to be believed by their followers that they are the demands of their gods (Leightfoot-Klein in Kambarami, 2006). Patriarchy as an aspect of culture is a social system that appropriates social

roles and they ensure women are kept in subordinate positions (Kambarami, 2006). This discussion looks at patriarchy as an aspect of culture and religion in relation to gender equality in leadership.

There is an assertion that culture is a notoriously difficult concept to describe despite a century of efforts to come up with a standard definition (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). This study relies on the definition put forward by Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) who describe culture as a set of implicit and explicit patterns of behaviour that are acquired and transmitted from one generation to another. They also point out that the core of culture consists of traditional ideas, values and systems that influence future action. It can simply be summed up as values and beliefs of a given society that is prone to change over time. Zimbabwean culture subjugates women due to such cultural practices as “*lobola*” (bride price) which commercializes women and makes them “property” belonging to their husbands (Hove, 2012). In her study, the author notes that women could not do work-related assignments that involved travelling away from home as their husbands denied them permission, hence the need to do away with retrogressive aspects of culture that treat women as second class citizens.

Zimbabwean culture leaves women in a predicament as they cannot participate in the decision making processes in the families in which they were born, and neither do they have a voice in the families they married into (Hove, 2012). As such, women have no room for exposure to leadership, or grooming opportunity for leadership as. These inequalities are perpetuated by the overemphasized traditional and religious beliefs that become a stumbling block to female advancement, and women should stand resolute in what they believe in until society has changed

its mindset against female leadership. Hove (2012) draws from her own experiences where she was replaced by male leadership in a church that she founded, as the board felt that there had to be male cover, but she persevered with support from her husband and went on to launch an international interdenominational ministry. This patriarchy in the family is replicated in the public sphere, whether economic or political, where leadership is masculinized (De Silva de Alwis, 2013).

Zimbabwean culture and tradition subjugates women to the private sphere for her family and development of her home, whether educated or not and this subjects women leaders to critical public scrutiny and some employers were reluctant to bring on board female leaders due to societal attitude against women (Maposa & Mugabe, 2013). Some men were even reported to get schizophrenic and depressed when their wives became successful leaders (Swati and Sheila in Maposa and Mugabe, 2013).

Previous studies have shown that patriarchy is one of the root causes of gender inequality. The word has been used to analyse the origins of male domination and oppression of women, and has been used since the 60s within feminism to refer to the systematic organisation of male supremacy and female subordination (Kamarae, 1992). The system is described as male authority that oppresses women through various structures such as the social, religious, cultural, political and economic institutions. The feminist theory posits that patriarchy is a social construction that can be overcome by critically analyzing its manifestations and exposing them (Ann, 2001).

Patriarchal control is the system of male monopoly of decision making positions at all levels of governance, and these structures are used to safeguard and maintain male domination while



perpetuating female subordination (Longwe, 2002). As a result men continue to serve their own interests at the expense of female interests, hence it will be folly for women to expect men to realize the value of gender equality and hand over part of the power to women, the author argues. Despite existing legal frameworks across the world, men have resisted gender equality.

In Zimbabwe, government has put in place policies such as the National Gender Policy (2013-2017) to ensure a gender just society in which men and women enjoy equity and contribute as equal partners to the development of the country. If these patriarchal attitudes are perpetuated, then development remains elusive, hence the need to investigate the problem more and identify possible measures to address gender inequality. This study further explores these challenges that are faced by women in leadership and suggest solutions.

Femininity, sexuality and culture among indigenous people are intricately woven, and patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of any form of control over their sexuality (Kambarami, 2006). The author argues that custom in Africa is stronger than the law and is even stronger than religion. In these patriarchal societies, leadership has been associated with masculinity and a general belief that men make better leaders than women (Maseko, 2013). Patriarchy has been found by researchers to be a major barrier to women's advancement, and its combination with conservative religious interpretations and cultural stereotyping has created a very strong barrier to women's participation in the public sphere (Sabbagh, n.d.).

The family has been criticised for being the “brewery” for patriarchal practices as it socialises the young to accept sexually differentiated roles which prop up boys as the breadwinners and

leaders, while girls are drilled to be obedient and submissive housekeepers (Maseko, 2013; Kambarami, 2006). The authors argue that in African traditional culture, girls are defined as being dependent on and submissive to men in their formative years, and as they grow older they internalise these qualities. At puberty, while the boys are taught leadership and survival skills, the girl child is groomed to take good care of her husband and family. This socialization process has gone on to impact on the performance of women in leadership as it stands as an obstacle and kills any seed of ambition to lead within female aspirants who then feel compelled to respect the system of a dutiful wife and mother (KPMG, 2013).

Gender quotas have been created to increase female representation but researchers argue that they have not delivered as expected because they thrust women into unaltered social and political structures that frustrate female leaders (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). These structures are criticized for as perceiving women that benefit through affirmative action of being handed a favour hence expected to be of compliant conduct. Non-compliance and antagonistic behaviour on the part of women in these structures earn them discrimination and exclusion, further frustrating any efforts to achieve gender parity in leadership. Therefore much more needs to be done in order to disband institutionalized patriarchy which manifests itself through an entrenched culture that denigrates equality of women and men. Maseko (2013) also weighs in and posits that women are professionally isolated and they are not fully integrated into male-dominated leadership structures, but men argue that women lack the skills for leadership and confidence, hence are not as effective. This view is consistent with Davidson and Burke in Mapolisa and Madziyire (2012) who argue that cultural beliefs are so strong that society and women

themselves tend to underestimate their leadership capacity. This research provided more insight into this debate.

Men have been socialized to believe that their privileges of holding key positions are natural and are a right; hence they will not readily relinquish power to women (Longwe, 1999). The author argues that it is no surprise that the world still has a huge gender gap in terms of leadership; as men were reluctant to have women occupying dominant leadership positions.

### ***2.4.2 Religion***

Challenges to women's rights and gender equality are not limited to specific regions and religions but their severity varies from one region to the other, as noted by Raday (2003). The author observed that there is a clash that exists between culture, religion and gender, hence equality has become an issue high on the global agenda. While there are different types of religions, claims against gender equality have been raised against the monotheist religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Raday,2003), but this discussion shall have a bias towards Christianity.

Religion is a strong pillar that holds Zimbabwe's social fabric together. However, Christianity in Zimbabwe has been used as a tool for female exploitation and oppression (Kambarami, 2006). The most predominant religion in Zimbabwe is Christianity, although there are pockets of Islam followers around the country, but Islam too is no exception with regards to perpetuation of patriarchy (Raday, 2003). The author posits that Christianity in Zimbabwe has strengthened traditional patriarchal beliefs, practices and attitudes which are used by men to control women, be they followers or their wives and female relatives. The patriarchal story of creation and

original sin in the Old Testament that Eve (woman) was created from the rib of Adam is interpreted in the Christian environs to suggest that women are second class citizens that are dependent on men, and they need constant supervision lest they err (Townsend, 2008; Kambarami, 2006; Raday 2003).Maposa and Mugabe (2013) also argue that men and some women substantiate male domination over women using the biblical story of creation. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he took one of his ribs.....and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.” (Gen 2 verse 21-22). With the majority in Zimbabwe subscribing to the Christian religion, it goes without saying that female subjugation is to a large extent driven by religion that fits perfectly well into the cultural religion that promotes male supremacy.

Later, the Pauline teachings in the New Testament are further testament in the Christian world that women should submit to their husbands (Colossians 3:19). As a result, men exert control over their women and justify their actions and base them on biblical teachings. These Christian beliefs that have become a culture in Zimbabwe, suffocate any leadership ambition that women might harbour (Sibanda, 2011). Because the women have to portray a “good wife” image to society and the patriarchal world at large, they succumb to societal pressure that expects docility and subjugation from women. This is despite the fact that the same bible that male supremacists use to justify female subordination clearly reflects how women have played leadership roles (Hove, 2012). Mica 6 verse 4 clearly indicates that Miriam was part of the leadership team together with her brothers Moses and Aaron. Hove (2012) also makes reference to Deborah in the book of Judges 4 who played an influential role in Israel’s return to God. The author argues that women and men should work alongside each other for the development of the country.

However, because the international rights framework recognises freedom of religion, basic human rights such as the right to education and participation in the public sphere, can be violated under the umbrella of freedom of religion (Raday, 2003). The study was motivated to explore the extent to which religion as an institutionalised aspect of culture influences female leadership.

### ***2.4.3 Gender inequality on performance***

Gender is socially constructed, and it asserts that expectations, capabilities and responsibilities of men and women are not biologically determined, but they are clearly defined by society and are assigned as such. Research has shown that these structural and cultural inequalities reinforce and perpetuate male domination and female subordination. These inequalities are planted through socialization and have a negative impact on women's performance; they work as challenges for women to realize their full potential in the economic, social and political spheres (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui, 2010). This study will interrogate whether the socialization process has had a negative impact on the female leaders being studied. There are strong arguments from scholars that successful and independent women function as role models for younger generations, a notion that this research interrogated to assess the impact that women leaders have had in their communities.

### ***2.4.4 Unequal Educational Opportunities***

Historically, poor access to education was the main visible barrier to women's participation in the public sphere owing to patriarchal attitudes about gender roles, as well as social pressures such as child marriages and religious beliefs that inhibited women's education (NDHS, 2003).

This resulted in some parents attaching importance on the education of the boy-child while circumscribing the girl-child educational opportunities (Allanana, 2013; Kambarami, 2006).

There are generally two schools of thought on the nexus between education and women's advancement. There is a general belief that education is one way women can extricate themselves from the clutches of male domination, yet research has also shown that education is no emancipator as far as male domination is concerned; women still have to grapple with the realities of succumbing to cultural pressure of ascribing to gender roles or risk isolation, while the system props up men by emphasizing work and career orientation (Chirimuuta in Kambarami 2006).

Women with the same educational qualifications as men often have to prove themselves twice as much as their male counterparts as the woman is perceived as having received some favour to be in a key-decision making position (Mapolisa and Madziyire, 2013). This argument validates the Conflict Perspective on which this research finds its basis; women and men are consistently in a struggle for power and dominance.

The world has more than 800 million illiterates, and of these, two thirds are women. This is an indication of complex socio-cultural and political processes that deny women of this basic human right (Medel-Añonuevo, *ed*) (1999). Zimbabwe has its fair share of gender inequality in education, where enrolment ratio for girls declines with each level due to patriarchal attitudes that negate girl education and perceives it as a waste of money (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013; Mapolisa and Madziyire, 2012). Although women constitute 52% of Zimbabwe's population, in

2010 only 49% were enrolled into primary school, and the rate falls to 42% at tertiary level (ZimStat, 2013). Studies have shown that education that is acquired at tertiary level is key in shaping one's career in life, yet women are not given an equal chance to access this vital resource. This socio-cultural bias against female education has resulted in two thirds of Africa's illiterates being women (Carmen in Rutoro, 2012). The low levels of female enrolment into higher levels of education then become a huge bottleneck for women to navigate the corporate world and the world of leadership.

There is evidence that women have to traverse a bumpy road to leadership since they face limited access to educational opportunities (Grant Thornton, 2012). Their research show that 57% of girls in low income countries have access to education, compared to 92% in high income countries. These statistics indicate that the ground is not yet level for women to achieve gender equality if such basic aspects that facilitate advancement are lacking. The graph below shows how females are underrepresented at each level of the pathway to leadership in various sectors.

## From classroom to boardroom



Source: Grant Thornton International Report (2012)

Although there are other factors limiting women's access to tertiary education such as the age of consent in Zimbabwe, there is need to take more action to accelerate female tertiary education as a means to address gender inequalities in leadership (Platform for Action). Women's participation in the development of policies remains peripheral in Zimbabwe; it is this stark gender disparity in terms of disproportionate representation between women and men in leadership that formed a basis for this study.

On the other hand Longwe (1999) provided a strong argument that it is a fallacy that education that is provided to the powerless by those in power is meant to liberate; it is actually designed to



perpetuate domination by the powerful. She argues that education can only get women so far within the strict limits of patriarchy set by the education systems in Africa; hence women with limited education are in a better position to recognize gender injustice. She further points out that women can only attain equality with men if there is equality of opportunity, hence it is hopeless to imagine education will bridge the gap since this is not the case due to patriarchy. For education to be truly empowering for women, it should reflect the process of the feminist struggle for empowerment (Longwe, 2002).

The author's gripe with educated female leaders is that they become "honorary males"; female elites who connive with male leadership to exploit and oppress their fellow sisters. They are bent on defending their positions within the patriarchal establishment hence they will not raise a finger to fight for women's rights (Longwe, 1999). This might be true to some extent, with the author providing insight into the large numbers of men with little education who have a seat in parliament. She however, forgets to provide examples of illiterate women that have excelled with regards to women in leadership. This dimension then strengthens the argument that education and skills training are necessary ingredients in positioning women for empowerment and leadership; hence women should have equal access to education. In Zimbabwe, there is a feminist organisation called Women and Politics Support Unit (WIPSU) whose mission is to build the capacity of female politicians and aspirants. Their vision is grounded in the firm belief that access to higher education and training is fundamental in building the capacities of female leadership (<http://www.wcoz.org>).

Chirimuuta in Kambarami (2006) also embraces the notion that educated women exercise their independence with caution as they still have to yield to societal pressure lest they get stigmatized

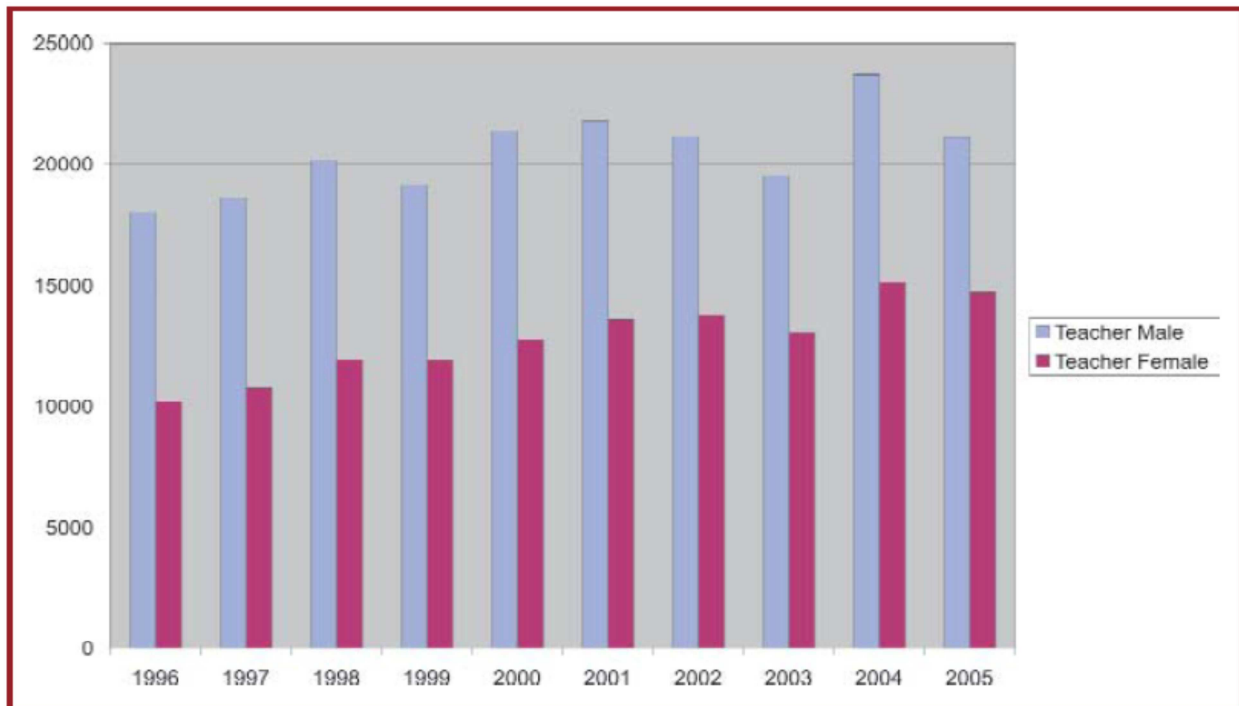
as unmarriageable and repulse potential partners. In Zimbabwe, particularly in traditional Shona culture, almost every woman looks forward to getting married and having a family since this a stable marriage and a happy family are used as a yardstick to measure successful women in traditional Zimbabwe (Kambarami, 2006). Consequently, the woman's ambition to advance in career and professional growth is overshadowed by the need to balance with societal expectation, despite the education. These existing traditional patterns and practices provided an inspiration for this research, to find out how women in leadership have managed to balance between their professions and societal expectation.

