



An Investigation Into Women's Low Participation In Political Activities: A Study Of Kasama District Northern Province Of Zambia

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Abstract- Women's participation in political activities is a key pillar of democratic governance and sustainable development. However, in many developing countries such as Zambia, women remain underrepresented in political leadership. This study investigated the factors contributing to low participation of women in political activities in Kasama District of Northern Province, Zambia. A mixed-method research design was employed, involving 60 respondents drawn from political leaders, community members, and aspiring female politicians. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that women's participation is hindered by socio-cultural barriers, economic constraints, and institutional challenges. Patriarchal norms, domestic responsibilities, lack of financial resources, and biased political systems were identified as major obstacles. The study recommends gender quotas, financial empowerment, mentorship programs, and community sensitization as strategies to improve women's political participation. The study contributes to policy discussions on gender equality and inclusive governance.

Keywords: Women, Political Participation, Gender Equality, Zambia, Barriers.

I. Introduction

Women's participation in politics is essential for inclusive governance, democracy, and national development. Globally, there has been increasing recognition of the need to include women in decision-making processes. According to the United Nations (2015), gender equality in leadership leads to improved policy outcomes and social development.

Despite these efforts, women remain underrepresented in politics, particularly in developing countries. In Zambia, women hold a small percentage of political positions compared to men. This situation is even more pronounced in districts such as Kasama, where cultural and economic factors limit women's involvement.

The absence of women in leadership positions affects decision-making processes because issues affecting women and communities may not be adequately addressed. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing women's political participation is important for promoting equality and development.

II. Problem Statement



Although Zambia has implemented policies to promote gender equality, women's participation in political activities remains significantly lower than that of men. In Kasama District, women face multiple challenges that prevent them from engaging fully in political processes.

These challenges include cultural beliefs that limit women's roles, lack of financial resources, and discrimination within political institutions. As a result, women are underrepresented in leadership positions, which negatively affects inclusive governance and community development.

III. Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to:

- Identify socio-cultural barriers affecting women's participation
- Examine economic challenges limiting participation
- Explore institutional barriers in political systems
- Propose strategies to enhance women's political involvement

IV. Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Sample Size

A total of 60 respondents were selected:

- Political party officials
- Councillors
- Female politicians
- NGO representatives
- Community members
- Data Collection Methods
- Questionnaires (quantitative data)
- Interviews (qualitative data)

Data Analysis

- Quantitative: Frequencies and percentages
- Qualitative: Thematic analysis

V. Findings and Analysis



Socio-Cultural Barriers

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Patriarchal norms	50	83%
Domestic responsibilities	45	75%
Social stigma/resistance	35	58%

Explanation

- Socio-cultural barriers were identified as the most significant factor affecting women's participation.
- Patriarchal norms (83%): Society views leadership as a male role. Women are discouraged from participating in politics because it is seen as inappropriate for them.
- Domestic responsibilities (75%): Women are expected to manage households, leaving little time for political activities.
- Social stigma (58%): Women who participate in politics face criticism, ridicule, and lack of support.
- These factors create a negative environment that discourages women from entering politics.

Economic Barriers

Economic Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of campaign funds	52	87%
Limited access to loans	40	67%
Financial dependence	38	63%

Explanation

Economic barriers were also found to be critical:

- Lack of funds (87%): Political campaigns require money for transport, publicity, and logistics. Many women cannot afford these costs.
- Limited access to loans (67%): Women lack collateral to access financial support.
- Dependence on men (63%): Women often rely on male family members, limiting their independence.
- This financial disadvantage makes it difficult for women to compete with male candidates.

Institutional Barriers



Institutional Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Biased nominations	48	80%
Limited mentorship	42	70%
Male-dominated systems	45	75%

Explanation

Institutional barriers include:

- Biased nominations (80%): Political parties favor male candidates.
- Limited mentorship (70%): Women lack guidance and support in politics.
- Male dominance (75%): Leadership structures are controlled by men.
- These barriers prevent women from accessing leadership positions.

Strategies to Improve Participation

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Gender quotas	50	83%
Financial support	48	80%
Mentorship programs	45	75%
Community sensitization	42	70%

Explanation

Respondents suggested several strategies:

- Gender quotas ensure representation of women
- Financial support helps women run campaigns
- Mentorship programs build confidence and skills
- Community sensitization changes cultural beliefs

VI. Discussion

The study confirms that women's political participation is affected by interconnected factors. Socio-cultural norms shape attitudes toward women, economic constraints limit their opportunities, and institutional barriers restrict access to leadership.

These findings align with feminist theory, which argues that gender inequality is embedded in social and political systems. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach involving policy changes, economic empowerment, and cultural transformation.

VII. Conclusion



The study concludes that women's participation in political activities in Kasama District is significantly lower than that of men due to socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers.

Without deliberate interventions, gender inequality in political leadership will continue. Promoting women's participation is essential for inclusive governance and sustainable development.

VIII. Recommendations

- Implement gender quotas in political systems
- Provide financial support for female candidates
- Establish mentorship programs
- Conduct community awareness campaigns
- Reform political institutions

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