THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE QUOTA SYSTEM: A RECONCEPTUALISATION AND MESO ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN AFRICA

by

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In loving memory of my beloved mother and best friend:

Sithandekile Monase Ntombezinhle Nyoni

1970-2014

For. Your. Legacy!

I used to think my mother left behind no legacy but I was wrong.

I am my mother's legacy.

ISAIAH 41:10 &13 AMP

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'Do not fear [anything], for I am with you;

Do not be afraid, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you;

I will certainly take hold of you with My righteous right hand

[a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation]'.

13

"For I the LORD your God keep hold of your right hand; [I am the Lord],

Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you'.

This PhD journey was not easy, but the Lord held my hand.

I am Grateful

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, *Ashleigh Rumbidzai Tesa Shangare*, declare that this thesis is my own unaided work, both in conception and execution. It is being submitted for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations* in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for examination at this or any other university.

Ashleigh Rumbidzai Tesa Shangare

Pretoria, October 2021

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines women's political empowerment with its central tenets of equity and equality. Women's political empowerment will be examined within the context of the gender mainstreaming agenda of the African Union (AU). This agenda is expected to be implemented on a regional and national level to ensure equity and equality within institutions of political decision-making. The literature has been skewed towards the quota system of representation, which focuses on the increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making.

This conceals non-numerical components of women's political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity, equality, and women's empowerment. Focusing solely on quantifiable measurements is insufficient; therefore, this study proposes that additional, non-numerical variables contribute to achieving women's political empowerment. The addition of these variables to the quota system variable, which is used by the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and national gender instruments to assess women's political empowerment in Africa, will provide a qualitative perspective on women's political empowerment objectives.

The cases of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (regional) and Zimbabwe (national) will be used to reflect on how women's political empowerment has been conceptualised. Moreover, data obtained through semi-standardised interviews at the African Union Commission and a document analysis will inform the argument to address the research question. The thesis is an analytical study that uses a qualitative research approach informed by a constructivist worldview, which in turn informs the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis methods.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Representation, Quota System, Critical Mass, Critical Acts, Gender, Women's Empowerment, Gender Policy

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AUGP	African Union Gender Policy
AUGS	African Union Gender Scorecard
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HDR	Human Development Report
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
REC	Regional Economic Community
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC GP	Southern African Development Community Gender Policy
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCOZ	Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe
WGDD	Women Gender and Development Directorate
ZGP	Zimbabwe Gender Policy

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the 21st century, the agenda to empower women has been a response to the challenges women face due to what is known as women's 'absent' autonomy (Bayeh 2016). Autonomy occurs when "the person feels that the actions emanate from the self and reflect who one really is, instead of being the result of external pressures" (Martela & Riekki 2018). Thus, an absent autonomy is the absence of one's ability to act based on a sense of self as an individual. The agenda for women's empowerment has been accelerated through academic research, conferences and policy frameworks spearheaded by feminist movements and international organisations (Coster 2014). Women's empowerment has been divided into three areas, namely economic, social, and political empowerment (Human Development Report 1993). This thesis is interested in women's political empowerment and particularly in the African context, through the African Union's (AU) gender mainstreaming objectives. The definition and understanding of empowerment in the literature has changed over time, with a shift away from only focusing on representation towards engaging critical consciousness in the form of critically evaluating the norms and values that contribute to shifting power relations (Cornwall 2016).

The problems with how women's political empowerment is understood and practised are immediately evident in how it is defined in policy contexts. For example, the 2015 African Union Gender Scorecard (AUGS) defines women's political empowerment as the "increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making", which is measured through numbers, namely, the quota system of representation (AU Commission 2015). Significantly, women's social and economic empowerment is measured using more than one variable but in terms of women's political empowerment, the single variable of "increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making" is used (AU Commission 2015a). Resultantly, the focus of analysis in the literature on women's political empowerment has been on numerical growth rather than the quality of change experienced by the various "actions" pertaining to women's political empowerment (Cornwall 2016).

The basic assumption underlying women's political empowerment is that representation is the key to achieving both long- and short-term goals for equity and equality. However, this technical definition of women's political empowerment fails to capture the social significance of the concept, and it is insufficient to assess equity and equality in political bodies of decision-making that are seeking to achieve gender mainstreaming. As social researchers, we need to move beyond technical definitions, as these can silence or marginalise other variables; however, the challenge is that not all concepts are easy or simple to conceptualise or reconceptualise (Berg & Lune 2012).

Thus, this thesis proposes the need for additional and context-specific variables as indicators for assessing the accomplishments or drawbacks of women's political empowerment. The thesis explores this in the African context, noting that other variables have been developed in the North American and European contexts. This is significant because the thesis moves beyond the descriptive representation of African women in politics towards their substantive representation. This is done through answering the main research question of the thesis, which is, "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?"

This thesis is interested in the AU's various gender agenda approaches on the continent in pursuit of its gender mainstreaming strategy. Moreover, the cases of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Zimbabwe will be used to conceptualise women's political empowerment.

1.2 Background to the study

The purpose of this background section is to provide context about women's political empowerment through the AU's gender agenda in Africa, through its various AU gender mainstreaming objectives. The gender agenda of the AU is supported by various gender instruments through its Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) under the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AU gender agenda is aimed at transformation within the AU, the continent of Africa and the international community (African Union Gender Policy 2009).

The AU has in place six frameworks for its gender agenda, which are, firstly, the constitutional framework that is embedded within the Constitutional Act of the AU, the framework for the AU's conduct. Secondly, there is the legal framework, which is embedded within the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Banjul Charter) (1981), strengthened by the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) for the protection, promotion, and interpretation of Human Rights. Thirdly, the reporting framework, which is embedded in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) (2004), which is used as the instrument to reaffirm governments' commitments towards gender equality.

Fourthly, there is the policy framework, which is the African Union Gender Policy (AUGP) (2009) and action plan, the policy framework with specific targets to ensure the elimination of barriers towards women's empowerment through enforcing gender parity and representation. Fifth was the implementation framework, which was embodied in the African Women's Decade (2010-2020), the guide towards strengthening and implementing gender equality initiatives. The theme for the decade was "Grass-roots approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment". Lastly, there is the financing framework, with the sole intention of financing gender initiatives and policy implementation (Martin 2013; Omotsho 2015). For the AU, the year 2015 marked the "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063", and the purpose of this theme was to ensure that the vulnerabilities of women in Africa are catered to by reviewing existing gender policies and strategies (AU Echo 2015: 5).

In 2015, the AU introduced the African Union Gender Scorecard (AUGS) as a tool to measure performance in attaining gender mainstreaming objectives by member states (African Union Commission 2015a). This measurement tool was to be *assessed yearly*, in line with the AU theme of the year. The AU's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018 to 2028 strategy, launched in 2019, builds on the 2009 AU gender policy, with objectives to develop women's agency, amplify women's voices and ensure the implementation of ratified policies (AU WGDD 2019).

In the AUGS, there are mechanisms in place that have been used to determine the rate at which gender mainstreaming is being achieved, as well as eight indicators

towards development, which are "employment, business, women in politics, access to credit, access to health, land, health, and water and sanitation" (African Union Commission 2015a: 17-23). Based on the indicator "women in politics", the main objective of the AUGS is the increase in the number of women who hold seats and positions within institutions of government such as parliaments, in addition to other influential bodies of decision-making and power, which falls under *representation* (African Union Commission 2015a). Based on data collated for the period 2012-2015, in Africa, women held 22,4% of seats while men held 77,6% of seats; the data was used to measure the representation of men and woman politicians in parliaments and ministerial positions. Rwanda had the highest rating, with 18 women with seats in parliament and 6 women in ministerial positions (African Union Commission 2015a).

In light of the above six frameworks, AUGS, and the GEWE strategy, the AU formulated a blueprint for the transformation of Africa, Agenda 2063. Agenda 2063 is a 50-year developmental plan, envisioned at the signing of the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration (Golden Jubilee Celebration of the organisation) celebration in May 2013 (African Union Commission 2021). The purpose of the gender agenda in Agenda 2063 is to be pan-African, inclusive, and progressive towards attaining the AU gender mainstreaming objectives (African Union Commission 2015b). Goal 17 of Agenda 2063, "full gender equality in all spheres of life", ties in with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"; thus, Goal 17's priority is to (1) empower women and girls, and (2) end violence and discrimination against women and girls (African Union Commission 2015b).

Although a connection is made between Goal 17 of Agenda 2063 to Goal 5 of the UN SDGs, the thesis focuses more on continental gender mainstreaming efforts. Therefore, it is important to note that Agenda 2063 has seven aspirations, 20 goals that fit within the seven aspirations and 39 priority areas that fit within both the goals and aspirations. This is also seen in various flagship programmes, and Aspiration 6 is "an Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for Children" (African Union Commission 2015b: 8).

The Human Development Report (HDR) (2016) provides a statistical barometer to measure women's discrimination in Africa; Lesotho had the lowest level of women's discrimination at .09 and Zambia had the highest level of discrimination at .45. Rwanda remained the global leader of women's inclusivity at 64%, while 14 African countries passed the 30% representation bar set at the 1995 Beijing Plan of Action. The 30% representation bar is known as the "critical mass" of representation. Critical mass is a central concept and tool in women's political representation that assesses the connection between the number of woman politicians in institutions of political decision-making and policy outcomes (Norris & Lovenduski 2001; Krook & Childs 2008).

Additionally, the percentage of women in African upper and lower houses was set at Rwanda with the highest of 64% and 39% respectively, while the Comoros was set at 3% and 0% respectively. Furthermore, senior positions in political parties in a selection of 11 African countries based on data collected in 2007, South Africa had 24 women and 71 men in a total of 95 positions while Mozambique had zero women and 31 men in a total of 31 positions (Human Development Report 2016). By 2013, 70% of AU member states had gender policies; however, these policies have achieved little to no implementation (Martin 2013).

The above statistics reveal to us that efforts towards increasing women's representation and ensuring the inclusivity of women or the engendering of political decision-making bodies have taken effect in Africa. However, increasing quotas may not always translate to women's political empowerment. It is part of the process but being used as the ultimate variable may lead to the silencing of other variables that are crucial for the achievement of women's political empowerment.

1.2.1 A global history of women's rights and policy formation
The following are a few vital global conferences and policies on women's empowerment – social, economic, political – that have influenced the development of policies in different regions of the world, including Africa:

1946 The establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women:

"The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946" (UN Women 2021a).

1975 The First World Conference on Women's Rights:

"In 1975, the first United Nations World Conference on Women took place between 19 June and 2 July in Mexico City, bringing together individuals from a wide range of backgrounds with the goal of promoting gender equality. The World Conference of Women (WCW) was the capstone event of International Women's Year, the UN's response to the transnational women's liberation movement sweeping the globe" (Valladares 2020).

1975-1985 The United Nations Decade for Women

"The United Nations Decade for Women spanned the years 19 and consisted of three international forums and conferences: in Mexico City in 1975 to inaugurate the Decade; in Copenhagen in 1980 to give a mid-Decade report; in Nairobi in 1985 to formulate strategies and goals for the future. In addition to these international meetings the Decade occasioned numerous regional meetings of United Nations agencies and organizations (i.e., the United Nations Economic and Social Council [UNESCO], the World Health Organization [WHO], ECLA, the European Economic Council [EEC]) and regional meetings of non-govern- mental organizations (i.e., YWCA, World Council of Churches, National Association of Women), all to consider the status of women and to make recommendations for women" (Zinsser 1990: 21).

1979 CEDAW the International Women's Rights Bill

"On 18 December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It entered into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981 after the twentieth country had ratified it. By the tenth anniversary of the Convention in 1989, almost one hundred nations have agreed to be bound by its provisions" (UNHR 2021).

1995 The UN Fourth World Conference for Women

"The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China was the most important of the four conferences on women held between 1975-1995, because it built on political agreements that had been reached at the three previous global conferences on women, and it consolidated five decades of legal advances aimed at securing the equality of women with men in law and in practice. More than 17,000 participants attended the conference, including 6,000 government delegates at the negotiations, more than 4,000 accredited NGO representatives, a host of international civil servants and around 4,000 media representatives" (United Nations 2021).

2010 The Establishment of UN Women

"The establishment of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women — to be known as UN Women — is a result of years of negotiations between UN Member States and advocacy by the global women's movement. It is part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact" (UN Women 2010).

Although these policies and institutions have advanced women's empowerment, they nevertheless fail when they do not achieve their intended goals. As argued by Mueller (2020), failure to obtain intended objectives in policies can occur due to the complex nature of public systems, as these systems are not static to change and these systems cannot be predicted or controlled.

1.3 Formulation and demarcation of the research problem

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing awareness and concern about the marginalisation of women from political spaces. To address this, a quota system was introduced which at the time was ground-breaking in the advocacy for women's empowerment and did result in an increase in the number of women to some extent. But it did not necessarily result in women having more political power, especially in the African context. Subsequently, although the literature points to the fact that the 'numbers' are not sufficient on their own, politicians in Africa use the numbers, citing

how many women are in various political bodies as evidence of how women now have political power. But in reality, they do not have meaningful decision-making power.

With the marginalising of non-numerical variables in efforts to mainstream women's political empowerment through AU gender instruments, limitations to the quality of women's political empowerment in Africa have arisen. Thus, the research question for the study is "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?" It is the main question the thesis seeks to address and problematise, and with the popularity of the concept of women's political empowerment, the need for its reconceptualisation is warranted.

Therefore, the research problem is that "The use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity and equality". Consequently, advocating for the descriptive representation of women (through numbers) as *the* vital component of women's political empowerment, while marginalising the substantive representation of woman politicians, is insufficient in terms of what is required for women's political empowerment to be achieved.

For the research to be narrow and specific, the main research question and problem will be embodied in four sub-questions:

1. In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment?

2. What other indicators have been developed (for example, by SADC gender barometers and other organisations) that measure women's political empowerment?

3. What are the implications of the fact that gender policy makers and politicians on the African continent tend to see an increased number of women in political positions as being the equivalent of gender empowerment?

4. What are the challenges affecting the advocacy, follow up and monitoring of gender instruments towards women's political empowerment?

1.4 Research aim and rationale

The research aimed to address the challenge of women's political empowerment in Africa. A reconceptualisation and meso analysis (linkages between the AU, RECs, and states) of empowerment were conducted throughout this thesis and non-numerical indicators extrapolated through the research were used to reconceptualise women's political empowerment.

One of the assumptions and limitations of the linkages between the AU, RECs, and states, by scholars but more so practitioners, is that what is happening at the top (macro-level – the AU) is happening at the bottom (micro-level – member states). A meso 'network' level of analysis is lacking compared to the micro- and macro-level analysis of implementation. Therefore, the results of this study provide a meso evaluation of a perceived flow between the policymaker (AU) and the implementers (at regional and national levels). This was done by problematising the concept of women's political empowerment as it is operationalised through AU gender instruments.

As explained above, SADC (REC) and Zimbabwe were used to assess the flow between the three levels, which are the continental body (policymaker) to regional body to national body (policy implementers).

1.4.1 Objectives of the study

In response to the above research sub-questions as well as the theme of the thesis, three objectives were formulated to guide the research processes. These objectives are linked to the research problem, which is "the use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity and equality".

1   To reconceptualise and theorise women's political empowerment from an international relations perspective, apart from a sociological, psychological, managerial, and developmental perspective.

2   To provide a meso analysis and understanding of women's political empowerment through the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe, and provide an African perspective on women's political empowerment.

3   To consider alternative indicators to measuring women's political empowerment other than the quota system of representation.

1.5 Literature review

The discipline of International Relations has various primary sources such as policy documents, media reports, government records, interviews and books on women's political empowerment, which were useful for the thesis. Cross-sectional data was provided by institutional websites of the AU, SADC, the Zimbabwean government and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved with the gender agenda of the AU. Bearing in mind the 'neglect' or 'newness' of developing/Southern/third-world perspectives and interests in the discipline of International Relations, secondary sources provided relevant information in highlighting the gaps, as more developing/Southern/third-world arguments are being theorised and debated.

The 'Southern' discourse of knowledge creation highlights the need to think differently, as there has been a problematic universalising of women's experiences. The experiences of women politicians in Africa cannot be equated with the experiences of women politicians in the Global North or Western democracies, considering that these experiences are both complex and diverse to grapple with. Hence, through the literature, the thesis recognised that previous studies have focused on the descriptive representation of women in politics and their critical mass. Although the focus of this thesis is on the critical acts of women politicians, the literature review touches on feminism, as this forms part of the context for understanding women's empowerment. These complex concepts contribute towards the understanding and reconceptualising of women's political empowerment.

1.5.1 Feminism

Within the discipline of International Relations, the introduction of feminism occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Feminism began as a movement that culminated in the development of a feminist theory that set the principles that guide the feminist movement, and the insurgence of feminist theory within the discipline of International Relations led to the introduction of a new variable, *gender* (Dunne, Kurki & Smith 2007). Feminism started hundreds of years ago but is recent within International Relations. Feminism in International Relations argues that the understanding of global politics would be advanced by the inclusion of gender as a category or variable for analysis. Only then would the impact of states, institutional policies, and world systems on the livelihoods of women be fully understood (Daddow 2013).

There are different strands within feminism that seek to explain the different experiences of women and provide perspectives for analysing these experiences. Within the discipline of International Relations, feminism manifests itself through a liberal approach, post-structural approach, post-colonial approach, constructivist approach and critical theory approach (Daddow 2013). These approaches and theories of International Relations address major inequalities in the practice and theory of International Relations, and the purpose of feminism has been to highlight the need for actors within global politics to be more aware of hierarchies of power and the implications of these. At times, there is an overlap of objectives present in the different perspectives of feminism; however, in general, feminism highlights and reinstates women's (in)visibility by addressing *gender relations*. The major purpose of most feminist strands is to re-gender global politics (Dunne et al. 2007).

In the West, specifically in North America, feminism is understood as having progressed in four waves (Householder 2015): the first wave of feminism advanced a movement for women's political equality (suffrage) and the second wave advanced a movement for women's social and economic equality (Faludi 1992). The third wave of feminism advanced a movement for understanding the intersectionality of women's issues (Snyder-Hall 2010), while the fourth wave advanced a movement for the empowerment of women, by the acceptance of raising women's issues through different voices, and the digitisation of feminism (Parry 2018). However, these waves are not without criticism. Evans and Chamberlain (2014) argue that the waves of

feminism have been exclusionary of other voices and experiences of women in the pursuit of empowerment. Despite the criticisms of these 'metaphoric' waves, they are useful in establishing relationships or tensions in the pursuit of women's movements and activism (Evans 2015).

1.5.2 A third-world perspective

Spivak (1988) critiques the claim by Western feminism to represent or depict women's issues as a global experience of "sisterhood" through universalising them. Her works highlight the question of difference and draw the attention of scholars towards the intersectionalities of race, glass, gender, and geographical context when evaluating women's experiences. This thesis has attempted to grapple with this by highlighting the complex intersectional experiences of woman politicians in Africa in an attempt to mainstream gender and empower women politically.

Spivak's 1987 essay on 'Feminism and Critical Thinking' introduced a strategic-essentialism lens, which challenged the binary thinking of 'man' and 'woman' identities based on biological sex by focusing on the "cultural" differences of women in the "First World" and "Third World". Furthermore, Danius, Jonsson and Spivak (1993) explained how strategic essentialism is a context-specific *strategy* used to evaluate or suit a particular situation. This thesis used this lens of strategic essentialism to evaluate the influence of culture in understanding women's political empowerment, in among other ways through the complexities and evolving aspects of culture.

Oyewumi (2002) highlights how gender has been theorised through a Western lens and is a model through which feminists explain, explore or account for women's oppression and subordination. She highlights that gender is a sociocultural construct and that the gender category of "woman" is not universal, meaning, the African critique of gender cannot be theorised at face value. Oyewumi (2002) adds that the distinctions of gender are what create social hierarchies and they have been largely Western. Thus, this thesis grapples with the reality that "the difficulty of applying feminist concepts to express and analyze African realities is the central challenge of African gender studies" (Oyewumi 2002: 4).

1.5.3 African feminism and womanhood

This section presents a southern discourse approach that is weaved into the main argument. It reflects the importance of highlighting the unique experiences of African women (politicians), as the experiences of African women cannot be universalised.

The misrepresentation of African womanhood led to the introduction of women African writers to revoke literature on African women by African men (Mekgwe 2006) and these writings set the precedent to explore gender in African societies (Arndt 2000). Shangare (2017) highlights how the writings of Ogundipe-Leslie provided an African feminist lens that proposed a transformation of gender, politics, and society. Shangare (2017) further adds that the experiences of African women have not received much global recognition, not only in the global context but the African context as well. The multiplicity of voices and the cultural specificity of gender called for the contextualisation of experiences to ensure a body of literature and epistemologies that are relevant to and reflective of African women's experiences, experiences that are not universal (Bechler 2011).

A few prominent African feminists who have theorised African women's experiences are Amina Mama (Nigeria), Sylvia Tamale (Ugandan), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi (Nigerian), Maame Afon Yelbert-Obeng (Ghana), Aisha Fofana Ibrahim (Sierra Leone), Abena Busia (Ghana) and Leymah Gbowee (Liberia) (Regush 2017). These women of African scholarship and literary works have mostly been restricted to African philosophical contexts (Coetzee 2017). The challenge is that gender in the African context has not been extensively theorised through an African lens, despite the growing body of recent literature on African feminism (Oyowe & Yurkivska 2014). African feminism is still finding its feet in African philosophy, which is complex and largely "male" because African women scholars have been excluded (Hutchinson & Jenkins 2013).

African feminisms are often theorised based on the indigenous experiences of African women and the tenets of these theories stem from African cultural and epistemological experiences to empower women while enlightening men (Nkealah 2016). In the literature, there is an emphasis on how there is no 'one' African feminism, as this would lead to the misrepresentation of the diversity of African cultures and experiences. African feminisms have their foundations in African epistemologies that reflect the

realities and gender norms that African women and men have been socialised into. They have made contributions towards knowledge creation on African phenomena for advancing gender and women's studies in Africa (Ahikire 2014; Kisiang'ani 2004).

Ahikire (2014) further explains how women in male-dominated areas face challenges of lack of structural support within institutions, lack of policies that integrate women and certain organisational practices that uphold gender discrimination. Thus, African feminism faces challenges of development, inequality, inadequate gender mainstreaming and how these issues are tied to specific problems and difficulties directed at women on the African continent (Kanjere & Rachidi 2014). With its multifaceted nature, African feminism seeks to advocate for and foster the agenda of gender mainstreaming with a specific concern for women's empowerment (Gaidzanwa 2010).

Historical research and analysis have argued that women have not been afforded the opportunity to be appointed to positions of political decision-making compared to men, and African feminists seek to critically assess the strides that the AU has made with respect to achieving gender equality on the continent (Ahikire 2014). African feminism is different to Western feminism because African feminism has been constructed with African women in mind to deal with their specific needs and reflect their realities.

Another way in which it differs from Western feminism is that African feminists typically argue that African states' liberation from colonialism should extend to the liberation and emancipation of African women on the continent (Ahikire 2014). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argues for the transformation of gender politics and society so that there can be a recreation of women's identities by evaluating and restricting existing institutional structures so that the emancipation of women can be actualised.

African feminism was introduced to address the historical inequalities and marginalisation introduced by colonialism (Tamale 2004). Resultantly, this has seen a trend in the importance of addressing the intersectionality of African women's issues, gender, race, class, ethnicity, and poverty (McFadden 2002). Thus, African feminism seeks to address women's issues through three lenses, namely the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods (Goredema 2010). There are various strands of

African feminism due to the complex experiences of women in Africa, and these pluralities are evidence of African feminist scholarship (Goredema 2010; Tamale 2014). Additionally, feminism in Africa is either intellectual or popular, with the former exporting the experiences of African women outside Africa and the latter highlighting culture, women's involvement in liberation movements and food production (Touré, Barry & Diallo 2003).

However, the challenge with African feminism is that, unlike Western feminist thought, it cannot be defined by a specific wave or movement; thus, African feminist movements are different regionally across Africa (Goredema 2010). With this in mind, the thesis did not use African feminism or the fourth wave of feminism as the theoretical lens for the study, but the various strands of African feminist thought formed the context within which women's political empowerment, representation and quotas in the African context were explored.

1.5.4 Representation and quotas

All parts of society, through the politics of presence, need to be able to participate in politics (Phillips 2010). The reason for this is to ensure that all interests are represented at the decision-making table. This has led to arguments for increasing the presence of women in politics (Lovenduski 2001). The reason women's representation is low, specifically in African countries is numerous factors such as the institutionalisation of patriarchy and agents of socialisation. The reason for the current form of representation of African women in politics is intertwined between actors, institutions, and structures that reproduce gender norms in Africa.

According to Sumbadze (2008), there are two aspects to consider, firstly, that increasing representation does increase the chance of women's issues being addressed in the policy formulation process, and secondly, that there *is* a concern for women's issues, and these two aspects are encapsulated in gender. Moreover, as explained through African feminist thought, interests among women are different, be it on the basis of race, class, culture, or ethnicity. In other words, the differences in interests are not just gendered – men's interests versus women's interests – but they are also different among women, and studies of political representation must not neglect this (Lovenduski 2002). This thesis takes note of this difference.

To reconceptualise women's political empowerment, it is important to diagnose the causes of women's underrepresentation. Understanding these causes will aid in providing relevant and context-specific solutions, such as in the African context. Secondly, the type of electoral system choice in a country also affects the level of representation of women politicians, and in an instance where quotas will be used, it is important to evaluate the chosen and applied electoral system to increase women's representation (Dahlerup 2005). For example, countries with a proportional representation electoral system tend to have a higher number of women within political institutions of decision-making (Norris 2004). In a functioning democracy, representation is key and thus women's political empowerment encapsulates the attainment of 'representation'.

There are four broad types of representation, namely formal, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive. The thesis uses Pitkin's work as a framework of analysis, resultantly her arguments and approach on representation are both a lens and critique, in the process of reconceptualising women's political empowerment. Pitkin (1964 and 1967) introduced these forms of representation to the discipline of the Political Sciences and International Relations, and her arguments are drawn out from essays she wrote critiquing Hobbes' 1651 work titled *Leviathan*, where he explained that the 'representative' is given the power to represent 'the whole'. For this thesis, the substantive representation of women and their political participation are mutually exclusive, meaning that attaining substantive representation in politics can translate to women's participation in politics, whereas the descriptive representation of women does not always translate to the political participation of women. Understanding the limitations of the descriptive representation of women is what this thesis sets out to do by arguing for a shift in focus from a critical mass to the critical acts of African women in politics.

Quotas are used as a fast-track means to ensure the increase of representation for women in politics (Dahlerup 2005). The focus in the literature has been on the increased quantity of women in political institutions rather than the quality of change experienced by the various actions of empowerment, and quotas as the means for

increasing women's representation addressing women's issues. However, this description is lacking because it extrapolates that increased numbers (quotas) will translate into women's empowerment (Stromquist 1995; Sundström et al. 2015). In the 1990s, women's formal political representation was scarce and so it became the focus to increase the number of women within decision-making institutions. This focus was on obtaining a critical mass; however, the critical acts of women were somewhat neglected.

In the past 25 years, feminists have managed to advocate for the increased representation of women (meeting quotas) within bodies of decision-making and women as potential candidates aiming for office; a system for achieving quotas and ensuring gender balance in political institutions. Thus, women's empowerment became a widely used term for development, and various governmental and non-governmental institutions use the term within their policies as one of their goals. The inclusion of the term is "fashionable" because it provides credibility for policies and programmes (Medel-Anonuevo & Bochynek 1995; Costa 2014). Including certain terms in policies does not mean the policies are engendered, gender-sensitive or that the policy implementation is effective. This means the 'critical acts' of those targeted by policies of empowerment need to be investigated by scholars of women's empowerment.

The literature also reflects that when (African) women infiltrate political institutions, it is usually at lower levels, while top levels are occupied by men, as there are fewer women in decision-making positions in chief executive areas. In some cases, men are at the helm of the very institutions meant to empower women and indigenous history. This is not to say that men cannot be involved in the empowerment of women, but the overrepresentation of men is one of the reasons the underrepresentation of women has been questioned. Additionally, agents of socialisation and various dynamics in culture have placed women second to men, subordinate and unequal, and this is also reflected in modern political institutions, as these ideologies affect and regulate what women can and cannot do (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994; Oxaal & Baden 1997).

1.5.5 Conceptualising gender

For this thesis, gender is a "system of social practices; this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and it organises relations of inequality based on [these distinctions]. In this view, gender involves the creation of both differences and inequalities" (Wharton 2012: 7). In African practice and scholarship, gender is determined by aspects of socialisation and the dynamics of culture; however, the ascribed meanings vary depending on geographical and cultural context. Gender reproduces the dichotomy of man and woman, of labour between man and woman, and the nature of the private and public space of man and woman (Webber & Williams 2008). Thus, gender is a recurring construct throughout the thesis.

In Africa, there are diverse ideas about what role is ascribed to either men or women and the general perception, based on cultural expectations, has been that the woman is subordinate or second to the man. As mentioned, African feminists seek to address women's issues through three lenses: the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods (Goredema 2010). Thus, the construct of gender in Africa has been influenced by the process of colonisation on the continent and this was normalised by a system of patriarchy. Patriarchy is "a family-social, ideological, political system in which men, by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (Rich 1977: 57).

Bearing this definition in mind, it is important to note that societies in pre-colonial Africa were not just patriarchal but matriarchal as well, and gender was not simply dichotomous – of man, of woman – but complex (Bertolt 2018). Thus, the current gender relations in Africa have been strengthened by colonisation and the expectations have become institutionalised. This, as argued by Spivak (1990), is a continuation of norms through capitalist power dynamics that reproduce gender norms in the third world. Apart from colonial roots, gender politics in Africa has also been reproduced by religion; although religions differ, there is the commonality of women's suppression (Ray 2003; Hingston 2014). This thesis does not dwell intently on the influences of religion and the position of African women, but the researcher does acknowledge that religion has defined gender norms in Africa.

Gender dynamics in Africa need to be understood within the systems of power relations and hierarchies, as systems of power reproduce gender dynamics (Foucault 2000). Women's political empowerment in Africa cannot be understood outside the systems of power and gender, as "it is the case in most instances in African countries that women tend to hold less power and men more power; hence, the default position in most [feminist] work is understanding and critiquing gender-based relations of domination and subordination" (Marindo 2017). Thus, the thesis explains power relations in African politics, which are reproduced by socialisation that is in turn influenced by culture, through a gendered lens. Systems, in this case, political systems, define gender relations and the subsequent empowerment or disempowerment of African women in politics.

1.6 Research methodology

Methodologically speaking, the research question was addressed through a constructivist worldview, as discussed further in chapter three.

This thesis employed the case study method and the regional economic community of the AU selected for analysis was SADC, because SADC has been releasing a regional gender barometer since 2009, with the most recent gender barometer being the 2021 edition (Gender Links 2021), which meant the availability of data since 2009. Within the region, SADC member states also provide yearly country barometers derived from the SADC gender barometer targets. Zimbabwe is the only member of SADC that released a 2017 country barometer (Gender Links 2021). Moreover, of the 15 member states of SADC, Zimbabwe released four country gender barometers, in 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2017, while the remaining 16 members of SADC have only provided three country gender barometers (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2018).

Through the use of semi-standardised interviews, conducted at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, political elites were engaged from two departments: namely, the Political Affairs Directorate department and the Women, Gender and Development Directorate department. Elites from the two departments were relevant for the thesis, because they were directly or indirectly involved (through their departments) with the policy formulation of electoral systems and the gender agenda in Africa. Interviews were also supposed to be conducted with political elites

in Zimbabwe and at the SADC headquarters; however, due to the covid-19 pandemic, this posed a challenge for the researcher. Resultantly, through a combination of primary and secondary sources, the researcher was enabled to address the research problem of the thesis.

The thesis is qualitative, inductive, and analytical. It is qualitative due to the complex, multi-dimensional nature of the phenomenon of women's political empowerment, and the expectation of the research problem for the researcher to apply knowledge. In other words, the researcher had to use an inductive reasoning to explain causality and draw out themes from the data, in order to contribute to the existing scholarship on women's political empowerment. The thesis is analytical because of the possibility of the reconceptualisation of women's political empowerment. Chapter three of the thesis explains the methodological underpinnings of the study in detail.

1.6.1 Macro, meso and micro levels of analysis

The thesis is presented in three levels: the continental (AU), regional (SADC) and national (Zimbabwe). The macro level of analysis is represented by the AU, the meso level by SADC, and the micro level by Zimbabwe. However, the meso level of analysis explored by this thesis refers to linkages between the three distinct levels. This is presented as a form of network analysis, to formalise the relationship between the three levels.

In the social sciences, all three levels of analysis have been applied; however, there has been an emphasis placed on either the macro or micro level of analysis (Serpa 2017; Serpa & Ferreira 2018). The meso level of analysis encapsulates various meanings (Fine 2012). The meso can be applied as a connecting level of analysis between a macro and a micro, and it allows for investigation between connecting groups (Javeau 1998). Groups contribute towards the creation of social order and groups are part of the social order; thus, the connection between groups can be evaluated to understand how social order is being reproduced (Fine 2012).

Society and culture are not static; there is a continual wave of production and reproduction of social norms and values that connect the macro and the micro (Sallum 2005). By the researcher applying a meso level of analysis to the thesis, it created

room for the investigation of the interaction of groups and the processes by which these interactions have been created (Pyyhtinen 2017). Social groups continue to change, internally or externally, due to different social factors, and a meso level of analysis is relevant when the macro and micro levels of analysis are not neglected (Hartman 2017), which is what this thesis aimed to do. Certain research requires only a specific level to be studied independently, whereas other research, such as the case of this thesis, required that the research problem be investigated taking into consideration the connection between the three levels.

The thesis took on a meso approach to show linkages of understanding or aims and objectives of the gender policies of the three 'institutions' or groups under investigation. This helped the researcher ask questions about gender policies, as to whether there is a common understanding or an implementation gap. Since women's political empowerment is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, it needs to be addressed accordingly and "social problems feature substantial interdependencies among multiple systems and actors, developing and implementing innovative solutions involve the re-negotiating of settled institutions or the building of new ones" (Van Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, De Baker & Marti 2019).

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The current introductory chapter is the first and foundational chapter of the research. It provides a fundamental background of the study and the research question that is addressed by the thesis. It is followed by chapter two.

Chapter two provides the conceptual and theoretical framework for the thesis, which guides the scholarly understanding of the concept of women's political empowerment. The chapter also cements the arguments of the thesis within the discipline of International Relations.

Chapter three explains the methods of the study by providing a detailed explanation of the process of methodology and how the research tools are used. The chapter also provides insight into the data collection used by the researcher.

Chapter four provides a document and meso analysis of the implementation process of women's political empowerment through a continental (AU), regional (SADC) and national (Zimbabwe) analysis of the three gender policies. This chapter specifically addresses two research sub-questions, which are: "What other indicators have been developed (for example, by SADC gender barometers and other organisations) that measure women's political empowerment?" and "What are the challenges affecting the advocacy, follow-up and monitoring of gender instruments towards women's political empowerment?" It provided an analysis of policies and implementation scorecards.

Chapter five reflects on the elites' understanding of women's political empowerment by specifically addressing one research sub-question, namely "In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment"? The chapter engages with the qualitative lens of women's political empowerment, and the operationalising of the three gender policies that are engaged with in chapter four.

Chapter six, similar in function to chapter five, also reflects on the political elite's understanding of women's political empowerment; however, it specifically addresses one of the research sub-questions which is "What are the implications of the fact that gender policy makers and politicians on the African continent tend to see an increased number of women in political positions as being the equivalent of gender empowerment?"? The chapter aims to step further from a focus on a critical mass towards critical acts.

Chapter seven is the final and concluding chapter, which also offers recommendations for scholars and practitioners concerning women's political empowerment from an African perspective.

1.8 Conclusion

As has been noted, the AUGS defines women's political empowerment as the "increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making", which is measured through numbers, namely, the quota system of representation. This provides an inadequate evaluation for reflection on our understanding of women's political

empowerment and this then requires us as scholars of International Relations to move beyond the numerical limitation of the definition as this can marginalise other variables. The AU's gender agenda is aimed at transformation within the institution itself, the African continent as well as the international community. Efforts towards increasing the presence of women in institutions of political representation have taken effect to ensure the engendering of decision-making. However, despite the commitments made by member states of the AU towards the empowerment of women politically, the commitment levels are not equal to implementation. Quota systems of representation have been used to increase the number of women in politics, but this has taken for granted the influence of socialisation, culture, and gender, and ignored other vital components needed to shift and transform power relations. The following chapter commences the research by setting out the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the arguments presented in the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

To some, the attainment of women's political empowerment is as simple as increasing the number of women within institutions of political decision-making. Since the inaugural global international women's conference, the discussion among policymakers, activists, and academics concerning attaining women's rights economically, socially, politically, and overall has intensified. As explained in section 1.2.1, these global women's conferences have contributed to women's empowerment and "the United Nations has organized four world conferences on women. These took place in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. The last was followed by a series of five-year reviews" (UN Women 2021b). There were 12 areas of concern raised, with one of them being 'women in power and decision-making', and two strategic objectives were raised. These were, firstly, to "take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making", and secondly, to "increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership" (UN Fourth World Conference on Women 1995). Two elements stood out to the researcher: 'access' and 'capacity'.

Concerning studies about women's empowerment, the literature can be divided into six broad areas. Firstly, there are studies on **women and social movements**, concerning how these social movements have raised awareness regarding women's issues (Beckwith 2007). The reason for the study of women and social movements has been to understand the exclusion of women from political participation (Krook & Childs 2010). Moreover, women's movements have encompassed the systemic organisation of women towards their empowerment as well as the gendered nature of politics (Beckwith 2002; Chappell 2002). Opportunities for mobilisation through women's movements came about based on the awareness that men have occupied leadership roles while women have only occupied supportive roles (Baldez 2002). The type and context of women's social movements have been debated (Weldon 2002), as the male-dominated nature of political institutions and how this affects women has also been studied as a social movement in itself (Sainsbury 2004).

Secondly, there are studies about **women and political parties**, the reason being that political parties are a point of entry for women into institutions of political decision-making. Women may become part of political party leadership, but studies have noted that few may take on top leadership roles within political parties (Kittilson 2006). Women have taken on roles as cooks, secretaries or mobilisers of women voters and not always as top leaders (Freeman 2002). Studies of women and political parties have raised issues of women's representation and the formulation of policies through political party interests to address or silence women's issues (Young 2000a). These studies have focused on the gendered nature of political party formation or organisation, and how the entrance of women threatens or changes the functionality of political parties (Krook & Childs 2010). Moreover, the response of political parties to women's demands has been investigated through these studies (Lovenduski & Norris 1993).

Thirdly, there are studies that focus on **women, gender, and elections**. This literature focuses on the patterns of how women are elected and the idea of women taking part in the voting processes (Krook & Childs 2010). The number of elected women has been studied based on women's qualifications to be in politics and the willingness of women to be political leaders (Lawless & Fox 2005; Norris & Lovenduski 1995). There have been studies that have evaluated the electoral system of countries, for example, the first-past-the-post (FPTP) or proportional representation systems, and the conclusion was that the proportional representation system was more favourable towards women's political appointments (Salmond 2006). A major issue that has been raised was that of culture and how culture and the socio-economic position of women in society determined the 'acceptance' or 'non-acceptance' of women in politics (Inglehart & Norris 2003). Importantly, there have been studies on the intersectionalities between women, based on race, class, gender, and age, as to how women interact with 'politics' or how women's ideas or understanding of political participation are influenced or perceived (Gay & Tate 1998).

Fourthly, there are studies about **women, gender, and political representation**, focusing on the degree to which the presence of women in politics will translate to women's concerns being addressed at policy levels (Mansbridge 1999; Young 2000). These studies have looked at what is termed the descriptive and substantive

representation of women in politics, addressing the extent to which the presence of women in political institutions of decision-making are influenced by policy formulation or implementation (Pitkin 1967). Women's issues have been defined to be the increase of women's agency and autonomy (Reingold 2000), concerns in a woman's private space (Schwindt-Bayer 2009), and concerns in a woman's public space (Mackay 2001). This area of research has debated on the notion of critical mass, as women tend to be the *minority* within institutions of political decision-making (Dahlerup 1989; Grey 2006). The argument for women to reach a critical mass has been critiqued in that women are diverse, political contexts differ, and the type of electoral system in a country affects how women engage in politics (Mackay 2008; Trembley 2003). This has led to an argument for the substantive representation of women (Childs & Krook 2006; Dahlerup 2006a). There is also growing literature on 'where' and 'when' women act in politics, as this affects their political influence (Celis, Childs, Cantola & Krook 2008).

Fifth, there are studies on **women, gender and public policies** that focus on the gendered nature of equality policies, and how the formulation and implementation of these policies have been gendered, which in turn reflects gendered norms being reproduced (Krook & Childs 2010). These studies focused on how women's issues have been transformed and encapsulated within policies (Elman 2007; Verloo 2007). Public policy shapes outcomes, and various actors, such as churches, lawyers, and unions also influence the meanings attached to social problems that are addressed in policies (Htun 2003; Weldon 2002). The formulation of policies to address gender-related issues have evolved into what is known as gender mainstreaming (Booth & Bennett 2002; Squires 2005). However, debates concerning gender mainstreaming have resulted in the need to conscientise intersectionality and the creation of a 'needs-specific' approach, so that policies are transformational and not just gender-sensitive (Hancock 2007; Weldon 2006). However, this has raised challenges as to whether governments can formulate policies that are needs-specific (Squires 2007), such as those specifically geared towards addressing women's issues.

Lastly, there has been research on **women, gender, and the state**, how the state in itself influences gender relations and how these in turn shape policies produced by the state that are gendered in nature (Krook & Childs 2010). Traditional approaches

concerning women, gender, and the state have focused on the role of the state in a globalised world (Krook & Childs 2010). There have been studies about the state as an instrument of power without an ability to be transformational (Randall & Waylen 1998). There have been studies stating that the normative views of the state are not independent of socio-economic issues (Sainsbury 1994) and thus, the state is without capacity to address women's inequalities. There have been arguments of the state being 'conservative' and promoting the traditional role of women for women to remain within the private space (Esping-Anderson 1999). There have also been studies of women who become part of the state to transform it from within (Franzway et al. 1989). The above studies on women, gender, and the state have focused on the interaction of society with the state in relation to gendered issues of governance, policy formulation, and women's organisations or movements.

This thesis is based largely in the scholarly arena on research concerning women, gender, and political representation, as well as women, gender, and public policies. The thematic areas described above provide a broad context of studies of women's political empowerment and they show how gender has been infused within the study of politics and how political processes can or have been expanded to incorporate studies on women's political issues. The aim of the broad context is to show where this thesis is situated, its quest to address the research problem, which is "the use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of women's political empowerment which are crucial for ensuring equity and equality".