#### ***2.4.5 Human Capital Differences***

The theory of human capital differences is advanced by some scholars to explain women's under-representation in leadership (Mugari and Masocha, 2015). The authors argue that there is a dearth of qualified women due to lack of investment in female education and training, and call this problem a "leaking pipeline." They intimate that education is a strong weapon to fight male hegemony, yet only 42% women make it to tertiary education in Zimbabwe (Zimstat, 2013). However, scholars such as Mapolisa and Madziyire (2013) seem to suggest that there is a pool of educated women in Zimbabwe, but they still have to work twice as hard as their male colleagues despite holding the same educational qualifications. This shows that while indeed there is need for Zimbabwe to improve on equal access to higher education, the country has a lot to do to acknowledge the contribution of available female human capital which seems to go unnoticed due to existing prejudices of "male is better." The graph below shows the lack of investment in female tertiary education that contributes to inadequate female capital. This is despite high rates of female enrolment into primary school as reflected in the second graph. Explanations put forward to explain low female enrolment at tertiary education include early marriages and school

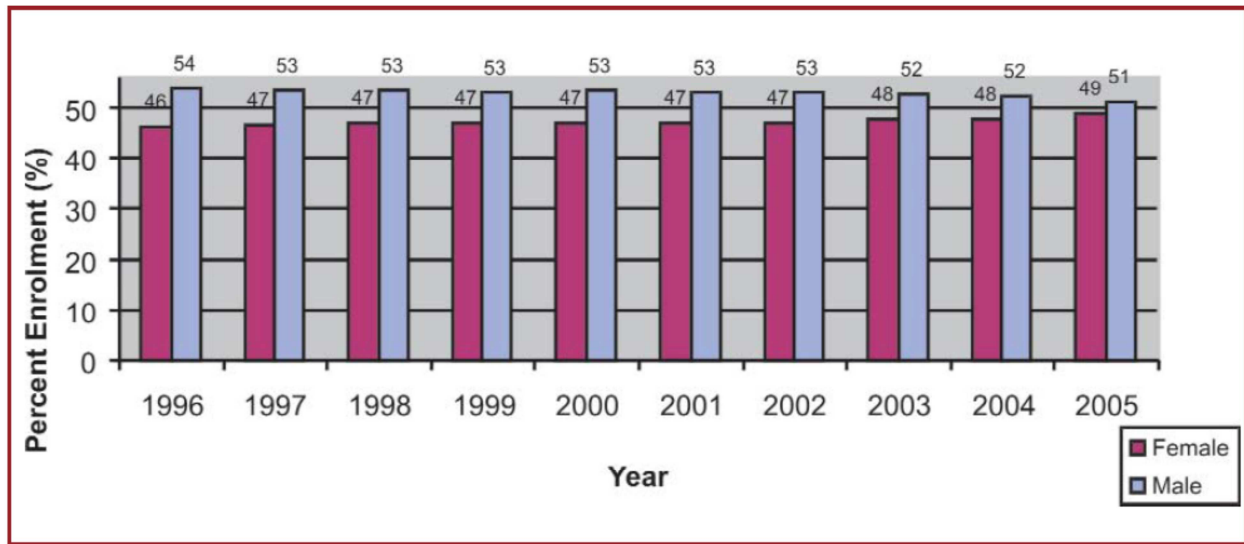
drop outs due to pregnancy (Sibanda, 2011). The Zimbabwe CEDAW Report (2009) argues that female students at tertiary level shun technical subjects and careers that were perceived as male domains, hence the lower rates. This study sought to find out how such leakages occurred and how they contributed to the gap in female leadership.

### ***Enrolment in Primary Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe.***



*Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)*

### **Primary School Enrolment (1996-2005)**



*Source: Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe in Terms of CEDAW (2009)*

The first graph provides insight into the existing unequal opportunities to tertiary education, where women play second fiddle in terms of enrolment yet they make up 52% of Zimbabwe’s population as reflected in the census report of 2012, despite having high rates in primary school as reflected in the second graph. The worsening economic crisis in Zimbabwe has been used to explain the low female enrolment rates at colleges and universities, and this validates the opinion that parents still hold on to the patriarchal view of prioritizing male education. These stark indicators of gender inequality provided motivation for this study.

### **2.4.6 Gender Stereotypes**

These are ideas and beliefs about men and women that are socially constructed and taken as truth by society. They are maintained and perpetuated from one generation to another by social institutions such as the family, religion and culture. For example, the stereotype that men make better leaders because they are socialized as such. Over the years, Zimbabwe has struggled with

its patriarchal nature which imprisons women leading to their subordination (Kambarami, 2006). The author further argues that leadership in Zimbabwe, particularly in politics, is considered a dirty game hence it requires tough qualities to withstand pressure, attributes which society perceives as lacking in women. Women are then grudgingly accepted in leadership such as ministerial positions only to occupy less challenging ministries such as social services, and never in defence or finance ministries. Post-independence Zimbabwe's history has no record of a female defence, finance or foreign affairs minister, hence validating the notion that women are perceived as weak, and they are readily accepted as singers and dancers in politics. The table below provides insight into distribution of ministerial roles in a research carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2005):

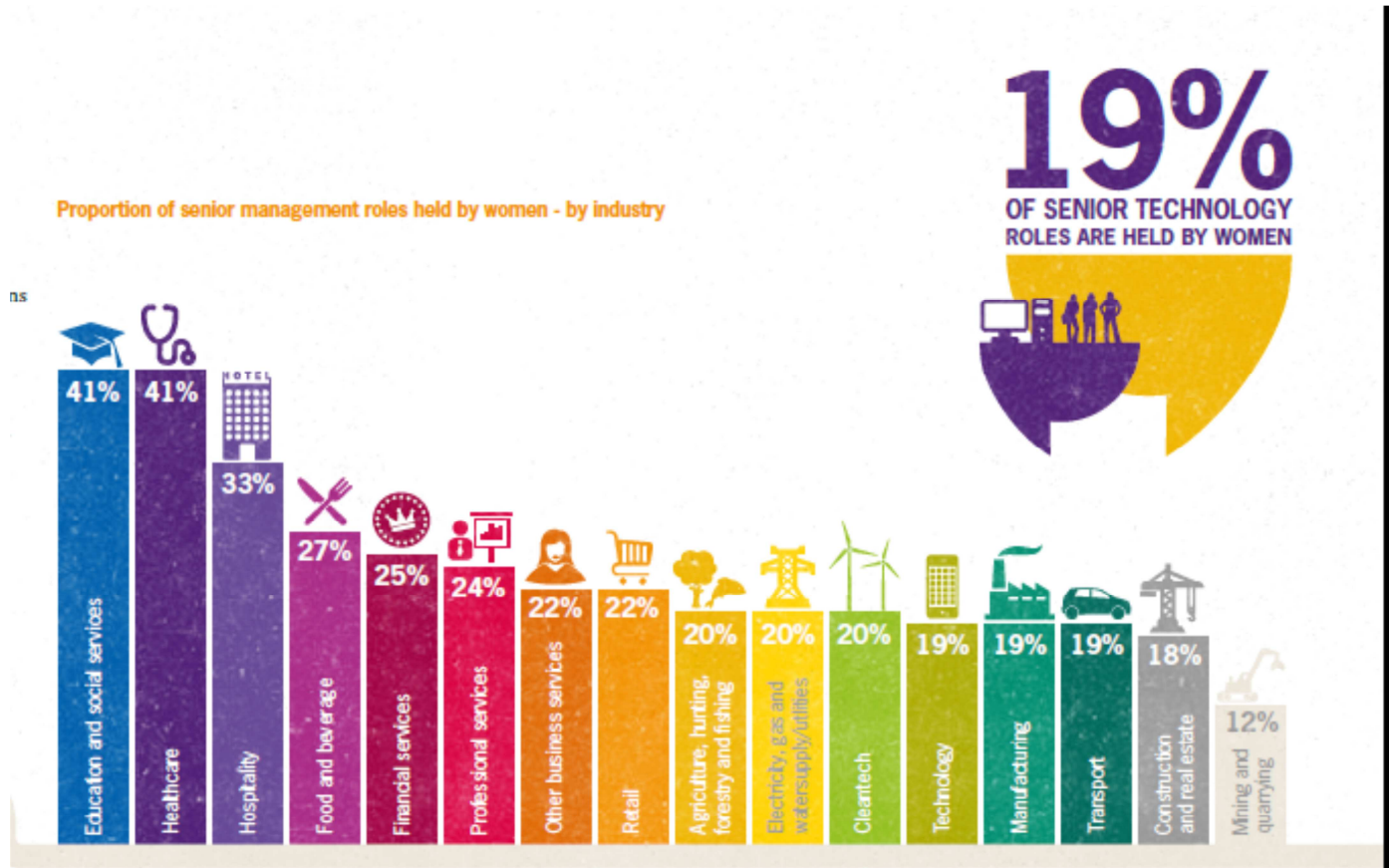
<b>Ministerial Portfolio (n=858)</b>	<b>Number of Women Ministers (%)</b>
Related to family, children , youth, disabled, elderly	83 (9.7%)
Social Affairs	69 (8%)
Women Affairs	63 (7.3%)
Education	63 (7.3%)
Environment and energy	60 (7%)
Foreign affairs	25 (2.9%)
Finance	20 (2.3%)
Defence	12 (1.4)

**Source: (Dube, 2013) Engendering politics and parliamentary representation in Zimbabwe**

The table shows that women are relegated to social roles that are in tandem with their gender roles in the private sphere where they are expected to care for children, the sick and the elderly. This school of thought is supported by Shvedova in Dube (2013) who argues that it is just as well that women are given these roles since they have a tendency to give priority to societal concerns such as social security, national health care and children's issues. The author intimates that involvement of women would strengthen these key development priorities which men do not give priority on the development agenda. This study delved into the problem to explore the magnitude to which such stereotypes impact on female leadership in Manicaland.

The graph below also validates the existence of gender stereotypes in assigning women into leadership. Women are assigned to leadership in social institutions while men continue to dominate the sectors that are considered key such as mining, manufacturing, finance and defence. The authors even note the imbalance between the industry leadership and the end users such as in the food and beverage sector, where men in leadership decide what the women (end users) have to consume.

## Proportion of Senior Management Held by Women by Industrial Sector



*Source: Grant Thornton International Business Report (2015)*

Studies have shown that gender stereotypes have contributed to the alienation of women from leadership participation as society tends to severely judge women who go against the norm. Clegg et al (2005) argues that most business deals are discussed in areas such as bars, golf courses, but due to societal restrictions women are left out since an honourable woman is not expected to be visiting hotel bars at night. This alienation due to stereotypes proves costly as it impacts negatively on female leaders' performance. Maseko, (2013) also argues that these gender stereotypes results in a lot of pressure being applied to women; such as ridicule and

ostracism in the event that the women fail to ascribe to defined gender roles expected of a “decent” woman.

#### ***2.4.7 Gender Discrimination***

Gender discrimination is an act of unfair treatment that is directed towards an individual or a group on the basis of their gender and that action denies them rights, opportunities and resources. Maseko (2013) argues that discrimination against women has been a significant feature in the corporate world and it will take a long time to eliminate. The author argues that society is largely made up of two types of men: those that will not accept equality between men and women, and those who would allocate women fewer and feminine and perceive their actions as caring and sensitive to women’s needs. Sunter (1997) further weighs in when he notes that despite the new political dispensation that promotes upward mobility for women, women in the workplace continue to suffer patriarchy-induced attitudes from their male colleagues. Gender discrimination stems from prejudice and it is justified under the patriarchal order (Longwe, 2002).

In politics, women politicians are not expected to carry themselves around socially as their male counterparts, they are treated as second class citizens in decision making and this keeps male supremacy firmly in place (Longwe, 2014). The author cites the Zambian parliament that has only 12% female representation, and the women are treated as unwelcome guests in parliamentary business. The Zambian parliament has earned itself the name “men’s club”. Zimbabwe’s parliament though slightly better at 21% female representation, it has a yawning gap despite having a National Gender Protocol which advocates for 30% female representation (The Global Gender Report, 2014). Zimbabwe is also party to the SADC Protocol on Gender which agitates for 50-50 representation between women and men, but the This implies that having legal



frameworks in place will not win the struggle for female empowerment, but women have to wrest the power from men since it shall not come on a silver platter (Longwe, 2002).

This study examined the existence of such sexist tendencies towards women in leadership in Manicaland Province by tapping into their experiences in the male-dominated leadership world.

#### ***2.4.8 Gendered differences in leadership***

A study of South African women in parliament conducted by Britton (2005), showed that the major challenges that women faced included male resistance, double workload, indirect sexism and domestic obligations. Men are rarely confronted with the dilemma of having to choose career and children yet women are bogged down by maternity issues and child care (Longwe, 1999). The author argues that there is a small number of women in decision making positions because of the unequal gender division of labour. Women are consistently juggling the burden of domestic work, child care and their professions; hence they have limited time to engage in public affairs.

Research has shown that men feel threatened by women in leadership particularly in politics and women's movements, hence they employ a range of dirty tricks to frustrate them (Longwe, 2002). Strong debates weigh in to validate this notion as female leaders in Zimbabwe were reported to often suffer sexual harassment and gender stereotyping from their male peers, and were regarded as important for catering tasks with little contribution to parliamentary debates (Dodo, 2013).

Because of these pressures and the loneliness that came with being a female key decision maker in a hostile institutional environment, women were reported to abdicate their positions due to

lack of support. This shows the prejudices that exist against female leadership in the African context and the perpetuation of male domination through uncouth means of deliberately creating a hostile environment in the public leadership space. This study examined the existence of such perceptions on women in leadership.

#### ***2.4.9 Marriage and family***

Studies have shown that marriage and family commitments present as challenges in terms of women participation in leadership (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). There are two dimensions that have been identified as stifling female representation: early marriage and marriage and family commitments.

##### **Early marriage**

Early marriages have been found to inhibit female representation since leadership requires high credentials which can only come through education. The prevalence of child marriage is very high in Zimbabwe, but data is difficult to obtain since most child marriages are not registered, or in the event that they are registered, the girls' ages are often falsified to subvert the law (Research Advocacy Unit, 2011). However, it is estimated that in Zimbabwe 21% of children are married before they reach 18 years of age; and the majority of these are girls. While child marriage has recently been outlawed in Zimbabwe in the Chidyausiku landmark ruling of 2015 bringing the minimum marriageable age to 18 years, there are some deep-seated socio-cultural values that continue to promote child marriage. A senator and chief in Zimbabwe (Chief Chiduku) is on record for defending marriage of underage girls (Sibanda, 2011). The irony is that the Senator and Chief represents the gatekeepers of society's values, addressing gender inequality involves changing the mindset of such individuals and disbanding the patriarchal

nature society. It remains to be seen how the recent outlawing of marriage to girls below the age 16 impacts on female representation assuming that girls are given a chance to continue with their education, and hence prepare and groom them for leadership through secondary and tertiary education.

It is practices such as these (early marriage) that deprive women and girls a basic right to access education which is one of the factors that define and shape the journey to leadership. The existence of such socio-cultural challenges inspired this study to further interrogate them in an attempt to map strategies that promote women empowerment.

### **Marriage and family attachment**

Feminists have criticised marriage and family for stifling female career advancement as women are often required by society to fulfill their traditional roles of being mothers and wives, making it difficult for them to navigate between career and family obligations (Rutoro, 2012, Dube 2013). Various studies have found that the traditional conception of marriage in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, plays a barrier to women's professional advancement in the public sphere (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012). Marriage was found to be the root of discriminatory attitudes and tendencies in the workplace, with married women managers being expected to bow to their private sphere obligations of caring for the family, while their male counterparts have time to socialise and network as expressed by women of Manicaland Province. Some scholars have made conclusions that marriage somehow stands in the way of female advancement. Mugari and Masocha (2015) observed in their study of female leadership in the sports fraternity that single women seemed to enjoy promotion as they had no marital obligations that held them down when they needed to be away from home attending business. However, the authors note

that there is no empirical evidence to answer the question of whether husbands indeed block their wives from taking up leadership positions. This was an interesting dimension for this study as it also interrogated partner support from the participants to the in-depth interviews.

