

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**MITIGATING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN LEADERS WITHIN
POLITICAL PARTIES IN NAIROBI**

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**MITIGATING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN LEADERS WITHIN
POLITICAL PARTIES IN NAIROBI**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management—Peace Studies in the Faculty of
Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology**

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I, Walkowa Akinyi Odinga, hereby declare that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the paper.

Signed



Date

29/10/24

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all women who embody resilience, inner strength, and fortitude in the face of adversity, starting with my beloved mother, Gaudence Achieng Adeya. She has been my closest confidant, offering unwavering emotional support, encouragement, and steadfast faith in my abilities, especially during our most challenging times. My mother has been a constant source of inspiration, my staunchest advocate, and the foundation of my strength. Throughout my doctoral journey, she has served as my anchor, guide, and muse, consistently lifting my spirits and reinforcing my determination. I am both humbled and awestruck by the depth of her love, trust, and companionship. My heartfelt appreciation goes out to you, Mum! This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

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ABSTRACT

Political institutions in Kenya have long been criticised for insufficient efforts to promote gender equity and enhance women's participation. Notably, patriarchy continues to dominate decision-making processes, directly impacting women's potential. This thesis focused on structural violence against women leaders within Nairobi's main political parties, examining the concept of structural violence in the political institutions. While direct violence, such as electoral intimidation and physical attacks, has drawn attention, this study focuses on structural violence: the systemic and institutional barriers that impair women's political participation. These include exclusion from political networks; male-dominated party hierarchies; financial barriers; and the lack of internal policies addressing gender-based inequities. Unlike direct violence, structural violence is often invisible but deeply embedded in party practices and norms. The study explored through action research how harm, caused by these institutions or social structures, can be mitigated. The study aimed to understand and address structural violence against women leaders in political parties by engaging both women and men, with the aim of exploring the basis, nature, and extent of this violence. This thesis employed a mixed-method, explanatory sequential action research design, incorporating quantitative, qualitative, and applied intervention approaches. Findings examined the characteristics, prevalence, origins, and impacts of structural violence against women leaders in Nairobi County's major political parties. An evaluation of the effectiveness of past and current efforts to address this issue within Kenya's major political parties followed. The study engaged 88 participants quantitatively and 15 qualitatively. This study identified extensive structural violence against women in Kenyan political leadership, including exclusion from political networks, male dominance in parties and institutions, and electoral violence against female candidates. It also highlighted financial constraints on female candidates, contributing to disparities in political power and representation. The final objective involved implementing and assessing short-term outcomes of interventions using participatory action research (PAR) in collaboration with stakeholders. The study identified that there are no policies or interventions within political parties or broader structures to address the ongoing psychological and physical violence and structural obstacles faced by women. The findings reveal persistent systemic barriers to gender equity in Kenya's political institutions.

Keywords: structural violence, political parties, violence; women; Leadership, action research

ABBREVIATIONS

CBPR	Community-based participatory action research
CCM	Critical Communicative Methodology
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DP	Dialogue Participants
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDPV	Gender-Differentiated Political Violence
GMPV	Gender-Motivated Political Violence
GTE	Gender Transformative Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IO	International organisations
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KKA	Kenya Kwanza Alliance
MCA	Members of County Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
ORPP	Office of Registrar of Political Parties
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

QBP	Queen Bee Phenomenon
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDA	United Democratic Alliance
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UDHR	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWIP	Violence against Women in Politics
WHO	World Health Organisation
YPAR	Youth Participatory Action Research
ZDHS	Zimbabwe demographic and health survey

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi, Kenya. The concept of structural violence refers to avoidable harm caused by institutions or social structures through the impairment of fundamental human needs. This definition was provided by a renowned peace scholar and Norwegian sociologist (Johan Galtung 1990 2010). Galtung proposed that hidden and systemic sources of violence can indirectly affect people. By far, his approach has enriched the understanding of peace concepts in studies and research of this nature.

African political institutions have long faced criticism for their inadequate efforts to promote gender equity and increase women's participation. It is still significant that patriarchy dominates decision-making in Africa. To the extent that this has directly affected women's potential to achieve their basic needs, the reality is that the institutions foment areas of latent violence against women in leadership. This exclusion has been extended to the political arena. There have been attempts to address inequality. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, there has been a growing recognition of the need for political parties to facilitate women's access to power and decision-making roles. Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2014) argues that political parties play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and women's political empowerment. Despite the awareness of gender issues within political parties, there is a need for pragmatic actions that institutionalise gender equality.

The subjects of gender equality and the advancement of women's participation in political institutions in Africa have been under scrutiny for a considerable period, with a prevailing observation of a lack of progress in these areas. While there have been efforts to promote gender equality and women's participation in politics and governance in Africa, challenges still exist, as exemplified by the cases of Kenya and

Ghana (Owiso and Sefah 2022). Women's rights to participate in political and decision-making processes face obstacles, hence necessitating the exploration of solutions to address these challenges.

Political parties in African states have been identified as significant barriers to women's political leadership, with biased leadership structures, nomination processes, and campaign financing practices that work against women (Aderayo 2022). This bias within political parties contributes to the under-representation of women in leadership roles and reinforces gender inequality in political spheres. The African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, popularly known as the Maputo Protocol, was adopted by the African Union on 11 July 2003. The Maputo Protocol requires governments to eliminate violence against women, as well as gender discrimination (Geng 2019; Amnesty International Publications 2005). The purpose of the Protocol is to eliminate discrimination against African women and to provide for wide-ranging social, cultural, political, economic, and other general welfare rights. The Maputo Protocol allows the emergence of three interrelated themes in the implementation of substantive equality for women: governmental commitment, the interaction between local culture and global norms, and women's voice and agency (Geng 2019). The Maputo Protocol guarantees the rights and equality of women on the continent. It complements the global women, peace, and security agenda (Sigsworth and Khumalo 2016). Since being ratified by the African Union in 2003, case studies of Malawi, South Sudan, Somalia, and Mozambique reveal that the implementation of the Maputo Protocol is slow and patchy. While this study does not directly engage with the Maputo Protocol, it highlights that the implementation of the protocol might have been expedited in Kenya and that structural barriers have inhibited its full application and usage. The existence of the Maputo Protocol has encouraged the participation of women in politics, but its efficacy has not been detectable.

Furthermore, the inadequate representation of women in leadership positions across various domains, including sports, is a result of systemic barriers such as the insufficient availability of education promoting gender equality within African cultural

practices. A United Nations report¹ provides statistics on the number of women presidents, parliamentarians, and those in local governments. As of October 2024, there are 29 countries where women have served as heads of government. The report points out that there has been an increase from 11 per cent in 1995 to 26,9 per cent in 2024 in the percentage of female parliamentarians. Sub-Saharan Africa has 27 per cent of female legislators, a number which is modest but not enough to fulfil the Maputo protocol tenets. The failure to achieve the percentage situated can be understood by the systemic obstacles. The systemic obstacles restrict women's access to leadership roles in diverse sectors of African societies. The experiences of women in academia further illustrate the systemic injustices rooted in ideologies of race, class, and patriarchy that perpetuate disparities in higher education institutions. This kind of institutional injustice reflects broader societal norms that marginalise women and restrict their advancement in traditionally male-dominated spaces (Maseti 2018).

African women's movements have challenged patriarchal norms by advocating for gender equality (Dancer 2018). By challenging stereotypes and promoting social change, these movements have encouraged the participation of women in politics. Asogwa and Odoh (2022) argue that masking traditions exemplify the gendered power dynamics and gender relations that shape socio-political spaces in these societies. These traditions provide insights into how gender and power intersect to influence social and cultural norms.

The overall aim of this study has been to understand structural violence against women leaders within political parties. To get a better understating of structural violence, this study engaged both women and men directly in the exploration of the basis, nature, and extent of structural violence against women in political leadership. The study used a participatory action research (PAR) approach to establish and test measures to address the situation based on the study findings. The study used a mixed-method approach not only to launch the research design but also to examine the participants' experiences, resulting in an in-depth and broad understanding of the

¹ (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>)

problem. Furthermore, some of the analyses presented in the study findings employ a narrative approach, given the complexity of structural violence.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The proportion of women in the Kenyan parliament reached a record 25.5% following elections conducted in 2022, representing an increase of 0.6%². This presents a steady but slow progress. The 2023 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report predicts that it will take another 50 years to achieve gender parity in parliaments worldwide.³ In 2021, only Rwanda, Cuba, and the United Arab Emirates had 50% or more female representation in parliament. In Kenya, the number of women in parliament increased from 10% to 19% following the implementation of new constitutional affirmative measures that required political parties to nominate more women in 2013.⁴ After the 2017 general elections, the number of women members of parliament increased to 22%, and the number of women senators increased to 31% (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics).⁵ However, women governors constituted only about 17% of the total number of governors in the country (Kaimenyi, Kinya, and Samwel 2013). While this indicates a considerable presence of women in Kenya's legislative bodies, there is still room for improvement to achieve gender parity. Studies on women's political representation have consistently shown that female legislators are more adept at advocating for women's interests as compared to their male counterparts, suggesting that increasing the number of women in the Kenyan parliament may result in a heightened focus on women-centric issues and contribute to a more diverse legislative agenda (Hömann 2020).

The ability to participate in a free and fair political process is one of the necessities of democracy. However, around the world, women are prevented from fully participating in political competition through intimidation and violence, sometimes visible or

² (<https://www.knbs.or.ke/>)

³ (<https://www.ipu.org>).

⁴ (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>).

⁵ (<https://www.knbs.or.ke/>).

sometimes hidden (Castillejo 2016; Krook and Sanín 2019). There have been cases when women have been beaten and killed by family members for voting for a candidate of their choice. Women experience violence across all political roles, from aspiring for a political seat to voting and employment within political parties or other electoral bodies.

1.2.1 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Recently, online platforms have emerged as a significant force in political discourse, with the potential to enhance women's participation in politics. Despite the potential to enhance women's political participation, Gichanga and Orembo (2020) posit that these platforms have exacerbated violence against women in political leadership roles in Kenya. The violence perpetuated through online platforms has deterred women from joining politics, and a lack of female decision-makers can have detrimental consequences for policy outcomes. Despite the toxicity of the online platforms, some women have conducted political meetings online and utilised hashtags for campaigns to overcome the structural barriers that seek to intimidate them from participating in fair political competitions.

Societal norms, as emphasised by (Biroli 2018), often view women as subordinates to male leadership rather than as leaders in their own right. This subordination of women can result in women facing violence due to their non-adherence to traditional gender roles, such as family caretaking. Women leaders are particularly vulnerable to specific forms of violence, including threats of divorce, social and family sanctions, moral and sexual purity harassment, and financial and economic intimidation. Following research carried out by Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo (2020), the conclusions drawn about women's participation in politics may be inherently biased against women due to the historical focus on men's experiences in studies of political violence, or because the obstacles faced by women do not always qualify as violence. Women in politics are frequently subjected to attacks based on their gender and their political roles (Biroli 2016; Biroli 2018; Krook and Sanín 2019). This violence is often linked to sexual morality and can occur in both private and public spaces (Huber and Kammerud 2017). Castillejo (2016) argues that women are generally less financially equipped than their

male counterparts, which limits their ability to exert influence, offer bribes, or mobilise male-dominated patronage networks.

1.2.2 POLITICAL ALLIANCES

In Kenya, there are two significant political alliances: the Azimio coalition and the Kenya Kwanza coalition, which comprises numerous political parties. The Azimio coalition is made up of nine parties: Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Jubilee Party, Wiper Democratic Movement, KANU (Kenya African National Union), NARC Kenya (National Rainbow Coalition), Democratic Action Party of Kenya (DAP-K), Movement for Democracy and Growth (MDG), Muungano Party and Party of National Unity (PNU). The other coalition Kenya Kwanza coalition is made up of seven parties: United Democratic Alliance (UDA), Amani National Congress (ANC), Ford Kenya, The Service Party (TSP), Democratic Party (DP), Chama Cha Kazi and Tujibebe Wakenya Party. These parties possess the potential to negatively influence the autonomy of institutions, such as the judiciary and parliament, when opposition and government parties cooperate, ultimately resulting in an uneven distribution of power in favour of the executive branch (Gichanga and Orembo 2020). (McGowan *et al.* 2018) explore the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals, arguing that there are significant gaps in the integration of the goals, particularly concerning gender equality and governance. They argue that women often face violence and discrimination, which can deter their participation fully in the economy and social spheres.

1.2.3 GENDER AND PEACE

There is a need for academic analyses to identify progressive measures based on empirical evidence to address these issues effectively. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but it is also a crucial foundation for constructing peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies (Roig, Aybar, and Pavía 2020). Gender-equal societies tend to experience fewer internal and external conflicts, emphasising the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in peace and conflict studies (Gizelis 2018). Millerd's (2023) paper establishes a relationship between gender equality and peace, particularly in the context of International Organizations (IOs). The study posits that higher levels of gender equality within states contribute to a greater likelihood of peaceful interactions among those states. In addition, she argues that the

characteristics of IOs, including their gender equality, play a crucial role in diminishing the likelihood of conflict. Specifically, the study finds that states that are part of multiple, densely gender-equal IOs, are less likely to engage in militarised disputes, suggesting that gender equality at the state level can have a pacifying effect when aggregated at the International Organisation level (Millerd 2023: 25). I aim to create a connection with this study, arguing that if the parliamentary becomes densely gender equal, it will reduce the likelihood of violence (physical or structural) against women.

Education, particularly Gender-Transformative Education (GTE), plays an important role in promoting gender equality and peace. UNESCO (2020) defines GTE as a critical, intersectional approach to teaching and learning that actively challenges and transforms gender inequalities within educational environments and society. GTE encourages students to question and deconstruct societal norms, particularly those related to gender, through active engagement and reflection on their own experiences. Müller and Bang-Manniche (2021) posit that GTE aims to challenge and change traditional gender norms and inequalities within educational settings. They argue that GTE extends beyond formal education to include non-formal education, focusing on creating equal access and participation. In practice, gender-transformative education means moving beyond traditional content delivery to guide students in developing critical attitudes and understanding complex realities that contribute to gender inequity (UNESCO 2020: 154). Müller and Bang-Manniche (2021) underscores the role of education in empowering both boys and girls to become active citizens who advocate for equality in their contexts. They also highlight the importance of GTE in fostering a critical awareness of gender stereotypes and encouraging all stakeholders, including learners, parents, and teachers, to challenge harmful social norms. Factors such as gender, education, profession, income level, gender roles, and culture shape attitudes towards domestic violence against women, highlighting the intricate interplay of social and cultural factors in shaping perspectives on violence against women (Rafi, Ali and Nawaz 2015). While this study is not about the education system, I borrow from the research to highlight how fostering positive attitudes towards gender equality in the education system is important in educating future and present politicians on the importance of gender equality. I assert that education, in the broader sense, is vital in dealing with structural violence and, by extension, encouraging gender equality.

The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 led to an increase in the number of women's seats in the national assembly through the establishment of women's representative seats. Kenya has a strong judiciary that has ensured compliance with its progressive bill of rights, including gender equality and other rights (Gichanga and Orembo 2020). The Constitution also includes provisions for the two-thirds gender rule, which requires that no more than two-thirds of the members of an elective body should be of the same gender. If the elective body fails to achieve 33% representation during elections, the gap is filled through nominations at the county assembly level. However, the National Assembly and Senate are required to enact legislation to ensure representation in these bodies. The Political Parties Act 2011 has been used to ensure respect for human rights and compliance with the two-thirds gender rule. Failure to comply with this rule can result in the political party losing funding (Gichanga and Orembo 2020).

Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP) is a pervasive issue that is often normalised as a routine aspect of political practices and power contests. Kuperberg defines VAWIP as 'acts or threats of violence resulting in physical, psychological, or symbolic harm or suffering to women involved in, or associated with politics' (Kuperberg 2018: 686). As a result, women are continually undermined and discouraged from engaging in politics through sexual and verbal attacks and other forms of harassment (Ballington 2018). While Section 27 of the Kenya Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act 2018, which prohibits cyber harassment, is among several laws aimed at addressing violence against women in the country, the effectiveness of implementing such laws remains largely inadequate. Consequently, women frequently experience political conduct that is indecent or offensive, hindering their willingness to participate in public life. Despite notable progress in addressing gender issues, structural violence against women persists, and in some cases, it is worsening. Women have been ridiculed for asserting their opinions, demanding equal treatment with their male counterparts, or fighting back against attacks (Krook 2018).

The UN Women Report of 2018 states that politicians use intimidation and violence to convey to women that they are not welcome or belong in the political arena⁶ Krook (2018) further argues that political violence aims to silence a competing perspective and is, therefore, issue-based; however, VAWIP specifically seeks to impede women's right to political participation and silence their voices. While there may be overlapping elements between these two forms of violence, women are more likely to experience both. They are targeted violently because they are women and because they are involved in politics. An intersectional perspective highlights that a woman's identity is complex and intertwined (Kuperberg 2018). Consequently, women are subjected to intersecting structures of oppression.

Research has also shed light on the media's portrayal of Kenyan politicians, revealing the level of visibility and attention given to these figures in the press. Examining the media's depiction of women parliamentarians can offer valuable insights into their public image and their representation in the political sphere (Ileri and Ochieng 2020). The effectiveness of gender quotas in boosting women's representation in parliaments has also been a topic of research in various contexts. Kilimo (2022) argues that the introduction of gender quotas in 2010 was meant to increase women's political representation. The implementation of the gender quota led to a notable increase in the number of women elected to political positions. For instance, after the 2013 elections, women held 21% of the seats in the national parliament, a significant rise from 9% in 2007. By the 2017 elections, this figure slightly improved to 22% in the national parliament, with some women also being elected as governors and senators (Berry et al. 2021). The quotas have led to an increase in the number of women nominated, but they have not significantly changed the underlying perceptions of women's roles in political life. Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2013) underlines the centrality of establishing sanctions, that is, legal frameworks that enforce gender quotas. While Kenya has made commendable progress in women's representation, understanding the impact of specific measures, such as gender quotas, on further promoting women's participation in the Kenyan parliament remains an area of interest for future research.

⁶ (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/06/annual-report-2018-2019>).

Additionally, studies have examined the influence of caucus groups and female leadership on parliamentary behaviour and representation.

The representation of women in the Kenyan parliament has significant implications for gender equality, policy outcomes, and societal progress. Understanding the factors that contribute to women's effective representation in the Kenyan parliament is critical for promoting gender equality and inclusive governance in the country. In Kenya, the long-standing struggle for women's political participation has persisted, with women playing significant roles in the fight for independence but facing challenges in securing political seats post-independence. (Illés and M. Mwangi 2024: 76-77) State that despite women's pivotal contributions during the liberation struggle, women found themselves marginalised in decision-making institutions in Kenya, with no women holding political office after independence. This lack of representation led to a significant under-representation of women in political spheres.

1.2.4 ACTIVE ROLE OF WOMEN AND PARTICIPATION

The introduction of the multiparty political system in 1992 marked a turning point for women's political engagement in Kenya. While the political culture and legal frameworks remained largely unchanged, the shift to a multiparty system opened up political space for women within civil society. This change allowed women to mobilise, articulate their demands, and actively engage with the state, paving the way for increased participation and representation of women in decision-making processes (Opoku, Anyango and Alupo 2018).

The promulgation of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya was a crucial milestone in the journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The constitution not only enshrined provisions aimed at promoting gender equality but also created opportunities for the participation and representation of women in decision-making bodies. The constitutional provisions, including the two-thirds gender rule, were instrumental in opening up spaces for women in political leadership (Owiso and Sefah 2022).

The active role of women in civil society has been vital in driving constitutional reforms, organising sensitisation programs, engaging in activism, implementing socio-

economic initiatives, and providing capacity building for women in political leadership positions. This collective effort has led to the emergence of a progressive women's movement that spearheaded the second liberation struggle, resulting in a significant increase of 9.8% in the number of women in parliament. The main aim of this movement was to challenge the patriarchal political culture by advocating for women's agendas through increased representation in parliament. As a result of these initiatives, there has been a noticeable improvement in human rights awareness, advocacy interventions, and policy strategies, with policymakers increasingly incorporating gender language and equality principles, albeit sometimes only rhetorically (Nzomo 2013; Jha and Sarangi 2018).

The global average of women's representation in parliament currently stands at 25.5%. Rwanda leads the East African region with 56% representation of women in parliament. Other African countries have also made progress, achieving a 33% threshold in decision-making institutions (Sojo *et al.* 2016; W and Reche 2019).^{*} However, a survey by the Ministry of Gender in Kenya revealed that while 30.9% of public service employees are women, a significant 72% of them hold non-decision-making positions, highlighting a disparity in women's roles within the public sector (Sundström and Stockemer 2021). Kenyan women face various obstacles, including political and institutional structures, cultural barriers, health challenges, limited access to education, and poverty, which contribute to this disparity in women's representation in decision-making positions.

Efforts to increase the representation of women in parliament have been driven by donor governments and international organisations, often emphasising a rights-based approach that focuses on the fundamental right of women to be represented in parliament (Corbett and Liki 2015). Studies have shown that achieving a critical mass of women in parliament is critical for substantive representation, as women MPs are more likely to advocate for women's interests when their numbers exceed a certain threshold (Bektas and Issever-Ekinci 2018). Moreover, Verge (2020) highlights the symbolic role of parliaments in representing gender equality, shifting the focus from how women in parliament symbolically represent women to how parliaments symbolically represent women as institutions.

Women in Ghana are reluctant to stand for parliament due to factors like the high cost of politics, the prevalence of insulting political tactics, and the recognition of parliamentary limitations (Bauer and Darkwah 2020). Conversely, Rwanda, with the highest percentage of women in parliament at 61.3%, has utilised legal mechanisms, including candidate quotas at all levels, to promote women's political representation (Madsen 2018). Research has also emphasised the need to address the underlying causes of women's under-representation in parliaments worldwide by examining the impact of constitutions on women's political agency (Austen and Mavisakalyan 2015; Galea and Gaweda 2018).

1.2.5 MEN IN POLITICS

Studies have shown that men continue to be over-represented in legislatures globally, highlighting the persistent gender imbalance in political representation (Galea and Gaweda 2018). Scholars have explored the role of formal and informal institutions in promoting women's political representation, with post-conflict contexts like Rwanda demonstrating high levels of women's representation in parliament due to legal frameworks supporting gender equality (Madsen 2018). The introduction of gender quotas as temporary special measures has also been identified as an effective strategy to increase women's representation in parliaments (Hidayahtulloh 2019).

In Indonesia, despite positive developments, women still face obstacles in getting elected to parliament, indicating ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity in political representation (Davies and Idrus 2018). The importance of party discipline and the parliamentary system in influencing the participation of female parliamentarians in decision-making structures has been underscored, suggesting that numbers alone may not be sufficient to drive substantive change in parliamentary debates and policies (Fokum and Fonjong 2018). Moreover, the role of women's movements in advocating for increased representation in parliaments has been instrumental in shaping political discourse and policy outcomes (Bochel and Bochel 2016).

The study on the influence of women's representation on key issues in parliament found that female MPs often have a less significant impact on the advancement of bills during parliamentary sessions (Joshi and Mason 2008). The adoption of gender

quotas and special measures has played a vital role in increasing women's representation in parliaments worldwide, with varying levels of success in different countries and regions (Azizah and Hidayatulloh 2019). Muryani *et al.* (2023) have emphasised the crucial need to address socio-economic factors, such as inequality and access to resources, which affect women's political roles, to improve women's political participation.

In summary, despite the progress made in increasing the presence of women in parliaments globally, challenges such as under-representation and gendered barriers persist, limiting the capacity of female MPs to advocate for women's issues in political debates effectively (Chaqués-Bonafont and Cristancho 2021). Junk, Romeijn and Rasmussen (2020) also highlighted the need to address gender inequalities in lobbying activities to ensure the equitable participation of women in influencing policy decisions. Additionally, studies have noted the impact of patriarchal cultures on women's political participation, underscoring the importance of establishing regulations to ensure and improve women's representation in parliament (Abdullahi, Williamson and Ahmed 2023).

The 2013 General Elections were conducted after the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, which stipulated that a single gender shall not hold more than two-thirds of the elective or appointive positions. The 2013 parliament saw women's representation increase from 9.8% to 19% due to the 47 women's seats created through affirmative action coupled with policies that required political parties to nominate women into parliament (Berry *et al.* 2021). However, this still falls below the expected 33.3% representation where the two-thirds gender rule is fully implemented (Kaimenyi, Kinya and Samwel 2013).

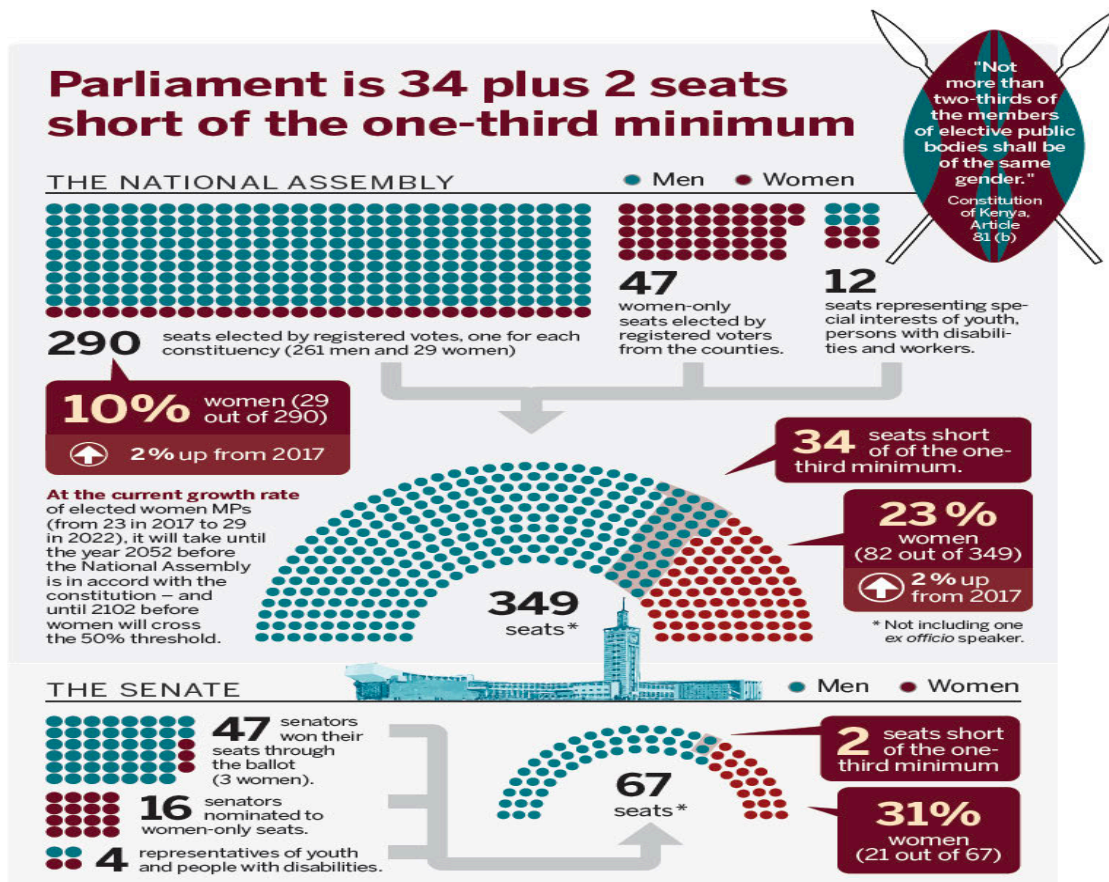


Figure 1. 1: Gender Distribution of the 2022 National Parliament of the Republic of Kenya (Source: Kenyatta 2023).

1.2.6 CHALLENGES

Women face significant challenges in attaining public political leadership positions, despite advancements in gender and civic awareness. These obstacles are perpetuated by deeply ingrained socio-cultural patriarchal values, which act as a barrier to women's participation in politics (Evans and Pfister 2020). Research shows that globally, women are under-represented in leadership roles, highlighting the persistence of gender disparities in political spheres. These disparities are exacerbated by unconscious bias, which presents a significant obstacle for women aspiring to reach senior leadership positions (Evans and Maley 2020). Although legislative efforts have been made to promote gender equality in the workplace, unconscious bias continues to hinder women's progress in attaining top leadership roles. Furthermore, women seeking to advance their leadership ambitions face difficulties in convincing others of their ability to hold executive positions (Wagner, Trimble and Sampert 2018b). Gender stereotypes and masculine-coded leadership

ideals often undermine women's perceived suitability and authority as top political leaders, contributing to their disadvantage in political leadership (Erikson and Josefsson 2023). The intersectionality of gender with race, ethnicity, and sexuality further complicates women's political consciousness, highlighting the interconnectedness of various forms of inequality in shaping women's experiences in leadership (Harnois 2015).

The approaches to competing for access to political leadership positions within mixed-gender groups indicate a complex interplay of social and biological factors influencing leadership dynamics (Smith *et al.* 2021). The perpetuation of gendered expectations that associate leadership with masculinity reinforces the notion that leadership is inherently male, limiting the emergence of diverse leadership styles and diminishing the pool of talents that women can bring to the political arena (Li 2024). This gendered expectation of leadership being a male domain contributes to the under-representation of women in senior organisational roles, such as in higher education contexts (Burkinshaw, Cahill and Ford 2018).

Outside of this gendered expectation, there are some reasons affecting women's participation. Different cultural practices, stereotypes, economic factors, and physical fitness requirements hinder women's progression to senior leadership positions in various national and regional contexts (Chawla *et al.* 2021). The dearth of women in political leadership roles is a crucial concern for democratic societies, highlighting the importance of women's input in shaping policy and governance decisions. However, utilising gender as a criterion for evaluating political leadership capabilities may restrict future opportunities for women in leadership positions (Inal 2015).

The involvement of women in decision-making processes at all levels is crucial for achieving the goals of peace, equality, and development. International conventions and agreements stress the importance of women's equal participation in political leadership to promote peace, security, and sustainable development. The UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security underscores the need for the full involvement and equal participation of women in decision-making processes to ensure comprehensive and effective governance. Women's political empowerment can have a positive impact on their entry into entrepreneurship by eliminating existing

constraints on women's economic activities (Goltz, Buche and Pathak 2015). The UN's Millennium Development Goals and subsequent Sustainable Development Goals have emphasised the importance of eliminating gender inequality and promoting women's participation in political leadership and governance (Azizuddin and Shamsuzzoha 2023). The study on factors responsible for women's low participation in political leadership highlights the indispensable role of women in decision-making positions for societal development (Onalu and Nwafor 2020).

Gender-equitable affirmative actions are essential to challenge traditional gender norms and promote the inclusion of women in positions of power and leadership (Lari, Al-Ansari and Elmaghraby 2022). Women's leadership is essential for advancing gender equality, justice, progress, and national and international security (Sharma 2019). The need for women's participation in political leadership is not only a matter of equality but also a fundamental component of good governance, democracy, and societal well-being (Artaç and Oğurlu 2024).

This study aimed to enhance the participants' power concerning their oppressors through non-violent means, with the ultimate goal of making cooperative conflict resolution processes a viable option. Galtung's (2018) structural violence theory and Lederach's (2014) conflict transformation theory served as the foundation for the research.