This literature review chapter aims to enhance our understanding on what entails women's political empowerment and address the main research question, namely "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?" The chapter begins by providing a conceptual framework of the critical mass, critical acts, and quota systems. Secondly, the chapter addresses the literature on a gendered approach to politics in Africa. Lastly, the chapter presents a section on the origins of political representation and the types of political representation as influenced by Hannah Pitkin.

2.2 Towards a conceptual understanding

As this thesis uses an inductive style of data analysis, which is further explored in section 3.5.1 on inductive data analysis, a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon 'women's political empowerment' is warranted. This style of data analysis allows for the redefinition of a phenomenon (Johnson 2008), thus allowing for empirical generalisations to be derived from the research, as the data can speak for itself (Brewer 2003). The conceptual understanding will explain why this research is important and how this thesis contributes to what is already known about women's political empowerment. The two main concepts utilised by this thesis are the concepts of critical mass and critical acts.

2.2.1 A critical mass?

What is critical mass? The "critical mass is the point at which something (an idea, belief, trend, virus, behaviour, etc.) is prevalent enough to grow, or sustain, a process, reaction, or technology" (Farnam Street 2018). Critical mass explains how "the nature of group interactions depends upon size. When a group remains a distinct minority within a larger society, its members will seek to adapt to their surroundings, conforming to the predominant rules of the game. But once the group reaches a certain size, critical mass theory suggests that there will be a qualitative change in the nature of group interactions, as the minority starts to assert itself and thereby transform the institutional culture, norms and values" (Norris & Lovenduski 2001: 2-3).

Debates around women securing "access' argue that a specific number of women are needed in order to ensure change, whatever institution these women may be in. What has come to be known as the critical mass is a threshold number needed to ensure that policies in institutions of political decision-making, are woman-friendly or woman-sensitive (Mansbridge 1999). In the Political Sciences, the concept of critical mass was introduced through the writings of Dahlerup in 1988 in that she raised an issue that the "composition" of a decision-making institution determined agenda setting and policy formulation (Dahlerup 1989). Her work built on that of Kanter (1977a), where she evaluated the effects of group dynamics on organisational culture.

Kanter (1977b) argued that groups below a critical mass were only "tokens" within an institution, while groups beyond a critical mass were able to influence organisational

culture. The arguments for a 30% critical mass of women were that change would not happen unless women were at least 30% present within an institution. The argument was largely centred on the "politics of presence" (Philips 1995). Critical mass theory mainly argued for the increased representation of women politicians and was the foundation used to support the introduction of gender quotas (Dahlerup 2005).

Various political actors, women politicians, activists, and scholars have argued for a 30% critical mass of women in political institutions (Mansbridge 2003). Scholars of women's representation have argued for both the continued use and scrapping of the critical mass. Critical mass theory has been "popular", but its efficacy has been questioned as well (Childs 2006; Krook & Childs 2008; Dahlerup 2006b). The major criticism of critical mass theory is that there is no agreed-upon percentage of what exactly is the critical mass (Childs 2006). It is important to note that, various disciplines have used critical mass theory before its introduction in the social sciences, namely, "physics, group dynamics, politics, public opinion, and technology" (Farnam Street 2018).

Firstly, in nuclear physics, critical mass was used to explain the amount of "reaction" needed for "something" to occur once or continually and this was dependent on certain factors such as density (Farnam Street 2018). Secondly, in sociology, critical mass was used to explain how the behaviour of a certain group of people was altered when they collectively decided towards drastic change (Farnam Street 2018). Morton Grodzins (a political scientist) introduced sociology critical mass in the 1960s to explore why individuals separated themselves by race. Thirdly, in business, critical mass was used to explain the self-sustainability and economic viability of companies, and that there were certain factors such as industry and location of a business needed for it to reach a critical mass (Farnam Street 2018).

Fourthly, in psychology, critical mass was used to explain mob behaviour (group think), which explained how when an individual was in a group, they tended to compromise their morals and became rebellious (Farnam Street 2018). Fifth, Gustav Le Bon (a psychologist) used critical mass to explain the number of people needed to effect change or what is known as the "collective unconscious" (Farnam Street 2018). Lastly, Mikael Krogerus used critical mass to explain technology, Michael Quinn Patton used

it to explain how great change resulted from small actions and Jon McGregor used it to explain weather (Farnam Street 2018).

In the Political Sciences, critical mass has been used to explain changes in government and revolutions, how a "marginal" group of individuals with an idea about a government needed to attain a certain number to reach a majority consensus, leading to a revolution (Farnam Street 2018). It is the people and not political leaders who spark revolutions, and this happens when the critical mass of individual revolt is reached, when the desire for change become greater than the fear of consequences resulting from revolting against a government (Farnam Street 2018). With the above in mind, in relation to women's political representation, in 2006, globally, women made up over 50% of the world population, yet only accounted for 16% of globally elected posts (Grey 2006). Key to note and question is that "the term critical mass is frequently used by politicians, the media and academics, but can it offer insights into the influence of gender on political processes and outcomes?" (Grey 2006: 492).

In the 1980s, the argument for critical mass was that a certain percentage of women (30%) was needed in parliaments and that changes needed concerning women's issues would not be addressed unless the critical mass of 30% was reached (Dahlerup 2006b). The idea was that the presence of women in politics needed to be sufficient to represent and therefore politically empower women; however, does gender (femaleness/maleness) and representation translate to the empowerment of women? The challenge with the critical mass argument is that it has been difficult to obtain a causal link between the critical mass of women politicians and the substantive representation of women (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers 2007; Studlar & McAllister 2002). This is due to the dependency on quantifying women in political institutions and not necessarily analysing the quality of change experienced or caused by these women in political institutions. The challenge with this focus on numbers was that major issues such as power dynamics in politics between politicians who are men and those who are women, party ideologies and personal beliefs were ignored (Grey 2006).

Tremblay (2006) recommends that "future research should explore how the psychological effects of electoral systems do or do not generate incentives for women

to act in certain ways once elected". This will help scholars and practitioners to explore whether women are politically empowered once they are in office or if the women they represent are in turn empowered due to the increased presence of women in political office. Therefore, as Pitkin indicates, "we need to retain the ideal of the substance of representation in addition to our institutionalisation of it" (Pitkin 1967: 239). Thus, the concern and focus should not just be on numbers, but on the effectivity of woman politicians.

The purpose is to address the concern of why women's increased presence in institutions of political influence does not always translate to women-friendly policy outcomes or the supposed empowerment of the women policymakers. Critical mass is twofold in the sense that (1) the number of women needs to reach critical mass in order to effect change and (2) change can be effected without even taking note of the number of women in politics. Hence, Krook and Childs (2008) raise the following issues concerning women's empowerment: instead of focusing on *when* women become empowered (increasing numbers), scholars need to focus on *how* women become empowered (quality of participation).

2.2.2 From critical mass to critical acts

Beckwith (2007) raises various challenges with critical mass theory. Firstly, the operationalisation of critical mass is difficult in that it requires quantification and yet the exact critical mass is debated. Secondly, critical mass is "under-theorised" because it is mostly used to highlight the positives of an increase in the number of women into the legislature (Beckwith 2007). However, negatives such as increased resistance and hostility towards elected women tend to be minimised. Thirdly, critical mass is presented as a "dichotomous independent variable", meaning there is either a certain number of women present or not present and this is the "sole" determining factor towards transformation and change; however, this is flawed as it is a limited indicator of women's political empowerment (Beckwith 2007).

Fourthly, when using critical mass, case selection may be a challenge because critical mass requires a longitudinal study to assess the differences in numbers of women in parliaments, and strenuous variables such as culture are ignored (Beckwith 2007). Fifthly, a threshold number presented by scholars of 40%, 35%, 15% have not been

reached by most parliaments; how then can the theory be applied (Beckwith 2007)? Thus, the dependent variable needs to be known to determine what threshold percentage is applicable to reach the critical mass and currently, based on data Beckworth provides in 2007, only Rwanda (48,85%, 2003) and Sweden (45,3%, 2002) meet the 40% threshold (Beckworth 2007).

With the above challenges of critical mass raised, the argument for critical acts by critical actors has been introduced by scholars. By definition, "critical actors are those who act individually or collectively to bring about women-friendly policy change" (Krook & Childs 2008: 127). Critical actors is an umbrella term and it "encompasses a range of types of actors concerned with advancing the SRW" (Chaney 2011: 442). SRW is the substantive representation of women, which is explained further in section 2.4 on women and political representation. Critical acts are enacted by critical actors, as defined by Krook and Childs (2008) and Chaney (2011). This understanding of critical acts by critical actors came about because of the critiquing of critical mass. This contributed to literature because "critiques of 'critical mass theory', in contrast, focus primarily on cases where policy change does not occur, even as the percentages of women in the legislature reach 'critical mass' proportions, identified at levels ranging from 10 per cent to 40 per cent" (Krook & Childs 2008: 733).

Group dynamics are often complex, rife with different opinions, factors, and contexts, meaning the numbers of a particular group of gender, in this case women, needed to be evaluated beyond their composition (Mansbridge 1999). When women are part of political institutions, these institutions are gendered; resultantly, scholars need to evaluate whether women are acting (affecting policy) despite certain factors beyond their control (Dovi 2002; Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers 2007). Hannagan and Larimer (2010) evaluated gender composition and decision-making; they denoted how men and women used different strategies to make decisions (gendered differences in decision-making), individually or in groups. In most cases and generally, women are explained to be critical actors for women, but men can also be critical actors on behalf of women (Celis 2004).

Therefore, what needs to be evaluated is not "when" women make a difference but "whether" women make a difference at all (Childs 2004). Another area of concern that

is highlighted by this is whether or not women are allowed to make a difference in the first place. This is important because "scholars ought to adopt a more guarded approach: rather than simply assuming that women will form alliances with other women as their numbers increase, they must investigate multiple possibilities in the relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation" (Krook & Childs 2008: 734). Additionally, Hannagan and Larimer (2010) explain how these gendered differences were based on how men and women had been socialised, yet this is incomplete because in cases where there is no "gender gap", the outcome from decision-making/policy formulation is not affected by the number of men/women present. Women may not need to reach critical mass to effect change because they can be driven by objectives that foster ownership and an incentive for change (Herrnson, Lay & Stokes 2003).

Moreover, beyond the need for critical actors, there is a need for critical institutions where these critical actors act as representatives. Critical institutions are created by a political environment/context through (1) political ideologies and their impact on society, (2) the political salience of attaining gender equality and (3) socio-economic influences such as poverty (Kurebwa & Ndlovu 2020). Critical institutions determine whether critical actors can "perform" critical acts; thus, women's ability to lead depends on the political environment and governance system of a country. With this in mind, scholars have argued for what is known as process tracing, whereby "intervening variables" are identified, which are the "contextual factors" that affect the ability or inability of representatives to "act" (Faletti 2006; Tansey 2007; Waylen 2014). The purpose is to attain positive policy change; hence, the move from simply focusing on critical mass towards the attaining of critical acts.

Dahlerup (1989) introduced six aspects to "broaden" the narrow conception that simply increasing the number of women in parliament led to their empowerment:

"1. Changes in the reaction to women politicians.
2. Changes in the performance and efficiency of women politicians.
3. Changes in the social climate of political life (the political culture).
4. Changes in the political discourse.
5. Changes of policy (the political decisions).

6. Increase in the power of women (the empowerment of women)".

<div align="right">Dahlerup 1989: 283-284</div>

The above aspects speak to what representatives do, and the factors that influence how they would bring about change. In 1997, SADC introduced a goal of attaining 30% of women's representation in the region, which increased to a goal of 50% in 2015 (SADC 2019). The focus there has been on critical mass and not the critical acts of woman politicians in the region; thus, Dahlerup (2006) used SADC to illustrate the need for further research concerning the "effective" percentage of women's presence, or the limitation thereof. She highlights that "in its 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development, the Southern African Development Community, SADC, committed to achieving a 30% representation of women in politics and decision-making by the year 2005. A 1999 conference, organized by SADC's Gender Unit and titled Beyond 30 Percent in 2005: Women and Decision-making in SADC, adopted a far-reaching program for gender parity in the region" (Dahlerup 2006b: 515).

Additionally, Dahlerup (2006: 515) highlights the increase in the number of women in bodies of political decision-making, which has increased from 30% to 50%, how this increase is an argument for critical mass and female representation in parliament as reflected by the case of the SADC region. The case of SADC is further discussed in section 4.5.3 on SADC and women's political empowerment tracking, and section 4.4.2 on SADC and gender. Dahlerup's (2006) arguments end by stating how no matter how limiting the concept of the critical mass and the use of quotas is, it is the starting point needed, as women need to be involved in decision-making processes in political institutions.

2.2.3 The quota system

The debate for quota systems has been presented on both sides of the spectrum, with scholars for the quota system (Kanter 1977a; Dahlerup 1989) and those against (Bari 2002). Quotas have been used to achieve women's descriptive representation and they are diverse. The main purpose of quotas is to achieve descriptive representation, and this is not limited to gender, but incorporates various intersectionalities such as race, religion, and ethnicity (Krook & O'Brien 2010). Quota systems come in three forms: (1) when parliaments are expected to reserve seats for women, (2) when

political parties are expected to have women on their electoral candidates list during elections and (3) when political parties voluntarily promise to have an expected number of women within their political party top positions (Bush 2011). The first two are enforced through law and constitutional amendments and are "legal quotas". Within political systems, these quotas can be applied at the local or national level and within parliaments in the upper or lower house (bicameral systems) (Bush 2011).

Quota systems are categorised by (1) quota size, (2) quota placement mandates, (3) quota enforcement mechanisms, and lastly (4) expected quota effects (Schwindt-Bayer 2009). The quota size, as explained in this chapter, through the concept of critical mass, is an expected percentage, be it 20%, 30% or 40%, and this size is expected to be found within political parties, electorates, or parliaments. However, the percentage marker does not directly translate to for example 30% of women representation according to population demographics, as it is also influenced by election outcomes and voter preferences (Schwindt-Bayer 2009). Scholars have argued that quotas have worked due to the significant underrepresentation of women; thus, quotas *have* increased the presence of women within institutions (Mansbridge 1999; Paxton & Hughes 2014).

Quotas have been argued to increase the presence of minorities of women, as well as ethnic minorities of men (Krook & O'Brien 2010). Quota placement mandates are an expectation that requires governments and political parties to "place" women on their political party lists and an example would be the placement mandate stating that one in five candidates must be a woman (Schwindt-Bayer 2009). The reason quota systems are adopted is for gender mainstreaming purposes, to ensure gender equality (Bush 2011). Thus, quota systems have been used to increase the number of women in workforces and this economic change has spread to the social and political spheres of societies. Quota enforcement mechanisms have been implemented through law or constitutions and stipulate a form of "punishment" for political parties that fail to meet quota placement mandates (Bush 2011). These can be in the form of financial penalties (France), where funding for a party is reduced, or positions expected to be filled by women must be left empty until a woman candidate is available to fill the position (Brazil) (Schwindt-Bayer 2009). There are variations of enforcement, which are weak, moderate, and strong mechanisms.

Quota systems are usually associated with developed nations, democratic nations, improved women's socio-economic status and the generalisation that Muslim countries are less likely to adopt quota systems (Bush 2011). The concerns addressed by Bush (2011) raise an awareness towards cultural and political factors that are embedded within patriarchy and colonial systems of oppression. With this in mind, global examples of the use of quota systems can be traced back to the 1900s. In the 1950s, Argentina was ranked 4th globally, with the highest percentage of 15% of women in parliament in 1950 and 22% in 1955, through the use of gender quota systems (Paxton & Hughes 2014). In the 1970s, Western industrial nations and North Africa (Egypt) began to adopt quota systems, while Asian countries had already been doing so (Paxton & Hughes 2014). In the 1990s, there was a dramatic increase of the use of quota systems, with Latin America and the rest of Africa adopting quotas within their political parties and parliaments (Paxton & Hughes 2014). In the 21st century, governments worldwide ensure the inclusion and use of quota systems to warrant gendering of institutions (Paxton & Hughes 2014).

According to Phillips (2010), there are four possible reasons for increasing women's participation, which are: (1) to provide role models, (2) to promote justice, (3) to articulate interests and (4) to take advantage of new resources which will improve democracy. The need for equal representation through quota systems is that women in society generally have particular interests and concerns that have to be addressed, such as safety, protection from gender-based violence and equal pay, to mention just a few (Phillips 2010). Thus, there is need for women to be in parliament to raise such concerns when policies are being drafted and implemented. However, this argument is problematic in the sense that one woman's interest does not immediately translate into the interest of another. These interests may vary from woman to woman, taking into consideration the intersectionalities of race, class, religion, and cultures (Phillips 2010). However, having male-dominated institutions of decision-making is even more problematic, as these may fail to adequately address women's issues or cater to their interests at all (Phillips 2010).

Support for quota systems has been based on the expectation that 'women will introduce a different set of norms and values' to those of men. However, what is

constant in the argument for increasing the number of women in parliaments is that the arguments are based on probabilities, namely, the probability that increasing the number of women will lead to their empowerment and representation, rather than certainties (Phillips 2010). However, there is no certainty that increasing the number of women will lead to their effectiveness and guarantee that women's issues will be addressed.

Expected quota effects vary and scholars have argued that for quotas to be effective, placement mandates and enforcement mechanisms are needed, otherwise their effect will be minimal. Compliance with quotas beyond what is on paper is what will lead to a quota system being effective and achieving its objectives to empower women and the ensuring of women's representation (Schwindt-Bayer 2009). However, as explained, quota systems vary and are not set in stone as there have been different versions of what exact number or percentage of individuals (for a quota to be effective) is needed. Moreover, quotas of women in parliament have not always translated into the needs of the elected woman politicians being effectively met. Women's quota systems *have* increased the use of "quotas" concerning women's representation and resistance (criticism) from both scholars and practitioners (Paxton & Hughes 2014). This is a bone of contention because on the one hand, there is a need to increase the number of women in institutions of decision-making, while on the other hand women's presence has not necessarily resulted in change in policies.

2.3 A gendered approach

This section discusses the gendered nature of empowerment and how this influences the understanding of "woman" governance in Africa. A gendered approach offers room to evaluate the presence of women in politics.

2.3.1 Gender in politics within the African context

Gender is a "system of social practices; this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and it organises relations of inequality based on [these distinctions]. In this view, gender involves the creation of both differences and inequalities" (Wharton 2012: 7). Gender is used to explain the binary distinction of male and female, and the "patterns" of behaviour that the two exhibit. Thus, a gendered approach would involve analysing the expectations, perceptions, political culture, interpretation and

institutionalisation of the binary man and woman (Wharton 2012). This results in the exclusion and inclusion of either binary of male or female in addition to the hierarchies that these binaries create.

The binaries of male and female are social classifications resultant from structures established in social relations and connections. Gender is used to distinguish biological differences, but it more significantly refers to the social meanings (identities) given to these binary biological distinctions of male and female (Childs & Krook 2006; Scheele 2011). Gender identities are constructed, usually in conjunction with an identity that can emanate from race, religion, class, and ethnicities (Childs & Krook 2006). These intersectionalities cannot be overlooked when seeking to reconceptualise women's political empowerment.

Gender is "enacted or done"; it is not simply a characteristic of individuals but occurs at all levels of social structure, it is a multilevel phenomenon and refers to its importance in organising relations of inequality (Wharton 2012). Gender is epitomised as a variable that is the subject matter that feminists ought to grapple with and can either be explored qualitatively or quantitatively, which will allow feminists to explain the masculine nature of the discipline of International Relations. However, using gender as a variable can be problematic because it implies that gender can be studied from the outside of gender or free from gender, but it is embedded in the structures and practices of organisations and social institutions, which appear on the surface to be gender-neutral. Likewise, the discrepancies between men and women within the 'private' and 'public' sphere remain a vantage point to understanding inequalities that arise due to gender distinctions. The duality of men and women concerning their labour and access to resources remains one of the major axes of gender inequality (for the above see Wharton 2012; Webber & Williams 2008; Crompton 2007).

In the African context, Pearce (2000) recommends that when evaluating gender in governance, there is a need to scrutinise policy wording and implementation to assess whether women's political empowerment is achieved. Branches of government, political parties, law enforcement agencies, peace commissions and tribunal policies have to be assessed to determine the extent to which women are politically empowered, as these are the institutions through which women obtain political

empowerment. Scholars and practitioners must note that "ideological, social and personal differences between men and women often come into play" when endeavouring to politically empower women (Pearce, 2000).

2.3.2 Empowerment: an interdisciplinary concept

The concept of empowerment is embedded in various disciplines and historically was not inherently political but sociological, psychological, managerial, and developmental in nature (see Sundström et al. 2015; Conger & Kanungo 1988; Medel-Anonuevo & Bochynek 1995). Not only is empowerment interdisciplinary, but it is a multidimensional process for dealing with what a group of people deems important (Page & Czuba 1999). The interdisciplinary nature of empowerment has confused its definition.

Bookman and Morgen define empowerment as "a spectrum of political activity ranging from acts of individual resistance to mass political mobilisations that challenge basic power relations in our society" (1988: 4). The literature proposes that empowerment can be envisaged as different constructs; empowerment as a relational construct infers perceived power structures between individuals and organisational leaders to subordinates, while empowerment as a motivational construct infers that an individual or organisation's needs are met when one is perceived to be in control/having the power to manage life as well as social experiences to acquire self-determination (Conger & Kanungo 1988). In this research, the construct of empowerment is understood as a motivational construct, which allows the recipient of empowerment to be "enabled".

Moreover, empowerment is defined and explained according to three aspects, namely sociological, economic, and political. Economic empowerment is defined as an individual or organisational ability to engage in economic activities freely without hindrances. Social empowerment is defined as an individual or organisational ability to engage freely in social activities regardless of race, sex, age, and religion (Human Development Report 1993). Political empowerment is defined as one's individual or organisational will "to choose and change governance at every level, from the presidential palace to the village council" (Human Development Report 1993: 21).

As explained in chapter one, the definition and understanding of empowerment in the literature has changed over time, with a shift away from *focusing solely on representation* towards *engaging critical consciousness* in the form of critically evaluating norms and values, contributing to shifting power relations (Cornwall 2016). Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe and Thomson (1991: 2) importantly emphasise that "empowerment at one level does not necessarily entail empowerment at another". The next section explores the definition of women's political empowerment.

2.3.3 Women's political empowerment: a definition

Sundström's definition of women's political empowerment guided this thesis but was developed and adapted in several important ways. Sundström's definition is: "a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making" (Sundström, Paxton, Wang & Lindberg 2015: 4). For the purpose of this thesis, the researcher has expended the Sundström et al 2015 definition to:

"*A method and process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making which results in particular intended outcomes*".

This expanded definition will be applied throughout the thesis. The reason the definition is expanded for this research is that political empowerment is not only a process, but also a method and an outcome. The political component of empowerment is the capacity to organise society in a manner that results in social change, leading to agency and collective efforts. In this, the process of empowerment is seen as a "method" to attain access and control of means, awareness and most importantly *empowerment* (Stromquist 1995; Lazo 1995).

Women's political empowerment has further been described in terms of the measures used to increase the potential of women candidates and create opportunities for women to make choices, as this increases the potential for the representation of women's issues and access to resources (Matland 2005). Ballington (2004) points out that the use of quotas to achieve women's political empowerment tackles the issue of balancing gender in politics; however, it is not reflective of both equity and equality.

More factors have led to women's increased political participation apart from the quota system of representation, such as women's movements; nevertheless, some in the scholarship do argue that as a short-term strategy, the quota system is effective (Ndlovu & Mutale 2013). More significantly, politicians and policymakers often assume or imply that the numbers are sufficient to tell us whether a political system is equitable in relation to gender.

Politicians make decisions on behalf of individuals and groups; therefore, the concept of political empowerment needs to be problematised because the assumption is that the increase in the number of women in politics equates with empowerment. Omotsho (2015: 100) suggests that "while series of policies and action plans have been carried out, they have not fully addressed the quandary women face as far as empowerment is concerned". In terms of policies, formal commitments have been made by member states of the AU; however, concerted action is still lacking, and commitment levels are not equal to implementation (Olowo 2011).

Omotsho writes (2015: 7): "despite all efforts at establishing gender mainstreaming praxis in Africa, discriminatory practices against women continue while female participation in decision-making remains negligible in many jurisdictions". Furthermore Martin (2017) highlights that "the level of coordination between the AU and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) appears limited and among the RECs is almost non-existent". There is a lack of transparency and data recording between the two levels of the AU and RECs, meaning better strategies need to be implemented to establish a flow between the AU and its RECs. This 'flow' between the AU and the RECs is what this thesis seeks to problematise and address.

2.3.4 Women's political empowerment: culture, socialisation, and perceptions

Culture determines and influences history and the creation of identities in society (Prah 2001). The dominant political culture in Africa tends to dictate that leadership roles and positions of decision-making are not best suited for women, but men (Tremblay 2007). This can indirectly affect women's confidence to aspire to leadership positions, while indirectly perpetuating cultural expectations of women.

There is a distinction between culture, broadly, and political culture. Culture is explained as the beliefs and attitudes of an institution or population (Meena, Rusimbi & Israel 2018). Religion, education, and societal norms encapsulate how culture is formed and implemented in a particular society (Meena et al. 2018; Tremblay 2007). Apart from general social culture, there is also institutional political culture. Political culture is defined by Kamravah (1995: 692) as "norms and mores [which] are popularly accepted by the people and have, in fact, been internalised". Political culture is complex because "it is not always what it appears to be", it changes over time, and it is influenced by social and political changes (Kamravah 1995). Resultantly, this affects or influences perceptions of legitimacy such as who can and cannot be a political leader. Additionally, political culture influences perceptions and preferences, of citizens and politicians alike, concerning "regime orientations" and "political orientations" (Kamravah 1993).

In many societies, cultural norms in relation to gender roles have resulted in the perception that men are better decision makers than women, and this has resulted in the gender gap found in politics (Norris & Inglehart 2000). However, with the increase in public opinion and developments/advancements in gender awareness or women's advocacy, change in cultural perceptions is inevitable; only the rate at which the change will come is what is unclear (Norris & Inglehart 2000).

Political culture determines the political and economic systems within institutions in a country; this then influences social identities (Matlosa 2003). Multiple social institutions, such as family, education, religion, political parties, media, and governments, shape political culture (Matlosa 2003). These institutions can determine a political culture, which then shapes a political system (Jackson & Jackson 1997). This then builds societal expectations for how the "state of affairs" must be conducted (Heywood 1997). Political culture is influenced by a process of changes in democratisation and it "can be usefully summarized as a people's values, knowledge, and evaluations of their political community, political regime, and political institutions, as well as how they see themselves and others as citizens" (Mattes & Nyenhuis 2021).

The broader sociocultural barriers to women's political participation are predetermined by attitudes that result in women lacking support. Most countries have a "political

culture" that is determined by traditional practices or beliefs that have been there for a long time; however, despite literature explaining these cultural limitations, there is a lack of clarity as to how far or how long such traditional cultural attitudes can be changed (Konte & Kwadwo 2019; Enaifoghe & Khoalenyane 2018).

As a theory, political socialisation has been used to differentiate between various political agents that become a "political animal" (Botha 2015). It is when a "citizen acquires a complex set of beliefs, feelings and information which help him comprehend, evaluate and relate to the political world around him. His political views are a part of his more general social views... related to his religious, economic and cultural views" (Dawson & Prewitt 1969: 17). Political socialisation determines how individuals see or perceive the world and it is influenced by the social or political culture of a state. Therefore, women's political empowerment in Africa is seen through general socialisation and political socialisation, which are both influenced by the complex nature of culture.

Political socialisation determines identity or nationalism, and it determines attitudes or perceptions about issues in society (Dawson & Prewitt 1969). There are two forms of political socialisation: primary socialisation, through institutions of family and education, among others, and secondary socialisation, through institutions such as the media (Botha 2015). These can be used to indoctrinate perceptions of what should and should not be in society. Thus, the thesis uses this lens to investigate to what extent the political socialisation process through various agents and culture has determined or defined women's political empowerment. Political socialisation influences various perceptions in society.

Perception leads to and is inseparable from action, therefore, it is encapsulated in an action/thought/reaction/response influenced by information that is received. Moreover, perception is how one views the world around one resulting from one's "senses" as well as the consciousness of one's environment (Smeets & Brenner 2001; Lewis 2001). Men's perception of women's empowerment in Africa has been understood by what is called a "restrictive exposure", which is encapsulated in the perception that a woman's place is not in politics (Miranda 2005). Thus, women's space in politics is challenged because this space has been a space defined for men.

Government and any form of women's leadership is challenged because of this ideology and definition of political "space" (Miranda 2005). Socialisation through gender norms and patriarchal systems into and within political spaces has perpetuated the inequalities between men and women (Reingold & Harrell 2010; Omotosho 2015). Thus, men tend to perceive women and positions of decision-making as divergent. The agenda to empower women politically is argued to be perceived as a threat to men's masculinity, perpetuating women's marginalisation. Moreover, there is no shortcut to changing society's core values simply by increasing the number of women in politics (Sefah & Owiso 2017).

The argument in some segments of the literature is that patriarchal cultures negatively impact the possibility of not only increasing the number of women in parliament but their perceived "effectiveness" towards bringing women's issues to the table (O'Neil & Domingo 2016; Akinola 2018). The status of women in society is met with other challenges such as a lack of career preparation, resulting from discrimination towards access to higher education or training. Furthermore, tradition and culture are more influential than institutional structures, such as quotas that are put in place to ensure women's participation; hence the challenges in policy implementation when quotas are applied in isolation from other empowerment efforts (DeLaurentis 2014; Mindzie 2015; Cheeseman & Dodsworth 2019). The anticipation is that the increase in women in politics through quotas will result in women's political empowerment, but the reality is that the influences of social and political culture have proven to be a barrier to achieving this (Stockemer 2011; Hill 1981).

In contrast, some scholars have disregarded the importance of culture, stating that culture is irrelevant in the creation of political systems (Huntington 1968). In this thesis, culture will be seen as a major factor in influencing women's political empowerment, but there are arguments to be made in that it is overemphasised. There are other factors, such as the hegemonic masculinity of politics and the confidence of women political leaders, that come into play. These additional factors are further discussed in chapters five and six of the thesis.

2.4 Alternative variables

To introduce alternative variables for measuring women's political empowerment beyond the quota system of representation, it may be helpful to turn to the definition of women's empowerment by Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002: 4), which emphasises "options, choice, control, and power".

According to Malhotra et al. (2002: 13), women's political empowerment is operationalised (1) in the household, when there is "knowledge of [the] political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; [and] exercising the right to vote", (2) in the community, when there is "women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; [and] representation in local bodies of government", and finally, (3) in broader arenas, when there is "women's representation in regional and national bodies of government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups".

The challenges to measuring empowerment is firstly that it is context-specific and secondly, that it is a process. Firstly, scholars and practitioners need to understand that meanings attached to what empowerment is, differ from one place to another and this affects consistency and comparability (Malhotra et al. 2002). Indicators such as "power, women's status, or gender equity" have been used to assess the empowerment of women. Hence, indicators chosen must be relevant to a country setting and this is known as the localisation of indicators and not simply the universalisation of indicators. Secondly, empowerment is a process and not just a condition (Malhotra et al. 2002). In other words, empowerment is measured using indirect variables such as health and education, because as a direct measurement of the process of empowerment, it is methodologically challenging. Thus, this process is assessed through qualitative means by using in-depth interviews and case studies at specific periods of time; however, there is a reliance on proxy measurements (Malhotra et al. 2002).

2.5 Women and political representation

According to Pitkin (1967: 221-222) "Political representation is primarily a public, institutionalised arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements. What makes it representation is not

any single action by any one participant, but the over-all structure and functioning of the system, the patterns emerging from the multiple activities of many people". This section will explain the origins of representation and how scholars in the Political Sciences have come to understand representation. This thesis analyses 'women's political empowerment' and 'empowerment' which are embedded in the concept of representation.

2.5.1 Origins of political representation

One of the earliest scholars to write about political representation was Thomas Hobbes, who argued that when it comes to political representation, having greater numbers did not automatically translate into the representation of a particular group and their interests (Hobbes Chapter XVI 1651). For Hobbes, in political bodies, those who have been placed as "representative" have limited power and this power is limited by law at both the domestic and international level (Hobbes Chapter XXII 1651). Additionally, Hobbes argued that one man can be "representative" of the whole (group) and when that one man acts, he acts as a "representative" on behalf of his "represented". However, when a "representative" acts outside of law, then he has represented his own interest and not the people's/group's interest (Hobbes Chapter XXII 1651). Furthermore, Hobbes argued that individuals in their free will and liberty can elect someone, the "representative" to represent them and their interests, by giving them (the representative) full authority to do so (as he argued for the importance of a monarchy) (Hobbes Chapter XIX: 1651).

Building on this, Hanna Pitkin (1964), in her second essay on Hobbes' concept of representation, elucidates the four aspects of representation presented by Hobbes: (1) the identification of subjects and sovereign with a single body, (2) the obligation to obedience, (3) the transfer of rights and power, and (4) the duties of the sovereign. These four aspects are explained as a "problem/challenge" that Hobbes encountered in explaining representation. Firstly, concerning the identification of subjects and sovereign with a single body, Pitkin (1964) reviewed Hobbes' text to explain how obedience is necessary for an "act" to occur and "the idea that one will in some way represent, or stand for, the wills of others". However, this combined will in the pursuit of "one" goal does not negate the individual will. This collective will is represented by the "elected" man given authority to represent the "goal" of the group/collective will.

Secondly, concerning an obligation towards obedience, which is symbolic too and provides legitimacy to the authority given to the "representative" by the "represented".

As Pitkin (1964) explains, for Hobbes, representation is a social practice, and it is enforced by the "Law of Nature". Thirdly, Hobbes explains the transfer of rights and power to the sovereign (representative) as being done so through a covenant that states that the represented must transfer all their power to the representative (Hobbes Chapter XIX). Pitkin explains this as "for when a man authorizes another to represent him, he takes on himself all the consequences and obligations arising out of the representative's acts" (Pitkin 1964: 912). Thus, the representative is given rights to represent his representatives, which is described as authorisation. Lastly, concerning the duties of the sovereign, Pitkin (1964) explains Hobbes' fourth aspect as paradoxical, because the sovereign is not obliged to act on behalf of people; however, because of the nature of representation, the sovereign (representative) will represent the people. For Hobbes as explained by Pitkin, "to represent means simply to be authorized, to have the right to act, and to have responsibility for one's action taken by someone else" (Pitkin 1964: 915).

Therefore, with the above explained, drawing from Hobbes' book *Leviathan*, Pitkin (1964) in her second essay on Hobbes's concept of representation concludes that Hobbes' definition of representation is paradoxical but also foundational to understanding what political representation entails. Ultimately in *Leviathan*, Hobbes returned to the argument that the sovereign (representative) must fulfil the "duty" to care for his subjects (representatives). The system of political representation has been founded on Hobbes' arguments on representation; however, Pitkin argues that Hobbes' definition may be foundational for representation but somewhat limited, because of Hobbes' idea to support the monarchic system of government. As argued by Pitkin in her essay, there is more to representation and authority that Hobbes omitted in *Leviathan* (Pitkin 1964). For Pitkin, the definition of representation by Hobbes will remain foundational but incomplete. The thesis agrees with this definition in that representatives have a 'duty' towards those they represent but this is incomplete as issues of loyalty to one's party, morals or personal ambitions can be more appealing to representatives than 'duty'.

The fundamental reason for concern about women being in politics is based on the premise that politics is an important institution for decision-making, which concerns allocation of state resources, agenda-setting and policymaking/ implementation (Haggue & Harrop 2010). Politicians have the power to enforce the decisions they make on behalf of individuals, and it is a position that bestows "authority". In principle, law and political decisions are gender neutral; however, in practice there are substantial gender inequalities, as argued by political feminists and theorists (Paxton & Hughes 2014). Moreover, as Phillips (1991: 62) argues, "the under-representation of women within conventional politics is none-the-less crucial in thinking about democracy and gender". To address this, the quota system was introduced to try and mitigate the under representation of women.

In Africa, women's participation in politics has increased and this has been due to (1) the proliferation of women's movement groups, (2) multiparty systems, (3) educational opportunities and economic empowerment, (4) pressure from civil society, (5) quota systems, and (6) international agreements and conventions (Ndlovu & Mutale 2013). Women in Africa want to be represented; hence, the increased presence of women in political institutions. Pitkin (1967) argues that today, groups want to be represented and for their interests and values to be tabled for agenda-setting and policy formulation. Therefore, the idea of representation seeks to reduce discrimination and legitimise democracy. However, with the popularity of this concept, how do we differentiate between genuine and fraudulent representation? One needs to understand that a president can represent a nation, but does it translate into that president representing the interests of the people of that nation?

2.5.2 Formal representation

Pitkin notes the paradoxical nature of the term representation as it will "exist" when people believe in it. Thus, Pitkin raises questions such as "What makes man feel represented? When should man feel represented? What would count as they are represented?" (Pitkin 1967: 9-10). Pitkin emphasises that she focuses on reasons to *suppose* that one is represented rather than the *causes* of if one represented. Through her 1964 work, began by debunking Hobbes' definition of representation as she describes his understanding of representation as "authoritative", with representation being defined as "a representative is someone who has been authorised to act", and

she is against this Hobbesian definition because she explains how it leans in favour of the representative and forgoes the representatives (Pitkin 1967). This representation for Pitkin is a (I) formalistic representation. Moreover, she explains how in the Political Sciences, representation has simply been about authority, it has minimised the importance of morals. Additionally, one may represent a group yet lack authority in their position of representation, or one may represent a group and have the authority to represent them. Authority and representation are not the same, "authority over others, the right to give orders, is one thing; representation is another" (Pitkin 1967: 53). Hence, the assumption that increasing quotas (authority) will immediately translate into representation of women's issues is insufficient.

Formal representation created a platform that argues that by law, women have a right to take part in politics in "equality" with men. This type of representation notes that women must have the right to vote, to be politicians, and to be represented in bodies of political decision-making (Paxton & Hughes 2014). However, "observation suggests that formal representation does not necessarily result in substantial numbers of women in position of political power" (Paxton & Hughes 2014: 10). Thus, Phillips terms this as "mirror representation", which states that obstacles to women's participation in politics must be removed, as "any system of representation which consistently excludes the voices of women is not just unfair; it does not begin to count as representation" (1991: 63). Therefore, Young introduces what is termed as "modes" of representation and there are three types: (1) interest, (2) opinion, and (3) perspective. Young questions what it means for an individual to say, "I feel represented" and highlights how institutions should not represent individuals but they should represent "a person's life experience, identity, beliefs or activity where she or he has affinity with others" (Young 2010: 195).

Representatives' interests are what they *feel* is important to them; for example, women *feel* they need more equality in the workplace. When such interests are addressed by their representative, then groups can feel represented (Young 2010). Representatives' opinions are the morals and values they esteem, and when the representative puts programmes in place or initiates policies that address these issues, then groups can feel represented (Young 2010). Lastly, representatives' perspectives are influenced by social location and ascribe to various forms of socialisation concerning life; thus,

the argument is that those who are close or similar may share the same perspective on certain issues (Young 2010). Resultantly, sharing a perspective creates room for affinity, one with a lesser affinity (in this case men) will need to put in more work to understand or have a similar perspective with those whom they represent; hence, the argument for women to represent women (Young 2010).

Additionally, Pitkin debunks accountability theorists to understand the representative to be "someone who is held accountable, who will have to answer to another for what he does" (Pitkin 1967). Accountability theorists find that the definition of authoritative theorists is limited, as it does not consider the concept of accountability (Pitkin 1967). The argument is that one can only be a representative when they are accountable to their representatives, whether through elections or other means. The above definitions of (formal) representation developed by authorisation theorists and accountability theorists are "limited" as they do not explain "what" happens during representation in terms of whether the one who is representative (elected women/women in politics) is indeed representing their representatives (women in general). Therefore, Pitkin introduces alternative two forms of representation, which are (II) descriptive representation and (III) symbolic representation.

2.5.3 Descriptive representation

Theorists or political scientists who ascribe to descriptive representation are those who are concerned about numbers within legislatures and bodies of political representation (see for example, Kanter 1977; Dahlerup 1989; Mansbridge 1999). The main argument is that those who represent in bodies of political decision-making should be descriptive of those that they purport to represent, and the idea is to provide an "accurate reflection" of society's composition of people. For this argument, it is not about authority or accountability, but about how the group is best represented *descriptively* (Pitkin 1967). This is where the need for proportional representation is drawn from; it is about the describable character of the representative and not simply what they do or whom they answer to.

Proportionalists argue that the representatives in the bodies of political decision-making must reflect the group they are representing or there will be no true representation (Pitkin 1967). However, descriptive representation theorists

acknowledge that "perfect condensation (reflection) is unattainable" but hold to the idea that the more reflective a representative is of its group, the better/more accurate information about the group will be provided by the representative (Pitkin 1967). Thus, descriptive representation is obviously relevant to political life, yet again it is only a partial view, and this explains that the quota system provides us with a descriptive representation of women, but it is insufficient. Pitkin's (1967) major critique of this form of representation is that it fails to address issues of accountability, policy formulation, governing, and consensus, which are needed in the political realm. However, Pitkin also argues that descriptive representation goes beyond the formalistic view, which focuses on authority and accountability but ignores the need for the representative to be descriptive of the group that they represent (Pitkin 1967).

Dovi (2010) provides two criteria for descriptive representation, namely (1) there must be a mutual relationship between represented and representative and (2) this relationship should be fostered by what she terms historically disadvantaged groups. The first criterion emphasises that a historically disadvantaged group (women) needs to identify with their representative (a woman). The need for this identification is based on the ability of the representative (woman politician) to reach out to those they represent (women). This means "to possess mutual relations, descriptive representatives must recognise and be recognised by a member of a historically disadvantaged group" (Dovi 2010: 218). The idea of "one of us" is what led to the advocacy for the quota system of representation. Moreover, this mutual recognition is needed despite how insufficient it may be to understand women's political empowerment.

The second criterion addresses dispossession, meaning those who were previously secluded from political processes, resulting in lack of resources or political influence to effect change. There are various markers of intersectionality, such as class, gender, and religion to indicate dispossession, and thus there will be a need for a commitment to ensure that those who are secluded are represented (see, for example, Hancock 2007; Weldon 2006; Squires 2005). Hence, a political voice is needed for the dispossessed; women have been excluded based on their gender, as politics has been dominated by men (Connell 2014a; Masarira 2018). The use of quotas supports arguments for descriptive representation, which is the basis for "the necessity of

mutual relationships for improving the substantive representation of historically disadvantaged groups" (Dovi 2010: 220).

Mansbridge (2010) argues how "disadvantaged groups" would want descriptive representation because the idea of shared experience with the representative is important for the represented. However, there are some arguments against descriptive representation, which are that (1) mirror or descriptive representation is unattainable and (2) it does not speak directly to what a representative can or cannot do for the represented (Phillips 1991). Therefore, "when non-descriptive representatives have, for various reasons, greater ability to represent the substantive interests of their constituents, this is the major argument against descriptive representation" (Mansbridge 2010: 202). Which means a "man" representative could possibly do better in representing a "women's" group more than a woman representative.