It is well documented in literature that women who have sufficient support from their husband and families perform much better in leadership (Murniati in Shava & Ndebele, 2014), yet this family-work dichotomy was often filled with stress for female leaders in Zimbabwe. Zinyemba (2013) noted that women did not often get this support from their husbands; rather they got jealous and insecure reactions particularly when the wife enjoyed a company vehicle and cash allowances. This lack of husband support then posed a huge barrier as some women chose instead to fulfill their marriage obligations and keeping it intact by not penetrating the leadership circles, thereby creating a gap in female representation. On the other hand, other women chose not to marry at all to avoid being bogged down by marital and family demands, and a cursory look around Zimbabwe's female leadership seems to validate this opinion.

Apart from husbands playing challenges to leadership, by virtue of socialization from a tender age to be obedient housekeepers, women take seriously the responsibility of domestic maintenance which limits their career advancement while men are not held down by such responsibilities. Women were reluctant to take up promotion as leaders as this would most likely take them away from their husbands and children (Chabaya *et al* 2009, Rutoro 2012). Women's gender roles were found to compete with professional development and many women chose to fulfill their traditional gender roles instead, by abandoning the "professional track" and choosing the "mommy track" as observed by Mugari and Masocha (2015). The authors argue that this reaction was consistent with women's dilemmas in African contexts where marriage was

regarded as a huge achievement and unmarried women were regarded as a social disgrace. This societal expectation pushed women into compliance with socio-cultural expectation so as to safeguard their dignity, thereby prejudicing their chances to climb to the top. Kwinjeh (2012) weighs in as she argues that Zimbabwean women have been driven back to the medieval era where their main value was based on their reproductive capacity and their functions within the family as wives, mothers, and caregivers. Women's reproductive roles are a reality, hence some parliaments and workplaces have given in to pressure from gender activists to provide child care facilities at workplaces.

Zimbizi *et al* in Rutoro (2012) also argues that gender inequality is entrenched in the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean life which promotes female subordination by making them lose their identity at marriage. In many cultures, women drop their second names and assume their husbands' names, and Zimbabwe is no exception, and this to a large extent makes women culturally constrained to take up leadership in their communities, be it in politics or otherwise.

Parenthood was often cited by women as a major barrier to reach the top, and it required women to make huge sacrifices in an attempt to balance family and work demands (Grant Thornton, 2015). Some women were reported to forgo their careers so that they could concentrate on child rearing, or delaying having children so that they could concentrate on their careers. Either way, this involved life changing decisions on the part of women and in a study by Grant Thornton (*ibid*), 28% cited parenthood as a huge barrier to female advancement. On the other hand, not many men were ready to help with childcare citing a backlash from society. In African settings,

such men were said to have been given love portions, hence men in traditional societies were reluctant to help with child care and other domestic chores.

This research is motivated by these debates and will add more insight into the magnitude of family and marriage as a drawback to female participation in leadership.

#### ***2.4.10 Low self-esteem and confidence***

Another socio-cultural related barrier to women's representation was identified as low self-esteem and lack of confidence on the part of women themselves who have potential to become leaders. In their study, Chabaya *et al* (2009) found that myths, stereotypes and prejudices related to women's capacities and attitudes presented as obstacles to women's participation. Women have internalised such myths as women cannot make good leaders, and these have worked as a handicap in the development of their individual career capacities and personalities. The social background is blamed for making women feel inferior and with the acerbic belief that men only should be leaders while women play a subordinate role. The socialization of women into stereotypes that make second class citizens makes them lack confidence in making independent career decisions. Women seem not to have sufficient drive to dismantle the patriarchal society, and Epstein (2005), blames women to some extent for the perpetuation of these socio-cultural factors that are a bottleneck to female representation in key decision making positions. The author argues that women have to re-socialise the internalised gender roles that make them stay in cultural prisons in which they worship male domination, and focus on propagating independence and career orientation.

Former Vice-President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Joice Mujuru spoke out on the need for women to take charge of their destinies and improve the lives of women and girls. She made reference to the participation of women in the war of liberation where women took to the trenches alongside men, and that was sufficient evidence that women were capable. She called on women to crawl out of their cocoons, fight the inferiority complex and be catalysts in the development processes instead of creating their own glass ceiling (Hove, 2012).

#### ***2.4.11 The Glass Ceiling, Glass Borders, Glass Walls Perspective***

Studies have also suggested that one of the socio-cultural challenges to female participation in representation is “the glass ceiling”. The concept of “the glass ceiling” was first used in the Wall Street Journal in 1986 as the journal looked at the persistent failure of women to go up the corporate ladder in reflection to their representation on the labour market (Angelovski n.d). The expression implies that an invisible, transparent barrier similar to a glass ceiling exists and it blocks women from attaining equality with men. The glass ceiling bunches up the socio-cultural attitudes such as gender stereotyping and occupational segregation that prevent women from reaching the top of the corporate hierarchy and keep them “in their place” (Platform for Action, 1995, Dale in Shava & Ndebele, 2014). The glass ceiling explains why in Europe and the US women account for less than 10% of senior executives, implying that gender bottlenecks are stronger at the top end of the hierarchy (Angelovski n.d).

Different studies have shown that female leaders struggle to overcome the glass ceiling even if they perform well in their management roles; they find it difficult to go beyond to head key public and commercial entities. This has been attributed to the invisible borders that emanate from cultural perceptions of the role of women; and this stifles growth of female leadership as

the male dominated world of leadership sees little value in women leadership (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012). Studies have documented the experiences of female leaders who felt that in the leadership positions they occupy, they are not taken seriously and their contributions are not valued (Davidson & Burke, 2000). A list of popular clichés proposed by Mapolisa and Madziyire (2012) validate the argument that women are not perceived as central in world affairs:

1. Women are power behind the throne
2. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world
3. Behind every successful man is a woman

The authors argue that the existence of such clichés conditions the world to accept that women should play second fiddle to men, and this seals the fate of women as they are expected to remain in the shadows of their husbands, fathers and brothers. Women continue to be treated as peripheral participants of world affairs yet they are actually central to the whole development process considering that they make up more than 50% of the world's population (SADC Gender Report, 2013).

Maseko, (2013) also argues that due to the glass ceiling, most women continue to suffer discrimination in the workplace as this invisible wall separates them from top-level management. The author argues that the few women that manage to break the glass ceiling often continue to face challenges in the workplace and this impacts negatively on their performance. Winn in Mapolisa and Madziyire (2012) observes that the world has failed to move beyond tokenism except for a few cases of genuine women representation. The author argues that men still hold



the biggest stake in top management and these gender imbalances show that challenges still exist for women.

The glass ceiling reinforces the gender stereotypes of women's lack of leadership capacity and thus marginalisation and disempowerment of women continues. In Africa, the glass ceiling is a reality and continues to be a topical issue (The SADC Gender Monitor, 2013), hence the motivation of this study to further explore these socio-cultural challenges in an attempt to search for answers to female advancement in leadership.

#### ***2.4.12 Lack of political will***

##### **Feminisation of deputy positions, honorary males, title glorification**

There is a school of thought that in as much as socio-political and economic systems pretend to push for women empowerment, in reality the system is paranoid and reluctant to promote the advancement of women because the system remains deeply entrenched in patriarchy (Longwe, 2002, Kwinjeh, 2010). The authors intimate that the system propels only a few women to the top whom they socialize to become 'honorary males' or "token females" who then collude with the patriarchal system in exploiting fellow women. Such women are made to believe that women already have equality since the "token females" have managed to reach the top. This argument seems valid to a large extent in the African context where women at the top do not quite turn back to pull their fellow sisters along the empowerment drive, rather they keep them in the periphery where in politics they play the role of singers and dancers (Dodo, 2013, Hove 2012). The "honorary males" cannot be part of the process of female empowerment; rather they are part of the problem that needs to be dealt with (Longwe, 2002).

Governments in Africa have been criticised for “feminization of deputy positions” (Dube, 2013). These governments have managed to fake gender equality by giving women honorary titles that in the form of deputy positions in which women rarely make decisions. This is especially true for Zimbabwe where ministerial positions and other are largely deputized by women; validating the argument that the male-dominated governments lack the political drive to empower women.

The US has been particularly singled out as having made significant strides in gender equality through “title glorification” and other institutions are following suit (Shames, n.d). This involves renaming of previous roles and giving them new names with management connotations yet in reality, these positions do not exercise any significant power in decision making. For example, secretary is now called an administration assistant yet she or he does not wield and decision making power. This shows the paranoia that characterises the patriarchal system in terms of female empowerment. The response to legal pressure is lukewarm and there is no genuine commitment to gender equality in leadership.

#### ***2.4.13 Gender Bias***

Gender bias refers to the tendency of favouring females or males on the basis of gender rather than any other particular attributes (Mudeka notes, n.d). In a study by Grant Thornton (2015) gender bias was cited by 41% of African women in their study who felt that their working environment was unsupportive and was characteristic of covert gender bias. The women cited the nature of questions that they were asked in the recruitment processes as having covert overtones of gender bias. Others also indicated the often in meetings, their male counterparts got better

reception after repeating the same points/arguments they would have raised earlier, implying that these societies are macho-dominated and they do not value female leadership.

These various challenges that are highlighted in the review of literature formed a major push to embark on this study to also examine the socio-cultural challenges to female leadership in the local context.

## **2.5 Redressing gender inequality: Strategies**

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) urges that in addition to government efforts, various actors need to make a commitment to support women's participation in power structures and decision making positions. The convention points out that gender inequality should not be viewed as a government problem, but the private sector, academic institutions; political parties as well as employer organisations should establish time-specific targets and time plans on how to improve female representation in leadership.

The SADC Protocol on gender pushed for 50-50 representation by 2015 through use of affirmative action and elimination of challenges that prevent women from meaningful participation in all spheres of life. However, despite being a signatory to the SADC protocol, Zimbabwe reduced its target to 30%, and even then, the country has failed to achieve 30% female representation. This shows that it is not sufficient to put targets and plans in place, but more should be done if gender disparity is to be achieved.

The country has a National Gender Machinery in place, the MWAGCD which is theoretically mandated to spearhead gender issues in the country including raising awareness on gender

equality. However, the NGM has been criticised as it represents failure since it is underfunded to carry out its mandate (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012).

Maseko (2013) argues that there is need for a radical resocialisation of women to make them aware of how culture creates a huge gap between women and men and further educate women so they can disentangle themselves from the cultural prison of patriarchy.

The SADC Gender Monitor (2013) also notes that systemic and institutional challenges should be removed to enable women's participation. Section 17 of Zimbabwe's constitution requires the state to promote 50-50 women's participation, but despite the requirement being carried in the country's supreme law, women are under-represented in leadership. This shows that achieving gender parity requires shifting cultural norms in addition to having entitlements in the Constitution and other gender protocols (Zimbabwe Country Analysis, 2014).

Because it has taken forever for Africa to achieve women empowerment and fair representation where they expected to find their space within the existing socio-cultural, economic and political system, the term women's emancipation needs to be redefined (Longwe, 2002). The author argues that in Africa, women empowerment should be about dismantling gender apartheid which has hitherto been standing in the way of women's advancement. Patriarchy has been criticised for perpetuating female subordination by legitimising gender discrimination through traditional norms and values that regard gender inequality as natural and normal. The author further argues that the true empowerment of women involves rejecting old habits of female subordination and a change in perceptions of gender discrimination as just and morally acceptable (Longwe 2014).

The author lobbies for feminist consciousness raising to make women aware of the gender injustice around them and their rights (Longwe, 2002).

In a research they conducted for Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) in Mutasa, one of the districts in Manicaland, Wallace and Klirodotakou (2015) noted that once women received new skills and knowledge through trainings, their social standing in the community was raised as they were then considered for leadership. Traditional leadership was also reported to be valuing trained women and would seek their opinion in decision making. This underscores the importance of providing equal educational opportunities as one way of breaking the challenges that prohibit female advancement in leadership.

### ***2.5.1 Encouragement***

Some people have raised the argument that maybe women are being thrust into leadership when they have absolutely no desire to lead. In a study carried out by KPMG (n.d) on female leadership, the findings showed that there was no shortage of ambition among women surveyed as 60% of the professional women aspired to be a senior leader, but there was a strange disconnect; there was something that was holding them back. Research has shown that encouragement plays a key role in washing away hesitation hence the need for women to receive all the support they can get instead of being viewed as less capable by their male colleagues and “honorary males.”

There are factors that are integral to the development trajectory of leadership among women as identified by KPMG (n.d). In their research, they found that the following factors strongly influence the path to leadership:

### ***2.5.2 Socialisation***

The report suggests that a woman's predisposition to lead does not start in adulthood; rather it begins in the formative years hence the need for nurturing so as to ensure a solid foundation for future leadership. Studies have shown that early exposure to leadership as well as childhood lessons on leadership have a significant bearing on a woman's perceptions of her capacity to lead (KPMG, n.d). This is the time when views of leadership begin to take shape and values take root. This aspect of grooming the girl child for leadership is lacking in African traditional societies, hence the gender disparities that are evident in terms of leadership (Maseko, 2013).

### ***2.5.3 Role modeling and confidence building***

Various studies on women and leadership have shown that many women have low self-esteem and they lack confidence (Chabaya et al, 2009). They further argue that women have indicated that they lack support from their family and the workplace. A study by KPMG (n.d) also showed that when it comes to taking leadership roles in adulthood, women struggled with their confidence even though they were regarded as intelligent and were once leaders in high school. Having a role model earlier on in life and having a strong professional network was found to have a critical influence on how women perceived leadership; and it also helped to create and boost the much-needed confidence. Therefore, there should also be initiatives to help women

build their confidence instead of questioning their abilities as happens when women miss their step in their leadership roles (KPMG, n.d.).

#### ***2.5.4 Creating a circle of trust***

Research has shown that connecting women is key in the evolution of female leadership to facilitate woman to woman engagement and mentoring. This is especially true as research has also shown that female leaders tended to feel lonely as the leadership environment was male dominated; and this loneliness further decimated their confidence to discharge their leadership duties (Dodo, 2013; Madziyire and Mapolisa, 2012; Chabaya 2009). The presence of women in key-decision-making positions is a networking opportunity that can help women advance in their careers.

CEDAW Report on Zimbabwe (2012), recommends collaborative efforts between government, civil society, religious leaders and traditional leaders to raise awareness among men and women in order to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that work against women advancement. The report also recommends media involvement to make them appreciate equality of women and men, and portray a balance and non-stereotypical picture of women and men. The report suggested strengthening of monitoring mechanisms in order to assess gender equality progress and take appropriate action. This is especially true considering that data on female leadership in Zimbabwe is scarce, implying that the monitoring aspect is weak.

### ***2.5.5 Legal and policy reform***

Kambarami (2006) recommends that in addition to re-socialisation, there should be commitment to legal and policy reform in light of international standards in order to build an environment that accommodates women, and laws should accord them similar freedoms to their male counterparts. However, the international human rights framework such the CEDAW and the UNDHR protect the three human rights of freedom of religion/beliefs, the right to enjoy one's culture and the right to gender equality, hence it becomes a dilemma to depend on legal and policy framework as an agent of change to achieve gender equality (Raday, 2003). Furthermore, universal normative consensus is difficult against a background of diverse cultural and contextual realities (Sibanda, 2003), hence more work lies with dismantling systemic and institutional challenges so as to create an enabling environment for women to equally participate in Zimbabwe's development processes.

### ***2.5.6 Use of quotas***

This study acknowledges that Zimbabwe has spelt quota systems in the 2013 Constitution in order to increase female participation in the National Assembly, the Senate and the Independent Commissions. However, the constitution does not provide a quota for local government yet these grassroots leadership structures provide opportunities to groom leaders for bigger posts. Female representation in local authorities fell from 19% to 16% in 2013 compared to 31% women in parliament, and this drop can largely be blamed on the absence of quota systems (Zimbabwe Country Analysis, 2014).