1.2.7 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN KENYAN CONTEXT

Galtung's theoretical framework differentiates structural violence from direct violence by redirecting attention from explicit acts of aggression to systemic barriers entrenched within societal institutions. He delineates three components of violence: direct violence (physical harm); structural violence (harm through social structures); and cultural violence (cultural norms that sustain inequalities). In this context, structural violence is often subtle, operating quietly within economic, political, and social systems to create conditions where certain groups are marginalized and exploited (Kester & Cremin 2017).

In Kenya, structural violence is prominently manifested in inter-ethnic politics. Since independence, ethnic favouritism in political appointments has cultivated a climate of

distrust and rivalry among different ethnic groups. The political framework frequently consolidates power within specific communities, marginalizing others, which Galtung would categorize as a form of structural violence that limits access to political agency (Kungu et al. 2023). The violence that erupted during the post-election period of 2007-2008 exemplifies this: the turmoil was not merely the result of direct conflict between groups, but stemmed from long-standing grievances rooted in economic and political disenfranchisement.

In addition, economic policies in Kenya often perpetuate structural violence by entrenching poverty through the unequal distribution of resources. Research indicates that public and internal debt policies have exacerbated income inequality, primarily affecting marginalized populations (Obiero & Topuz 2021). According to Galtung, such economic structures that facilitate elite capture of resources represent systemic violence against the poor, restricting their access to essential services like education and healthcare, thereby reinforcing the cycle of poverty.

Kenya's governance frameworks are significantly impacted by corruption, which, in accordance with Galtung's framework, constitutes a form of structural violence. Corruption erodes institutional integrity, leading to ineffective governance that fails to protect citizens' rights or provide essential services (Odallo et al. 2022). In the absence of accountability, those in power retain their positions by exploiting resources to the detriment of the general populace, particularly the economically disadvantaged, thereby exacerbating structural inequalities (Odallo et al. 2022).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The 2013 Kenyan election saw 86 women elected in the 12th Parliament, which was a considerable positive change from the previous electoral results (KNBs 2022). Considering the overall number of seats available as well as the structural obstacles that hinder women from participating in the election campaigns, this was a recommendable positive improvement. On gender representation, the Kenyan Constitution provides that women should have 16 seats in the Senate and 47 in the National Assembly. However, even though female representation in national governance is guaranteed by these protected seats, their efficacy depends on cultural

acceptance, enforcement and support (UN Women report, 2025). Women's advancement in leadership positions is hampered by patriarchal and cultural resistance, with 45% of women experiencing physical assault, gender-based violence makes political participation even more difficult and fosters an environment that deters political participation. According to The IPU Report 2025, women's representation in the Kenyan National Assembly is currently at 23.28%. While selections to the National Assembly and Senate followed established constitutional procedures, the 2022 elections demonstrated persistent difficulties in women's political participation, with only 7 out of 47 governors (15%) being female. This discrepancy draws attention to problems with political party support and voter views. Despite progress in the political sphere, it is evident that gender parity has been low since 2013 due to structural violence in politics in Nairobi County. That said, even though change has been slow, in the judiciary, there has been good progress with women making up 49% of magistrates and 41% of High Court judges (UN Women 2025).

Despite the existence of constitutional provisions and affirmative action policies in Kenya aimed at ensuring equal participation of women in leadership positions, a significant and persistent research gap exists. This gap is evidenced by the continued prevalence of systemic violence, structural violence (manifesting as exclusion, silencing, harassment, and abuse), and entrenched gender stereotypes within political parties that significantly hinder women's equal participation and advancement in political leadership roles. While constitutional momentum and policy intentions signal a commitment to inclusivity, national statistics reveal a stark disconnect between these goals and the on-the-ground realities for women in Kenyan politics, who often find themselves at the bottom of the leadership hierarchy. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on descriptive statistics of women's representation or broad analyses of legal reforms without fully interrogating the lived experiences of female politicians within male-dominated political party structures. Additionally, the research points to limitations within the electoral system, a challenging political context marked by backlash and discrimination, and difficulties for women in establishing crucial networks within a historically male-dominated political landscape. One underexplored area is how structural and systemic violence, rooted in patriarchal norms and maintained through political patronage and institutional inaction, continues to undermine gender

equality in political spaces. This study fills that gap by providing an empirically grounded, qualitative analysis of the everyday experiences of women in politics in Nairobi County, revealing how structural violence is normalised, enacted, and legitimised in political institutions, despite constitutional commitments.

Conducting this study is justified by several reasons. Firstly, the enduring disparity between policy and practice underlines the need for further examination to understand why current frameworks are insufficient and to inform more effective interventions. Secondly, this study will provide a nuanced understanding of how various forms of structural violence including the dominance of men in political institutions, entrenched political patronage, the silencing of women's voices, and the normalization of abuse act as significant and ongoing barriers to women's political leadership in Kenya. Thirdly, given the crucial role of political parties in candidate nomination, resource allocation, and overall support for women in politics, an investigation into their internal dynamics and cultures is essential to shed light on how they contribute to or mitigate the challenges faced by women. Finally, while existing literature acknowledges the broad challenges, this study aims to offer a more focused and in-depth analysis of the specific ways in which systemic and structural violence operate within the Nairobi political context, particularly within the structures of political parties, to impede women's leadership aspirations. This justification presents an opportunity to broadly engage with the research problem that this research is interested in.

While constitutional provisions and policies exist, women in Kenya continue facing significant barriers, such as systemic violence, structural violence and persistent gender stereotypes within parties, to equal participation in political leadership. Structural violence, which refers to the harm caused by societal structures hindering basic human needs, is prevalent in Kenya, where men hold significant institutional power and dominate decision-making bodies such as political parties and legislative organisations (Ndirangu 2017). This power imbalance results in challenges for women in leadership roles, who are often ridiculed for exhibiting traits traditionally associated with masculinity, creating subtle barriers within political structures. The entrenched political patronage in Kenya's major parties further exacerbates these obstacles, with women who achieve positions of power being criticised for their assertiveness, resulting in a disconnect between them and those they represent (Dhatt *et al.* 2017).

The gender disparities in leadership positions are emphasised by the fact that politics in Kenya has historically been male-dominated, making it challenging for women to establish networks for mobilisation and navigate the inherently violent electoral landscape (Opoku, Anyango and Alupo 2018).

Kenya, in 2010, implemented affirmative action for women in all public appointments, demonstrating its commitment to inclusivity (Anumo and Pacificah 2019). The government has also adopted global and regional instruments leveraging the Constitution of Kenya to advance gender equality and empower women. However, despite these efforts, national statistics show that women still face challenges in achieving equal participation in leadership roles, highlighting a gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities. (Hailu *et al.* 2023: 2) Point out that there is a notable disconnect between the stated policy goals of achieving gender equity and the actual student outcomes. This gap limits institutional success and economic development, suggesting that policies may not be effectively implemented or may lack the necessary support to achieve their objectives. Concerning this, Anumo and Pacificah (2019: 274-5) state that

“...Key stakeholders such as political parties, the Registrar of Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations and the media must work together to advance the political agenda of the affirmative action principles and foster political will to support women legislators in Parliament”

Affirmative actions in Kenya ranged from the establishment of a legal framework for gender equality enabled by the 2010 constitution. The legal framework mandated that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective bodies should be of the same gender. In addition to that, political parties were encouraged to nominate women candidates and support their campaigns. Anumo and Pacificah (2019) argue that political parties play a crucial role in the nomination process, and their commitment to gender equality is essential for the success of affirmative action. This section will refer to the examples that are fully described and nuanced in the following chapters. The examples given in this section are not exhaustive of the data followed, but they serve to highlight the systemic and structural violence.

The constitutional momentum in Kenya aimed at ensuring equal participation of women in leadership positions is a positive step towards addressing gender

disparities. However, the country struggles to meet its targets, often placing women at the bottom of the leadership hierarchy (Hailu *et al.* 2023). Berry *et al.* (2021) provide several reasons why Kenya is failing to meet the quotas. They cite reasons such as the limitations of the electoral system. Kenya employs a first-past-the-post electoral system, which complicates the enforcement of gender balance. They also cite the political context of Kenya, backlash and discrimination against women in politics, and this study springs from such challenges that the country has faced and how structural violence has been part of the issues why gender quotas have not been met. The implementation of gender quotas in the 2013 general elections resulted in 68 women legislators joining the National Assembly, indicating progress in enhancing women's representation in political spheres (Williams and Sawer 2016). Additionally, the legalisation of gender egalitarian policies by the Kenyan constitution has contributed to the rise of political matriarchy in some regions. Despite the existence of quotas encouraging women's participation, the environment has not been conducive; I portray how women have been side-lined in favour of some candidates. In addition to this, I show in Chapter Six how some individuals decide to support other candidates at the expense of women.

Women in politics are frequently subjected to systemic violence, which can impede their political involvement and limit their potential due to the pervasive structural violence in society. Žižek (2008) uses the concept of systemic violence to indicate that certain social structures or institutional practices, such as political domination or capitalist exploitation, cause people to engage in subjective violence. Van Der Linden (2012) claims that systemic violence also includes the continuous threats of violence that sustain unjust social structures. He makes a connection between structural violence and systemic violence, asserting that it is easier to understand systemic violence via structural violence lenses (Loadenthal 2019). This means that certain social arrangements maintain their power through the implicit or explicit threat of violence, which can be seen as a form of systemic violence. Systemic violence in this study is shown by how the political system has worked against women, for example, when female candidates are replaced by the more 'popular' male candidates for the good of the party. I also discuss how respondents complained of the lack of support from the systems, leading to trauma, something I contextualise as systemic violence.

One respondent complained about how her report on sexual harassment was dealt with, and it exudes systemic violence.

Structural violence in Kenya, as shall be shown, is displayed in many ways. Khan, Yousuf and Naqvi (2020) posit that structural violence manifests as exclusion, silencing, verbal harassment, abuse, and assault. All are aimed at discouraging women from actively participating in political arenas. One of how structural violence manifests is the silencing of women in politics and positions of power. Khan et al. 2020: 47) point out that “men’s silencing, and exclusion of women, limits their full participation as legislators at the provincial and national levels”. This finds resonance with the Kenyan structural violence in which the women are silenced. The Women in politics in Nairobi County, as highlighted in Chapter Five, reported being physically abused and reporting to their superiors. The victims were asked to bring evidence, and this was a way of silencing them.

Women in politics face significant challenges within political parties, often managed and financed by men, leading to a system that inherently favours men. The internal workings of political parties intersect with issues like limited financial and human resources, making it difficult for women leaders to receive the necessary support within these political institutions. Traditional institutions have historically been male-dominated, reinforcing traditional conceptions of gender relations that disadvantage women (Evans and Kenny 2019). In Kenya, for example, politics has long been associated with masculinity, making it challenging for women to establish political networks for mobilisation, as most political organisations are male-dominated (Ndirangu 2017).

Violence against women in political spheres is not only arbitrary but is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and objectives that aim to exclude them from these spaces (Kijewska 2023). This form of structural violence plays a significant role in justifying hostility towards women leaders, leading to their marginalisation and silencing (Krook and Sanín 2019). Moreover, gendered motives become apparent when violence is used to maintain men's dominance over politics (Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo 2020). Women's gendered experiences of violence are shaped not only by their gender but also by factors such as race, class, sexuality, generation, and nationality.

There are instances in the Kenyan parliament when some motions which benefit women are passed in parliament when women are out of the House of Assembly attending some business. I broadly contextualise this as structural violence.

The challenges faced by women leaders extend beyond gendered leadership discourses and stereotypes to include overwhelming personal and professional commitments, as well as harassment (Bhatti and Ali 2020). The normalisation of abuse against women in the workplace, particularly in the context of power imbalances between men and women, perpetuates a culture where such behaviour is accepted (McEwen et al 2021). Despite the increase in women's political representation in recent decades, significant barriers persist, limiting women's full participation in politics (Erikson, Håkansson and Josefsson 2021). In chapter five, I highlight how whenever a woman makes a complaint about abuse- physical or online- her male counterparts are quick to say that is what politics is about. The calling of women derogatory names by others has been normalised such that there is a prevalence of female misogyny, which is also dealt with in chapters five and six.

The issue of political patronage within significant political parties contributes to the structural violence experienced by women in leadership positions. Women who achieve power are frequently subject to ridicule for exhibiting toughness or adopting masculine attributes in their leadership styles. They may also face accusations of emasculating their male counterparts, both in the workplace and at home. Despite the implementation of affirmative action measures, such as the creation of women-only seats in Kenya, structural violence persists. Words and images are used to harm, discipline, and subjugate women, particularly through online platforms (Kijewska 2023).

Furthermore, violence against women in the political sphere is a deeply ingrained issue that is rooted in gender norms and unequal power dynamics. Women who challenge traditional gender roles and exhibit strength are often met with resistance and aggression. The systemic nature of this violence becomes evident when it is observed that women affiliated with political parties are more likely to experience it than non-partisan politicians (Krook and Sanín 2019). Violence, whether it takes the form of physical or symbolic attacks, aims to undermine women's authority and

discourage their participation in political processes (Håkansson 2023). Furthermore, the use of masculine ideals through violence perpetuates the notion that women are unsuitable for leadership positions, thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes and hindering women's progress in politics (Lewis 2022). As shall be shown in chapters five and six, women politicians have been reminded that their place is at home cooking and cleaning and should leave politics for men. The violence women face is made 'normal' due to the gender norms and unequal power dynamics.

The interaction of gender and power dynamics complicates the representation of women in leadership positions, exacerbating the challenges faced by women exhibiting leadership qualities. These women often need to balance traditionally masculine traits with collaborative and empathetic behaviours, reflecting the evolving expectations of leadership in a postfeminist context (Chidinma Favour Chikwe, Nkechi Emmanuella Eneh and Chidiogo Uzoamaka Akpuokwe 2024). However, the pressure on women to conform to masculine norms in leadership roles creates a double bind, where they must navigate a narrow path to success while facing stereotypes and biases (Dagneu, Yirdaw and Asrat 2020). This challenge is further compounded by the need for women to negotiate their identities in male-dominated spaces, where leadership has historically been associated with masculine attributes. Negotiating their identities has seen the rise of the queen bee phenomenon, which I discuss in chapters two and six.

Moreover, the challenges confronting women in political leadership are not limited to individual acts of violence; they also encompass broader societal perceptions and systemic obstacles that restrict their participation. Public opinion frequently targets women, accusing them of exploiting the gender card for personal gain. Further, they encounter harsh internal politics within political parties, where they are mocked for demonstrating strength or adopting masculine traits in their leadership styles. These challenges intersect with limited financial and human resources, exacerbating the trauma experienced by women leaders as a result of structural violence, as highlighted by Krook and Sanín (2019).

The inadequate support within political institutions compounds the challenges confronted by women in leadership positions. Commonly, political parties dominated

by men, both in terms of leadership, financing, and operations, exhibit a preference for men and lack secure channels for women leaders to express their concerns. This disparity perpetuates a system that marginalises women and erects substantial obstacles in their path as they navigate the political realm (Erikson and Josefsson 2023). Respondents gave examples of not having gained any support from the political party they belonged to, and the lack of support from fellow women would exacerbate the situation.

That said, the concept of hegemonic masculinity also has a significant impact on maintaining gender disparities in political power structures by validating men's superior positions and justifying women's subordination (Yates 2019). Research on gender and leadership in Kenya uncovers complex dynamics that affect women in leadership roles, with societal expectations frequently clashing with female gender roles, ultimately resulting in prejudice and discrimination against women leaders. The emotional dimension in political culture further complicates women's leadership experiences, reinforcing stereotypes about female leadership and perpetuating gender inequality. In this thesis, I give numerous examples of hegemonic masculinity, ranging from women being constantly reminded that their place is at home to women being asked why they would still be out (late at night), which is not normal.

The gendered nature of political leadership is evident in the disparities in access and experiences between men and women within party structures (O'Brien 2015). Men tend to have more opportunities and face fewer obstacles to reaching leadership positions within political parties. Populist radical right parties, which are often male-dominated, openly challenge norms regarding gender balance in politics and leadership roles (Erikson and Josefsson 2024). The emergence of women in leadership positions within political parties can be a slow process, as seen in the feminisation of leadership in parties like Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland (Matthews and Whiting 2021). Female politicians complain that female misogyny has affected the participation of other women in politics. Women vote, and side with men in many decisions, and this affects the rise of women in political positions.

The culture within political parties plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of women in politics. The masculine culture that pervades politics creates a challenging environment for women to navigate, impacting their ability to thrive and advance within party structures (Soetjipto 2023). Gender quotas have been introduced in some contexts to address the under-representation of women in politics, highlighting the need for parties to empower women and challenge existing power dynamics actively (Christie Marie 2018). Political parties often control decisions related to candidate nominations, positions on party lists, and campaign support, further influencing the opportunities available to women in politics (Ndirangu 2017).

Efforts to increase women's political representation require strategies to address barriers within political parties that hinder women's participation and advancement (Chatun 2023). The implementation of quotas and the promotion of women's visibility in leadership roles are essential steps towards achieving gender equality in politics. Understanding power dynamics and gender relations is crucial for empowering women in political leadership positions (Varghese 2020). The impact of individual leaders within political parties can influence voting behaviour and party engagement, highlighting the importance of effective leadership in addressing challenges within party structures (Garzia, Silva and Angelis 2019).

Media representations of political leadership can also reinforce gender stereotypes, portraying men as more suitable for leadership roles while casting doubt on women's qualifications and experience (Wagner, Trimble and Sampert 2018b). Women in leadership positions may face harsher judgement when their roles deviate from traditional gender norms, reflecting broader societal biases that impact women in politics. The role of women's organisations within political parties is evolving, with a shift towards individual gender experts rather than collective women's groups, indicating changing dynamics within party structures (Kantola and Agustín 2019).

1.4 OVERALL AIM

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the manifestations and underlying causes of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Kenya and to suggest evidence-based recommendations for its mitigation.

1.5 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were developed to understand how female politicians in Nairobi County have perceived, engaged with, and addressed the structural violence that restricts their political participation. Their objectives are:

1. To explore the nature and extent of structural violence experienced by women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County.
2. To analyse the causes and consequences of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi county.
3. To identify previous and current attempts to mitigate structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County and to assess their effectiveness.
4. Using a participatory action research approach, plan and implement interventions that can mitigate structural violence within the main political parties in Nairobi.
5. To assess the immediate impacts of the participatory intervention, focusing on stakeholder engagement, policy responsiveness, and shifts in political party discourse on gender equity.

1.6 STUDY RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The study of the obstacles faced by female leaders in Kenya's political parties is of utmost importance due to the significant consequences that follow. Examining this topic highlights the specific barriers women in leadership positions face within the political party framework, often hindering their political progress and perpetuating gender disparities in decision-making processes (Opoku, Anyango and Alupo 2018). The study of structural violence against women leaders in Kenya's political parties is crucial due to the persistent and systemic nature of gender inequality in political spheres. Despite constitutional reforms and gender quotas, women continue to face significant barriers in political participation and leadership roles (Berry et al. 2020). The entrenchment of these obstacles within institutional frameworks and societal norms has created a self-perpetuating cycle that maintains male dominance in decision-

making processes, effectively marginalising women's voices and perspectives in governance (Galea and Gaweda 2018).

The impact of the systemic exclusion extends far beyond individual women leaders, affecting society. Research has shown that the intersection of power dynamics, patriarchal norms, and institutional practices creates multiple layers of discrimination that impede women's political advancement (McCarthy and Moon 2018). These barriers are pronounced in the context of socioeconomic factors, where considerations such as economic status, social norms, and access to resources significantly influence young women's ability to engage in political processes (Moraa, Lillian and Josephine 2021). The persistence of these challenges, despite various intervention attempts, suggests that current approaches to promoting gender equality in politics have been insufficient.

The inadequacy of existing interventions is concerning given the fundamental role of political representation in shaping society. As Katsande et al. (2024) note, the examination of biases and discriminatory practices that limit women's political participation reveals deeper systemic factors that preserve inequality. The normalization of violence against women in politics (VAWIP) has created an environment where discrimination is often overlooked or accepted, further entrenching gender disparities (Kuperberg 2018; (Barnes and Córdova 2016). This normalisation has made it particularly challenging to identify and address the root causes of women's political marginalization.

Given the limited success of previous efforts to address these challenges, there is a critical need for research that not only documents the obstacles faced by women leaders but also develops and tests new interventions for promoting gender equality in political spaces (Li 2024). Traditional approaches have often failed to address the complex interplay between institutional arrangements, economic freedom, and educational factors that contribute to gender inequality (Chundakkadan and Sasidharan 2021). By examining how associational bias, evaluative bias, and backlash manifest in political institutions (Roberts and Kwon 2021), this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for dismantling systemic barriers and creating truly inclusive political systems. The findings from this research

could inform targeted interventions and policy initiatives that promote meaningful change in political representation and decision-making processes.

In summing up this section, the rationale for taking up this study of structural violence against women was made by the realisation that politics has far-reaching implications on women's involvement and representation in political spheres. By uncovering the systemic factors that perpetuate harm and inequality, the researcher believes that the research will pave the way for transformative changes that will empower women leaders and encourage gender equality in political decision-making processes. The researcher will address the 'normalised' issues withholding women's progress in politics and contribute to broader efforts challenging discriminatory practices. Further, by exploring the connection between power dynamics, patriarchal norms, and institutional practices, the researcher will uncover the systemic barriers delaying women's progress in politics.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The central aim of this thesis was to investigate the manifestations and causes of structural violence. This study uses a theoretical framework that intertwines three theories: Galtung's (1990) theory of violence, Lederach's (2014) conflict transformation theory, and gender moral development theories. The deployment of the three theoretical approaches facilitates an understanding of the complexities of structural violence. While Chapter Three engages in an increased depth with the theories and makes a connection with the present study, it is pertinent to present definitions which help the reader understand the theories and how they relate and aid the thesis. Johan Galtung's theory of violence introduced a triad model of violence: Direct (Overt) violence, cultural violence, and lastly, structural violence. He stated that 'Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisation are beyond their potential' (Galtung, 1990: 168). While Galtung introduced the triad of violence, this thesis is primarily interested in structural violence, however, this should not be misunderstood to imply that in this study, the researcher does not highlight instances of both direct and cultural violence. Galtung defines structural violence as "social structures- economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural- that stop individuals, groups and societies from reaching their full

potential” (ibid, p171). Farmer (1999: xi) applied structural violence to health disparities in the global South and defined it as being “one way of describing how social structure, sometimes very broad ones such as poverty or racism, may harm individuals and populations.” Rosalinda Shaw's (2002: 178) study on post-conflict societies describes structural violence as “involving the systematic denial of rights and resources to certain groups, often justified by historical narratives or cultural myths”.⁷ The definition and descriptions given to structural violence help in expanding the traditional understanding of violence beyond physical acts to include systemic and symbolic violence. Vital in contextualising, grasping and understanding the various forms and expressions of violence within societies. This study makes use of the definitions and descriptions of structural violence, juxtaposing them with the narratives and evidence gathered from Nairobi County.

In addition to Galtung's (1990) theory of violence, this study makes use of John Paul Lederach's (2014) conflict transformation theory. The theory focuses on peaceful means of addressing conflict by advocating for reconciliation, peacebuilding, and lasting change. The study relies on Lederach's underpinning the significance of engaging with all parties involved in a conflict, comprehending their standpoints, and encouraging dialogue to transform relationships and structures that foster violence. The study builds and extends upon Lederach's conflict transformation theory to understand structural violence as a complex and dynamic process requiring multilevel and long-term engagement with the interested parties. Lederach's theory helps highlight how women's low participation in politics goes beyond individual choices, but is shaped by structural violence which includes unequal access to resources, patriarchal norms and cultural practices, gender-based violence and intimidation and lack of support within the political parties in the Nairobi county. Lederach's conflict transformation theory offers a lens to see the challenges women face in participation in politics, not just as isolated incidents, but as results of deeper structural issues. Aside from doing this, the theory also provides a framework for a long-term approach

⁷ Shaw, R 2002, *Memories of the slave trade : Ritual and the historical imagination in Sierra Leone*. University of Chicago.

to dismantle the structures that have inhibited women's participation in politics. The research deploys the conflict transformation theory cognisant of the criticism levelled against it. Scholars like Ramsbotham et al (2016)⁸ have criticised the theory for being vague and lacking concrete steps for implementation. Richmond (2006)⁹ criticises the theory for its focus on reconciliation as this may come at the expense of justice and accountability for the perpetrators of violence. Paffenholz (2010)¹⁰ and Campbell (2011) have also criticised the long-term multilevel aspect of Lederach's theory. Paffenholz discusses the difficulties of implementing bottom-up approaches, highlighting the challenges of long-term engagement. Campbell (2011)¹¹ while broader than Lederach's focus, explores the challenges external actors face in long-term interventions and navigating local complexities relevant to the multi-level aspect. This thesis highlights and engages with the criticism of the theory, as will be highlighted in Chapters Five and Six. It must be highlighted that the articles used here have slight to no bearing on structural violence but more on physical violence.

Lastly, this study integrates moral development theory to enhance the analysis of the evidence gathered. The theories help in the examination of how individuals' ethical reasoning and moral values shape their perceptions and reactions to violence. Gender and moral development theory, which is what this study is more inclined to align with, is primarily associated with the debate between Kohlberg and Gilligan. This study neither aligns with Lawrence Kohlberg's (2008) stages of moral development nor Carol Gilligan's ethics of care, but borrows and leans on both as they provide lenses through which to assess the ethical dimensions of conflict and violence. On one hand, Kohlberg's expansion of Piaget's work on moral development argues that moral development follows a universal, invariant sequence across cultures. He further argues that the highest stage of moral reasoning involves justice-based reasoning

⁸ Ramsbotham, O, Miall and Woodhouse, T. (2016), *Co temporary conflict Resolution* 4th ed, Cambridge, Polity Press

⁹ Richmond, O. P. (2006) The problem of peace: Understanding the 'liberal peace'. *Security dialogue* 37(2) 283-304

¹⁰ Paffenholz, T, (2010), 'Peace building from below: assessing local initiatives for peace' In Jurstad A. K and Sisk T,D (eds) *A critical approach*, London, Routledge, 107-126.

¹¹ Campbell, S (2011), 'Global governance and local agency: Competing logics of intervention in civic war', *International Studies Quarterly* 55(1), 1-22

concerns about rules, fairness and individual rights. On the other hand, Gilligan critiqued Kohlberg's theory as biased towards the male perspective, largely on studies of boys and men and this led to an overemphasis on justice-oriented morality. She further suggests that women often approach moral dilemmas from a care perspective with an emphasis on relationships, responsibility and empathy. The debate between the two enhances the analysis of the data collected.

Chapter Three deals in depth with the theoretical frameworks of the study. This was just to highlight and contextualise the theories with the current study.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for this study incorporated quantitative, qualitative, and intervention methodologies within the action research framework. Widely recognised as more effective than single-method designs, the mixed-methods approach combines the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative methods while minimising their shortcomings. This design gathered data and engaged stakeholders in developing appropriate interventions based on the proposed action steps. Participatory Action Research (PAR), a collaborative research approach, allows the treatment of participants and the researcher as equals and actively engaged in both the research process and the intervention stage. The researcher will explore and explain PAR and how it was influential in the research process and intervention stage in this study in Chapter Four.

The study utilised an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. A representative sample of male and female leaders from the Azimio and Kenya Kwanza political coalitions participated in a quantitative questionnaire, followed by a qualitative phase. This research aimed to actively engage and empower participants in addressing structural violence against women in political leadership. Timans et al (2019) assert that mixed-methods research is important in research because it enhances a comprehensive understanding of the topic under research. They further claim that mixed methods research is useful in exploratory research, where qualitative methods can help generate hypotheses that can later be tested quantitatively. Quantitative findings can

inform qualitative inquiries, providing deeper explanations for observed patterns, and this, as shall be explained in chapter four, is what this study deployed. This collaborative approach involves shared research control, mutual education, and the integration of scientific inquiry with social action to generate relevant knowledge for research partners.

1.9 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research employed PAR to examine structural violence against women in political leadership by both men and women. Unlike other methods, PAR promotes participant equality and collaboration over control. Furthermore, a mixed-methods approach was used, which, according to Hodgkin (2008), provides both a broad overview and a personal narrative. This variety of methods and sources enhances the research's validity and reliability. The mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and the extent of structural violence. Given the complexity of structural violence, a narrative approach enabled in-depth exploration by engaging participants in meaning-making dialogue and revealing hidden ideas (Creswell and Creswell 2018).

Two theoretical frameworks, conflict transformation theory and gender moral development theory, inform the research approach. Conflict transformation theory seeks a society free from domination, discrimination, and oppression (Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers 2016; John 2020). The gender moral development theory posits that men and women undergo similar moral development stages but express them differently. "Gender infuses both structural violence and political violence, but focussing on how gender expressly motivates acts better informs research and policy" (Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo 2020).

These theories aim for a society where masculine and feminine voices integrate within individuals, reducing conflicts. At this level, institutional leadership becomes inclusive, fostering transformation and structural change (Were 2017, Gilligan 1977).

Additionally, action research design facilitates the implementation and evaluation of research. As PAR, the researcher and participants designed and conducted dialogue

sessions and trauma support groups. PAR promoted inclusive engagement during these sessions (Westmarland and Bows 2018).

1.10 METHODOLOGY

This study makes use of a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data. The researcher conducted interviews and discussions with prominent figures from the main political parties that make up the coalitions, specifically those located within the parties' national headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city. Nairobi is additionally a county government, one of the 47 quasi-federal governments within the country. As such, the study mainly concentrated on the structural violence encountered by women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County, Kenya, with a research population of 500 potential respondents. The researcher used a systematic random sampling technique to select participants from the membership lists accessible on the websites of the National Elections Board of Kenya and the Registrar of Political Parties, as well as from the party headquarters. The study deployed systematic random sampling to select 100 respondents from the potential pool of 500 participants. Out of the 100 selected participants, the quantitative data gathering benefitted from 88 participants. The remaining 12 could not make time to sit and fill out the questionnaire- refer to Appendix A. The researcher did not replace them because the data attained from the 88 was sufficient. The study only approached the political parties as gatekeepers, as the research is action research. It was essential to involve the party structures during the implementation stages to enhance their support for elected women leaders who experience structural violence within the party.

These parameters were used to calculate the sample size needed to achieve the specified margin of error with the given confidence level and standard deviation.

Given the following parameters:

Population of 500

Margin of error of 5%

Confidence level of 95% (with $Z=1.96$),

The standard deviation of 0.5 ensures a sufficiently large sample size.

As shall be explained in the next section, this study used an explanatory sequential research design. This design allowed the researcher first to gather quantitative data and then gather qualitative data to help contextualise the quantitative data. This thesis makes use of 15 participants who were purposively picked. The selection and the justification for the selection of participants are explained in Chapter Four. The thesis makes use of 15 participants, who may seem to be few, but the point of saturation was attained, and there was no reason to continue with the face-to-face unstructured interviews gathering the same information.