2.5.4 Symbolic representation

Symbolic representation is when a representative becomes a symbol for a group. Thus, a political leader can personify their group by being symbolic to the group in question and this is in the same way a president can symbolically represent a country (Pitkin 1967).

This symbolism arises when individuals infer a meaning upon an object or person; thus, to symbolise and to represent are not the same. Symbolic representation can best be explained as a feeling/action or attitude, whereas descriptive representation is about reflection and provision of information (Pitkin 1967). "A symbol is considered to have a meaning beyond itself"; it is about the "feeling" that is attached to it. Therefore, a flag may be symbolic because when someone *believes* it to represent its country, and then that meaning/feeling is attached to the symbol (Pitkin 1967). The political representative becomes symbolic when those that they represent "believe" in them and there is acceptance from the group that they represent.

Therefore, women in politics will attain symbolic representation when the women that they represent believe in them. The quota system may increase the number of women in parliament, but their influence may be limited as the women that they represent may not *believe* in them, as symbolic representation will be lacking. Pitkin argues, "both

descriptive and symbolic representation supplement the formalistic views and enlarge the understanding of the concept" (1967: 111). However, scholars and practitioners need to ask and understand what causes people to attach a symbolic meaning to the representative.

Understanding the causes is important because, "the symbolic importance attributed to women in positions of political leadership is routinely invoked as an explanation for the need to elect more women, regardless of whether men can represent women's substantive interests" (Lawless 2004: 82). Symbolic representation is important because the presence of women gives other women an opportunity to have a symbolic "icon" to look up to and it also gives women an opportunity to be represented among men politicians, and for women to *be* in positions of political influence. These symbolic positions raise (1) gender consciousness, which can be used as a means of "uniting" women based on their sex/femaleness, as it is argued that women are more conscious of gender and gender related issues than men (Lawless 2004).

Symbolic positions also raise the issue of (2) the roles of the representative, as it is argued that women tend to be more "approachable" within their constituencies or women are more interpersonal; hence, having women representatives is crucial to reach constituencies (communities), whether the community is largely male or female (Lawless 2004).

2.5.5 Substantive representation

Hanna Pitkin defines political representation as "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (1967: 209). The representative must (1) act independently, (2) act in such a way that there is no conflict between represented and representative and (3) must not be at odds with the wishes of the represented. Political issues are intermediary in the sense that "substantive acting" for others is applicable. Substantive "acting" means there are issues surrounding actions, norms (what ought to be done), factual judgements, end and means, and values (Pitkin 1967). For Pitkin, there can be "substantive representation only when interest is involved, that is, when decisions are not merely arbitrary choices" (Pitkin 1967: 212).

Pitkin highlights that by insisting solely on proportional representation (quota system) to ensure the representation of a group is lacking and does not reflect substantive representation. The desirable outcome is to achieve substantive representation, as this caters to an individual (the representative) working to pursue the interests of the represented alongside other representatives. This will ensure that both group and national interest are achievable, as those interests are intertwined in the arena of politics.

This means public opinion cannot be ignored in the pursuit of substantive representation. Substantive representation is about what representatives "actually do"; it is not just about their formal authority, description, or symbolism but what they can achieve (see, for example, Dahlerup 2006a; Childs 2004; Krook & Childs 2008; Chaney 2011). The substance is in the form of "acting for" their representatives and it is in this that woman's political empowerment can be achieved. The quota system, which is introduced through policies and governments, is good in the sense that it allows for representatives with the same characteristics as the represented to provide information to the political institution; however, when that information is provided, is there substance?

Only when substance is achieved, the operationalisation of women in bodies of political decision-making is actualised. This in turn correlates with whether women are politically empowered. As a result, throughout this thesis it is questioned whether women become politically empowered simply because they are given positions of political power (in the descriptive, symbolic, and formal authoritative sense) according to a quota system, or whether they are empowered when their objectives are achieved (substantive representation). Can women's objectives only be achieved when a man is in power or only when a woman is in power?

Goetz (2003) provides four constraints on women's voice which are firstly, the constraints of gender-based divisions of labour. Secondly, there is the challenge of access to resources in that women politicians may not have the same access to resources as men politicians. Thirdly, there is the challenge of diversity, the interests of women are diverse as women in themselves are not homogenous. Lastly, the control of women's sexuality by men; due to this, women's sexuality becomes a topic

of discussion in the public domain. These four aspects raised by Goetz are fundamental in examining the substantive representation of women.

Researchers and scholars have not simply focused on the increased numbers of women in political institutions but also in the context of women's political presence, leading to questions such as what do these women do, which policies do they implement, and whether these women have influence within their positions of power (Stokes 2005). Campbell, Childs, Lovenduski (2010) explain substantive representation as "policy responsiveness": how different groups of women are represented when the potential or impact of a policy implemented considers these groups of women. Simply increasing a small number of women in parliament will not necessarily translate into women being represented or empowered, because "individuals can rarely provide a complete account or analysis of the obstacles confronting the group without interacting with others from the group" (Campbell et al. 2010: 173). The biggest challenge for this study is that "too few women have held decision-making positions in government to assess the relationship between their presence in office and variations in gender-equality outcomes" (Campbell et al. 2010: 173).

2.6 A meso level of analysis

As explained in chapter one, section 1.6.1, on the macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis, this thesis applies a meso level of analysis. This thesis is presented in three levels, namely the continental (AU), regional (SADC) and national (Zimbabwe). The three levels are separate in that broadly, the macro is represented by the AU, the meso by SADC, and the micro by Zimbabwe. However, the 'meso level of analysis' explored by this thesis is the linkages between the three levels. This is presented as a form of network analysis to formalise the relation between the three levels. The AU uses a principle of subsidiarity and it denotes that the "macro" institution has the responsibility of acting on behalf of the "micro" institution only when incapacitated to do so (Sibanda 2007). Therefore, there are two key elements, namely "balancing" and "autonomy", where the "micro" maintains sovereignty while the "macro" fills any gaps that may arise (Sibanda 2007). This is why a network analysis is relevant to investigate the relationship between these different level with regards to policy formulation and implementation.

The meso level of analysis goes beyond the dichotomy of macro level analysis and micro level analysis. Women's political empowerment is a social phenomenon and "through a typically meso approach to social phenomena, the small things of everyday life, the ways that interactions and relations take place in specific places and times, become the observation plan to analyse the structural dimensions making society" (Perulli 2016: 121). Therefore, a key aspect of this definition is the highlighting of the observation of interactions and relations to better understand the structural dimensions of society. The transformation of social structures, or their understanding thereof, warrants that scholars investigate the connection between personal individual experiences, the context of personal individual experiences, and how the two contribute to the reproduction of social structures (Elias 2009).

The analysis of day-to-day life is what enables the observation of "networks that link actors", and these actors can be individuals or groups or institutions, and the separate actions of these actors are interdependent and interconnected (Elias 2012). In other words, the meso analysis "focuses on social relations, that is, patterns of *connection* among groups, group members, and group meanings, as explanatory factors in the shaping of sociology. By 'connection', we mean linkages among social actors that produce social action; for example, friendships, memberships, acquaintanceships, enmity, interests, goals, ideas and the various structures that enable any of these" (Lengermann & Niebrugge 2007: 341).

A key aspect of conducting a meso level of analysis is not necessarily to discover what is new or novel, but to provide clarity on what is already known (Lengermann & Niebrugge 2007). The challenge, however, is in how to make these connections, whether there is a use of secondary or primary data, as the question "what is similar, actually similar" needs to be answered during the process (Lengermann & Niebrugge 2007). Vangroff, Nyiri and Fugiero (2003) conducted a study on the "gap" in women's representation at the meso level of governance, a study that evaluated women's presence at the regional level, between the central and local government. They highlight the importance of having a meso 'network' level of analysis especially in pursuit of women's presence in institutions of political decision-making (Vangroff et al. 2003).

Although the study by Vangroff et al. (2003) focused on levels of governance within a nation, the approach of exploring the patterns of women's representation between groups, beyond the nation, is relevant for this thesis. Through this sociological lens of a meso analysis, the thesis focused on interactions between groups and as stated above, the 'groups' under investigation were the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe. The thesis studied interactions between the three groups and the specific interest of the thesis was to understand the pursuit of attaining women's political empowerment in Africa. The focus was not just on the broad level of the AU and women's political empowerment or the regional level of SADC and women's political empowerment or the micro level of Zimbabwe and women's political empowerment; the focus was on the interaction 'network' of all three within the African context.

2.7 Conclusion

The chapter explored the origins of critical mass from a scientific background regarding its adoption within the social sciences. A question was posed: "does a quota system lead to the empowerment of women"? This is a crucial question because the assumption that a certain number of women being introduced to institutions of decision-making means women are represented is limited. The chapter further explored: the limitations of critical mass theory (which does not provide an "exact" number of women to obtain the proposed or argued for critical mass), the lack of conceptualisation of the theory and concept, the tendency to focus on increasing the number of women in institutions, the flawed nature of depending on one variable to determine influence, and the limitation of time (as a longitudinal study is more apparent in determining changes) and finally, the challenges of an agreed "threshold percentage" by various scholars of which percentage is the critical mass.

Therefore, there is a need to move from critical mass to critical acts, but we need to recognise that quota systems are a crucial step towards women's inclusion with regard to decision-making. This brings us to representation and the understanding thereof, which is embedded within the understanding of quota systems. As there are intersectionalities of race and social class, the reality is that the interests or concerns of one woman may not be the same as those of another woman. However, quota

systems will ensure that the 'male' dominance of institutions of decision-making is addressed, as that is even more problematic.

The chapter defined representation and provided an understanding of representation dating back to Hobbes. Hobbes' arguments are broadened by Pitkin as she highlights four key aspects of representation, which are summarised as identity, obedience, power, and duties. In principle, law and political decisions are gender neutral; however, in practice, there is substantial gender inequality, as argued by political feminists and theorists. Thus, quotas were introduced to try and mitigate the underrepresentation of women, reduce discrimination, and legitimise democracy, because with increased diversity in society, groups want their different interests to be represented.

Representation begins with formal representation (mirror representation), which focuses on the right of women to take part in politics and the obstacles to this right consequently being removed. Therefore, formal representation creates affinity, whereby women can identify with women, thus the need for this formal representation. However, formal representation is limited as it does not explain what happens during representation and simply focuses on putting individuals into a position of representation and authority. Descriptive representation goes beyond formal representation in that those who are representative must be describable to those who they represent. There must be a reflection of the represented by the representative, an argument that a 'woman' describes a 'woman' therefore a 'woman' can identify with a 'woman'. The idea of "one of us" is what has led to the quota system of representation and creates mutual recognition.

Symbolic representation focuses on the meaning attached to a representative the same way a president can symbolically represent a country. It is about the feeling attached to an individual or thing and the 'belief' in a representative by their representatives. Both descriptive and symbolic representation appendage formal representation, the three combined create a consciousness towards unifying women, as women are more conscious of gender than men. Lastly, substantive representation addresses the intermediary nature of politics and moves beyond proportion (description) and aims to pursue the interests of the group being represented. Substantive representation is about what representatives do and not simply their

presence within an institution. The question we are left with is, do they provide *substance,* or do they simply provide presence? This points to the limitations of the quota system.

This chapter provided the foundations and arguments in the literature concerning women's political empowerment in Africa, the next chapter focuses on the research methods used to address the research question.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter is the structure that holds the thesis together. For this thesis, the lens guiding the research is a constructivist worldview (explored in section 3.2), embodied by an inductive style of data analysis (explored in section 3.5.1). The logic of inquiry for the thesis will be presented through the case study design (explored in section 3.3.2) and this influences the nature of the research sub-questions and objectives. The methodology chapter provides a step-by-step indication of how the research problem is approached. The research problem is that "the use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and silences other components of political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity and equality". This problem leads to the research question, "how does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?"

With the above research question in mind, there are three distinct research approaches that a researcher can use: the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches (Kumar 2011). The differences are that the qualitative approach uses "words", the quantitative approach uses "numbers" and the mixed-method approach is a mixture of both words and numbers (Neville 2007). This research was steered by the qualitative research approach, which is used to understand a social or human problem encountered by an individual or a group of individuals (Burnham, Gilland, Grant & Layton-Henry 2004). Embedded within these three types of research approaches are what are known as philosophical worldviews (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat 2018). These worldviews are strategies that influence data collection and analysis methods; as mentioned above, the constructivist worldview is the lens for this study.

The primary method of data collection this thesis used was that of in-depth interviews conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in December 2019 (explored in section 3.4.1). The in-depth interviews were done with seven participants from two departments at the African Union Commission. Three participants were from the Political Affairs

Directorate department and four participants were from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate department. The seven participants responded to 15 questions, administered through an open-ended interview questionnaire (also explored in section 3.4.1). Therefore, seven in-depth interviews in corroboration with document analysis of 20 gender scorecards/barometers were used to address the research problem and justify the study. The thesis applied a form of inductive data analysis to understand the phenomenon of women's political empowerment.

It is important to note that with research approaches there are two distinct features, namely philosophical assumptions and distinct methods or procedures. Therefore, this chapter will explain in detail how these two distinct features were applied in this thesis. To do this, the chapter follows a sequence of five sections: the constructivist worldview, research approach, data collection methods, data analysis methods and lastly ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 The constructivist worldview

This first section explains the worldview of the thesis. Worldviews have been described as "belief systems, paradigms, epistemologies, ontologies and broadly methodologies" (Creswell 2014). These worldviews are divided into four, namely post-positivism, constructivism, transformativism and pragmatism, and the selected worldview used for this study was that of constructivism.

The constructivist worldview is qualitative in nature and ascribes to the assumptions that individuals seek to understand the meanings they have attached to experiences and objects (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat 2018). The constructivist worldview is concerned with the "social construction of international politics" and believes that international politics is not defined by objects but rather by social reality, as structures are founded on social norms and values (Barkin 2003: 326). Berger and Luckman (1967) emphasise that knowledge creation and the "process" that leads to its creation must be investigated to reflect the reality of a phenomenon (meanings ascribed to it). It is about the analysis of how social knowledge is constructed by the actors within a particular social environment (Creswell 2014).

Furthermore, for constructivism, the central principle reflects on culture and how individuals experience what is around them to be *real*, as they have been socialised through culture towards certain belief systems (Berger & Luckman 1967). The constructivist worldview was chosen because the thesis addressed complex views that need to be understood in their entirety, thus, providing context for the study of women's political empowerment in Africa.

Constructivism historically stems from Kantian thought, which explains how individuals do not simply receive knowledge, but actively take part in creating knowledge as well, to explain the world as they know and experience it (O'Leary & Wright 2005). Constructivism is concerned with knowledge, which for International Relations is epistemologically debated; yet the limitation is that constructivists tend to 'ignore' that an actor may subscribe to certain norms and values outside of their immediate environment, as there may be alternative rational explanations of the structure of international politics and societal interactions (Lezaun 2002). By contextually analysing the knowledge of actors within a particular "environment", it can then become possible to evaluate how those actors understand the world around them (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat 2018). Therefore, for this thesis, social meanings produced by actors in the international system, as well as objects, political spaces and actors' understanding of these, were treated as "socially constructed" facts.

Four tenets underpin the constructivist worldview, namely, (1) understanding, (2) multiple participant meanings, (3) social and historical construction, and (4) theory generation (Fox 2001). These four tenets are the foundation for why social constructivists clarify how individuals (and groups) create certain meanings towards what they experience in life (Fox 2001). These meanings created by everyday experiences vary from individual to group (Scaife 2019), which means the researcher must be able to analyse and extrapolate the complexities of multiple views of a phenomenon. Narrowing down these views will limit their true meanings; hence, the questions asked must be broad and accommodate a wide spectrum of experiences (Fox 2001). Additionally, constructivism identifies the construction of meanings through different experiences by human beings, as human beings understand and experience the world based on societal discourse, which is founded on relationships that occur between people (Brown & Scaife 2019).

The process of interactions by women in politics is what was addressed considering cultural norms and historical events, and the patterns or meanings prescribed to these interactions were inductively evaluated by the researcher. Resultantly, the constructivist worldview was fitting for this study because the thesis was led to look for "the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas because individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences" (Creswell 2014: 9).

3.3 The research approach

Reiteratively, the research question was "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient towards meeting its objectives?" This question is important because the focus in literature and gender policies has been on the increased number of women in institutions rather than the quality of change experienced by women in politics, through the various 'actions' undertaken to achieve women's political empowerment. Thus, this question and the gap in the literature informs the research design, which is the how and what of addressing the problem, and the research design is a plan of action and method used to answer the research question to ensure that the research objectives are achieved (Blaikie 2010). This second section explains the research approach of the thesis.

3.3.1 Qualitative research

This thesis sets out to understand the opinions and attitudes around women's political empowerment with regard to the quota system of representation to understand the extent to which this quota system does or does not meet its objectives. The qualitative research method leans towards the constructivist worldview (Kielmann, Cataldo and Seeley (2012), which understands the world through the individual or groups that experience it, is humanistic in nature, as it focuses on the subjective nature of experiences and it propels the researcher to be interpretive (explaining contexts and experiences derived from a phenomenon) and reflexive (considering history when the research questions are framed). In this regard, I took note of these factors during the interviews and analysis of the literature, and the women in politics were engaged in the context of their natural setting.

The goal of the investigation was to understand and discover how the quota system is insufficient to achieve women's political empowerment. This method creates a pool of data linking to one case, uniquely characterised to answer a particular phenomenon, thus helping to understand "how and why cultures and practices have developed in the way they have" (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge 2009: 7). Qualitative research can be used to explain, describe, and explore experiences, relationships and activities practised by individuals or groups that are not statistical in nature (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin 2007). A qualitative research design relies on words instead of statistics to be able to explain and understand the study (Neville 2007).

This is an emphasis on depth, and the function of qualitative research design for this thesis is relevant for the following reasons; firstly, the researcher developed an operational plan and secondly ensured that there was validity and objectivity during the research process. Therefore, the qualitative design was a means to ensure that the research was conducted through an appropriate methodology (Burnham et al. 2004: 30-36). Moreover, the nature of qualitative research is to address the way opinions and attitudes are formed (Hancock et al. 2009). The study assessed the experiences of women politicians within the African context as well as the description and interpretation of those experiences.

Qualitative research makes room for sensitivity to contextual factors (Burnham et al. 2004). Leadership and the symbolism of leadership are both sensitive and contextual (White 2016); thus, using a qualitative research approach provided an understanding of various dynamics embedded within leadership and power in Africa. Culture and the meanings tied to culture are contextual and the researcher needed to be cognisant of this (Ospina 2004). Hence, the use of qualitative research was important as it was used to understand the complex phenomenon of women's political empowerment in Africa.

3.3.2 The case study design

The "case study research is one method that excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue and can add strength to what is already known through previous research" (Dooley 2002: 335). The basis is that a limited number of events, contexts,

objects, and subjects will be under study (Creswell 2007). 'Cases' and 'case study' differ in that a case is an account of a specific event of a phenomenon, while a case study is a study/contextual analysis of limited events/phenomenon under investigation (Yin 2014). Cases are used for discussion and are usually descriptive and interpreted using different perspectives, while the case study can be used for theory building or theory testing (Dooley 2002).

Within the overall case study of women's political empowerment in Africa, the cases for this thesis were the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe. Resultantly, Yin (2014: 23) defines the case study design "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". The contemporary case study phenomenon under investigation was women's political empowerment within the Africa context, and the case study design was appropriate because it provided an in-depth analysis through multiple sources, allowing the researcher to redraw generalisations.

Firstly, the case study design provided conceptual validity, as the researcher had to qualitatively investigate non-numerical components of women's political empowerment, because "the validity of numbers to phenomenon tends to be questioned" (Aspers & Corte 2019: 150). Secondly, Creswell (2007) defines case studies as a means to derive new hypotheses, and when evaluation of the data was being conducted, new answers and meanings about women's political empowerment in the African context were discovered.

Thirdly, Yin (2014) describes how case study designs can explore causal mechanisms beyond the independent variable (in the case of this research, non-numerical variables), the dependent variable (in the case of this research, women's political empowerment in Africa) and intervening variables (the non-monolithic nature of culture in Africa). Fourthly, George and Bennett (2005) explain that the case study design makes it possible to reach a conclusion through analysing various issues, such as different gender processes, gender policies and gender initiatives. Various processes guided the researcher throughout the study and the first requirement was for the researcher to identify the research problem from the literature (Barakso, Sabet &

Schaffner 2014). The previous chapter provided this, and it encapsulated the literature review.

With the research problem in mind, the next step was the identification of the concept under analysis, which was women's political empowerment in Africa, the case study phenomenon under investigation which is embodied as a political, social, personal, and economic issue. Resultantly, the data collection techniques used to address the research question were derived from the research problem, in the form of primary and secondary sources as well as interviews (these are explained in section 3.4). This identified concept of analysis was women's political empowerment in Africa. The concept of analysis is the major entity that is being analysed; it is the "what" of the research study that requires investigation. The concept of analysis was conceptualised in the African context, through AU gender instruments, from the macro level to the micro level through the cases of SADC and Zimbabwe. This was a meso evaluation of the AU (supranational/continental) to SADC (regional) to Zimbabwe (national). The above contributed towards the formulation and addressing of the research question, which was "How does the concept of Women's Political Empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient towards meeting its objectives?"

In summary, six processes embody the case study design: (1) to determine and define the research questions, (2) select the cases and determine data-gathering and analysis techniques, (3) prepare to collect data, (4) collect data in the field, (5) evaluate and analyse the data and (6) prepare the report (Dooley 2002). Guided by these processes, the researcher through the case study design used various data collection methods to address the research question such as document analysis and interviews, whether for theory testing or theory building, and so the case study method and process is for the creation of new knowledge (Yin 2014; Burnham et al. 2004).

The case study method was therefore fitting for this thesis because the use of various data collection methods was applied as a strategy to examine a phenomenon whose context was not clear: the phenomenon of women's political empowerment through the use of political quota systems in Africa. A phenomenon that has been founded on

an assumption that, there is a positive correlation between the increased number of women within bodies of political decision-making as well as their empowerment.

The case study design is used to ask "why" and "how" questions, which can be broken down into smaller questions to understand causal relationships (Creswell 2007; Yin 2014; Burnham et al. 2004). The smaller questions of the main research question of this thesis were broken down into four research sub-questions, which were:

1. In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment?

2. What other indicators have been developed (for example, by SADC gender barometers and other organisations) that measure women's political empowerment?

3. What are the implications of the fact that gender policy makers and politicians on the African continent tend to see an increased number of women in political positions as being the equivalent of gender empowerment?

4. What are the challenges affecting the advocacy, follow up and monitoring of gender instruments towards women's political empowerment?

Each research sub-question was uniquely designed to answer the main research question. By having research sub-questions, the phenomenon under investigation was narrowed down for specificity (Baglione 2007; Neville 2007), a requirement for this thesis to conduct the meso 'network' analysis. As guided by the above explanations of the case study design, the study focused on the African context, specifically SADC and Zimbabwe; thus, the results may not be generalisable to different regions of Africa or, more specifically, regions outside of Africa.

A challenge with using the qualitative case study design as explained by Creswell (2007) is that the case or cases to be studied is chosen by the researcher based on the rationale of the researcher, while considering research boundaries in the form of time, processes, and strenuous variables, of which some were challenging for the

researcher to overcome. For example, interviews were also supposed to be conducted at SADC and in Zimbabwe; however, due to the covid-19 pandemic, this became challenging, and interviews were only conducted at the African Union Commission in December 2019, before national lockdowns were initiated in different African countries in early 2020.

The regional economic community of the AU that was selected for analysis was SADC, because SADC has been releasing a regional gender barometer since 2009, with the most recent gender barometer being the 2021 edition (Gender Links 2021), which meant the availability of data since 2009. The SADC gender barometer has 28 targets that it seeks to achieve regionally for its 16 member states. In 2011, SADC introduced the Southern Africa Gender and Development Index (SGDI), which is a pool of empirical data (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2018). Moreover, the SADC gender barometer was introduced in conjunction which the AU gender policy, which was also released in 2009 (African Union Gender Policy 2009).

Within the region, member states of SADC also provide yearly country barometers derived from the SADC gender barometer targets. Zimbabwe is the only member of SADC that released a 2017 country barometer (Gender Links 2021). Moreover, of the 16 member states of SADC, Zimbabwe released four country gender barometers, in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2017, while the remaining 15 members of SADC have only provided three country gender barometers (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2018). Additionally, Zimbabwe's national gender policy was first released in 2004 (Ministry of Women Affairs 2017), five years before the AU gender policy and four years before the SADC gender protocol. Furthermore, a revised Zimbabwe national gender policy was released in 2013 (Ministry of Women Affairs 2017).

Therefore, more data can be analysed through the Zimbabwe country gender barometers and for this reason the case Zimbabwe was chosen to provide a national gender analysis. These cases were selected consecutively from the continental region to the regional bloc and finally the member state.

3.4 Data collection methods

This section explains the data collection methods used to address the research question. Data collection is an essential part of the research process which explains how the data is collected, determining whether the research will be reliable or valid (Kumar 2014). For this thesis, the qualitative data collection methods used were comprised of both secondary and primary sources (Glaser & Strauss 2010). A "primary analysis is the original analysis of data in a research study" (Glass 1976: 3), while a secondary analysis is the use of pre-existing data for the purpose of conducting research (Heaton 2008: 34). Secondary sources are data sources that are readily available in the form of books and journals, while primary sources are data collected by the researcher, as well as policy documents, government publications and interviews (Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera & Martimianakis 2016).

Yin (2014: 118-119) explains that secondary sources and analysis allow researchers to choose sources they are familiar with and further present new sources (not familiar to the researcher) that can help answer the research question. The secondary analysis of data can investigate research questions or verify new findings (Heaton 2008: 35). For this thesis, literature was used to substantiate the themes and arguments that came out of the interviews that were conducted. Kumar (2014: 196-197) explains that the problem with secondary sources is that validity and reliability of data may be different based on the sources consulted. Thus, it was crucial that as the researcher used secondary sources, the researcher avoided only using articles which biased towards a specific outcome.

Interviews were used to substantiate the information found in other primary and secondary sources about women's political empowerment in Africa. Interviews are part of qualitative research, and they involve an "in-depth exchange between researcher and researched" (Barbour 2008: 113). Interviews are both an art and a science because the researcher needs a particular skill for conducting the interviews and the ability to extrapolate relevant information from the interviews (Barbour 2008: 114). To select the seven interviewees from the African Union Commission (AUC), purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is a process for selecting a sample based on "relevance to an issue being studied" (Gray et al. 2007: 105).

The advantage of this sampling method is that those who directly deal with the issue being studied may be chosen based on their willingness and availability. However, the challenge is that the researcher has no control over who exactly will be selected (Gray et al. 2007). For this thesis, the interviews were conducted in December, a time when most specialists at the AUC are finalising their missions. This posed a challenge, as the researcher could only work with the interviewees who were available and in the office at the AUC; hence, interviews were done with seven specialists instead of ten.

3.4.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is a qualitative research method that allows the researcher to interpret documents to provide meaning (Bowen 2009). The process of analysing documents allows the researcher to code content into themes, in a manner similar to how interview data is coded (Bowen 2009). This method is used to corroborate data from at least two sources to address the research problem. There are various kinds of documents that can be analysed such as transcripts, reports, blogs, newspapers, agendas, and training materials (O'Leary 2014).

A researcher must acknowledge two important things during the process of document analysis, namely the bias of the researcher and the subjectivity of the writer of the document (O'Leary 2014). There are two steps the researcher should take when analysing the data, which are firstly to treat the document as an interview respondent with relevant information (O'Leary 2014). The purpose of this first step is to 'ask' questions and find the answer within the text. The second step is when the researcher finds specific phrases, words, or concepts within the text to address the questions being asked (O'Leary 2014).

Document analysis is important because it aids in painting a broad picture of the issue under investigation, and it provides the researcher with insight about what could be meaningful and relevant for the study (Bowen 2009). Firstly, document analysis is efficient, as it requires an investigation of sources that are already available (Bowen 2009). Secondly, documents can be read and reviewed multiple times as they tend to be easily accessible and non-costly as well (Bowen 2009). Thirdly, document analysis can support and strengthen findings from experiments such as interviews, and it can also complement other sources of data that are under investigation (Bowen 2009).

A major challenge, however, is that the researcher needs to be skilled to conduct a document analysis (Bowen 2009). Secondly, not all documents under investigation will be complete, some may be obsolete, and some will not provide all the necessary and relevant information needed to address the research question (Bowen 2009). Thirdly, some documents may not be easily accessible, and some may have "sparse" information and more effort will be needed to subsidise these documents with information from other documents (Bowen 2009). Document analysis applies to qualitative case studies (Yin 2014), and it reflects the immense value of relevant documents for the study (Bowen 2009).

Moreover, in the process of document analysis, there is skimming, reading and interpretation (Bowen 2009). These are three crucial stages that the researcher undergoes to address the research question. However, it is important to be critical of documents because "it is necessary, as well, to determine the authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and representativeness of the selected documents" (Bowen 2009: 33). Document analysis can substantiate arguments by refining ideas and identifying what is known as conceptual boundaries (Charmaz 2003).

Therefore, the researcher applied this document analysis process to evaluate the (1) various gender scorecards from the AU, and the (2) various gender barometers from SADC and Zimbabwe. The purpose of the gender scorecards and barometers were to be "quick instruments" for progress assessment, and to assess the attainment of gender equality.

3.4.1.1 Sampling and data analysis of the documents
Document analysis is explained above, and the sampling method used for the document analysis of the gender scorecards and barometers was purposive sampling. Section 3.4.3 on sampling, describes different types of sampling including purposive sampling, which is when the sample is subjectively chosen based on the ideal that the sample is representative of the whole (Jones & Olson 1996).

The gender scorecards and gender barometers were chosen based on a set of pre-specified inclusion criteria. The sample was very narrow and specific, and included four AU Gender Scorecards, 12 SADC gender barometers and 4 Zimbabwe gender

barometers. All in all, there was a document analysis of 20 gender scorecards/barometers that were found to be relevant and analysed. The findings from the document analysis helped to evaluate the gender mainstreaming efforts of the three institutions as a form of policy analysis.

Section 3.5.1, on inductive data analysis, explains how according to McLaren (2010), the inductive style of data analysis is relevant for the case study design because it allows theory to emerge from the collected data. Thus, the documents were analysed inductively, and this was done by not applying an opinion, but by searching for common or uncommon concepts, words, ideas, or processes in the gender barometers. During the process of document analysis, the objective was to find change or lack of change over a period, within the political context of the African continent. This was done guided by Krippendorff (2004), who proposes that texts must be analysed systematically.

3.4.2 Elite interviews

The interview process was qualitative and sought to unravel a non-numerical phenomenon (Alshenqeeti 2014). Interviews were relevant for this study because they provided interviewees with their own voices concerning the phenomenon of women's political empowerment. The interviewees provided their practical hands-on experience concerning women's political empowerment, and their experience covered issues around policy formulation, their observations of women in political leadership and their experiences with policy implementation. Permission letters were sent out via email to the Women, Gender and Development Directorate at the African Union Commission, but the responses were vague, and the researcher encountered bureaucracy.

It was only when the researcher went to the African Union Commission, in person, that she was able to secure interviews and that was when the permission letters were signed. The permission letters explained what the study was about and clarified that an alias would be used to protect the identity of the respondents for ethical reasons (Aspers & Corte 2019). Some elites may feel suspicious whenever they need to be interviewed; hence, Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman (1975) point out that when attempting to gain access, the interviewer must be ready to encounter gatekeepers,

with the possibility of facing bureaucracy and of going through multiple individuals before being in touch with the desired elite candidate.

In social sciences research, the interview process is "efficient" because it provides interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing for clear answers which can help to broaden the scope of the phenomenon (Kumar 2011). With a foundation stemming from literature, questions from the interview assisted in providing data to address the research question (Paradis et al. 2016). Moreover, the interview method was flexible, as it covered various topics and paved a way for direct explanations of human interactions and need, moving beyond just being illustrative but reflective and critical (Kumar 2011).

This was in line with the constructivist worldview, which requires one to be reflective of meanings that are tied to a phenomenon. Additionally, interviews were appropriate for the study because they paved a way for interaction and clarification of questions, unlike in the case of a questionnaire with close ended questions without the possibility to ask for clarification (Alshenqeeti 2014). The interview process allowed the interviewees an opportunity to ask for clarification on questions that they did not understand.

Phillips (1998) highlights that when interviews are conducted with elite, the elite usually choose a setting that is most comfortable to them. This raises the challenge of what is known as "elite settings" and that the following issues will need to be considered: (1) "are they still part of the policy-making process" or (2) is the interview being done retrospectively, using their previous and not current contributions? As the researcher was guided by these two points from Phillips (1998), those interviewed at the African Union Commission were verified to still be part of the policymaking process; resultantly, one the interviewees even emphasised that they had to remain anonymous due to their current involvement.

Hence, in accordance with maintaining anonymity, aliases were used in the data analysis and relevant chapters. The aliases used in this thesis of those interviewed at the AUC were the following acronyms: AB, AN, KK, RG, SND, SNY and TN. Emphasising anonymity, as explained by Kumar (2014), was also important so that

the interviewees did not feel pressure to concede to what was in the various policies and gender strategies, all while masking their own personal views. Therefore, elite interviews were appropriate because the individuals' views are not always captured in secondary sources of data (Aspers & Corte 2019).

When conducting interviews, the interview must be natural; therefore, the way the questions are asked must not be leading or biased (Burnham et al. 2004). Additionally, the interview needs to provide the interviewer with "rich detail" which will ensure that the information adds value for the study (Alshenqeeti 2014). During the interviews, the researcher was cautious not to be "leading" the interviewees, while ensuring that the responses were relevant.

Consequently, another reason interviews were relevant for this study is because there was a gap in the literature, highlighted by Martin (2017), which exists in the fact that "the level of coordination between the AU and the RECs appears limited and among the RECs is almost non-existent". This lack of transparency and recording of data between the two levels of the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) revealed that better strategies need to be implemented in the flow between the AU and its RECs, and the causes of this frustration in the flow was a gap in the literature. Thus, the interviews provided rich data to fill this gap and addressed the meso analysis question.

One of the goals of this study was to examine the political elite who took part in the AU gender strategy formulation process and how they grappled with the issue of gender at the regional and national levels. The data to be collected through the questions asked was used to investigate attitudes, experiences and belief systems concerning women's political empowerment, how the elites (policy formulators) defined the phenomenon and their responses to the challenges faced by women in politics. Through employing open-ended questions, the elites were permitted to express their experiences and expertise. The issue of women's political empowerment is complex, as the thesis sought to reconceptualise the phenomenon; therefore, closed-ended questions would not have provided room to explore the meanings attached to the phenomenon by the elite.

Open-ended questions also allowed for response validity, as respondents could answer in a manner comfortable to them; however, this approach posed a challenge when the data was being coded and analysed, with the challenge of combing through pages of data. Additionally, open-ended questions were more appropriate for the study because they provided room for the elite to articulate their views providing clear explanations of their views. These above decisions were informed by Aberbach and Rockman (2002), who highlight that this approach is time-consuming, through conducting and coding the interviews, but due to the in-depth nature of the thesis, this was the best approach.

The assumption in the literature and practice is that gender policies are in place and being implemented and that through the quota system, women are being empowered politically (Ballington 2004). By conducting interviews, the researcher was able to ask the respondents whether the assumption of an increase in the number of women is equal to women having become empowered. However, the challenge is that a one-hour recorded interview may take up to six hours to transcribe and the information will also need to be coded (Alshenqeeti 2014). For this thesis, the information obtained from interviews was firstly coded through keywords (themes) and social constructs that recurred during the different interviews and secondly the recurrences of these social constructs were classified into units of sections and analysis. In this way, as the data was coded, it was collectively grouped and recorded.

Semi-standardised interviews were used, and the main purpose was following a structured set of questions while being flexible enough to changes that arose. This also allowed the researcher to probe questions outside of the prepared structure of questions to gain additional information (Berg & Lune 2012: 61). The following disadvantages of conducting interviews were considered by the researcher. Firstly, interviews are time-consuming and expensive to conduct, the researcher travelled to Ethiopia and at the time of gaining access to the two deparments at the AUC, the researcher also had to wait to be afforded time by the respondents to conduct the interviews.

Secondly, the researcher had to be aware of how she responded to the interviewees' answers, as that could have affected the data collected. Thirdly, the researcher had to

be aware of her skill level while conducting the interviews. Fourthly, the respondents could have lacked the necessary information that the researcher needed, and she was aware of this. Fifthly, analysing the data for open-ended questions was time-consuming, and lastly measures were needed to ensure validity and that the responses to the questions were relevant to the study. The above six disadvantages were guided by information from the University of South Alabama (2003: 3).

3.4.3 Sampling

To select the individuals to be interviewed, a process of sampling was used that was either random (probability) or non-random (non-probability). Sampling is "the process by which we select cases to study if we are unable to analyse the entire research population. There are two main approaches: probabilistic and non-probabilistic" (Harrison 2001: 168). The thesis applied the non-random (non-probabilistic) purposive sampling method.

Random sampling is when any unit or individual has the chance and probability of being selected as a representative of the whole population (Brown 1947). This method is free from bias and tends to be representative; however, the challenge with this method is that it is impossible to select a sample that truly represents "all" (Brown 1947). Random sampling can be systematic, stratified, multi-stage, cluster, and panel design (Burnham et al. 2004). Systematic random sampling is when a researcher has a starting point and selects the sample that is second, fourth, sixth and so on, while stratified random sampling is when the sample is divided into homogenous groups and a sample is randomly selected from the homogenous group (Jones & Olson 1996).

Multi-stage sampling is when a large population (such as a country) is divided into groups (provinces) and then samples are drawn from the provinces; this is done for convenience and not necessarily homogeneity (Neville 2007). Cluster sampling is when groups are interviewed instead of individuals and the process of selection is similar to that of multi-stage sampling (Neville 2007). Finally, panel sampling is when surveys are used with the same sample at different stages of a study; the challenge with this method is that individuals selected from the panel may move, fall ill or pass away, affecting the results of the study (Burnham et al. 2004). Quota sampling is when

"quick results are needed" and this is done through selecting an x number of individual (sample) to represent the perceptions/opinions of the whole (Omona 2013).

The characteristics of those being chosen will be specified and "any" individual who fits the description may be selected to be part of the sample. Snowball sampling is when initial contacts/interviewees are used as "informants" for obtaining contacts or gaining access to more contacts to be interviewed (Omona 2013). However, the greatest challenge with this method is the degree of representativeness (Burnham et al. 2004; Jones & Olson 1996).

Non-random sampling is when the researcher subjectively chooses a sample to represent the population (Burnham et al. 2004). Stratified sampling selects individuals to ensure that the sample is universal through seeking characteristics that are known and "ignoring" those that are not universally applicable (Brown 1947). Characteristics such as age and occupation are to be used as "controls" for selection; thus, non-random sampling can either be purposive, quota sampling or snowball sampling (Brown 1947).

Purposive sampling is when the sample is subjectively chosen based on the ideal that the sample is representative of the whole (Jones & Olson 1996). Consequently, the SADC region was purposively selected to represent a REC perspective and Zimbabwe was purposively selected to represent a national perspective of continental gender strategies employed through AU gender instruments for the African continent. The results were used to "predict" perceptions of the whole. Thus, as explained above, purposive sampling is when the "sample is hand-picked because the participants are typical or interesting examples of what we are researching" (Harrison 2001: 23).

Purposive sampling was ideal because those interviewed were selected based on being or having been part of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment gender policy formulation processes at the African Union, as they were "better equipped" to provide the data needed for the thesis. Guided by Harrison (2001), the purposive sampling method employed was the purposive maximum variation sampling method which as the name suggests, individuals were chosen based on diversity of experience to the phenomenon women's political empowerment. Furthermore, guided by Etikan,

Musa & Alkassim. (2015), this was done to provide the different experiences of the elite who engaged with the formulation of the gender policies and gender strategies as guided by the AU. Moreover, the selection of the purposive sample was random to increase validity of the study. Thus, this thesis applied the non-random (non-probabilistic) purposive sampling method.

As already explained in section 3.1, interviews were conducted with seven respondents from the African Union Commission. Unfortunately, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was unable to conduct interviews in SADC (headquarters) and Zimbabwe. Had interviews been conducted in SADC and Zimbabwe, 10 more individuals each from both SADC and Zimbabwe would have been sampled. The data collected through the seven interviews at the AUC was evaluated and analysed to look for patterns and once that data was analysed, naturalistic generalisations were made that can be applied to various cases (Creswell 2007).

Since the data collected was non-numeric, the interviews were collected through audio-recording and transcribed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). Transcribing the recordings was done by listening to the audio at least twice and then taking down the important aspects of the interviews. The approach used to collect data was inductive because as the research progressed, themes were drawn out from the interviews to organise the data and information extracted. The data was categorised by meanings and relied on interpretation; additionally, categorising allowed for the recognition of relationships in the data (Saunders et al. 2009).

3.4.4 Semi-standardised interview questions

The interview questions were structured in such a way that they addressed the research question, "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?" Semi-standardised questions were chosen because they allowed for follow-up questions of 'how' and 'why' during the interview process. The challenges with this method are that it is "(1) time consuming, (2) labour intensive, and (3) requires interviewer sophistication" (Adams 2015: 493).

Additionally, as guided by Adams (2015), semi-standardised interview questions were suitable for this thesis where (1) in-depth knowledge was required, and further inquiry was needed. (2) The interview questions were sensitive, and it was not ideal to ask them in a focus group to obtain truthful responses. (3) Key programme makers or policymakers were needed as they are the experts in the field. (4) Unknown research areas were being probed and there was potential for extensive information to be uncovered.

Leech (2002) emphasises that the interviewer needs to gain rapport, as this puts the interviewee at ease. Throughout the interviews, the researcher was both professional and knowledgeable on the topic; however, not as much as the respondents, so that they felt that they were contributing towards the thesis. Also, the second important aspect highlighted by Leech (2002) is the question order, as the order of questions need to start with the least invasive. Thus, the researcher ensured that the questions started with simple personal questions such as age and personal experiences and moved on to gradually asking about women's political empowerment. Most importantly, non-judgemental language was used so that the respondents felt at ease.

Additionally, Leech (2002) explains the types of questions to be asked for semi-standardised interviews: (1) grand tour questions, (2) example questions and (3) prompting questions. An example of a grand tour question is "Can you describe a typical day at the office?"; such questions allow respondents to open up and relax because these are general questions that they have information about. Example questions are more direct and would be posed as "Can you give an example of a time you had to advocate for women?" Such questions provide a platform for the kinds of challenges the respondent may face as they engage with the phenomenon.

A prompting question leads your respondent to explain further. If a respondent explains a time they advocated for women and simply say "It was at an AU summit in 2018", the prompt would be "And who was present at the summit or where was it held?". Semi-standardised questions allowed the researcher to do the above to obtain specific and relevant information needed for the study.