Quota systems are aimed at directly increasing female participation as they have the capacity to bypass discrimination by dictating that certain positions should be reserved for women (Pande



and Ford, 2011). Therefore, government and civil society should push for more quotas in various sectors to ensure a rise in female representation.

### ***2.5.7 Mentoring***

Studies that have been conducted in the past have shown that women that received mentoring were more successful in terms of rising to the top. The managing director of Cargill, Zimbabwe, Priscilla Mutembwa reflects on her experiences in a study carried out by World Congress of Accountants (2015). “I have benefitted tremendously from mentoring and I would recommend it to any woman who is serious about rising to the top.” The study argues that with the right mentoring, women will be in a position to overcome such challenges as lack of confidence and self-belief that are often cited as inhibiting women in leadership, and there was no better way to learn from someone that had previously walked the same path. This also provided the upcoming leaders with the much needed support as it got lonely higher up the leadership ladder.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

This study conceives a theoretical framework as the structure that hypothesizes the research problem and guides the process of building knowledge (Maseko, 2013). This study was guided by the Conflict Perspective, the Feminist theory, Great Man Theory of Leadership and the Functionalist theory.

Traditionally, leadership has been perceived as masculine and the notion that men make better leaders is deeply entrenched even in today’s society. Although numbers of female leaders have increase, scholars argue that women leaders are habitually named as an afterthought since top-leadership is regarded as a male sphere (Maseko, 2013). Hojgaard in Maseko (2013) argues that

African culture believes that men should lead while women follow as reflected in Africa's traditional leadership structure.

### ***2.6.1 The Conflict Theory***

The Conflict Theory postulates that society is a stage on which struggles for power and dominance are acted out. The theory further argues that society is composed of different interest groups that are competing for power and resources. The school of thought further explains how the world's social arrangement propels certain groups into positions of domination while pushing others into peripheral roles (Mooney et al, 2007); as reflected in the traditional African leadership structures that are dominated by men and perpetuate female insubordination. The origins of the Conflict Theory can be traced back to the works of Karl Marx and recognizes and acknowledges that women are in positions of subordination owing to the patriarchal nature of the society they live in.

Research has shown that because of biological differences, women are disadvantaged as the theory facilitates division of labour within society thereby relegating women to caring duties in the home while men are allocated duties outside the home. Mapolisa and Madziyire (2012) argue that this explains the gender disparities in such areas as Zimbabwe's judiciary system, the police and army, and education. Many researchers have relied on the Conflict Theory to explain gender inequality, but the theory does not specify the nature of challenges that women face. This study, therefore, focuses on articulating these challenges and suggesting solutions by taking an in-depth look at women's participation in leadership in Manicaland. The research also sought to refute or validate the claims put forward by this theory.

### ***2.6.2 The Feminist Theory***

The Feminist Theory is rooted in the Conflict Perspective and it argues that society is patriarchal; economic, political and social structures are controlled by men and they ought to be changed in order to address gender inequality. Women that would have broken the glass ceiling and managed to penetrate the male-dominated world, face loneliness and dilemmas related to discrimination on the basis of gender (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012). In view of the Conflict perspective and the Feminist theory, this study will explore the extent to which women's challenges to leadership are a result of patriarchy and the world's social arrangement.

### ***2.6.3 "Great Man" Theories (GMT)***

#### ***Origins of the GMT***

The Great Man theory (GMT) was formulated by studying the behaviours of 19<sup>th</sup> century military leaders, many of whom happened to be male, and the theory got popularized around that period (Eckmann, 2005). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, authoritative positions were solely held by men since women were not given the opportunity to rise, hence the theory was named Great Man Theory (Eckmann, 2005). This theory has received great recognition from the likes of famous historian Thomas Carlyle, who is on record for stating that the world's history is nothing more than just a combined biography of great men (Eckmann, 2005; Bolden, 2004). These are theories that assume that leaders are born and not made. The theories reflect the patriarchal nature of traditional society, which believed that great leadership had male qualities and it came from men. Researchers who lean on the GMT do so with the belief that people are born into leadership and they argue with examples from royalty, high ranking military officers, captains of industry and

other privileged classes where hereditary titles were held (Penn,n.d, Nwobodo, n.d.). An authentic study was carried out by Galton to validate the GMT. He looked at the hereditary backgrounds of great men and attempted to explain leadership on the basis of inheritance. Further studies were carried out by Woods who looked at leadership of fourteen nations over a period of five to ten centuries. Woods noted that brothers of kings also tended to become men of great influence and power, and this was a result of natural endowment, and he concluded that man had the capacity make and shape the nation (Biju, 2010, MacAuthur, 2011).

### ***Implications to leadership***

Indeed today, there are many people that value this traditional belief although it seems old-fashioned, conservative and appears to have no room in contemporary leadership literature; they argue that studies of famous royal and military leaders support this assertion (Yaverbaum and Sherman, 2008). In a study carried out by Eckmann (2005) using personal voice, a technique used in studying personal experience, the researcher noted that the leaders that she worked for lost their humility after studying the GMT literature.

There is criticism of GMT that most of the researches that were done were carried out by males, hence creating what Eckmann (2005) calls a golden opportunity for bias in early leadership literature. The author further argues that even some of the current literature on leadership is rooted in GMT, and have an underlying premise that all good are accomplished by the sheer brilliance of a male leader. Giuliani's leadership book published in 2002 is highlighted as some of the current literature on leadership that glorifies the works of men and how they can change the world, but women are never highlighted. Such literature is also criticised for impacting

negatively on female leadership as Eckmann draws from her personal experience that she became a leader but was not “born for leadership”, she did not come from royalty nor an educated elitist family, she felt lacking in the traits that were ascribed to “great men”; masculinity, dominance and conservatism. She therefore, felt she was inadequate as a leader and she felt an urge to change her feminine identity so as to be perceived as a successful leader.

African tradition and culture is in tandem with the Great Man Theory that eulogises the male species as more intelligent than the female leaders; and these beliefs are so strong that women themselves have internalised the prejudice. They no longer demand the right to participate as they have come to underestimate their leadership capacities (Davidson & Burke in Mapolisa and Madziyire, 2012). However, this notion has been challenged as needing verification to prove that better managers are masculine; hence men are more influential than women that tend to be more easily influenced by their environment. These are the sexist tendencies that female leaders face in their day-to-day work as managers, and they have to work twice as much as men to prove that they are capable.

Recent literature on leadership has opened new doors for women with the option of a collaborative leadership model that invites both women and men to participate in leadership. Researchers such as Herbert Spencer countered the GMT argument that viewed great leadership as synonymous with great men. Spencer intimated that such great men were the products of their societies, and their actions would be impossible without the social conditions built before their lifetime, hence dismissing Carlyle opinion that leadership is inherent in men (Biju, 2010). Leadership has also been separated from the accomplishments of individual men by such

scholars as Heifetz, (2000) who argues that anyone can exercise leadership, thereby bringing the much needed transformation and opportunity for female participation. The theory glorifies patriarchal beliefs hence, prejudice female leadership can be partially blamed on such theories that promote female subordination; the theory assumes that women and other people from the lower classes do not measure up when it comes to leadership.

#### ***2.6.4 The Functionalist Theory***

Structural functionalism espouses that society is a complex interconnected system whose different organs work together to promote harmony, solidarity and social equilibrium (Mooney et al, 2007). The theory was popularized by such scholars as August Comte, Emile Durkheim and Hebert Spencer among others, and it espouses that in society, men fulfill functional duties while women fulfill expressive roles and the proponents argue that this is what maintains society's stability and balance (Russel in Kambarami, 2006). For example, girls are socialised into homemaking and caring for the younger members of the family, while boys already take up tough, masculine tasks of providing for the family and participate in decision making. These activities have a bearing on the children's attitudes and beliefs and eventual choice of careers as their aspirations are shaped by the socialization process (Kambarami, 2006).

At the end of the day, women and girls aspire to be good wives and mothers, and not leaders in society as they fulfill their function. Sadly, functionalists do not treat women and men as equals and they further perpetuate gender inequality and female subordination (Mapolisa and Madziyire, 2012). The theory is a major force of gender inequality as it socializes people into prescribed gender roles thereby depriving them of choice to pursue their ambitions. Considering

the foregoing discussion, the study was motivated to explore the extent to which these traditional views of prescribing gender roles impact as a barrier to female leadership in Manicaland.

## **2.7 Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a visual or written product that explains in graphical form or in narrative form, the key issues to be studied and the supposed relationships that exist between them (Ravich and Regan, 2011). The conceptual framework facilitates with research design and helps researcher in developing realistic and relevant research questions. It is a tentative theory that a research seeks to validate.

Based on the foregoing discussion, women are the most marginalized in society be it socially, politically and economically even though they make up more than 50% of the world population (Zungura, et al., 2013). They still occupy peripheral positions in society and they have been relegated to mere spectators in the development discourse owing to various socio-cultural factors such patriarchy, gender stereotypes and gender discrimination. Although international conventions such as CEDAW provide for equality between women and men in participation in policy formulation and decision making, many countries including Zimbabwe have failed to adhere to the provisions of CEDAW as female representation in decision making positions remains low. Zimbabwe is also criticized for its failure to ratify the CEDAW thereby making its implementation ornamental in nature (Zungura, et al., 2013).

This study examined the extent to which such socio-cultural values contribute to sidelining women because of their lowly rated sex thereby entrenching feminization of poverty in Manicaland Province. The dissertation had its foundations in the Sarah Longwe framework

which intimates that true empowerment of women lies in their ability to take control of socio-economic and political factors, so as to equally and meaningfully participate in the development agenda (Longwe, 2014). The gender expert argues that men are all out to preserve and perpetuate the male domination of leadership positions so that they can continue to serve their own interests. As such, it would be foolhardy for women to expect recognition of their value from their male colleagues and provide for gender equality. She makes reference to previous experience that serves as proof that power is never given, but it has to be taken in order to improve the socio-economic and political status of women (Longwe, 2002).

### ***2.7.1 Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework***

In her “Women’s Empowerment Framework” Longwe identifies five stages of the empowerment process, which does not necessarily follow a linear process (Longwe, 2002). However, this study is grounded more in the last four levels of the empowerment framework which have an emphasis on equality. The last 4 levels suggest that women make inroads to improving their own status, and they should not wait to be given benefits. The framework is explicitly about power dynamics, she argues that women’s poverty is a result of oppression and exploitation by men rather than lack of productivity; hence women should be empowered at various levels including leadership, to reduce poverty (Kabeer, 1994).

- Welfare
- Access
- Conscientisation
- Mobilisation



➤ Control

**Welfare (Zero level of empowerment)**

At this level, women are passive recipients of benefits that focus on provision of socio-economic status such as shelter, medical care, income and nutrition. Teberg (2011) argues that this level does not empower women as they are not part of the active creators of their material needs; hence the level is not sustainable. It is the level that reflects patriarchal beliefs that legitimise gender discrimination; the notion of treating women as minors who ought to be inactive recipients of material needs while men stay in power to make all the decisions, including those that affect women. This dissertation shows that women are not contented to be at this level where they are confined to their traditional roles, but they need more empowerment rather than remaining in their private sphere.

**Access (first level of empowerment)**

The Access level marks the beginning of empowerment as it tackles the question of women's access to resources such as land, market and skills training, in a bid to improve their own status (Longwe 2002). The gender gap that exists at the welfare level is a result of inequality in accessing opportunities; hence this level redresses the observable gap between women and men in terms of access to resources (Teberg, 2011). Once women have gained access to resources, they are automatically propelled to the next level of empowerment, conscientisation. At this level, access to education and skills training for empowerment comes into focus as Longwe (1999) argues that education that is empowering has to be taken. She argues that education that is given by those in power is designed only to achieve subordination; hence women should be wary

of education that is provided by the powerful to the powerless. This dissertation linked the question of education to leadership since education was believed to be key in providing leadership opportunities and grooming future leaders.

However, the realities on the ground as reflected in the literature review, suggest that there are underlying issues of power and control entrenched in the longstanding tradition that worships male supremacy, thereby leaving women with little access and control of resources (Longwe, 2002).

### **Conscientisation Level - Social change is on the agenda**

At the conscientisation level, women are not only able to recognise and analyse their problems, but they take collective action to solve them. Women now come to the realization that their inferior status as compared to men is not necessarily due to women's lack of capacity, but a result of discriminatory tendencies that give priority to men for access and control of resources. It is at this stage that dissatisfied women and their leadership take determined action to liberate themselves (Longwe, 2002).

### **Mobilisation/Participation**

The mobilisation process involves collective analysis of gender issues and collective action after the realization that an individual woman in the home will not likely challenge traditional norms and values that accounts for gender discrimination. The level emphasizes the power of numbers and connection among women (Teberg, 2011). The mobilization process complements the conscientisation process but at this stage women join the global sisterhood in the struggle for gender parity and the realization of women's rights, with special focus on redefining

participation in decision making processes (Longwe, 2002). This level is also concerned with equal participation in policymaking, planning and administration (Kabeer, 1994). This level of empowerment is premised on the belief that in politics, nothing is given, hence the process of empowerment is characterised by generating sufficient mobilisation so that power can be taken. If women wait to be handed power on a silver platter, they will wait forever (Stromquist, 1999).

In Zimbabwe, the women's movement emerged around 1983 with the birth of such organisations as Women's Action Group (WAG), whose motivation was the creation of a 'safe space' for women to mobilise and articulate their issues. However, despite having legal reform and other structures that serve the interests of women, the battle for women's emancipation continues as these structures are merely vehicles for sloganeering and perpetuating female subordination (Kwinjeh, 2010). The author criticises the Ministry of Women's Affairs which was set up in 1981 and is still in existence, but this model of governance has been used not as a vehicle of change, but a tool to advance male superiority by compartmentalizing women based on polarized political positions for survival. Therefore, the struggle for women's emancipation continues in Zimbabwe and the rest of the world as women fight for equal recognition and representation.

The Mobilisation level and the Control stage to be explained below, form the crux of this dissertation. The literature review showed that unless women mobilise themselves and push for participation in leadership, they will remain at the periphery of the development discourse with continued domination by men.

## **Control**

This level marks the achievement by women of gender equality in decision making; neither women nor men are in the position of dominance. Women now have power alongside men and no longer wait for patriarchal authority to influence their destiny and society at large.

Longwe intimates that the five levels do not necessarily occur in linear progression; rather the empowerment process is an interconnected cycle of fighting discrimination and oppression (Lonwe, 2002, Teberg, 2011). The women's empowerment framework is a political model, and it suggests that women's inequality is a result of structural oppression that ought to be dismantled in a bid to empower women (Pittman, 2010). The framework provides a relevant foundation to this problem explored by this study; that despite having various legal statutes, the world is yet to achieve fair representation in decision making. This shows that there is more at play than the mere absence of legal tools; patriarchal ideology is ruling and it is setting limits on women's advancement.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of different debates surrounding socio-cultural challenges in female representation in the private and public sector. Gender inequality has been articulated from the global and regional perspective, in order to provide a comparative analysis for the gender disparities in Zimbabwe. Various studies have found the major bottlenecks to be the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society which seems to influence attempts at female participation. These debates were premised on the Conflict Theory by Werber which explains that social relations are characterised by domination and power, and division of roles along

gender lines hence pushing the weaker groups of society into subordination. The Feminist Theory has also been highlighted for explaining that society is patriarchal; and socio-economic and political structures are controlled by men and gender parity cannot be achieved until such structures are disbanded to rid them of male domination.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter looks at the methods and procedures that were used in carrying out this study. The key aspects that are discussed include a recap of the problem as highlighted in Chapter 1, the study setting and design, the sampling procedures. The purpose of this study as highlighted in Chapter 1 was to examine the extent to which women participate in leadership in Manicaland, and assess the socio-cultural factors that work against female participation in leadership. This is against the background that since the Beijing Platform for Action in 1999 that agitated for equal representation, studies show that female representation around the world is between 20% and 40%, and in Zimbabwe it is around 25% (SADC Gender Monitor, 2013). Socio-cultural factors such as patriarchy and gender stereotyping have been blamed as the major challenges to women's advancement in leadership. Feminists have argued that unless there is resocialisation, the playing ground remains uneven for females to advance in key decision making positions within the public sphere.