The quantitative data aimed at addressing the first and second objectives of this study, which are to explore the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County. The quantitative data also sought to identify previous and current attempts to mitigate structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County and to assess their effectiveness. The quantitative data would not have provided room to explore the underlying mechanisms behind the causes, nature, extent, and failure of the identified attempts at mitigating violence. Against this background, the qualitative side of the research, among other things, evaluated the short-term outcomes of the intervention. The two research designs help both the researcher and the reader understand and contextualise the research problem. The methodology is in detail in Chapter Four.

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS

This study utilised an explanatory sequential research design involving three phases of result analysis and integration. Initial quantitative data was analysed with SPSS software, followed by a thematic analysis of subsequent qualitative data. The qualitative findings were used to interpret the quantitative data, with the integration of quantitative results identifying anomalies for further exploration in the qualitative phase. Quantitative results informed participant selection for the qualitative phase, ensuring an informed choice of data sources. The final phase addressed mixed-method research questions by linking results, such as explaining quantitative

mechanisms and how qualitative findings elucidate the quantitative survey (Chong Ho 2009).

Qualitative data from in-depth narrative interviews was recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were analysed using the six-step thematic analysis process described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach enabled fresh insights by deeply engaging with the data and uncovering new categories rather than imposing preconceived ones. It aligns with the gender theory underpinning this research. Having referred to the theories that form the foundation of this study, the theories sensitised the research to look for issues related to power roles, structural violence and moral orientations within the data. Using the theories in coding helped the researcher come up with the themes used in the thesis. The Braune and Clarke (2006) Six-step thematic analysis is also essential in connecting the themes and the three theoretical frameworks. An depth explanation of the data analysis is found in Chapter Four which is dedicated to the research design as well as data analysis.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study followed and stuck to the ethical demands that are associated with academic research, including human participants. The University's ethical department approved the research proposal. As part of this research, the researcher explored both physical and psychological harm. The researcher is not qualified to deal with trauma and sought the assistance of a professional psychologist who was present during interviews to provide emotional support as needed. Participants were offered additional support from a psychologist and executive coach at no cost. The study adhered to stringent ethical guidelines, including obtaining written or verbal informed consent at the start of each interview, informing participants of their right to decline or withdraw from the research at any time, and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality by using pseudonyms and securely storing data. Hard copies of the data will be stored for five years in a locked cupboard before being destroyed by burning, and the electronic copies will be deleted after the same period. All necessary measures were taken to maintain anonymity and prevent any link between the data and individuals in the reports.

This thesis includes images from the Trauma Support, Leadership, and Dialogue Sessions held in Nairobi. The sessions were conducted with some politicians who had taken part in the research and sought to discuss the ways forward in dealing with traumas. Chapter Seven has a detailed description and analysis of the sessions. All individuals featured in these images provided explicit consent for their faces to be used, having signed consent forms. They were fully informed about the potential risks associated with the use of their images. Despite these risks, they chose to participate, viewing it to combat structural violence within their community.

1.13 KEY FINDINGS

This study identified the varied forms of structural violence against women in political leadership positions in Kenya, including their exclusion from political networks, male dominance in political parties and public institutions, and the use of electoral violence and thuggery against female candidates. Furthermore, the researcher explores how financial constraints faced by female candidates contribute to disparities in political power and representation. The financial constraints should be understood from a bifocal perspective for they are both systemic and on the individual level. The parties provide some financial help by the majority if the money comes from individuals and as a result, if the individual is not strong financially, the possibility of the female politician to be in politics is slim. Chapter Five, Section 2.3, deals extensively with the financial constraints faced by women in politics. The study discovered that there are no existing policies or interventions within political parties or broader political structures to alleviate the psychological and physical violence and structural obstacles that women persistently face. The findings also reveal deeply ingrained structural violence against women leaders in Kenya's main political parties, leading to their exclusion from networks and restricted access to decision-making roles. Addressing these issues demands an approach that includes policy interventions, financial resources, support for women leaders, and efforts to challenge societal norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence. Systematic changes within political party structures and broader institutions are urgently required to ensure gender equality and support women leaders in their political participation and representation.

This study argues that promoting a supportive and inclusive political climate that values women's leadership is crucial for parties to represent a diverse population and can help alleviate structural violence against women. Tackling structural barriers and promoting gender equality requires multi-level efforts, including initiatives promoting gender equity, raising awareness about structural violence against women leaders, providing psychological support, and advocating for policy reforms prioritising gender equality and inclusivity.

1.14 SCOPE OF STUDY

Delimitations

While the study was conducted in Kenya, its scope is limited to Nairobi County and the political party headquarters in Nairobi. Other counties outside of Nairobi were excluded. Despite interviewing the members of parliament who represent the grassroots, the researcher cannot fully generalise the study's results to the Kenyan population. The study aimed to pinpoint more universal concepts that could be applicable in various contexts.

Limitations

This study is limited in scope, as it only includes the main political parties based in Nairobi. Because the researcher only interviewed participants in Nairobi and focusing on structural violence hindering women's participation in politics, its ability to be generalized to the broader Kenyan population is significantly limited. The geographical focus on Nairobi County presents a constraint, as Nairobi, being the capital and a major urban centre, possesses distinct political, economic, and social characteristics that differentiate it from other regions in Kenya. These differences, such as urban versus rural dynamics and the concentration of political power, mean that findings from Nairobi may not accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives prevalent in more rural counties or regions with different political landscapes. Furthermore, the focus on major political parties in Nairobi restricts generalisability, as these central entities operate under different considerations compared to regional or local party structures elsewhere in the country. While interviews with Members of Parliament representing grassroots constituencies provide some connection to broader experiences, these

perspectives are filtered through their role as national-level actors operating within the Nairobi-centric political framework, potentially overlooking diverse local nuances. Due to the limited geographical scope and the focus on central party structures, the findings of this study should be interpreted primarily within the context of Nairobi County and the major political party headquarters located there, and direct generalisation to the broader Kenyan population would be inappropriate without further research conducted across different regions of the country.

1.15 WAY FORWARD

Valérie and Diane-Gabrielle (2020) state that creating institutional environments that empower women to support other women is essential for promoting gender equality and female leadership, considering that women in politics may exhibit inconsistent gender views and sexist behaviour. This study aligns with this assertion, and the findings also point to the same. To combat structural violence against female leaders in African political parties, a comprehensive strategy should address workplace gender inequality, dismantle token systems, reduce social identity threats, and challenge negative stereotypes and biases (Tripp 2012). This study highlights and agrees with Goetz and Hassim (2003) that political parties can advance societal gender equity by transforming their culture, attitudes, and leadership structures, as well as providing trauma therapy for victims of systemic violence. This study presents evidence of structural violence against women in Nairobi's political parties, necessitating practical interventions and mental health support.

The participatory action research facilitated transformative dialogue sessions, leading some participants to commit to driving party reforms despite challenges such as complex discussions, limited time, and local patriarchal interests (Wicks, Reason and Bradbury 2008; Thomas, Weber and Bradbury-Jones 2020). Participants recommended institutionalising trauma response programs within the parties. Addressing gender issues in political parties requires a reflective approach, recognising that learning involves knowledge, will, and structures, and overcoming resistance to change in patriarchal institutions demands sustained reflection (Lundgren and Poell 2016). Adapting action research for dynamic cyclical analysis and

action facilitated genuine sharing and collective reflection between women and men, unveiling a strategy that political parties can implement.

Tackling structural violence against female leaders in Nairobi's political parties necessitates comprehensive policy interventions, financial resources, empowerment support, and efforts to challenge discriminatory societal norms. Systemic changes within political party structures and broader political institutions are essential for promoting gender equality and enabling women leaders to represent their communities effectively. To the Nairobi County women, gender equality means equal access to rights to participate in politics and equal responsibilities just like their male counterparts. Media organisations must present women leaders fairly, counter gender stereotypes, and highlight their accomplishments, as media representations shape public perceptions and attitudes.

Political parties should foster an inclusive environment that values women's leadership by addressing structural barriers and promoting gender equality. International experiences, such as those in the United States post-World War II, demonstrate increased sensitivity to discrimination's impact on political stability and economic growth, with legal quotas guaranteeing women's representation proving significant.

Targeted interventions and policy changes that focus on reforming party structures, promoting gender equality, providing financial support, addressing violence and harassment, and challenging discriminatory norms are necessary to address barriers faced by female leaders. To ensure equal representation of women in leadership, political parties should implement gender quotas supported by robust systems to help women advance while challenging the underlying power dynamics and patriarchal structures within these institutions.

1.16 STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the reader to the study by providing the background and the broader context in which the research is situated. It outlines the research problem, clearly stating the overall aim and specific objectives the study seeks to address. In addition to this, Chapter 1 touches on the theoretical framework that informs the research, as well as a brief overview of the research design,

methodology, and approach adopted. It also offers a preview of the study's findings and sets clear boundaries for the scope of the research.

Chapter 2: This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the existing research on structural violence against women in political leadership. It defines and critically engages with the concept of structural violence, distinguishing it from other forms of violence. Furthermore, the chapter examines the literature surrounding structural obstacles, exploring the causes, structure, nature, and consequences of structural violence as addressed by other scholars. Finally, the chapter highlights key gaps in the current literature that this study aims to address, providing a foundation for the research that follows.

Chapter 3: In this chapter, the focus is on the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study. It begins with an exploration of Galtung's theory of violence, which is central to understanding how violence and peace are contextualised within the study. Galtung's theory distinguishes between direct, structural, and cultural violence, which allows for a deeper analysis of the multifaceted nature of violence in conflict situations. This theory is essential for examining how these forms of violence intersect and shape the possibilities for peace. The chapter then explores the conflict transformation theory, a crucial lens through which conflict management and resolution are approached. Conflict transformation theory emphasises not only resolving conflict but also transforming the underlying structures and relationships that give rise to conflict. This theory allows the study to explore long-term, sustainable approaches to conflict resolution that go beyond immediate solutions and address root causes. Another significant theoretical framework in this chapter is gender moral development theory, which is pertinent to the study's focus. This theory provides insights into the role of gender in shaping moral reasoning and decision-making in conflict situations. It helps to highlight how gender dynamics influence conflict and peacebuilding processes. Finally, the chapter integrates moral development theory, which serves as a foundational component in understanding the ethical and moral dimensions of conflict and peace. This integration is important because it broadens the theoretical perspective, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how moral considerations influence conflict resolution strategies. Together, these theories form a comprehensive

framework that guides the study's analysis and understanding of violence, conflict transformation, and the moral dimensions of peacebuilding.

Chapter 4: This chapter focuses on the research methodology deployed in the study. This chapter highlights and justifies the reliance on a mixed-method approach to investigate structural violence against women in politics. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The chapter begins by discussing the study's sampling strategies. Out of a total pool of 500 potential respondents, systematic random sampling was employed to select participants. This method was chosen to ensure an unbiased and representative sample, which the chapter justifies in detail. In addition to systematic random sampling, the study also utilised purposive sampling, targeting specific participants with relevant knowledge or experience. The rationale behind this complementary method is also discussed, particularly for gathering in-depth qualitative insights.

Figures and tables are used in the chapter to illustrate the population and gender distribution of respondents, providing a visual understanding of the study's demographic scope. The study used a sequential explanatory method for data collection. Quantitative data was collected first, allowing for in-depth exploration of the subject matter. This was followed by qualitative data collection to substantiate and further explore patterns identified in the quantitative phase. The chapter explains that after quantitative data was collected, it needed to be "humanified" – that is, contextualised through face-to-face unstructured interviews, giving depth and personal insight into the findings. Data analysis involved thematic coding, where the themes emerging from the qualitative data were systematically identified and categorised. For the quantitative data, the analysis was conducted using SPSS software, enabling a robust statistical evaluation of the collected data. The chapter also addresses ethical considerations, ensuring that the research complied with necessary guidelines and followed established ethical expectations, particularly regarding the sensitive nature of structural violence against women in politics.

Moreover, the chapter highlights efforts made to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, demonstrating that the methodologies employed were sound and that the

data collected could be trusted to accurately reflect the research questions. Finally, the chapter acknowledges the limitations of the study, providing a brief discussion on areas such as potential biases or restrictions in data collection methods. The chapter concludes by elucidating the implications of the chosen methodologies and explaining how they contributed to the overall aims of the research.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5 presents the findings gathered through a mixed-methods approach, focusing on a broad understanding of violence. It explores violence through the lens of structural violence, utilising the critical act and critical mass frameworks to delve deeper into how this form of violence operates. A key aspect of the chapter is the portrayal of violence against women in politics, illustrated through anecdotes from both male and female politicians. These stories help to reveal how structural violence is both perpetrated and normalised, largely due to entrenched cultural and patriarchal phenomena. The chapter also discusses various dynamics that contribute to the subjugation of women in the political sphere. These include concepts like solidarity and the "queen bee syndrome," which highlight the complex ways in which women can both challenge and reinforce patriarchal structures. Importantly, this chapter critically examines existing interventions aimed at addressing structural violence, revealing the shortcomings of these efforts and analysing the reasons behind their ineffectiveness. By engaging with the theories and evidence collected, the chapter offers a comprehensive view of the challenges in combating structural violence and the systemic barriers that persist.

Chapter 6: Chapter Six focuses on the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention developed as part of this study. It provides an overview of the intervention, highlighting how it differs from previous approaches. This distinction is a central theme, as the chapter addresses the question of what sets this intervention apart from earlier ones. The chapter offers concrete examples of the interventions that were designed and enacted by the researcher, with detailed discussions of the sessions conducted as part of the intervention. It also includes an analysis of the responses from attendees, offering insights into how the intervention was received and its impact. In addition to presenting these findings, the chapter evaluates the sessions from both the researcher's and the attendees' perspectives, providing a comprehensive view of the intervention's effectiveness. Overall, this

chapter contrasts the intervention with those discussed in Chapter Five, presenting it as a novel approach to addressing the issues identified earlier in the study.

Chapter 7: The chapter focuses on the study's findings and includes a reflexive discussion of the research process. It examines the use of action research, particularly in the context of women in politics, highlighting how this approach proved to be both relevant and effective in addressing the study's aims. The chapter also explores the concept of reciprocity, emphasising how the direct exchange of ideas between the researcher and participants led to mutual learning. From data collection to the intervention sessions, both the researcher and the participants engaged in a dynamic process of shared knowledge and insights. A key component of the chapter is the discussion of reflexivity, where the researcher critically reflects on how the researcher's biases may have influenced the data collected and interpreted. This reflexive approach is placed within a broader context, underscoring the importance of maintaining the reliability and validity of the findings, as initially discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 8: Chapter 8 serves as the concluding chapter of this study, providing a summary of the key research findings. It revisits the overarching aims of the study and illustrates how these objectives were successfully met. The chapter briefly recaps the causes and nature of violence, as explored throughout the dissertation, and reflects on how these issues were addressed. In addition, the chapter reviews the theories that underpinned the research, evaluating their effectiveness in helping to achieve the study's goals. The focus is on highlighting the new knowledge this research has contributed, particularly concerning women, structural violence, and politics. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations for future research, suggesting areas that could be explored further in the study of women in politics and the dynamics of structural violence.

1.17 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter serves as the introduction to the thesis by giving an overview of the thesis. In this chapter, there is an examination of the study's background, research problem, objectives, delimitations, and limitations. The chapter introduces the reader to the

research problem and identifies the research gap that the study seeks to fill. The chapter highlights the overall aim of the study and subsequent objectives which the thesis engages with. The chapter provides the rationale for taking up the research and justifies why this study is time-consuming. The theories that make the foundation of this study are engaged with and provide the reader with a sense of how the data was collected and analysed with the help of the theories.

In addition to the theories discussion, this chapter briefly discusses the research design and methods that were employed in data gathering. While not pre-empting the chapters on methods, this chapter embarks on a journey of data analysis and how it intersects with the theories deployed in the study. The chapter provides the reader with the chapter breakdown. Overall, this chapter presents the reader with a chance to understand the point of departure, the stops and the ultimate destination of the thesis. The following chapter deals with the relevant literature to the present study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a literature review that examines the concept of structural violence and its impact on women in political leadership. This chapter is organised into sections that aim to contextualise the study and establish the research gap the study addresses. The first section provides an overview of structural violence, outlining its defining features and theoretical underpinnings. The second section narrows the focus to structural violence, specifically targeting women in political leadership. In this section, the review explores patterns and forms of violence that women encounter, particularly about their gender and public roles. In the third section, the researcher engages literature on the structural barriers embedded within political institutions that obstruct women's access to and performance in leadership. This section presents a review of institutional practices, policies, and unwritten norms that sustain these obstacles. The following section evaluates both the nature and scope of structural violence against women in politics, presenting findings on how widespread these issues are and their effects on political environments and individual careers. Finally, the last section discusses existing and proposed approaches to mitigate structural violence against women in politics. This includes policies, advocacy efforts, and legislative reforms designed to create safer, more equitable political spaces. The chapter sets the tone for the reader to understand the subsequent chapters and debates made in the study.

Violence against women leaders within political parties is a global phenomenon that has been on the rise in recent years (Krook 2018). Research from various regions, including Jamaica, Pakistan, Guatemala, Brazil, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Turkey, indicates that violence against women in politics is not limited to specific geographical locations (Johnson-Myers 2023; Hartviksen 2021; Biroli 2018b). Female politicians in Jamaica, in particular, have experienced political violence, highlighting its gendered nature and defining it as violence against women in politics (Johnson-Myers 2023). The gendered nature of political violence against women has been

further characterised as a form of backlash to women's greater inclusion in the political sphere, resisting the gains made possible by gender quotas and other mechanisms to empower women in decision-making. Violence against women political leaders often takes on gendered forms aimed at preserving patriarchal societal arrangements and hindering women's ability to organise and assert their rights. Muhammad et al. (2020) portray how women face resistance in the Pakistan Parliament in various ways, including sexist remarks and derogatory remarks, intimidation and harassment (p. 362), and marginalisation in discussions (p. 364). This highlights that violence is not limited to any geographical location but is widespread across the world. The nature of gendered violence sometimes takes the form of character assassination and verbal attacks specifically targeting women leaders, reflecting a broader pattern of discrimination and inequality (Johnson-Myers 2023; Muhammad et al 2020). Moreover, the state's political economy, coupled with changing gender relations, can create unique risks of violence against women, especially in conflict-affected areas (Alsaba and Kapilashrami 2016). The violence aims to deter women's participation in politics and preserve traditional gender roles, ultimately undermining democratic institutions (Miura 2023).

It is important to note that the study of violence against women in politics is relatively new, and there is a recognition of the uncharted territory within this field, emphasising the need for further research and understanding of this complex issue (Kuperberg 2018). Transnational advocacy networks have played a crucial role in putting violence against women on the United Nations security agenda, leading to the adoption of Resolution 1325 and other statements on gender, peace, and security (Harrington 2011). According to Al-Qaralleh, Bader and Al-Majali (2022), the use of electoral violence against women perpetuates patriarchal societal structures and hinders women's empowerment and full participation in shaping social, political, and economic life.

2.2 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

In 1969, Galtung introduced the concept of structural violence, and since then, it has generated extensive academic discussions on its impact. Galtung defines structural violence as 'social structures- economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural- that

stop individuals, groups and societies from reaching their full potential' p171. Other scholars have defined structural violence as how social structures perpetuate harm and suffering, affecting marginalised populations (Farmer *et al.* 2006); (Odhiambo *et al.* 2023). Tacey and Riboli (2014) are some of the scholars who joined the discussion on structural violence. They concur with Galtung's (2010) characterisation and definition of structural violence, and they go further and assert that "structural violence has largely replaced direct violence" (Tacey and Riboli 2014: 207). Sinha *et al.* (2017), in their study on structural violence in India, trace the history of structural violence from 1969. They provide examples of how structural violence manifests in society, mainly through systemic issues such as sexism, cultural norms and economic inequalities that disproportionately affect women. In their study, they use a case of a lady who was gang-raped in India as a pivotal event that awakened awareness and added to the discourse around violence (Sinha *et al.* 2017: 135.). Shannon *et al.* (2017) describe structural violence as a comprehensive framework that explains how social forces such as poverty, racism, and gender inequity manifest as individual experiences and health outcomes. These scholars, among others engaged in this section, highlight the pervasive nature of this structural violence and how it reinforces the deeply entrenched indirect forms of violence that exist within societal structures and institutions. These are not overt but rather covert, preventing individuals from meeting their fundamental needs and thereby creating unequal life opportunities.

Health research, among other fields, has applied this concept of systemic violence to understand the influence of societal structures on health outcomes, particularly in marginalised communities (Maio and Ansell 2018). Johan Galtung's classification of violence into direct, structural, and cultural forms is a valuable tool for recognising different types of violence, including those that may be less noticeable or evident (Staines, Aghtaie and Roy 2022). This classification is vital, especially for this study, as it allowed the researcher to draw on the categories and highlight how structural violence can be understood using all three.

Structural violence intersects with broader institutionalised social structures such as poverty, sexism, racism, and gender inequity, illustrating how these systemic injustices contribute to societal disparities and social marginalisation (Montesanti and Thurston 2015; Shannon *et al.* 2017). Structural violence is also characterised by unequal

access to essential resources such as healthcare, housing, and employment, further creating environments in which interpersonal violence can flourish (Montesanti and Thurston 2015). Moreover, by reinforcing systemic injustices that contribute to health disparities and social inequalities, structural violence further deepens the role of political, economic, and social systems in perpetuating harm (Maio and Ansell 2018; Odhiambo *et al.* 2022).

The impact of structural violence is evident in various contexts within institutions. Shannon *et al.* (2017), in their study, posit that structural violence manifests as systemic inequalities and discriminatory practices that hinder individuals from accessing resources and opportunities necessary for their well-being. While their study was based on understanding gender and health inequalities, they portray how structural violence manifests in the Peruvian Amazon. Sinha *et al.* (2017) assert that structural violence in institutions manifests in ways that include discriminatory policies, lack of access to resources, inadequate support systems and economic inequality. Hailu *et al.* (2023), in their study on higher education, make reference to how structural violence manifests in the institution, and they cite unequal access to resources, discriminatory policies and lack of representation. What these scholars have in common is that institutions, regardless of the focus, often reflect and reinforce societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The varied manifestations through systemic barriers that affect access and quality. The concept of structural violence sheds light on the systemic issues within such institutions and practices that persist despite policies framed by human rights, making visible the oppressive social machinery (Makoae *et al.* 2022). In some sectors, structural violence is intertwined with issues such as abuse, physical violence, and the normalisation of violence within institutional practices (Alzyoud, McCurry and Revell 2022). It also reveals how legal and institutional processes can perpetuate harm and suffering through seemingly neutral but exclusionary practices (Odhiambo *et al.* 2022). Structural violence, therefore, is prevalent, socially sanctioned, and undermines individuals' autonomy, causing moral, psychological, and emotional harm.

2.3 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Structural barriers obstructing women's political leadership are influenced by gender inequality and societal norms that link leadership activities to men, thus impeding women's entry into political spheres (Anchuri *et al.* 2021). Anchuri *et al.* (2021) present one of the important aspects of this study, the psychiatric harm (trauma) that is caused by structural violence. They argue that structural violence can lead to widespread trauma within communities, affecting the collective mental health of groups that experience systemic oppression, and this trauma can manifest as a shared sense of grief, loss, and dislocation among community members. In addition to that, they highlight that individuals subjected to violence can experience chronic stress due to indiscrimination, economic instability and social marginalisation. This study's Chapters Five, Six and Seven deal with how structural violence has left some female politicians with chronic stress due to the points shared above. Anchuri *et al.* (2021) further note that the experiences of violence and oppression can result in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This thesis creates a link between the active participation of women in politics and PTSD among women politicians.

2.3.1 EFFECT OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

The points below discuss some of the effects on women of structural violence.

Lower income: Moreover, obstacles such as women's lower income, disproportionate household and childcare responsibilities, and varying party support for increasing women's representation also contribute to women's restricted involvement in party activities. The social norms that validate men as political leaders while diminishing women's leadership capabilities serve as significant obstacles to women's representation in political leadership worldwide (Baker and Palmieri 2023; Lari *et al.* 2022). These norms, deeply rooted in patriarchal structures, continue to impact women's participation in leadership roles, restricting their political autonomy. Bullough and Luque (2014) underscore the need to create environments that challenge culturally ingrained leadership theories to attract women to entrepreneurial and political positions. However, Wagner *et al.* (2018a) reveal that female candidates face

more negative and gendered evaluations of their abilities and experiences compared to men, reflecting biased perceptions that hinder their leadership advancement.

Limits to using skills: Factors such as masculine culture and male-dominated environments limit women's ability to utilise their skills and fully contribute to political leadership. Gendered norms and practices within party structures may also discourage women from seeking party or public office, thereby exacerbating the gender gap in political representation (Verge 2015). Bjarnegård and Kenny (2016) stress the significance of understanding the gendered and institutional dimensions of opportunity structures within political parties to elucidate women's persistent minority status and male dominance in politics. Verge and Fuente (2014) discuss how historical exclusion has labelled political parties as 'institutionally sexist' entities, perpetuating male-centred practices that impede women's full participation. In addition, Kantola and Agustín (2019) highlight how informal institutions act as barriers to gender justice in party politics, further marginalising women.

Intersectionality. Research on violence against women in political leadership highlights the multifaceted nature of the threats and abuse they face. This violence, as discussed by scholars like Krook and Sanín (2019), often arises from deeply rooted structural and symbolic violence, embedded in longstanding gender hierarchies that limit women's access to political spaces and reinforce patriarchal norms. These structures subject women leaders to forms of intimidation, harassment, and abuse that range from online trolling to physical threats, all of which aim to sideline them from political engagement. Intersectional perspectives on violence, as developed by Crenshaw (1991), are particularly relevant here, revealing that marginalised women experience distinct challenges based on intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, and gender. Black and Indigenous women, for example, often face additional layers of discrimination and violence, which are systematically reinforced within both societal and political institutions. These intersections create specific vulnerabilities that traditional political violence frameworks sometimes overlook, necessitating more comprehensive approaches to address these compounded experiences of exclusion and hostility.

Furthermore, emerging literature suggests that misogyny plays a fundamental role in fuelling violence against women in politics. Misogynistic attitudes impose expectations on women's roles, categorising them as 'good' or 'bad' based on adherence to traditional gender norms. This societal policing rationalizes attacks on women leaders who challenge these norms, thereby preserving gendered power imbalances in political spaces. Consequently, this exclusion reinforces the structural violence that underpins women's political disenfranchisement, as seen globally and exemplified in various studies (Raney et al. 2023; Manne 2018). As this scholarship indicates, understanding violence against women in politics through an intersectional and structural lens allows for more nuanced interventions that address both the visible and systemic forms of exclusion faced by women leaders.

Blocking participation: Miura (2023) contributes to the discussion by framing violence against women in politics within the context of Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP). VAWIP targets women in politics using gendered means to deter their participation and uphold traditional gender roles. Bardall (2018) expands on this by connecting symbolic violence to Bourdieu's sociological theory, demonstrating how gendered tropes delegitimise female politicians by challenging their political competence. (Biroli 2018) Extends the concept of violence against women in politics to include not only direct hostility but also efforts to undermine feminist policy initiatives, highlighting a broader systemic issue.

Impunity for perpetrators: Violence against women in political settings, particularly in the global south, has been explored by Suárez (2022), who emphasises the role of criminal justice systems in perpetuating impunity for perpetrators and reinforcing patriarchal power structures. Johnson-Myers (2023) notes that the violence is perpetrated by various actors, including political, societal, and state entities. The impunity extends to both perpetrators of structural and physical violence. As shall be shown in chapters five and six, the perpetrators have been exempted from punitive execution, which presents a nature of structural violence. Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) stressed the importance of understanding violence against women and considering the complex power dynamics. The significance of intersectionality in understanding the challenges confronting women in political leadership is emphasised by Tariq and Syed (2017). The intersection of gender and culture affects how women are perceived

and treated within hierarchical leadership frameworks, impacting their employment prospects and career development. This intersectional perspective is crucial for recognising the distinct struggles faced by women from diverse backgrounds in navigating the political arena. The perpetuation of gender norms that favour men as political leaders presents a barrier to women's advancement in political leadership, as highlighted by Baker and Palmieri (2023). These entrenched social norms contribute to undervaluing women's leadership abilities and reinforcing their marginalisation in positions of power.

Undue pressure: Hastie *et al.* (2023) illustrate that gendered expectations of leadership qualities impose undue pressure on women, diverting attention from their leadership effectiveness. These ingrained expectations create a double standard that diminishes women's authority and hinders their leadership potential. Insufficient family-friendly policies and the burden of childcare and household responsibilities exacerbate the challenges faced by women in political leadership, as identified by Keohane (2020). Women often grapple with balancing family obligations and professional ambitions, with limited support systems exacerbating their difficulties in securing leadership positions.

Glass ceiling: Moreover, the concept of the 'glass ceiling,' as delineated by Markwei (2023), exemplifies how few women, particularly those in traditionally male-dominated sectors, attain top leadership positions. The concept was popularised after the release of the U.S. Department of Labor's report in 1991 titled "The Glass Ceiling Initiative"¹². The concept has generated many descriptions and definitions. Ragis (1998) described the glass ceiling as a metaphorical barrier that prevents women and other marginalised groups from advancing to top management positions despite their qualifications and capabilities. Powell and Butterfield (2015) posit that the 'glass ceiling' is a metaphor that is used to characterise what women encounter when they attempt to advance in managerial hierarchies. The glass ceiling presents invisible obstacles that limit access to leadership roles based on gender, often resulting in a

¹² <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED340653>

low proportion of women in top management. In the US Department of Labour report (1991: 1), states that

'The glass ceiling, where it exists, hinders not only individuals but society. It effectively cuts our pool of potential corporate leaders by eliminating over one-half of our population. It deprives our economy of new leaders and new sources of creativity— the 'would-be' pioneers of the business world.

Related to this, Ragis (1998) asserts that the lack of progress for women has been attributed to the glass ceiling, an invisible barrier to advancement based on attitudinal or organisational bias.

The glass ceiling impedes women from reaching the highest echelons of power, restricting their influence and representation in decision-making processes. Shattering the glass ceiling necessitates dismantling systemic obstacles and fostering inclusive environments that enable women to excel in leadership roles. Pepera (2023) emphasises the growing problem of violence against women in politics, calling for a global effort to combat this issue and ensure women's full and equal participation in political life. (Al- Qaralleh, Bader and Al-Majali 2022) analyse how electoral violence against women serves to perpetuate patriarchal norms and obstruct women's empowerment, presenting a significant barrier to their participation in shaping society. Kuperberg (2018) acknowledges the nascent stage of the field of violence against women in politics, underscoring the need for further exploration and comprehension.

Customary laws and practices: Herlihy (2012) explicates the way indigenous communities' customary laws can propagate harmful practices towards women, thereby obstructing their access to political leadership and justice. Rheault *et al.* (2019: 2), in their investigation on the devaluation experienced by women in leadership positions, concur with other researchers that "...women and men in politics are judged according to different standards". Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo (2020) delve into the gender-based motivations behind political violence, emphasising men's desire to preserve their control in politics.