3.4.5 Interviews in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The experience for the researcher at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia was memorable. Being at the African Union Commission presented multiple learning opportunities, not just as a researcher, but as an African. The researcher had background information on what the African Union Commission does, the different departments at the African Union Commission and the specific departments where the researcher had to conduct elite interviews.

The opportunity to travel to the African Union Commission opened the researcher's eyes to the world of diplomacy and bureaucracy. At the time of conducting interviews, the Third Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee Meeting on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST) was being held at the Old Conference Centre at the AUC. The researcher was privileged to attend one of the open sessions.

Every time the researcher arrived at the African Union Commission, she had to go through security clearance. This was quite an experience, as security clearance was needed for each building one would go to. For instance, one would need security clearance to enter the Peace and Security Council building, and a separate clearance to enter the conference centre and office complex. The two departments where the researcher had to conduct interviews, the Women, Gender and Development Directorate department (WGDD) and the Political Affairs (PLA) department were both situated in the conference centre and office complex.

Before travelling to Ethiopia, the researcher had sent out e-mails to key elite from the departments and received no responses. Efforts to establish communication were frustrating and it is key that future researchers consider this. Establishing rapport can be time-consuming, there may be no responses and it can take time to receive a response.

Initially, gaining security clearance to the African Union Commission was an obstacle. Eventually though, the researcher was able to gain security clearance with the help of two researchers who had previously conducted interviews at the African Union Commission. The two researchers were able to connect the researcher to someone at the African Union Commission who facilitated the security clearance and made introductions to the relevant elite at the WGDD and Political Affairs departments.

Most specialists at the African Union Commission have 'missions' that they manage, which are demanding. These missions can have them stationed at the African Union Commission, or they would need to travel to other countries or attend workshops in line with their missions. In the case of the researcher, at the time she arrived in Addis Ababa, the elite of the WGDD had all travelled out of Ethiopia for a mission workshop. Hence, the interviews started at the PLA, as the elite from that department were present at the AUC at that time.

On the first day of interviews, not much progress was made as all specialists were busy and could not afford to take time out to conduct interviews. So, on the first day, the researcher took time to familiarise herself with the two departments and whom she would need to approach for interviews. For the three days that interviews were conducted, there was no set meeting time; the researcher simply had to wait for an available time slot to be afforded to her. This was also the time that the researcher was able to obtain signed consent to conduct the interviews specifically at the two departments before the different interviews could begin. Also, each interviewed elite had to sign an individual consent form, in addition to the departmental consent the researcher had received.

The interviews were conducted in the elite's personal offices, during working hours, which meant that during some of the interviews, someone could walk in requesting a signature or information from the elite being interviewed. The researcher had to be patient, considering the busy schedules of the specialists. However, this did not happen for all the interviews. On average, the researcher would spend a full day at the commission because the elite were available at different times throughout the day.

3.5 Data analysis

This section describes the data analysis process of inference, the stage where analysis and claims are made (Harrison 2001). The analysed data was used to address the research problem, which is "The use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment which

are crucial for ensuring equity and equality". The thesis sets out the need for other variables and the insufficiency of the quota system.

3.5.1 Inductive data analysis

Robison (1951) describes how analytical induction is an approach that isolates that which is essentially needed to understand a phenomenon under investigation. The "characters/variables" drawn from the data are what become essential (sufficient) to explain causality leading to the phenomenon. Moreover, these characters drawn must be generalisable or similar when applied to any case used to investigate the phenomenon (Robison 1951). Thus, when the essential characters are present, the phenomenon will occur, but when these characters are absent, it will be difficult or impossible for the phenomenon to occur (Robison 1951).

According to McLaren (2010), the inductive style of data analysis is relevant for the case study design because it allows theory to emerge from the collected data, especially in research where theory is limited. The relationship between constructs within the data provides the researcher with the ability to address 'how' and 'why' questions that emerge (McLaren 2010). The difficulty with this approach was the process of selecting what is or is not important as themes and constructs emerged from the data.

Johnson (2008) explains how analytical induction paves the way for the redefinition of a phenomenon and this approach is concerned with the attachment of subjective cultural meanings to experiences by individuals. With this approach, the researcher was expected to demonstrate categories derived from the data to explain how alternative theoretical explanations have been rejected. This approach is argued to be logical and unassailable (Johnson 2008); therefore, using it for inference was reliable. Reconceptualisation became possible as unique features of the case study concept of analysis, women's political empowerment was extracted from the data to reflect variances in the phenomenon.

The variable "*increase in proportion of women*" is an empirical generalisation and according to Brewer (2003), empirical generalisations should be derived from data inductively, so that the data "may speak for itself". Therefore, analytic induction would

warrant that knowledge of how society is constructed must be derived from how individuals or groups perceive the social world they exist in (Brewer 2003); hence the use of a qualitative research method through a constructivist worldview.

3.5.2 Coding

Coding simply means "reading the transcript until certain themes become apparent. Identify each theme by a short word or phrase; this word or short phrase is the code" (Griffee 2005: 36). This was when the researcher picked out themes from the transcribed data and this was done in conjunction with the theoretical and conceptual framework. Coding varies from study to study; however, a coding frame needs to be established for the research (Griffee 2005) and coding is the ability of the researcher to convert raw data to reproducible results that can address the phenomenon under investigation (Burnham et al. 2004: 217; Crittenden & Hill 1971).

Furthermore, the data to be coded will be filled with "assumptions, biases and questions" as the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee can create these issues (Griffee 2005). The data from the interviews was raw, meaning a process of interpretation was needed, so the researcher had to thoroughly familiarise herself with the data to find themes and codes to sort the data. These themes or codes were created before conducting the interviews, meaning there was a "hypothesis" behind every question asked, as this aided the coding process (Griffee 2005).

By using qualitative semi-standardised interviews, the 'unstructured' nature of the interviews meant structure was gained at the end, during the coding process. Thus, coding allowed the interviewer to differentiate between the feelings of the respondent and information contained in the responses of the respondents. Most importantly, the coding process was crucial because this is where most errors in the research process can occur due to biases. Therefore, the codes used were "all-inclusive" and "mutually exclusive".

Kammeyer and Roth's (1971) coding approach was incorporated, which requires the theme or code used to understand the data must be mutually exclusive to the explanation/meaning ascribed to the data. For this thesis, a posteriori codes were used; these are codes that were developed after the data collection process as the

thesis used an inductive approach to analyse the data. The advantage of the a posteriori method is that it offers "marked improvement"; however, the researcher needed to be meticulous about ensuring the reliability of the information drawn out from the codes used (Montgomery & Crittenden 1977).

3.5.3 Validity and reliability

Two obstacles to the success of a design are validity and reliability. By definition, "validity is concerned with the meaningfulness of the research components" (Drost 2011: 114). A significant problem throughout the thesis was whether what the researcher intended to study was being studied.

Internal validity assesses whether there could be other extraneous variables that can limit the explanation of causality, and this is known as internal validity and extrinsic obstacles (Jones & Olson 1996: 227-229). Internal validity requires triangulation of data to address the research question resulting in a reliable conclusion (Dooley 2002: 34; Drost 2011). Thus, competing explanations were eliminated, as these could undermine the findings (Jones & Olson 1996) There are various threats to internal validity, some being "history, demoralisation, selection and instrumentation" and these are known as intrinsic threats, which can nullify causal findings (Drost 2011: 115; Jones & Olson 1996).

Construct validity warrants that the proper research tools need to be used to understand the concepts under investigation (Dooley 2002: 34). By definition, "construct validity refers to how well you translated or transformed a concept, idea, or behaviour – that is a construct – into a functioning and operating reality, the operationalization" (Drost 2011: 116). The construct validity of this thesis was the ability to address the research problem and validate the inference that the quota system of representation is insufficient to conclude that women's political empowerment (in Africa) is achieved by simply increasing the number of women in positions of political power and decision-making.

Therefore, as the phenomenon under investigation was operationalised and problematised, the thesis investigated whether it reflected the true meaning of the achievement of women's political empowerment in Africa. According to Harrison

(2001: 28), construct validity arises when an abstract trait is being measured. The abstract trait in the study was women's political empowerment in Africa; so, the terminology and definition of women's political empowerment was clear throughout the study and 'how' this was measured was clearly explained.

External validity speaks to the generalisability of the conclusions drawn from conducting the research as well as the connection of findings and literature (Dooley 2002: 35). Moreover, external validity assesses whether the study is valid to a targeted population or across populations, which is its generalisability. This raised the following questions: will the study be generalisable to different AU regional blocs and different African countries (across populations), and more broadly to other 'regional' continents (across populations)? This thesis' objective was for the findings to be generalisable across populations (different African countries) based on the sample of the SADC region and Zimbabwe.

Reliability is about the replicability of data. Reliability can be undermined when there are errors during data production, as there may be incorrect evidence, and this must be avoided (Harrison 2001). Reliability will ensure that the findings presented by this thesis can be reproduced at any time after the finalisation of the findings (Baglione 2007). Another challenge will be the reliability of information from secondary sources, and this can be mitigated by ensuring that information is from accredited sources (Burnham et al. 2004: 170).

Research follows a process and "the study must be well constructed to ensure construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability" (Dooley 2002: 33). To ensure these three forms of validity and reliability were present, the study was embedded in three objectives:

A To reconceptualise and theorise women's political empowerment from an international relations perspective, apart from a sociological, psychological, managerial, and developmental perspective.

B	To provide a meso analysis and understanding of women's political empowerment through the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe and provide an African perspective of women's political empowerment.

C	To consider alternative indicators to measuring women's political empowerment other than the quota system of representation.

3.6 Ethical considerations

There were ethical issues to consider as a qualitative researcher in the process of data collection, analysis, and the writing of the thesis. As informed by Creswell (2007), the anonymity of interviewees was protected by assigning aliases to them and there was no deception used to obtain interviewees and informed consent was obtained. Interviewees were not forced or coerced to be part of the study and they were at liberty to withdraw from the study. Most importantly, the interviews did not cause any harm or risks towards life during the interview process.

The interviews were credible and transparent, as there are careful records of how the interviews were conducted. Guided by Rubin and Rubin (1995), there was consistency in analysing ideas and responses to ensure that they corresponded under the same themes. The researcher ensured communicability by clearly stating what the research was for and made sure the interviewees felt part of the study. Lastly, the data was stored according to University of Pretoria policies.

3.7 Conclusion

The thesis used a constructivist worldview as it was qualitative. This provided a lens through which the researcher sought to understand meanings attached to women's political empowerment, through a process of knowledge creation as well as the participation of the respondents from the African Union Commission. Due to the reliance on data rather than statistics, the thesis fell within the confines of a qualitative research method. The nature of the study was a reconceptualisation and meso analysis, which meant that the study was contextual and used the case study design.

The case study design was appropriate for the study, as a specific phenomenon which is women's political empowerment in the context of the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe

was under investigation. Therefore, the case study design allowed for an in-depth analysis to draw out generalisations. However, the difficulty was that the specificity of the thesis could produce results that are not generalisable to regions other than SADC, in the context of AU Regional Economic Communities and other member states of the AU.

The thesis ascribed to various data collection methods, in the form of a document analysis of 20 gender scorecards/barometers as well as seven interviews. Thus, both primary and secondary sources were used to draw conclusions, and the interviews conducted substantiated the information found in other primary and secondary sources. Purposive sampling was employed for both the selection of documents (gender scorecards/barometers), and respondents who were selected based on the issue being studied. In light of the advantages of purposive sampling, elite interviews were conducted as they were most relevant to the study.

The elite respondents were allowed to provide their own voice with regard to their experiences and understanding of women's political empowerment. These elite were part of policymaking processes in their respective departments of the Political Affairs Directorate department and Women, Gender and Development Directorate department at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Hence, they had direct insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Semi-standardised interviews were employed as a flexible means of collecting data and set questions were used; however, there was room to probe further based on the response from interviewees due to the open-ended nature of the questions asked.

The chapter explained how both SADC and Zimbabwe were purposively chosen as cases to investigate the phenomenon. Elite from both the region of SADC and Zimbabwe were also supposed to be interviewed; however, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the study encountered the challenge of conducting interviews in SADC and Zimbabwe. Without funding, once borders were opened, the cost of travel was too high and the interviews for SADC and Zimbabwe could not be done. Instead, the study used interview data collected from elite at the African Union Commission as well as desktop research for SADC and Zimbabwe to substantiate the results.

Furthermore, the chapter explained how data was analysed and the approach used was inductive. Themes, or codes were extracted from the interviews and information was derived from the data and substantiated by the literature. Afterwards, the data was interpreted in collaboration with the theoretical and conceptual framework, providing a response to the research sub-questions. The use of inductive reasoning allowed for theory to emerge from the data; however, there was still the challenge of selecting what is or is not important as themes and constructs emerged from the data.

Additionally, the chapter explained the experience of the researcher while conducting fieldwork at the African Union Commission, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Key to note form the experience is that rapport for interviews needs to be established in advance. Setting up interviews is time-consuming, requires patience and may not always go according to plan. Therefore, researchers are required to be flexible and find ways to gain access and secure interviews.

With regard to coding, a posteriori codes were used, which were developed after the interview data was analysed. The construct validity of this thesis was the ability to address the research problem, which was that "the use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment which are crucial for ensuring equity and equality". Throughout the research process, ethics were taken into consideration. When the interviews were conducted, consent was provided by the respondents and their anonymity was maintained with aliases. During the interview process, the interviews were clearly stated what they were for and there was no harm or risks encountered by the interviewees in the process of conducting the interviews.

This chapter explained the methodology used to address the main research question, which was "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?". The next chapter provides a document analysis of the African political system and woman's political empowerment through the AU's gender mainstreaming objective.

CHAPTER FOUR: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters provided a theoretical and methodological understanding of the reasoning adopted by the thesis. Chapter four addresses gender mainstreaming frameworks put in place to achieve women's political empowerment in the African context. Multiple factors inhibit the attainment of women's political empowerment in Africa, including "gender stereotyping occasioned by patriarchy, poverty, illiteracy, religious interpretations and cultural norms. Women under patriarchy are stereotyped as weak, inferior to men, and partially rational beings in comparison with men who are viewed as strong, rational and superior to women" (Akoleowo 2021: 250). This chapter will address the various gender mainstreaming frameworks for achieving women's political empowerment in Africa, by focusing on the cases chosen for this thesis, which are the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe.

Chapter four analyses these gender mainstreaming frameworks with reference to the academic literature, various gender strategies, and gender policies to address two of the sub-research questions of this thesis. The first sub-research question being addressed is "What other indicators have been developed (for example by the SADC Afrobarometer and other organisations) to measure women's political empowerment?" The second sub-research question being addressed is "What are the challenges affecting the advocacy, follow-up and monitoring of gender instruments for women's political empowerment?" In addressing these questions, this chapter appraises the regional gender agenda in the African context to establish a women's political empowerment framework. The chapter is divided into the following sections: an overview of women in African politics, gender mainstreaming, the three gender agendas, evaluating women's political empowerment and a meso analysis. This is done to provide an analysis of actual policies and implementation scorecards.

4.2 Overview of women in African politics

Gender equality and women's empowerment require "the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making and political involvement [which] is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable

development, peace and democracy and the inclusion of their perspectives and experiences into the decision-making processes" (Mlambo & Kapingura 2019: 2).

One of the great challenges in Africa is that states commit to gender policies and agendas, but the agreements are usually "shelved" (Rop 2013). The political environment for women in Africa has been unfriendly and at times even hostile, affecting women's resolve to be involved in political decision-making (Shvedova 2005). Additionally, the institution of politics is characterised by political violence, and even though both genders are affected by this, women bear the brunt of the effects (Mlambo & Kapingura 2019). An even greater challenge is that for most African democracies, the election processes and systems are characterised by illicit strategies and various forms of unrest targeted at women, causing women to be intimidated or uninterested in politics (Para-Mallam 2015).

The literature describes various other reasons why women are marginalised in terms of their political involvement. For example, there is the stigma that African politics is a dirty game that "clean" women should not be associated with (Behrendt-Kigozi 2012). Women in Africa are described as having both domestic (private) responsibilities and economic (public) responsibilities, which are not taken into consideration by political institutions and political parties, causing a barrier to women fully taking part in politics (Kangas et al. 2015). Socio-economic factors such as a lack of financial resources is another reason women in Africa are said to be struggling to succeed in African politics (Kayuni & Chikadza 2016). Furthermore, women are described as being "used" in the sense that, during campaigns, women will be rallied and provided with a platform to be vocal; however, there is a tendency to silence those women at the decision-making table (Cheeseman & Dodsworth 2019).

According to Kassa (2015), when a sizable number of women in different African countries become economically empowered, and part of the labour force, there is a positive correlation with the political participation of women in those countries. This economic empowerment allows women to obtain certain skills and confidence to take part in political decision-making. In the SADC region, the objective by different heads of state and their governments has been to achieve a goal of 50% women in politics

and decision-making; however, despite this noble intention, the numbers still fall short (SADC 2019).

For SADC, the Declaration on Gender and Development was adopted in 1997, which was a significant milestone as it happened two years after the 1995 Beijing conference, and the Protocol on Gender and Development was later established in 2008 (this is further explored in section 4.3.2 on SADC and gender). Despite these achievements in the SADC region, the reality is that many women are not economically independent. Instead, they are dependent on their husbands, and this dependence has discouraged women from entering the political space (Seyedeh, Hasnita & Hossein 2010). As explained in the paragraph above, there is a positive correlation between economically empowered women and their involvement in politics. Therefore, the choice to evaluate the SADC region is fitting because continentally, SADC has made various strides towards gender mainstreaming initiatives as compared to the other regions in Africa (Matlosa 2002). However, the economic empowerment of women in the region is still lacking.

In the SADC region, if you simply observe the numbers, the quantity of women in politics is indeed increasing (Gysman 2018). According to the 2009 SADC Gender Policy, in the region, gender mainstreaming involves taking the concerns of both women and men into consideration at the levels of policy development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (SADC 2009a). In line with this, SADC has adopted a strategy through its gender mainstreaming policy initiatives that aim to focus on equal opportunities for men and women, while having a specific focus on women's empowerment in various areas (Gofhamodimo, Dembo & Makochekwana 2018).

This is crucial because research has been conducted that shows that on average, 60% and more of households in SADC are female-headed, meaning the empowerment of women directly affects development socially, economically, and politically in the region (Hendricks 2001). The condition of women in politics in Africa and specifically the SADC region directly affects women's political empowerment.

SADC understands the important role women play and reflects this in their policies. Therefore, the researcher concludes that SADC needs to continually prioritise gender in their policy frameworks. Additionally, this also reflects the importance of evaluating political institutions with regard to gender mainstreaming objectives/initiatives to better understand the important role African women play in political leadership and governance.

4.3 Gender mainstreaming in the policy frameworks

Gender mainstreaming is a central term that guides the policy frameworks under discussion in this chapter. The definition of gender mainstreaming as set out by the UN Economic and Social Council (UN 1997: 28) is:

> *"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".*

This definition set out by the UN Economic and Social Council has been foundational to the formulation of most global gender strategies and policies, and the aim of gender mainstreaming is "to imbue all systems, structures and institutionalised cultures with awareness of gender-based biases and injustices, and to remove them" (Woodford-Buger 2004: 65).

Additionally, gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that gender is at the centre of policy formulation because there has been systematic gender inequality in government structures, in the sense that legislation and governance have been biased towards men, and for all women and men to benefit from policy formulation and implementation, there is a need for gender sensitivity (Page 2011: 318-319). This

gender sensitivity is operationalised through gender mainstreaming and the expectation is that this will occur at all levels of governance, which is from the local (grassroots) to the supranational (continental institution), and, conversely, from the supranational to the local. The challenge with gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity is that there is a tendency for this process to be unclear or misunderstood, as the different levels that seek to mainstream gender within their policy formation and implementation processes may have different priorities or implementation strategies (Alonso 2017). This will be discussed further in section 4.6 on a meso analysis.

Gender mainstreaming was adopted and popularised at the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action at the UN Women's Conference. Evidently, "Beijing was a watershed moment in gender programming because it helped 'mainstream' gender across the UN system (including humanitarian, development and peace-building) through commitments to women's, as well as men's, particular gendered concerns and experiences" (Holloway 2020). The debate on the pros and cons of gender mainstreaming has transpired through theory as well as practice; it touches on the concept of transforming "social norms" that are embedded within various structures and institutions (Sainsbury & Bergqvist 2009) intending to provide an understanding of the inequalities that women (and men) who attempt to enter these structures and institutions experience.

Gender mainstreaming is a process that allows for the reformulation and restructuring of the status quo or the balance of (political) power in society (Riley 2003). This is done through "new tools such as gender analysis, gender statistics, gender awareness and gender sensitivity training, [that] were developed with a view to closing the gap or inequality between men and women. Again, as the mainstreaming continues to gather momentum, women's rights and women's political representation became part and parcel of the mainstreaming" (Tamunosaki & Opuene 2019: 22). Moreover, gender mainstreaming is argued to provide a platform to elevate women's issues to the policymaking table, which without this concept and principle would not be the case (Sainsbury & Bergqvist 2009).

One of the challenges in Africa lies in the domestication of gender mainstreaming. There have been mechanisms put in place to increase accountability; however, the "trickle down" effect from the AU to regional economic communities (RECs) to member

states has been "slow" (Martin 2013: 24). Part of the cause of this challenge is because "work at the regional level does not replace work at the national level" (Martin 2013: 24); there is a need for the two to complement one another to achieve the goal of women's political empowerment. There is a need to assess the capacity local authorities may or may not have in dealing with gender inequality in bodies of political decision-making as well as the availability of resources for this agenda.

Declarations and policies are not binding, which is problematic as funds or resources may be channelled to other areas of national interest (Martin 2013). The greatest challenge has been the difficulty in accessing and obtaining data to assess improvements in gender mainstreaming and women's political empowerment (Martin 2013). Gender mainstreaming is a complex process; thus, "closing gender gaps and changing or improving the current position of African women in political structure in the continent is not so easy, because it requires political will and implementation, because it is not a linear process" (Enaifoghe 2019: 259).

At the regional level, SADC, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), EAC (East African Community), IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development), ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States) and COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) have made strides towards adopting gender policies as well as dealing with women's rights issues (Omotosho 2015). This has been made possible through the AU's gender policy, which aims to address the challenges that women in Africa face at the social, economic, political, and other levels (Omotosho 2015). However, the greatest challenge has been in the implementation of these gender policies.

Omotosho (2015) points out that the biggest hurdle to the empowerment of women on the African continent is the influence of culture. This challenge of culture is further explored in section 6.2.1 on the perceptions on the socialisation of genders and section 6.2.2 on the perceptions of the toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics. Culture was also explained in section 2.4.4. This current section explained what gender mainstreaming is, and the purpose, which is to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, in the context of this thesis, equal opportunities for women and men to be in institutions of political decision-making and political leadership.

The next section explains the goals and strategies used by the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe to mainstream gender within their policies as a means of transforming unequal power relations in pursuit of women's (political) empowerment.

4.4 The three gender agendas

Understanding gender mainstreaming is crucial because this concept and the gender agenda is the reason gender policies have been formulated to tackle gender issues on the continent. This section explains the gender policies that govern Africa through the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe.

Through the AU's Women, Gender and Development Directorate department (WGDD), there is a gender architecture that has been put in place to actualise gender mainstreaming within the AU and to guide the organs of the AU, member states and RECs. The AU gender architecture is guided by the 2000 Constitutive Act of the AU, the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the 2009 African Union Gender Policy (African Union 2017) and the recent Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028 Strategy (African Union WGDD 2019). Additionally, there is the Women's Decade (2010-2020), the 2015 theme for the AU, which was the "Year of Women Empowerment and Development", the Fund for African Women and Africa's Agenda 2063 (African Union 2017). The AU has therefore put in place a women's empowerment framework, a reporting framework, monitoring framework, implementation framework and financial framework towards achieving their gender agenda.

The Women's Decade (2010-2020) of the AU was influenced by the 1975 women's conference, 1980 Copenhagen women's conference, 1985 Nairobi women's conference and the 1995 Beijing women's conference (African Union 2010). These different global initiatives were explained in section 1.2.1. Consequently, this decade was guided by the African Union gender policy and was further split into two phases from 2010 to 2015 and 2015 to 2020 (African Union 2010). The purpose of the decade was to accelerate and encourage gender mainstreaming through ten objectives, seven

guiding principles, and committees at the national, regional, and continental level (African Union 2010: 4-6).

The 2015 theme for the AU was the "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development". This theme was coined during the 23rd Ordinary Session in 2014 (Malabo, Equatorial Guinea) when research provided data that showed that women were facing challenges such as poverty and poor health based on their gender (African Union 2010). This theme for the year 2015 was created so that AU members would be motivated to achieve gender mainstreaming on the continent and at individual national levels. Moreover, the theme had six priorities, four specific objectives and five expected outcomes that were foundational to propel Agenda 2063, a strategy for Africa's overall development (African Union 2015).

In addition, through this theme, the AU sought to ensure that women had and have "equal" opportunities to men to attain sustainable development (African Union 2015: 1-6). Agenda 2063 is a pan-Africanist agenda that speaks on behalf of the African people concerning issues in Africa and is founded on seven aspirations (Agenda 2063: 1-2). Agenda 2063 declares women as a driving force for change and aspiration six is dedicated to building and developing an Africa that is people-driven, especially for women and girls, through removing the barriers that women and girls have faced and are currently facing that hinder their progress (Agenda 2063: 8, 12).

4.4.1 The AU's gender agenda

On 7 November 2000, the AU adopted its Constitutive Act, a document signed by heads of state in Africa. This was an act adopted to guide African countries concerning social, economic, and political issues to provide a continental approach to tackling problems and challenges that might arise (African Union 2004). Article 4 of the act highlights the fundamental principles of the AU and section 4(L) calls attention to the importance of the promotion of gender equality (African Union 2004).

The 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) is a strategic reporting instrument and a tool to create ownership of gender issues by African states at all political levels (African Union 2004; African Union 2017). The SDGEA has the rotating AU Chair and heads of African states committing to annual reporting

concerning gender mainstreaming in their countries. Additionally, this declaration is influenced by the "implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999); the Outcome Document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (2000); UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)" (African Union 2004: 1).

AU gender initiatives are in tandem with global gender initiatives and "these international gender initiatives provided a driving force for Africa through the AU, to establish policies and structures to handle gender issues on the African continent. "Gender mainstreaming was actualized after the transition from the OAU to the AU when the decision to include a Gender Directorate department within the AUC was made. This directorate warrants the operationalization of gender mainstreaming within African Union Organs (AUO) as well as through AU members by means of initiatives, policies and agendas which would be made by the AU" (Shangare 2017: 25). The AU gender policy (AUGP), through its Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) mainstreams gender internally and externally.

The AUGP was established to provide African solutions for gender challenges on the African continent towards a pan-Africanist agenda for sustainable development and "with this Gender Policy and its Action Plan in place, the Commission, other AU Organs, RECs and Member States will be able to ensure gender equality, human dignity and peace for all and thereby fulfil the vision of AU" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: iii). This statement within the AUGP summarises the objective of the policy through the institution of the AU.

The AU gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) strategy was ratified in 2019 and it has four pillars: (1) maximising opportunities, outcomes, and E-TECH dividends, (2) dignity, security, and resilience, (3) effective laws, policies and institutions, and (4) leadership, voice and visibility (AU WGDD 2019). Pillar four advocates for the equal representation of women in institutions of political decision-making, agency in both the private and public space and women as contributors

towards societal development (AU WGDD 2019). In Africa, the representation of women in politics has been achieved through gender quotas (UN Women 2017). Based on the above, there are various commendable gender strategies that have been put in place in Africa through the AU; however, "despite global recognition of the importance of national gender machineries, the consensus from policymakers and scholars is that they have been largely ineffectual in Africa" (Enaifoghe 2019: 273).

4.4.2 SADC's gender agenda

There are 16 member states in SADC, namely Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (SADC 2012). SADC was formed in Lusaka on 1 April 1980 and was then known as the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). This was later changed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2002 (Banda 2002). The political culture of SADC has been determined by its history of colonialism, liberation movements and independence; resultantly, this has influenced the political identity and societal development of the region (Maltosa 2003: 85-86).

In SADC, the political culture has been characterised by instability and violence; however, women's organisations and human rights groups have contributed to multiparty systems in the region (Matlosa 2003). Maltosa (2003: 86) conceives political culture as "a concept that denotes a broad array of norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and traditions that shape systems, institutions and processes of governance". This political culture then determines the efficacy of the branches of government and bodies of political decision-making. The introduction of the proportional representation system has led to gender equality and the increased participation of women in the region, apart from the limitations that women have faced and still face (Matlosa 2003).

In 1992, the Declaration and Treaty of SADC was signed by heads of state to actualise regional integration, and this actualisation established a foundation for handling national development and transnational challenges. The 1992 Declaration and Treaty of SADC drew from the lessons of SADCC and highlighted how systems had established an "engendered" identity that trickled down to investment and trade for the region through increased productivity and competitiveness (SADC Secretariat 1993).

Moreover, Article 6(2) clearly states how SADC member states will strive not to discriminate against individuals based on gender (SADC Secretariat 1993).

Then, in 1997, SADC established a declaration on gender and development, and the preamble states that SADC member states are "convinced that gender equality is a fundamental human right" (SADC Secretariat 1997). Five years after the establishment of SADC, the regional body was taking steps to ensure that the region addressed issues of gender. The declaration was to be a tool for gender mainstreaming, not just at the regional level: the heads of state agreed to ensure this was the case at national levels as well (SADC Secretariat 1997).

After the Declaration on Gender and Development in 1997, SADC created a gender unit in 1998 to "facilitate, coordinate and monitor the implementation of SADC Gender Commitments at national and regional levels" (SADC Gender Unit 2012). Moreover, the unit was tasked with the role of ensuring that policies are gender-sensitive and reflect gender mainstreaming through the internal organs of SADC and that likewise member states become engendered (SADC Gender Unit 2012). The unit also follows the SADC Guidelines on Gender Responsive Budgeting and a Gender and Development Monitor (SADC Gender Unit 2012). In 2007, the SADC Gender Policy (SADC GP) was adopted, which emphasised that gender equality is a human right, and it was adopted to "provide a sound, authoritative, coherent and strategic mechanism for achieving the objectives of the Declaration" (SADC Secretariat 2007: 4).

The purpose of the SADC GP is to be an authoritative document that assists with the operationalisation of gender regionally and nationally. The policy addresses patriarchal attitudes, disparities in education between boys and girls, the issue of few women in male-dominated professions, discriminatory cultural norms, and many more impending issues in gender mainstreaming in the region (SADC Secretariat 2007). Furthermore, under section 4.2 on Gender, Governance, Representation and Participation, the policy has a commitment to "increase the participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making for them to effectively and meaningfully contribute to and benefit from national and regional development programmes" (SADC Secretariat 2007: 12). The 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender

and Development identified the experience and violations women in the region faced politically, thus, recommending the need to increase women in political decision-making by encouraging states to seek the critical mass of 30% of women in political institutions (Band 2006).

Moreover, the region recognises the influence of culture and promotes the need for African values to recognise equality, democracy, and dignity to achieve women's political empowerment (Band 2006). Thus, there is an expectation that states must "take corrective and positive action in those areas where discrimination against women in law and in fact continues to exist" (Band 2006: 26). In 1999, the SADC Gender Unit organised a conference titled "Beyond 30 Percent in 2005: Women and Decision-making in SADC", which led to the adoption of a far-reaching program for gender parity in the region (Lowe-Morna 2004).

In 2008, SADC member states (excluding Botswana and Mauritius) signed an amended Protocol on Gender and Development to establish equity and equality for women and what preceded the protocol was the 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development (SADC Secretariat 2008). In Article 3, the objectives of the protocol are to ensure women's empowerment, develop various implementation strategies towards gender mainstreaming, address arising gender issues, set goals, monitor progress, and expand regional integration towards gender mainstreaming (SADC Secretariat 2008: 9-10).

Then, in 2009, SADC established the SADC Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit and adopted the SADC Workplace Gender Policy (SADC 2009a and SADC 2009b). With more women in the region than men, naturally, for the policymakers and women in the region, women would require representation in bodies of political decision-making. Although SADC has extensively addressed women's issues at the policy formulation stage, men have still monopolised politics in the region (Sadie 2005).

What is key to note is that excluding women from politics in SADC is a violation of the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which promotes the equal participation of women in politics (Maphunye 2013). This reveals once again that despite SADC having extensively addressed women's issues at the policy formulation

stage, "women are struggling to attain gender balance in politics and various leadership platforms. These are the views of senior female members of former liberation movements in southern Africa" (Kavhu 2018). This is also reflective of the fact that despite the increase in the quantity of women in politics, their descriptive representation, and the various gender strategies put in place in SADC, this has not fully addressed the issues that women in politics in the region face (Sadie 2005).

The SADC Gender Unit and SADC Parliamentary Forum were established to pursue gender equality and the critical mass of 30% for women's representation. SADC has "committed (through the 'Engendering of SADC Parliaments' in their 2000-2005 Strategic Plan) to *engender politics* and provide Members of Parliament with the capacity to *engender* issues" (Sadie 2005). Engendering politics is the process of gender mainstreaming, within political processes, which was explained above in section 4.3 on gender mainstreaming.

SADC, as a regional bloc is governed by a revised plan known as the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). The RISDP is a revised 10-year strategy (2020-2030) of a five-year strategy (2015-2020), and it highlights cross-cutting issues in SADC, with the second issue raised as "National gender policies and programmes" (SADC 2020). The strategy highlights how members of SADC do have gender policies, are adhering to the SADC Gender and Development Protocol, and that states have gender mainstreaming capacity (SADC 2020). The main outcomes of the RISDP are outlined as follows:

"1. Increased participation of women in regional development and enhanced equal access to opportunities and gender parity.
2. Strengthened gender mainstreaming at both national and regional levels.
3. Enhanced elimination of gender-based violence."

(SADC 2020).

The gender agenda of the SADC region is commendable, as various policies and strategies have been put into place since the early 90s. This reflects that the AU, as a continental body, faces more challenges in formulation and implementation of their policy frameworks, as compared to its REC SADC.

4.4.3 Zimbabwe's gender agenda

The Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs was established in 1981 by the ZANU PF government. Teurai Nhongo was appointed as the minister and the purpose of this ministry was to table women's issues for agenda-setting. In 1982 the Legal Age of Majority Act was passed, in 1985 the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed and in 1985 the National Women's Council was also proposed (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). Furthermore, in 1992, the Ministry was moved to the Ministry of National Affairs where it simply became coordinator of national affairs (Geisler 1995). In 1996, the Ministry became a unit within National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operative, and in 1997 a Gender Issues Department was created (and demolished in 2000) to coordinate ministries in gender mainstreaming their structures (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). These changes reflected a lack of vision concerning women's issues from the period of 1980 to 2000, the two decades after independence.

From 1980 to 2012, Zimbabwe was governed by the Lancaster House 1979 constitution and this constitution inadequately provided statutes concerning women in politics or women's rights (Dziva 2018). The ratified constitution was adopted in 2013 and incorporated the African Women's Rights Maputo Protocol stated in section 4.4 on the three gender agendas, with the provision that men and women were equal and to be treated equally. Section 17(b) of the 2013 constitution emphasises gender balance and the inclusion of women candidates, while section 17(2) underlines that the state is obligated to remove gender imbalances and discrimination (Zimbabwe 2013).

The constitution introduced the quota system, stipulating that (1) women must be represented in the senate and parliament, with party lists being headed by females (section 120 (2) (b)) and (2) 60 women, six from the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe through cast votes, are to be represented during elections. In Zimbabwe, the quota system did increase women's representation from 14,29% (2008) to 32% (2013) (Dziva 2018). This was a numerical achievement; however, in 2013, only three out of 26 cabinet members were women, which caused an uproar among feminists and scholars who based their concerns on the ratified 2013 constitution (Zvobgo & Dziva 2017: 64-70).

Women's political participation and representation in Zimbabwe is guided by the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy: 2013-2017. This policy makes mention of the African Women's Rights Maputo Protocol, AU gender policy, and Africa Women's Decade, and calls for the need to "track" any progress made towards gender mainstreaming and women's equality (Ministry of Women Affairs 2017). The Zimbabwean government has the following policies in place to achieve gender mainstreaming: the Girl's and Young Women's Empowerment Framework (2014), Economic Empowerment Policy and the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim-Asset) policy (Zvobgo & Dziva 2017: 71).

Political parties, through their women's wings, have assented to the gender mainstreaming of their internal structures; however, quotas in political parties have been received with scrutiny and resistance as women candidates are placed in positions of men "strongholds" and being used as "tokens", a means for ensuring quantity but not quality (Chiroro 2005). The consequences of tokenism are further addressed in section 5.2.4 on perceptions on the adequacy of the quota system. Women in Zimbabwe have also rejected quotas, citing that the quota system represents them as inferior to their male counterparts, as their competency will in some ways be questioned when they are placed in political positions through quotas (Ahikire 2008).

Women in Zimbabwe constitute 54% of citizens in the country, yet they are underrepresented and marginalised; moreover, some women tend not to vote for women candidates (Geisler 1995). The Zimbabwe constitution requires that there must be gender-balance in political institutions, yet from the 24 posts, only four were women for the following ministries: "(1) women and youth affairs, (2) environment, (3) tourism, and the (4) ministry of state for Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city" and the six deputy ministers were all men (Marima 2017).

Gender equality seeks to ensure equal opportunities for women and men; hence, at times, politicians (men and women alike) perceive quotas as undemocratic and limiting fairness, because they advocate for one gender over the other (Hassim 2003). The question of fairness is raised even though women have been the disadvantaged

gender in political leadership and representation. Another major challenge that women in Zimbabwe have faced is the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system at national assembly, a system that stipulates that the winner takes all (Zvobgo & Dziva 2017). The FPTP electoral system at national assembly is problematic because it is a "winner takes all approach" and the voter pattern in Zimbabwe is that voters are looking for the traits of 'male' politicians. So, by virtue of being women, women are disadvantaged in that the voters vote for men, and the men politicians 'take all' the positions. In this case, there is no proportional representation.

The electoral system of proportional representation paves the way for gender justice, as "a body of literature suggests that a closed-list proportional representation system is more conducive to the electoral success of women than a constituency-based FPTP system" (Gaidzanwa 2006: 12). Moreover, the election trend in Zimbabwe for the period 1980 to the most recent elections in 2018 is that despite efforts by various women's organisations, election outcomes have not been favourable to women because voters (women and men) vote for men politicians and there is inadequate support given to women politicians by voters (Balance 2019). In Zimbabwe, despite the various regional and international signed and ratified treaties, gender inequality and discrimination persist (Maunganidze 2020).

Women in Zimbabwe go through the standard electoral process to be politically appointed: (1) they need to announce their candidacy, (2) they need to be elected as candidates within their political parties to appear on party lists and (3) women need to be voted for, bearing in mind the voter pattern in Zimbabwe due to the FPTP system (Zvobgo & Dziva 2017). As women politicians go through this process, their agency is arguably affected by issues such as a lack of confidence and low self-esteem (these issues are further addressed in section 5.2.3 on perceptions on capacity and section 6.2.3 on perceptions on the confidence of women in leadership), which in turn affects their freedom or desire to take part in politics (Markham 2013).

Resultantly, women's participation in politics from the local to the national level is low and there is an increased gender stigma imposed on women politicians. This gender stigma is placed on women politicians because they are women. Additionally, there is a significant gap in capacity as women tend to be less skilled in politics and leadership

than men politicians (Hivos 2017). As an example, women politicians in Zimbabwe faced resistance from men politicians during the most recent July 2018 national elections where it was noted that "only one in ten Zanu-PF candidates and around one in seven opposition candidates were female" (Burke 2018).

Of the 23 presidential candidates for the July 2018 elections, only four were women, while 19 were men (Shaban 2018). The violence and intimidation that the woman politicians faced were both physical and in the online sphere in the form of cyberbullying (violence against woman politicians is further explored in section 6.2.4 on perceptions on women's psychological state). However, in Zimbabwe, there has been a rise of independent woman candidates for parliamentary seats, but their chance of winning is based on community ties, a strategy the young middle-class women are using to enter the arena of politics (Dendere 2018). This also reflects that despite intimidation and violence, there is a form of agency that some young middle-class woman politicians are enacting.

In Zimbabwe, the marginalisation of women is both historical and structural. During the colonial era, women were kept in rural areas to tend to the home (private space), while men worked in urban developed areas and mines (Masarira 2018). This was enforced through a racial and patriarchal system that reinforced a gender gap/divide between women and men. This, coupled with the underrepresentation of women in politics, has perpetuated gender stereotypes. The underrepresentation of women means Zimbabwean men politicians are overrepresented as has been the norm, despite women being introduced into this male hegemonic space and institution of politics (UNECA 2009). More on this issue is discussed in section 6.2.2 on perceptions on the toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics.

The issues that Zimbabwean women face are complex, as they intersect with race, class and one's economic position (Manyonganise 2015). In rural areas, there are still instances of child marriage and other factors limiting women from pursuing education or careers, including lack of financial resources and lack of access to media and exposure. For example, Masarira (2018) states that "37% of women in Zimbabwe have no access to media". Women in Zimbabwe are still very marginalised in society and

still face various forms of "sextortion" when in pursuit of business, economic or political aspirations (Chingono 2020).

This means that family responsibilities and unpaid chores still burden women in Zimbabwe, affecting their agency and ability to make certain choices. Due to the "feminisation of poverty" in the country and a reliance on informal work by women, this has led to a hand-to-mouth type of survival for Zimbabwean women (Masarira 2018). Moreover, the reality in Zimbabwe is that the barriers to enter politics for women are prominent, as political and sexual violence is also present in political parties (Masarira 2018). Also, there is age discrimination among women politicians, as older women in politics make sure that young/er women do not have a point of entry into institutions of political decision-making (Masarira 2018).

Under President Mugabe's rule from 1980 to 2017, women's groups lobbied for the inclusion of women to lead key ministerial positions, and post-Mugabe the struggle continues. Various media platforms label women who seek to lobby as prostitutes, their marital status is questioned, they are assumed to behave as men, and the statement "good girls don't go into politics" is continually reiterated (Marima 2017). Currently, 35% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women due to the 30% quota system set to expire in 2022 (introduced in 2012), and activists have argued that a quota system and elections are insufficient to achieve gender mainstreaming and equality (Marima 2017). At government executive levels, women are still severely underrepresented; at party levels, women are elected to window dress (not necessarily to increase their capacities or political influence) and Zimbabwe has only had one female deputy president, Joyce Mujuru (who was fired in 2014 on accusations of plotting against the then President Mugabe) (Marima 2017).