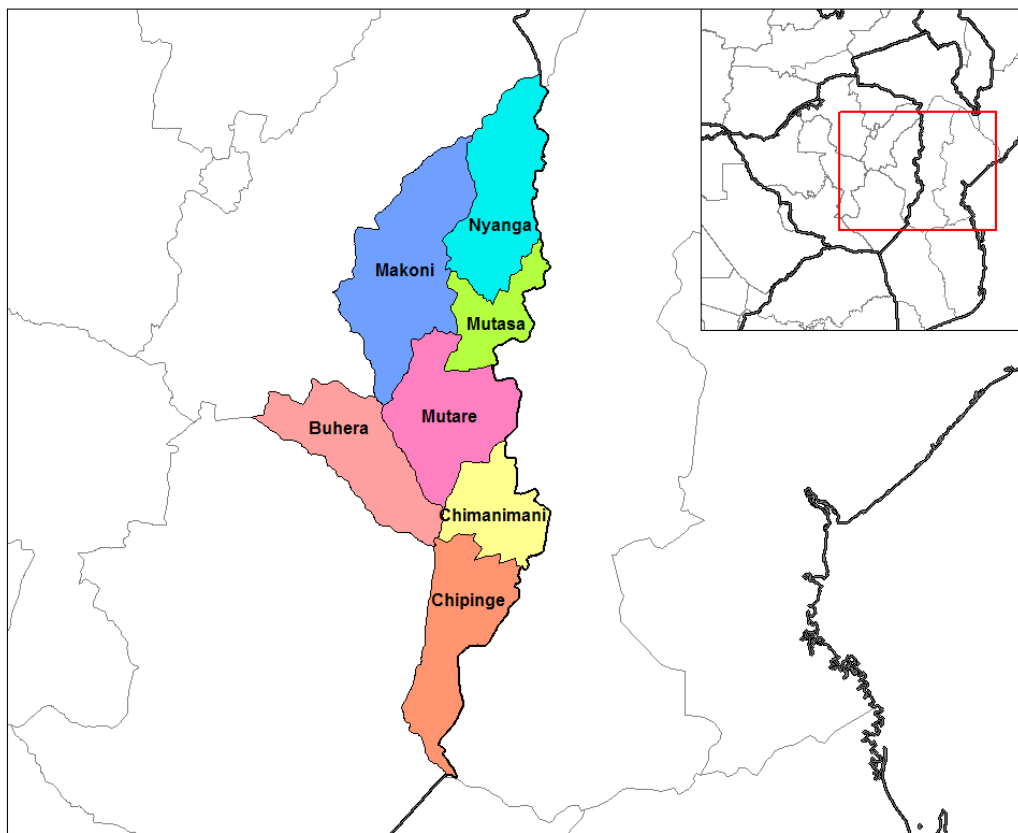
This study further looked at possible measures that can be put in place to address such challenges, and the practicability of carrying out such.

### **3.2 Study Setting**

The study was carried out in Mutare, the provincial capital of Manicaland which housed Provincial leaders of various departments, both government and private. Manicaland Province consists of seven districts: Nyanga, Mutasa, Makoni, Mutare, Buhera, Chimanimani and

Chipinge, and it was home to a total of 1,752,638 people of which 53% (922001) of them were women and girls (Zimstat, 2012). The study was motivated to document the experiences of female provincial leadership, which was considered to be the pinnacle of leadership in the province, as well as lower-level leadership such as female students' representatives and ward councillors.

### ***Map of Manicaland Province***



***Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org>***

### 3.3 Study Design

A study design refers to the way in which a study is protected from potential hazards to its validity, and the design involves setting up procedures to guard against these potential threats to the credibility and reliability of the study (Fischer, *et al* 2008). This study falls within a qualitative research paradigm; and as such it sought to provide in-depth understanding of socio-cultural challenges to leadership as seen through the eyes women. Qualitative research refers to a set of techniques that are often used in social science and marketing in which data is collected from a relatively small number of participants. Analysis of qualitative research is not statistical, but it involves detailed verbal descriptions of the phenomenon under study (Meurer, W. J. *et al*2007).The objective of a qualitative research is not statistical inference; hence this research did not place emphasis on the size of the sample, but focused on the quality and richness of data that was generated (Maxwell, 2008). However, the results of the study can still be used to inform gender policy; hence some form of generalization is inevitable.

This qualitative study is characterized by exploring aspects of social life through the use of flexible instruments such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (Cochran and Patton, 2003). Data in qualitative research is in the form of words and not numbers; it is designed to reveal and explain the perceptions, attitudes and feelings of a target population towards a certain issue (Qualitative Research Consultants, 2014), hence the researcher used in-depth interviews to get personal perspectives and first hand experiences from women in leadership positions in Manicaland Province. The uniqueness of qualitative research lies in its capacity to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given subject of research



providing information on beliefs, gender roles, behaviours, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals (FHI, n.d).

Furthermore, qualitative studies are not bogged down by matters of external validity, since their purpose is to obtain rich and textured knowledge about people's experience of a particular phenomenon (Fischer, 2008). Likewise, this study did not place a lot of emphasis on sample size since the intention was not to generalize the findings, but to focus narrowly and deeply on female leadership in Manicaland.

### ***3.3.1 Target population and participant selection***

#### **Population**

A population is the larger group of people who experience the problem under investigation (Maxwell, 2008). It is from this group of individuals from which a sample for research is drawn (Sindhu, 2012). In this study, the population was indigenous Zimbabwean women who participate in public or private leadership roles.

#### **Sampling methods**

A sample refers to the selected group of people from whom data is collected and actually participate in the study. This follows that it is a subgroup of a population and should, therefore be truly representative of the characteristics of a population (Latham, 2007, Fischer, 2008). Qualitative researchers suffer from the dilemma of wanting data-rich participants while at the same time struggling to get a sample that faithfully represents the research problem. The researcher made use of purposive sampling according to pre-selected criteria that was relevant to

the research question. Sampling assumed a two-pronged approach where women in leadership and women not in leadership were interviewed.

### **Definition of Leadership**

For the purposes of this research, female leadership was used to refer to women that were holding a substantive key decision-making position at provincial level as number one or as deputy, either elected or appointed or by merit. These are women that have had access to education and are playing a crucial leadership role in the community. The following list of key informants was generated based on the knowledge of the researcher, and it was used to send out invitations to potential participants in the in-depth interview:

### **List of Provincial Leaders in Manicaland**

	<b>Position</b>	<b>Department</b>
1	Resident Minister	Government
2	Manicaland Senator	Government
3	Principal Marymount Teachers' College	Government
4	Principal Mutare Polytechnical College	Government
5	Provincial Medical Director	Government
6	Provincial Head - MWGCD	Government
7	Deputy Provincial Education Director	Government
8	Provincial Head: Min of Youth,	Government
9	Executive Director: Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT)	NGO

10	Mutare Branch Manager – Steward Bank	Private
11	Department of Registrar	Government

### **Definition of non-leadership**

The researcher recruited college students who were in the Students’ Representative Council from two colleges in Mutare to represent non-leaders. This was done so as to explore why women tend to fizzle out along the leadership hierarchy when they usually hold leadership positions at grassroots level. Views of ordinary women were also sought in a third FGD to get their perceptions on female leadership and what they perceived as socio-cultural challenges from an ordinary observer’s point of view. Views of women’s organisations were solicited in addition to those of MWAGCD.

This study made use of non-probability sampling methods (convenience and purposive sampling) because of their convenience and low cost as observed by Babbie in Latham (2007). Furthermore, the sampling methods afforded the researcher an opportunity to probe for rich data on the attitudes, beliefs and feelings of ordinary women and those in leadership, as well as social and cultural practices pertaining to the research problem (Mugwenhi et al, 2011).

Convenience sampling was done for non-leaders to get their perceptions on what they thought about female leadership and the socio-cultural challenges that affected women in leadership. This sampling method was also used to examine the aspirations of ordinary women with regards to occupation of key decision making positions. The economic principle of rationality argues that a human being aspires for more and will strive to reach their goals; hence this sample was used to interrogate the socio-cultural challenges that aspirants face in climbing the leadership ladder

despite them possessing the right qualifications (Vandamme, 1974). Longwe's empowerment framework intimates that it is not sufficient for women to meet only their welfare needs and be able to get income, but true empowerment should be brought about by the desire to participate in decision making, hence the research sought to get the opinion of ordinary women on why they were failing to achieve fair representation (Longwe, 1999). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, non-leadership referred to individual professional women who did not hold any influential position within their communities.

Purposive sampling was used for the second subgroup of women that already occupy positions of leadership within the Manicaland Province. Fischer et al (2008) refer to purposive sampling as the deliberate selection of participants on the basis of their capacity to give meaningful information about the question. The researcher interviewed women that were holding public office in Manicaland Province in government ministries and departments, as well as in the non-governmental sector. Government departments were of particular interest in this study because the researcher perceived government as a key player in achieving gender parity; hence it was interesting to see the level of effort in implementation and the environment within which these efforts were being made. For the purposes of this research, leadership was used to imply a provincial position or deputy position within government, the private sector or the NGO sector. .

A list of female leaders in the province was obtained from the provincial office of MWAGCD who kept an inventory to show the extent of women's participation in the development trajectory and it was used as a sampling frame to get participants to the study. The selection of leaders was also based on the researcher's own knowledge of the population with regards to the requirements

of the research aims as noted by Latham (2007). Based on this knowledge of the population of female Provincial leaders in Manicaland, the researcher used the said list to rank the leaders according to their potential to generate rich data for the research. The researcher considered the level of power that each leader held, and those women wielding high political, social or economic power were placed top of the list, assuming that they had significant experience in leadership, and the researcher was motivated to document how they had managed to survive in the male dominated world of leadership.

The two non-probability methods sampling allowed the researcher to simultaneously do data collection and analysis, which was a plus considering the limited timeframe of the research. The size of the sample was determined by theoretical saturation. The sampling process was flexible and it evolved as the study progressed until the point of redundancy in emerging themes had been reached (Law et al, 1998).

### ***Guiding principles in sample selection***

This qualitative research was guided by the principles of sampling which are regarded as key in qualitative research. The first guiding principle was that the sampling techniques should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions (Curtis et al, 2000). This study used the Longwe Women's empowerment framework which posits that unless women participate in key decision making positions, they would not have achieved true empowerment. Non-probability sampling methods of convenience and purposive sampling allowed the researcher to identify women that have reached the apex of empowerment as espoused by

Longwe (1999), and also those women who were still struggling within the lower ranks of the framework.

The sampling was also guided by the need to generate rich information on the nature of socio-cultural challenges to female leadership. Miles and Huberman in Curtis et al (2000) intimate that a sample should have the capacity to generate as rich information as possible on the phenomenon under study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also advocate for feasibility of the sampling plan in terms of cost (money and time), hence the researcher settled for purposive and convenience sampling due to the limited time within which the research was conducted. The sample selection was also motivated by the researcher's competencies in terms of communication skills and the ability to relate to informants and their experience, as noted by Curtis et al (2000).

### **Sample size**

Curtis et al (2000) do not place emphasis on sample sizes for qualitative research, rather they intimate that the researcher should always balance their practical needs against the need to have meaningful findings that have adequate depth. However, the authors argue that for qualitative studies, a sample size between 7 and 15 is usually adequate. This study being a qualitative study, the researcher did not make a decision on numbers; rather the numbers were guided by the themes that were generated by the participants that were purposively sampled as the researcher aimed at reaching the point of saturation, also bearing in mind the time limitations of the study.

Ellis & Levy (2009) also argue that there is no need for statistical significance in qualitative research since the investigation aims for depth and breadth. Furthermore, a large sample in a qualitative study would inhibit the effective analysis of data considering the large numbers of in-depth interviews.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedures**

#### ***Inclusion criteria***

The inclusion criteria was guided by Cohen *et al* (2005) who articulate that in qualitative research, the characteristics of individuals are considered as a basis for selection, as long as they are perceived as sources of rich data.

#### **Participants in In-depth Interviews (IDI)**

- Age 18-64 (legal working and retirement age in Zimbabwe)
- Indigenous (born and bred in Zimbabwe) women occupying leadership positions in the Public sector or the Private sector at provincial level.
- Ethnicity Shona or Ndebele women – since focus was on socio-cultural challenges, the researcher needed to maintain focus on local tradition and culture and assess any nexus with female leadership. Since the study looked at socio-cultural challenges, this facilitated focus on Zimbabwean tradition and cultural practices that subjugate women to peripheral roles in the private sphere.

### **Participants in Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

- Ordinary college women older than 18 years but below 30 years of age who did not hold key decision making positions in their communities. The two FGDs explored access to educational opportunities for females at tertiary level, as well as how the system prepares females for leadership roles.
- Ordinary community women in order to get the ordinary observer's point of view.

### ***Exclusion criteria***

- Male leaders
- Women leaders who were not of African decent

### **3.5 Data Sources**

The research made use of primary and secondary data. Primary data is the original data that a researcher collects through the use of data mining instruments such as interviews and questionnaires (Sindhu, 2012). Primary data is more dependable because it has a high degree of accuracy hence more reliable (Sindhu, 2006; Oschman 2009).

On the other hand, secondary data refers to information that was collected in the past by a different party for a different purpose other than the current study (Maxwell, 2008). Secondary data sources include internal and external source; and this research used both. Internal sources were obtained from MWGCD and the Public Service Commission in order to assess the extent of female leadership in the province.



### **3.5.1 Primary Data Sources**

Primary data was collected through the use of in-depth interviews of those women occupying leadership positions as informed by the inventory within the provincial office of MWGCD. The same method of semi-structured interviews was used to collect data from leaders of women's organisations on their perceptions of challenges to gender parity in leadership. Focus group discussions were also held with ordinary women and college students to get their perceptions on socio-cultural challenges to female leadership.

### **3.5.2 Secondary Data Sources**

The researcher engaged the MWGCD who are the national gender machinery hence they play the watchdog role on progress regarding gender issues in the country. The idea was to peruse records to reflect the extent to which women in Manicaland occupied leadership positions, and to get those individual's opinions regarding their experience as leaders in a male-dominated environment.

Triangulation was achieved by using both primary and secondary data sources, and also using two different methods of data-mining, that is, semi-structured interviews and FGDs. This was done so as to improve the credibility of the research and to have robust conclusions.

## **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews (In-depth Interviews)**

The researcher chose to make use of in-depth interviews (IDI) as this gave her leverage in depending on the prevailing situation. The other major advantage of this method as noted by

Kothari (1990) was the opportunity it gave the interviewer to explore in depth, the impact of patriarchy and cultural beliefs which scholars believe suffocate women's aspirations as far as empowerment is concerned. Because of the direct contact which allowed the researcher to build some rapport with the participants, the latter opened up and provided insight into these sensitive issues while also observing the participants' emotional feelings as they expressed how deeply they felt about socio-cultural beliefs and their impact on women. Interview guides were used to provide guidance during the interviews because of their capacity to generate in-depth data regarding the experiences and perceptions of women on the research problem (Turner, 2010). To achieve the validity of the study, interviews were coupled with three FGDs to provide the researcher with well-rounded information for analysis.

The researcher also conducted interviews with Women's organisations that agitate for gender equality (Plan International and World Vision) as well as Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWGCD), the national gender machinery responsible for implementing and monitoring gender policies. The two non-governmental organisations had running projects that focused on gender and women empowerment.

These data mining instruments have been used by various other scholars in similar qualitative studies in the region and beyond. Many scholars have successfully used qualitative methods in their studies of female leadership (Chabaya et al, (2009), Mugweni et al (2011), Mapolisa & Madziyire (2012). The researcher discovered that these data mining tools were most suitable for the dissertation since it focused on exploring similar perceptions on women and leadership.

Participants to in-depth interviews were invited by way of sending an invitation letter with an attachment of the letter of authority from college. A follow up was made through either phone calls or physical visits to confirm the participation of the candidates.

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are a formal method of interviewing a small group, about 5 to 10 participants on a topic of interest (Law et al, 1998). This method was used with a small group of ordinary women and two groups of female college students to solicit their views pertaining to socio-cultural challenges to female leadership. Furthermore, FGDs provided the researcher with an opportunity to get multiple view-points that were needed in this research in a shorter space of time compared to the individual interviews that were conducted with leaders.