Sexual violence: McEwen *et al.* (2021) emphasise the prevalence of sexual violence against women in the workplace, indicating a systemic issue that requires prompt remedial action. Hunt (2020) explores how public emotions and societal norms can contribute to violence against women, thereby creating an effective economy that

perpetuates detrimental practices. As noted in the section, the effects of structural violence reach into every aspect of a woman's life. The structural barriers confronting women in political leadership are rooted in societal norms, institutional practices, and gender biases within political systems. Carli and Eagly (2001: 631) state that

the lack of women in powerful positions used to be explained by many as a 'pipeline problem,' that is, the interpretation that women with the appropriate education and background were not available.

This explanation is understood as one of the barriers that can be used to hinder the progress of women. Addressing these structural obstacles demands comprehensive policy reforms that promote gender equality and advance women's participation in political leadership. Krook (2017) highlights the necessity for strategies to combat violence against women in politics, drawing attention to the escalating intimidation and harassment faced by women in democratic settings.

2.4 STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES WITHIN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The central tenet of this study is structural violence, and contextualising it is imperative. The existence of structural obstacles necessitates violence. Structural barriers in politics refer to long-standing social systems within the political, economic, and cultural spheres that are upheld by those in positions of authority (Mesquita and Missimer 2021; Bratt *et al.* 2021). These obstacles, reinforced by complex interconnections, present significant challenges to individuals navigating these systems (Bratt *et al.* 2021). Additionally, subtler dynamics of power, such as sexist or derogatory language and imagery within the political arena, further impede political participation (Rosino 2016) and can be understood as structural barriers. Political parties play a significant role in perpetuating these obstacles, particularly through party structures that may hinder the advancement of female candidates (Perdana and Hillman 2020).

Gatekeeping: Structural obstacles with political institutions can be viewed through the violations of political rights and civil liberties linked to various political systems that can restrict political and civil freedom, functioning as barriers to openness and transparency. There is an overemphasis on power dynamics and norms that promote

conformity, which can also contribute to social and political barriers. Francescato and Mebane, (2019) argue that gatekeeping practices, gender stereotypes, and media attitudes are some of the obstacles women face in politics, and these impede their access to and progression within their political careers. They further state that the gatekeeping approach suggests that men systematically control all the most relevant political positions and keep the gates shut to women by excluding them on purpose at the entry-level and opposing their career progress.

Gatekeeping is and can be understood as both an institutional and structural barrier. McNabb and Baker (2021) claim that it is evident that institutional and structural hurdles within the political sphere can obstruct efficient legislative actions, as exemplified by the difficulties parliamentarians encounter in enhancing policies. Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2013) underscores that political parties are the "real gatekeepers" to political power, and thus, creating enabling environments within these parties is essential for meaningful participation and representation of both genders. In addition to the institutional barriers, Hoff and Stiglitz (2008) state that political issues, resource constraints, and complexity problems are among the obstacles impeding policy implementation responses to structural challenges. Political issues can manifest in party frameworks that support men at the expense of women. Perdana and Hillman (2020) suggest that party frameworks inadequately prioritise women's concerns, leading to insufficient representation of women and inadequate promotion of female candidates within political parties. Furthermore, the existence of informal selection criteria within parties can exacerbate gender disparities and restrict candidate diversity (Bjarnegård and Kenny 2015).

Organisational structures: Inadequacies in organisational structures within political parties can hinder their capacity to address enduring historical and structural issues, resulting in electoral stagnation and a loss of credibility (Bardakci and Mat 2018). These challenges often stem from deep-seated divisions within society that parties struggle to navigate (Bardakci and Mat 2018). The failure to adapt to evolving societal dynamics and address these fundamental issues can lead to a decline in relevance and support for political parties.

Institutional weaknesses within political parties exemplify the challenges of providing effective checks on party representatives and ensuring efficient governance (Omodia 2018). Despite having a national outlook, these parties often battle internal weaknesses that limit their ability to govern and advocate for the interests of the population effectively. The inability to address these institutional challenges can result in a fragile democratic process and hinder national integration. That said, naming, recognising, and addressing the issue of structural violence is a crucial step towards accountability and systemic change. It involves identifying and acknowledging the violence inherent in systems, hierarchies, and institutional practices, which shifts the focus from blaming individual perpetrators to holding the entire system accountable (Salter *et al.* 2021). As has been discussed, this study understands structural violence, as described by Farmer *et al.* (2006), as encompassing a range of human rights violations, including poverty, racism, gender inequality, and human rights abuses, which are experienced as embodied violence by marginalised communities (Bastian 2024). Therefore, understanding and addressing structural violence is essential for promoting equity, justice, and well-being across various societal domains.

2.5 THE NORMALISATION OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

As has been discussed, structural violence refers to the systematic ways in which social structures cause harm to individuals and can have significant consequences for female leaders, particularly those in the political realm. Structural violence has normalised hostility against and towards women. The normalisation of hostility towards women in positions of power perpetuates violence and harassment against female politicians (Krook and Sanín 2019). This normalisation is rooted in power dynamics, inequality, and control, resulting in an environment where women in leadership roles are disproportionately targeted for acts of violence and intimidation (Krook 2017). The United Nations has recognised this issue, calling for zero tolerance towards violence against female candidates and elected officials, highlighting the global extent of this trend (Krook 2018). The nature of structural violence against women political leaders is a complex issue that encompasses various forms of violence, such as physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and symbolic violence, including character assassination and harassment (Johnson-Myers 2023; Muhammad *et al.* 2020).

Leadership practices significantly contribute to the normalisation of violence by fostering an environment that tolerates or even encourages aggression and harassment (McEwen *et al.* 2021). Additionally, the social construction of sexual violence against female politicians contributes to the perpetuation of this harmful behaviour, shaping how society views and responds to acts of violence targeting women in positions of power (Putri and Suyanto 2021). This social construction not only affects how violence is perceived but also influences how women leaders are supported or marginalised in political contexts.

Structural violence can lead to the normalisation of hostility towards women leaders due to perceived status violations, which play a significant role in perpetuating assault and harassment against female politicians. Power dynamics, inequality, and control deeply intertwine with this form of violence, affecting all aspects of life and exacerbating the vulnerability of economically disadvantaged women. Furthermore, patriarchal societal structures maintain electoral violence against women, impeding their empowerment and full participation in shaping social, political, and economic life (Al-Qaralleh, Bader and Al-Majali 2022).

Harmful effects: The effects of structural violence on female leaders are wide-ranging and extend beyond physical harm, with significant implications for their lives. This form of violence not only causes immediate physical and psychological harm to female politicians but also has long-lasting effects on their mental health and political aspirations (Herrick and Franklin 2019). The repercussions of violence and harassment on women leaders extend beyond simply silencing feminist debates; they also impede their policy activities, restricting their ability to advocate for gender equality and social justice (Håkansson 2023). Economically disadvantaged women are particularly susceptible to this form of violence, which exacerbates their vulnerability and impedes their ability to fully engage in political processes (Krook and Sanín 2019).

The structural obstacles against women leaders within the main political parties in Kenya are multifaceted and deeply entrenched. Research has shown that women face significant challenges in attaining leadership positions within political parties, which hinders their overall political representation and influence. The existing literature

provides valuable insights into the nature of these obstacles and their impact on women's political participation. Douglas Lucas and Paul (2019) highlight the patriarchal structure, gender stereotypes, financial constraints, lack of support from political parties, social and community resistance and lack of political present the nature of the obstacles to addressing gender imbalance in Kenya, indicating a systemic issue within the political landscape. Similarly, Bouka, Berry and Kamuru (2019) cite cultural norms (p.326), including a political environment characterised by violent propaganda (p321-322), discrimination based on gender, and weak political structures as some of the hindrances to women's effective political participation.

The intersectionality of violence against women in politics is evident in the experiences of women from diverse backgrounds. Politicians with ethnic minority or immigrant backgrounds are disproportionately targeted for acts of violence, highlighting the complex interplay of gender, ethnicity, and power dynamics in shaping these experiences (Alizade *et al.* 2023). It is evident that acts of violence against women in politics represent a form of resistance to women's increased participation in the political sphere and seek to undermine the progress made possible by measures such as gender quotas and other mechanisms designed to empower women in decision-making (Krook and Sanín 2019). In addition to ethnic and immigrant backgrounds, economically disadvantaged women are also vulnerable to various forms of political violence, including structural gender, symbolic, everyday, and long-term, which have far-reaching consequences (Menjívar and Walsh 2016). The consequences of violence against women in politics extend beyond the individual level and have a significant impact on the broader societal and political context. This hinders women's full participation in shaping the social, political, and economic landscape.

Political violence against women entails practices aimed at specific women and actions that undermine women's rights, contributing to a broader understanding of political violence that encompasses gender-based violence (Biroli 2016). Theories of domestic violence point to power imbalances rooted in patriarchal social structures as the primary causes of violence against women (Wagers *et al.* 2021). According to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, it is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological

harm or suffering experienced by women, including threats, coercion, or deprivation of liberty.

Maxwell Peprah, Beatrice and Beatrice Atim (2018) identify a range of hindrances to women's effective political participation, including a political environment characterised by violent propaganda, discrimination based on gender, and a lack of support from fellow women, further illustrating the complex and interconnected nature of the challenges faced by women leaders in Kenya.

The nature of structural violence against women in politics is further highlighted by its intergenerational transmission, as attitudes justifying violence against women can predict views supporting violence against children, indicating a broader societal issue. In addition, the role of capacity building is crucial in addressing the challenges faced by women leaders in Kenya, as it can contribute to their empowerment and effective participation in political elective positions (Wainaina *et al.* 2022; Opoku *et al.* 2018).

Based on the references provided, it is evident that violence against women in politics, particularly in Kenya, is a significant issue that encompasses various forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence (Ballington 2018). This violence is deeply rooted in structural inequalities and power dynamics, which intersect with gender, race, class, and political factors (Bjarnegård, Håkansson and Zetterberg 2020). Historical, cultural, and political contexts, as well as the dynamics of intra-party democracy and elite power struggles, influence the nature and extent of violence against women political leaders in Kenya (Okoth and Jagero 2021). The post-election violence in Kenya has been associated with widespread sexual violence against women, highlighting the intersection of political conflict and gender-based violence. The references also emphasise the impact of capacity building on women's leadership in political elective positions in Kenya. They highlight the role of development, corruption, and political violence in creating barriers to women's participation in politics (Maxwell Peprah, Beatrice and Beatrice Atim 2018). Furthermore, the studies conducted in various African countries, including Kenya, have revealed alarming rates of violence against women, particularly within the context of domestic and intimate partner violence. These findings also highlight the pervasive

nature of gender-based violence in the region and its detrimental effects on women's political participation.

The experiences of violence against women in politics are not limited to their roles as political leaders but also extend to their participation in elections, where they face intimidation, harassment, and various forms of violence (Krook and Sanín 2019; Bjarnegård, Håkansson and Zetterberg 2020) The impact of such violence is multifaceted, affecting women's ability to exercise their political rights, campaign freely, and hold public office (Ballington 2018). Moreover, the prevalence of violence against women in politics is not exclusive to Kenya. However, it is a rising global trend, as evidenced by studies in various countries, including Brazil, Pakistan, and Jordan (Al-Qaralleh, Bader and Al-Majali 2022).

It is important to acknowledge that there are differing viewpoints regarding the issue of structural violence against women leaders within political parties in Kenya. While some argue that the low representation of women in political leadership positions is primarily due to structural violence within political parties, others contend that factors such as women's own choices and preferences, a lack of qualifications or experience, and societal norms prioritising male leadership also contribute to this issue (Okoosi-Simbine and Neji 2021). These opposing arguments suggest that the under-representation of women in political leadership is a complex issue that cannot be attributed solely to structural violence within political parties. Rather, the problem requires a collective effort from various stakeholders, including women themselves, to overcome the barriers and challenges they face in politics (Bouka *et al.* 2019). It is crucial to recognise that addressing the under-representation of women in political leadership positions is not solely the responsibility of political parties but a broader societal issue that requires attention and action from all relevant parties.

While it is indisputable that there are obstacles and barriers for women in politics, it is essential to consider that progress has been made in increasing women's representation within political parties (Berry *et al.* 2021) This includes the implementation of positive actions, such as constitutional provisions and gender quotas, which have resulted in a rise in the number of women in parliament and other leadership roles. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that structural violence remains

a significant issue that restricts women's full participation and leadership within political parties. Despite the progress made in increasing women's representation in political parties, there still exist significant challenges and barriers that hinder women from achieving leadership positions (Bauer and Taylor 2023).

It is widely acknowledged that various measures and policies have been introduced to address the gender disparity in political representation. In Kenya, for instance, affirmative action has been adopted to ensure that political parties nominate more women for parliamentary positions. As a result, the number of female parliamentarians and senators has increased significantly. This demonstrates a commitment to reducing gender inequality within political parties. However, it is crucial to recognise that these measures alone are insufficient to tackle the problem of structural violence against women leaders in political parties (Matfess, Kishi and Berry 2023). Further efforts are necessary to address the underlying systemic and cultural factors that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and violence within political parties.

It is also important to note that the under-representation of women in political leadership positions is not solely attributable to structural violence within political parties. While this form of violence is a significant factor, other challenges such as limited financial resources, socio-cultural stigmatisation, gender-based electoral violence, lack of access to education and training opportunities, and biased media coverage also contribute to the barriers faced by women leaders in political parties (Schneider and Bos 2019). In summary, although affirmative measures have contributed to progress in increasing women's representation in political parties, the issue of structural violence against women leaders within political parties remains a pressing concern.

2.6 CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

Established power systems typically employ political violence to resist the appropriation and control of political, economic, or other resources, the assertion or preservation of national identity supremacy, or the attainment of regime change (Breen-Smyth 2016). Violence Against Women (VAW) is defined as any act of gender-

based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether it occurs in public or private settings (UN Women 2021). At the intersection of gender, politics, and violence, there are two distinct concepts: gender-differentiated political violence (GDPV) and gender-motivated political violence (Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo 2020).

The use of gender-based political violence (GBPV) and gender discrimination in GDPV is often intended to restrict or govern individuals or groups based on their gender identity, with the ultimate goal of perpetuating traditional patriarchal dominance over decision-making establishments (Yaroshenko *et al.* 2022). This type of violence takes many forms, including psychological, economic, sexual, and symbolic, and can occur in both the cyber and domestic spheres. Perpetrators can be intimate partners, family members, or members of the community. However, since dominant political actors do not recognise GDPV, it is often overlooked or ignored. Bardall (2018) defines political violence more inclusively as the use of emotional, social, economic, and physical or sexual force, coercion, or pressure to restrict and/or subjugate an individual or group's freedom to participate in political processes and institutions, both in public and private spheres, encompassing the family, community, cyberspace, media, or state-perpetrated or sanctioned actions.

GBPV and GDPV violence are pressing concerns that seek to restrict political rights based on gender. Both male and female political actors have experienced political violence in various ways, such as through gender-based motives, forms, and consequences (Johnson-Myers 2023). Some perceive GBPV as primarily motivated by gender, specifically targeting women politicians because of their gender (Bjarnegård, Håkansson and Zetterberg 2020).

Although there is a gender gap in support for politically motivated aggression and violence, studies have demonstrated that women are actively involved in political violence, challenging the notion of women as solely peaceful (Shitrit 2016). The relationship between gendered socio-political, historical, and economic structures and sexual and gender-based violence in conflict cannot be overlooked (Kuperberg 2018). Global initiatives such as the global study of sexism, violence, and harassment against

women parliamentarians and the release of a programming guide on preventing violence against women in elections highlight the growing trend of violence against women in politics (Krook 2018).

Social-psychological violence, including GMPV and GDPV, infringes upon a victim's political and civil rights, perpetuating their subordinate status within society. Ideological and partisan convictions are the root cause of the exclusion of political violence, which also reinforces patriarchal dominance over political institutions. Non-physical forms of political violence disproportionately target women, and psychological aggression frequently serves as a precursor to physical violence (O'Leary, 1999). Social-psychological violence can be used to inflict fear on a victim to coerce or punish them for their behaviour. This may include family pressure, social sanctions, acts of intimidation, sexual harassment (such as unwanted advances or verbal harassment of a sexual nature), and character assassination (Hubbard and DeSoi 2016; IPU 2016; UN et al. 2017; Krook & Sanín 2016; Krook 2017).

Gender-based violence is the physical, psychological, social, and political violence perpetrated by individuals, groups, or institutions against others based on their actual or perceived gender. GBV can affect both men and women and is rooted in structural gender inequities, patriarchal belief systems, and power imbalances. (UN Women 2020; Nnawulezi *et al.* 2018). At the United Nations expert meeting, Dr Freizer proposed the notion that violence is used as an intimidation tactic to convey the message to women in politics that they are not welcome and do not belong in the political arena (UN Women, 2018). Krook further expounded on this perspective by emphasising that political violence aims to silence a competing viewpoint and is, therefore, issue-based. At the same time, VAWIP specifically seeks to impede women's right to political participation and silence them. Although there may be common elements between these two forms of violence, a woman is likely to experience both (UN Women, 2020; Krook 2017).

Various factors, such as physical attacks, hateful speech, sexual innuendos, a lack of political will, structural barriers, stereotyping, and harmful norms, fuel VAWIP. These acts deter women from participating equally in political life. VAWIP has led to the persistent undermining and discouragement of women from participating in politics

through sexual and verbal attacks and other forms of harassment, particularly online. Women in politics frequently experience psychological violence, but degrading talk, mainly shrouded in sexual connotation, is often overlooked by the women themselves as a necessary price to pay in politics. This type of violence is mainly used against women, while libel is common for both men and women (UN Women 2020; Ballington 2018; UN Women 2018b).

According to Estefan *et al.* (2016), women who experience gender-based violence are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These traumatised individuals in politics are expected to be strong and resilient to survive. There are few interventions addressing these health consequences in political settings. As a result, women in political leadership often change their presentation and relationships to adapt and survive. Unfortunately, lack of support leads to trauma-related issues that some women must conceal to maintain relevance and demonstrate toughness (Estefan *et al.* 2016). Health can be viewed through the lens of sustainable peace, which is linked to social structures like inequalities, violence, conflict, or oppression. While constructive conflict can lead to sustainable change and peacebuilding, it is crucial to recognise that harm can still occur unintentionally (Woehrle 2019). Violence disproportionately targets women in politics due to their gender and political status. Intersectionality theory highlights that a woman's identity is complex and multifaceted (Kuperberg 2018). Women thus face intersecting structures of oppression.

Despite significant advancements in addressing gender issues, incidents of violence and harassment against women continue to persist and, in some cases, have even worsened. Women are equally susceptible to violence and harassment, both online and offline. They have faced ridicule for standing up for themselves, expressing their opinions, or demanding equal treatment with their male counterparts (Krook 2018). To address gender-motivated and gender-differentiated political violence effectively, it is crucial to possess a thorough comprehension of the gendered motivations, manifestations, and repercussions of such violence. A comprehensive approach that encompasses the wider socio-political, historical, and economic contexts, as well as the legal safeguards for victims of online gender-based violence, is essential.

2.6.1 TRAUMA AND WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Women in leadership positions often face discrimination and stereotype threats, which negatively impact their well-being and leadership effectiveness. I join, researchers such as (Eagly 2007; Marte 2021), in identifying discrimination as a significant factor contributing to the under-representation of women in leadership roles. The traditional view of leadership as a male-dominated field further compounds this discrimination, leading male evaluators to perceive female leaders as a threat. Marte (2021) also highlights the lesser-known mental, spiritual, and emotional effects of structural violence on the health and well-being of women leaders. Ridgeway (2001) posits that stereotype threat plays a significant role in women's leadership aspirations and effectiveness. Gender stereotypes often lead to a less positive evaluation of women leaders, especially those in male-dominated roles. Despite this, Simon and Hoyt (2013) suggest that counter-stereotypical images may buffer women from negative stereotype threat effects in the leadership domain. Hoyt and Blascovich (2007) emphasised the perceived incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role, which can lead to prejudice and unfavourable attitudes towards female leaders.

While the impact of trauma on leadership has not been widely investigated through empirical research, Kramer and Allen (2018) recognised both positive and negative consequences that trauma exposure can have on leadership and leadership development. Williams and Allen (2015) analysed the transitional narratives of trauma-driven leaders to pinpoint the variables that contribute to prosocial leadership development. In contrast, Patel *et al.* (2020) explored the challenges and opportunities that women leaders face in conflict and humanitarian settings, highlighting the gender-specific differences in leadership styles and advocating for greater female representation in leadership positions to bring about institutional change.

Recognition of the impact of gender, religion, and culture on women's leadership experiences is essential. According to Baqutayan and Raji (2021), these factors significantly influence women's leadership approaches. Women in leadership roles often grapple with unique challenges, especially when they have experienced trauma. The harmful effects of structural violence on women's social, psychological, and

economic survival are well documented. However, the lesser-known mental, spiritual, and emotional effects of such violence on the health and well-being of women leaders bring to the fore the need for a healing justice framework for women in leadership roles (Marte 2021). It is vital to acknowledge the impact of trauma on women in leadership positions. According to Chance (2021), women in leadership face adversity and navigate cultural adversity in their roles. Additionally, the role of trauma in leadership socialisation has been explored, highlighting women's agency and their ability to create opportunities for themselves despite suffering and pain (Arnold *et al.* 2018).

According to Hourani *et al.* (2022), women are more likely to encounter traumatic events that can adversely affect their mental well-being. Additionally, female leaders frequently face political violence due to their gender, such as harassment, intimidation, and limited political participation (Muhammad *et al.* 2020). The traumatic experiences of women leaders are influenced by broader societal and political factors, including poverty, ethnocentrism, and support for political violence, which exacerbate the challenges they face in their roles (Kapiga *et al.* 2019; Heath *et al.* 2013). In certain cases, the enactment of gender quotas in parliament has triggered a retaliatory response, employing violence to limit women's political involvement, thereby perpetuating a cycle of trauma and intimidation (Muhammad *et al.* 2020). The traumatic experiences of women leaders constitute a violation of their human rights and hinder the realisation of their political rights, perpetuating a cycle of harm and injustice (Ballington 2018).

The impact of structural violence against women in leadership positions is of paramount importance and cannot be underestimated. During election periods, shifting political economies and gender dynamics create risks of violence that shape women's experiences and exacerbate their trauma, as indicated by Alsaba and Kapilashrami (2016). Furthermore, Bjarnegård (2021) emphasises that the diverse forms of election violence and the various experiences of female candidates highlight the increased exposure of women to threats and aggression, leading to psychological distress and trauma.

It is essential to recognise the emotional and psychological consequences of trauma, as well as the coping strategies and healing processes, to comprehend the obstacles

faced by female political leaders. Providing emotional support and encouraging self-reflection can help women leaders manage any emotional vulnerabilities that may arise due to work-related trauma, as underscored by Mavin's research (2022). That said, it is critical to consider the psychological impact of trauma on women's overall well-being when addressing its consequences.

Women leaders' media portrayals and the challenges they face in disrupting traditional political leadership norms expose gendered dynamics and the need for normative change to address the impact of trauma on women in leadership roles (Baker & Palmieri 2023). Women leaders from ethno-racial minority backgrounds may face forms of psychological trauma and post-traumatic stress, highlighting the need for support and empowerment. The experiences of trauma among female politicians encompass various aspects of their leadership roles. It is important to acknowledge the emotional challenges and vulnerabilities that women leaders may encounter due to work-related trauma. The psychological consequences of trauma, coping mechanisms, and the need for healing and support are critical factors to consider when addressing the obstacles faced by women in political leadership. Reflexivity and emotional support are essential for addressing the emotional vulnerabilities that women leaders may experience due to work-related trauma, as highlighted by Sharon (2022).

It is crucial to consider the concept of cultural trauma, which refers to the lasting impacts on a group's consciousness caused by horrific events, fundamentally changing their identity (Pelak 2015). This notion is particularly relevant in the context of women in politics, as they face traumatic experiences that affect their political engagement and identity. According to Jabiri (2017), scholars have shed light on the gendered politics of alienation and power restoration, revealing the marginalisation and violence faced by women in post-revolution processes. This underscores the significance of acknowledging the specific challenges and traumas that women encounter in political spheres.

The role of women in politics extends beyond representation, as female politicians can act as role models, inspiring other women to engage in political activities (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). This highlights the importance of women's presence in political

institutions as a means of countering the historical under-representation and trauma experienced by women in politics. Additionally, the use of counter-frames has been identified as a powerful communication strategy to neutralise public information effects in energy politics, indicating the potential for strategic communication to challenge existing narratives and perceptions (Bayer and Ovodenko 2019).

The study of trauma experienced by women in politics necessitates recognition of the intricate, ever-changing interplay between informal practices and hybrid regime tactics that are directed at gender politics and its constituents, while concurrently emphasising women's ability to navigate and overcome obstacles to their political power within and beyond political institutions (Ehrhart 2023). This highlights the nature of women's experiences in politics and the need for comprehensive approaches to address the trauma and obstacles they confront.

2.6.2 SOLIDARITY BEHAVIOUR VS QUEEN BEE SYNDROME

This section provides a brief explanation of the Queen Bee syndrome and solidarity behaviour, highlighting their opposing nature. Queen Bee syndrome, as will be discussed later in the study, is identified as one of the contributing factors to the persistence of structural violence over time. To address its negative impact, the researcher also explores the concept of solidarity behaviour among women as a potential solution. This solidarity can help counteract the challenges posed by women in leadership roles who may have adopted behaviours and attitudes that align with masculine organisational cultures, as seen in the Queen Bee syndrome. The 'queen bee syndrome' refers to a phenomenon in which female leaders who have succeeded in male-dominated environments may hinder the progress of other women in various institutions ((Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers 2016); (Klea, Naomi and Belle 2020); (Cibibin and Leo 2022)). This behaviour involves female leaders legitimising, rather than challenging, the disadvantaged position of women within their institution, perpetuating the institution's culture. Apaydin *et al.* (2021) further emphasise that the characteristics of the "queen bee syndrome" include adopting male attitudes and using them against women, attempting to eliminate the competition of other women, and ignoring the symptoms of discrimination. However, Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers (2016) associated this behaviour with the response to the discrimination and social

identity threats that women may experience in male-dominated institutions. This may benefit individual women, but it often leads to successful women leaders distancing themselves from other women, including those they represent, reducing the likelihood of improving opportunities for other women or being seen as role models by female subordinates.

Furthermore, Ellemers *et al.* (2004) and Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers (2016) assert that it is crucial to recognise that queen bee behaviour is not inherently feminine but rather a common response to group distancing among marginalised groups. Sarwar and Imran (2019) suggest that the queen bee syndrome, rather than being a cause of gender disparity, is closely associated with the gender bias women encounter in institutions. Scholars have linked the concept of the queen bee syndrome to the under-representation of women in leadership roles and the resistance to the women's movement. Sheppard and Aquino (2017) further explain that the term has been associated with negative narratives surrounding women's relationships and interactions in management and leadership literature. The impact of the queen bee syndrome on women's perceptions in professional settings has been studied, with implications for women's advancement and the culture of institutions. Additionally, the syndrome has been observed across various industries and sectors, such as sports and leadership (Cibibin and Leo 2022; Ramnund-Mansingh 2022).

On the other hand, solidarity behaviour among women encompasses a multitude of social, political, and organisational dynamics that reflect the collective support, unity, and political solidarity among women. This behaviour has implications for women's activism, leadership, and well-being, and understanding the factors that contribute to it is crucial for promoting gender equality and creating supportive environments for women in various spheres of life. Solidarity behaviour among women has been a subject of interest in several fields, including gender studies, social psychology, and feminism. Cornwall (2007) accentuated the importance of female solidarity and autonomy in gender and development thinking. Shea *et al.* (2017) indicate that gender solidarity can serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of perceived gender discrimination among women. Studies have linked women's solidarity to support for women's movements, suggesting that both men and women associate

unattractiveness with support for the women's liberation movement (Goldberg *et al.* 1975).

Studies have explored the concept of solidarity in the realm of political leadership, with Lee *et al.* (2023) revealing that perceived unfairness can increase female bureaucrats' support for female political leaders, fostering a sense of shared experience among women. Ali *et al.* (2020) suggest that the unity of female characters can liberate them from the oppressive grip of patriarchy. Furthermore, the visibility of black women in politics has been connected to identification and solidarity, emphasising the potential for solidarity to alleviate black women's invisibility in politics (Mosier *et al.* 2022).

The phenomenon known as the queen bee syndrome, which refers to the tendency of senior women to undermine or hinder the advancement of other women, often complicates solidarity behaviour among women in leadership positions (Mavin 2006). This syndrome has been linked to the under-representation of women in leadership roles, as the lack of solidarity behaviour among women in senior positions can contribute to women's opposition to the women's movement (Ellemers *et al.* 2004). Some studies have shown that women in leadership positions may hold contradictory perceptions of other senior women, expecting them to support their advancement while also viewing them as competitors (Mavin 2006). This is also highlighted in Chapter 5, giving scenarios in which female politicians have been labelled to fit under the Queen Bee phenomenon. It is essential to recognise that the queen bee syndrome has been observed in various contexts, including among female business students and senior policewomen (Zandria *et al.* 2020) and in different industries where women in top positions can undermine the advancement of other women (Cibibin and Leo 2022).

In contrast to the concept of queen bee syndrome, which can create a competitive and exclusive work environment, solidarity behaviour among women is essential for cultivating a supportive and inclusive institutional culture. A study by Kaup *et al.* (2022) found that solidarity among women in the workplace is positively influenced by adherent safety behaviour, middle age and negatively influenced by depression symptoms, male gender, and high age. However, women in leadership roles and those with family responsibilities may face challenges that prevent them from engaging in

solidarity behaviour. Solidarity behaviour requires women to act collectively and for senior female managers to support their female colleagues within their institution (Hurst *et al.* 2016). This concept of collective support and unity among women is a significant topic in gender studies, with research highlighting the importance of political solidarity between women (Hooks 2014). Moreover, research by Leaper and Holliday (1995) suggests that women may be more likely than men to use gossip in same-gender friendships to establish solidarity and make social comparisons. The idea of sisterhood and solidarity has also been examined in the context of women's activism and leadership. Ali *et al.* (2020) found that sisterhood can serve as a source of support and unity for women, enabling them to face oppression with resilience. Additionally, research has explored the role of sisterhood in promoting female political leadership by challenging traditional gender ideology and the division of labour.

Moreover, the concept of solidarity among women has been linked to various social and psychological factors. For instance, Erbil and Gümüşay (2018) have demonstrated that perceived social support positively affects women's attitudes. Zumeta *et al.* (2020) have identified the experience of self-transcendence, situated social identity, and identity fusion with collectives representing solidarity with women as psychosocial mechanisms linked to the effects of collective behaviour in the context of women's rights movements. Within institutions, the notion of solidarity behaviour among women has been examined in the context of management and leadership. It has been observed that solidarity ties tend to be stronger for women than for men, given that women are more powerfully subject to social norms due to systematic discrimination against them, making their position more tenuous. Furthermore, the expectation for women in senior leadership positions to support other women within their institutions reflects the broader societal and organisational dynamics that influence solidarity behaviour among women (Hurst *et al.* 2016).