4.5 Evaluating women's political empowerment

This section will apply women's political empowerment to the three gender agendas of the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe. As stated in section 2.3.3 on women's political empowerment, the expanded definition of women's political empowerment guiding the thesis is based on Sundström's definition but expanded in a number of important ways: women's political empowerment is seen as "*a method and process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal*

decision-making which results in particular intended outcomes". Based on this definition, when women lack choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making, they are not politically empowered. The different variables that scholars and practitioners have come up with have been to measure the "degree" to which these elements (choice, agency, and participation) have been achieved.

Various variables have been used to assess women's political empowerment. One project, the V-Dem project used three indices to assess women's political empowerment. The three indices used were: (1) an index on "women's civil liberties", (2) an index on "civil society participation" and (3) an index on "women's political participation" (Sundström et al. 2015). Lombardini, Bowman & Garwood (2017) add to the definition of women's political empowerment by introducing three context-specific "changes" that must be actualised to attain women's political empowerment, namely personal, relational, and environmental changes. Without changes to the personal, relational and environment of women, women's political empowerment is unattained.

Resultantly, a key question that arises is, at what level of women's empowerment should empowerment be addressed, the individual, household, community, [political] or environment level (Lombardini et al. 2017)? Additionally, women's political empowerment could be considered in the light of four dimensions according to Rowlands (1997): (1) power within, (2) power to, (3) power with and (4) power over, which could be helpful in understanding power dynamics better. The first dimension evaluates one's confidence and psychological state, the second dimension evaluates the agency of an individual, the third dimension evaluates how one receives support from peers, and the fourth dimension evaluates the power of a woman in her household or community. Power with and power to both assess changes within an individual, while power with and power over assess changes external to an individual such as their work environment (Lombardini et al. 2017).

To add further to the discussion of empowerment, when selecting indicators of evaluation, empowerment is either intrinsic or instrumental. Empowerment is intrinsic when you evaluate the power one values, while it is instrumental when you evaluate the power that one has (Ibrahim & Alkire 2007). Additionally, empowerment is either subjective or objective and this links to the intrinsic and instrumental nature of

empowerment, in that power is subjective when an individual perceives their ability to carry out agency, and objective when others perceive that individual's agency (Holland & Brook 2004). This brings us back to the argument of what exactly representation means, as representation is a fundamental factor in attaining women's political empowerment. Descriptive representation, as explained in section 2.3.4, focuses on the numbers of representatives. The argument is embedded in proportional representation in that there is a need to be reflective of groups in society in the pursuit of political representation. This concept supports the notion that "one of us" is representing "us" where decisions are being made. However, this is a partial view, as it focuses mostly on numbers and a critical mass of women politicians (Pitkin 1967: 60-91).

Therefore, on the one hand, descriptive representation, in pursuit of women's political empowerment, embodies the third and fourth dimensions of power, which is the power with and the power over. On the other hand, substantive representation, as explained in section 2.3.6, is achieved when choices made by the representative are not just about their choices, but the actualisation of the "interests" of the individuals/groups that they represent. It is about what representatives "actually do" as opposed to them simply being in a position of leadership or decision-making. This looks at what women can achieve, whether it is contributing to political meetings, policy formulation or their ability to have agency and act independently (Pitkin 1967: 212-224). Therefore, substantive representation, in pursuit of women's political empowerment, embodies the first and second dimensions of power, which are the power within and the power to. This means the "power" a woman in politics has is linked to her confidence, psychological state and agency within institutions of political decision-making, and these are the 'critical acts' of women politicians.

Political dimensions of empowerment are evaluated at the household (individual), communal and broader area. At the household level, the questions asked are: do women "know" about politics and do they have access to be in politics? At the communal level, do women have the means to mobilise, to vote and to be political candidates? At the broader level, are women represented in regional and national bodies, and are their issues represented in decision-making? These are political dimensions of empowerment, as explained by Malhotra et al. (2002). Moreover,

women's political empowerment is a process, and it is difficult to measure a process, especially from the macro through to the meso- and microlevels of implementation, in this case from the AU, to SADC, to Zimbabwe.

This section endeavoured to highlight the previous studies of women's political empowerment as well as the different measures, indices, levels, and changes of women's [political] empowerment. This reflects that measures to assess women's political empowerment have been put in place by different scholars and practitioners. The following sub-sections present the measures which the three cases under investigation have assessed/addressed/understood women's political empowerment in the African context.

4.5.1 Operationalisation of the three gender policies

This section seeks to examine whether the three gender policies, namely the AU gender policy, the SADC gender policy, and the Zimbabwe (national) gender policy, are linked to one another, or influence one another in any way, according to the perceptions of those interviewed at the AU. This meso 'network' level of analysis is crucial because it evaluates the operationalisation of the gender policies in the region of Africa through the lens of the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe.

In 2019, the AU adopted the division of labour between the African Union Commission, RECs, and member states of the AU (African Union Commission 2019a). There is an element of goodwill that is expected from member states concerning the implementation of continental policies (such as the AU gender policy), as member states are the nexus point of the AU continental body and its RECs (PSC Report 2019). There is an agenda to unify Africa towards attaining the AU's Agenda 2063 seven aspirations through strengthening integration within regional blocs; for the SADC region specifically, the greatest challenge is around overlapping memberships, issues around sovereignty and lack of government (national vs citizens) involvement in certain aspects (African Union Commission 2019b).

The division of labour policy document touches on six broad key areas, which are "policy planning and formulation, policy adoption, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, partnerships and joint resource mobilisations" (African Union Commission

2019a). What is important to note in this document is that the African Union Commission, in conjunction with its regional bodies and member states, is working on achieving connections between the macro and micro levels of the three institutions (African Union Commission 2019a). This document was only established in 2019 and yet the AU was formed in 2002, redesigned after the Organisation of African Unity, which was established in 1963 (African Union Commission 2019a). This policy should have been developed earlier, considering that the AU transformed from the OAU, to be relevant to African issues at hand.

It is important to note that with regard to policy planning and formulation, the AUC coordinates, drafts and creates awareness about policies. The RECs formulate regional policies in line with the continental one, consult with the AUC, and supports national policies through consultation and negotiation between the macro- and micro-bodies (African Union Commission 2019b). The member states participate, serve, adopt, and support initiatives in alignment with national development and formulation of policies (African Union Commission 2019b). With regard to policy adoption, the AUC "presents legal instruments to the assembly for adoption", the RECs ensure adoption of policies are in alignment with the continental one and member states execute national policies, ensuring that there is awareness and liaison with the REC and AUC (African Union Commission 2019b).

With regard to implementation, the African Union Commission ensures consultations between them and the RECs, provides a continental legal framework and coordinates implementation among the RECs (African Union Commission 2019b). The RECs facilitate, support, provide a regional strategy and are responsible for regional implementation (African Union Commission 2019b). Member states implement at a national level the agreed-upon policies from the AUC and the REC, while promoting and advocating the policies at the national level (African Union Commission 2019b).

4.5.2 Women's political empowerment indicators

Indicators used to assess women's political empowerment across the board were as follows:

African Union

i.   Gender parity in the constitution

ii. Women in the executive (main indicator)

iii. Women in parliament (main indicator)

iv. Women in the judiciary

v.   Women in local government

Source: African Union Gender Scorecards

SADC

i.   Women in parliaments (main indicator)

ii.   Women in local government (main indicator)

iii. Women in ministerial positions (cabinet) (main indicator)

iv.   Women in top party posts

v.   Women in electoral bodies

vi.   Women judges

vii. Women sources on different topics

Source: SADC Gender Barometers

Zimbabwe

i.   Women in parliaments (main indicator)

ii.   Women in local government (main indicator)

iii. Women in ministerial positions (cabinet) (main indicator)

iv.   Women on parliamentary committees

v.   Women and men political party candidates

vi.   Women and men in the public service

Source: Zimbabwe SADC Gender Barometers

These indicators are further discussed in the following three sections on the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe's women's political empowerment tracking.

4.5.3 The African Union and women's political empowerment tracking

This section provides an analysis of the tools and frameworks implemented by the African Union to attain and assess women's political empowerment on the continent. The AUGS was ratified in 2015 when the theme for the AU was the "Year of Women Empowerment and Development". The purpose of the AUGS was to inform Agenda 2063's first 10-year plan of the period 2015-2025, and the African Union Commission

had a responsibility to refine the indicators in response to gender outcomes and studies (African Union Commission 2015a: 13).

The AUGS is a "quick instrument" for progress assessment of seven sectors with intergenerational effects on women and girls, with sector two being "parliament and decision-making", and these seven sectors were placed in the three empowerment clusters of economic empowerment, social development empowerment and the political empowerment cluster (African Union Commission 2015a). The political empowerment cluster was defined as the "increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making", through evaluating ratios between men and women in parliaments (African Union Commission 2015a: 11). Of the eight indicators in the AUGS, indicator C on "women in politics" evaluated (i) representation of women in African parliaments (African Union Commission 2015a). This evaluation was based on "proportion (percentage) of seats held by women in national parliaments and ministerial positions"; whether the seats were filled by "nomination, appointment, indirect election, rotation of members and by election" (African Union Commission 2015a: 18).

In summary of the above, seven sectors, three women's empowerment clusters and eight indicators are used by the African Union to evaluate women's progress on the continent. The 2016 Gender Scorecard, with the theme "Women's rights in Africa. Where does the continent stand?", had the purpose of introducing "qualitative indicators" as the 2015 scorecard was largely quantitative, especially for women in politics, as the focus was on ratios between men and women. In the 2016 AUGS, the political empowerment cluster became the "women's civil and political rights cluster"; instead of just focusing on women in ministerial positions and parliaments (as the AUGS 2015 did), it included the executive, legislative, judiciary and local governance levels (African Union Commission 2016).

The 2015 AUGS had two indicators under the political empowerment cluster; resultantly, the 2016 AUGS aimed to be more intrinsic in approach rather than instrumental. Hence, the 2016 AUGS added four more indicators: "(i) gender parity in constitutions; (ii) the percentage of electoral quotas for women defined in the

constitutions; (iii) the highest level reached by women in the judiciary; and (iv) affirmative action quotas in local governance" (African Union Commission 2016: 50).

Of the four additional indicators, only indicators (i) and (iii) had a qualitative aspect. Indicator (i) evaluated the "clauses" within national institutions that mention non-discrimination of women; however, it was aggregated by the number of countries with clauses and not the changes attained through these clauses. Indicator (iii) evaluated the "level" that a woman reaches in the judiciary; however, it was aggregated by several women reaching the highest levels of the national constitutional courts. This meant that the 2015 and 2016 AUGS had a heavy focus on numbers or percentages; however, without going into detail, the 2016 AUGS did highlight structural challenges that prevented member states from "acting" their commitments towards women's political empowerment (African Union Commission 2016).

The 2018 AUGS was developed on the theme of the year, which was "Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to Africa's transformation". The 2018 AUGS focused on gender and corruption, as corruption is exacerbated by gender inequalities on the continent (African Union Commission 2018). The 2018 AUGS had 25 indicators and five performance areas, which deviated from a focus on "women in politics" to factors that condoned or condemned corruption on the continent (African Union Commission 2018). Limitations or the attainment of women's rights and equality was the focus of the scorecard, and an emphasis was placed on dealing with gender-specific forms of corruption (African Union Commission 2018).

Of the five performance areas, performance area three, "the participation of civil society and private sector in the fight against corruption" focused on the "space" for individuals and civil society to participate in working against corruption, through evaluating how women (using their voice and accountability) took part in this (African Union Commission 2018). The 2018 AUGS was relevant to the 2018 theme of the AU; however, it deviated from the goal of the 2015 AUGS. The 2018 AUGS provided general indicators that evaluated the effects of corruption on gender mainstreaming on the continent, but it did not provide a lens of analysis concerning and specifically about women in politics.

In 2020, the Women, Gender and Development Directorate department (WGDD) introduced the Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index as an assessment framework titled "Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index Framework: A COVID-19 Response and Recovery Monitoring and Implementation Tool". It was a framework to ensure women's rights were protected in a crisis (such as covid-19) and there was a right included, "the right to participation in political and decision-making processes" for African women, in the framework (African Union Commission 2020). The framework was established to deal with the dissatisfactory progress towards attaining women's rights on the continent from the 42 member states that had ratified the Maputo Protocol (African Union Commission 2020). The main focus of the framework was to "build accountability for gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights obligations under the Maputo Protocol" (African Union Commission 2020).

4.5.4 SADC and women's political empowerment tracking

This section provides an analysis of the tools and frameworks implemented by SADC to attain and assess women's political empowerment in the region.

In SADC, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development has ten parts and 43 articles. Part three, on Governance, has Article 12 on Representation and Article 13 on Participation (SADC 2008). Article 12 gazetted that by 2015, 50% gender parity had to be achieved by member states of the REC and that legislative awareness was to be implemented by members of the REC (SADC 2008). Article 13 gazetted that states would adopt legislative measures and strategies to provide women with equal opportunities for electoral participation and equal opportunities for decision-making (SADC 2008). In 2009, the SADC Framework for Achieving Gender Parity in Political and Decision-making by 2015 was adopted. This 2009 Framework was adopted to support Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development by addressing issues that exacerbate women's underrepresentation in institutions of political decision-making (SADC Secretariat 2009).

The framework highlights that "the primary goal in increasing the number of women in decision-making positions is to directly increase female representation and participation, and as such secure better balance in the way an organization transacts business" (SADC Secretariat 2009: 8). Another important issue that the framework

highlighted is that "strategies for equal representation and participation of women and men should therefore be transformative to permeate the deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes and systems that continue to subordinate and discriminate against women" (SADC Secretariat 2009: 9). The SADC Gender Policy had a thematic area 4.2 on "Gender, Governance, Representation and Participation" and the policy commitment was that "SADC Member States shall increase and improve the representation of women in all structures of governance and all levels of decision-making in public, private and social spheres to at least 50% by 2015" (SADC Secretariat 2007).

The annual SADC gender barometer reports, with the 2009 barometer as the baseline report, were established to assess attainment of gender equality in the region and provide annual data for comparison and evaluation of gender equality (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009). Chapter two of the 2009 SADC gender barometer on Gender and Governance built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The proportion of women in parliament in 2008 was 17,5% and in 2009 it rose to 25%; this increase was achieved through voluntary or legislative quotas (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009). The chapter highlighted that despite the increase, there was a need to assess what happens "beyond numbers" by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of electoral systems and quotas. In 2009, the REC had 24,7% women in parliament, 29,5% women in local government and 21,4% women in ministerial positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009).

Of the then 14 member states of SADC, in 2009, seven had adopted gender quotas but these were often "just on paper", as the quota adoptions were not reflective of percentages of women in decision-making (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009). The reason this adoption of quotas could have been "just on paper" was because systemic and structural gender inequality issues had not yet been addressed, something that quotas alone could not have dealt with, thus, affecting women's representation. Concerning participation in decision-making, in 2009, regionally, there was only one female speaker of the 14 speakers of parliament in the region (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009). The 2009 barometer highlighted that to achieve gender equality there would be a need for gender-sensitive electoral systems, quotas, gender-aware political parties and democratic environments conducive to women's participation (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009).

Chapter two of the 2010 SADC Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. In the 2009 Baseline Barometer, the proportion of women in parliament was 25% and in 2010, it dropped to 24% (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2010). The 2009 Barometer highlighted that countries with a first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system were not the most conducive to women's quotas, as compared to countries with the proportional representation system (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2010). The significance of the 2010 barometer was that it called for the region to go beyond numbers; consequently, in 2010, the REC had 24,1% women in parliament, 42,3% women in local government and 37,5% women in ministerial positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009).

The 2010 barometer also highlighted that despite certain improvements in percentages of women's representation and participation, there was a need for overcoming cultural, customary, and religious barriers to women's empowerment (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2010). Additionally, the barometer still emphasised the use of quotas and a gender-sensitive electoral system through a proportional representation electoral system. Moreover, the barometer highlighted the importance of regular training of women and the inclusion of men in women's empowerment (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2010).

Chapter two of the 2011 SADC Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The proportion of women in parliament rose again to 25%; however, this 1% increase from 2010 occurred amid governments reluctant to review their electoral systems and gender strategies (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2011). In 2011, the REC had 24,6% women in parliament, 23,6% women in local government and 22,1% women in ministerial positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2011).

The 2011 barometer introduced an argument for a critical mass, namely that it would be difficult for women to make changes without attaining a 30% critical mass (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2011: 76). The argument was that the presence of women (descriptive representation) helped to combat gender stereotypes and it normalised women being "seen" in institutions of political decision-making. However, the

barometer also highlighted the importance of going beyond numbers and introducing a "gender agenda" that had to be included in all political processes (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2011).

The 2011 barometer also highlighted the role of the media in changing perceptions about women in politics and decision-making. Regionally, those in the media needed to be trained on how to portray women in institutions of political decision-making, as media coverage could thwart efforts towards women's political empowerment (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2011). Chapter two of the 2012 SADC Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The 2012 barometer recorded a decrease from 25% to 24% of women in parliament in the region; however, the region saw Malawi have its first woman president, Madam Joyce Banda, and the first woman president in the region (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). In the same year, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa was elected as chairperson of the African Union Commission, also, the first woman chair of the commission (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012).

In 2012, the REC had 23,7% women in parliament, 23% women in local government and 24% women in ministerial positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). Concerning participation in decision-making, the 2012 barometer highlighted that women were missing from election management bodies and top decision-making positions such as political party leadership positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). Madam Joyce Banda and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma became examples that having women in top leadership positions for the region was possible, not just in SADC but in Africa.

However, the issue of capacity building was raised in that training in the region had been generic and had not addressed specific needs (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). More concerns were raised about the lack of follow-up mechanisms, the absence of national gender strategies and the male-dominated nature of political institutions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). These non-numerical issues raised in the 2012 Barometer concerning women's political empowerment are raised and addressed in chapters five and six of the thesis.

Chapter two of the 2014 SADC Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. In 2014, the region attained its highest percentage at 26% women in parliament. In 2014, the REC had 26% women in parliament while in 2013 it was 24%, 24% women in local government, the same percentage in 2013, and 21% women in ministerial positions, with 22% attained in 2013 (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2014). The 2014 barometer emphasised that while women were not a homogenous group, they had shared experiences and their presence in political institutions was vital. The 2014 barometer also highlighted that despite progress in the region, the target of 50% women in parliament by 2015 would not be attainable at the rate of increase from 2008 to 2014 (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2014).

The 2014 barometer also noted that women's representation in Zimbabwe's parliament increased – the causes of the increase were founded on the 2013 constitutional provision section 124, 1(b) (this is explained further in the following section 4.5.3, on Zimbabwe and women's political empowerment tracking). Once again, the electoral system of proportional representation was highlighted as more favourable for women than the FPTP system (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2014) because quotas, either voluntary or legislative quotas, worked better in that system, which was more favourable for women in politics (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2014). Chapter two of the 2015 SADC Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The 2015 barometer recorder an increase from 26% to 27% women in parliament in the region

The 2015 barometer was significant because it marked the deadline in the region for member states having 30% women's representation and 50% women's representation regionally (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). The region only attained 27% women in parliament; thus, the encouragement concerning gender and governance was that "the focus of the 50/50 campaign must be on the adoption of strategic special measures to ensure that gender parity is achieved in the post-2015 era" (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015: 79). In 2015, the REC had 27% women in parliament, 24% women in local government and 22% women in ministerial positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). Twenty-seven percent women in parliament

regionally was a commendable attainment as SADC was ahead of not just RECs in Africa but the European, Asian, Arabic and Pacific regions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015).

Quotas, party lists and reserved seats were appraised for this attainment and reiterated the limitations of the FPTP electoral system concerning affirmative action around women in politics (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). Key to note is that this 2015 barometer highlighted that quotas alone were insufficient for attaining women's political empowerment; there was also a need for advocacy, training, and financial support for women in politics (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015).

From 2004 to 2015, the region had had two woman presidents (Malawi and Mauritius), five woman deputy presidents (Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), two woman prime ministers (Mozambique and Namibia) and two woman deputy prime ministers (Namibia and Zimbabwe) (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). This reflected a shift in that woman politicians were appearing in top political positions and not just positions in local government, although the positions were not attained through running for elections, but political circumstances such as the death of a sitting president.

The 2015 barometer also provided percentage predictions in the region for 2020, which were 50% women in parliament and 30% women in local government (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). With a heavy reliance on quotas for increasing women's representation, the 2015 barometer noted that "this calls for new strategies in the post-2015 era to step up women's participation in all areas of decision-making" (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015: 109). The barometer also highlighted the need to transform cultural perceptions about women's equality and women's empowerment, which led to the development of what is known as the Gender Progress Score (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015).

The six-year period from 2009 to 2015 focused heavily on increasing women's representation in the region of SADC and within the political institutions of SADC member states. The goal was to achieve 50% representation of women in politics in the region by 2015 and encouraged the use of quotas to do so by creating awareness

of the electoral systems that were respectively more favourable (proportional representation) and unfavourable (FPTP) to quotas. The indicators women in parliament, women in local government and women in ministerial positions (cabinet) were the main indicators used for assessment. Other indicators used were (1) proportion of women and men in SADC parliaments, (2) regional (global) comparison of men and women in parliament, (3) global and regional ranking of women parliamentarians, (4) political party quotas, (5) women and men in party leadership and (6) women judges (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017).

The post-2015 three-year period, from 2016 to 2018, recorded the following results for women in parliament, women in local government and women in ministerial positions:

	Parliament %	Local Government %	Cabinet %
2016	27%	26%	23%
2017	27%	24%	23%
2018	26%	23%	20%

(Gender Links 2021)

A quick comparison of the 2009 baseline barometer report to the 2018 barometer report revealed that there were multiple fluctuations in percentages in the SADC region concerning women's representation in politics. The three main indicators under gender and governance for assessing women's representation in the region did not reach a regional 30% critical mass, which was an objective in the 2009 baseline barometer report, alongside the 50/50 campaign's objective of attaining 50% representation of women by 2015. The annual barometers from 2009 to 2018 focused largely on descriptive representation, which is equally important; however, the substantive representation of women was not captured; which is about what representatives actually do.

In 2019, the SADC Gender Barometer annual reports narrowed their focus of analysis to sexual and reproductive health and rights through the introduction of a #VoiceandChoice Barometer, with the assessments conducted through SADC's new SRHR Strategy Score Card (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2019). The deviation was commendable in that it addressed current issues affecting women's inequality in the region and built its call to action based on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2019). This was crucial in that it linked to the 2020 AU Strategy introduced by the WGDD, Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index, an assessment framework titled "Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index Framework: A COVID-19 Response and Recovery Monitoring and Implementation Tool", established to deal with the dissatisfactory progress towards attaining women's rights on the continent from the 42 member states that have ratified the Maputo Protocol (African Union Commission 2020).

4.5.5 Zimbabwe and women's political empowerment tracking

This section provides an analysis of the tools and frameworks implemented by Zimbabwe to attain and assess women's political empowerment in the country.

In Zimbabwe, the use of gender-affirmative action through quotas was a constitutional provision in section 124, 1(b), which mandates "for the life of the first two Parliaments after the effective date, an additional sixty women members, six from each of the provinces into which Zimbabwe is divided, elected through a system of proportional representation based on the votes cast for candidates representing political parties in a general election for constituency members in the provinces" (Zimbabwe 2013). Since the adoption of the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, from the period 2008 to 2021, Zimbabwe has held its elections in 2008, 2013 and 2018 (Chan 2019).

The new constitution was ratified in 2013 and a revised Zimbabwe national gender policy was also released in 2013 (Ministry of Women Affairs 2017/ Zimbabwe 2013). As a signatory to the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, Zimbabwe committed to presenting country-specific gender barometers in conjunction with the regional gender barometers. The purpose of the barometers had been to monitor the country's progress towards its various gender commitments. Under governance,

Zimbabwe used the three main indicators stipulated within the SADC Gender Protocol indicators, which were women in parliament, women in local government and women in ministerial positions (cabinet).

Chapter two of the 2012 SADC Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development reflected the following statistic for Zimbabwe: 17,9% women in parliament, 19% women in local government and 16% women in ministerial positions (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). In 2012, the Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) in Zimbabwe hosted a relaunch of the 50/50 campaign, where various organisations came together to deliberate on the urgency of ensuring 50/50 representation of women in the public and private sectors (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). This relaunch advocated for the use of quotas to increase women's representation in institutions of political decision-making and a stern call for electoral reforms in anticipation of the referendum of the then "new" 2013 constitution (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012).

In alignment with the SADC regional gender barometer, chapter two of the 2013 Zimbabwe Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance, also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. In 2013, Zimbabwe had 34% women in parliament, 16% women in local government and 12% women in ministerial positions (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2013). The 34% attainment was due to the special measure in section 124, 1(b) of the Zimbabwean constitution as highlighted above. However, even the attainment of a 30% critical mass of women's representation did not reflect what was happening on the ground in terms of attaining women's equality. A key issue highlighted in the barometer was that "a large majority of the country's women were excluded from participation in governance and national development processes due to gender biases, gender inequalities, cultural norms, GBV and their low economic status" (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2013: 31).

Furthermore, the barometer highlighted that quotas alone were an insufficient means of attaining women's political empowerment in Zimbabwe because the "four Cs" affected women's involvement in politics, which were "confidence, culture, childcare and cash" (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2013). Even with 34% of

women in parliament, there was still a need to train and build the capacity of these women as well; also, the need for research on women's experiences and participation in politics was highlighted (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2013). The limitations of the FPTP system was raised as well, as the constitutional provision only made "changes" for women in parliament and not women in local government; thus, affecting women's representation and maintaining 16% women in local government (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2013).

Chapter two of the 2015 Zimbabwe Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. In 2015, Zimbabwe had 34% women in parliament, 16% women in local government and 12% women in ministerial positions (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). The percentages remained the same, as Zimbabwe had had elections in 2013 and the next elections would be held in 2018. With this in mind, the 2013 and 2015 figures of women's representation were the same. Consequently, key issues highlighted in this barometer were similar to those highlighted in the Zimbabwe SADC 2013 barometer.

However, the 2015 barometer provided post-2015 governance targets, recognising that political parties in the country were the biggest hindrance to women's representation in noting that "political parties, which remain the key actors in advancing women's leadership and representation, persist in entrenching patriarchal norms and values within their leadership structures" (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). The targets presented in the barometer were ensuring the attainment of 50% women's representation, adoption of legislated measures to ensure parties adopt means towards women's political representation, creation of awareness towards legislated measures, participation of women in decision-making by political parties and strengthening of structures for gender mainstreaming (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015).

Chapter two of the 2017 Zimbabwe Gender Barometer on Gender and Governance also built on Articles 12 and 13 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. In 2017, Zimbabwe had 35% women in parliament, 15,7% women in local government and 15,4% women in ministerial positions (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance

2015). A fact highlighted in the 2017 barometer was that "women's representation in key leadership and decision-making institutions such as parliament, local government, traditional leadership and cabinet remained far below 50%" (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017: 17). Zimbabwe even had laws in place to provide for women' participation in politics; however, the numbers or presence of women in politics were still low. Under the "General Law Amendment Act [section 12, chapter 8:07] women in Zimbabwe are legally entitled to assume political and public office" (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017:19).

A key issue that was also reflected in both the 2013 and 2015 Zimbabwe SADC gender barometers was that political parties were "gatekeepers" of women's political participation and empowerment (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017). Other issues raised were violence against Zimbabwean women in politics and the fact that political tension increased women's vulnerability, as they experienced harassment, intimidation, forced resignation and biases about women's appearance and not their political abilities (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017). The recommendations for Zimbabwean women in politics was that capacity-building programmes, mobilisation of resources to support women, programmes to enhance women's confidence, identification of areas in need of affirmative action and implementation of mechanisms to eliminate culture and tradition were needed (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017).

4.6 A meso analysis

The AU gender scorecard indicators, SADC gender barometer indicators and Zimbabwe SADC gender barometer indicators have one thing in common, namely the use or encouragement of quotas to increase women's political participation and the use of percentages (numbers) to assess women's political empowerment. The definition of women's political empowerment guiding the thesis is "*a method and process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making which results in particular intended outcomes*".

Based on this definition, the quota system or drive towards attaining a critical mass of women's presence in political institutions of decision-making has addressed, at least,

one part of the definition. Quotas and women's numbers create "room" for women to participate in societal decision-making. What the three measures of assessment from the three different levels have reflected is that on the African continent, women *are* entering the political space. As women enter the political space, their presence allows them to participate in a way their absence previously did not.

To understand women's political empowerment and subsequently their presence in political institutions, the norms and values of political institutions were assessed in this chapter. The political norms and values concerning gender equality and women's empowerment of the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe were embedded within their gender policies and gender instruments of evaluation and tracking. The gender instruments of evaluation and tracking, namely the AU gender scorecard (initiated in 2015), SADC gender barometer (initiated in 2009) and Zimbabwe SADC gender barometer (initiated in 2012), were ratified around the same time. Thus, making comparison through a meso 'network' analysis for a similar time period possible.

In the African context, a meso analysis is lacking because macro-, meso- and micro-institutions have not been studied in tandem (Madsen 2021). Therefore, through the constructivist lens which seeks to understand the social construction of behaviours, norms and values of institutions or societies, and the central principle of reflecting on how individuals experience what is around them to be real through the process of socialisation, the meso network analysis became possible (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat 2018; Barkin 2003; Berger & Luckman 1967).

The assumption by these three bodies of political decision-making was that descriptive representation would bring about transformation and the actualisation of women's (substantive) representation and political empowerment. However, numbers of women in politics will not always translate to the addressing of women's issues or the formulation of policies to address women's issues (Bauer & Britton 2006). This was raised in all three instruments of measurement; there were fluctuations of the numbers of women in political institutions and the numbers did not always address gender biases or cultural values.

Institutional change is what will lessen gender inequality, taking into consideration that gender dynamics within institutions are complex and still under investigation (Waylen 2014). Formal rules (use of quotas to increase women's presence) may address formal biases against women's participation in politics; however, they may not address informal biases against women in politics (Waylen 2014). Consequently, the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe all introduced quotas to address the formal biases that women in politics face, which is the ability to enter political spaces and this was descriptively beneficial. Laws, acts, and gender indicators of analysis were subsequently put into place, and this achieved descriptive representation for women in politics for all three levels of political institutions.

However, similar issues remained, which were structural challenges that affected member states from putting into practice their commitment to women's political empowerment (African Union Commission 2016). Corruption has exacerbated gender inequalities on the continent (African Union Commission 2018) and there has been dissatisfactory progress towards the attainment of women's rights on the continent despite the various efforts towards increasing the numbers of women in political institutions (African Union Commission 2020). Moreover, there is still a need to assess what happens "beyond numbers" by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of electoral systems and quotas (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2009) as barriers to women's empowerment are cultural, customary, and religious (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2010).

The issue of capacity building was also raised in that training in the region had been generic (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2012). Quotas alone were insufficient in attaining women's political empowerment; there was emphasis on the need for advocacy, training, and financial support of women in politics (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2015). In Zimbabwe, most women were excluded from participation in governance and national development processes due to various gender biases and gender inequalities (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2013: 31). Additionally, political parties in Zimbabwe were 'gatekeepers' of women's political participation and empowerment (Zimbabwe-SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2017). Moreover, the portrayal of women in media coverage has not aided the biases that women in politics encounter (SADC Gender Protocol Alliance 2011).

The issues raised above were clear at any (if not all) of the three levels, meaning quotas did achieve descriptive representation but they did not translate to the substantive representation of women in politics. Adoption of terminologies towards gender mainstreaming, placement of policies and instruments of evaluation were in place, and were similar for the three levels; however, the implementation and actualisation of goals was still lacking for all three. In the SADC region, the percentages of women in politics fluctuated and never reached the desired percentages by 2015 and the assessment tool focus was shifted in 2019. In Zimbabwe, the numbers were consistently low for women in local government and ministerial positions, but a critical mass was achieved for women in parliament; however, this did not address gender inequality in the country. While for the AU the first two scorecards 2015 and 2016 were similar, there was a shift in focus in 2017 and 2020. What is evident is that a lack of continuity affects assessment, comparability, and achievement of objectives.

This lack of continuity poses a great challenge because the first two AU gender scorecards (2015 to 2016) were similar in function, but the evaluation objectives changed in 2017 and 2020. In SADC, the regional barometer from the period 2009 to 2015 had a unified goal, the attainment of a critical mass of 30% women in political institutions and a 50% women's political representation regionally. However, in 2019, the main objective changed to focus on voice and visibility of women, dealing mainly with Sexual, Reproductive Health and Right (SRHR) issues. Zimbabwe was able to produce four country gender barometers, but, due to the constitutional provisions focusing on women in parliament only, women in local government and women in ministerial positions were significantly low. The main issues highlighted were that the fixation on numbers was limiting, although increasing numbers was a viable short-term strategy for increasing women's presence in politics.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter used a meso 'network' analysis to understand women's political empowerment; specifically, the connection or perceived flow between the macro (AU), meso (SADC), and micro (Zimbabwe). The meso analysis was not just an evaluation of the meso level of SADC but the meso connection of the three levels. The chapter

presented an overview of the gender policy frameworks at the continental, regional and national levels. Additionally, the chapter evaluated the instruments of measurement in attaining women's political empowerment at the three levels, which were the AU gender scorecard, the SADC gender barometer, and the Zimbabwe SADC gender barometer.

It was apparent that the aim of these three gender policies and instruments were to, respectively, formalise the mainstreaming of gender within political institutions and evaluate the progress of gender mainstreaming. The focus of all three institutions was found to have been on quotas and the attainment of a critical mass by increasing the numbers of women in institutions of political decision-making. It is commendable that the three political institutions have put in place various frameworks in the pursuit of women's political empowerment. However, as explained, there is a challenge with continuity and policies are not given sufficient time to bring about change. Most of the frameworks have been number focused and this is a focus on the descriptive representation of women, yet numbers do not always translate to influence or change.

As was discussed in this chapter, power is demonstrated in four dynamics: (1) power within, (2) power to, (3) power with and (4) power over. Power within and power to assess changes within an individual, while power with and power over assess changes external to an individual (Lombardini et al. 2017). Empowerment is intrinsic when you evaluate the power one values (internal), while it is instrumental when you evaluate the power that one has (external) (Ibrahim & Alkire 2007). Instruments of measurement focused on evaluating women's participation (numbers) and neglected to assess women's choice, agency, and capacity within institutions of political decision-making. An emphasis on quotas links to 'power with' and 'power over' but neglects 'power within' and 'power to'.

Additionally, when emphasising quotas, the focus is on the instrumental nature of power (how institutions evaluate the power women in politics have) instead of the intrinsic nature of power (how women in politics perceive power). Thus, women's political empowerment and women's substantive representation is affected. Most of the issues raised and highlighted in the AU scorecard, SADC barometer, and Zimbabwe SADC barometer arose from neglect in improving, evaluating, and

addressing women's choice, agency, and capacity in institutions of political decision-making.

Chapter four addressed two sub-research questions: "What other indicators have been developed (for example by the SADC barometer and other organisations) that measure women's political empowerment?" and "What are the challenges affecting the advocacy, follow-up and monitoring of gender instruments towards women's political empowerment?" The qualitative issues raised in chapter four are addressed in chapters five and six. Chapter five addresses one research sub-question, which is "In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment"? Chapter six addresses another sub-research question, namely "What are the implications of the fact that gender policy makers and politicians on the African continent tend to see an increased number of women in political positions as being the equivalent of gender empowerment?"

By answering these questions, the thesis makes the argument that substantive representation in pursuit of women's political empowerment embodies the first and second dimensions of power, which are the power within and the power to, meaning the 'power' a woman in politics has, which is linked to her confidence, psychological state, and agency within institutions of political decision-making. When policies are unable to ensure that the power a woman has within is developed, the leadership of that woman politician is affected. Resultantly, this chapter presented a document analysis of women's political empowerment, and the following chapter presents arguments for the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

5.1 Introduction

A recurring theme in this thesis is that the challenge with critical mass theory, discussed in chapter two, is that it is difficult to obtain a causal link between the critical mass of women politicians and the substantive representation of women in political leadership (Childs 2006). The relationship between representation and policy outcomes has been critiqued because there should be an aim for critical actors, rather than simply a critical mass of actors (Kanter 1977). Critical mass theory presents a 'simple' solution for complex arguments, as the reliance on a number is 'simple'; yet there are other complexities to consider in light of obtaining a substantive representation of women, such as the context of the particular civil society that these women are from (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers 2007).

This thesis does not highlight the limitations of the critical mass theory so as to disregard the importance of increasing the presence of women (descriptive and symbolic representation) within institutions of political decision-making. After all, women can only effect change, or only begin to affect change, when they obtain a certain number of seats or presence within institutions of political decision-making (Park 2017). But this is not enough; substantive representation is also needed.

This thesis argues that we need a better understanding of representation on the continent with regard to women's political empowerment to address part of women's inequality in political leadership. Based on the arguments on women's political empowerment presented in chapters two and four, this thesis proposes that the following factors, among others, need to be considered when assessing women's political empowerment. These include factors such as applied electoral systems, voting injustices such as intimidation and political violence, cultural and traditional norms, and the type of economy in a country (Mlambo & Kapingura 2019).

As already stated in previous chapters, for this thesis, the construct of empowerment is seen as a motivational construct, which allows the recipient of empowerment to be 'enabled'. Additionally, the thesis understands women's political empowerment as "*a*

method and process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making which results in particular intended outcomes".

Therefore, this chapter will reflect on the understanding of women's political empowerment by representatives from the African Union Commission that emerged through interviews undertaken at the African Union Commission in December 2019. Those interviewed had a direct influence on formulating gender policies and initiatives on women's empowerment, and therefore influenced the meanings attached to these policies. Interviews were conducted in the department of the Women, Gender and Development Directorate department as well as the Political Affairs Directorate department at the African Union Commission.

The Women, Gender and Development Directorate department is the department responsible for the formulation and implementation of the AU gender policy. They put in place strategies and systems of gender mainstreaming as well as gender monitoring, not only to be implemented at the AU (Commission) but to be used and implemented by the regional blocs (RECs), states, and different public and private institutions. The opinion and understanding by these representatives of what gender mainstreaming and women's political representation are, are likely to influence progress towards tackling women's political challenges on the continent, with regard to women's participation and representation.

An important question that arises within the chapter is whether quota systems increase women's capacity when they are introduced to political spaces of decision-making, and whether they become empowered to act or make decisions once they have entered these political spaces.

Chapter five identifies themes from the interview data to address one of the research questions of the thesis, which is "In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment"? Moreover, the chapter provides a critical view of women's political empowerment in addressing the social impact of women in politics; an attempt to address how we could measure the social impact on women themselves, on their families and societies.

Throughout this chapter, acronyms will be used to represent the interviewees to maintain anonymity; there were seven interviewees from the African Union Commission, who are represented by the following acronyms: AB, AN, KK, RG, SND, SNY and TN.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first and main section is on the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment, which includes the themes of perceptions of women's representation, perceptions of capacity and perceptions of quota systems. The purpose of this section is to present non-numerical traits of what women's political empowerment is. The second section is on the operationalisation of gender policies and presents an analysis of whether the AU, SADC and Zimbabwe gender strategies are connected.

5.2 Qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment

In general, there has been an increased consensus among women on the continent that they want positions of political leadership. This is, for example, evident in studies undertaken in Nigeria (Panata & Finch-Poyer 2016), in Mali (Gorman & Chauzal 2019) and Bostwana (Bauer 2011). Political institutions have changed because of the presence of women politicians and "this increase in women's political participation has formed part of a change in the gender regimes in some countries and has been attributed to the decline in conflict" (Medie 2019: 2). This is especially true in instances where women are qualified to be in those positions and the only limitation to them occupying those spaces is as a result of their gender and sex; this has largely been a cultural limitation for women's ambitions towards political leadership (Kuumba 2006). In this instance, their sex refers to what they look like as a woman and their gender refers to the societal roles prescribed to them (Marini 1990).

As already explained, in section 2.4.1, on gender in politics within the African context, gender is a "system of social practices; this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and it organizes relations of inequality based on [these distinctions]; in this view, gender involves the creation of both differences and inequalities" (Wharton 2012: 7). Gender has determined which opportunities women can and cannot utilise based

on these societal binaries that have been created by culture and socialisation, among other things.

Historically, women on the continent have, by and large not been allowed to be able to pursue a career in politics, at whatever level. This has been problematic and led to the different protests and advocacy attempts that have seen the rise of women in institutions of political decision-making (Tamale 2000; Burnet 2008; Staudt & Glickman 1989). In several countries globally, at city or country level, women are the majority (Byrnes 2019; Hamandishe 2018). So, the "first step" was to ensure that women were given a chance to vote their leaders into power, especially considering that they are the majority in most countries, this mostly occurred between 1893 and 1960 (Schaeffer 2020; Paxton and Hughes 2014).

The second step then became that women wanted not only to vote people into power but to have political power themselves (Matland 2005). From the first global women's conference in Mexico City in 1975 to the conference in Beijing in 1995 (United Nations 1976; United Nations 1996), this has been the agenda; that women are not only given the opportunity to vote but the opportunity to make decisions and influence policymaking as well. Women wanted and still want to know that they are descriptively represented in political institutions, due to still being underrepresented (Hinojosa 2021). Descriptive representation, which was discussed in section 2.3.4, is important because the presence of women in political institutions is important for placing women's issues on the agenda (Espírito-Santo, Freire & Serra-Silva 2020). Descriptive representation speaks largely to the entrance of women into political spaces predominantly reserved for men. However, it is only one form of representation. In the following section, various perceptions of women's representation will be discussed.

5.2.1 Perceptions of women's representation

This subsection addresses the views of the policymakers interviewed concerning women's representation and presence within spaces of political decision-making. When politicians or leaders are elected to power, the intent and purpose is to create a platform where issues can be raised and discussed (Hague & Harrop 2010: 194).

As explained in chapter two, Pitkin (1967: 2-4) explains how groups want to be represented so that their issues can be discussed at the policymaking table. This is agenda-setting. A group's objective, whether it be a political party or movement, is that as they vote, their representative will have a seat within a governing institution, which will create a platform to determine what the government will be dealing with (Miller 2013: 867). As Walby (2005: 323) states, "agenda setting implies the transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms, changing decision-making processes, prioritizing gender equality objectives and rethinking policy ends".

Therefore, the purpose of increasing women's representation will be to ensure that the elected women increase, strengthen, and prioritise women's movements, groups, and organisational objectives (Jahan 1996: 829), thus influencing agenda-setting. However, substantive representation will be attained when women in positions of political decision-making can advance or raise issues of gender equality through agency, as this moves beyond their descriptive representation. As one of the interviewees, KK stated:

> "So, you are representing the organization, also, you can be there as the chair of the organization. So, at that position you are able to take action or to speak on behalf of" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

What KK alluded to here is that, when one is in a position of representation, you speak "on behalf of". This means that the representative becomes the "voice", through representation, of the individual, group, or organisation, and they can act on their behalf. Political institutions formulate policies and allocate budgets based on interest. This "interest' is what needs to be represented during agenda-setting and as explained in chapter two, the "one" representative becomes the "whole" (Young 2010). Therefore, the "one" woman leader will represent the interest/s of the "group" of women that voted her into power (Phillips 2010: 187). This is one of the reasons it makes political sense to advocate for the inclusion of women in institutions of political decision-making, because the assumption is that men would not understand what their women constituents may want or need (Mansbridge 2010).