The researcher conducted FGDs with three groups of women; one in a teachers' college within the Students' Representative Council and another group at a technical college to get their views as to what they perceived as socio-cultural challenges to female leadership. A third group of ordinary women who were conveniently sampled was also engaged in a FGD to explore the views of ordinary women towards the research question. The women were conveniently sampled by inviting a few women in the community in which the researcher lived to share their views. Data generated in the FGDs was used to complement data that was generated in individual interviews.

An interview guide was prepared with questions that were pertinent to the research problem for both the IDIs with leaders and FGDs with ordinary women. An FGD with leaders proved difficult as they could not be convened together due to their busy schedules.

### **3.7 Ethical issues**

According to Beauchamp and Childress (1983), a researcher has responsibility to her research participants, hence should consider the four principles of autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence and justice. The researcher took into consideration the first three principles that applied to her study.

#### ***3.7.1 The Principle of beneficence and non-maleficence***

Beauchamp and Childress (2009) describe beneficence as taking positive action to help others. It is based on two general rules as propounded by the Belmont Report; “do no harm” and “maximize benefits and minimize possible harm.” The report further states that people should be treated in an ethical manner by protecting them and respecting their decisions. UNISA (n.d) also highlights that the principle of beneficence includes freedom from harm and exploitation.

With reference to this study, there was no physical or psychological harm. There were no risks that could be associated with this research which was done for the general good of the women and the society at large, and has the potential to inform policy makers to commit to reducing gender inequality and achieving fair representation. The identities of research participants were protected by using codes instead of their names hence made the data as anonymous as was possible.

#### ***3.7.2 The Principle of autonomy***

According to Rainbow (2002), the principle of autonomy implies that individuals have control over their lives and the researcher should give them room to make independent decisions that affect their lives. In this research, the investigator, made it clear to would-be participants that

they had the right to agree or to refuse to participate in the study and their decision would be respected without jeopardizing them in any way.

### ***3.7.3 Confidentiality***

The researcher committed to respect the rights of the participants' refusal to participate in the research by making use of consent forms and assuring confidentiality. Participants in the study freely gave their consent without being coerced or unfairly pressurized. The identities of participants to the study were protected and no personal identifiers were used. Participants were coded using numbers.

### ***3.7.4 Consent***

Participation in the in-depth interviews and the FGDs was purely voluntary. Respondents who did not provide written Informed Consent were not eligible for the study. Participants had the research explained to them so that they could assess any risk, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any moment and could request for the data collected from them to be deleted and they would not be asked to explain their decision. They were also informed that should they agree to take part, the respondents had the right not to answer any of the questions included in the interview guide if they felt uncomfortable. The researcher, however, did not encounter any such challenges of participants refusing because of perceived risk; participants that refused to participate gave time constraints as they could not sit with the researcher as they held busy offices.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at the step-by-step procedures and the methodology that was used in this study. Being a qualitative study, the researcher used non-probability sampling methods convenience and purposive sampling. In-depth interviews were conducted with individual female leaders and this data was triangulated with data from focus group discussions. The primary data was complemented by data obtained from internal and external secondary sources availed by MWGCD as well as the Public Service Commission. The data that was generated is presented and analysed in Chapter 4.

# **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTEPRETATION**

## **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter has looked at the methodology and the key steps that were taken in conducting this qualitative research that looked at socio-cultural challenges that are faced by women in leadership. This chapter focuses on data presentation, description and analysis of the research findings. The data were collected in April 2016, with the aim of answering the following research questions:

1. How far do women occupy leadership positions in Manicaland Province?
2. What are the challenges that are faced by women in participation in leadership positions?
3. What measures can be put in place to address challenges that are faced by women in their quest to participate in leadership?

The data presentation is in 3 parts: the first part provides quantitative data that shows the level of female leadership in the Province. The second part provides a table carrying themes that emerged from In-depth interviews (IDI) and FGDs, with description of the key issues related to each theme. The third and final part looks at measures that were proposed by respondents as possible solutions to the gender inequality within leadership in Manicaland in particular and in Zimbabwe in general.

## **4.2 Realisation of the research method and Data Collection**

The purpose of this study was to explore the socio-cultural challenges that affect women in leadership, thus qualitative data was obtained by means of in-depth individual interviews with women that held provincial leadership posts and other lower level leaders such as ward counselors. These respondents were purposively sampled and taken through in-depth interviews with the anticipation of getting rich data for the research. Data was also obtained from FGDs with women in lower level management who were conveniently sampled from the student's representative council of two institutions of higher learning, and another group of women from the community that the researcher lived. Checklists were designed to guide the individual in-depth interviews as well as the FGDs. These data mining tools were pre-tested prior to using them with the research participants.

For data collection, the researcher made the initial contact with respondents to book appointments and seek their consent. In four cases, the key informants were on leave and this somehow delayed the data collection process. The researcher eventually had to seek the services of a research assistant to help with in-depth interviews and FGDs since time was running out. The research assistant was a holder of a Masters degree hence the researcher was confident with the quality of his data collection. However, as part of preparing him, he was given an orientation on the use of the tools and the technique for data collection. For students, express permission to work with them was sought from the principals of the two college.

After doing two IDIs, the researcher noted that there was need to involve women in lower level management as had been reflected by data from these two interviews. As such, IDIs were planned and conducted with two ward councillors in Mutare.



## List of Participants in the IDI

	<b>Position</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>IDI Done (Yes/No)</b>
1	Resident Minister	Political position	No
2	Manicaland Senator	Political position	No
3	Principal Marymount Teachers' College	Government	Yes
4	Principal Mutare Polytechnical College	Government	Yes
5	Provincial Medical director	Government	Yes
6	Provincial Head - MWGCD	Government	Yes
7	Deputy Provincial Education Director	Government	No
8	Provincial Head: Min of Youth	Government	Yes
9	Director: Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT)	NGO	Yes
10	Mutare Branch Manager – Steward Bank	Private	Yes
11	Provincial of Registrar	Government	Yes
12	Ward Councillor (Sakubva)	Political position	Yes
13	Ward Councillor (Greenside)	Political position	Yes

The researcher could not do IDIs with all the participants that had been purposively sampled since some of them were committed and others simply could not grant the researcher an interview as they were not comfortable with sharing their experiences. However, this did not affect the quality of the data collected nor the study, since qualitative studies focus more on the richness of data rather than statistical significance.

## **Focus Group Discussions**

FGDs were held with two groups of female students from a local teachers' college and polytechnical college, and a third FGD was held with a group of ordinary women in the community that researcher resided. The group was conveniently sampled since the researcher was facing time constraints in terms of making appointments with different respondents.

### **4.3 Data management and analysis**

Data analysis refers to the systematic organisation and synthesis of research data (Polit and Hungler, 1997). The qualitative data collected from IDIs and FGDs were analysed manually through construction of themes and matrices. As data collection progressed each day, the researcher went on to identify pertinent and critical themes that were emerging in the early stages of data generation in order to guide the subsequent in-depth interviews. This gave the researcher control in terms of identifying the point of saturation. The point of saturation is that time in point at which new qualitative data no longer generates new themes, and this is an indication to the researcher to halt the data collection process (Sindhu, 2012).

The collected data was then coded and later classified into themes that were developed based on the interpretation of underlying meaning on a higher analytical level as compared to the more descriptive categories. Relevant individual quotations related to certain themes were also identified.

## **4.4 Data Presentation**

### ***4.4.1 The Extent of female leadership in Manicaland***

#### **Leadership in Girls High Schools**

Comprehensive data could not be obtained from various government departments due to bureaucratic challenges. The introductory letter from the college was not considered sufficient to facilitate authorisation to gather statistical data. However, Oyedele et al (2010) provide insight into the level of female leadership in education. The authors highlight that Mutare District had 202 schools (=202 heads) and 60 % of the total number of teachers were women, but only 15 women (7%) held posts as heads. Even girls high schools such as Bonda Girls' High, Kriste Mambo High School, St Marys Magdalene and Knowstics Academy are headed by men, except for two (Mutare Girls High and Lydia Chimonyo). This is despite the availability of women whose academic achievements qualify them for such posts. Women have been documented as declining offers to head schools due to challenges of separation with their families since usually first time heads were given schools in the periphery. The women themselves appeared to have no appetite for leadership if it interferes with family life, yet men were said to be quick to jump at such opportunities.

The MWAGCD, though willing, also failed to avail data in time citing technical challenges. However, the IDI with MWAGCD indicated that female representation was far below the 30% target as enshrined in the national gender protocol. Reference was made to the various development committees such as the Lands Committee, where it was noted that there could be just a handful of women (<10%) out of all participants, signaling a dearth of fair representation

of women across different sectors. There was said to be some improvement since these committee meetings are chaired by the resident minister, who is a female.

Though statistical data was not available in defence, there were no women heading Army, Prisons and Police in Manicaland. It could not be verified whether women occupied deputy positions due to bureaucratic challenges. The two tables below provide a snapshot view into the extent of female representation in Manicaland.

### ***Leadership in Local Government in Manicaland***

	<b>Total Councillors</b>	<b>Number of Females</b>	<b>Percentage Females</b>	<b>Number of Males (%)</b>	<b>Percentage Males</b>
Buhera RDC	33	2	6%	31	94%
Chimanimani RDC	23	1	4%	22	96%
Chipinge RDC	30	5	17%	25	83%
Chipinge Town Council	8	2	25%	6	75%
Makoni RDC	39	4	10%	35	90%
Mutare Municipality	19	3	16%	16	85%
Mutare RDC	36	3	3%	33	92%
Mutasa RDC	31	6	19%	25	81%
Nyanga RDC	31	7	23%	24	77%
Rusape Town Council	10	2	20%	8	80%
Total for Manicaland	260	35	13%	225	87%

***Source: Manicaland MWAGCD Report, 2013***

The province has a dearth of female representation in local government, yet it is day to day issues of local governance that affect women's lives. It is also these grassroots structures that

nurture leadership yet women in Manicaland contribute only 13% to local governance. This points to a lack of appreciation of female leadership that is deeply entrenched in the country's patriarchal systems, where women in some cultures such as the Ndaou in south-eastern part of the province, cannot even stand to address men at a gathering since it is not culturally acceptable (World Vision, 2014).

### Summary of Female Representation Across Departments in Manicaland

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Percentage Female Representation</b>
Councillors	13%
Heads Primary and Secondary	Data not available
Principals: Colleges and Vocational Training Institutions	30%
Security (Police, Army, Prisons)	Data not available
Private sector	Data not available
Parliament	16%
Senate (NB: There were only 2 senators in the province)	50%

#### 4.4.2 Emerging themes

#### How were you prepared for a leadership role?

<b><i>Theme/Challenge</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>Socialisation process</b>	There were different views on how the socialization process impacted on the

<p><b>promoted gender roles</b></p>	<p>female leaders depending on whether one grew up in town or in the rural areas and whether one had educated parents or not, or had supportive siblings within the family. It was noted that women who grew up in the rural areas tended to get more confined to gender roles that did not only end at cooking for girls, but extended to herding of livestock where girls were allocated the duty of tending of goats while boys herded cattle, a symbol of the family wealth hence reflecting that boys were given a higher responsibility.</p>
<p><b>Unequal access to tertiary education</b></p>	<p>The researcher noted that girl children whose parents had relatively good education tended to fare better in terms of access to education. Three respondents indicated that their parents were working as teachers and they gave their children equal opportunities to education. Generally, the research findings indicate that the respondents belonged to what one participant called “the luckier generation” who benefitted from the government policy of formal education for all. However, FGD participants felt that there are bottlenecks to higher education and available government schemes such as the Presidential scholarship which, they claimed, lacked transparency. It emerged that some girls had been “pushed” into teaching while boys in the family got priority to attend university, despite the girls qualifying for university.</p> <p>The findings also indicate that within marriage, men tended to frustrate their women’s educational advancement. One respondent indicated how she had to forgo two opportunities to study for a Masters degree after the husband did not approve citing that the wife would hook up with her ex-boyfriend. The</p>

	<p>respondent shared that she began to make real progress in terms of educational advancement only after divorce.</p> <p>One respondent indicated how access to formal education made a huge difference between her and other girls in the “Johane Marange” community that she grew up, in which girls generally received limited education up to about Grade 7 at most. The respondent’s father believed in equal opportunities, though belonging to the apostolic sect that generally despised girl education. The main message was that, indeed, some women still face bottlenecks as far as educational opportunities are concerned since they are often married off before age 16 (Sibanda, 2011). The author notes that these churches constitute a huge following in Zimbabwe.</p> <p>There were women who also felt that it was not good for women to get more educated than their husbands since they are the heads of household, as the wife may end up not respecting him. “<i>Hazviite kupfuura murume kudzidza, hauzomurespecti!</i>” However, there were leaders who indicated that they respected their husbands despite the husbands holding even inferior jobs to their own. The husband of one of the respondents was actually said to be out of work but their marriage was working as she gave him his position “<i>sababa mumba.</i>”</p>
<p><b>Lack of self esteem</b></p>	<p>The research showed that lack of confidence was one of the major drawbacks for women to achieve fair representation. Two participants in the IDI actually pointed out they had to be pushed into venturing into leadership by other people</p>

	<p>who realized their potential but the women themselves were happy in the other non-leadership positions they previously occupied. They highlighted that they did not believe they could do it as they had been socialised to think that leadership was for men.</p> <p>There were other divergent views from the participants in the in-depth interviews who indicated that they had been fighters since way back and they were confident and assertive; key attributes <i>inter alia</i> that they identified for one to survive in leadership. Even as women and men discouraged them to hold public office, they went ahead anyway, to prove that women were capable. “I grew up fighting with boys in the pastures, so to me, a man is an equal,” said one participant.</p>
<p><b>Economic security</b></p>	<p>It was evident from the findings that women that had economic independence were able to rise in leadership. Reference was made to the way they funded their own campaigns and/or further education. They made it clear that men were reluctant to part with resources in order to empower a woman. The three female councillors that took part in the study indicated that the political arena in Zimbabwe demanded well-resourced individuals since the process of campaigning was expensive and most women did not have access and control to the required resources. One responded indicated that she only got a miserly \$100 from her party to campaign in the 2013 elections. But because she was financially independent, she accessed her own resources to facilitate her entry into politics through campaigns.</p>



## How does society perceive female leadership?

<b><i>Theme</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>Female perceptions</b>	<p>This theme was recurrent particularly among respondents within political leadership who felt that they were not sufficiently supported by their fellow women when they made the decision to run for office. They expected strong support from their female counterparts but they got the worst discouragement from this constituency. One Councillor reported that women in her community openly told her that “...<i>haungamirisani nemurume...</i>” (You can’t contest against a man.) The female leaders alluded to her stubbornness and confidence that were nurtured as she grew up in a male environment as having given her the courage to run for office.</p>
<b>Male perceptions</b>	<p>Research findings showed that women who were new entrants into leadership often faced some form of resistance from men, but after staying for a while and proving their mettle, they felt more accepted and appreciated by fellow male colleagues. Other male colleagues were said to raise concern on the ability of women to carry big leadership posts considering the general perception that women were a busy lot with family and other social responsibilities. One respondent indicated that it was not uncommon to find some men in meetings ranking new female leaders lowly to the point of overshadowing their contributions. The respondents also raised the issue of feeling patronized with male colleagues sometimes playing the big brother role to ensure the women were not straying. The research also showed that some men were</p>

	indeed difficult; although it was not expressed but there was a certain stubbornness that came from some male colleagues but it would be difficult to draw conclusions that they were doing it to frustrate their female leaders.
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**What are the socio-cultural challenges that are faced by women in leadership?**

<b><i>Theme</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>Home-work conflict</b>	<p>This was a major theme that kept running through in-depth interviews where marriage and families could be a real drawback especially when the leadership role is demanding in terms of travel and time away from home, and this was said to happen quite often. <i>“Imwe misha yakaparara murume atadza kunyatsozvinzwisisa, zvinotoda varume vane mwoyo murefu”</i> (Some marriages collapsed when husbands failed to understand these issues; they require patience and support).It was noted that men associated their women with infidelity since indeed some women forgot to balance their wifely and motherly duties with their offices. The research findings showed that for women in leadership, they took an extra mile to explain and prepare their husbands for the former’s role, lest the husband became a barrier himself.</p> <p>One respondent indicated that her marriage collapsed after facing domestic violence which she attributed to her being involved in high level leadership that took her away from home. With the travelling came allowances and the husband thought the wife</p>

was now cheating on him hence the bashing. The respondent strongly felt that her position was the major contributory factor to the collapse of her marriage as the bashing came with such statements: “*Inguva dzekuti mukadzi anopinda mumba here idzi?*” (Is this an hour that a woman should be arriving home?)