2.7 MITIGATING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

Interactions and relationship structures embed structural violence, making overt violence largely absent and more difficult to identify than physical violence. If not addressed, structural violence in the conflict cycle progresses to the violent conflict

phase, eventually transforming into a crisis and then leading to behavioural or physical violence. First, each party's investment in the objectives and their value to the conflicting parties determine the intensity of conflict (Kaufman 2015). Further, protracted social conflict results in a combination of psychological and social realities that are difficult to detect or explain. Despite the well-known psychological and physical reactions to trauma, the collective effects have received little research.

Failure to address the structural violence against women will result in continued trauma. This is a social disease, and unless the possibility of transforming persistent, protracted social conflict into a state of peace is realised, the problem poses a threat to societal harmony. The experience of inequalities by women in Kenya shows their unequal status in society. Unfortunately, due to the entrenchment of patriarchy within political institutions, male structural violence against women is exploited to keep the status quo (Rinker and Lawler 2018; Were 2017).

There have been many initiatives introduced to address structural barriers to women's representation in Kenya through various initiatives and policies. One such policy is the introduction of a gender quota in 2010, which aims to increase women's political representation in Kenya (Kilimo 2022). This system of quotas has played a crucial role in facilitating women's participation and enhancing their influence in decision-making processes (Opoku *et al.* 2018). The adoption of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya represented a significant achievement in fostering gender equality and promoting women's political representation (Opoku *et al.* 2018). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the 2008 law against gender-based violence in Kenya, advocated by a coalition of women and men in parliament, demonstrates advancements in securing legislative support and combating violence against women (Thomson *et al.* 2015).

Initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in politics have been vital in overcoming structural obstacles and fostering a more inclusive political environment for women. Capacity building and education have been highlighted as key factors in enhancing women's leadership in political elective positions in Kenya (Wainaina *et al.* 2022). Moreover, research has shown that gender quotas have led to increased women's political engagement in the National Assembly (Anumo and Pacificah 2019). However, it is also crucial to address broader societal issues to prevent violence against women

in politics, which often arises from structural violence that dictates access to fundamental needs based on group affiliations (Krook and Sanín 2019).

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Deep-rooted traditional beliefs of women's inferiority and cultural norms that perpetuate gender subordination continue to impede women's involvement in electoral politics in Kenya. In addition, socio-economic factors such as poverty and disparities in resource allocation further hinder women from attaining public positions (Moraa *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, the elimination of violence against women and children is emphasised as a critical indicator of regional development success (Amalia *et al.* 2022). This underscores the significance of integrating prevention, response, and support services into institutional frameworks to comprehensively address violence.

In contrast, according to Clayton (2014), the implementation of quota-mandated female representation may not necessarily lead to an increase in women's engagement with local politics. This suggests that while quotas may improve numerical representation, they may not necessarily result in active participation or empowerment at the grassroots level. In addition, Mansbridge (1999) argues that internal dynamics within political groups based on descriptive identity can hinder progress towards gender equality, even in groups that challenge dominant hegemony. This implies that although efforts have been made to promote women's representation, there may still be underlying power struggles and complexities within these groups that could impede the full realisation of gender equality in politics.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Studlar and McAllister (2002) demonstrates that the gains in women's representation have been gradual rather than being attributed to a critical mass effect. This contradicts the belief that a substantial increase in women's representation would result in a transformative shift in political dynamics. Incremental progress may not be sufficient to eliminate deeply ingrained structural barriers that impede women's full participation and influence in political decision-making processes. Moreover, the assumption that women are capable of governance and the impact of changes in women's descriptive representation on political participation may be subject to scrutiny (Alexander 2012). It is essential to consider whether the increase in women's representation directly leads to a shift in societal perceptions about

women's leadership capabilities and whether this shift is substantial enough to overcome deeply entrenched gender biases in politics.

The role of gender in party leadership and the factors that influence women's political representation at the local level may present challenges that need to be addressed (O'Brien 2015; Sundström and Stockemer (2021). Understanding the nuances of gender dynamics within political parties and local contexts is crucial for designing effective strategies to enhance women's representation and address structural barriers. Additionally, Berry *et al.* (2020) highlighted the backlash faced by women in politics in Kenya, including derogatory comments and stereotypes such as labelling women as "prostitutes" once they enter the political arena. This backlash emphasises the persistent gender biases and discriminatory attitudes that continue to undermine women's credibility and effectiveness in political roles, indicating that structural barriers persist even with some progress. Further, Yoon (2011) claims that the increase in the number of female representatives in Kenya's parliament has undermined the special-seat system, which was originally established to provide women with access to political positions. This indicates that although progress has been made in terms of numbers, the effectiveness and long-term viability of mechanisms like special seats in achieving genuine gender equality and women's empowerment in politics may be called into question. Moreover, the challenges faced in implementing gender quotas in Kenya, as well as the potential backlash, could be a contentious issue (Berry *et al.* 2020). The negative stereotypes and accusations levelled at women entering politics may reflect ongoing resistance to gender equality initiatives, emphasising the need for sustained advocacy and awareness campaigns to counter such harmful perceptions.

Subsequently, even though there have been various national policies, legislative, and administrative interventions to address structural violence against women, such as the establishment of gender advisory commissions, women's financial support instruments, and women empowerment training (Marey-Sarwan 2020; Zakrison *et al.* 2019; Claassens 2018), nonetheless, these are ineffective and inaccessible to all (Premaratna 2020; Sinha *et al.* (2017). Consequently, further investigation is required in the area of psychosocial support for women leaders who have experienced trauma due to both structural and cultural violence against them within political institutions, as

this would be more holistic and integrated in meeting their challenges, leading to fundamental structure change and hence transformation.

In summary, overcoming the systemic barriers that impede women's representation in politics necessitates addressing the underlying structural inequities. Continuous advocacy for gender equality in politics and governance in Kenya is crucial (Kiplimo and Amunga 2021). Implementing policy interventions, education, and capacity-building programs can help establish a more inclusive and representative political environment for women in Kenya. Using gender quotas, promoting women's leadership, and challenging entrenched cultural norms can assist Kenya in preventing structural violence obstacles against women's representation in politics. Therefore, the advancements made in Kenya to combat structural violence obstacles against women's representation involve legal reforms, advocacy efforts, and a shift towards more inclusive and gender-equal political arenas. Persevering in addressing systemic disparities, advocating for legislative actions, and fostering a culture of gender equality can further enhance women's engagement in politics and effectively combat violence against women.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the subject of structural violence against women in political leadership positions in Nairobi. Specifically, the chapter aimed to investigate the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of structural violence directed towards women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County. Additionally, the chapter examined previous attempts to mitigate this form of violence and assessed their effectiveness.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Institutions or social structures can cause avoidable harm by impairing fundamental human needs, a concept known as structural violence. The four types of basic needs adversely affected by violence are freedom needs, well-being needs, survival needs, and identity needs (Galtung, 1990). All human beings have these needs, and the intersection of gender with these conditions reveals that factors such as political and institutional structures, cultural barriers, health, education, and poverty disproportionately affect women. An in-depth examination of the institutions reveals their potential to exacerbate the harmful structural inequalities that women face in society. In contemporary realities, it is worse when the very institutions, such as political parties, are the same ones that provide society with its political leaders.

3.2 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE OVERVIEW

The concept of structural violence, first introduced by Johan Galtung, has generated significant scholarly debate and influence. Societal structures and institutions embed this pervasive form of violence, causing harm and oppression to individuals or groups (Loyd 2012). Structural violence is insidious, socially sanctioned, and inflicts injury on an individual's autonomy, leading to moral, psychological, and emotional damage. Although the ideal of perfect equality is its goal, it may not be practical or desirable in all cases (Barnett 2008). Health research, among other fields, has applied this systemic violence to understand the impact of societal structures on health outcomes, particularly in marginalised communities (Maio and Ansell 2018).

The idea of structural violence comes from peace studies. It criticises the social and political processes and colonial discourses that cause the deeply rooted, spatially compounded, and visible violence of displacement, such as hunger, thirst, and the "death of the earth" (Murrey 2015). This theory also explains the interrelationships among structural inequality, poverty, and violence in society. Structural violence refers to a type of violence that is deeply ingrained in social institutions and structures, leading to the harm and oppression of individuals and communities. This form of

violence is insidious and socially sanctioned, causing injury to an individual's autonomy and resulting in moral, psychological, and emotional damage (Burnett 2021). Structural violence manifests as a variety of offences against human dignity, including extreme poverty, social inequalities, and human rights abuses, and punishes efforts to escape it (Maio and Ansell 2018). Unlike personal violence, structural violence lacks a specific subject, and cultural violence serves to legitimise both personal and structural violence.

Furthermore, structural violence in healthcare is evident in the high rates of medical interventions and the disrespectful treatment of women during childbirth (Sadler *et al.* 2016). The field of nursing science and practice identifies structural violence in specific situations where socially constructed systems impose disadvantages on individuals or groups based on factors such as race, gender, and economic privilege. With regard to long-term residential care for older individuals, structural violence can manifest as indirect forms of violence built into social structures that hinder individuals from fulfilling their basic needs or reaching their potential (Banerjee *et al.* 2012). Baum and Pender (2023) applied structural family theory in the context of family conflict to address patterns of violence and disrupt the cycle of violence through second-order change.

Additionally, Alzyoud *et al.* (2022) have utilised the theory of violence to distinguish between direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence, emphasising the processes involved in structural violence. In the educational context, systemic or structural violence has been identified as a mechanism for the reproduction of existing social relations, contributing to the violent (re)production of educational inequality (Alicea 2022). On the other hand, Norberg (2021) examines the impact of neoliberal austerity on disabled people through the lens of bureaucratic violence, highlighting the structural and material violence enacted by bureaucratic systems, sometimes, notably without knowing it.

Johan Galtung's typology of direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence is a useful tool for identifying different forms of violence, including those that are less visible or apparent (Aghtaie and Staines 2022). This framework identifies structural violence as police or state violence, colonialism, and medical violence (Anchuri *et al.* 2021). Moreover, Flood (2015) emphasises that efforts to prevent violence should

concentrate on transforming structural and institutional inequalities and altering men's attitudes. Farr (2021) proposes an intersectional assemblage theory to understand the dynamics of power and process in the context of domestic violence, focussing on the nodes and switch points of oppression through anti-violence abolitionist praxis.

That said, the theory of structural violence is deeply rooted in societal structures and institutions, perpetuating harm and oppression for individuals or groups. It encompasses various dimensions, including social, economic, and healthcare contexts, and is closely linked to the perpetuation of social inequalities. All of these references show how the theory of structural violence can be used and interpreted in different fields. They also show how important it is to understand how society works, how power works, and how violence and inequality keep happening.

3.3 GALTUNG, EXTENDED VIOLENCE AND GENDER

Galtung introduced two branches of peace in 1964: negative peace, which represents the absence of violence and war, and positive peace, which involves the integration of human society. While this concept has been associated with Marxist ideology, it is also attributed to Mahatma Gandhi's holistic approach to peace. Gandhi's satyagraha movement inspired Galtung to shift away from Western science's actor-oriented perspective and develop peace concepts that emphasise interconnectedness and holistic approaches (Galtung,

1985; 1990; Lawler, 1995). Galtung believed that unintentional extreme harm caused by others constitutes violence and should be addressed through non-violent solutions to address the unacceptable social disorder and direct acts of violence. A structural approach can help transform the international system's way of dealing with violence.

Galtung's work further explores the definition of structural violence, focussing on the distinction between actual and potential violence, which he referred to as the "extended concept" of violence. This extends the definition of violence beyond intentional destructive acts. If actual violence is unavoidable, then there is no violence. However, if actual violence is avoidable and potential violence is lower than actual violence, then there is violence. For example, the 18th-century tuberculosis crisis was unavoidable due to the lack of medical knowledge at the time. However, with more

sophisticated medical resources available today, similar devastation would be avoidable, and experiencing senseless deaths from it would constitute violence (Galtung, 1969).

Therefore, individuals inflict structural violence without intention, and the unequal distribution of power and resources often perpetuates it. In contrast to personal violence, the identity of both the subject and object is not always clear in structural violence. One does not need to be aware that they are a victim of structural violence to suffer from it. For instance, hunger is considered structural violence because it is an avoidable condition that arises from unequal power dynamics. Galtung first introduced the concept of structural violence in 1969 and further developed it in 1985 and 1990. According to Galtung, structural violence is a result of unequal power and, consequently, unequal life chances.

To bring about peace and transcend violence, it is necessary to understand the legitimisation and use of violence. Galtung's ultimate goal in studying and defining violence is to create peace. He added a third dimension to the direct/structural violence binary in 1990, which he called cultural violence. The aspects of culture that can justify or legitimise direct or structural violence are known as cultural violence.

The triangle below in figure 3.1 illustrates this concept:

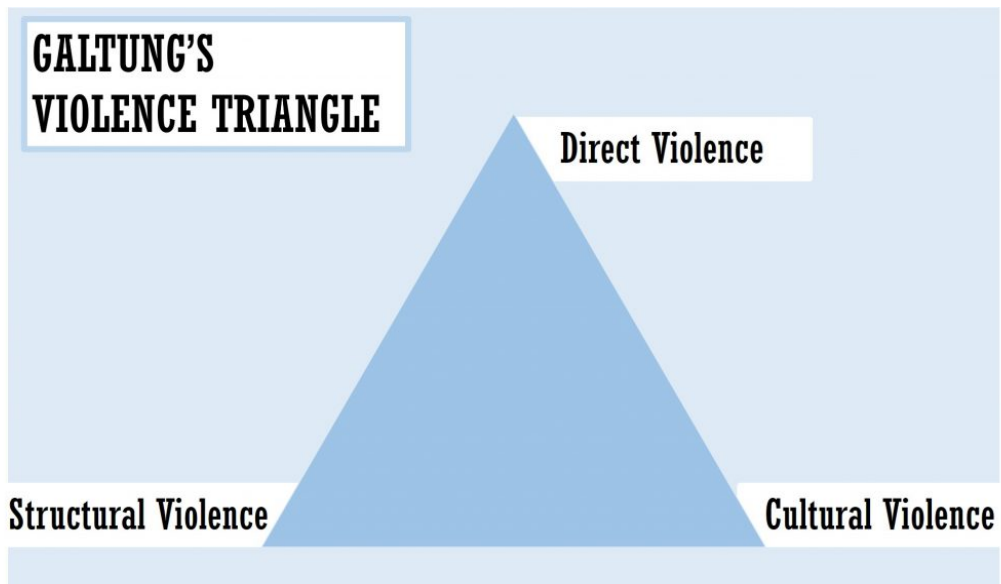


Figure 3. 1:Galtung's Violence Triangle source

Cultural violence frequently serves to sanction both physical and systemic violence, which can be difficult to detect. It is crucial to address the underlying cultural and structural causes of violence, rather than just focusing on its superficial manifestations, to achieve Galtung's framework for a shift from negative peace to positive peace (Galtung, 1990). This study aimed to investigate the current issue of structural violence faced by women in Kenyan political parties.

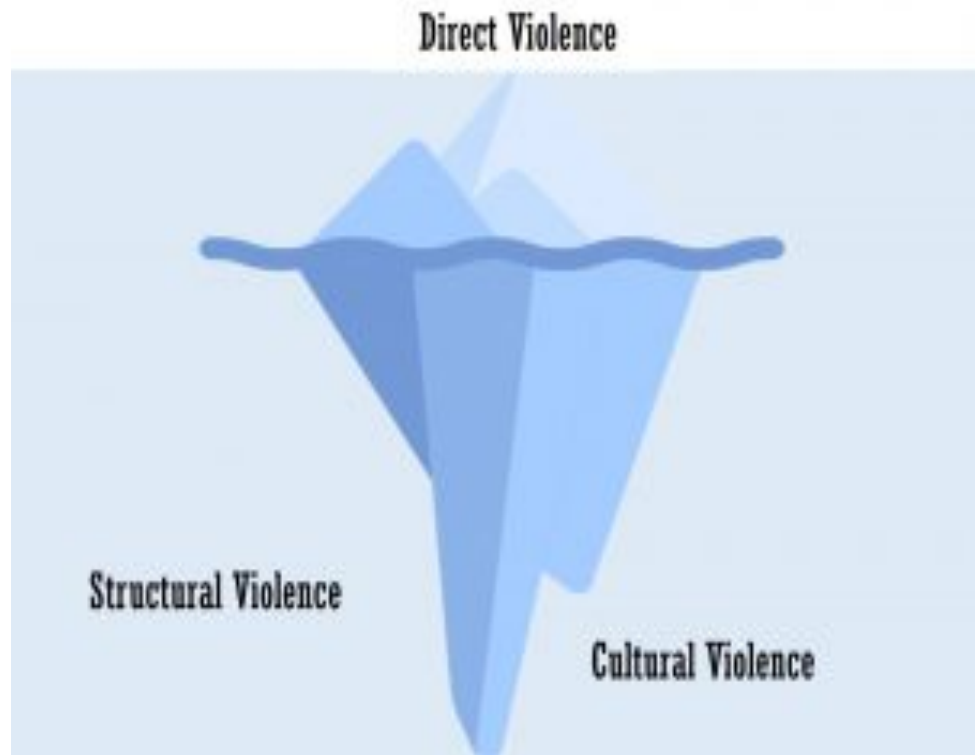


Figure 3. 2: Violence Triangle of Johan Galtung: Kalpalata Dutta

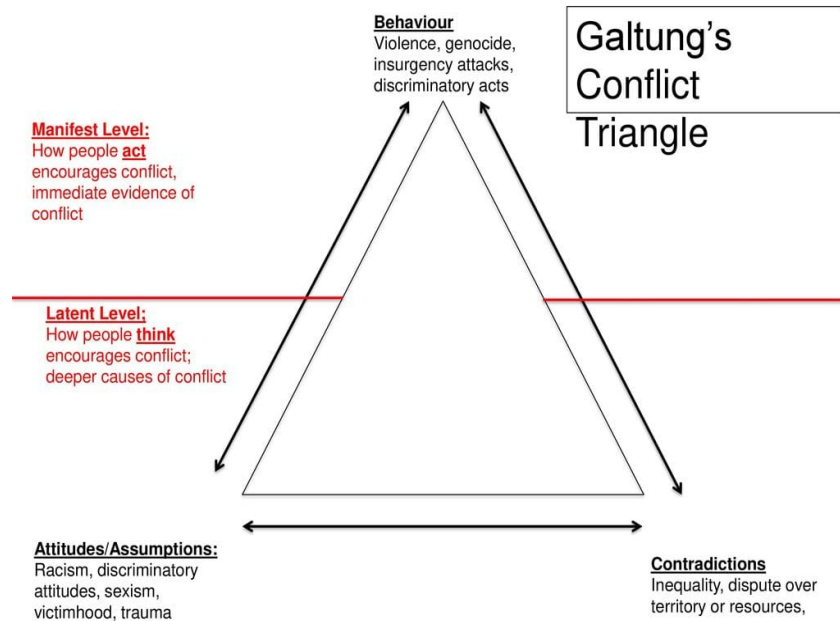


Figure 3. 3: Galtung and Conflict Triangle: Maria Herandez 2019

Gender-based hierarchies in political leadership perpetuate masculinity through misogyny and the degradation of femininity, mirroring and reinforcing patriarchal structures where men assert their superiority by demeaning those perceived as feminine. The political leadership in numerous countries, including Kenya, exacerbates this process by promoting and normalising masculinity as a desirable leadership trait. The presence of institutionalised sexism, misogyny, discrimination, and even the normalisation of violence in political platforms contribute to this environment (Alexander 2018; Kuperberg 2018).

3.4 CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION THEORY

The world inherently contains conflict, which we cannot wish away. It is important to acknowledge the existence of conflicts and to develop effective processes to transform them. Conflict transformation involves more than resolving current conflicts; it also involves creating structures that prevent the recurrence of conflicts while improving relationships. This approach aims to achieve a state of positive peace, as described by Johan Galtung, which is characterised by the absence of structural and cultural violence (Galtung 2018) The goal of conflict transformation is to enhance the relationship between the parties involved, thereby reducing the probability of violence. This can be achieved through non-violent means, such as transforming conflicts

through dialogue and consensus building. Conflict refers to the divergence of needs, ideas, cultures, and goals between parties, which can lead to tension and clashes. However, if handled constructively, conflicts can yield positive outcomes, as they have a genesis and a prompting stimulator, which serve as their root causes.

Different generations in diverse communities have come up with various methods to resolve their conflicting objectives. In extreme cases, violence has been one such method. Violence is an outdated and ineffective approach to dealing with conflict, as it demonstrates a lack of creativity. Instead, Wanjala (2012) suggests employing non-violent means to transform conflicts. Therefore, non-violence is encouraged as a paradigm. Johan Galtung identified three types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural violence. In his manual on violence, he argued that violence stems from two human constructs: bad structures and bad cultures (Galtung 2000) Direct violence refers to the deliberate actions of an individual or group to cause harm, pain, destruction, or death to another person, group, or nation (Galtung, 1990). Although the most visible form of violence, it may not be the most harmful. Examples of direct violence include armed conflicts, and fights using weapons such as machetes, guns, chemical weapons, and drones.

Structural violence, as first introduced by Galtung, refers to the systemic nature of violence that results in unequal power dynamics and life chances (Galtung, 1969). The governing and social structures of a community or nation ingrain this type of violence, which can take the form of laws and regulations that favour the elite while oppressing marginalised groups (ibid.). Unlike direct violence, the consequences of structural violence can be far-reaching and long-lasting, yet it is often overlooked or disregarded. Tragically, structural violence remains a prevalent issue in many African countries, including Kenya.

3.4.1 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management is a well-established approach that was initially introduced to address violent conflicts before the emergence of conflict resolution and conflict transformation concepts (Paffenholz 2009). Its primary objective is to quickly end violent conflicts through the intervention of a third party, utilising diplomacy, coercion, or force, and to prevent further violence. The ultimate aim of conflict management is

to halt the fighting at all costs. As outlined in the book "A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies", conflict management involves "interventionist efforts to prevent the escalation and negative consequences, particularly violent ones, of ongoing conflicts. Conflicts are rarely fully resolved; instead, they are usually reduced, diminished, or contained" (Miller 2005). The emphasis is on managing the conflict or violence rather than resolving the underlying issues. Conflict management is frequently imposed by a powerful and influential third party whose primary objective is to bring an end to the immediate conflict. This method is commonly utilised in Kenya to curb violence between different groups (Kimenyi and Ndugu 2005) including in situations of violence against women in politics.

To combat structural violence against women in leadership positions, it is essential to prioritise interventions that focus on shifting gender norms, encouraging male involvement in traditionally female household chores, and promoting conflict management techniques (Hossain *et al.* 2014). These interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in changing gender norms and perceptions of masculinity that contribute to violence against women. Moreover, interventions that challenge and transform gender norms have shown success in modifying men's attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, resulting in a decrease in violence against women (Barker *et al.* 2010).

Structural violence, characterised by unequal access to services, creates conditions that facilitate interpersonal violence, particularly affecting women in vulnerable social positions (Montesanti and Thurston 2015). Adopting organisational reforms and advocating for women's leadership roles can help eliminate impediments to women's progress in conflict and humanitarian situations (Meagher *et al.* 2023; Patel *et al.* 2020). Additionally, implementing community-level interventions, such as conflict transformation training and awareness campaigns about women's rights, is crucial for preventing violence against women (Corboz *et al.* 2019).

To effectively address systemic responses to violence against women, robust organisational backing and efficient management are necessary to enhance the system's capacity to tackle such violence (Adams *et al.* 2021). Developing interventions that extend beyond cultural and attitudinal transformations to encompass

structural connections and social practices is essential to prevent violence against women (Pease and Flood 2008).

In conflict-affected regions, the breakdown of social support networks intensifies intimate partner violence against women, emphasising the importance of interventions that address the impact of conflict on gender-motivated violence (Le and Nguyen 2022). Recognising the political economy of gender in conflict settings is crucial for a comprehensive approach to mitigating the risks and consequences of violence against women (Alsaba and Kapilashrami 2016). Moreover, interventions should consider the intersectionality of violence against women in leadership to adopt a holistic approach to addressing violence in conflict-affected areas (Le and Nguyen 2022).

3.4.2 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict resolution is a more extensive approach to resolving conflicts as it seeks to end violence and resolve the root causes of the conflict, promoting dialogue and understanding. This is opposed to Conflict management, which aims to address the immediate violence leaving the underlying issues that led to the conflict unattended. The development of this field of study can be traced back to the First and Second World Wars, and it has since been expanded to include various contexts, ranging from personal and family interactions to interstate confrontations. Louis Kriesberg has categorised the historical development of conflict resolution and peace studies into four distinct periods: the formative period (1914-1945), the foundational period (1946-1969), the growth and spread period (1970-1989), and the diffusion period beginning in 1989. This study examines the evolution of conflict resolution as well as conflict transformation in the context of peacebuilding.

Conflict resolution in the context of addressing structural violence against women in politics involves understanding and analysing the violence and harassment faced by female politicians. Sanín 2019 delves into the analysis of violence and harassment against female politicians, shedding light on the challenges and costs associated with women engaging in politics. This study highlights the need to address the intimidation and harassment faced by women in political spheres.

Moreover, Krook 2018 discusses the rising global trend of violence against women in politics, emphasising the importance of recognising and combating such violence. The study underscores the United Nations General Assembly's call for zero tolerance for violence against female candidates and elected officials, emphasising the need for concerted efforts to address this pervasive issue.

Additionally, Haglund and Richards (2017) focus on the enforcement of sexual violence laws in post-civil conflict societies, highlighting the complexities and challenges in ensuring justice for survivors of sexual violence. This research underscores the importance of effective legal mechanisms and enforcement strategies to combat sexual violence and promote accountability in post-conflict settings.

By synthesising insights from these studies, it is evident that addressing structural violence against women in politics requires a multifaceted approach that includes analysing the root causes of violence, implementing robust legal frameworks and fostering a supportive environment for female political participation. Efforts to combat violence against women in politics must be comprehensive, encompassing legal, social, and political dimensions to create a safer and more inclusive political landscape for women.

3.5 THE GENDER MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is widely employed for analysis in this study. The theory postulates a hierarchical sequence of six stages through which individuals progress in their moral reasoning (Pratt *et al.* 1988). Building on Piaget's work, Kohlberg's stages focus on the development of a sense of justice and involve cognitive structures for determining rights and duties (Candee, 1976). These stages are believed to represent an invariant and culturally universal sequence similar to Piaget's stages of cognitive development (Davison *et al.* 1978). Kohlberg's theory suggests that individuals advance through these stages by undergoing transformations that lead to higher moral reasoning (Bouhmama, 1984).

Research has explored various aspects of Kohlberg's theory, including its application to different cultural contexts. Studies have indicated that cultural and religious values can influence individuals' moral reasoning and impact their progression through

Kohlberg stages (Hau and Lew, 1989). Kohlberg's stages of moral development have contributed significantly to the field of moral psychology by providing a framework for understanding how individuals progress in their moral reasoning. While the theory has faced criticism and challenges regarding its cultural universality and gender biases, it continues to be a valuable tool for studying moral development and ethical decision-making across different contexts.

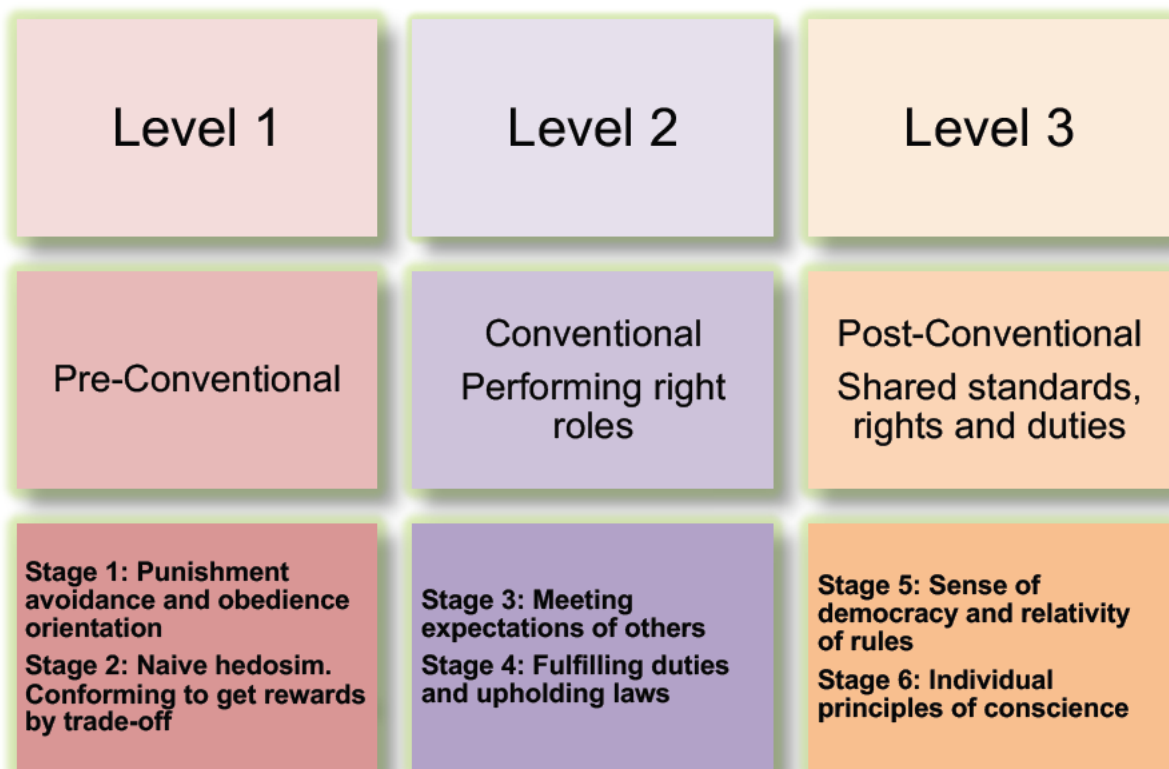


Figure 3. 4: Kohlberg's theory of moral development Sources: Mintz, 1992; Kohlberg, 1984

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is foundational in the field of moral psychology, providing a framework for understanding how individuals progress through different levels of moral reasoning. Kohlberg's theory consists of a sequence of six stages in which individuals advance from lower to higher levels of moral development through cognitive transformation (Davison *et al.* 1978). Similar to Piaget's stages of cognitive development (Harkness *et al.* 1981), in ascending order of complexity, the six stages in the theory are arranged as shown in Figure 3.4 below. Carol Gilligan's influential work, "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and Morality," presents a moral development theory that challenges traditional theories, such as Kohlberg's stages of moral development, by advocating for the

inclusion of women's perspectives and experiences in moral development research (Gilligan, 1977). Gilligan argues that conventional theories, such as Kohlberg's, do not adequately represent women's moral concerns and experiences. Her theory posits that there are distinct ways of thinking about moral problems, particularly justice and care, which are differentially related to gender (Donenberg and Hoffman, 1988). She therefore suggested that women may prioritise care-based moral reasoning over justice-based reasoning, emphasising the importance of considering gender differences in moral orientation. Gilligan's critique highlights gender bias in the way moral development is understood, and she proposes an alternative framework that emphasises the ethics of care over the traditional justice-based approach championed by Kohlberg (2008).