The argument is that having a woman leader would allow her to prioritise women's interests on the political agenda. However, it does not consider intersectionalities and that the "genderedness" of being a woman varies. All women's groups do not share the same identities, experiences, or interests (Garry 2011). This kind of representation is thus descriptive; it creates a platform for women to be physically present within these institutions but it does not always translate to women's various issues being addressed. As explained in chapter two, in principle and law, political decisions are gender neutral; however, in practice, there is substantial gender inequality, as argued by political feminists and theorists (Paxton & Hughes 2014: 3-4).

The increase in the number of women in political institutions is relevant and "in recent decades women's political representation has significantly increased in Africa. From 2000 to 2018, the proportion of women parliamentarians almost doubled, and women's representation in cabinet increased fivefold to 22% between 1980 and 2015" (Konte & Kwedwo 2019). Despite this increase, which is necessary and commendable nonetheless, gender inequalities persist, and this is a threat to fully achieving women's political empowerment on the African continent (Egbetayo 2019).

Quotas must work in conjunction with other indicators because "it is important to highlight that quotas do not work in isolation: they cannot be separated from dominant societal attitudes and norms, and the socio-economic position of women in society" (Ballington 2004: 126). Thus, in countries in Africa, where there are women's quotas and women are placed in parliament to meet these quotas, it is not necessarily a reflection of representation. For instance, in Uganda, a 40% critical mass was reached; however, women who were in parliament due to reserved seats (through quotas), were not given the same respect as women elected to parliament (Wang 2013). These women were not given respect as there was a general sense that they did not earn their political position, compared to other women and men politicians who had to campaign for their positions. This is a reflection of both tokenism and patronage because quota women may not have experienced the same forms of activism or patronage by women who are part of a political party that had to campaign for their positions.

The representation of women in institutions of political decision-making is increasing in Africa and "facts show that whereas political representation continues to increase in Africa, equal representation is not achieved in most African countries" (Konte & Kwadwo 2019). In Rwanda, which is seen as a global leader of women in parliament, there is gender parity in terms of parliamentary seats, but it has not resulted in the parity of the ordinary woman in Rwanda (Porfido & Horgan 2020). Years after the Rwandan genocide, women in Rwanda still face grave sexual violence emanating from women being used as weapons of war, and most women can do little to nothing about these sexual violations despite the increased presence of women in political leadership (Pierce 2020). In considering this, it is evident that representation needs to be comprehensively aligned with changing cultural norms, strong by in by citizens and understanding that women in leadership *need* to be a voice and not just a symbol.

The reality is that "the implementation of a gender quota system resulted in an upsurge of the number of women who participated in public decision-making in Mozambique (34.8%), South Africa (32.8%), Tanzania (30.4%), Uganda, Burundi (30.5%), Rwanda (48.8%), Namibia (26.9%), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Rwanda, for example, has the highest percentage (48.8%) of women's parliamentary representation across the globe" (Ilesanmi 2018). Resultantly, the quota system is praised as a system that corrects the imbalance and gendered nature of power within systems of political decision-making (Hamandishe 2018). Quotas are a fast-track means to resolve unequal representation in political institutions (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005); however, the challenge is that quotas can also do little to address vertical and horizontal segregation (Oñate 2014). Quotas still face a form of resistance due to social norms, and that challenges their implementation (Kirsch & Blaschke 2014).

Gender quotas have been implemented in most (Southern) African countries and "across the continent a range of creative and innovative designs has been used in adopting and implementing electoral gender quotas for parliaments" (Bauer 2013). There are more women than men in most African countries and yet, in 2018, women only contributed 33% to gross domestic product (Moodly, Kuyoro, Holt, Leke, Madgavkar, Krishnan & Akintayo 2019). This issue questions and speaks to two things, namely, that there is a need for both the economic and political empowerment

of women by enabling them with access to markets and institutions of political decision-making. In addition to this disparity, another issue arises, and this is expressed by KK:

> "I can give an example. We have our different parliaments where you can find, usually on the continent as you know most of our countries, I can say even 30 of the 55 countries we have within the continent, we have an average of 10% of women in different parliaments. But you will agree with me, in those countries we don't have only 10% of women. Women are more than 10% but in parliament they are only 10% and yet, they are representing 50% and more of the country" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

KK here alludes to the fact that women have been placed in political institutions of decision-making, such as parliaments, and this has increased women's presence, but it does not always translate to an equal ratio of women being represented. If there are 10% of women in parliament, while over 50% of society are women, then there is an unequal representation of women. This reflects that women may need to form their own political parties and campaign specifically for women's issues. This could potentially address the imbalance with regards to the numbers of women in politics in tandem to women (in general) in society. Therefore, the 10% women may not have the capacity or substantive representation to be able to act on behalf of the women in society. As explained in section 2.2.3 on the quota system, a critical mass percentage marker does not directly translate to the percentage of women representation according to the population demographics of a country or region.

African women politicians can contribute to the development of Africa, but "the world is wasting a precious resource in the dramatic underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, often resulting in the exclusion of women's talents and skills in political life" (Pepera 2018). Women are an untapped resource and "what is needed is a strong, independent, diverse women's movement, which is able and willing to work with politicians, and able to mobilize women around common interests" (Geisler 2004: 214). Descriptive representation is being achieved in terms of numbers; however, substantive representation is lagging (Konte & Kwadwo 2019). It lags because when

women are voted into power to represent, there is an expectation for them to "represent their constituencies well" and in an interview with SND at the African Union Commission this is explained as follows:

> "For example, if I have elected a member of parliament, I would expect him to represent, to represent me well. In the sense that I have voted him into power or into that position for him to take care of my needs. It could be service delivery, promoting service delivery, or women's rights, or maybe we voted for him because he promised us a school. Therefore, he's representing our needs, our wants, through his being in that position. Yeah, after all, they say, you know, for example, our parliamentarians are present by virtue of them being in power. They represent us, they represent our views, so that's why when they sit in parliament, they make decisions. They're supposed to take our views into consideration because decisions they make, when they create policies or when they develop laws, you know, anything that involve us should represent us" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

The above statement by SND reflects that voters have expectations and when those expectations are met, representation is achieved. The expectation is that when they elect a representative to power, that representative will bring their issues to the policymaking table. There is an expectation that the "needs and wants" of the people who voted will be met and those views will be expressed during debates in parliament, as these views will become enforceable laws. This is a constitutional process. However, those (women) who are voted in may feel pressure to be more committed to their political party objectives instead of what voters voted them in for. This takes us back to the argument by Hobbes in chapter two that representatives have a 'duty'. The question that still arises is whether this 'duty' will be fulfilled when questions of individual morals, goals or ethics come into question. Chapter two of this thesis explained how substantive representation is about what representatives "actually do"; it is not just about their authority, description, or symbolism but it is in what they can achieve. This explanation is supported by what SND said above and was reiterated by RG, one of the few male respondents from the Political Affairs Directorate:

"Representation for me presupposes a constituency. A constituency is a collective of individuals with specific interests or energy of a geographical setting. So, representation for me is acting on behalf of that collective in the interest of that collective, well its interest or a geographical setting. So, for me, that is the representation" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

As explained by RG, the element of "acting on behalf" is brought out again, which recapitulates the argument of moving away from focusing on a critical mass towards advocating for critical acts by critical actors. This is because "critical actors, as we define them, are those who either initiate reforms themselves or play a central role in mobilizing others for policy change" (Childs & Krook 2006: 145). Critical acts are embodied by those who have a position of substantive representation and not simply descriptive representation. Adequate representation in politics involves decision-making, as decisions made result in policy formulation.

When a representative supports women's interests and provides various approaches for addressing women's issues, there is substantive representation because "looking at the existing research on substantive representation, one discerns two answers to this question: more support for women's interests and different approaches to women's interests" (Celi 2009: 101). With a representative, there is "acting" that is being done and there is a sense of all issues are being raised at the decision-making table and this is also raised in the interview with TN:

"So, the representation part of it, it's where you're converging at a decision-making table and you want everybody to be represented and not leaving anyone behind. So that's representation for me" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

Based on the above by TN, there is an element of "not leaving anyone behind" in terms of their issues being addressed in institutions of political decision-making. This implies that different representatives, based on issues such as race, class and notably gender, will bring to the decision-making table different experiences of these issues to be addressed in society (Mansbridge 1999). When "all" in society are represented, there

is democracy; hence, without the presence of women in institutions of political decision-making, democracy will not be fully functioning. This means "the equal participation of men and women in decision-making is a precondition of a functional democracy" (Cliveti 2005). However, it cannot be ignored that women representatives may not always have good intentions. An obstacle to women's empowerment can be women themselves in that there is an element of expediency where women politicians will seek to advance their own career goals or party goals, which may not be in line with advancing or changing women's issues.

As explained by KK above, the percentage of women in political institutions does not match the population composition of women within countries and as seen by TN's understanding of representation, everyone must be represented to achieve equality. In reality, it is impossible for everyone to be represented; however, the goal is to try to have as many groups being represented as possible, but minorities tend to bear the burden of not being represented. This means that "the composition of any body of representatives should mirror the composition of the represented population in the best way possible, based on criteria such as gender, language, or ethnicity" (Mansbridge 1999: 3). The failure to integrate women into political institutions of decision-making means there is a group that will not have their issues sufficiently raised and addressed at the decision-making table. Nevertheless, there are other ways that can be utilised, such as women politicians engaging in mobilisations with other groups, and women being creative and innovative to challenge male dominated parties.

Men and women politicians ought to be representative of members of society and "if having more women in political offices enables a better representation of the overall societal preferences, it is imperative to address gender imbalances in political representation" (Hessami & Lopes da Fonseca 2020: 2). Moreover, having women in positions of political power, through quotas, creates room for conversation, mobilisation, and interest in politics among women in society (Reingold & Harrell 2010). This creates a sense of autonomy and agency for women around political issues, as feminists have argued that policymaking is not gender-neutral; hence, both genders must be present during policy formulation (Lombardo, Meier & Verloo 2012).

Nevertheless, there is a need to go beyond "seeing" women in these political institutions to "experiencing" their decision-making abilities and influence on agenda-setting, which is their substantive representation and actualisation of agency. This substantive representation is not limited to political institutions such as parliaments but can occur on multiple levels and in multiple locations (Celis et al. 2008). SNY, a respondent from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate, reiterates two points of how representation is physical and ensures that the representative is a "voice" for their representatives:

> "There are two ways I would say representation, one there is the physical one, basically, we just want to see women you know, when we are doing maybe meetings or discussions, we just want to see women there at least, women as part of parliaments, women as part of audience and things like that; that is the first representation. Then I would say the second representation is to have somebody to actually voice out the voice of women; it's either gender, either a man or woman, but the person who is there, doing the representation, making sure that the voices of women are heard. So, I would say it has these two aspects" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

The two points of physical (descriptive) representation and substantive (vocal) representation that SNY raises above are crucial in understanding representation; however, a challenge is that "systemic gender bias against female leadership, entrenched in socio-cultural and religious values, still persists in Africa" (Konte & Kwadwo 2019). African culture cannot be ignored, as it affects women's political engagement because Africa is largely a patriarchal society where men are the ones who hold leadership positions (Enaifoghe & Khoalenyane 2018). However, despite the introduction of quota systems into African politics, it is crucial to note that "cultural factors dominate in the case of gender representation – particularly attitudes towards women as political leaders" (Ruedin 2012: 107). It is these cultural perceptions and attitudes that are discussed in this section.

This has perpetrated gender inequalities and "when women overcome hurdles and gain political seats, they hardly lead the most important political positions. Most

striking, they get little influence and decision-making power in legislation and budgets" (Konte & Kwadwo 2019). Women politicians may not necessarily voice women's concerns and "getting women into politics is only half of the challenge. The second half is to make sure that women are not only seen, but also heard" (Cheeseman & Dodsworth 2019). These women (notwithstanding men) spoken of by Cheeseman and Dodsworth (2019) are those in the positions of decision-making and those 'represented' by the decision maker.

Concerning political representation, when the political system of democracy swept the African continent, it was men who filled the positions, particularly during the colonial era of rule; it was men who ruled, and this became a social system. Resultantly, the social institution of democracy is founded on social norms which are imbedded in culture and gender expectations. When social institutions are founded on culture or social norms, especially in the context of colonialist impositions or coloniality, gender inequalities are exacerbated. Despite claiming democratic rights and equality for all people as is expected of a democracy, women in these situations, because of the discriminatory social underpinnings on which the democracy is founded, still struggle with access to education/ resources. Thus, at times depriving women of autonomy and limiting their access to various resources such as education.

However, one respondent did not perceive culture and attitudes (social norms) as the reason women are hindered when they want to get ahead in politics. KK had the following to say about culture and one's internal self-awareness:

> "That means that you should be convinced yourself before you convince others. It's not about age, it's not about culture, it's not about village, region. No, leadership for me is about competency" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

KK presented a different perspective that although culture is founded on social norms it will not always be the root limitation for women's political empowerment. This is because, as KK reiterates, women politicians or leaders, in general, must not use culture, age or where they come from as an excuse in relation to competence. For example, there are instances where individual women are pushed out of politics for

being incompetent and then they "play the gender card". But despite what KK says, and the danger of the "gender card" being played, this thesis argues that culture is a decisive factor in explaining why women remain excluded. In the next section perceptions on women's capacity will be discussed.

5.2.2 Perceptions of capacity

Looking beyond representation is fundamental in achieving women's political empowerment and this subsection looks at this. Part of the definition of women's political empowerment introduced in chapter two includes a process of increasing the capacity of women (Sundström et al. 2015). When women are introduced into institutions of political decision-making, they need capacity. Capacity building is an immediate way of enhancing women's ability and skill to become political leaders in society (DeLaurentis 2014).

Ensuring capacity building can better prepare women for political leadership as there are different perceptions and expectations of the capacity of women to become political leaders. There are different ways in which this can be done and "sometimes this means investing in the skills and capacity of potential candidates, boosting their confidence and ability. Other times it means reducing the financial burden of running for office" (Cheeseman & Dodsworth 2019).

As a result of the influence of a patriarchal system in democratic Africa, men have been in political office *longer* than women, so women require the necessary education and training for political leadership; they cannot simply lead based on fulfilling quotas and their gender. Educational capacity is important: "whereas they may be able to have a voice, they do not necessarily have the educational capacity to do so, thereby identifying the need for effective capacity-building trainings (negotiation, lobbying, public speaking trainings)" (Osei-Afful & Hubbard 2014). Women may be given the opportunity, but do they have the capacity? As was stated by KK, an interviewee from the Department of Political Affairs Directorate, in response to the question of what giving women opportunities means:

> "It's to empower women in terms of politics, for instance, to build their
>
> capacity, and for them to become, for instance, candidates or to know

how to vote and also, of course, to be leaders or to be trainers because even as you know, during political processes including electoral process, women can also intervene as candidate leaders or trainers and voters" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

As quoted above, KK explains that empowering women would involve the process of having women as political candidates and not just as voters. There tend to be low numbers of women candidates on the ballot paper due to certain cultural and voter biases, caused by various reasons such as the intentional defamation of women candidates and lack of trust (Clayton, Robinson et al. 2020). Thus, women can become politically empowered by first ensuring that they can *be* political candidates. Furthermore, women in society need to be trained concerning voting systems because as women vote, they are participating within institutions of political decision-making (Ballington 1999). By ensuring that women can be in political leadership through education and training, they can improve their chances of being effective leaders with agency, thus achieving substantive representation and attaining political empowerment (Mindzie 2015).

There is a perception that the practice of politics is engulfed in a hegemony of men politicians. This is also discussed in detail in section 6.2.2 on the perceptions on the toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics. It is key to note that "one concern that remains is that women are less likely to be active citizens. Not only are they less likely to be registered to vote and to vote in an election than men; but they are also significantly less likely than men to report that they have contacted leaders and to engage in other forms of participation" (Afrobarometer 2014). Political education and knowledge are important because in Africa, women are less likely to take part in politics or discuss politics; thus, quotas may introduce women into the political environment, but they may not have the skills and or knowledge needed to navigate the institution of "politics" (Shenga & Pereira 2019).

Many women who participate in politics, whether as a political candidate or as a woman voter, are reported to fear intimidation and election or political violence (Afrobarometer 2014). This fear has discouraged many women from participating in politics and this affects the capacity of women engaging in politics. Hence, quotas may

be used to increase women's presence within political institutions, but this alone does not translate to women's political empowerment. Political violence hinders women politicians' capacity because violence manifests in various forms such as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, which combat women's political empowerment or inclusion (Badall 2018). Descriptive (and symbolic) representation will be achieved through quotas; however, substantive representation will be lacking. Resultantly, the "critical acts" of women's political leadership may not be experienced due to the fear of intimidation and political violence, thus, hindering women's leadership capacity.

Espírito-Santo et al. (2020) argue that the increase in the number of women in institutions of political decision-making through descriptive representation does not always result in policy formulation that is influenced or affected. This means that when women gain access to these institutions there are other factors, such as political violence, which can affect the substantive representation (critical acts) of women. It is important to note that political violence is not always gendered but it can be motivated by gender; resultantly, political institutions and power relations become defined by this, and then hinders women's ability to execute their political mandates or influence policy formation (Badall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo 2020).

In 2019, a global study on political violence on women in politics was done and it was found that "across Africa – where Acled has collected data for the longest time period – violence that targeted women appeared to have increased. While 71 violent events targeting women were recorded in the first quarter of 2014, this grew to 156 in the first quarter of 2019" (Ratcliffe 2019). For example, in Zimbabwe, despite strides obtained by the gender quota, women political candidates are still faced with physical violence and threats (Matfess 2018). Moreover, when women politicians in parliament attempt to question men politicians, their physical appearance is ridiculed, even to the point of comments about the size of their thighs (Matfess 2018).

In 2019, Zengenene and Susanti conducted interviews with women that had been victims of political violence that occurred during the July 2018 elections in Zimbabwe. The study concluded that security forces (including soldiers, police or private security) purposefully attacked women under the impression that they supported opposition political parties (Zengenene & Susanti 2019). Some of the issues that were raised

were that women were raped in front of their children, some were made to drink sewage water, some were physically assaulted by hands, sticks or kicked, and women failed to report these acts to the police, as police were part of the very security forces assaulting them (Zengenene & Susanti 2019).

Inequalities are displayed in various ways and "women are subjected to 'structural inequality' which results from men domination, gender stereotypes, sexism, lack of opportunities and decision-making power, under-education, obstacles in access to social resources or access to economic resources, and all other aspects resulting from non- or under-participation of women" (Ouedraogo & Ouedraogo 2020: 8). Addressing the issue of political violence that women/ women politicians face will address several capacity issues, allowing women to become politically empowered when taking part in elections. The reality is that continued political violence incapacitates women politicians from executing their political duties, raising the issue of access and political power.

RG, one of the two male respondents from the Department of Political Affairs Directorate, raised a key point about "having access to" and "managing political power", by stating:

> "First of all, before I respond to women's political empowerment, the important thing is to understand what's political. What is political, for me entails anything that relates to access to political power, and access and managing political power or rather access and control of political power. So, women's empowerment, political empowerment means providing women with all tools, whether it's knowledge and skills, to enable them to access the political process, or access institutions of power, whether it's through elections or whether it's through political appointment. Also helping them to be able to execute the mandate bestowed on those institutions or the offices they occupy" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

As alluded to above by RG, for women to have capacity, they need "access", and this access is possible when women are presented with the necessary tools. These tools

are displayed as knowledge and skills that enable women to execute their duties in the offices they would occupy.

Furthermore, RG raised the issue of political power. Descriptive representation does not always translate to political power, but substantive representation can. In chapter two, the thesis highlighted how Campbell et al. (2010: 172) explain substantive representation as "policy responsiveness": how different groups of women are represented when the potential or impact of a policy implemented considers these groups of women. Political power will be achieved by women when and if their presence influences agenda-setting and policy formulation, which raises the question: "once more women are in parliament, what needs to happen to empower them to play an equal role in government?" (Cheeseman and Dodsworth 2019).

An example of women influencing agenda-setting is found in Zimbabwe, the 2013 constitution was amended due to pressure from women's groups: "the women's movement mobilized and joined hands with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus to launch a sustained advocacy campaign for a gender-sensitive constitution" (Mushonga 2014). These women's groups became a 'collective voice' for women's concerns to be addressed and this amplified the capacity of the women parliamentarians. AB, a respondent from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union Commission, had the following to say about women's presence and their capacity in institutions of political decision-making:

> "You can be there, but your voice doesn't count. So, it's not just to have women, to say that they're there, but you have to give them the capacity to express themselves to consider what they want" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

AB raises the critical issue of voice. By mainstreaming gender into African politics, states need to implement laws that will ensure women hold not only parliamentary positions but cabinet positions as well, and that women's issues are raised when various socio-economic policies are being implemented (Morsy 2019). Having women in these positions will allow them to speak out and raise awareness on women's issues as well as ensure gender sensitivity during policy formulation processes. A gender-

sensitive cabinet or parliament will be one able to attend to the needs of women and men, moving beyond "substantive, structural or cultural" barriers which hinder the actualisation of gender equality (McCann 2013).

When political spaces are not gender-neutral, "it is a refusal of [women's] voices, and of what a voice means: the right to self-determination, to participation, to consent or dissent; to live and participate, to interpret and narrate" (Solnit 2017). Voice is not simply the sound produced from vocal chords when one speaks, but has reference to one's ability to speak up as well as having credibility when one speaks, resulting in the actualisation of capacity. Women in positions of power can be rendered voiceless in the way the media represents them. Section 4.5.4 on SADC and women's political empowerment tracking raised the issue of media coverage and the manner in which certain biases of women politicians are presented by media, thwarting efforts to empower women politicians.

For example in Kenya, Okwemba (2013) notes that woman politicians opinions are "omitted" from the media and this renders them voiceless. In 2009, Mawarire conducted a study on how gender issues were minimised in the print media, as he investigated how women ministers were appointed into the government of national unity. Additionally, the study analysed the representation of women politicians and noted that journalists presented women politicians using "patriarchal thinking" and this in turn rendered women politicians voiceless (Mawarire 2009). Fair media coverage is needed and "female ministers may also behave differently from their male colleagues, and in so doing may promote a debating culture that is more conducive to, and encouraging of, the participation and influence of other female MPs" (Blumenau 2019: 2).

The number of women in cabinets in African states is generally low, which means women may be in parliaments, but they are not in cabinets, where policymaking happens (Sadie 2015). Adams and Scherpereel (2019) collected data on the number of women politicians in Africa and noted that "recent data from across the continent show an overall dip in women's cabinet representation. This suggests that while cabinet seats have substantial political upside, they may also be more tenuous than legislative seats" (Adams & Scherpereel 2019). Reflecting that "the appointment of

women to cabinet minister positions may help to break down historically constructed stereotypes about the policy domains to which women are well-suited to contribute" (Blumenau 2019: 2). As more women hold cabinet positions, structural barriers will be reduced improving women's capacity, leading to the normalisation of women in politics as well as political leaders in society.

When women carry out their political duties and improve their capacity through training, to express themselves, influence policies and be heard, that is when women's political empowerment would be attained, as women would not just have representation, but they would also have participation (Myeni 2014). Some women cannot express themselves because from a young age, due to gender stereotypes, women are socialised into being quiet and submissive (Zhang 2018). Resultantly, women tend to keep quiet in different political meetings, especially in male-dominated political spaces; this is attributed to how genders have been socialised and in turn this limits women's capacity to execute their political duties (Santos 2012).

Due to gender stereotypes, the agency of individuals can be affected; men are viewed as competent and assertive, while women are viewed as warm and interdependent (Eagly & Carli 2007). So, when a woman political leader is uncertain of herself, she may ask a male colleague to speak on her behalf, as the male colleague (due to their gender), may be perceived as the competent and assertive one. Another reason for this could be that women do not want to speak up because they do not want to be perceived as being too talkative or aggressive and they are "afraid of being perceived as too dominant and controlling, as gender stereotypes persist" (Grant 2021).

Women who gain access into political institutions may deal with having an inferiority complex where they may feel they do not deserve to be in institutions of decision-making; this is a result of leadership being associated with power and femininity being associated with weakness (Joshi 2018). When a woman politician is stifled by an inferiority complex, it can limit their capacity and influence because "ministerial positions come with significant agenda-setting powers, and ministers determine the substance of legislation deriving from their ministries" (Blumenau 2019: 28). This

reflects that women can be obstacles to their own empowerment when they do not allow themselves to break free from these mental and patriarchal chains.

To access political positions, quotas will and can be used to attain descriptive representation; however, there is always the possibility that some women can be placed in certain positions by political parties as a façade, just to meet with the standards set by law. Despite certain ministerial positions being given to women as a façade, it is however important to realise that "through the use of these reserved seats, and quotas for female candidates, many African governments have taken legislative action to increase women's participation, something most western governments have refused to do themselves" (Anita 2017). This achievement through laws that a certain percentage on the ballot, in cabinet or parliament must be women, is commendable; however, some women simply feel that they are a statistic or placement number, thus affecting their leadership capacity.

Quotas to increase women's political representation are necessary; however, "despite the proliferation of quotas for women on the continent and the rise in women's presence in African parliaments, key factors continue to circumvent and limit woman politicians' effectiveness and accountability toward the woman population" (Ramtohul 2020: 13). These women may not have a voice or capacity to be within these positions without training. They simple "owe" the party or political institution for their position and they do not necessarily speak on behalf of their gender, but they speak on behalf of the men or political parties that put them in those positions, because these institutions are predominantly male (Jalalzai 2009). This means that women themselves are curbing women empowerment by agreeing to serve as tokens when they can contribute or offer so much more. The next section addresses perceptions on the adequacy of the quota system.

5.2.3 Perceptions of the adequacy of the quota system

This next section starts by explaining tokenism then presents the perspectives of the interviewees on the adequacy of the quota system. Tokenism occurs when there is "hiring, placement and tolerance of specific people in your organisation, strictly to prove you are not discriminatory" (Byarugaba 2021). The main argument of tokenism is that once the number of members of a discriminated group is increased, their work

conditions or challenges will change/improve, which is not always the case. Tokenism was first introduced in 1977 by Kanter, where she argued that as women's numbers increased, their work conditions in male-dominated industries would improve (Kanter 1977).

In 1988, Zimmer critiqued this argument by Kanter, stating that there was no causality between the increase in the number of women in male-dominated industries and their improved work conditions. Instead, there was a need to evaluate the change in attitudes of men when women are introduced to those industries (Zimmer 1988). Yoder (1991) adds that tokenism advocates for achieving gender equality through increasing the number of women; however, this focus on numbers (tokenism) fails to recognise other issues in the workplace that could hinder women's progress, such as sexism, sexual harassment, social isolation, and performance pressure (Yoder 1991).

Furthermore, a key argument is that politics is a male-dominated industry, not just in terms of numbers but also in terms of "organisational traits". A key statement by SND is that "[gender quotas don't] necessarily change people's thoughts, people's behaviours, people's culture", such as provision or lack of "informational and emotional support" and "professional competencies", which continue to exist and resultantly hinder women's ability to be effective leaders (Wallace & Kay 2012). In terms of the inadequacy of the quota system, this is what SND said:

> "I think, it's not adequate, that would be my conclusion and then why I say it's not adequate, not to say that it's not a good thing, I think it's a very good thing to have the quota system, because it then allows women to be able to participate, to be able to be politically empowered. However, it's got its limitations. For example, I think it may just be something that has been announced or put into a law or into a policy of the certain government or a certain country, but it doesn't necessarily change people's thoughts, people's behaviours, people's culture. For example, if men don't believe that women should be politically empowered, introducing a quota system will not necessarily mean that the women of a certain political party, or a certain tribe, or

certain gender, will necessarily be politically empowered" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

When women are introduced into political institutions of decision-making, the aim is to diversify these political institutions and ensure a gender-sensitive/neutral environment (Hughes 2011). Based on the above by SND, she points out how the quota system may just be announced or put into law to increase women's numbers without ensuring gender sensitisation and there is a danger to this. This is done without necessarily addressing issues women will face when they are now in these male-dominated political spaces, and this also speaks to tokenism that is explained above.

Another issue that was raised spoke to the patriarchal nature of politics, where SND stated: "If men don't believe that women should be politically empowered, introducing a quota system will not necessarily mean that the women of a certain political party, or a certain tribe, or certain gender, will necessarily be politically empowered". Reports in the British media confirm the bias that exists in society, by asking the question "Why do we still distrust woman leaders?" and they further raise an issue about stereotypes concerning masculine behaviour. One deep-rooted bias is that women, compared to men, are too "weak" or too feminine to lead and that women in politics do not possess agency or the ability to influence policy (BBC 2021).

Regarding quotas, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 was monumental because it was the world conference that called for at least 30% representation of women in institutions of political decision-making (Mutume 2004; United Nations 1996). In Africa, between 2000 and 2005, 23 African countries in the sub-Saharan region held elections and 14 of these 23 countries saw an increase of women's participation in politics and presence in parliaments (Mutume 2004).

As explained in chapter two, there are three types of quota systems that have been used to increase women's representation: constitutional quotas, election law quotas and political party quotas (Bush 2011; Mutume 2004). Furthermore, chapter two explained how women's quotas in political institutions have influenced the increased use of gender quotas in other fields as well as resistance from scholars and

practitioners, resistance concerning the "sufficiency" of these systems (Paxton & Hughes 2014).

African nations have used quotas as a means of creating social and legal change, and the number of women in legislatures in African countries is among the highest in the world (Arendt 2018). However, one of the greatest challenges with gender quotas is that when women assume their positions of leadership because of the quota system, negative perceptions of these women seem to emerge related to whether they are as capable compared to some of their elected counterparts (Franceschet & Piscopo 2008). There is a perception that black people cannot rule; hence, being a black (African) woman is even more disempowering. The cycle and stigma perpetuates itself.

Manyeruke (2018) conducted a study on Zimbabwean women in politics and she noted that "women still find their involvement in politics as emotionally wrecking as they face various types of abuse" (Manyeruke 2018: 16). These abuses are a result of failure to understand the significance of the presence of women in politics and "women lost significant political ground during the colonial era and after independence, and this resulted in a number of problems. One such problem came from European perspectives on gender relations" (Pearce 2000: 8). Women were socialised into the private realm while men were socialised into the public realm because of European perspectives on gender relations. Considering the key issues of agency, colonialism and tokenism, quotas will not simply reverse them. The reality of these impacts are further addressed in this section.

Nationally, the quota system of representation was first introduced into African political systems in the 1960s in Ghana, even though elections were not being held and Ghana was under military rule (Bauer 2019). The purpose was for the electoral commission to encourage political parties to implement quotas and increase women candidates on their candidate lists (Madsen & Gouws 2021). Four other African countries used gender quotas before 1995, namely Tanzania (1975), Egypt (1976-1986), Senegal (1982), and Uganda (1989) (Tripp, Konaté & Lowe-Morna,2006).

Regionally, the first wave of quotas occurred in East and Southern Africa, while the second wave of quotas mostly occurred in West Africa (with the exception of Ghana) (Bauer 2016). The quota system is an easy and popular addition to policy frameworks to encourage gender parity and they have a primary objective to "reduce gender gaps in representation in electoral lists and in the targeted representative institutions" (Campa and Hauser 2020). Quotas have changed the gender composition of political institutions and globally over 100 countries have implemented or adopted quotas (Clayton 2014).

The quota system of representation means different things to different people and SNY, a respondent from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union Commission, had this to say about the implementation of quota systems:

> "I would use an example of Kenya, where we are trying to have the 2/3rd gender rule. To have at least have 30% of women in parliament, but at the end of the day, when the bill is brought to the parliament, even women themselves, they skip the meetings, not necessarily because they want to. Maybe there are other political powers or some things that we might not really know but it's a good system and with progress we'll get there one day" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

From the above, we can see that SNY explains how quotas involve the attainment of a certain percentage of women, such as 30%. She goes on to explain how despite the adoption of quota systems, women do not even attend the meetings in parliament to discuss quotas. The previous section on the perceptions of capacity spoke of how women may be introduced into institutions of political decision-making but they may not have the voice or capacity to be in those positions (Zhang 2018; Osei-Afful & Hubbard 2014; Sadie 2015). In Africa, this could be due to how women are socialised, and quotas will not simply resolve this socialisation and attitude stemming from childhood (Coffe & Bolzendah 2011).

In many cases, concerning the reason women do not attend meetings, men are usually more accomplished or educated, or appear to be these things, than the women who

make it into political institutions, even where women have a similar degree of education (Bauer 2019). Despite the increase in educated or qualified women in parliaments through quota systems, African countries still score very low with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment (Dimitrova-Grajzl & Obasanjo 2019).

These are structural barriers "whereby discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women's ability to run for office, and capacity gaps, which occur when women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders" (Musau 2019). AN, a male respondent, had this to say about women's presence at the commission:

> "Sometimes men try to put more pressure on females because if we have a woman in a leadership position, it seems that there is a lot of expectation and if you fail, it's like why?" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 13 December 2019).

A reason for this stereotype could be that men rate themselves as more qualified and efficient than women in the same position (Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2014). At times this bias against women leaders is displayed implicitly, meaning it is hard to find and there is an implicit bias that men leaders are deserving of the positions while women leaders are not (Banaji & Greenwald 2013). These biases about political leadership are not simply reversed by the application of quotas.

The counterintuitive effect of quotas is that "while the quota system and other measures can increase the number of women in parliament, they might not be a panacea to the deep rooted socio-economic and political factors leading to the marginalisation of women in electoral politics" (Hamandishe 2018). This means that, at times, women introduced to political institutions through quotas are marginalised as they bear the stigma of being less "qualified" than women who are elected to political positions (Holzer & Neumark 2000). Thus, equity (descriptive representation) may be achieved at the expense of "quality" (critical acts) and the quota woman leader's ability (substantive representation) is scrutinised more, compared to their elected women counterparts (Baltrunaite et al. 2014). Thus, quotas can adversely effect the "quota" women in these political positions.

Another significant issue is that of legitimacy. Women may not attend these meetings as they may feel inadequate due to perceptions by their elected colleagues, thus affecting their confidence or willingness to participate in the decision-making process (Dimitrova-Grajzl & Obasanjo 2019). By simply declaring that a percentage of women, through the use of quotas, must be present in institutions of political decision-making does not mean that other underlying issues have been addressed and the following chapter six will further explore these issues. RG had the following to say about the quota system of representation:

> "But also, I think what matters is to go beyond just numbers to ensure that women, their representation of women, is not just quantitative, but also qualitative. So, you can elect a woman in parliament, but if she does not have the knowledge, then she cannot influence policy agenda. Yes, so there is more than just numbers" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

The reality is that "indeed, gender quotas increased the percentage of women in the parliament in most African countries regardless of their political system" (Asiedu, Branstette, Gaekwad-Babulal, N. & Malokele 2018). However, as stated above by RG, what matters is to go beyond numbers to ensure that the presence of women is not just quantitative but qualitative as well. When the focus relies heavily on the number of women in institutions of political decision-making, there is a danger of insufficiency of the quota system.

A recurring question/theme concerning the quota system was raised by TN, a respondent from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union Commission:

> "Is it an issue of just filling the numbers or it the quality part? So, I think that's the aspect which is always missing with this quota representation because you bring whichever category that you want to bring on board. You just throw them out there without even preparing, even supporting them, even building their capacity to have quality

representation, it's not just the numbers, but it's the quality" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

Based on the above, TN uses a simple and informal way to explain the problem which is "you just throw them [women, into institutions of political decision-making] out there". This is profound because it reiterates the problem and inadequacy of focusing on numbers and percentages. Whether at the ward, council, district, provincial or national level, women are just being "thrown" into the different political bodies of decision-making, once again raising the issue of lack of training. The quota system is insufficient when woman politicians lack training and knowledge about it, as has been argued.

Despite lack of political training and knowledge, "women also highlighted three other main barriers to their political participation; lack of opportunities for training and skills development, lack of finance and resources to participate and contest for elections and a lack of self-belief among women" (Westminster Foundation for Democracy 2019). There is a need for "targeted training on public perceptions of women and leadership for women candidates, men advocates for gender equality and church, community and political leaders" (Mulder, McDiarmid & Vettori 2019: 36). Without the training of woman candidates and the greater society, what the political quota system seeks to achieve will be hindered.

Furthermore, TN states "it's not just the numbers, but it's the quality". This speaks to what this thesis addressed in chapter two, namely that insisting and relying solely on quota systems (descriptive representation) to ensure the representation of a group is lacking (Pitkin 1967). The inequalities between men and women within the private and public sphere remain a vantage point to understanding inequalities that arise due to gender distinctions and gender expectations. Thus, the duality of men and women concerning their labour and access to resources remains one of the major axes of gender inequality (Wharton 2012: 7; Webber 2005; Crompton 2007). Inequalities arise when there are disparities in accessing resources, which can be in the form of training, an issue raised above by Mulder et al. (2019).

AN, a male respondent from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate, explains below:

"But we have seen that we can have quantity, but the quality sometimes is not embedded in this quota system. Yeah, we need the quota, but at the same time, the quality is not taken into account" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 13 December 2019).

AN also raised the issue of quality and quality speaks to the aspect of substantive representation. Women may be placed into political institutions of decision-making; however, do they produce results (quality)? Such questions remain and "gender quotas may have an adverse effect on the quality of selected representatives" (Baltrunaite, Econpubblica, Casarico & Profeta 2014: 64). The quality of a political leader affects the quality of government and governance; hence, the greatest danger of quota systems is that women can be introduced soley as tokens into political institutions without any skill, knowledge, or experience but simply based on their gender. When women are tokens, even their agency is hindered because they can experience isolation (from those that are elected) or insecurities, whereby the women feel they do not belong with those that are elected. This then impedes women's ability to be empowered.

An example to note is that women in Zimbabwean politics still face harassment, and during the 2018 elections "many female politicians complained of a hostile and prejudiced environment in which abuse is common. Thokozani Khupe, a senior opposition leader in the MDC-T and political figure, was called a "prostitute" by demonstrators during a leadership battle earlier this year" (Burke 2018).

Another challenge is that since men have been the dominant gender in political institutions of decision-making, the introduction of quota systems has been, for the most part, adversely received by both man and woman politicians, and voters. SND had this to say:

"Like I said, even if you introduce the quota system, you will still find that men are complaining, look, you cannot introduce the quota system because it will not ensure that women of calibre, women who know what they're doing will get into power. So there has been this argument

that the quota system is bad in the sense that it does not promote women who can deliver" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

As raised by SND, "[the quota system] will not ensure that women of calibre, women who know what they're doing will get into power". A statement reiterating one of the challenges of the quota system, which is that it may raise women who are less qualified to be in those positions, meaning the women have less skill and may not be able to deliver concerning their specific job description (Iversen & Sharan 2017; Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee 2019).

Lastly, KK further raised the point that the quota system is not reflective of the population of women in most countries:

> "But we cannot limit the opportunity of women, you will agree with me, only by these 30%. Since they are the majority of the population and most of African country, they will tell you that women are 50% and above, even in the electoral list, yes, they are more than men. So then, if you compare that category of the population who are 50% and more, are you going to limit them to the quota" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019)?

KK speaks to the issue that population demographics will need to be considered as quotas are still descriptively applicable because "quotas do provide an important entry point for increasing the inclusion of women into high-level decision-making. But the establishment of quotas needs to be tailored to the country context and carefully managed: quotas are only one step along the way to gender equality in representation: it is important to see them as an important entry point to change, rather than as an end goal" (Phyu 2016). This section reflected on quotas and the next section reflects on the operationalisation of gender policies.

5.3 Perceptions of the operationalisation of gender policies

This section focuses on the perceptions of the operationalisation of the three gender policies from the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe. With the explanation provided above in the previous sections of this chapter, as well as the document analysis in chapter four,

there reflects an idea that a trickle-down effect is present, where the AU gender policy informs the RECs gender policies as well as national gender policies. AB, a respondent from the Women, Gender and Development Directorate, had the following to say concerning the operationalisation of the three gender policies:

> "We are working on it. Yes, because RECs are supposed to harmonize policies with the AU policy, AU strategy. So, it means member states have to analyse their policies with the AU. So, we're still working on... yeah that's why we had a project that we haven't implement yet, but we are supposed to have a REC Engagement Program. It means we have to harmonise, like we need to sit and have a common, not common policy, but we have to agree on a certain amount of activities that we'll do together but as I said, RECs and members are supposed to harmonize their policies according to the AU strategy" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

Based on AB's comments regarding the harmonisation of policies, there is a gap, a lack of continuity, that requires a concerted effort to ensure that deliverables towards gender mainstreaming on the continent are met. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development was signed in 2008 to integrate international, continental, and regional instruments for achieving gender equity in the region (Muigua 2020). This regional protocol was adopted to harmonise gender initiatives for attaining gender equality. A great challenge with the harmonisation of the three levels of gender policies is that "there are no sanctions attached to failing to comply with reporting obligations, it is seen as a major weakness in the enforcement and implementation system" (Martin 2013: 25).

AB also raised the issue of "activities" and how the AU aims to do activities with its RECs; however, commitments to gender equality policy initiatives need to be financed and implemented by gender experts, and this can affect the harmonisation of gender policy objectives (Gaynor & Jennings 2004). Relevant gender audits are lacking: gender audits are a process of evaluating the sensitisation of gender within institutions, and these audits train individuals and organisations on how to mainstream gender (Manyire 2011). The success or failure, presence or lack of gender audits affects the

implementation of gender policy objectives. Without the sensitisation of gender mainstreaming within institutions and relevant gender audits, the operationalisation of the three gender policies will continue to face challenges.

Another possible challenge with the harmonisation of gender policies is the aspect of "language" embedded in policies. Those who are not gender experts may be unfamiliar with gender policies of the language used in these policies and this can impede progress towards gender mainstreaming and therefore the operationalisation of the policies (Forsythe & Martin 2011). Furthermore, AB also raised the following concerning the operationalisation of the gender policies:

> "So normally we should have this flow but it's not always there. It's not easy because every country, they have their own constraints, they have their own realities. So, the AU strategy is general, it's for the whole continent. So, when you come to RECs, it could be easier because RECs are composed of many countries, but when you go to one country and ask them to harmonise with the big policy. It's not always easy from general to specific" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

A possible constraint countries face is that those tasked with implementing policies can be politically weak and lack the necessary influence or financial backing to be able to implement their national gender policy (Moser 2005). AB highlights the challenge of moving from general (AU gender policy) to specific (national gender policy) policy implementation. Governments are struggling to implement innovative ways for mainstreaming gender at the national level, such as systematically reviewing gender policies (to be ratified according to recent issues), an inclusive approach to policy formulation (ensuring that those "affected" are part of the policy formulation process) and most importantly what is known as evidence-based policy formulation (Thomas, Cordova Novion, De Haan, De Leon, Forest & Iyer 2020). RECs must build from continental efforts and nations must build from regional efforts and this can foster a reformulation and re-operationalisation of gender mainstreaming on the continent, and this is reiterated by AN:

"We are restarting through the new gender strategy, but basically I can say that this is one of the principles we call it the 'principle of subsidiarity'. So, our role at the continental level is to help the regional bodies to internalize and harmonise what we have been doing at the political level in terms of policies" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 13 December 2019).