Respondents in the FGDs echoed the same sentiments that men got uncomfortable and paranoid when their women showed any signs of independence such as going to college or getting into leadership. They reported that men felt the women may be tempted, what with the exposure, the independence and the consistent interaction with male colleagues; hence women in leadership needed to build the trust of their spouses. The respondents also indicated that leadership came along with better remuneration, and once women started providing – buying more provisions in the house, some men felt threatened and they would react through violence to boost their ego.

Some respondents indicated that their earnings covered the caring gap that was created by their being away; they ensured they got a good helper who would do some of the chores that were doing before they got a high demanding job. In-laws were said to not complain as long as they were well taken care of, showing that somehow, the expectation was on the woman to ensure her family was well-looked after. The findings, however, show that the spouse needed to be very understanding particularly when the family is still young, as he eventually has to take over some of the productive responsibilities while their wives are away on business.

	<p>Respondents that were not married indicated that they had the freedom to chart their own course of life without getting the much needed approval from men as was the case with their married colleagues. They felt they had higher chances of performing better as they were not pressured to explain and justify any absence from home yet this was one of the major characteristic of their work.</p>
<p><b>Loneliness</b></p>	<p>This was highlighted by women in top provincial leadership who felt that they had become an island. They no longer fitted perfectly with the ordinary woman for social interaction, and neither could they join their male counterparts outside working hours lest they got labeled as indecent women, hence they are deprived of the important networking component that is integral to leadership. One respondent actually indicated that ever since she had risen through the ranks to occupy the top position in the organisation, she felt a resentment and some loneliness that she had not felt before as nobody knocked at her door except for work-related issues. This gives the feeling that this was the cost that female leaders have to pay; deprivation of a normal social life.</p>
<p><b>Bridging the gap between culture and female leadership</b></p>	<p>The research findings showed that women leaders felt that norms and values have to be respected for them to be received in the communities that they work. <i>“Unotoombera kuti unyatsogamuchirika.”</i> You need to show that you are a true African woman who values traditional norms and values, women seemed comfortable with that because they also saw men doing the same. The respondents</p>

	<p>also showed that a woman in leadership still needed to competently play her role as mother and wife at home and effectively juggle the private and public life, lest she invites the ire of her critics. They concurred that indeed female leaders needed to go the extra mile as they also felt the pressure to prove that being in leadership did not make them any less of a mother or wife. “<i>Kana ndava kumba ndinotomira samai!</i>” (At home I do stand like a woman!) It also emerged that women in leadership felt suffocated in traditional family <i>indabas</i>(meetings) in the village, where they were not expected to participate, but because of their leadership consciousness, they often found themselves bulldozing against the wishes of the “uncles and aunts” in the family.</p>
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## 4.5 Interpretation of Findings

### 4.5.1 Patriarchy

The research findings were in tandem with the Conflict Perspective which postulates that women and men are in a constant struggle for power and dominance, with the more dominant group pushing others into peripheral roles (Mooney *et al*, 2009). Respondents that were in political structures reported that they felt that they were in some kind of competition with their male colleagues who always wanted to patronize them by playing the “big brother” role, forgetting that they are professionally equal. “*Unotonzwa vachiti kumurume wako tinavo tete; zviya zvekuti tinoongorora mafambiro avo.*” (Councillor) (You hear them say to your husband we have our sister/aunt, in a way that denotes they are watching my every move). Sara Longwe (2002) points out that these underlying

political dimensions are a result of the longstanding cultural values and beliefs that men are the heads, hence the political arena tends to reflect this trend.

#### ***4.5.2 Gender stereotyping***

The research findings showed that gender stereotyping is still common in the boardroom where leadership is associated with “maleness” thereby giving rise to resistance to female leadership. Scholars that believe in the Great Men Theory (GMT) that forms part of the theoretical framework for this research suggest that effective leadership comes from men. This research showed that these views were still common in the workplace, with both women and men struggling to come to terms with the establishment of female leadership. As such, these elements presented as challenges as they undermined the authority of female leadership they worked under. The findings point to deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs which are a result of the socialization process that grooms women and men into specific gender roles. Over the years, Zimbabwe has struggled with its patriarchal nature which imprisons women leading to their subordination (Kambarami, 2006). To fight gender stereotyping, Bower and Hums in Shava & Ndebele (2014) argue that women will have to work hard and stay confident in order to dispel the myth that women lack the necessary leadership skills.

Culture has an impact on gender roles and expectations, and it becomes a challenge for women to balance between mother, wife and leader at the workplace (what one respondent called the “wicked problem”. While the women in this study acknowledged this was a challenge, they were not prepared to fight it in any way, but they were ready to make provisions of getting helpers so that their families still got cared for even in their absence, without compromising their positions.

### ***4.5.3 The Home-Work Conflict***

This conflict arises as society fails to fulfill the Functionalist perspective, which forms part of the theoretical framework of this research. The theory contends that women should play their expressive roles of caring while men play their functional roles of providing for the family to create harmony and peace in society (Mooney et al, 2009). The theory is a major stumbling block to gender equality as it keeps women confined in the private sphere.

Research findings showed that indeed it was difficult to balance marriage and families as well as leadership, and these gender functions could be a real drawback especially when the leadership role is demanding in terms of travel and time away from home, and this was said to happen quite often. *“Imwe misha yakaparara murume atadza kunyatsozvinzwisisa, zvinotoda varume vane mwoyo murefu”* (Some marriages collapsed when husbands failed to understand these issues; they require men with patience and support). Participants felt that they still needed to prove to their families and the community at large that the leadership roles had not changed them and they still acknowledged their gender roles. Consequently this implied that they worked twice as much as their male counterparts who would take on leisure activities while women assumed their caring role at home.

While participants believed that this did not affect the quality of their leadership, they acknowledged that sometimes it took a toll on marriage when some jealous men associated their women with infidelity since indeed some women forgot to balance their wifely and motherly duties with their offices. The research findings showed that for women in leadership, they took an extra mile to explain and prepare their husbands, lest the husband became a barrier himself. It

also took a really strong woman to disregard gender roles and concentrate on the leadership role as society continued to castigate her for abdicating her cultural responsibility.

Respondents in the FGDs echoed the same sentiments that men got some discomfort when their women showed any signs of independence such as going to college or getting into leadership. They reported that men felt the women may be tempted to indulge in extramarital affairs; what with the exposure, the independence and the consistent interaction with male colleagues; hence women in leadership needed to build the trust of their spouses.

This shows the magnitude of the pressure that female leaders have to contend with on a day to day basis as they strike to juggle between family and work as per expectation of society and culture, making women work twice as much as their male counterparts. Although this was not evident amongst the participants, having to balance the two can be cumbersome particularly if the partner is not supportive. Moreover, other women would feel intimidated to even venture into the world of leadership with all its perceived pressures and potential to destroy the family. This would then hamper women's career development and gender parity would continue to be elusive as noted by Shava and Ndebele (2014). Policies should recognise women's productive and reproductive roles as they impact on their capacity to effectively play their role in the development agenda on the country. There should be a way of easing these challenges such as continued advocacy for day-care facilities at the workplace so that mothers in leadership can effectively discharge their duties.

#### ***4.5.4 Loneliness and Isolation***

The study findings buttressed the view that women in key decision making positions are lonely and isolated. It is a game of numbers where women in high level leadership are still few such



that the lone female leader has no female counterpart to relate to since the leadership arena is male dominated. The research findings suggested that the dilemma came with being unable to socialise beyond the workplace since the women had their gender roles to fulfill at home, and this was the time men utilized “to even take their work to the golf course” (Provincial leader). Furthermore, the findings indicate that a woman who would continue to hang around with men outside of work would be misunderstood to be looking for boyfriends other than mere companionship with male colleagues; a decent woman was expected to knock off and go home to fulfill her gender roles, and not to engage in “socially awkward” after work events.

The findings are in line with the Functionalist perspective that argues that men and women have different functions in society, and women are expected to play the caring role and be the decent, docile and silent wife. This theory continues to widen the gender divide and keeps societies entrenched in deep patriarchal beliefs, and it fails to acknowledge the contribution of women in the public sphere. The theory fails to appreciate that keeping 52% of the global human resources confined to the “kitchen” implies a 52% loss in development, according “smart economics”.

#### ***4.5.5 Unequal Access to Education***

Formal education was perceived by respondents to be crucial to facilitate women’s negotiation of the leadership ladder. They noted that quality education produced informed and confident citizens who had the capacity to interact at various social levels. Leaders in the lower levels indicated that sometimes they had felt that men were really far ahead of them as they had the right papers and women had a lot of catching up to do. “*Chikoro chakakosha; kuti uzanyatsotonga uri kumusoro ikweyo ungatonga here usina mapepa akakwana?* (Education is

important; for one to really exercise their authority they can't do it without papers, can they?

*Councillor participant.*

The successful leaders that participated in this research attributed their success to having had the right papers and this education continued to have an impact on their work as leaders. Mukepfa (2008) also noted in her research that leaders (councillors) who lacked formal education struggled to understand issues and debates on development. These findings contest Longwe's (1999) opinion on the impact of education on leadership who argues that education that is offered by a patriarchal system was meant to keep women in subordination. It is this "patriarchal education" that has necessitated the rise of the few women in leadership, and more opportunities should be availed to women to access tertiary education which plays an important part in producing an informed and confident citizen.

#### ***4.5.6 Low self esteem***

Another socio-cultural related barrier to women's representation was identified as low self-esteem and lack of confidence on the part of women themselves who had the potential to become leaders. In their study, Chabaya *et al* (2009) found that myths, stereotypes and prejudices related to women's capacities and attitudes made them develop a low self-esteem and they underestimated their capabilities.

The research showed that lack of confidence was one of the major drawbacks for women to achieve fair representation. Two participants in the IDI actually pointed out they had to be pushed into venturing into leadership by other people who realized their potential but the women themselves were happy in the other non-leadership positions they occupied. They highlighted

that they did not believe they could do it as they had been socialised to think that leadership was for men.

There were other divergent views from the participants in the in-depth interviews who indicated that they had been fighters since way back and they were confident and assertive; key attributes *inter alia*, that they identified for one to survive in leadership. Even as women and men discouraged them to hold public office, they went ahead anyway, to prove that women were capable. “I grew up fighting with boys in the pastures, so to me a man is an equal.” Shava and Ndebele (2014) observe that females in leadership ought to get support in order to boost their self-image and confidence levels that were created by the traditional socialization process that did not believe in female leadership.

#### ***4.5.7 Discrimination in the workplace***

Research findings showed that the male dominated world of leadership was full of intimidation and discrimination of female leadership. The findings seem to point out that women leaders continue to be seen as sexual objects rather than colleagues. There were reports of how in the beginning of their tenure of office, women tended to face the same sexual advances from their male colleagues. “*Vanokupima mazuva ekutanga kuti uri mukadzi akaita sei.*” (They size you up in the beginning to see what kind of woman you are). There is need to raise consciousness among both women and men in order to dismantle patriarchal systems that uphold male-defined values so that society appreciates the added value of women without judging them (Mugwenhi *et al*, 2011).

#### ***4.5.8 Lack of Support among Womenfolk***

*“I have been in the position where I held a leadership position but did not get the full support of other women. This jealousy stems from the absence of opportunities. The more women are allowed in leadership positions, the more they will be able to support each other.”*

– Edna Machirori, Zimbabwe’s first female newspaper editor (IWMMF)

This observation of women being their own enemies comes from a celebrated Zimbabwean journalist. This theme was recurrent in IDIs particularly among respondents within political leadership who felt that they were not sufficiently supported by their fellow women when they made the decision to run for office. They expected strong support from their female counterparts but they got the worst discouragement from this constituency. One Councillor reported that women in her community openly told her that “...*haungamirisani nemurume...*” (You can’t contest with a man.) The female leaders alluded to her stubbornness and confidence that were nurtured as she grew up in a male environment as having given her the courage to run for office against the negative perceptions of her female counterparts.

An executive director of a successful non-governmental organisation also highlighted that “women have a tendency to pull each other down” as she had to contend with negative comments from women quite often who passed comments such as: *Haasi mabasa evakadzi aya....mabasa evarume. Izvi hazviitwi nemadzimai izvi!* (This is not a woman’s job....it’s a man’s job! This stuff is not for women!)The moment one got to the top they were associated

with infidelity by their fellow women, especially with the high level of travel and time spent away from home.

This reflects the importance of Longwe's women empowerment framework, which provides the conceptual framework for this study. Longwe posits that empowerment of women happens at different levels, but for women to reach their peak, they need to mobilise and conscientise each other on the struggle of gender equality. The findings seem to suggest that women were not aware of the existing gender disparities; instead of celebrating one of their own who broke the norm to participate in leadership, they pulled in a different direction. This implies that there is a silent tug-of-war where feminists and other gender activists are agitating for involvement, while on the other hand there is another group of women that has joined patriarchy in resisting gender equality and advancing male supremacy. More concerted efforts should therefore be made in mobilizing women and conscientising them on the need for female representation in leadership, lest activists fight a losing battle, like the proverbial knitting of a woolen article that continues to be undone with the knitter thinking that s/he is making progress.

There also appeared to be a blame game between leaders in the top hierarchy and the lower level leaders and non-leaders. The latter felt that top leaders were not doing enough to pull along their fellow women into key decision making positions, validating the "honorary males" view which argues that women in top leadership collude with males to exploit their fellow women. The findings seem to suggest that this pattern holds true in the political arena, as the NGO and private sector indicated that they supported their fellow women through granting study leave, capacity building and even encouraging them to study further. However, in the political dimension, there was a feeling that top leadership tended to forget all about the grassroots once they got etched at

the top. *“Tisu tinovaisira ladder rekuti vakwire, asi ivo havazodi kutiisirawo tambo kuti tikwire.”* (We are the ones that provide them with the ladder to the top, but they will not reciprocate by lowering the rope, so we can climb too.) Councillor. Longwe’s empowerment framework needs to be applied in such cases to raise awareness on the importance of unity of purpose among women. As long as the elementary aspects of empowerment, that is, mobilisation and conscientisation of women are not achieved, the fight for gender equality in leadership would remain elusive as women would remain divided.

There is also need to avail opportunities to women so that the jealousy that exists amongst them disappears, as reflected in the quotation that opens this section. For as long as opportunities remain scarce, women will view each other as competitors and not collaborators.

#### **4.6 Proposed measures to improve female leadership**

##### ***Education***

The research findings indicated that women should have access to a good education. Respondents that had a little formal education felt that they were held back as they could not advance into more senior positions that required advanced education, even though opportunities availed themselves. One responded indicated how she will forever be grateful to her father who defied religious pressure and sent her twin-daughters to school who are today proud examples of powerful female leaders. They stand out like beacons when they visit the village where female education was frowned upon due to religious beliefs, and the respondent intimated that she could as well be one of the many village women who are stuck in polygamous unions with education

only sufficient to write their names. The respondent's experience underscores the crucial role that education plays in women empowerment in general and female leadership in particular.

### ***Networking***

The findings seemed to suggest that women were poor in terms of networking yet this was highlighted as one of the key elements to build each other's' confidence. The respondents made reference to the high level networking that characterises male interaction, yet such was missing amongst women. Women were encouraged to come out of their shells and interact across sectors so as to gain the rich experiences from different people.