The moral reasoning theory as advocated by Gilligan is rooted in her critique of Kohlberg's cognitive developmental stage theory of moral development (Jaffee and Hyde 2000). Kohlberg's theory focuses on justice and rights while Gilligan's theory places greater emphasis on caring relationships and interpersonal connections in moral decision-making (Weinberg *et al.* 1993). This shift from a justice-based perspective to an ethics of care is central to Gilligan's contributions to moral psychology (McCloskey *et al.* 2020). Research has explored the implications of Gilligan's theory on gender differences in moral reasoning, with some studies supporting her hypotheses regarding gender differences in moral orientation (Pratt *et al.* 1988; Gump *et al.* 2000). Gilligan's theory has been instrumental in highlighting the role of care-based ethics, in contrast to traditional justice-based moral frameworks (Lejano 2008; Pratt and Royer, 1982).

By proposing an alternative perspective that values care and relationships in moral decision-making, Gilligan's theory has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of moral development beyond traditional masculine-oriented models (Lejano 2008; Pratt and Royer, 1982). This study should be understood in the context of the comprehensive role of women in public decision-making from the moral framework. See Figure 3.5 below.

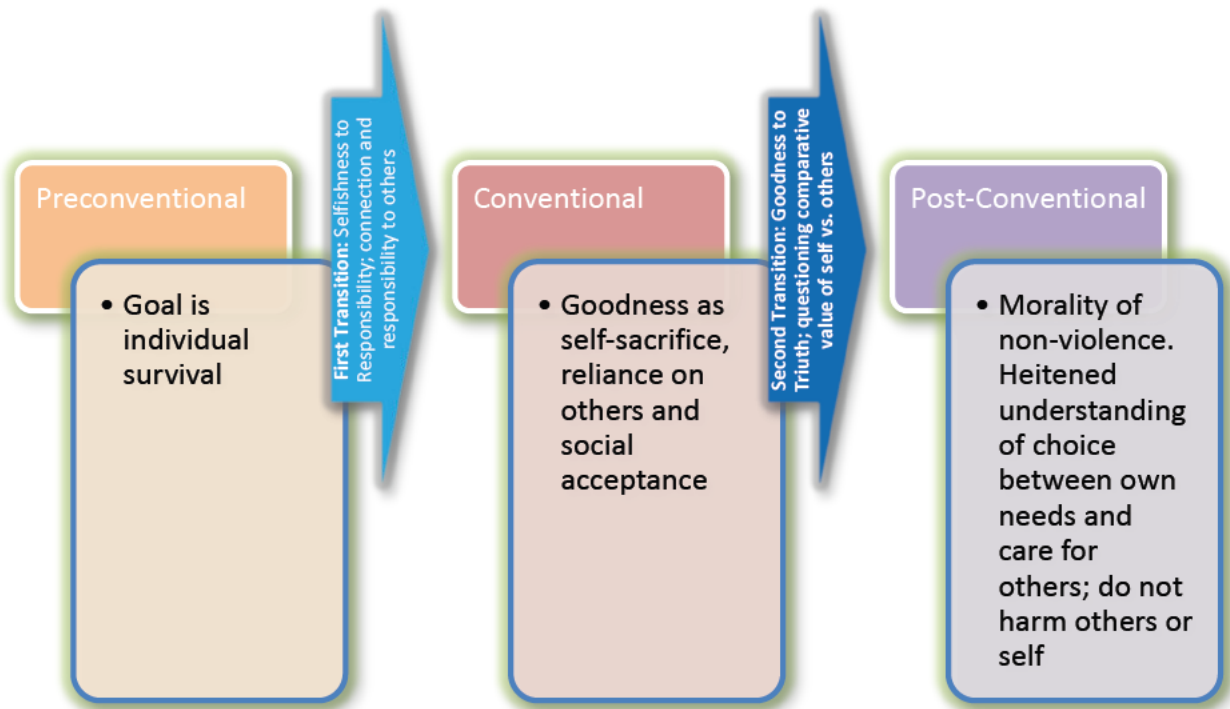


Figure 3. 5: Gilligan's Stages of the Ethic of Care

Both men and women tend to develop through 3 to 4 major levels or stages of moral development:

Stage 1	Preconvention	Egocentric (me)	Selfish
Stage 2	Conventional	Ethnocentric (us)	Care
Stage 3	Postconventional	World-centric (all of us)	Universal Care
Stage 4	Integrated		
Gilligan, 1993			

Table 3. 1: Gender moral development theory

Gilligan's work has been instrumental in shedding light on the complexity of women's moral reasoning abilities, challenging the idea that men exhibit higher levels of moral

development than women, as suggested by Kohlberg's theory (Daniels *et al.* 1995). Gilligan's emphasis on care-based moral thought provides a valuable alternative to traditional approaches to moral development (Skoe 2014).

Extensive research on the scholarly debate regarding gender differences in moral development has focused on Gilligan's critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which is central to this discussion. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's theory, which was based solely on male subjects, overlooked a distinct form of moral reasoning in females that prioritised relationships and avoided harm (Jaffee and Hyde 2000). She proposed an alternative theory of female moral development, drawing attention to gender bias within Kohlberg's framework (Dakin 2014).

Gilligan's research reveals that young girls frequently base their moral judgements more on a utilitarian approach than a deontological one (Allison and Goethals 2015). She proposed an alternative theory of female moral reasoning development that emphasised the impact of gender bias within Kohlberg's theory (Dakin 2014). Gilligan's emphasis on care-based morality being more associated with women has been a significant point of discussion in understanding moral reasoning differences between genders (Seiter and Fuselier 2021). This work emphasised the importance of care-based moral reasoning in contrast to justice-based moral reasoning, suggesting that women often prioritise care and relationships in their moral decision-making (Donenberg and Hoffman, 1988).

This perspective challenged traditional views that associated caring and empathy more with females than with males (Bebeau and Brabeck, 1987). Gilligan's theory posits that women's moral reasoning is contextual and emphasises interpersonal relationships (Li 2023). Studies have explored the implications of Gilligan's theory of gender differences in moral reasoning. Some research supports Gilligan's claims, showing that women tend to exhibit more care-oriented moral reasoning than men do (Björklund 2003).

Gilligan's work on moral development has had a significant impact on the field, but it has been subject to criticism. Some scholars have challenged the gender-based hypothesis proposed by Gilligan, arguing that moral reasoning based on care is just as valid as rule-based reasoning (Keefer and Olson, 1995). Also, research indicates

that cultural and situational factors, in addition to gender, may influence gender disparities in moral reasoning (Clopton and Sorell, 1993; Gump *et al.* 2000). Studies reveal that there are indeed gender differences in moral reasoning, with women often making decisions that prioritise relationships and care, while men tend to focus more on justice and impartiality (McCloskey *et al.* 2020). Gilligan's work has highlighted the fact that moral development is not a gender-neutral process and that women may have a different approach to moral decision-making compared to men. As such, women's moral reasoning can be said to be more context-sensitive and emphatic in interpersonal relationships (Li 2023).

Gender differences in moral reasoning, within the context of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, is a topic of interest. Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg's work highlighted gender biases and proposed an alternative perspective that emphasised care-based moral reasoning over justice-based moral reasoning (Sherblom 2008). This critique led to discussions on the integration of task-focused and care-focused approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of morality (Gibson 2004). Critiques and reconstructions of Kohlberg's theory have been proposed. Murphy and Gilligan (1980) critiqued Kohlberg's theory, pointing out instances in which subjects regressed to lower stages, exhibiting judgements typical of earlier stages (Murphy and Gilligan, 1980). See Table 3. 2 below.

This is a paradoxical union.	
Autonomy	Relationship
Rights	Responsibility
Agency	Communion
Wisdom	Compassion
Justice	Mercy
Masculine	Feminine

**This becomes as comprehensive and inclusive as possible
(Gilligan, 1993)**

Table 3. 2: Stages of gender development

3.6 INTEGRATION OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

The relationship between moral judgement and conduct has received considerable scholarly attention. Scholars like Krebs and Denton (2006) claim that approaches grounded in neo-Kohlbergian theory may not entirely capture everyday moral judgements and decisions. Further studies have also investigated cultural and gender differences in moral judgement based on Kohlberg's theory, shedding light on how individuals from diverse backgrounds progress through stages (Bouhmama and Al-Masoud 2019). Kohlberg's theory has been used in conjunction with other viewpoints to provide a more comprehensive understanding of morality. Gibson (2004) suggests that a combination of Kohlberg's justice-oriented theory and Gilligan's care-oriented theory offers a broader perspective on moral development. Kohlberg's stages of moral development have an impact on the study of moral psychology. The staged approach enables researchers to have a better understanding of how individuals confront moral dilemmas and make ethical choices. Regardless of being widely used, scholars have raised doubts about the universality of Kohlberg's six stages. Moheghi *et al* (2020) argue that people may not progress through them consistently as the theory falls short. Debates on the inclusion of women's moral reasoning within Kohlberg's framework have emerged. Wilgus (2009) argues that the model may fail to fully capture the complexities of women's moral development.

Gilligan's moral development theory has focused more on the gender differences in moral development. Her work has been central in challenging Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development. She criticises Kohlberg's work for not effectively representing women's moral concerns and experiences. Gilligan's theory of moral reasoning, influenced by and emerged from Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental stage theory, underscores the importance of comprehending morality through the lens of care and relationships (Jaffee and Hyde 2000).

Gilligan's hypotheses regarding the relationship between gender, self-definition, and moral judgment have been tested. The findings align with Gilligan's theory that there are diverse ways of thinking about moral problems related to justice and care that are differentially associated with gender (Lyons, 1983; Donenberg and Hoffman, 1988). Pratt *et al.* (1988) further posit that factors such as age, stage of moral reasoning development, and the type of moral dilemmas presented may influence gender differences in moral reasoning orientation.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The primary objective of this chapter is to explore structural violence in extensive detail. To attain this, the study employs a theoretical framework that triangulates three theories: Galtung's theory of violence, Lederach's conflict transformation theory, and moral development theories. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of structural violence by integrating multiple theoretical viewpoints. Johan Galtung's theory of violence is essential for understanding the various forms and manifestations of violence in societies. Galtung distinguishes between direct violence (physical harm), structural violence (inequities embedded in social structures), and cultural violence (justification and perpetuation of violence through norms and values). By incorporating Galtung's framework, the study identified not only overt acts of violence but also the underlying systemic injustices that contribute to perpetuating conflict.

Lederach's conflict transformation theory was also used. The theory focuses on constructive approaches to addressing conflict by promoting reconciliation, peacebuilding, and sustainable change. Lederach emphasises the importance of engaging with all parties involved in a conflict, understanding their perspectives, and fostering dialogue to transform relationships and structures that perpetuate violence. By integrating Lederach's theory, the study gains insights into practical strategies for addressing violence and promoting positive change within communities.

Furthermore, the inclusion of moral development theories enriches the analysis by exploring how individuals' ethical reasoning and moral values influence their perceptions and responses to violence. Moral development theories, such as

Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development or Carol Gilligan's ethics of care, provide a lens through which to understand the ethical dimensions of conflict and violence. By considering the moral complexities inherent in violent situations, the study offered a more nuanced analysis of the underlying factors contributing to structural violence against women in political parties.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodological approach that was used to gather data. The chapter describes and justifies why a mixed-methods research approach was used. In addition to that, the chapter provides demographics, gender, and statistics that are pertinent to the research. The chapter also introduces the reader to the study site, Nairobi County, and the respondents' sample. Two sampling methods determined the recruitment of the study's participants, and this chapter justifies why the sampling methods were chosen. The chapter also highlights how the research benefited from the Transformative dialogue sessions and how vital they were in responding to the research objectives. The chapter also enlightens the reader on how the collected data was analysed using SPSS software for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. The chapter describes the methodology and its relevance in addressing the study's aim and objectives, which are:

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the manifestations and underlying causes of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Kenya and to develop evidence-based recommendations for its mitigation.

Objectives:

1. To explore the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County.
2. To identify previous and current attempts to mitigate structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County and to assess their effectiveness.
3. Using a participatory action research approach, plan and implement interventions that can mitigate structural violence within the main political parties in Nairobi.
4. To evaluate the short-term outcomes of the intervention.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research investigates the structural violence faced by women leaders within political parties in Nairobi County. Specifically, the study explored the various forms and manifestations of this violence, focusing on the barriers that hinder women's participation, the discriminatory practices they encounter, and the impact of these challenges on their political careers. To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods action research approach was employed, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. To address the topic of structural violence against women in political leadership within Nairobi's political parties, the research design incorporated Participatory Action Research (PAR). This approach differs from other methods in that it selects and utilises conventional methods to meet the research goals. PAR promotes the engagement of participants as equals, aiming to collaborate with them rather than control them (Sarantakos 2013). The mixed-methods approach was chosen to ensure a robust and nuanced exploration of the research problem, drawing on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This involved conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews, administering questionnaires, and performing document analysis to gather data on the lived experiences of women leaders within political parties in Nairobi County. By combining these methods, the research captured both the personal narratives of the women affected and the broader patterns of discrimination and violence they experience within the political sphere. This chapter outlines the research design and methodology, explaining the rationale behind the mixed-methods action research approach, the data collection methods employed, and the analytical strategies used to interpret the data. The chapter also alerts the reader to the potential pitfalls associated with the selected methodologies and how different approaches were implemented to circumnavigate these disadvantages. Additionally, it highlights the steps taken to maintain the validity and reliability of the research.

4.3 PLACE OF STUDY, POPULATION AND SAMPLE SELECTION

This study covers the two main political party coalitions in Nairobi, Kenya. Kenya enjoys the profile of a relatively democratic country with more than a hundred

registered political parties. Although the law requires all registered political parties to have field offices spread throughout the country, the parties typically have their headquarters in Nairobi, the capital city, with a scant presence in other parts of the country. Characteristically, the parties are organised into two main coalitions in government: the ruling Kenya Kwanza Coalition and the Azimio Coalition.

Nairobi is also a county government, one of the forty-seven quasi-devolved governments in the country. As such, the study primarily focused on structural violence against women leaders in the main political parties in Nairobi County. The study had a potential population of about 500 members of the political parties as respondents, considering the open spread of hundreds of active political party players in each of the parties. The table below shows the breakdown of the pool of potential participants based on their affiliation.

	Members of National Assembly	Members of Senate	Members of County Assembly (Nairobi)	Total
Kenya Kwanza Coalition (3 Political Parties)	186	38	64	288
Azimio Coalition (6 Political Parties)	125	28	59	212
	311	66	123	500

Table 4. 1: The population of politicians from the two coalitions

4.3.1 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

The recruitment of participants for this study was made possible by a combination of two sampling methods: systematic random and purposive sampling methods. The study used a systematic random sampling technique to select participants for some of the face-to-face interviews based on the membership lists of the political parties.

Systematic random sampling is a probability sampling method used to select a sample from a larger population in a systematic way (Raymond et al. 2012). This technique is often employed in quantitative research and plays a crucial role in ensuring that the quantitative component of a mixed-methods approach is both representative and unbiased. In systematic random sampling, researchers select subjects from a larger population using a fixed, regular interval after an initial random start (Mostafa & Ibrahim 2018). In this study's case, there were 500 potential participants, and a sample of 100 was needed. The researcher obtained the list of potential respondents from the party headquarters randomly chose a starting point on the list and then selected every fifth person. Systematic random sampling offers several advantages: it is simpler to implement than simple random sampling, especially with large populations, and it requires less time and effort once the initial random start point is chosen. Additionally, it can produce a representative sample if the population list is random or random-like. However, there are also disadvantages. If the population list has a periodic pattern, the sample may not be representative. For example, if every fifth person on the list shares a common characteristic, this could bias the sample. The systematic random sampling chosen presents some challenges like reliability and potential bias. The potential pitfalls presented by the list used, for example, if the party membership list I'm using is ordered alphabetically, by seniority, or by branch location, my fixed sampling interval might accidentally overrepresent certain groups. An alphabetical list could cluster people with similar cultural backgrounds, while a seniority-based list might exclude newer members, making the sample less diverse than the actual population. To minimise these risks, the researcher examined the list carefully to check for any obvious ordering or clustering. If any were found, the researcher considered reshuffling the names or randomising the list before applying the systematic sampling method. Finally, the researcher cross-checked the list against other records to ensure there were no missing important segments of the population. If any gaps existed, the researcher supplemented the sample with purposive sampling to fill in those gaps. The researcher decided to use this sampling method because it helped gather a representative sample for the quantitative aspect of the research. It ensures that every individual in the selection pool has an equal and known chance of being selected, providing reliable data that can be generalised to a larger population.

This study utilised a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods to capture a comprehensive understanding of the challenges women face in political participation in Nairobi. The quantitative phase involved 88 participants, while 15 participants were engaged in the qualitative phase. Initially, the study aimed to involve 100 informants, selected through systematic random sampling. However, the 2022 general elections in Kenya presented challenges in reaching some of the intended participants, as many were actively involved in election campaigns outside Nairobi. Due to the busy schedules of several political leaders, some were unresponsive. While the initial number to fill in the questionnaire was 106, the survey stopped at 88 participants because the responses were becoming repetitive. It was at this point that the researcher confirmed the existence of structural violence.

To address these challenges, two research assistants were hired to facilitate the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. This support enabled the researcher to reach 88 participants for the questionnaire phase, ensuring representation from across the major political parties. The hiring of the assistants did not influence the demographic of ideological shifts as the assistants followed the guidelines set by the researcher. Nonetheless, difficulties in collecting completed questionnaires from some of the targeted political leaders led to adjustments in the methodology. The research shifted to include physical meetings and face-to-face interviews, allowing for a more detailed exploration of the questionnaire topics. This approach not only provided participants with the opportunity to give more nuanced responses but also facilitated a smoother transition into the qualitative phase. The face-to-face interviews allowed for the incorporation of insights from the quantitative phase, ensuring a richer and more in-depth examination of the issues. Additionally, the interviews made scheduling for the second phase of the study more efficient, contributing to the overall success of the research process.

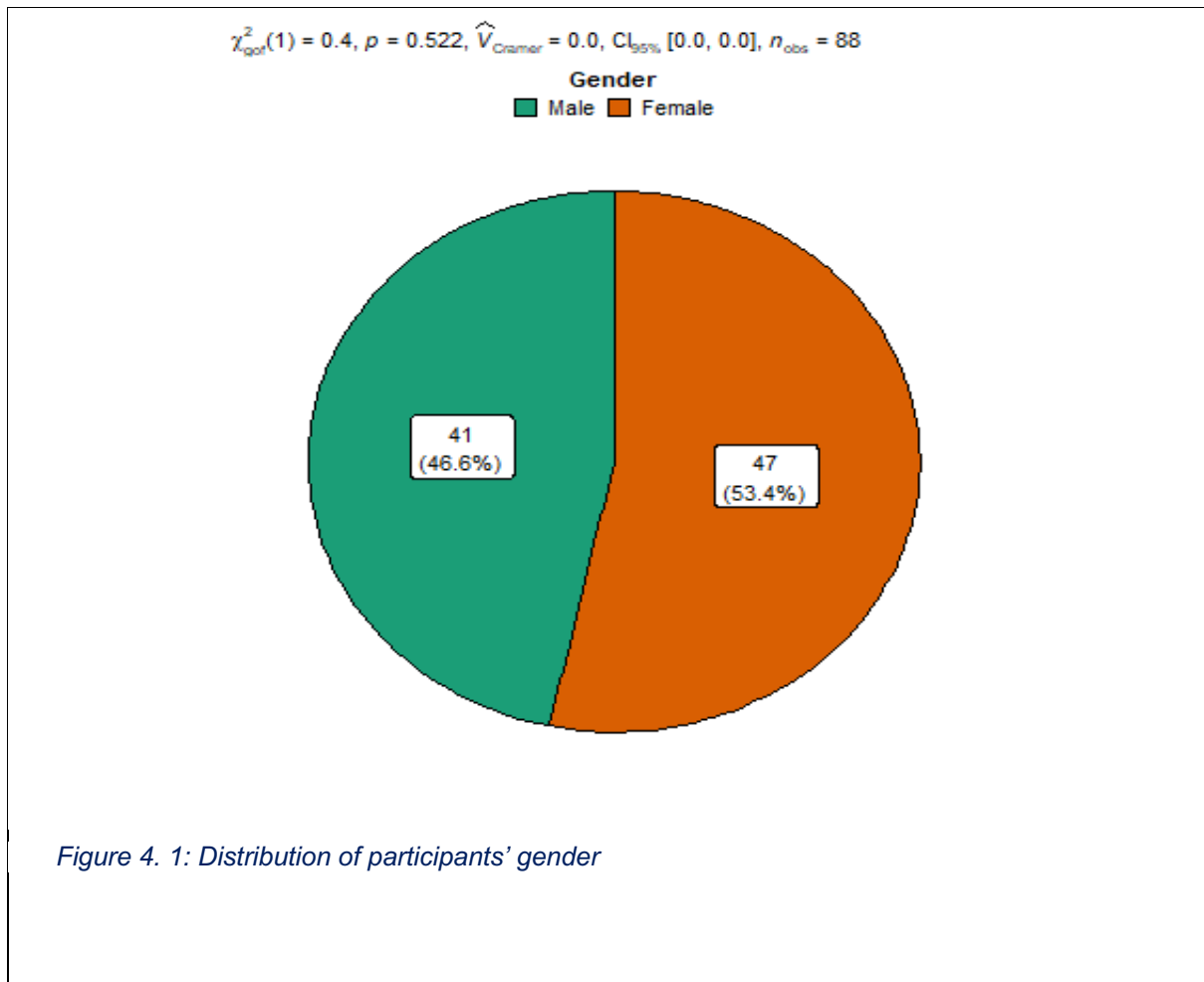
The first phase of this study employed systematic random sampling to select participants for the quantitative research, ensuring a broad and representative sample. While this method was crucial for gathering data from a wide range of respondents, the qualitative phase relied on purposive sampling to select participants for in-depth interviews. As Kelly (2010:317) explains purposive sampling is 'used to select

respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information.’ Following this principle, the researcher chose 15 participants from the 88 who had taken part in the quantitative phase. The respondents chosen were people who had experienced structural violence while others demonstrated resilience in navigating the structural barriers they had faced. The researcher did not exceed 15 respondents for the qualitative interviews, as they had reached data saturation—where no new information or insights were emerging—after repeated interactions with these participants. The researcher could have conducted more than 15 interviews, but the depth and quality of the data from the 15 interviews were enough to construct an understanding of structural violence. Although the qualitative phase focused on these 15 interviews, the remaining respondents played a crucial role in providing the broader context for the study, forming the foundation upon which the research is built. The 15 respondents who were chosen to take part in the qualitative research were eight females and seven males who were drawn from the two coalitions.

METHOD	PURPOSE	SAMPLE SIZE	TYPE OF SAMPLE
Interview Questionnaire Narrative Interviews	Meet Objective 1	88 15	Systematic Random Purposive
Interview Questionnaire Narrative Interviews	Meet Objective 2	88 15	Systematic Random Purposive
Dialogue Sessions	Meet Objective 3	30	Purposive
Evaluation and Validation workshop.	Meet Objective 4	60	Purposive

Table 4. 2: Table showing Method and Sample method used.

The participants interviewed during this questionnaire stage consisted of 46.6% males and 53.4% females, resulting in a nearly equal gender ratio.



While the research aimed for equal representation from both major political coalitions, there was a slight disparity in participant affiliation. The Kenya Kwanza Coalition accounted for 44.3% of the participants, while the Azimio Coalition represented 55.7%. However, this difference between the two groups was statistically insignificant and did not affect the overall balance of the study's findings.

$$\chi^2_{\text{good}}(1) = 1.1, p = 0.286, \hat{V}_{\text{Cramer}} = 0.0, \text{CI}_{95\%} [0.0, 0.2], n_{\text{obs}} = 88$$

Political party affiliation
■ Kenya Kwanza Coalition ■ Azimio Coalition

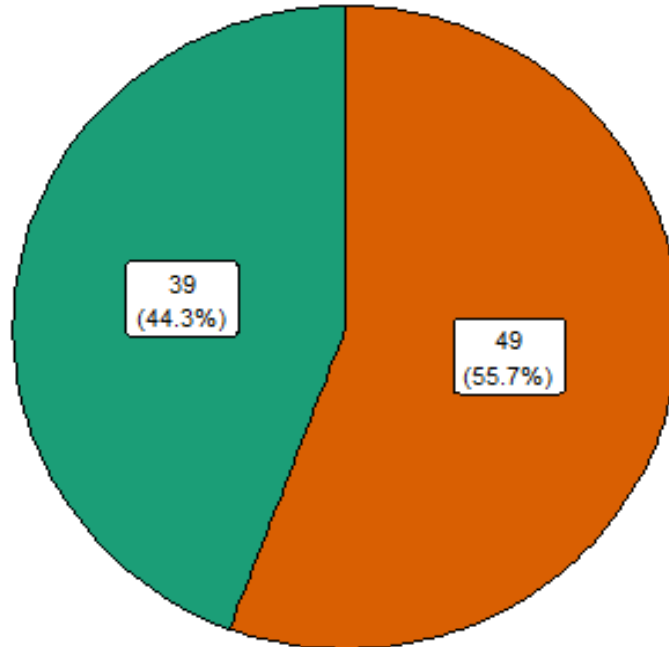


Figure 4. 2: Participants' political party affiliation

All individuals interviewed during the research were affiliated with at least one of the two major political party coalitions. Only 21.6% of respondents held national positions in their respective political parties.

The research questionnaire covered an age range of 16–50 years, with the highest proportion of participants falling within the 51–60-year age group (36.7%). The age group with the second highest representation was 31–40 years, accounting for 26.4% of the participants. The age group with the lowest representation was 30 years and under, with only 16.1% of the participants falling within this range. Finally, the age group with the second lowest representation was 41 to 50 years, with 20.7% of participants falling within this range. (Refer to Figure 4.3 below.).

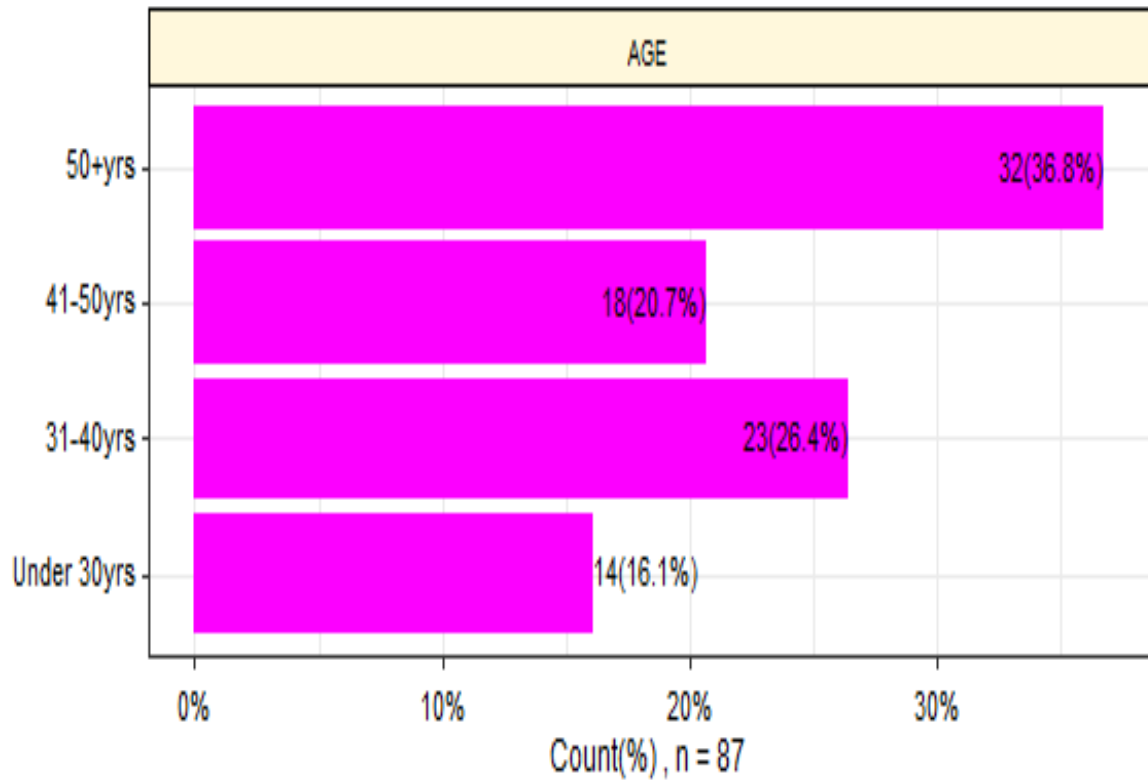


Figure 4. 3: : Distribution of participants by age group

The majority of participants (73.9 %) held a university education qualification, while only 17 % possessed a TVET college education qualification, and 9.1% had a secondary school education.

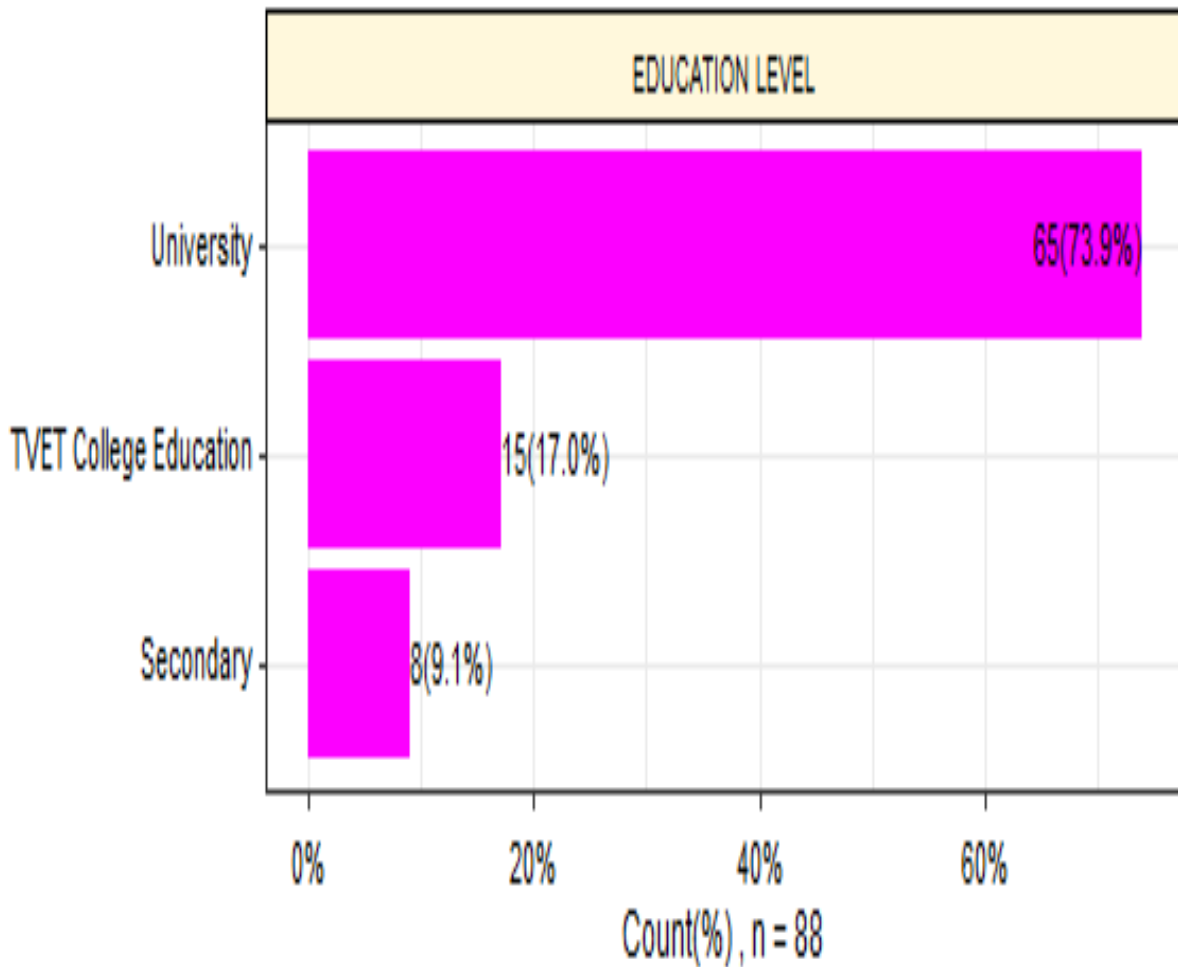


Figure 4. 4: Distribution of participants' highest education level

4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Investigating structural violence against women's participation in politics in Nairobi County deserves a mixed methods approach that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews. As highlighted earlier, structural violence is a complex phenomenon rooted in systemic inequalities, cultural norms, and institutional practices that often operate subtly and invisibly to limit women's access to and influence within political spaces. Mixed methods offer the chance to capture the full scope of such dynamics demands both empirical data and deep contextual insight. Quantitative surveys, as used in this study, are valuable for identifying patterns and trends across politicians. They enabled the measurement of the extent of gender disparities in

political representation. These data can highlight areas where structural barriers are most pronounced, offering an objective baseline from which to analyse progress or setbacks. However, while surveys portrayed what is/was happening in the county, the data fell short of explaining why it was happening or how individuals experience these systemic constraints in their daily lives.