AN introduces the principle of subsidiarity. As explained in chapter two, the principle of subsidiarity denotes that the "macro" institution has the responsibility of acting on behalf of the "micro" institution only when incapacitated to do so (Sibanda 2007). Therefore, there are two key elements, namely "balancing" and "autonomy", where the "micro" maintains sovereignty while the "macro" fills any gaps that may arise (Sibanda 2007). Thus, in the flow of policy implementation following the principle of subsidiarity, "the REC should act first, followed by the AU" (Striebinger 2016: 17). In terms of the flow and operationalisation of the three gender policies, the REC has the greater responsibility towards implementation compared to the continental body. Awareness of the principle of subsidiary, its strengths and weaknesses, and its tenets will improve the operationalisation of gender initiatives.

However, there is a criticism that the principle of subsidiarity inhibits the AU because "this principle recognises the primacy of regional organisations in leading interventions in member states, limiting the AU's interventions" (Woldemichael 2021). The AU cannot directly intervene within member states, as the REC has the first responsibility of doing so when states fail to implement national gender policies or have various internal crises. This is because the principle of subsidiarity promotes a clear division of labour between the AU, RECs, and member states to promote effective collaboration (NEPAD 2017). SNY refers to an action plan that the AU is using to do this:

SNY: "We have an action plan, and we are trying to get RECS to align their gender strategy with our strategy. After it is aligned, it trickles down from the RECs, when it comes to implementation and domestication, to the member states" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

The action plan for alignment by the AU is the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) strategy. The GEWE strategy was developed to realise the implementation and the attainment of Aspiration Six of the AU Agenda 2063 (African Union 2018). The GEWE strategy adopts a theory of change and seeks to develop long-term goals, identify evaluation indicators, identify interventions and assumptions, and gain a better understanding of contexts (African Union 2018). The GEWE strategy builds on the 2009 African Union gender policy and aims to "upgrade national policies and regulations to align with AU Protocols for the Flagship and other transformational projects" (African Union 2018: 42). Furthermore, SNY stated that

> "We came to realise our strategy might not really have their priority areas, or rather the priority areas for RECs may not really be the ones that are reflected in our gender strategy. So out of this, we try to have a common balance, I would call it, between our RECs strategy and our strategy" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

The GEWE strategy has two tracks, which are, firstly, "internal mechanisms to attain the African Union (AU) Parity Policy as embedded in Article 4L of the Constitutive Act and the AU reform agenda" and secondly "at a sub-regional level, the AU has provided guidance to the Regional Economic Commissions" (African Union 2018: 43). The purpose of these two tracks is to try and find a common balance towards operationalising the three gender policies under the principle of subsidiarity, which guides the AU, RECs, and member states. This section reiterated perceptions on the implementation of gender policies and strategies in the African context. Moreover, in Africa, through the AU, RECs and member states, the implementation of these policies is done through a division of labour in terms of the principle of subsidiarity.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter engaged with the views of policymakers at the African Union Commission in addressing one of the sub-research questions, which is "In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment"?

The 1995 Beijing conference introduced and popularised the adoption of gender quotas to achieve descriptive representation. There was a push for a critical mass to be attained to empower women politically and the period of 2000 to 2018 saw an increase in women's presence in political institutions of decision-making in Africa; however, gender inequalities on the continent persist. Quota systems are important because they are an entrance for women to become political leaders and they will be descriptively representative of the group 'women'. The only challenge with the argument that only women can represent women is that this ignores intersectional realities, including women's unique experiences, identities, and interests.

The introduction of quota systems in Africa, starting with Ghana in the 1960s, was commendable; however, one of the issues with quota systems is that they have the potential to perpetuate tokenism. One of the main objectives of tokenism is that when the numbers of a specific group are introduced within an institution, that group's challenges will be addressed or improved. The problem with tokenism is that there is no causality between the increase in the number of women in male-dominated industries and their improved work conditions. Tokenism will not address deep-rooted biases such as that women are perceived to be 'weak' and cannot be political leaders. The quota system is insufficient when women politicians lack training and knowledge. Additionally, a challenge that the quota system alone cannot address is that institutions are founded on social norms, attitudes, and culture that are reproduced, and the institution of democracy in Africa has been largely patriarchal, in part due to the influences of colonialism.

The principle of subsidiarity guides the AU, and therefore the AU will only act on behalf of its RECs when incapacitated to do so. This is a bottom-up approach that influences the flow of policy formulation and implementation on the continent. Therefore, the three gender policies of the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe are implemented considering that the regional body has the greater responsibility of ensuring that its member states comply with gender mainstreaming, following the AU's gender policy objectives. The AU recently introduced the GEWE strategy as a guiding document for integrating gender mainstreaming policy implementation on the continent, based on the principle of subsidiarity. The problem with this system is that there are different (gender) priority areas for the three different institutions of the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe.

The findings of this chapter suggest that the focus remains on critical mass rather than critical acts. Critical acts are embodied by those who have a position of substantive representation (critical actors) and not simply descriptive representation (critical mass). The next chapter will expand on the critical acts of women's political empowerment.

CHAPTER SIX: FROM CRITICAL MASS TO CRITICAL ACTS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

6.1 Introduction

Gender policies and strategies seek to address the gender status quo in Africa (Biegon 2016). This status quo is such that those with decision-making power and those with access to resources 'maintain' their positions of power (Irwin 2003). It is important to state that gender policies and the use of gender quotas to achieve a 'critical mass' has managed to ensure the 'diversity' of institutions of political decision-making; however, the inclusivity of these institutions is still questionable, as diversity does not always translate to inclusivity (Stefiszyn 2005).

Diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeably; however, they are different. Diversity ensures that institutions recognise and 'have' differences (Verlinden 2020), which in this case would be descriptive representation, where women are *present* in institutions of political decision-making. Inclusion ensures that the work environment or institution is a creative space that treats all with respect and fairness, and that there are equal opportunities and participation for all (Verlinden 2020). In this case, that would be substantive representation, where women are not simply 'present', but they can influence policies and execute their duties in all fairness.

In section 2.3.3 on women's political empowerment, this thesis stated the definition of women's political empowerment that would guide the study as "*a method and process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making which results in particular intended outcomes*". Interestingly, this definition reiterates the notion that women in political institutions of decision-making become politically empowered when they have equity and equality with men. The challenge is that "gender equality is more problematic the higher one goes up the political ladder" (Mama 2013: 147). In Africa, states have even used gender machinery not to address gender issues but only to legitimatise their governments or increase their status to 'appease' international and continental expectations (Bauer, Darkwah & Patterson 2017).

The unintended consequence of the quota system in African nations is that reserved seat quotas for women produces tokenism and leadership loyalty as compared to party-based quotas, affecting the separation of power and accountability within the system of democracy (Hassim 2010). On the continent, progress towards women's presence in institutions of political decision-making has been made and this is not to be disregarded or undermined, as it is a commendable achievement. However, as Ramtohul (2020) states, "culture and tradition tend to be slow and rather resistant to change". The ability to transform perceptions about women in politics that are founded on culture and tradition need to be investigated to actualise women's substantive representation and subsequently their political empowerment.

This thesis has highlighted that there is a need for a move away from focusing on critical mass towards advocating for critical actors. Chapter five identified themes, from the interview data, to address one of the research sub-questions of the thesis which is, "In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment?". This chapter identifies themes from the interview data that address another research sub-question of the thesis, namely "What are the implications of the fact that gender policy makers and politicians on the African continent tend to see an increased number of women in political positions as being the equivalent of gender empowerment?"? The purpose of answering this question is to evaluate the hindrances and factors faced by women political leaders in becoming critical actors and actualising substantive representation.

This chapter is organised into two sections: the first and main section highlights aspects that affect the actualisation of women's substantive representation and their ability to become critical actors. These are factors, for women in Africa, that could hinder them from becoming critical actors such as socialisation of genders, toxic hegemonic masculinity, women's confidence, psychological hindrances. Section two then evaluates some challenges around the policy implementation gap through the lens of experiences at the African Union Commission. These sections reflect an African feminist lens, and particularly strategic essentialism, which continues to resurface through the various themes discussed here that are common in everyday expressions of key stakeholders.

Furthermore, this chapter continues to reflect on the understanding of women's political empowerment by representatives from the African Union Commission that emerged through interviews undertaken at the African Union Commission in December 2019. Once again, throughout this chapter, acronyms will be used to represent the interviewees to maintain their anonymity; there were seven interviewees from the African Union Commission who are, in this chapter, still represented by the following acronyms: AB, AN, KK, RG, SND, SNY and TN.

6.2 Substantive representation and critical actors.

Substantive representation can be assessed at two levels, namely the individual level of the woman representative interacting with other political leaders (micro-level) and the level of how citizens (represented) interact with institutions of political decision-making (macro-level) (Kroeber 2018). This thesis acknowledges that there is both a micro- and macro-level of analysing substantive representation and thus focuses intently on the micro-level, while highlighting the intersectionality between the two levels through the lens of a constructivist approach.

The different types of representation identified by Pitkin raise crucial questions. For this research, perhaps the most significant is the question, what do women in politics do, which policies do they implement, and do they have influence within their positions (Stokes 2005)? To answer the main research question of the thesis, which is "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?", the thesis has focused on two main types of representation: descriptive and substantive representation.

When substantive representation is attained, representatives move from a critical mass towards critical acts. As already explained, critical mass theory suggests that once a disadvantaged group reaches a particular number within an institution, a qualitative change will be experienced by that group (Norris & Lovenduski 2001). As mentioned in section 2.2.2, Dahlerup (1988) critiques the focus on critical mass, stating that there are other factors, beyond numbers, that contribute to change or lack of change with regard to woman's political empowerment and their representation in

political institutions. She further argues that change lies within critical acts from critical actors, as numbers are more descriptive than substantive.

Childs and Krook (2009) further develop this argument by stating that substantive representation is attained when critical actors, despite their numbers, are "emboldened" to transform and formulate policies for women (and these actors are not limited to their gender). Empirically, critical acts from critical actors should be evaluated to better understand the behaviour of women political leaders. Focusing on substantive representation can allow us to re-evaluate the way scholars and practitioners can understand women's political empowerment.

Contemporary politics and democracy are founded on representation and the actualisation of representative democracy (Hague & Harrop 2010). Saward (2008) claims that representative democracy should go beyond elections and constituencies, focusing not just on an individual (critical actor) that "acts on behalf of" but on the changing processes of identity and interest. Saward (2008) further adds that the "system" in which representation is enacted also needs to be evaluated and not just the individual within the system. Substantive representation thus focuses on the activities of women political leaders as a means to operationalise their political empowerment; this representation can thus further influence institutional actors such as women's movements and policy agencies (Rashkova & Erzeel 2021).

6.2.1 Perceptions of the socialisation of genders

Gender is a complex social construct that is reproduced and repeated based on social norms (Morgenroth & Ryan 2018). Over time, gender has been reconstructed to accommodate the variations of gender identities that have emerged (Lindqvist, Seden & Renstrom 2020). As discussed in chapter two, traditionally and dichotomously, sex defines "male" and "female", while gender defines "man" and "woman" (Westbrook & Saperstein 2015). Gender is a major part of social identity, and it directly or indirectly affects how women perceive themselves and how they act as political leaders (Davis et al. 2005). The socialisation of gender in Africa has resulted in power imbalances and differences in access to opportunities between men and women (Anyidoho 2020). Understanding the socialisation of gender matters because, in Africa, colonisation was premised on a system of gender inequalities operated on by men (Connell 2014b).

On the continent, the effects of colonialism together with existing socio-cultural practices have intersected to create a double disadvantage for women. Postcolonial African gender norms, founded on colonial gender norms, continue to influence the development and structure of gender in the Global South (Harcourt 2009). During the colonial period, "women's formal political activity was generally ignored and denigrated by colonial authorities, and they lost ground with colonial legal systems" (Sheldon 2018). The postcolonial political order bears the effects of colonial gender norms, which has seen the rise of women's movements and advocacy for gender equality, and "any gender that goes beyond bounds could be sanctioned in many ways – the most common being ostracism and labelling. Regardless of many discussions and advocacies across time and domains, gender inequality and its negative outcomes persists, with implications for capacities to benefit from global/national trade and development policies" (Akanle 2011).

Men have typically been socialised as leaders and "this unfortunately has led to patriarchy, a system where every social situation, real or imagined, is viewed and assessed in masculinity" (Akanle 2011). How to behave in society, as a man or woman, is assigned to individuals based on the gender assigned to them at birth (Boundless 2017). The role that individuals or groups of individuals play in society, who are in the public eye, is placed on them based on various intersectional factors, including their sexual orientation, race, class, or age (Joseph 2002). In general, both men and women are limited by socio-cultural practices and "the commonness of customary and socio-cultural practices in most African nations have regularly been referred to as an extensive boundary or limitation for women in governmental issues" (Enaifoghe 2018).

Due to expectations because of gender roles, women in politics have to juggle both private and public life, at times frustrating the efforts of women in institutions of political decision-making (Enaifoghe 2018). Additionally, due to women being the "disadvantaged gender" in issues of politics, women have been expected to bring about their own political change while the rest of society remains unconcerned with this (Wayne 2018). AN explains that gender is a clarification given to one and this assigned clarification places you in "one box":

> "Sex is more of physical, but gender is more about culture, perception, how our culture, our society perceive woman or female and we decide just because of culture to define you in one box" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 13 December 2019).

It is apparent, from this excerpt, that those working in the area of gender at the African Union Commission have a clear understanding of the relationship between gender and culture, and that societal expectations and the assignment of role fulfilment with regard to women and men are cultural. However, despite this awareness the gaps are still apparent due to the weakness of challenges in implementation. As explained in chapter two, culture can be societal, institutional, and individual; culture can happen within an individual and around an individual (Schein 2010), and this is how women have been "put into a box". This "box" that defines gender roles through culture is founded on attitudes and perceptions (Marion & Gonzales 2013) and this is a hindrance towards women's substantive representation.

The expectations of gender roles are maintained at times even without the knowledge of the individuals enacting them (Deal &d Peterson 2002). Societal gender role expectations even influence how individuals perceive themselves, as this "box" confines them to what is ideal behaviour (Sanchez & Crocker 2005). In essence, there is nothing wrong with one having prescribed gender ideals; however, when a woman decides to move beyond this "box" to become more than just a wife and a mother, that is where the challenge arises.

Leadership has been perceived to be more "masculine" (Kellerman & Rhode 2007) and historically, women in politics, as a survival tactic within political institutions, have had to emphasise "masculine traits" because this was the "role" prescribed to the character of man politicians (Fine 2008). Women in politics, due to these expectations of what masculine and feminine are, have faced multiple stereotypes and have been labelled as ineffective political leaders because they are perceived as not masculine enough (O'Neil and Domingo 2016). Due to the gender stereotyping of men and women politicians, founded on culture, those who break free from this "box" stand out

and face criticism or being ostracised by society, as explained above (Aalberg & Jenssen 2007). SND had the following to add:

> "In as much as we talk about men and women, socialization then translates my sex into the certain roles that society expects me to play into certain behaviour, that society expects me to portray" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

The portrayal of gender roles affects women politicians, and they may not be able to garner sufficient support within their political positions (Norris & Inglehart 2001) due to what society expects of them. Women are expected to portray a certain demeanour in society and politics has been considered a "dirty profession" that "clean" women are not expected to engage in; thus, when a woman is willing to run for office, she may not garner support, even from other women (Micheal 2019). Women who do not support women politicians tend to perceive that men should be the politicians, they want to retain these gender norms and are unwilling to support women with political aspirations (Micheal 2019).

There is an aspect of "us versus them" and "women have been socialized to see politics as outside their area of concern, and since so few of them have played an active role in the political arena, they have neither grown up with expectations of becoming politicians nor do they dream about influencing public affairs" (Jensen 2008: 8). How some women themselves view politics is that it is "outside" of their feminine domain, and this affects women from aspiring to be politicians. Such society expectations on women cannot simply be reversed by quotas; however, having more women in politics through descriptive representation is a viable short-term solution for rectifying this portrayal (Emmet 2001). Thus, RG raised a key point about value systems:

> "Socialisation is the social attribution of roles to women and men by virtue of their sex, but this is informed by the cultural ideas and also as part of socialization. Socialization means how people get access to value systems and beliefs and cultures and how that helps them to construct what roles are attributed to women, and what roles are

attributed to men and that also produces expectations in the society"
(Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

Although as a global trend, "women's participation in politics is increasing; however, the quality and quantity of such increasing trends varies" and these variations are predetermined by cultural value systems (Khelghat-Doost & Sibly 2020). Another way in which gendered value systems have affected the efficacy of women's political empowerment is that women who do become politicians end up focusing on issues largely around social affairs and development, and rarely on issues around defence and the economy (Khelghat-Doost & Sibly 2020).

This is a form of essentialism that was also raised in section 5.2.4 on perceptions of quota systems. Women may be "essentialised", meaning they may be placed in positions where they deal only with issues that are essentially "women's issues" or gendered policy areas, which can minimise or limit the role that woman politicians can perform in general or elsewhere (Kerevel & Atkeson 2013). These social issues are considered feminine while issues of defence are considered masculine, thus, subtly perpetuating gendered value systems even by women in politics. The status quo, which defines gender roles, influences "traditional cultural values that militate against the advancement, progress and participation of women in any political process" (Shvedova 2005: 44), thus causing women to deal with specific and "essentially" women's issues.

Resultantly, to change the socialisation and 'essentialisation' of genders, a joint effort between men and women to move beyond gender prescribed roles concerning political leadership is warranted. KK raised this point:

> "Gender for me is men and women together because I will not just say men and women. So that's why it is better to specify saying that 'together' because sometimes even some institutions, UN Women they have a program called 'He or She'. So it's also something important to know, 'He for She' just means that, men who are supporting a woman and vice versa. So that's why it is men and women together" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

Gender prescribes roles to both men and women; thus, it will take both men and women to redefine these roles, in general and specifically to attain women's political empowerment. The roles that society has given women through gender socialisation are classified as but not limited to "mother", "wife" and "woman" (Biri & Mtambwa 2013). African society raises children on the premise of "maleness" and "femaleness", and "maleness" is emphasised above "femaleness" (Chigwata 2014). Historically, in most African cultures, a division of labour was used that recreated the idea that the "man" must work, and the "woman" must take care of the home (Eagly, Beall & Sternberg 2004). This was a prescribed role for women; it involved labour for the family and not necessarily decision-making for the family.

In many African societies, it is still uncommon for women to be in top leadership positions and "women who make it to the leadership positions outside the perceived feminine roles may be accepted as unique, exceptional, and unrepresentative of women in general" (Mwale & Dodo 2017: 110). As men and women in society are socialised into their gender roles, effort to train both men and women to understand the crucial role of women's presence in institutions of decision-making is crucial. As long as men are excluded from the process, current gender norms will persist. As these gender norms persist, they affect the substantive representation of women political leaders. The re-socialisation of both men and women politicians is important, so that there is substantive representation and not just descriptive representation of women in political institutions of decision-making.

6.2.2 Perceptions of the toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics

The connection between gender politics and masculinity in Africa is complex and multidimensional in that gender expectations dictate what is a "proper" man or "proper" woman (Wyrod 2008). This connection reveals that politics is not gender-neutral and "political institutions, norms and practices such as the state, citizenship and nationality, the vote, the military, policymaking, and the implementation of laws and many others have traditionally been treated as if they were un-gendered and guided exclusively by objective reasoning and rationality" (Starck & Sauer 2014).

Deconstructing political hegemonic masculinities in African politics will establish a better understanding of how to attain women's political empowerment in Africa, as these institutions and norms are not "un-gendered". Conceptions of masculinity (and femininity) need to be understood, as they play a role in the reproduction of gender inequalities and "there appears to be consensus in acknowledging political masculinities as thoroughly involved in the reproduction of power" (Löffler, Luyt & Stark 2020). SND raised a crucial point about the hegemonic masculinity of political institutions:

> "If you're a woman in the office and you fight for your beliefs or your rights, sometimes you are even called a man, you know and so, indeed, I think the agenda to empower women politically has been perceived as a threat to men, because it is even the men who use some women to fight against other women in politics who want to elevate themselves" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

The reality is that politics has been a male-dominated industry (Hamandishe 2018) and this section raises issues concerning this characteristic of the institution of politics. The higher women advance in their careers, the fewer women there are. Women tend to populate lower positions within institutions and industries, and this has created a certain reluctance for women to want to attain top leadership positions (Born, Ranehill & Sandberg 2018). One challenge of the entrance of women into institutions of political decision-making is that they encounter the obstacle of being undervalued by the majority presence of men (Boring 2017; Mengel, Sauermann & Zölitz 2018). Due to various reasons, such as the very way in which political spaces are designed dismisses the contribution women make, women in leadership positions may perform lower than their male counterparts as their political leadership positions are fairly recent or new; the majority presence of men only exacerbates this (Hoxby 2000; Black, Devereux & Salvanes 2013).

Another challenge that women in leadership positions may face is that they may believe that they perform less well than their male counterparts, even when this is not the case (Niederle & Vesterlund 2007). Male-dominated industries tend to intimidate women, and this can affect their ability to be "effective" political leaders (Born et al.

2018). It is not always about women's in/ability but factors such as the toxic masculinity of politics that can affect women's political empowerment. Such factors manifest through biases against women and "about half of the world's men and women feel that men make better political leaders, and over 40 percent feel that men make better business executives and that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce" (UNDP 2020).

Coined in the 1990s, toxic masculinity is a framework of analysis used to understand social hierarchies, forms of power and subordination, marginalisation, and traits of what a "real" man is (Daddow & Hertner 2021). Evaluating toxic masculinities is crucial, as these shape political practices, relationships, and can be an inhibiting factor to the use of gender quotas (Connell 2014a). Moreover, in politics, toxic masculinities perpetuate oppression, dominance, and a cycle of power hegemony for men and subordination for women (Childs & Hughs 2018).

In as much as quotas introduce women into institutions of political decision-making, men are still in the majority, because men are dominant in terms of numbers, they also set the cultural tone of a political environment. For example, decisions are made on the golf course or over a beer at a bar where women are not welcome. Additionally, there tends to be an "old boys' club" atmosphere of men who went to school together or were in the army or liberation struggles together. This tends to exclude women. AB reiterates this fact:

> "Another thing also is, even if they are represented like you said, even if they are 20%, men are 80%" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

As much as quotas provide women with the opportunity to enter the space of politics, the reality is that it is still disproportional. This disproportion was also raised in section 5.2.1 on the perceptions of women's representation. Whatever percentage women will hold, men will still be of the greater percentage. Women will have to navigate these "male" spaces and ways of functioning to set agendas around women's issues. This disparity in presence maintains hegemonic masculinity in the way in which politics is structurally organised and reproduced (Jewkes & Morrell 2012). This "male"

hegemony of political institutions needs to be problematised, as it perpetrates a masculine nature of politics: of male character, male dominance, and male influence (Pearson 2019). There is a preference for very rational debates, aggressive ways of communicating, conflict avoidance and long monologues without really listening to one another; traits that are not necessarily feminine or 'womanly' in character.

To support the argument above, gender identities reinforce social inequalities and "hegemonic masculinity identifies how gender power operates at multiple levels, it provides an overarching framework for understanding how gender inequalities are produced and reproduced, both in the long term and the quotidian" (Jewkes, Morrell, Hearn, Lundgvist, Blackbeard, Lindegger, Quayle, Sikweyiya & Gottzen 2015). Gender dynamics are a socio-structural issue that cannot be addressed only through introducing quotas. Due to this hegemonic masculinity of political institutions in Africa, women's presence can also be viewed as a threat by men politicians. AN had the following to say:

> "It could be a threat if we do not start to raise awareness, to advocate and let men understand the reason why we need to have females in politics, it is very important for us" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 13 December 2019).

Based on the above by AN, "men (*must*) understand the reason why we need to have females in politics". Without this understanding, there is a perceived threat (by men) that can result in backlash or resistance towards gender equality and women's political empowerment efforts (Flood, Dragiewicz & Pease 2020). The hegemonic masculinity of politics is also displayed in arguments against gender equality, where men may feel "tired" of diversity and inclusion efforts in political institutions and in general (Bendick, Egan & Lofhjelm 2001).

Additionally, there are counter-arguments, where men feel threatened by women's presence and start to say things such as "what about men?" (Bennette & Fox 2014). The idea that women want to be included in political spaces is difficult for some men (and women) to understand or accept, resulting in inaction (Lombardo & Mergaert 2013). The toxic masculinity of politics has caused men to perceive the introduction of

women into "their" space as a threat rather than a "solution" or a necessity (Hamandishe 2018).

The greatest challenge that women in politics have is that "too many suggested solutions are founded on the misconception that women ought to emulate men" (Chamorro-Premuzic & Gallop 2020). However, women are ostracised when they "act like men" due to the male character of these political institutions of decision-making, to the extent that sometimes they are even called "men". A male character of assertiveness, decisiveness, and at times aggression, is what women politicians are at times expected to exhibit or completely avoid exhibiting when in political leadership. Due to patriarchal expectations of women's "subordination", when women are outspoken or vocal, that is perceived as a masculine characteristic and not a feminine one; thus, "the norms and practices that define women as inferior to men, impose controls on them, are present everywhere in our families, social relations, religious, laws, schools, textbooks, media, factories and offices" (Sultana 2010). Due to these biases, men political leaders are treated differently to women political leaders and TN's understanding reiterate this:

> "They will even analyse if you're married, whether your marriage is functioning, what kind of a husband you have, whatever" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

As raised by TN above, women politicians' personal lives become a matter for discussion, whereas this is not the case for their male counterparts, as "women politicians are more often discussed in terms of their gender, their family life, and their physical appearance, but not in terms of their personality" (Van der Pas & Aaldering 2020). Women in politics face this micro-aggression of "gender differences in political media coverage" and this is embedded in the hegemonic masculinity of politics. The media coverage of woman politicians is different to that of men, as stereotypically, women tend to be associate with the "private" life while men are associated with the "public" life (O'Neil et al. 2016).

The argument is that women politicians have already "failed" according to these stereotypes as women politicians will either "fail" to prescribe to the masculine nature

of leadership or "fail" to be what is expected of a woman (Van der Pas & Aaldering 2020). The hegemonic masculinity of politics that women politicians face is the reality that they have to negotiate expectations of their identity as "women, politicians, and professionals" (Ruppanner & Carson 2020). These issues reiterate the challenges that women in politics face and hindrances towards their substantive representation; thus, SNY raised a point that to change these structural hindrances, both genders must be involved. This point was also expressed by KK in the previous section.

> "At some point, it threatens masculinity and it's like we get blinded by the fact that actually gender equality involves both genders, not necessarily women. I believe if you have both men and women represented equally, politically, we'll be able to have a standard I would say" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

The toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics highlights that gender equality and women's empowerment must involve both genders. The challenge is that the conversation has been set to exclude men and "gender balance in politics, however, can only be achieved if men work side by side with women to share the responsibility in breaking harmful cultural norms and practices, as well as the institutional, structural and legal barriers that hinder women's equal and influential political participation" (iKnow Politics 2017).

The inclusion of men in the discussion of women's political empowerment is crucial because "women's (political) rights should be strongly attached to the notion of human rights and that the progress of men and women are inextricably bound to each other" (Bachelet 2010: 7). The inclusion of men is transformative because "clearly, women and men perceive political reality, their political attributes, and their ability to succeed in the political system through a gendered lens" (Lawless & Fox 2012: 11). Without this 'inclusion', women's substantive representation may not be attained, and the cycle of hegemonic masculinity of politics will continue to hinder women's critical acts. Additionally, men politicians may not have a sense of ownership towards their women politician colleagues and their political empowerment. Their exclusion in the process of attaining women's political empowerment, as a process for women by women, reinforces the toxic hegemonic masculine nature of politics. In light of the above, it

becomes apparent that the higher women advance in their careers, without an understanding of "why" women need to be in these spaces, quotas will not be as effective as they are set out to be, neither will women's substantive representation be attained.

6.2.3 Perceptions of the confidence of women in leadership.

This section addresses the confidence of women once they attain political leadership positions, as women are missing from (top) political leadership and confidence is cited as one reason for this by interviewees. Many women in positions of power have been described as experiencing what is known as imposter syndrome, as "men overestimate their abilities and performance while women underestimate both" (Marsh 2019). However, the issue may not always be a woman's confidence but rather that as she exerts herself, it is perceived negatively, or as described in the previous section, she is expected to be "manly" to be recognised as confident (Marsh 2019).

KK states below that women in politics need to be convinced that they can "do it on their own".

> "The response for me is lack of confidence from women themselves because they gave them the tools for that. You have got the tools, you have been told that this pen can bring you very far, just use it. You can sign, you can write, you can do what you want and if the pen finishes, that is the shop, get another one. If you cannot find it in the shop, maybe your neighbour can also share with you in case, just manage. You see what I mean? But then you should be convinced to do it on your own, I don't want to be pessimistic" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

The reason for this is that the "ambitions of girls and women are discouraged when they are taught to be deferential to males and not to compete with them for resources, including power and recognition. Women internalize these expectations, which leads them to question their own abilities. Women are much less likely to put themselves forward for a promotion, a fellowship, or a demanding assignment than men even when they are objectively more qualified in terms of their credentials" (Msila &

Netshitangani 2020). Women have been provided with tools, through training, to enable them to be political leaders; however, due to the biases imposed on their gender, their confidence has been undermined (Kanyoro 2006).

In the interview, KK stated "you should be convinced on your own" but one reason women may not be convinced could be an issue of lack of role models. There are few "own-gender" experts that women in politics can look up to and the lack of role models has contributed to how women at times question their leadership abilities, despite having received political training (Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova 2012). For women in institutions of political decision-making, a quota system can allow them to be in the institution, system, and position, but the quota system cannot give them the confidence to stay in the system. The quota system is the tool, but the tool cannot fully address women's confidence gap in attaining their substantive representation. AN, one of the male respondents, had this to say about women's confidence:

> "We can find ourselves in the office and we have the same grade but sometimes because I am a male, you can ask me to speak first" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 13 December 2019).

This stereotype in hegemonic masculine political institutions indirectly affects women's agency and confidence to speak up. There are instances where, in meetings, women have had to manage gender dynamics from men as "men are often socialized to display dominance in competitive public settings like debates and interrupting is a power move" (Lang 2020). Having to manage gender dynamics, such as a man continually interrupting a woman in instances where men are the majority, can affect women's confidence to speak up or express themselves. SND had the following to say about women and how they have been socialised to express themselves:

> "Even in our own country, I think, there are cultures that don't allow women to stand in front of men and speak or if you do speak, you will see you have to sit down or kneel in front of these men, you see, so it's pretty limiting. Socialization is really limiting, and I think it doesn't allow women to fully express themselves, to fully reach their potential" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

There is a lot of "unlearning" that women in politics (and women in general) may need to do; women have learned to be silent or soft-spoken; hence, when they suddenly need to be assertive and outspoken, it is perceived to be in contradiction of what they have been taught. As Akinola (2018: 5) describes, "a fairly common thread running through the fabric of most African societies is the culture of deference and subservience of the African womenfolk to their male counter-parts". This subservience is accompanied by what is known as the "motherhood institution", which emphasises the "mothering" role of women in society, and this affects women's chances at receiving political support in the public space, because a mother should *only* be focused on her family and motherly duties (Miller 2009).

All these factors stem from the issue raised by SND, namely that "socialisation is really limiting, and it does not allow women to fully express themselves, to fully reach their potential". Aside from the "motherhood institution" limiting women, there is also the "marriage institution" and TN spoke of how marriage affects women's confidence to take part in politics:

> "You get married, somehow you're taken as a property and whatever it is you want to do, you'd definitely need to get permission from him, as your sponsor. In the name that he paid, dowry… just because of being a woman and being married to him. So now look at it when a person starts to think of, the backlash and everything else and the journey to politics, will it even bring the confidence for that person to say, 'tomorrow, I want to be a party treasurer'" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

Research shows that "anticipating marriage and getting married are strongly associated with women's employment outcomes" (Selwaness & Krafft 2021: 533). A great challenge for many women on the continent is that women are viewed as employed while in *transition* to marriage, such that when women become married, they are not expected to continue working (Krafft & Assaad 2017). Without a change in these social norms, women who pursue political careers will continue to be ostracised (Bursztyn et al. 2018). The fear of this ostracisation can affect women's confidence

and aspirations for political careers. Women in politics need career support, because without this reinforcement "they may give up, because of missing self-confidence and lack of peer support" (Oketa et al. 2010: 3).

6.2.4 Perceptions of leadership and psychological hinderances

This section addresses psychological hindrances that are barriers pertaining to an individual's emotions, opinions, and attitudes about life's experiences. These are influenced by one's worldview and they can develop into psychological barriers to one's leadership ability. The new leadership challenge for many women is the work-life balance. Changes in technology and globalisation have introduced new challenges for leaders of any kind in society and these complexities warrant that leaders must have an ability to adapt to change (Johnson et al. 2008).

As a leader, the ability to adapt involves having an authentic sense of self that can overcome challenges while seizing opportunities (Johnson et al. 2008). Having self-awareness is affected by one's worldview, and this worldview can be limited and distorted, affecting both the intellect and emotion of an individual's ability to process reality (Johnson et al. 2008).

Thus, the psychological state, or worldview, of women political leaders determines their actualisation of becoming critical actors when they enter the political space. Woman leaders, more than their male counterparts, face the double barrel of stress from both home and work responsibilities, and women need to adopt coping mechanisms, as failure to cope will affect them psychologically and impair their leadership efficacy (Folkman & Lazarus 1980).

The reality is that for women to become empowered political leaders the "work demand and family demand should be managed by adopting appropriate coping strategies because on the one hand, work-life balance helps to increase satisfaction, commitment, motivation and productivity; on the other hand, it reduces the absenteeism and turnover rate" (Vidyakala & Nithyakala 2020: 235). RG raised a point of what belief a woman may hold in terms of her leadership role, what she believes she should act/do/play and how she processes and acts accordingly to that belief:

"It is that kind of construction of what a woman's role should play and what she herself actually believes should play. It is that conflict that creates the influence or not, but how also the women leader will process and act accordingly" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

The above quote moves away from just the external limitations a woman faces and reflects on the internal beliefs that a woman leader has. Women in politics have to balance both the public and private space, and this dual responsibility is rarely separated (Nayak & Pandey 2014). Also, as Schiwy (2007) argues, in many African contexts, the public and private spheres are not necessarily separate to begin with.

Women's presence contributes to political institutions of decision-making and "today, women are dealing with several complex issues, and they bring compassion, team playing and patience to the organization, which are very important qualities for any leader" (Ceil 2012: 1). A key question then becomes, does a woman political leader believe that she can act this way, compassionately, considering the masculine hegemonic nature of politics? Thus, society needs to open up to women leaders and the particular intelligence and skill set that women possess (Fisher 2005).

Political competence is the ability to present forth "good" ideas that are encapsulated by a broad political vision with strategy and the ability to solve problems (Meier 2007; Brinkmann 2019). The demands of problem-solving intensify the higher one climbs up the political career ladder. Individuals in political institutions are expected to play a role in "aggregating, transforming, and representing political opinion" (Wolkenstein 2018) and women need to have the political competence to do so.

Competency has a psychological element in that people may be competent but not confident about their competence. Competency here can be considered in terms of knowledge, skills, capacity, responsibility, and duty. This then influences the strategies, positionality and opinions in policy formulation, implementation, and political negotiations of those in leadership positions (Krammer 2008). Moreover, women in politics will need a better understanding of quotas, political rules, polity, and political actors to be competent as leaders (Reicher 2010). Women who enter the

political space have a responsibility beyond their gender and RG states that women can be effective, but it is dependent on their skills and knowledge.

> "Yes, women can be effective political leaders to the extent that they also have the skills and knowledge to be able to exercise and execute the mandate bestowed upon them within the institutions they work. So, I don't think women are just able to execute by virtue of being women or men being men. It has to be tied to the knowledge and skills that they have, and also the duty and responsibility with regard to the office that they occupy" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

RG highlighted that women need to have the "knowledge", "skills", "duty" and "responsibility" of their position in institutions of political decision-making and this draws us back to competency which has already been explained. Christensen and Muhr (2019: 93) argue that "quotas and competencies are considered each other's opposites", because quotas are perceived as a means to address unequal representation (which is descriptive) but lacking in addressing competencies (which is substantive representation).

On the one hand, the knowledge, skills, duty, and responsibility of women in politics are tied to their psychological state, as "different life experiences result in uneven capabilities, unequal resources, different experiences of violence, conflict, exclusion or discrimination and varying exposure to enabling resources (such as education and health)" (Domingo et al. 2015). The life experiences of women in Africa, such as how they are socialised into their gender role, affects their worldview and ultimately their leadership perceptions and decision-making objectives.

On the other hand, entering political spaces without a changed worldview limits women's substantive representation, and another challenge that then affects women's psychological state is that as they enter political spaces, they still have to deal with sexism embedded in these institutions. This was raised by TN:

> "From where I come from, there's a lot of sexism that goes along with 'look at how she's dressed'. You're judged by your appearance first

even before you open your mouth. They say 'look at her dressing, look at her makeup, look at whatever it is'[, so there's a lot of sexism that goes in it. You'd want to just be by yourself and do your own things and not to come out into the public and be judged harshly just because you're a woman" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

Haraldsson and Wängnerud (2018) state that sexism can cause women to be undermined in their positions of political leadership and thus "strengthens the glass ceiling for female politicians". A woman may be intelligent, educated, and confident enough to be in politics, but she also needs to have the will and stamina to be able to continue despite comments about her appearance. This is something men in politics do not need to worry about, it is mostly never about the way they dress but about their ability to either deliver or not deliver. This is sexism and "sexism in particular is institutionalized in parliamentary spaces and the increased numbers of women in legislatures have served to draw more attention to this reality" (Collier & Raney 2018: 435).

As already explained above in previous sections, the political media coverage of woman politicians is different to that of men. Discriminatory practices that women in political leadership face are caused by their appearance – be it their complexion or the size of their bodies – and this is a form of sexism that can negatively impact a woman's psychological state. Sexism in politics is a form of political violence that is used to discourage women from taking part in political activities, whether the sexism occurs online through social media, in-person within institutions of political decision-making or by society (Drenjanin 2019). The institutionalisation of sexism within politics affects women's willingness to pursue political careers as it decreases one's self-esteem, and the greater challenge is that a particular woman may not be directly targeted or affected, yet it still influences their (un)willingness to enter the political space (Bradley-Geist et al. 2015).

This is the psychological consequence of ambient sexism. Ambient sexism is sexism that targets or affects someone else while one is a bystander (Bradley-Geist et al. 2015). So, women can be introduced into institutions of political decision-making through quotas and experience sexism as a "bystander", consciously or

subconsciously affecting their psychological state or willingness to be vocal or "noticed", as TN explained, causing them "not to come out into the public and be judged harshly". This discriminatory criticism and violence has caused women to shy away from public office to avoid experiencing sexism directly or ambiently, in the media or in person.

The evidence from the interviews thus suggests that women in institutions of political decision-making tend to be subjected to ridicule and belittlement, being viewed as "foreigners" in political spaces (Lovenduski 2014). According to Chappel and Waylen (2013), at times, it can be difficult or subtle to identify incidences of sexism and discrimination against women based on their appearance, as social and political culture has normalised these incidences, and it takes a concerted effort to combat these practices. The "difficulty" in identifying sexism is also perpetuated by the glass ceiling that women in politics have to break through.

6.3 Perceptions of gender policy gaps towards implementation

The previous sections of this chapter highlighted certain aspects that affect the actualisation of women's substantive representation and their ability to become critical actors. As already stated in these two analysis chapters, "the last twenty years have seen genuine progress in Africa when it comes to women's parliamentary representation" (Cheeseman & Dodsworth 2019b). However, it cannot be ignored that there is a "need for gender programs to pay attention to the integration and inclusion of the African worldview as a sustainable development imperative" (Chauraya 2012: 253) to attain gender equality and women's empowerment on the African continent.

Concerning gender mainstreaming in Africa, change is also reliant on African communities themselves and not just the formulators of gender policies (Wendoh & Wallace 2005). A key point is that policies have been formulated, in this case the AU gender policy, the SADC gender strategy and the Zimbabwean gender policy; however, enforcement of gender policies has been weak (Jayachadran 2019). In addition to the challenge of weak policy implementation, there is an "urgent" need to change the attitudes of both men and women so that they will realise that women's gender equality and political empowerment is possible on the continent despite various highlighted challenges (Beaman et al. 2012).

The issue of women's underrepresentation and disempowerment is not just about their limited numbers in institutions of political decision-making, but it is multifaceted and systemically unjust. There needs to be a connection between policy formulation, policy implementation and policy ownership to actualise women's political empowerment. There is a contradiction, in the excerpt by AN, namely, that he explains that at the AU, the policy formulators have an understanding of what they are intending to attain with regards to women's political empowerment. However, policy formulation and implementation are at odds with one another. It is, therefore, also important to note that "the weak implementation of gender policies is not just a funding problem. There are many other obstacles and risk factors: strong individual and institutional resistance to gender initiatives, deep-rooted cultural issues and traditions, and under-representation of women in the public space" (Wanjiru 2017).

Longwe (2000) and Kabeer (2005) raise the issue that empowerment policies fail to address the underlying structural root causes of women's disempowerment and indirectly allow the continuation of the social status quo. For a policy to be classified as successful, various activities and resources will need to be used to achieve the policy goal (Mbieli 2006). In Africa, some of the challenges of policy implementation lie in improper planning, lack of research, bureaucratic bottleneck and a heavy burden on civil servants who did not formulate the policies but are expected to implement them (Ajulor 2016). Moreover, the target beneficiaries are not always involved in the policy formulation process and yet the policies will be formulated on their behalf (Dialoke et al. 2017).

There creates a challenge of policy ownership, as "policies are often forced on people without their consultation and they in turn distance themselves from the government's excellent programme meant to improve their lives and can even go as far as sabotaging such plan" (Ajulor 2018: 1512). The gender policy gaps in policy prioritisation need to focus not just on increasing women's numbers in political institutions but on addressing structural barriers such as early marriages for girls, little or no education for girls, women's restricted land use or ownership and discrimination in employment (Masau 2015).

If these structural issues were addressed in policy and women receive empowerment from a younger age, there would be change, as there are various layers of gender inequality stemming back to how young girls are socialised and raised. The attainment of women's political empowerment in Africa is complex and "only in an equal and enabled Africa will African women be empowered to take their rightful place in society. This needs to be driven by a bold vision where all citizens contribute to and benefit from Africa's development" (Kumalo & Abebe 2020).