### ***Capacity Building***

This was identified as one of the key elements of improving women's capacities and building their confidence. MWAGCD and Plan International were already doing it in Manicaland showing the necessary linkages between government and civil society.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented data in three broad categories that are consistent with the research questions. The first part looked at the extent of female leadership within the province of Manicaland and the data is in quantitative form which shows that there is a dearth of female leadership in Manicaland even though the data was scarce; the second section presented the major themes that emerged from IDIs and FGDs and a short description of each issue was provided. Major themes identified included the negative perceptions of both women and men on female leadership, the loneliness that female leaders faced as well as the sacrifices that women

leaders have to make in order to bridge the gap between their work and their gender roles. A deep analysis and interpretation of the themes also followed, showing that indeed, women in Manicaland in particular, face a mammoth task of breaking the cultural challenges that inhibit their advancement. The final part looked at the strategies that were proposed by respondents as solutions to the problem of gender inequality in leadership. The following chapter will interpret the findings in relation to the theoretical framework.



## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter presented data, analysed and interpreted the research findings. This chapter focuses on conclusions and recommendations in the light of the themes that came out in the study, in close reference to the theoretical framework. It shall also provide a summary of the study as well as conclusions and recommendations as informed by the research findings.

This research was keen on exploring the socio-cultural challenges that are faced by women in leadership at two critical stages, as they attempt to venture into leadership and as they function in the leadership role. The study was motivated by the unequal representation that is typical of most institutions despite the fact that women make up 52% of the world's population, yet studies show that globally, female representation hovers below 30% (De La Rey in Maseko (2013)). Theories have been put forward to explain this gender gap that exists in leadership despite having conventions and legal frameworks that support inclusivity in leadership. This study was premised on the Conflict Perspective, the Feminist theory, Great Man Theory of Leadership and the Functionalist theory, and this chapter attempts to interrogate these theories in the light of the research findings.

### **5.2 Summary of the study**

This study made assumptions based on literature which indicated that women, especially those in developing nations, faced huge socio-cultural challenges in leadership. The study was motivated to explore the extent to which patriarchy was a constraint to female leadership taking into

consideration that Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society. The research has shown that although women have made huge strides in terms of penetrating the male dominated world of leadership, there are still gaps in terms of achieving gender parity in leadership. There still exist strong socio-cultural beliefs, values and norms in some parts of Zimbabwean communities that do not believe in female leadership. Longwe (2002) pointed out that only when society is able to recognise and analyse the obstructive tactics of patriarchy, only then shall it be able to pull the plug and suffocate patriarchal opposition. There is need to tackle the underlying patriarchal challenges so as to give women an opportunity to soar in key-decision making positions.

Access to higher education was cited as one of the key determinants for honing leadership skills. The country has made steady progress in ensuring access to education in primary and secondary school, but there is still work to be done in ensuring parity in higher education where leadership skills are honed and foundations for future leadership are laid. However, there is need to explore the education cascade which ends up with only 42% women in tertiary education, and account for the leakages and plug the challenges that restrict women's access to higher education. Affirmative action has been a welcome development, but the prohibitive fees that characterise Zimbabwe's higher education currently has been cited by respondents in college as one of the key factors that are impacting negatively on female education. The country risks losing the gains of yesteryear in terms of educational achievements if they do not strengthen such programmes as the cadetship programme that caters for fees for disadvantaged candidates. The students also highlighted that there should be more transparency in the allocation of the Presidential scholarship to ensure that genuinely needy students got access. There was a strong feeling that

the scheme was biased towards politically well-connected individuals who had the capacity to pay fees without state assistance, at the expense of needy and disadvantaged individuals.

Gender statistics were not readily available from relevant authorities for this research, showing a yawning gap in terms of systematic monitoring and evaluation of gender indicators with regards to female leadership. MWAGCD ought to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation strategies in order to document progress with regards to women empowerment since the ministry plays a watchdog role in monitoring gender issues in the country. The ministry has acknowledged a gap in that area and they cited inadequate resources which render them ineffective. Government should show commitment by funding the ministry adequately so that they carry out their mandate and the question of gender parity ceases to be mere rhetoric.

This research identified some resentment that came from lower level female leadership directed towards higher level leadership, but the findings are not conclusive hence there is an opportunity to study this area further so as to generate a sound body of knowledge around the perception that women are their own enemies. Women occupying lower level political leadership becried lack of support from those women in the high echelons of society, while top leadership also felt that they did not quite get sufficient support from grassroots women. There is need to find out more on the source of this antagonism as this study could not explore this dimension. For as long as this mudslinging continues, it will remain a source of division amongst the women's movement; hence it is key that women's organisations work to bridge this chasm to make women rally behind each other for support and development.

There was an indication also that unmarried women tended to fair better in terms of excelling and fulfilling their ambitions as they did not have “husbands from whom they had to seek approval each time they needed to fulfill their ambitions.” This view provides an opportunity for gathering comparative empirical evidence in future to ascertain the performance of married women versus unmarried women in leadership and educational attainment.

### **5.3 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Although significant progress has been made in terms of female involvement in leadership since 1980, this study has confirmed that Zimbabwe in general, and Manicaland in particular, still has a lot of work to do in terms of achieving fair representation in key decision making positions. Zimbabwe’s patriarchal system presents as a huge stumbling block to female leadership. It is evident from this study that women in Manicaland are yet to claim their fair share of key decision making positions. Secondary data showed that key decision making positions are still male dominated despite the fact that women make up 53% of the eastern region’s population as reflected in the national 2012 census.

This study has shown a 13% representation of women in local government in Manicaland. With such poor representation of women, there is no guarantee they are ensured of access, hence it is key to involve women in leadership so as to ensure their true empowerment as postulated in Longwe’s Women Empowerment Framework. Women’s organisations should also lobby for quotas in local government, as is the case with commissions, parliamentary and senatorial representation. Local government should be clearly singled out and should not fall under the

cosmetic phrase of “all areas of decision making” in terms of female representation, since it involves issues that affect women on a daily basis.

The findings of this dissertation show that in as much as radical feminists would prefer a revolution to overthrow patriarchy and its underlying causes, this radical approach will not bring the required development outcomes in terms of gender equality since some of the causes of poor female representation are the women themselves who are an enemy unto themselves. As such, wresting power from men provides no solution as there are women who still do not value female leadership as shown by this research. This follows that a compromise has to be struck, where women and men work alongside each other to achieve gender equality.

The Conflict Theory formed part of the theoretical framework to this research. The theory posits that the world’s social arrangement propels men into domination, while promoting oppression of women, hence there is constant power struggles between women and men. Indeed, the findings of this study showed that women had some bitterness as they felt that the men in their lives had frustrated their leadership ambitions and general empowerment. Even as some women became more financially empowered, their husbands became jittery as they felt threatened by women that earned more than them, and provided for the family dislodging the men from their traditional role of providing for the family. Women and men should not invest their energies in constant power struggles; rather, men should embrace women as a deep reservoir of development opportunities, and make space for them on the development arena.

The Functionalist theory was also used as part of the theoretical basis of this research. The theory emphasizes division of roles between women and men along gender lines. By involving women

in leadership, this dissertation has shown that women can make valuable contribution to the development processes of the world at leadership level, instead of confining them to their expressive roles of caring for their families. Women can equally be effective leaders, and by virtue of their numbers, they provide a strong human capital base for development. If half the world's population were to be shut out of the sociopolitical and economic processes of the world, then it is tantamount to failure to acknowledge the world's deep reservoir that could catalyse the development process.

This study recommends that there should be strong concerted efforts between civil society and government to dismantle patriarchal systems that characterise Zimbabwean society which cripple development by keeping women in traditional peripheral roles. Society should acknowledge the contribution of women to development; and should take cognizance of the fact that non-involvement of women equals 52% loss in human capital. MWAGCD should intensify campaigns that are aimed at sensitizing the nation on the importance of inclusivity with regards to female leadership. Zimbabwean systems should start believing in the capacity of their citizens regardless of gender. The gap between women and men in terms leadership capacity can be plugged through empowerment drives aimed at building and improving the leadership capabilities of females.

Government and other stakeholders should acknowledge the productive and reproductive roles of women and effect structural reforms such as workplace nurseries so that female leaders and the general female working population can concentrate on their work.

This research also noted that women appreciated it when there were social events at the workplace that could accommodate their spouses so that the spouses got to experience the environment their wives were working in as this would reduce suspicions of infidelity. As such this study recommends that employers consider what Shava and Ndebele term (2014) term a family friendly culture in workplaces so that female managers do not have to worry about their families.

This study also showed that the number of women in decision making, particularly in politics, should not always be used as an indicator of female participation (Gender and Development Network, 2015). The Gender and Development Network argues that some women political leaders only act as proxies for their male relatives (their husbands and their fathers), hence they do not quite hold their own individual opinions as women. They are sitting in there to only fulfill the quotas and provide a cosmetic effect to female participation. Therefore, measuring of female participation should go beyond numbers since having a seat at the table did not always translate to given opportunities to speak out and be listened to. There should also be emphasis on measuring the impact female leaders have in decision making processes. The complex and changing realities of women's lives cannot only be measured quantitatively, but there should also be a qualitative dimension to it in order to address the structural challenges that prevent women's equal participation in decision making processes. These are the monitoring and evaluation issues that MWAGCD should embrace in order to keep trace of women's progress in leadership and other development processes in the country. Challenge

This study also noted that there is a dearth of female participation in local governance with women constituting 16% percent of leadership in local government (Zimbabwe Country Analysis, 2013), and 13% in Manicaland Province. Failure to include women in local governance leadership structures defeats the whole concept of women empowerment as studies have shown that local structures influence women's daily lives. As such, efforts should be made by government and civil society to extend the quotas to local government instead of limiting them to higher level governance structures such as the Senate, parliament and commission. Therefore, the study recommends that there be quotas to ensure equal participation of women and men at the grassroots in order to fulfill the SDG on equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a summary of the study, which is a qualitative study that explored the challenges that women face in leadership in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. The study has shown that there are patriarchal structures and traditional beliefs that present as constraints that make society view female leadership negatively because the society is fraught with gender stereotyping. Married women leaders have to grapple with home and family commitments, they have to seek permission for further study and they face loneliness as society does not expect them to hang around socializing after work, lest they are labeled indecent. The environment that these female leaders operate within is fraught with tension and discrimination from both women and men who do not believe in female leadership. Gender prejudice continues to dog these women because the society they work in and live in is patriarchal, and their rise is resisted as it is viewed as a challenge to the status quo and historical trends. Therefore, the fight against gender



prejudice cannot be won by putting conventions and protocols alone in place, but there is need to change the mindset, more like resocialising the mind so that female leadership is accepted. This is in line with the SADC Protocol on Gender, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory, which provides for member countries to eliminate all challenges to female participation (ZWLA, 2010). Women also need to generate sufficient political mobilisation and organisation so that they are in a position to share power equally with men, instead of them fighting amongst themselves. This study concludes that female leadership is not about women-only advancement; it is about women and men looking at the world differently and embracing opportunities to work together to influence development at all levels.

Therefore, in conclusion, there is still work to be done by government and civil society on consciousness raising with regards to gender issues and female leadership in particular so as to change the mindset in accepting female leadership. Government should also show political commitment to supporting female participation in leadership by instituting affirmative action across different levels of leadership starting at the grassroots. The gender gap that exists in local government leaves government with egg on the face; because it is the key player with an obligation to level the playing field in terms of inclusivity. If women are then excluded from the planning and execution of grassroots affairs that affect their daily lives, this exposes government's double standards, where they promote gender equality only on paper yet it remains a real façade in reality.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Invitation to participate in the study

Mutare Teachers' College

P.O.Box 3293

Paulington

Mutare

20 April 2016

Dear .....

#### Re: Request for an in-depth interview/FGD

I am a Master of Arts in Development Studies student with the Midlands State University and I am carrying out a research on women and leadership in Manicaland. I humbly request for an in-depth interview in which you can tell your story and share your experience on the research topic "Socio-cultural challenges to women's participation in leadership positions in Manicaland." Data gathered will be treated with utmost confidence and anonymity.

Please, find attached a letter of confirmation from the college.

Yours sincerely

Judith Mutangirwa

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**Annex 2: Study Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Research Project: “Socio-cultural challenges to women’s participation in leadership positions in Manicaland.”**

I... .. have received an explanation in the language that I understand about the nature and purpose of the study. Therefore, I agree to participate in the study and I understand that I can withdraw from the study at anytime I wish to. The researcher has explained to me that this information will be treated as confidential and my name will be anonymous. I understand that the information will be used for academic purposes.

I therefore give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature .....

Date.....

### **Annex 3: Interview guide - Time 40-50min**

#### **Study Title: Socio-cultural challenges to women's participation in leadership positions in Manicaland.**

#### **Participants:**

- In-depth interview for Leaders -18 years to 64 – currently working in leadership positions
- FGD with college women >18 years currently enrolled

#### **Key areas**

##### **1. Socialisation**

- a. How were you socialised when growing up with regards to leadership? What role did your family/society play in preparing you for leadership?
- b. What was your self-perception when growing up? Why? What is your self-perception today? What are the influences?
- c. Who influenced you into leadership? Who was your role model?
- d. How would you rate your confidence in this position? Why? What prepared you for this role?
- e. What personal actions/behaviours/attributes can help a woman advance in her leadership career?

##### **2. Education**

- a. How has access to education impacted on your leadership career?
- b. In your opinion, what is the connection between access to education and leadership? Does education guarantee one to climb up the leadership ladder? Why?

##### **3. Culture**

- a. What do women perceive as challenges to their being in leadership? Is that the way you feel too?
- b. What cultural or social practices be they at family level or community level, that inhibit women from participating in leadership?

##### **4. Workplace (perceptions)**

- a. What are the gender challenges that you have faced (past and current) as you moved up the leadership ladder?
- b. How are you viewed by your male colleagues? Female colleagues? Why?
- c. How does your supervisor perceive you? What specific support do you get from your supervisor with regards to leadership and development?
- d. How would you describe the relationship between you and your subordinates, be they female or male?
- e. What are your prospects of rising? What gives you the confidence? What can hold you back?

## 5. Marriage & family

- a. How are you viewed by your partner/family in relation to your leadership position?
- a. How have you been able to balance between leadership and domestic responsibility (washing, cooking, caring for family) as expected by society?
- b. Reproductive duties - how have they complemented/interfered with your leadership role? (Marriage, pregnancy, breastfeeding) and what has been the reaction of those around you (family, community, workplace etc)
- c. What are your views on societal expectation that a woman should live up to her name in terms of caring for the family, with regards to the modern career woman?

## 6. Challenges/theories

- d. **B1:** Women make up only 21% of Legislators, senior officials and managers in the country although 85% of them take part in labourforce participation (The Global Gender Report, 2014). Zimbabwe has supportive international conventions and local gender protocols, but lags behind in gender parity, where is the disconnect? Where is the gap?

- e. **B2: Feminist/Conflict Theory** - How does the patriarchal nature (male supremacy) of Zim society influence female participation in leadership?
- f. **B3: GMT** -Maseko (2013) also noted that there is a belief among men that women lack the requisite leadership skills, and the socialization process has not adequately prepared them for the role - what's your take on this?
- g. **B4: GMT** - There is a stereotype that men make better leaders because they are socialized as such - Post-independence Zimbabwe's history seems to support this view - there is no record of a female defence, finance or foreign affairs minister, hence validating the notion that women are perceived as weak, and they are readily accepted as singers and dancers in politics. What are your views and what has been your experience?
- h. **B5: GMT - Minister** - leadership in Zimbabwe, particularly in politics, is considered a dirty game hence it requires tough qualities to withstand pressure, attributes which society perceives as lacking in women. Women are then grudgingly accepted in leadership such as ministerial positions only to occupy less challenging ministries such as social services, and never in defence or finance ministries - can you please, share your experiences on this view?
- i. **B6: Feminist Theory - 'honorary males' or "token females"**: There is an allegation that women that have made in leadership collude with the patriarchal system in exploiting fellow women. How have you been able to dispel such views? Such women are made to believe that women already have equality since the "token females" have managed to reach the top. who then
- j. **B7: Feminist Theory - feminization of deputy positions** - male-dominated governments lack the political drive to empower women – what is your opinion?

## 7. Strategies

- k. **Strategies 1:** What advice do you give to female leaders so they can survive in this male-dominated world of leadership?

- l. **Strategies 2:**What measures can be put in place to address challenges that are faced by women in their quest to participate in leadership?
- m. **Strategies 3:**What do you think needs to be done to move more women into key decision-making positions?