This is where qualitative semi-structured interviews become essential. Through open-ended conversations, the researcher explored the lived realities of women who participate in politics. These narratives revealed the personal, cultural, and institutional obstacles that shape their experiences, including internalised beliefs, societal expectations, institutional bias, and lack of support systems. Qualitative insights also help uncover how structural violence manifests differently across contexts, highlighting variations based on factors such as class, ethnicity, and age. The choice of a mixed methods approach strengthens the validity of the findings through triangulation. The researcher decided to use the mixed methods approach because confidence in the results increases when data from both sources converge on similar conclusions. It is important to state that conversely, discrepancies between the two can themselves be revealing, pointing to issues such as social desirability bias, and aspirational self-perception. The mixed methods approach enabled the researcher to describe the problem and understand its deeper roots and mechanisms. Most importantly the integration of statistical evidence with personal narratives ensured that the voices of women are central to the analysis, lending both authority and empathy to the findings.

Data collected from the interviews, observation, and literature analysis provided the main data for the questions under inquiry. The basic findings from this phase of the research informed the development and implementation of the political party dialogue workshops and subsequent interventions anticipated in PAR. Therefore, the study relied on face-to-face interviews, focused group discussions, and participant observation for qualitative data, while literature sources and participant responses provided quantitative data in the form of ranked, categorised, and measured numerical data.

4.4.1 FACE TO FACE INTERVIEWS

Face-to-face interviews are a widely used method of data collection in qualitative research. This method involves direct interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the interviewee's experiences, perspectives, and attitudes. Face-to-face interviews are a qualitative research method involving direct, in-person interaction between the researcher and the participant. This approach emphasizes building a personal rapport, allowing for a deeper exploration of the participant's lived experiences and viewpoints. By using open-ended questions and practising active listening, the researcher creates an environment that encourages in-depth and meaningful conversation (Seidman 2019; Kvale & Brinkman 2014). This method facilitates the collection of rich, contextual data that moves beyond superficial responses, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the participant's narrative and perspective. Face-to-face interviews are marked by their flexibility, allowing the interviewer to adapt the flow of the conversation based on the participant's responses. This adaptability makes it possible to explore complex topics in greater depth, moving beyond surface-level details to reveal more nuanced insights (Patton, 2014).

Given the study's objectives, the face-to-face interview method proved to be an appropriate method for investigating both the first and second objectives. Looking at the causes, nature, extent, and consequences of structured violence against women in political parties, as well as the mitigation measures, the study required introspection of the issues with the victims and informants with relevant experience. The researcher created an interview guide that included the main questions and themes to be discussed. This guide accommodated new questions and themes that emerged during the interviews. Bremborg (2011) compared the interview guide to a tree with various branches, where the main questions served as strong limbs directing the interview along different paths to be explored.

The researcher faced some challenges in getting to sit down with some political party leaders who had busy schedules. Despite the challenge of reaching the respondents for the interviews, face-to-face interviews were central in this study because they necessitated gathering as much detailed information as possible. Additionally, this

approach had the advantage of facilitating any necessary follow-up interviews. The semi-structured interviews did not have a limited timeframe but average took about 90 minutes. Some interviews were very time-conscious, with respondents sticking and responding to the questions and avoiding debiting to other issues. However, there were some instances in which respondents provided content to their responses, and consequently, the interview went longer than anticipated. The researcher also reminded the respondents that it was within their right to call an end to the interview should they feel that it was too long.

The researcher took advantage of the face-to-face, which relied on a semi-structured interview approach to observe the behaviour and social cues of the interviewees, including their body language and voice intonation. For instance, when asked about the nature of structural violence on them as individuals and generally as politicians, the interviewees exhibited various reactions such as smirks, squirming, facial expression contortion, or even laughter that could be interpreted as mockery. These social cues were taken into consideration in addition to the verbal responses and provided some context.

4.4.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Since this study relies on a face-to-face method, it made use of qualitative interviews. Qualitative interviews have been described as “an exchange with an informal character, a conversation with a goal” (Hijmans 2007). Interviews are purposeful conversations between two or more people (Bremborg 2011; Saunders et al. 2007). The main goal of interviews is to collect reliable and meaningful data. Interviews can be divided into three types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Creswell 2014;2012). This study deployed a semi-structured interview, which Magaldi and Berler (2020) describe as exploratory interviews employed in qualitative research. Bernard (2018) posits that semi-structured interviews are open-ended but follow a generalised script covering lots of topics. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews enable researchers to investigate complex issues and the nuances of participants’ perspectives. The choice of semi-structured interviews was necessitated by the fact that they can take place anywhere, in fields, bars, waiting for something, or walking to the shops (Bernard 2018). unstructured interview questions can be changed or adapted based on the direction and flow of the conversation, allowing for a more

natural and open-ended exchange of information. The research objectives enabled the use of unstructured interviews.

The list of issues covered the topic of structural violence against women in politics in the country. All the interviews followed the interview guide, resulting in a standardisation of the issues discussed. The success of this method relied on the participants' willingness to answer the questions in the semi-structured interview and allocate time for the interview. However, the participants were not forced to respond to every question or any question that made them uncomfortable. The respondents would either fill out the questionnaire and return the stack of responses later or, in certain instances, participate in direct interviews with the researcher.

4.4.3 LITERATURE REVIEW/ DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The document analysis method refers to a review of written literature. These can include personal and non-personal documents, such as annual reports, guidelines, and policy documents, as well as published materials and books. The document analysis method has long been used in social science spheres to gain a deeper understanding of behaviours and motivations by gathering insights from written material. By making the analysis, a researcher can conclude patterns, sentiments, and other actionable information on an issue.

The literature review in this study played a crucial role in establishing the current situation regarding the issues addressed within the study. The analysis connected the existing body of research and written text to the specific questions on structural violence against women, allowing for general conclusions about the overall state of things. Therefore, the method was an effective basis for building an understanding of the underlying thought processes, beliefs, theories, and patterns of the issues under investigation in the study.

4.4.4 TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Finally, as part of the participatory action research, some of the research participants and the researcher implemented trauma and leadership support groups, which were part of the transformative dialogue interventions. To promote conflict and leadership

transformation, the study deliberately initiated the transformative dialogue in the intervention stage of action research.

Transformative dialogue can be used in various conflict resolution approaches, such as mediation, negotiation, and social learning, which are integrated to address conflicts and promote positive change within societies (Martins *et al.* 2020; Allen and Friedman 2021; Nyadera and Ahmed 2020; Cleven and Saul 2021; Lehti *et al.* 2021); (Allen and Friedman 2021). Conflict transformation refers to a process that addresses the root causes of conflicts and aims to achieve sustainable peace through dialogue, reconciliation, and structural change, as explained by (Greer, Jehn, and Mannix 2008)The communicative approach also enhances relationships and fosters understanding among individuals. Transformation as a process involves different types of conflict management, such as transformative facilitation, transformational mediation, and narrative mediation, which highlight the significance of dialogue in these processes, as described by Putnam (2004). Transformative dialogue is crucial for learning and conflict resolution, as it promotes critical reflection and mutual understanding among individuals, (Gunnlaugson 2006). Moreover, research has emphasised the importance of collective memory and historical dialogue in conflict transformation in post-conflict societies, indicating the significance of oral history accounts and intergroup contact in this process (Psaltis 2016).

Cognisant of the impact that transformative dialogue can have, the researcher organised two transformative dialogue workshops in collaboration with some of the participants. This process involves creating safe spaces for open and honest communication, which leads to personal and collective development. Conflict transformation refers to a process that addresses the root causes of conflicts and aims to achieve sustainable peace through dialogue, reconciliation, and structural change, as explained by (Greer, Jehn, and Mannix 2008). Transformative dialogue is crucial for learning and conflict resolution, as it promotes critical reflection and mutual understanding among individuals, as per Macdonald (2002) and Gunnlaugson (2006). This process involves creating safe spaces for open and honest communication, which leads to personal and collective development.

The dialogue sessions were open to all of the willing participants who had taken part in the primary interviews, as well as those sent by their respective political parties. Participants in the sessions engaged in interchange sessions, which fostered a supportive environment. The dialogue addressed unequal access for women to both political power and economic resources. The women participants present also emphasised that political parties must play a leading role in promoting a robust agenda for equality between women and men and strengthening women's political and economic participation.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

4.5.1 SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY METHOD

In this study, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was employed to examine structural violence against women in Nairobi County's political arena. Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design is a two-phase approach where quantitative data collection and analysis precede qualitative data collection and analysis, to use qualitative findings to explain, elaborate, or interpret initial quantitative results (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018; Ivankova et al. 2006). This design involved an initial collection of quantitative data, specifically through questionnaires, followed by qualitative interviews to provide deeper context, explanation, and elaboration of the initial findings. This methodology aligns with established principles of sequential explanatory mixed methods designs, where quantitative data precede and inform qualitative data collection and analysis, with the primary objective of using qualitative insights to interpret quantitative results (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018). The insights gained from the quantitative questionnaire phase were instrumental in shaping and complementing the subsequent qualitative interviews. The rationale for this design stemmed from the need to first establish empirical patterns of structural violence before exploring their socio-political underpinnings and lived experiences.

The initial phase adopted a quantitative approach to document the prevalence and specific forms of structural violence experienced by women politicians in Nairobi County. Questionnaires generated statistical evidence, highlighting phenomena such as discriminatory party nomination processes, gendered bias, and financial exclusion.

These quantitative findings were crucial in establishing the scope and significance of the problem, thereby providing a foundational understanding for further in-depth investigation. The subsequent qualitative phase, as underscored by Ivankova et al. (2006), allowed for a move beyond mere numerical patterns to understand the complex socio-political and cultural dynamics that perpetuate these inequalities. Through semi-structured interviews, the research explored how institutional practices, prevailing cultural norms, and entrenched power structures collectively contribute to the production and reproduction of structural violence. For instance, while the questionnaire revealed that 59.1% of respondents reported experiencing structural violence, the qualitative interviews uncovered the specific mechanisms and lived experiences through which this violence manifested.

The integration of these distinct datasets occurred at multiple levels (Fetters et al. 2013). Firstly, the quantitative results directly informed the development of the qualitative interview protocol, ensuring a focused exploration of the most salient findings from the questionnaire. Secondly, the qualitative narratives provided essential context for interpreting the statistical patterns, illuminating both the human consequences of structural violence and the cultural logic that normalise its existence. This integrated approach, adopted by the study, resonates with Tashakkori and Creswell's (2007) conceptualisation of mixed methods as a robust means to achieve both breadth and depth of understanding in research.

4.5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data drawn from the field findings was analysed using SPSS software, and the follow-up qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis. The qualitative data was used to explain relevant analyses and findings in the context of the study. The final phase of data analysis answered the research questions by connecting the results, explaining the mechanisms of the quantitative results, and demonstrating how the qualitative results illuminated the quantitative survey (Chong Ho 2009).

The qualitative data collected through the interviews was analysed using the six-step description of thematic analysis processes outlined in the table below (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Steps of the analysis process	Actions
Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and rereading data, and noting down initial ideas
Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
Reviewing themes:	Checking if themes work concerning the collated extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic “map” of the analysis.
Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to redefine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names of each theme.
Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 4. 3: Six-step description of thematic analysis processes (Source: Braun, and Clarke 2006: 35)

This approach allowed the researcher to gain new insights by immersing themselves in the data and isolating relevant themes from the data for elaborate discussions. This report is drawn from the analysis of the findings.

4.6 RATIONALE OF STUDY

The study of the obstacles faced by female leaders in Kenya's political parties is of utmost importance due to the significant consequences that follow. Examining this topic highlights the specific barriers women in leadership positions face within the political party framework, often hindering their political progress and perpetuating gender disparities in decision-making processes (Opoku, Anyango, and Alupo 2018). The study of structural violence against women leaders in Kenya's political parties is

crucial due to the persistent and systemic nature of gender inequality in political spheres. Despite constitutional reforms and gender quotas, women continue to face significant barriers in political participation and leadership roles (Berry et al. 2020). The entrenchment of these obstacles within institutional frameworks and societal norms has created a self-perpetuating cycle that maintains male dominance in decision-making processes, effectively marginalising women's voices and perspectives in governance (Galea and Gaweda 2018).

The impact of the systemic exclusion extends far beyond individual women leaders, in affecting broader society. Research has shown that the intersection of power dynamics, patriarchal norms, and institutional practices creates multiple layers of discrimination that impede women's political advancement (McCarthy and Moon 2018). These barriers are pronounced in the context of socioeconomic factors, where considerations such as economic status, social norms, and access to resources significantly influence young women's ability to engage in political processes (Moraa, Lillian, and Josephine 2021). The persistence of these challenges, despite various intervention attempts, suggests that current approaches to promoting gender equality in politics have been insufficient.

The inadequacy of existing interventions is concerning given the fundamental role of political representation in shaping society. As Katsande et al. (2024) note, the examination of biases and discriminatory practices that limit women's political participation reveals deeper systemic factors that preserve inequality. The normalization of violence against women in politics (VAWIP) has created an environment where discrimination is often overlooked or accepted, further entrenching gender disparities (Kuperberg 2018; (Barnes and Córdova 2016). This normalisation has made it particularly challenging to identify and address the root causes of women's political marginalization.

Given the limited success of previous efforts to address these challenges, there is a critical need for research that not only documents the obstacles faced by women leaders but also develops and tests new interventions for promoting gender equality in political spaces (Li 2024). Traditional approaches have often failed to address the complex interplay between institutional arrangements, economic freedom, and

educational factors that contribute to gender inequality (Chundakkadan and Sasidharan 2021). By examining how associational bias, evaluative bias, and backlash manifest in political institutions (Roberts and Kwon 2021), this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for dismantling systemic barriers and creating truly inclusive political systems. The findings from this research could inform targeted interventions and policy initiatives that promote meaningful change in political representation and decision-making processes.

In summing up this section, the rationale for taking up this study of structural violence against women was made by the realisation that politics has far-reaching implications on women's involvement and representation in political spheres. By uncovering the systemic factors that perpetuate harm and inequality, the researcher believes that the study will pave the way for transformative changes that will empower women leaders and encourage gender equality in political decision-making processes. The researcher will address the 'normalised' issues withholding women's progress in politics and contribute to broader efforts challenging discriminatory practices. Further, by exploring the connection between power dynamics, patriarchal norms, and institutional practices, the study uncovers the systemic barriers delaying women's progress in politics.

4.7 SCOPE OF STUDY

The primary objective of this research was to explore the structural violence experienced by women leaders within political parties in Nairobi County. Specifically, the study investigated the various forms and manifestations of this violence, with a focus on the barriers that obstruct women leaders' participation, the discriminatory practices they encounter, and the consequences of such violence on their political careers. To accomplish these aims, a mixed-methods action research approach was utilised, which combined both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This involved the use of interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis to collect data on the experiences of women leaders within political parties in Nairobi County. The findings and insights gained from this study can be applied to similar situations and contexts where women leaders face structural violence within political parties.

Ultimately, the research aimed to attain a comprehensive understanding of the limited success of political parties in achieving gender equality in Nairobi County.

4.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study met several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research only examined structural violence against women in politics and did not investigate other forms of gender-based violence. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias and underreporting. Thirdly, the study focused on structural violence against women within political parties and did not consider violence against women leaders in other political contexts, such as grassroots movements or activist groups. Fourth, the study may not have captured the full extent of structural violence against women in politics due to the potential for social desirability bias, in which participants may underreport instances of violence for fear of retaliation or stigma. Fifth, the study only analysed the impact of violence against women in politics on representation and did not address its broader societal implications. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the issue of structural violence against women in politics and its impacts.

It is important to recognise that the study's findings are limited to women leaders in Nairobi County, which means that caution should be exercised when making generalisations about the findings. Factors such as socioeconomic differences, cultural attributions, or the rural nature of these regions may have overlooked the unique experiences of women leaders in other regions of the country. Furthermore, the study could not examine in detail the intersectional experiences of women leaders in Kenya concerning issues such as ethnicity and socio-economic status. It is important to know about the limitations of the methodologies used.

4.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In this section, we need to highlight how the use of interviews, literature review, and the data from statistics have worked in a way to cover the cons associated with one methodology.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The research project began with approval from the Durban University of Technology Ethics Research Board (IREC 275/21). Cognisant of the potential of gatekeeper letters that might be demanded, the researcher went about to get clearance and a research license from the National Research Commission in Nairobi. These allowed the researcher to communicate with respondents with ease and let them be comfortable knowing that the research was above board.

The research project was comprehensive in scope, encompassing both physical and psychological aspects of sexual harm. To ensure the well-being of participants, a professional psychologist was available for consultation during the interview process should any emotional discomfort arise. The researcher committed to maintaining the highest level of confidentiality, and during the course of the study, a psychologist and executive coach were accessible to participants free of charge should they require additional support. As a responsible researcher, the researcher adhered to various ethical guidelines, including those outlined below.

- I. Respect the participants' privacy and inform them of the confidentiality principle.
- II. Disclose all the details of the project to the interviewees, allowing them time to ask questions and raise any emergent issues of concern before agreeing to participate.
- III. Respond to any concerns raised before and during the interview.
- IV. Secure written or verbal informed consent, which will be recorded at the beginning of the interview.
- V. Inform participants of their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research even after participation has begun.
- VI. Inform participants whom to contact if they have any questions about the research.
- VII. Ensure complete anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process by not using real names, keeping documents and recording on a password-locked laptop, and deleting the recording as soon as the process is complete. Respondents were sampled as elected members of the party and not identified by position. Furthermore, the research employed pseudonyms.

Identities were not disclosed at the reporting stage, and nowhere was no link between the data and the respondent disclosed.

- VIII. Hard copies of the data drawn from the study will be stored for a period of five years in a locked cupboard and then destroyed by burning. Electronic copies of the data will be stored on a password-protected computer and, after 5 years, deleted according to the computer instructions. Identities will not be disclosed at the reporting stage.

All participants were asked to sign the consent forms (Appendix D) and made sure the researcher explained that they had the power in the interview and could stop it at any time they felt uncomfortable.

The researcher carefully designed the interview protocol, including a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses from the interviewee, to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. The researcher then conducted a questionnaire pilot test with a small sample of participants to identify any ambiguities or issues with the questions. The researcher employed a few peer interviewers to conduct the interviews to help mitigate the potential for individual interviewer bias. The researcher conducted the interviews in the comfort of the interviewees' offices or other private locations they suggested. Prior to the interview, the interviewer established informed consent procedures and communicated the study's purpose to the interviewee.

The researcher diligently documented the entire interview process, including any unplanned occurrences that may have influenced the data collection. After each interview, the researcher thoroughly analysed the data, searching for themes, patterns, and inconsistencies in the responses. A peer researcher later verified the recordings, transcriptions, and coding of the interviews using Atlas TI software.

Two transformative dialogue sessions and a stakeholder validation conference were conducted to conclude this process. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher engaged with the data for an extended period and used triangulation to cross-check the data collected through different methods. The researcher carefully documented theoretical and reflective thoughts about potential codes and themes. The raw data was securely stored in password-protected archives on a laptop, while field

notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals were kept in a locked desk drawer. Lastly, regular peer debriefing sessions were conducted throughout the research process.

4.11 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

The present research endeavoured to incorporate both male and female political leaders from the two primary political coalitions. While the study aimed at selecting and using an equal number of men and women for the study, the researcher ended up using more women, the difference not being much. However, individuals who were not affiliated with Nairobi's primary political parties were not considered for inclusion in the research.

4.12 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research underlines the need for further investigation into the specific obstacles faced by women in politics, particularly concerning party-motivated violence and its impact on their representation. Future research should delve into the potential effectiveness and consequences of legislative interventions, such as criminalising political harassment and violence against women in politics, as well as the implementation of gender quotas and other measures to enhance women's representation.

Moreover, future research should adopt an intersectional approach when examining the experiences of female leaders within political parties. This will enable future research to better understand the unique challenges faced by women in different political contexts and party affiliations, as well as how these factors intersect with gender to shape their representation and career trajectories in politics.

The study findings highlight the need for political parties to take action and work towards creating a more inclusive and gender-equitable environment. Therefore, future research could expand its geographic scope to include other regions in Kenya or even other countries, comparing and contrasting the experiences of women leaders within political parties in different contexts.

In addition, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to structural violence, future research could delve deeper into the intersectional experiences of women leaders, considering how factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status intersect with gender to shape their experiences within political parties. Furthermore, future research should explore the role of cultural and societal factors in perpetuating party-motivated violence against women in politics and the potential influence of party culture in this regard.

4.13 RESEARCH OUTPUTS

The following outputs were designed for this study:

- Two (2) Trauma Healing Support Groups
- A regional leadership training workshop(s)
- A meeting to present and confirm results with research participants and political party officials.
- Publish a journal article.
- Provide details on anticipated measurable outputs (e.g., publications, patents, and students).
- We anticipate receiving recognition on a national and/or international level for our research, and our research outputs play a significant role in expanding our knowledge base.

The outputs can be utilised for community development, leading to enhanced products, processes, and services in Kenya, the region, and/or the continent.

4.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study on structural violence against women leaders in political parties in Nairobi County. The mixed-methods action research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, was chosen to ensure a robust and nuanced exploration of the research problem. The study focused on the two main political party coalitions in Nairobi, with a sample size of 100 respondents. Various data collection

methods were utilised, including face-to-face interviews, semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions, literature review/document analysis, and transformative dialogue sessions. SPSS software was employed for quantitative data, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. The chapter also addressed the rationale, scope, and limitations of the study, as well as measures taken to ensure validity and reliability. Ethical considerations were carefully observed, including obtaining necessary approvals, ensuring participant privacy and confidentiality, and providing psychological support when needed. The mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex issue of structural violence against women in politics, capturing both personal narratives and broader patterns of discrimination. This methodology sets the foundation for the subsequent chapters, which will present the findings, analysis, and discussion of the research. The next chapter explores the results obtained through these methods, providing insights into the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of structural violence against women leaders in political parties in Nairobi County.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the multiple challenges that women face in political participation within Nairobi County, focusing on the barriers they encounter within the main political parties. The chapter draws on personal narratives shared by women, highlighting their victimisation by political structures as they strive to engage in politics. By utilising both quantitative and qualitative data, the chapter highlights the persistent gender biases, media and propaganda-driven narratives, and entrenched corruption that hinder the pursuit of gender equality within political parties. The findings emphasise the need to empower women, promote democratic values, and hold political parties accountable for reducing the structural violence that perpetuates gender inequality. This chapter engages with research objectives 1 and 2:

1. **Research objective 1:** To explore the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County.
2. **Research objective 2:** To identify previous and current attempts to mitigate structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County and to assess their effectiveness

First, the section examines the challenges women face in political participation in Nairobi, particularly within the main political parties. The findings revealed that women face a range of obstacles, including structural violence, discrimination, limited access and control, a lack of support, and asymmetrical societal expectations. Other challenges include legislation implementation, economic difficulties, a lack of resources and support, discrimination, and prejudice. In summary, women encounter both psychological and physical violence, along with normalised structural barriers. However, there is no remedy or policy in place to alleviate women's negative experiences within the political party framework or broader political institutions or structures.

The data also highlights gender biases, the role of propaganda, media bias, corruption, and the struggle for gender equality within political parties. To address structural violence against women, recommendations include trauma-healing practices, merit-based selection, and psychosocial strengthening. Finally, the findings emphasise the significance of empowering women, promoting democracy, and holding political parties accountable for mitigating structural violence. This is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below.

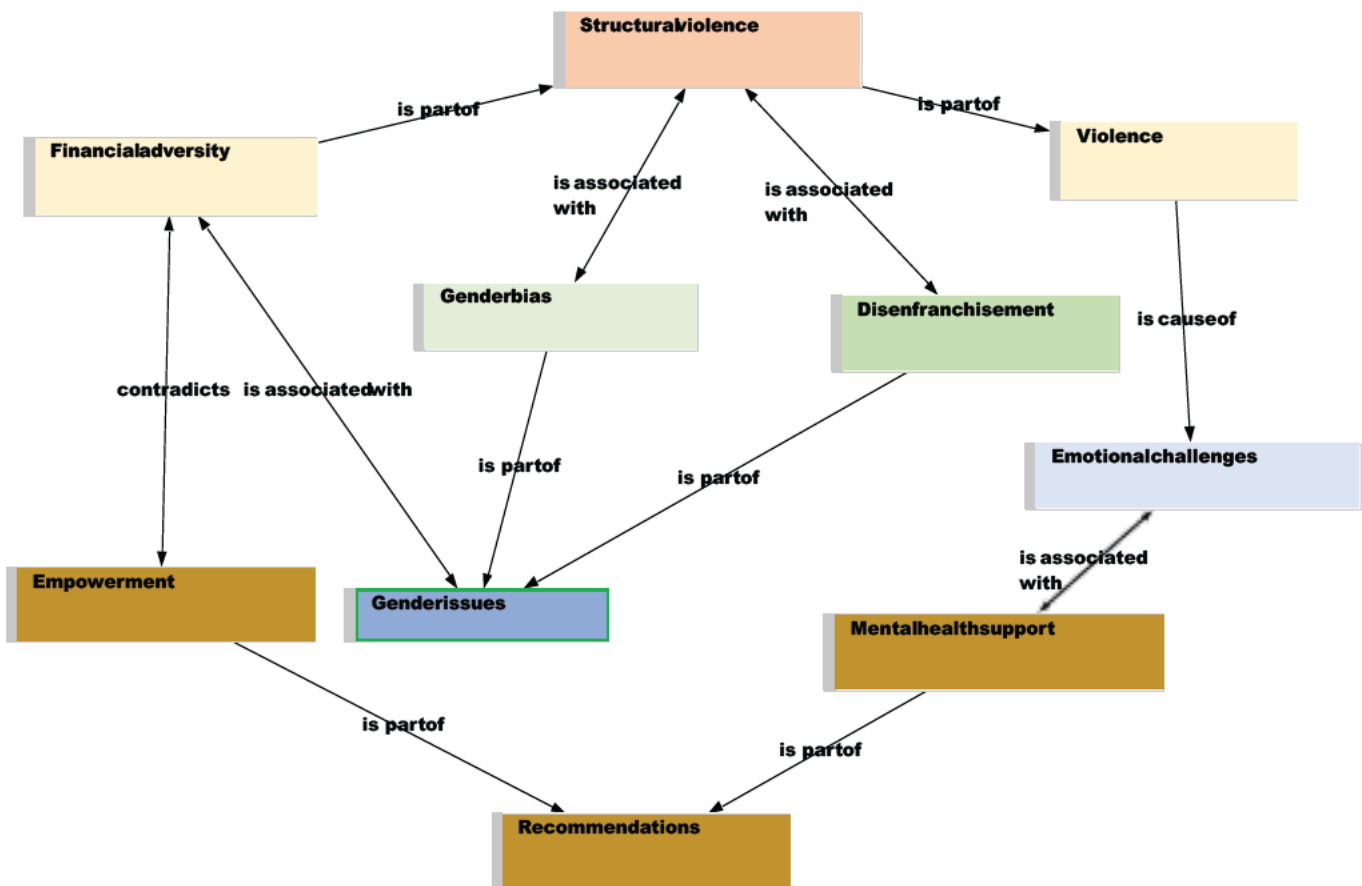


Figure 5. 1: Finding Themes

5.2 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The presentation of the findings in this and the following chapter sought to follow the themes that came out of the data gathered.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Despite the 2010 Constitution and devolved governance in Kenya providing opportunities for women to pursue political office and positively impacting their representation in political positions (Wainaina 2023), women still face multiple political barriers and challenges in realising their leadership potential. These include the perception of politics as a male domain, the lack of political networks for mobilisation, and the challenges associated with insufficient financial resources.

Political leadership campaigns require one to have steady financial resources and human capital, which sometimes means one has to build their resource base before one can realistically compete for a political leadership position. This can be particularly daunting for women who enter politics later in their careers, as they face difficulties in building a strong public image due to insufficient financial resources and relative inexperience. Furthermore, political violence and hooliganism disproportionately affect female candidates during elections, leading to intimidation and a reluctance to participate in politics. However, women with prior political experience tend to have a higher likelihood of success in elected political positions as they have built the necessary networks and also more importantly understand how to navigate the political terrain.

Political parties in Kenya often display patriarchal structures and attitudes, perpetuating gender inequality and restricting women's involvement in decision-making processes. These structures present significant obstacles for women leaders to secure support and access to resources within their political parties, hindering their ability to advance their careers. In addition, the male-dominated elite within political parties often reacts with hostility and resistance towards women's political participation, further perpetuating systemic violence against them.

This chapter concentrates on the key findings related to the problem statement and aims to ascertain how the findings have addressed these issues. The following discussion is following the areas identified in the problem statement and objectives of the study. This study employed a mixed-method, explanatory action research

methodology, requiring the adoption of three main research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and applied intervention approaches.

In line with the study objectives, the first part of the findings examines the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County. The second objective focuses on the effectiveness of previous and current attempts to mitigate structural violence against women leaders within Kenya's main political parties. The final stage of the study involved the implementation of interventions using a participatory action research approach. The planned and implemented interventions aimed at mitigating structural violence within Nairobi's main political parties. After collaborating with stakeholders to evaluate the intervention's short-term outcomes, the final results were documented.