At the African Union Commission, where the AU gender policy was formulated, it is apparent that women and men perceived the degree to which women are welcome differently. For example, RG a male respondent, said the following:

> "So, for the AU, even the emergence of women in political leadership is something that is welcome and it's something that the African Union commission supports" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

AB, a woman, had the following to say:

> "When you say 50% women are commissioners, 50% men are commissioners, they (men) are okay, but when it comes to implementation, they realise it's no, we are not okay with that" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 12 December 2019).

SND, another woman, said that those who advocate for women's empowerment become unpopular, giving the example of Madam Nkosazana C. Dlamini-Zuma when she was the African Union Commission Chair:

> "She grew very, very unpopular, because they were saying, 'oh, we are losing positions, because she's putting women'. For example, five people are interviewed for a job, three of them are women and two are men, if a woman is given the position, the men will argue 'she wasn't qualified, it's because of Madame Zuma'. So, whenever there was a woman in a position of leadership, people would not stop to think she's qualified, she passed the interview, the first thing they would start with

would be 'oh, it's Zuma, she's the one who promotes women'" (Interview, Addis Ababa, 11 December 2019).

Although RG stated that the presence of women is welcomed, and this is reflected by the election of women commissioners at the AUC in 2021, nevertheless, this does not reflect the experience of women at the AUC. As highlighted by AB, 50% of men and 50% of women parity of AU commissioners is an expectation and this was examined at the commission executive elections in February 2021, at the 38th session of the ordinary council; out of the six elected commissioners, four were women (Budoo-Scholtz 2021). It is commendable for the continental body to be an example to its regional economic communities and member states; as well as the actualisation of the broader Agenda 2063 vision (Miyandzani & Apiko 2020). This is additionally commendable because at the transformation genesis of AU structures in 2017, policy expectations are being implemented (Kagame 2020). However, it does not change the experiences of women politicians and women in general.

As has been discussed in this chapter, women in political institutions continue to be held to a different standard than men politicians and "findings suggest that women are punished for violating norms of group behavior and that stereotypes inform the evaluation process" (Courtemanche & Green 2020). Consequently, when gender mechanisms are used to introduce women into institutions of political decision-making, this can undermine the authority and position that a woman holds, and as explained by SND, women tend to be judged harshly when they fail to attain "self-promotion" (Rudman & Fairchild 2004). For example, women who have previously made it into the African Union Commission have been viewed as being given positions because of 'Madam Zuma', while their qualifications were completely disregarded or undermined.

The election of the four woman commissioners is a step in the right direction at overcoming socio-cultural stereotypes because "within the commission itself, discrimination against women employees is routine" (Allison 2018). A media report, for example, discusses that the African Union Commission is perceived to be hypocritical because women at the commission are sidelined from senior promotions or discouraged from seeking to advance within the commission (Mail and Guardian 2018). This is problematic and "central to the complaint is alleged discrimination in

recruitment at the commission, where experienced women employees are regularly passed over for more senior roles in favour of men" (Allison 2018).

The changes at the African Union Commission are necessary, as it is the "example" continental body for issues areas on the continent and "changes in the commission are happening as the African Union is being scrutinised for allegations of administrative corruption and abuses, including sexual harassment of women employees" (Crossette 2021). The 2021 elections at the African Union Commission were important because they served as a "litmus test" for post-institutional reforms; thus, according to a report from a think tank, "it is necessary to show the extent to which the efforts at the level of the Commission are envisaged to interact with the relevant policy organs to better support the implementation of their mandates" (ACCORD 2021).

The issues raised highlight the need for addressing gaps in gender policy that hinder implementation, as policy gaps manifest themselves in different ways such as the undue and double bind of expectation placed on women political leaders.

6.4 Conclusion

Bearing in mind that there is no monolithic African culture, this chapter explored the issue of culture from the perspective of policymakers at the African Union Commission as well as discussion in the literature.

Substantive representation can be assessed at both the micro- (individual) and macro- (institutional) levels. This is done by assessing issues that can affect the actualisation of women's political empowerment at both levels through the complex social construct of gender, which is embedded in social norms. These social norms dictate how men and women must behave and are cultural. Some of those interviewed cited culture as being the problem, whereas others did not see culture as the problem at all, but confidence and competency. Culture can be reproduced with or without the knowledge of those that are within a particular group setting; thus creating 'boxes' of behaviour for different individuals that can be intersectional. Moreover, this determines, to a large extent, what is perceived as masculine or feminine, and can result in gender stereotypes and the ostracisation of those who break free from those 'boxes'.

These gender portrayals may affect women in politics, as they are expected to portray a particular demeanour in society, one that is subservient to men, as women are typically socialised for the private space while men are socialised for the public space. The entrance of women into political institutions of decision-making has been met with acceptance and different kinds of resistance, subtly or overtly, due to reasons such as the toxic hegemonic masculine character of political institutions. Thus, women may become intimidated by these spaces, they may be expected to take on the personification of a 'male' character to be viewed as leadership qualified, and some can also do well depending on their confidence and psychological state. Resultantly, women in politics have been undervalued and perceived as threats by men politicians, meaning there is a need to deconstruct the political hegemonic masculinities that are present in African political institutions.

Unfortunately, placing women in political institutions of decision-making does not mean sexism within those institutions has been resolved. Sexism affects women's willingness to pursue political careers, whether it is direct or ambient sexism. Sexism in political institutions can consciously or subconsciously affect the psychological state or willingness of women political leaders to be vocal or 'noticed', which affects women's political empowerment, their ability to be critical actors and to perform critical acts to actualise substantive representation. Therefore, to achieve women's political empowerment in the African context, change will need to be encouraged by both the policy formulators and the communities themselves.

Men and women are different, and they lead differently; different strands of feminism understand this differently, but nevertheless, the political environment remains hostile to women. The hostility manifests in various ways, for example when Thokozane Khupe was called a prostitute and faced verbal abuse because of her political ambitions. Therefore, expecting women to act like men politicians masks potential benefits that can be actualised from the way women lead as women. The micro-aggression of differences in media coverage of men and women politicians does not assist in mitigating the challenges that women politicians face. As the media tends to focus on women's appearance, a woman political leader may be intelligent, but this is

disregarded, and she needs to be able to continue despite what media may say about her appearance, character, or marriage.

A quota system is a tool that can be used to provide women with access but expecting the quota system to give women confidence is far-fetched. Confidence affects individual agency and women who cannot exhibit agency can fail to speak up when it matters most. Moreover, women have to manage gender dynamics that are present in political institutions where they want to be perceived as assertive and confident but not as talkative and bossy. Furthermore, women are affected by the institutions of marriage and mothering, because according to research, women tend to work in anticipation of marriage and starting a family. Once these two institutions are present in a woman's life, there is an expectation by society that she will either stop working or face various forms of discrimination for continuing with certain work.

All these factors influence a woman's worldview and state of mind, and they can become psychological barriers. Therefore, the new challenge for women pursuing a political career or a career in general is the work-life balance. Women in politics have to overcome and face the double barrel of stress from responsibilities at home and political office. Thus, a woman political leader must have the ability to adapt and manage the expectations on her from both the private and public space. So, a woman political leader faces both external and internal pressure, and as she deals with complex issues; she needs to believe that she can lead. This is an awareness that must be combined with political competence.

Having the ability to solve problems such as this then influences the strategies, positionality and opinions in policy formulation, implementation, and political negotiations of a woman political leader. Quotas do solve unequal representation in the short term; however, in the long run, other issues need to be addressed or else women's substantive representation will not be attained. Quotas are perceived as a means to address unequal representation (which is descriptive) but lacking in addressing competencies (which is substantive representation).

The multifaceted, systemic injustices, and inequalities that women on the continent have faced will need to be considered and addressed for gender policies and

mechanisms on the continent to be successful. There is a need for proper planning, research, and ownership of gender policies by targeted beneficiaries, in this case, women. All citizens must be involved in the agenda of dismantling gender inequalities on the continent and as the continental body, the AU will need to continue to lead by example internally and externally.

This chapter argued that addressing these issues will foster change to the limited idea that simply increasing the numbers of women in institutions of political decision-making will result in the empowerment of women. Thus, encouraging a shift in focus from a critical mass to the critical acts of women political leaders. The next chapter presents the main arguments and conclusion for the overall thesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

Throughout the research, an integration of the concepts of empowerment, representation, critical mass, and critical acts was investigated to answer the main research question, which was "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?" This main question gave rise to the research problem under investigation, which was "The use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity and equality".

Importantly, the research was conducted with a focus on the African context, where a meso 'network' analysis has been lacking, as the three levels of political institutions – which are the African Union (AU) (continental institution), Southern African Development Community (SADC) (regional institution), and Zimbabwe (national institution) – have not been examined simultaneously. The key to note is that although all three levels of political institutions have policies aimed at gender mainstreaming, each has different priorities, which is at the crux of the problem in terms of the implementation of the policies. These differences are apparent in terms of advocacy, follow-up, and monitoring of gender instruments for women's political empowerment. Also, although gender quotas have been implemented by the three levels of political institutions, what these quotas fail to address is the social meaning of women's empowerment and women's equality and equity.

This concluding chapter is presented as follows: firstly, an outline of discussions present in the six chapters of the thesis. Secondly, the main arguments of the thesis are set out by presenting the findings of the sub-research questions. Thirdly, the contributions of the thesis to women's political empowerment in Africa and the scholarly literature are presented. Lastly, the thesis presents recommendations for policymakers and future research.

7.2 Overview of preceding chapters

The structure of the thesis was divided into seven chapters. Chapter one was foundational and introduced the background of the study, a global history of women's rights and policy formulation, the research problem, aims, objectives, design, foundations of feminism, key concepts, and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter two introduced the four main types of political representation, namely formal representation, symbolic representation, descriptive representation, and substantive representation, introduced by Hannah Pitkin in 1967. Formal representation involves expectations in law in that women have a right to take part in politics equally with men. Symbolic representation occurs when a representative becomes a recognisable "symbol", with an inferred-upon meaning, for and by a group previously excluded in institutions of political decision-making (Pitkin 1967). Descriptive representation is largely about "identity", the need and ability for the represented to be able to identify with their representative, especially for historically disadvantaged groups. Lastly, substantive representation is about what representatives "actually do"; it moves beyond their presence within institutions towards how those positions obtained by representatives are used, and the agency and participation of those representatives.

Moreover, chapter two explained the main concepts of the thesis, which were critical mass and critical acts, as well as empowerment. Critical mass is an interdisciplinary concept that is used to argue that when a group reaches a certain size (or percentage of the whole), "change" will occur, whatever the desired outcome or change that is being pursued by the group or individuals. The challenge, however, is that the concept is under-theorised and an exact percentage or number of critical mass is debatable. Differently from this, "critical acts" is an umbrella term referring to various actions that influence change, despite group dynamics or group size, and critical acts by critical actors tend to occur despite gender. This means that either women or men can critically act on behalf of a group and produce results. Lastly, empowerment was discussed, and it was noted that empowerment is a complex interdisciplinary and multidimensional concept. For this thesis, empowerment was applied as a motivational construct, meaning the recipient of empowerment is "enabled". It is crucial to note that, although empowerment falls within the discipline of International Relations, it "cuts

across" different fields of research and development, as the concept is embedded within various disciplines and historically was not inherently political.

Chapter three discussed and explained the lens of the constructivist worldview, through which this thesis was able to understand the social meanings attached to women's political empowerment in Africa. The thesis applied a qualitative research approach to understand the how and why of women's political empowerment in Africa. The case study phenomenon under investigation was women's political empowerment in Africa through the cases of the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe. Data to address the research questions was collected through a document analysis of 20 gender scorecards and gender barometers, seven interviews with political elites from the African Union Commission, and desktop research. Data obtained was analysed inductively, meaning themes that were drawn from the data (key concepts and meanings) are what became relevant to describe and understand the phenomenon under investigation.

In chapter four, key documents were analysed in relation to gender mainstreaming through a meso analysis of the AU, the SADC, and Zimbabwe. The process of a meso analysis was applied in that the linkages/network of the three political institutions were evaluated to establish both similarities and differences in pursuit of women's political empowerment on the continent. Importantly, in the African context, the meso analysis has been lacking, as the three levels of political institutions have not been examined simultaneously. Also, the chapter provided an overview of women in African politics and raised the challenge of how African states commit to gender policies and agreements that are usually "shelved" post-agreement. Moreover, this chapter looked at the gender agendas that have shaped the framework of gender mainstreaming for the three institutions. The main assumption by these bodies is that descriptive representation is what will bring about women's political empowerment. This speaks to the lack of political will by different political actors, a potential lack of vision or insight as well as the disconnect between policy makers and realities on the ground? The two main challenges prevalent within all three institutions is that there are structural issues and a lack of continuity.

Chapter five presented the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment by discussing the perceptions of women's political empowerment by representatives at the African Union Commission. The chapter explained that quotas must be applied in conjunction with other indicators, as quotas are not effective in isolation. Moreover, the chapter explained how substantive representation can be understood from two levels: the individual and the institutional. Significantly, the chapter also highlighted the principle of subsidiarity, where the AU only acts on behalf of its regional economic communities when and if they are incapacitated to do so. Lastly, this chapter provided perceptions on women's representation, capacity, the adequacy of the quota systems and finally, the operationalisation of gender policies.

Chapter six elaborated on substantive representation and provided an understanding of women's political empowerment by representatives at the African Union Commission. Moreover, the chapter reiterated that the underrepresentation of women is not just a question of numbers, but it is systemic and reflects structural inequalities and injustices. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted that women in politics are affected by gender expectations placed on them through socialisation and the portrayal of women politicians in the media. Additionally, this chapter provided perceptions on the socialisation of genders, the toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics, the confidence of women in leadership, leadership, and psychological hindrances and finally, gender policy gaps that hinder implementation. The main findings concerning gender policy gaps that hinder implementation were that there is an undue and double-bind of expectation placed on women political leaders, as women politicians continue to be held to a different standard than men. Additionally, there is the challenge of differences in policy prioritisation and policy ownership, which hinders policy success and achievement of gender mainstreaming objectives.

7.3 Reflections on the argument

Throughout the thesis, the main argument has been that there is a need to move away from fixating on a critical mass towards obtaining critical acts by critical actors, as this would lead to a more effective actualisation of women's political empowerment.

The initial hypothesis of the study is that the use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making'

ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity and equality. Based on the current findings, within African culture, some women have been socialised to only operate in the private realm (home). Hence, their entrance into the public realm (politics) has challenged certain generational socio-cultural dynamics. These were investigated and holistically addressed through the thesis by explaining that simply focusing on a critical mass (quotas) of African women in politics is insufficient; going beyond this to encourage the critical acts of women in politics will result in the attainment of (1) greater agency, (2) choice and (3) participation of women in politics. This was significant for the thesis because it challenged the idea/concept of representation (what it means to have woman political leaders in different capacities). Having more women in politics does not simply lead to their empowerment; this is a "descriptive" form of representation and what institutions must attain is a "substantive" form of representation.

The hypothesis focused on addressing African women in politics: to provide them with access, competence, and fairness of treatment, as women's political rights and responsibilities must not be impeded because of their gender. The interview data pointed to the ways culture and socialisation continue to impede women's involvement in politics, but also showed that it does not need to be a threat. An analysis of the literature and practice reflected that training has been provided but has not necessarily been relevant, and it has been in most cases exclusive to women, excluding men. The subsequent exclusion of men from the pursuit of women's political empowerment has created a sense of lack of ownership by men, and this was reflected in some of the interview data. Additionally, the literature reflected that women's rights are human rights; therefore, the inclusion of both women and men is beneficial for the gender sensitisation of political institutions.

Various examples emerged in the literature, document analysis, and interview data on how women are treated in politics, whether as women in office, political candidates, or voters. Firstly, women politicians experience various forms of political violence that emerge as sexism, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. In 2019, a global study was conducted that reflected that there were 156 political violence events that targeted women (Ratcliffe 2019). For example, in Zimbabwe, the July 2018 elections were mired in violence directed at both women politicians and women voters (Zengenene &

Susanti 2019). Secondly, women in politics experience targeted body shaming through media attention that is brought to their bodies and the way they dress (Drenjanin 2019). This is a discriminatory practice that focuses on women politicians' appearance instead of their contributions in office, an experience that men politicians rarely encounter.

Women politicians are also made to feel incompetent; yet, what is lacking is capacity building and financial support. Capacity building is a means of enhancing one's skills, and at times women are placed into office without training or investment in their skills (Cheeseman & Dodsworth 2019). This results in biases against women politicians and questions around their capacity as leaders when what is lacking is training to enhance skills. Women politicians may struggle to access political meetings and to access socio-economic resources for them to effectively carry out their duties, which in turn incapacitates them (Ouedraogo & Ouedraogo 2020). A major challenge that women politicians encounter is that of tokenism, where women are "given" political positions by men politicians and then these women subsequently "owe" these men. This happens through the quota system. At times, women are placed in positions of power simply to "prove" that the institutions are non-discriminatory, and this is tokenism (Byarugaba 2021). However, actual change and transformation will be lacking, and those women politicians will not be empowered.

The examples above of some challenges faced by women politicians are not addressed by the unilateral application of gender quotas. Gender quotas introduce women into political spaces, and they provide access and descriptive representation. However, this does not translate to the transformation of perceptions concerning women in politics, the ability of women in politics to influence policies or the ability of women in politics to effectively execute their duties.

This research also addressed socio-economic and socio-political issues that can have a profound impact on the deep and systemic challenges of inequality within political institutions of decision-making that women seek to take part in. The notion that women's issues will be addressed by the increased number of women in political institutions of decision-making is inaccurate. While a series of policies and action plans have been carried out, they have not fully addressed the quandary women face as far

as political empowerment is concerned. In terms of policies, formal commitments have been made by member states of the AU; however, concrete action is still lacking, and commitment levels are not equal to implementation.

The main gender strategy document (in conjunction with other commitments) guiding the AU gender strategy is the 2009 gender policy, which was developed into the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028 Strategy. The main gender strategy document (in conjunction with other commitments) guiding the SADC gender strategy is the 2007 SADC gender policy, while the main gender strategy document (in conjunction with other commitments) guiding the Zimbabwe gender strategy is the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy: 2013-2017. These gender policies inform the assessment tools used to evaluate progress towards women's political empowerment through the AU gender scorecard indicators, SADC gender barometer indicators and Zimbabwe SADC gender barometer indicators. The commonality between these three is the use or encouragement of quotas to increase women's political participation and the use of percentages (numbers) to assess women's political empowerment.

Although the AU (as the continental level) and SADC (as the regional level) have put passable gender policies in place and have brought about improvements in terms of the number of women in positions of political power, this has not meant a change or transformation in institutional culture towards women in politics. In relation to gender norms and gender sensitisation, it has not trickled down significantly to Zimbabwe (the national level). Moreover, the inherent challenge with the implementation of the three gender policies and agendas is that there are different priorities by the three institutions and that is the crux of the problem with the advocacy, follow-up, and monitoring of gender instruments for women's political empowerment in Africa.

7.4 Addressing the research questions

The main research question for the study is "How does the concept of women's political empowerment through the quota system of representation by AU gender instruments prove to be insufficient to meet its objectives?" This main question was divided into sub-research questions to answer this main question. The sub-research questions were addressed as follows:

7.4.1 Question One

In which way do quantitative variables overlook or undermine the qualitative dimensions of women's political empowerment?

This question was addressed in chapter 5 and an important question that arose within the chapter was whether quota systems increase the capacity of women when they are introduced to political spaces of decision-making, and whether they become empowered to act or make decisions once they have entered these political spaces. Quantitative variables focus on percentages and numbers, and these do not provide an in-depth understanding of an individual's experiences. Numbers do not inform us about the social costs or benefits of women entering politics; hence, this thesis highlighted the costs and benefits of women's entrance into politics on the African context by addressing this question.

This question speaks to the politics of presence. The politics of presence is what advocates for women to be represented within political institutions of decision-making. Increasing women's presence through quotas will increase the chances of issues related to women being addressed and or formulated into policies. Therefore, descriptive representation attained through quotas is significant in ensuring that the women politicians are "present" in politics. The politics of presence initiated the organisation of the four world women's conferences, from Mexico City in 1975 to Beijing in 1995, the establishment of the Women, Gender and Development Director of the African Union, the 2009 African Union Gender Policy, the 2007 Southern African Development Community Gender Policy and the 2013 Zimbabwe National Gender Policy.

However, despite the arguments for a politics of presence and women's descriptive representation through quotas to increase their numbers, the intersectionalities and "genderness" of women vary. Women's race, class, ethnicity, religion, interests, and affluence differ. This qualitative aspect is marginalised by quotas because women are not all the same and these differences, when not taken into consideration, will not result in addressing all women's issues. For example, Uganda reached a 40% critical mass and Rwanda reached a 48,8% critical mass but challenges facing women remain largely unaddressed in both countries. Moreover, women are the majority population

in most African countries, meaning having 10% of women in parliament does not reflect the over 50% of women in societies based on demographics. Thus, the quota system of representation overlooks this and mostly achieves the descriptive representation of women in politics.

Quotas tend to reflect the formal, descriptive, and symbolic form of representation, and these types of representation are mostly about "seeing" women in politics. This is necessary, as it leads to the attainment of the participation of women in politics to achieve women's political empowerment. However, attitudes to women in politics are not measured by quotas. In Africa, there tends to be a bias towards women in politics due to certain cultural perceptions. The attitudes are present both within and externally to institutions of political decision-making; they are displayed through women politicians placed by quotas failing to receive respect from both their political counterparts and voters. However, one respondent, KK, stated that despite certain attitudes and perceptions are women in politics, the women politicians needed to be confident in themselves to take on leadership positions.

Another issue that quotas overlook or undermine is that of capacity. Women's political empowerment is attained when women have both (1) greater agency and (2) choice. These two aspects speak to the capacity of the woman politician. This can be attained through capacity-building workshops and training. Men have been in political office longer than women; women cannot be simply placed into political institutions: they must be trained to have the capacity to fulfil their duties. Moreover, not only should women politicians be trained to be politicians, but women voters as well. Women voters may not have capacity due to not having adequate information, as well as hindrances caused by political violence. Women politicians and women voters' capacity is limited by violence because it is displayed in various forms not limited to sexual, physical and emotional abuse. For example, in Zimbabwe, women have faced gross violations of their human rights due to being targets of political violence.

Women politicians use their voices when they experience self-determination and autonomy. However, women in politics can be rendered voiceless by media despite their increased presence in politics. For example, in Kenya, the opinions of women politicians are deliberately omitted by media outlets. Thus, quotas may place a woman

into politics but without influence through the media, they are voiceless and fail to influence agenda-setting. Moreover, some women politicians may struggle with an inferiority complex, which hinders their ability to be effective political leaders.

There are three types of quota systems, namely constitutional quotas, election law quotas and political party quotas. What none of these three types of quotas address is "social meaning", as quotas mean different things to different people. A woman politician may be educated and qualified but still face structural barriers that have not been removed by the introduction of quotas. For example, some women politicians may not attend political meetings, there may be added pressure on women politicians to outperform men politicians and women politicians may be perceived as undeserving of their positions. A challenge that quotas undermine is that of tokenism, whereby woman politicians are "given" political positions, but they owe the men who placed them there or their positions are ceremonial, and they cannot use their influence or perceived power.

Lastly, quotas or quantitative variables overlook those tasked with the implementation of quotas. Those who implement quotas tend to be "politically weak" or at the grassroots level. They may not have been involved in the policymaking process and yet they are expected to implement the quotas. Without an inclusive approach that ensures that those that will be affected by gender mainstreaming initiatives are part of the process, a building process of regional economic communities from continental efforts and nation building from regional efforts, quotas will be minimally effective and simply achieve the descriptive representation of woman politicians.

7.4.2 Question Two

What other indicators have been developed (for example by the SADC gender barometers and other organisations) that measure women's political empowerment?

As the research problem states, "the use of quantifiable measurements through the variable of 'increase in proportion of women in politics and decision-making' ignores and marginalises other components of political empowerment that are crucial for ensuring equity and equality". The lack of alternative non-numerical variables by all three political institutions to assess the attainment of women's political empowerment

reflects the fact that a fixation on numbers is limiting and focuses mainly on a critical mass and the descriptive representation of women. Alternative non-numerical variables are crucial in achieving a proper realisation of women's presence within bodies of political decision-making. The main indicators developed by the AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe to measure the success or failure in attaining women's political empowerment were provided in detail in section 4.5.1, on women's political empowerment indicators.

The thesis proposes that qualitative methodologies can be used in conjunction with quantitative methodologies, which can be obtained through focus groups, attitudinal surveys, and social mapping tools (Demetriades 2007). A critical step is deciding what to measure and taking note of the following four challenges: firstly, change is a political process. Secondly, lack of data can lead to the biased neglect of certain indicators; thirdly, it is challenging to know why specific change has or has not happened, and fourthly, a failure to adapt gender indicators to a specific context can lead to their redundancy (Demetriades 2007*).* As both quantitative and qualitative gender indicators are developed for the three different levels, they need to inform one another (from the continental to the regional to the national), even as the indicators are developed to be context specific.

7.4.3 Question Three

> What are the implications of the fact that gender policy makers and politicians on the African continent tend to see an increased number of women in political positions as being the equivalent of gender empowerment?

Women's political empowerment does not occur in a vacuum. It takes place within a particular continental culture and system of traditions that for generations have determined what women can and cannot do. The introduction of women into politics challenges these traditions therefore perceptions are a key area of concern, and this goes beyond numbers. Hence, answering this question provided a scholarly understanding (which practitioners can use) of these perceptions and how to mitigate them to achieve the objectives of women's political empowerment.

When substantive representation is attained, representatives move from a critical mass towards critical acts. Without the attainment or assessment of critical acts by

women politicians, the focus will not be on "what these women are doing" but simply on their presence. Critical acts are attained when there is transformation and change in identity. Transformation occurs when the women politicians influence policies and change in identity occurs when there is a normalisation of women being politicians. The perception that the increased numbers of women result in their empowerment can be changed by acknowledging the influence of the following factors: the complexity of culture, the toxic and hegemonic masculinity of politics, and leadership and psychological hindrances that women politicians face.

Firstly, culture is complex. There is no monolithic culture in Africa; instead, there are diverse cultures with various degrees of influence concerning women's political empowerment and embedded within a culture are social norms and gender expectations. For most African societies, men are raised to be leaders while women are raised to be homemakers and caregivers. Additionally, culture can be societal, institutional, and individual; culture can happen within an individual and around an individual (Schein 2010).

In many instances, the social expectation for women is that they must be domestic and submissive, and this is restrictive to women in politics who have to navigate the value systems that they have been socialised into, especially within the African context. Women in leadership will be limited as long as they are viewed as portraying the "wrong" norms of their gender. When assessing women's political empowerment, it is crucial to ask whether this particular society has accepted that they can be led by a woman. If not, women will not be voted in or trusted, even by women. For some societies in Africa, the male child is raised to lead and provide for the home. To enable the male child to do this, they are taken to school, and they are trained from an early age to be in this position and role. Male children are even included in decision-making in the household, thus developing them from a young age to be decision-makers. The educational aspirations of the girl child are not viewed as important, and the girl child is mostly trained to cook and clean. Leadership skills are not transferred to the girl child, which in future affects her aspirations or confidence to one day become a leader.

In some instances, culture has also normalised incidences of sexism and made it difficult to identify these incidences. These incidences have caused women to be

"foreigners" in political spaces and women who manage to break free from social norms and cultural expectations tend to be ostracised. Culture is reproduced and most (once colonised) African societies have been founded on patriarchy, meaning there is a need for this recognition and awareness by political institutions, so that the perception that simply increasing the number of women politicians will lead to their empowerment can be overcome. In addition to social culture, there is a political culture. A political culture determines the organisational culture within political institutions and the general political culture within a particular state or provinces within a state, as well as regionally. Some political cultures are violent and perceived as "dirty" institutions that clean women must not be a part of. For most SADC member states, the political culture has been influenced by colonialism, liberation movements and a struggle for independence. Resultantly, this political culture has not always been woman-friendly, and quotas will not change this.

The higher women advance in their careers, the fewer women there are. In politics, this is partly a result of the toxic and male hegemony of politics in most African states. At times, the design of political institutions has excluded women, not just in terms of presence, but including contributions that women have made to political systems or institutions. Some male-dominated industries such as politics can intimidate some women, who end up under-performing; not because they are not qualified but because their positions are either fairly recent or the women politicians may not understand certain political practices. Some men politicians have perceived the entrance of woman politicians into "their" space as a threat, resulting in inaction. Thus, men need to be included in the process of gender mainstreaming so that they understand the importance of why women politicians are a necessity. Politics is not gender-neutral and gender policies or mainstreaming initiatives at times fail to recognise this.

Moreover, there is an expectation placed on women politicians to emulate men politicians. Hence, when women politicians' actions are perceived to be masculine, they can be understood as "acting like men". A woman politician can be assertive and that is perceived as masculine, and yet women and men can be assertive or decisive. In other instances, the personal lives of women politicians are scrutinised while those of men politicians are not. These differences are perpetuated by the media, who are concerned about women politicians in their personal capacity as opposed to

investigating the contributions they make in their positions of power. Both men and women must be included in the process of gender mainstreaming and advocacy for women's political empowerment, as the exclusion of men will create an "us versus them" doctrine, which will only perpetuate the cycle of the toxic and masculine hegemony of politics.

In some cases, women are not confident in themselves and their leadership abilities, notwithstanding that men politicians may experience the same issues. Training and support may be provided but women politicians need to believe in themselves and that they are capable to lead. At times the confidence of women is limited by the institutions of motherhood and marriage. In Africa, for most marriages, women are expected to play a subservient role to their husbands and there is an expectation that women should be taking care of their children at home. These two institutions may cause women to lack support, as there may be an expectation that women should only be at home, in the private space, catering to the needs of their families. Moreover, some women in Africa are ambitious before marriage and after marriage, they are not expected to continue working or being ambitious, as their working is only a "transition towards marriage".

Women politicians need to adopt coping mechanisms to help them manage the demands of work and family life to become empowered political leaders. Simply increasing the number of women politicians will not address this issue. For women in Africa, the private and public spaces are not necessarily separate to begin with; hence, the need for women politicians to strike a balance. The different life experiences of women politicians will determine their ability to be effective leaders; at the same time, political spaces need to change their view of women as well as certain unrealistic expectations placed on them. At times, women politicians face belittlement and ridicule, which is hidden by ambient sexism. This is when a woman experiences sexism as a bystander and they are resultantly consciously or subconsciously affected by this. The ability to address the issues highlighted above will create room for changing the perception that simply the increased numbers of women will result in their empowerment being changed.

7.4.4 Question Four

What are the challenges affecting the advocacy, follow-up and monitoring of gender instruments for women's political empowerment?

Paradoxically, as explained, 70% of member states of the AU have national gender policies; however, what is on paper is not the same as what is being implemented. This question allowed the thesis to address this question. The first challenge with the AU gender agenda is the principle of subsidiarity, whereby the AU will only act on behalf of its regional economic communities when incapacitated to do so. This is a bottom-up approach that influences the flow of policy formulation and implementation on the continent. The principle is noble, as it acknowledges the sovereignty of states, but it means the AU has to find alternative ways of encouraging states to honour their gender commitments. This means that the greater responsibility for implementing gender policies lies with the RECs of the AU.

The process for the implementation of gender policies is that the African Union Commission communicates with regional bodies and regional bodies with states. This means that the African Union Commission formulates policies, and the regional body and states implement these policies. The member states also have the responsibility of promoting and advocating for these policies; however, member states may fail to do so. This raises the challenge of the domestication of gender mainstreaming, which is the process of accepting and applying gender initiatives domestically, within states. This also speaks directly to the capacity or lack of capacity of domestic political institutions to implement gender strategies. States may not have the finances or expertise to implement gender agreements ratified at the regional or continental level. Consequently, agreements are not binding. It is within a state's prerogative to pursue its own interests and those interests may not be gender sensitive. Resultantly, finances may be channelled to other areas of interest while gender mainstreaming initiatives lack funding or support.

Another issue that adds to the challenge of attaining women's political empowerment is that at which level must this phenomenon be assessed? This is problematic because empowerment can be attained at the individual, community, environmental, or institutional levels. Moreover, empowerment is either subjective or objective, meaning it can be assessed either from the individual who subjectively perceives themselves

as empowered (which is an inward process) or an individual who is perceived by others to be empowered (which is an outward process). Not knowing at which level to assess women's political empowerment affects the monitoring of gender instruments. Resources may be spread too thin or applied incorrectly, which in turn affects gender mainstreaming.

Additionally, women's political empowerment tracking varies for all three institutions. The AU gender scorecard (AUGS) was ratified in 2015 and the evaluation system in the AUGS used the proportion of seats held by women. In 2016 another AUGS was released by the AU; however, in the period 2017 to 2021, the AU released gender scorecards that were not in line with the objectives of the 2015 gender scorecard. The SADC committed to releasing gender barometers to assess various aspects of women's empowerment in the region. However, the 2009 to 2018 SADC gender barometers focused on descriptive representation, while the 2019 gender barometer narrowed their focus of analysis to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) through the introduction of a #VoiceandChoice Barometer instead. For Zimbabwe, the main challenge of advocating, following up on and implementing gender instruments was that of "gatekeepers". These are individuals who do not give a chance to women politicians to become political leaders and political tensions render women politicians vulnerable due to political violence, lack of support and funding. The lack of continuity present in the gender agendas of the three institutions affected assessment, comparability, and achievement of objectives.

Another challenge affecting gender mainstreaming advocacy is the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system. The FPTP electoral system is not conducive to the application of gender quotas as compared with the proportional representation electoral system. The proportional representation system is more favourable to the appointment of women political leaders and countries with this electoral system tend to have more women in political institutions of decision-making. This system creates room for gender equality and women's participation in politics. The type of electoral system in place affects the success or failure of women politicians, as electoral systems determine how voting is done as well as how candidates are placed on ballot papers or run for office. Lastly, the assumption by these three institutions was that descriptive representation will bring about transformation and objectives met, towards

attaining women's political empowerment. Moreover, training of advocates, women voters and women politicians has been generic. Need-specific training is more effective than generic training. For example, in SADC, the percentages of women politicians fluctuated regionally, despite quota systems being in place.

There needs to be a connection between policy formulation, policy implementation and policy ownership to actualise women's political empowerment. When policies are formulated, they must address underlying structural root causes; without doing so, the policies may be rendered ineffective and lack of research before policies are formulated facilitates this problem.

7.5 Recommendations for policymakers

The thesis concludes by offering recommendations for future research in the field of women's political empowerment, specifically in Africa:

Any form of addressing the issue of women's political empowerment can only be done by first addressing the urgent need to change the attitudes of both men and women to women's gender equality and political empowerment so that they realise that it is possible on the continent despite various highlighted challenges. Change in attitudes can be done through re-education and community training programmes.

Civic education programmes to educate both men and women on the importance of both genders participating in politics and the advocacy for women's political empowerment. This can be integrated into school curriculums to create the relearning of gender roles, expectations, and the educating of both boys and girls that they are capable leaders. This can be achieved through the emphasis on equal opportunities for both girls and boys.

A second form of addressing the challenge to attaining women's political empowerment will require frameworks that integrate proper planning and in-depth research to understand the complex nature of the influence of culture and some hindrances for gender equality and women's empowerment, addressing bureaucratic

bottlenecks through gender sensitisation workshops, and training of civil servants who are expected to implement gender equality policies.

The quota system is insufficient when applied in isolation, particularly when women politicians lack training and knowledge. Therefore, a third form of addressing the challenge to attain women's political empowerment will be to provide training on what gender quota systems are. Several gender equality and women's empowerment policies reiterate the importance of women's gender quotas; however, the understanding and implementation has been inconsistent and at times done incorrectly. Thus, providing training to relevant political institutions as to what exactly a gender quota system is and how to move beyond it will be beneficial.

There needs to be career preparation for women politicians (and women in general) to fully participate in politics. For women to be able to participate with men *equally*, whether as political candidates or as voters, there is a need for women to be trained concerning political processes. "Women's political participation refers to women's ability to participate equally with men, at all stages, and in all aspects of political life and decision-making processes" (Sahu & Yadav 2018: 65).

The implementation of the above recommendations would contribute to improving the agency, capacity, and decision-making abilities of women politicians in Africa. Women politicians, political decision-making institutions, and communities have a part to play in addressing and solving the problem of women's political empowerment, because women's rights issues are not only women's issues but a human rights issue.

7.6 Limitations of the study and areas for further research

A key limitation of the study is that interviews were also supposed to be conducted at SADC and in Zimbabwe; however, due to the covid-19 pandemic, this became challenging, and interviews were only conducted at the African Union Commission in 2019, before national lockdowns were initiated in different African countries in 2020.

Further qualitative research is required to provide an additional understanding of African women's presence in institutions of political decision-making. Thus, the thesis proposes the following questions for further research:

- To what extent does the challenge of policy ownership hinder the African Unions' regional economic communities from addressing political violence targeted at women politicians within their regions?

- What tools can be developed to identify the subtle institutionalised incidences of sexism and discrimination targeted at women politicians based on their appearance?

- What coping mechanisms have African women politicians developed to manage their social and political lives to carry out their duties?

- How can government gender units that are politically weak and lack the necessary influence or financial backing be strengthened to implement their national gender policies?

- What change management strategies can be applied in political institutions that want to introduce quotas and create a gender-sensitive institutional culture?

- How can various media platforms be transformed to give African women politicians a voice?

- What context-specific qualitative indicators can be developed to measure women's political empowerment in the SADC region and Zimbabwe?

- What political processes can be applied to adapt continental gender indicators to the regional and national levels, while being both context-specific and transformational?

7.7 Conclusion

The unique contribution of the thesis was the meso 'network' analysis of women's political empowerment in Africa, by linking the macro- to the meso- and micro- levels of analysis. The AU, SADC, and Zimbabwe all have gender policies; nevertheless, all three institutions have different (gender) priorities, which is the crux of the problem with regard to the advocacy, follow-up, and monitoring of gender instruments for women's political empowerment. This raises the challenge of the domestication of gender mainstreaming, which is the necessary process of accepting and applying gender initiatives domestically within states. Both SADC (regional) and Zimbabwe (nationally) have made efforts towards formulating policies for increasing the numbers of women politicians within their institutions. Nevertheless, this has not translated to a change in institutional culture in relation to gender norms and gender sensitivity.

In the light of this, the thesis argued that we need a comprehensive understanding of what 'empowerment' and 'representation' mean on the African continent with regard to women's political empowerment. The thesis contributed to a deeper understanding of what it means to achieve women's presence within bodies of political decision-making. The thesis did this by advocating for a shift away from focusing on a critical mass towards attaining critical acts of African women in politics.

Affirmative action through the introduction of quota systems will assist in achieving women's empowerment, but a sole reliance on these quantitative numerical percentages is insufficient, as there are other factors to consider. The three different types of gender quotas, which are constitutional quotas, election law quotas and political party quotas, are relevant as they encourage the descriptive representation of woman politicians. However, what quotas do not address is their 'social meaning', as quotas mean different things to different people. A woman politician may be educated and qualified but still face structural barriers that have not been removed by the introduction of quotas.

Paradoxically, as explained, 70% of member states of the AU have national gender policies; however, what is on paper is not the same as what is being implemented. The quota system of representation *is* an entry point for women and the thesis does not undervalue this; however, the argument that it is insufficient is the driving force behind the need to consider alternative indicators for measuring women's political

empowerment. The thesis did this by highlighting the different forms of representation and indicating that the desirable form of representation is the substantive representation of women in politics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: African Union Interview Schedule

Topic: 'The Insufficiency of the Quota System: A Reconceptualization and Meso-Analysis of Women's Political Empowerment in Africa'.

Time of Interview…………………………….

Date of Interview……………………………..

Duration of Interview…………………………

Place of Interview…………………………….

Male or Female……………………………….

Interviewee……………………………………

Alias…………………………………………...

Questions for the African Union Commission Policy Makers/ Implementers

1   Can you explain to me how you understand 'empowerment' generally?

2   Can you explain to me how you understand women's political empowerment?

3   Can you explain to me how you understand 'representation' generally?

4   Is the quota system of representation adequate to ensure women's political empowerment?

5   Is the agenda to empower women politically perceived as a threat to men's masculinity, perpetuating women's marginalisation?

6   How do you think men perceive the emergence of women in positions of political leadership in the AUC?

Is there anything you would like to add?

7   Can you explain to me how you understand 'gender' (socialisation)?

8   Politics has generally been dominated by the presence of men, in your opinion; can women be effective political leaders?

9   How does gender (socialisation) influence the role that women are expected to enact in the public realm as compared to the private realm.

Is there anything you would like to add?

10   Can you explain to me how you understand 'culture'?

11   How does culture indirectly affect women's confidence to aspire for leadership positions while indirectly perpetuating cultural expectations of women.

12   The cultural barriers to women's political participation are predetermined by attitudes, which results in women lacking support. Can this lack of support for women political leaders be changed?

13   Does the AU Gender Scorecard inform the SADC Gender Barometer (REC) and the Zimbabwe Gender Barometer (state)?

14   Is there a harmonious flow between the three gender policies towards gender mainstreaming?

15   Has the presence of Women in the AU changed how women's issues are dealt with or placed on the agenda?

Is there anything you would like to add?

--END OF INTERVIEW--

ADDENDUM

The PhD journey

The researcher, as I refer to myself throughout the thesis, gained an interest in women's (political) issues during post-graduate studies.

The focus on Africa is primarily due to being a young black woman in Africa who has faced various manifestations of disempowerment due to race, class, gender, and culture. This helped the researcher see the research through and develop a resolve in the midst of grappling with political instability, financial uncertainty, lack of motivation, the process of drafting and redrafting, and writing and rewriting. The process has not just been about the contribution the thesis will make to the body of literature, but how the researcher has developed through the four-year process.

A great challenge of the study faced by the researcher was the complexity and 'newness' of women's political empowerment in the African context. It is a broad phenomenon that addresses complex constructs and themes such as presenting a 'third-world' perspective, various tenets of African feminism, gender, representation, and culture. These are constructs that overlap and intersect various disciplines; thus, the researcher had to present wide-ranging scholarly arguments in the most relevant way possible to address the research question. Resistance to women's political empowerment has not necessarily been overt, as policies presented to empower women, present themselves as gender-sensitive, despite lacking in addressing women's issues.

A challenge for the researcher was recognising the overlapping cultural, structural, and institutional barriers to women's political empowerment, as all three are different. Suggesting a shift towards critical acts as opposed to a fixation on a critical mass was not easy, as there are both internal and external factors that affect how women enact leadership. Grappling with the concept of women's leadership was convoluted as women's presence in politics has at times been mired by hostility. All through the research process, the researcher had to be aware of this.

Another challenge was navigating the uncertainties that arose due to the global pandemic, covid-19 (caused by SARS-CoV-2). This introduced new forms of stress, also caused by the limitations of in-person meetings, lockdown regulations and various restrictions. However, opportunities for online supervision provided means to continue with research, mental support, and mentorship throughout the research process.

--END OF ADDENDUM--