This study uncovered the prevalence of violence against women in positions of political leadership in Kenya, which includes the exclusion of women from political networks, the dominance of men within political parties and public institutions, and the utilisation of electoral violence and thuggery targeting female candidates in competitive elections. Furthermore, this study illuminated the financial constraints faced by female candidates, which contribute to the disparity in power and representation in the political arena.

In other words, women consistently face both psychological and physical violence coupled with structural obstacles, which have largely been normalised, and for this reason, there is no remedy or any kind of policy or intervention to ameliorate the kind of suffering within the political party set up or around wider political institutions or structures. The findings reveal deeply ingrained structural violence against women leaders within Kenya's main political parties, resulting in their exclusion from political networks and restricted access to decision-making positions.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that women face lopsided societal expectations and gender biases that undervalue their capabilities and limit their political ambitions. These challenges serve as significant barriers to women's political participation and representation, ultimately perpetuating gender inequality in the political sphere. In addition, the findings highlight a lack of political will in the enforcement of legislation to

promote women's representation in political leadership. Moreover, it appears that women's lack of access to resources and financial support still hinders their ability to compete in political campaigns.

Subsequently, the findings suggest that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the structural violence against women leaders within political parties in Nairobi. This approach should include policy interventions, financial resources, and support to empower women leaders, as well as efforts to challenge asymmetrical societal expectations and norms that perpetuate discrimination and systemic violence against women. This therefore brings us to the urgent need for systematic changes within political party structures and wider political institutions to ensure gender equality and support women leaders in their pursuit of political participation and representation.

Further, efforts should be made to increase media coverage and visibility of women leaders, as media representation plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards women in leadership positions. Media organisations should also be encouraged to portray women leaders in a fair and unbiased manner, challenging gender stereotypes and highlighting their achievements and capabilities.

Political parties need to foster a supportive and inclusive political environment that values and respects women's leadership. By addressing these structural barriers and promoting gender equality, political parties can become more inclusive and representative of the diverse population they serve. Other countries, including the USA, have manifested similar experiences in securing actual and substantive equality for women. Given the heightened sensitivity to discrimination and its degrading effects on political stability and economic growth, an evolving understanding of the state's role in the post-World War II era must contextualise this universal shift. Concerning the advancement of women's rights and participation, legal quotas to ensure women's representation have also been pertinent.

Therefore, targeted interventions and policy changes are needed to address the barriers and challenges faced by female leaders in political parties. These interventions should focus on reforming party structures, promoting gender equality, providing financial support and resources for women leaders, strengthening mechanisms to address violence and harassment against women leaders, and

challenging societal norms that perpetuate discrimination. The political parties must also actively promote and implement gender quotas to ensure more equal representation of women in leadership positions. These quotas should be accompanied by strong support systems to address the challenges faced by women leaders and provide them with the necessary resources and opportunities for advancement. This requires a transformative approach that challenges the underlying power dynamics and patriarchal structures of political parties.

Finally, the study agrees that an urgent need is required for concerted efforts at multiple levels—political, societal, and international—to address the structural violence within the political parties. This emphasises the importance of support for initiatives that promote gender equity in political organisations. These initiatives should aim to raise awareness about the issue of structural violence against women leaders, provide psychological support alongside other initiatives and programs for both men and women in political leadership positions, and advocate for policy reforms that prioritise gender equality, inclusivity, and psychological healing. In the future, further research will still be required to explore the specific dynamics and manifestations of structural violence and its psychological impact on political leaders in different political contexts.

5.3.1 NATURE, EXTENT AND TRENDS OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES IN NAIROBI.

Despite its critical importance, the political party milieu in Kenya does not widely acknowledge structural violence. The study ascertained that both male and female participants perceived structural violence primarily as physical violence inflicted upon women during political campaigns. However, most respondents had observed subtle, systemic barriers and inequities affecting female party members. Nevertheless, these participants failed to recognise the structural nature of the issue, instead viewing it as an individual experience, eliciting empathetic concern rather than a concerted effort to address the institutional structures that hinder the empowerment of women.

Based on the data presented in Table 5.1 below, a substantial proportion of individuals interviewed have participated in elections (97.7%), and most respondents (95.5%) demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the concept of structural violence.

While this may seem like a conflict with the earlier statement I made, the respondents showed that they understood what structural violence was but some might not have known the term structural violence.

The questionnaire results further indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents (86.4%) believe that structural violence exists within the country's political parties. Furthermore, a considerable number of participants (59.1%) have personally experienced structural violence within the political parties, while a further 64.8% have observed such violence against others within the main political party coalitions in Kenya.

Regarding the challenges faced by women in the political space, the quantitative results suggest that the majority of participants (96.6%) believe that culture is the primary challenge, followed by poverty (87.5%) and education (67%).

Party	Kenya Kwanza Coalition (N=39)	Azimio Coalition (N=49)	p- value	Overall (N=88)
Election participation			1.000	
No	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.0%)	Fisher's	2 (2.3%)
Yes	38 (97.4%)	48 (98.0%)		86 (97.7%)
Understand structural violence			0.318	
No	3 (7.7%)	1 (2.0%)	Fisher's	4 (4.5%)
Yes	36 (92.3%)	48 (98.0%)		84 (95.5%)

Party	Kenya Kwanza Coalition (N=39)	Azimio Coalition (N=49)	p- value	Overall (N=88)
Structural violence exists within parties.			0.842	
No	5 (12.8%)	7 (14.3%)	Chisq.	12 (13.6%)
Yes	34 (87.2%)	42 (85.7%)		76 (86.4%)
Experienced structural violence			0.648	
No	17 (43.6%)	19 (38.8%)	Chisq.	36 (40.9%)
Yes	22 (56.4%)	30 (61.2%)		52 (59.1%)
Observed structural violence			0.310	
No	16 (41.0%)	15 (30.6%)	Chisq.	31 (35.2%)
Yes	23 (59.0%)	34 (69.4%)		57 (64.8%)
Poverty			0.333	
No	3 (7.7%)	8 (16.3%)	Fisher's	11 (12.5%)
Yes	36 (92.3%)	41 (83.7%)		77 (87.5%)

Party	Kenya Kwanza Coalition (N=39)	Azimio Coalition (N=49)	p- value	Overall (N=88)
Education			0.946	
No	13 (33.3%)	16 (32.7%)	Chisq.	29 (33.0%)
Yes	26 (66.7%)	33 (67.3%)		59 (67.0%)
Culture			1.000	
No	1 (2.6%)	2 (4.1%)	Fisher's	3 (3.4%)
Yes	38 (97.4%)	47 (95.9%)	s	85 (96.6%)

Table 5. 1: Nature and Extent of structural violence

| % and p-values based on non-missing cases | * parametric p-value

5.3.2 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN LEADERS

This study demonstrates that political violence is gendered and serves as a fundamental form of structural violence that impairs women's ability to participate in politics. This is a global issue, yet the study reveals a lack of comprehension and attention from political party decision-makers and other leaders to address the problem as a hindrance to gender parity in leadership. This section presents themes on the exclusion of women, the normalisation of violence, the vilification of women by women (female misogyny), body shaming, insults, cultural stereotypes and physical violence. The themes tend to speak into each other as this section shows.

Violence against women in politics stems from structural violence, which is inherent within social structures and perpetuates the unequal distribution of access to basic

human needs based on ascriptive group membership. This discriminatory distribution of resources leads to unequal life chances and has far-reaching negative consequences not only on the physical well-being of individuals but also on their mental and spiritual health (Galtung 2010).

Furthermore, prejudice is a predisposition that affects individuals' perceptions and actions towards others, often stemming from their upbringing and convictions of their superiority. This inclination may manifest in various forms, such as considering women as feeble in need of assistance, and objectifying them as mere objects of sexual desire (Mandalaywala, Amodio and Rhodes 2017). Such beliefs cause people to underestimate women's achievements, attributing them to favouritism rather than their qualifications or merit. Essentialist beliefs, which suggest that social groups possess inherent and unchangeable traits, have been linked to promoting prejudice by supporting social hierarchies and endorsing stereotypes. These beliefs contribute to the perpetuation of prejudice by solidifying rigid classifications and justifying discriminatory attitudes (Cipollina, Pereira-Jorge and Sanchez 2022).

The exclusion of women from political participation has been linked to ancient and modern political theories that associate men with the public sphere and women with the private sphere (Alexander 2018; Hossain *et al.* 2018). As demonstrated by the data collected in this study, a respondent involved in the management of elections within a political party in Kenya agreed that structural violence is embedded in the country's national politics by similar causes:

“ A deeply ingrained bias exists amongst these male politicians, this prejudice more often than not, shapes their decision-making which tends to reinforce the stereotype that women are feeble, dependent, and mere objects of desire.” Pt11

“Most male leaders, maintain the view that any accomplishments by women are not attributed to their abilities or worth, but instead are perceived as the result of preferential treatment from male authority figures.”. Pt04

Political ideology also plays a crucial role in shaping prejudice, with research demonstrating that conservative political viewpoints are associated with a higher prevalence of specific biases (Hoyt, Morgenroth and Burnette 2018). Individuals holding conservative ideologies may be more prone to upholding traditional gender roles and stereotypes, contributing to the perpetuation of prejudiced attitudes towards

women. On the other hand, experimental studies have also pointed out the impact of religious priming on biased attitudes towards others, suggesting that deeply held religious convictions can fuel discriminatory behaviours and reinforce prejudiced beliefs towards women (Yılmaz, Karadöller and Sofuoğlu 2016).

These biases are often rooted in historical injustices and power dynamics that perpetuate inequalities and marginalisation (Haeny, Holmes and Williams 2021). Moreover, heightened sensitivity towards perceived prejudice can lead individuals to interpret others' behaviours through a prejudiced lens, thereby entrenching biased attitudes and behaviours within social interactions (Miller and Saucier 2016).

“At times, at top political party meetings, some male leaders struggle to include women effectively. They may conspire amongst themselves, reaching a consensus that women leaders are many in numbers and are therefore potentially disruptive”. Pt05

“Male leaders within the party insist that women should organise and conduct meetings within the party's women's wing, whilst men concentrate on matters within the main political party level. This approach almost resembles treating women as if they were children and were a nuisance.” Pt08

Prejudice beliefs play a significant role in forming intergroup relationships and perpetuating discriminatory behaviours. The notion that prejudice is immutable and unchangeable can hinder individuals' willingness to confront and challenge biased attitudes (Chaney and Chasteen 2023). Essentialist beliefs about social groups contribute to dehumanisation and intergroup distancing, creating an environment where prejudices flourish. By ascribing specific characteristics or traits to particular social groups, individuals dehumanise others and justify discriminatory behaviours based on these assumed differences (Gill and Mendes 2016).

By and large, institutional structures, particularly political parties, can restrict women's full participation in public life and impede their ability to claim their political rights. Women may encounter obstacles when advocating for their agenda due to household responsibilities and social expectations, as well as the notion that lobby meetings occur in male-dominated "boys clubs" where they are unwelcome. It was also stated that men tend to have greater access to social forums and networks than women, as stated by a male interviewee and corroborated by a female interviewee in this study, as illustrated below.

“When a woman enters a meeting with men in their usual meeting places, either by accident or by invitation, one can perceive a sense of discomfort from the male members and the dynamics and conversation of the meeting change. The places where men meet to discuss politics and make important decisions are, for the most part, exclusive. They often wait for the women to leave so that the real discussions can take place.” Pt09

The involvement of women in typically male-dominated spaces can challenge conventional power structures, as shown by the fact that women regularly make up over 50% of the attendees at public political meetings. Research highlights the favourable effects of having women in influential and decision-making roles, demonstrating that gender diversity can lead to positive outcomes for institutions (Damak 2018). This suggests that underlying biases or resistance to inclusive decision-making processes that involve diverse perspectives may link to the tension or change in dynamics observed when women join male-dominated meetings. The reluctance to accept women's presence in these settings may stem from a resistance to the potential benefits that gender diversity can bring to discussions and results.

“I had a brief meeting with a seasoned political figure who invited me to a private members club. Although I felt out of place in the group, they only engaged in small talk, and I had no intention of staying for the socialising. As I excused myself, one of the members made a light-hearted remark about women not staying out late with a group of drunken men, which caused everyone to laugh.” Pt12

Essentially, identifying the experiences of structural violence that women encounter can be a difficult task due to the private and indirect nature of the violence, which is often hidden from others (Castillejo 2016). This is exemplified by the testimonies of the participants below.

“Violence is prevalent within the party, with victims being told not only to expect it but also accept and refrain from reporting it. Physical violence against women is rarely addressed or spoken about as it is normalised as how politics is played; therefore, structural violence can never be seen as an issue.” Pt10.

Structural violence stems from structural inequalities and power dynamics, which generate hostility towards women leaders because of perceived status violations. Political conflicts further exacerbate the risks for women, as they face new and intensified forms of violence in such environments. Women in politics are targeted not only because of their gender but also because of their presence in positions of power,

making them susceptible to various forms of violence (Alsaba and Kapilashrami 2016; Kuperberg 2018; Krook and Sanín 2019).

The intersectionality of violence against women in politics highlights how it is a result of gender-based discrimination and power imbalances within political spheres. This violence serves as a strategy to maintain existing power structures and reinforce the notion of women having a secondary status in society. The manifestations of violence against women in politics aim to communicate to women that they are not equal to men and should accept a subordinate role. Such violence is not merely individual acts but rather a systemic issue that perpetuates gender inequality and restricts women's full participation in political life (Biroli 2018; Sanín 2018).

The consequences of violence against women in political settings extend beyond physical harm and encompass psychological and emotional trauma that inhibits women's political participation. Electoral violence against women often serves as a means to maintain patriarchal norms and restrict women's capacity to claim their rights and actively participate in shaping societal structures (Al- Qaralleh, Bader and Al-Majali 2022).

“The wind is elusive, yet its effects are unmistakable. Similarly, structural violence can be difficult to detect, yet its impact is undeniable. One must be vigilant, or else it may be overlooked and mostly it dismissed as pettiness even by women themselves.” Pt10

Structural violence can be difficult to identify directly, but its consequences are profound and undeniable. Just as the effects of the wind are evident through its impact on the environment, structural violence manifests in various forms, affecting individuals and communities (Eisler 2015; García 2016; Goldfarb and Goldscheid 2016). In addition, the insidious nature of structural violence often leads to its dismissal or trivialisation. This issue is particularly prevalent in the context of political violence against women in leadership, where systemic inequalities and power dynamics perpetuate harm and hinder the realisation of women's rights and well-being (Manjoo 2016; Silalahi and Dame Panjaitan 2023).

The study also revealed a prevailing societal custom of inflicting physical violence on female leaders. Differences of opinion between female partners and their male counterparts regarding political choices can sometimes result in physical

confrontations. In contrast, female politicians frequently experience verbal abuse during campaigns, even in the absence of physical altercations. This is coupled with the fact that public discourse also frequently portrays women negatively, hindering their advancement towards leadership positions in politics (Bjarnegård, Håkansson and Zetterberg 2020). During campaigns, this negative representation may subject women to derogatory comments and rumours about their moral character, thereby affecting their political careers.

“Even though physical and verbal violence is prevalent for both women and men, women tend to be dismissed when they report violence and are asked to behave as strong since politics is not for the weak”. Pt02

“There have been a few women-led parties which are often viewed as weaker and not as popular as the male-led parties. Women are perceived to be weak and cannot control a political party.” Pt05

This narrative highlights the lack of supportive structures coupled with the normalisation of violence. Current systems, which are predominantly male-dominated, do not provide a platform for addressing reports of physical abuse. Instead, those who complain are told to toughen up, as politics is seen as a choice that comes with such challenges. The absence of a dedicated mechanism to address these concerns perpetuates structural violence, as the existing framework fails to take such matters seriously.

Subsequently, violence within political parties, especially when directed at women, is a widespread problem which often goes unaddressed and is often normalised within the political landscape. This normalisation of violence against women in politics is a deeply troubling trend that sustains structural violence and impedes efforts to combat it (Davies and True 2015). From this study one can deduce that the sentiments shared by the respondents highlight that the normalization of violence is deeply ingrained in societal norms and power structures, rendering it challenging to address and eradicate. This is not solely attributable to direct physical violence but also arises from broader issues such as gender discrimination, inadequate support for women in political processes, and distorted media representation. This type of media representation fosters a toxic environment that, not only anticipates but also accepts violence, thereby discouraging the reporting of such incidents (Menjívar and Walsh 2022).

Further, the normalisation of violence against women in politics, deeply embedded in societal structures and power dynamics, creates a hostile environment that is difficult to dismantle. According to Popov Momčinović (2023), this has led to cognitive reframing, in which gender-based violence is made to make sense of and used as an instrument. The lack of support for women in political roles, combined with their limited decision-making power, exacerbates the issue. This, therefore, creates a hostile environment for women in political spheres.

However, even though it is understood that the normalisation of violence against women in politics extends beyond physical acts to encompass psychological and emotional harm, dismantling such deeply rooted societal structures and power dynamics that tend to lead to the normalisation of violence can be extremely challenging (Phillips 2023).

“When my photos were circulated in social media, the first people who castigated me as immoral and not fit for leadership were my fellow women leaders within the parliament. Only one woman supported me. Women tend to join with men to vilify and judge other women....” Pt14

This narrative illustrates how patriarchy, female misogyny, and cultural norms have entrenched and normalised violence. The respondent encountered judgment and a lack of support from fellow women leaders, a reflection of patriarchal norms that prioritise male dominance and control. Consequently, societal expectations and the internalisation of these norms manifest in female misogyny, where women uphold patriarchal values and, both consciously and unconsciously, perpetuate the violation of other women’s freedoms through internalised sexism.

The phenomenon of female leaders criticising and vilifying their female counterparts, as observed in this situation where personal photos were circulated on social media, represents a broader issue of intra-gender conflict and judgment (Mavin and Grandy 2016). This behaviour, where women team up with men to criticise and condemn other women, highlights the internalisation of societal norms and expectations that perpetuate harmful stereotypes and undermine female solidarity (Pullen and Vachhani 2020). Deeply ingrained gender beliefs and societal constructs that uphold traditional notions of leadership as inherently masculine are responsible for the resistance to female leadership and the tendency to engage in judgemental behaviours towards

women in power. Female misogyny, therefore, demonstrates a complicated interplay of power dynamics and gender prejudices that can manifest in detrimental ways within professional settings, especially in leadership contexts (Holland and Wright 2017).

The findings of this study further indicate that such common occurrences tend to diminish women's prospects for achieving equal status as leaders to men. Research has linked women's exposure to disempowered, submissive roles to a reduction in their belief in their accomplishments and a diminished interest in political participation (Fox and Bailenson 2009). The views reproduced below further illustrate this position:

“During the party nominations, I received immense support from friends and family, which led to my popularity on the ground, and eventual victory seemed imminent. However, when the party decision was made to grant the party ticket to another candidate, I experienced a sudden and profound sense of isolation. My phone no longer rang, and even those I had considered friends or who had worked for me during the campaigns, deserted me. This experience was so overwhelming that it felt as though my entire world had turned against me. It took me years to begin the process of healing, during which time I was completely broke and had no support system to rely on...”
Pt10.

Losing a party nomination amplifies the complex dynamics within political parties during the nomination process, where a multitude of factors beyond individual merit or popularity influence decisions.

“...even though women try to put a solidarity front, it is sometimes difficult because we have competing interests and also political alliances might be different ... sometimes even though we belong to the same political party we still might have competing interests which will not allow us to support each other fully... it is politics, it is never straight forward as one might assume...”
Pt10.

Various factors, such as conflicting interests and different political allegiances, can hinder women's efforts to present a united front in solidarity. Despite the aim of feminist solidarity to empower women collectively, the reality of diverse backgrounds and objectives can complicate this unity (Pullen and Vachhani 2020). In the face of societal norms and power imbalances, women may find themselves in situations where their shared political beliefs do not necessarily result in unwavering support for one another. This complexity highlights the intricate nature of politics, where alliances and interests can intersect and diverge, affecting the dynamics of solidarity among women.

That said, the gender roles of women (communal qualities) are often incompatible with the stereotypes about successful leaders (agentic qualities), which can disadvantage those who display feminine attributes in their pursuit of political leadership positions (Keck 2019; Mohan, Seijts and Miller 2022). This has led to the normalisation of the circumstances that women face, causing them to feel pressured to either compete with men or leave the field altogether. The participant reiterated that this vicious cycle of violence has only exacerbated the issue of structural violence against women in political parties:

“Women Leaders have learnt to respond harshly to adversaries and behave aggressively in public places. This behaviour is met with more acceptance and accommodation, resulting in a shift in societal attitudes that makes violence normal whether a woman or a man does it...” Pt03

According to recent research, women leaders are increasingly displaying assertive behaviours in response to challenges they face in their leadership positions. This has led to a shift in leadership styles as women need to assert their authority and combat stereotypes. Because of this, women leaders may strategically adopt assertive traits to counter existing gender biases and expectations that favour more dominant leadership styles traditionally associated with men. Women leaders are therefore under some pressure to balance agentic and communal behaviours while striving for ideal worker status, which places emotional burdens on them as they navigate societal expectations and their leadership identities (Vroman and Danko 2020; Imamverdiyeva and Shea 2022; Mohan, Seijts and Miller 2022).

Since the recognition of assertive behaviours exhibited by female leaders is connected to broader societal perceptions of leadership and gender roles, it is not unusual for women occupying leadership positions to frequently encounter scepticism and distrust from peers, particularly in male-dominated settings. This difficulty in gaining trust may lead women to exhibit assertiveness to demonstrate their competence and authority. Therefore, the portrayal of women in leadership roles, particularly in politics, affects societal attitudes towards accepting women as leaders and role models (*Hamzah et al 2023*).

“I was told by other women to develop resilience and deflect negative comments and criticism. I was also advised to alter my actions and avoid drinking alcohol in public places, even if my male colleagues were doing so...”
Pt09.

“During instances when I participate in spaces designated for women in leadership or when I am coaching other women, I often find myself overwhelmed with emotion as I recount my painful personal experiences of

discrimination and abuse to some extent. The accumulation of so many unresolved feelings has become too much to contain, leading to tears." Pt15

Addressing the underlying causes of structural violence in political contexts is therefore a complex and challenging task that requires time and the development of effective strategies. Structural violence goes beyond direct physical harm and encompasses inequalities embedded within political, economic, and social structures that indirectly cause suffering among marginalised individuals or social groups according to Tacey and Riboli (2014); (Krook and Sanín 2019). Regrettably, political parties often perceive this type of violence as a routine matter, resulting in a lack of understanding. This perception has led to the normalisation of violence, where women politicians are also encouraged to embrace violent approaches.

"Two women political leaders both from the same political party, showed their capacity for violence and toughness in war, and received recognition for it". Pt10

Historically, male leaders have often exhibited forms of masculine protectionism, drawing on traditional gender roles to project strength and authority (Johnson and Williams 2020). In contrast, contemporary female leaders face the challenge of combating gender stereotypes that portray women as weak, leading them to adopt a "tough" stance during international crises to establish credibility and dispel such biases (Schwartz and Blair 2020).

The case of Hillary Clinton, the first female presidential nominee of a major party in the United States, illustrates the gender biases and challenges faced by women in politics. Despite these obstacles, women like Barbara Lee have stood out for their peacebuilding efforts and non-violent discourse in the face of bellicose political environments, offering alternative perspectives and critiquing aggressive rhetoric and policies (Gorsevski 2021). Such examples highlight the diverse approaches women leaders can take in navigating conflicts and promoting peace. Nonetheless, in the realm of leadership styles, voters often expect female politicians to demonstrate strong, assertive behaviours to counter voter prejudices that may make them less likeable or influential (Everitt, Best and Gaudet 2016). By contrast, the broader discourse on perceptions of women as political leaders during times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, praises empathetic approaches (Tatum, Thompson and Yates 2022). This emphasises the complexity of expectations placed on women leaders to balance toughness with empathy in addressing multifaceted challenges.

In addition, there is evidence of silent violence among women that serves the interests of men, highlighting the complex dynamics of power and control within political environments (Krook and Sanín 2019). This normalisation of different forms of violence can perpetuate harmful behaviours and attitudes within political spheres.

“The male opponent told the woman leader that her husband has an important job, so she should stay at home and take care of their guests.” Pt06

This situation demonstrates the intersection of gender discrimination and political dynamics, where women in leadership positions often face challenges rooted in patriarchal norms that seek to limit their agency and influence. The male opponent's statement not only undermines the woman leader's capabilities but also reinforces traditional gender roles that confine women to domestic duties, thereby perpetuating inequality and hindering women's advancement in political spheres (Stein, Kursawe and Köhler 2023). This narrative brings out the issue of gender backlash, where individuals, including political candidates, may face negative reactions when they challenge traditional gender norms and seek positions of power typically associated with men. The male opponent's attempt to delegitimize the woman leader's political aspirations and reinforce gender-based hierarchies by citing her husband's job reflects a form of backlash (Green and Shorrocks 2019).

The incident further highlights the importance of addressing gender discrimination and promoting gender equality in political participation. As a result, women continue to face systemic barriers, including stereotypes, discrimination, and unequal access to resources, which hinder their full engagement in political processes (Napier, Suppes and Bettinsoli 2020).

Women in Kenya face significant obstacles when participating in politics due to widespread disregard, disrespect, and derogatory language, including body shaming and demeaning behaviour, from both their competitors and the general public. They experience both physical intimidation and harassment, often exploiting their physical attributes to diminish them. Besides, gendered hate crimes are widespread in Kenya, depicting women leaders as prostitutes, worthless hangers-ons, or morally corrupt individuals. Some argue that various forms of political exclusion, such as the marginalisation of women in public participation, reinforce "appropriate" notions of

masculine and feminine roles dictated by societal expectations (Alexander 2012). Subsequently, body shaming of female leaders is prevalent within political parties.

“I was running for the position of women's representative and faced a negative campaign from both men and women, who were against my age and appearance. Despite being older and heavier than my opponent, a young and slender woman, I was subjected to constant criticism about my body, which initially hurt my feelings and confidence. However, I eventually toughened up and learned to block out the negativity, which made it easier for me to counter the criticism and keep running for the position”. Pt12

This report illustrates a more general societal concern where female leaders frequently confront unjustified scrutiny and critique based on their physical appearance rather than their qualifications or competencies. Gender, physical appearance, and politics intersect in a complex domain where societal norms and expectations often influence the perception and treatment of female leaders. In addition, ageism in politics is one of the issues the respondent alluded to. Ageism in politics refers to discrimination or prejudice against individuals based on their age within the political sphere. It is not surprising therefore that women in influential positions face evaluations that extend beyond their professional capabilities to their physical appearance, leading to unfair comparisons and criticism that can undermine their self-assurance and impede their advancement (Clayton, O'Brien and Piscopo 2023). This occurrence emphasises the pervasive impact of societal beauty expectations and ageism on women's experiences in leadership roles, emphasising the need to confront and surpass such prejudices to foster gender equality and inclusiveness in politics.

Moreover, studies on shame and its consequences on individuals, especially women, shed light on the emotional burden of body shaming and criticism. Indeed, the female perspective on shame underscores the intersectional nature of this emotion, demonstrating its frequent entwinement with gender, power dynamics, and societal expectations (Fischer 2019). Women, in particular, are susceptible to experiences of shame related to their bodies, as societal beauty standards and femininity often establish unrealistic ideals that can lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt (Beavan 2018).

“I have been insulted both on and offline until lately, it has become 'normal'. I expect it now and I also sometimes joke about my body just so I catch them off guard before they can insult me. This makes it all normal for me therefore less painful because one must toughen up to survive.” Pt07

Coping with insults, especially body shaming, whether online or offline, can have significant psychological implications. This 'normalisation' of insults and the development of coping mechanisms to deal with them can be complex processes influenced by various factors. Research on coping strategies in different contexts sheds light on how individuals not only navigate but also continually manage such challenges. Confronted with insults, individuals may resort to different coping mechanisms to protect their mental well-being and self-esteem (DeMarco and Newheiser 2017). Coping is often described as a cognitive and behavioural effort to manage external or internal demands that exceed an individual's resources (Yunita *et al.* 2020). This is a complex process that involves adapting to stressors that may overwhelm one's capacity to respond effectively.

It is therefore not surprising that in situations where insults have become the norm, individuals may employ various coping strategies to mitigate the impact of such negative experiences. Some coping mechanisms, such as avoidance, may offer temporary relief but are not sustainable solutions in the long term (Shdaifat, Jamama and AlAmer 2018). Equally, the use of humour, dark humour, or stereotyping can serve as coping mechanisms in dealing with insults, as observed in paramedics managing patients with mental health issues (Rolfe, Pope and Crouch 2020). These coping strategies may act as protective mechanisms to shield individuals from the emotional distress caused by insults.

The social context and support systems also play a crucial role in shaping coping strategies. Good social support has been linked to the utilisation of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies (Kamarulbahri *et al.* 2022). In contrast, maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as denial, withdrawal, or substance use, can exacerbate distress and lead to further negative outcomes. As a consequence, understanding the interplay between social support and coping mechanisms is essential to effectively managing the impact of insults on mental well-being.

While men are known to use their positions to impede women from becoming involved and actively work against them within the political party set-up, women on the other hand, are commonly the target of slanderous remarks, which has contributed to a diminished level of political participation.

“A male competitor publicly advised a female competitor to tighten her skirt as the competition was going to be rough meaning, he was ready to orchestrate both sexual and political violence towards his female opponent”.
Pt08

This situation where a male political leader publicly advises a female leader to adjust her attire as competition intensifies is extremely worrying, as it demonstrates a blatant display of sexism and misogyny in the political arena. This objectification of women highlights the persistent gender disparities and discrimination that women face in leadership positions, especially in politics. Newman *et al.* (2017) emphasised the need for policy changes to spur organisational transformation towards gender equality in senior roles. However, gendered sanctions and stereotypes, as discussed by Fisk and Overton (2019), contribute to dampening women's leadership aspirations, reinforcing existing gender biases in leadership. The study by Kerevel and Atkeson (2015) further underscores the importance of challenging stereotypes to promote the acceptance and success of female political leaders.

The strict expectations regarding language and behaviour imposed on women in politics further contribute to a culture where women are subject to harsher criticism and punishment for perceived transgressions. This unequal treatment proves the gendered dynamics that exist within political parties, where women often have to navigate a more challenging terrain compared to their male counterparts (Kittilson 2010). That said, the criticism and punishment can be lessened on some conditions such as one's financial contributions to the party. This was highlighted by one participant who claimed that:

“If your husband has money, it helps as he can make large donations to the political party. This has helped some women gain attention, but it does not guarantee influence.” Pt13

Within the political parties, women are often subjected to harsher disciplinary actions than men, leading to more severe penalties for comparable offences. This discrepancy is largely due to gender biases and stereotypes that perpetuate an unjust system. Women, particularly those from marginalised groups, may face more severe consequences than men, as Kamarulbahri *et al.* 2022) and Fallon *et al.* (2018) have shown. This unequal treatment can have far-reaching consequences for women, not only affecting their career progress but also mental health, and overall well-being.

(Moreno and Segura-Herrera 2013), (Richard and Reidenberg 2005), and (Horne and Anna 2004) have emphasised the importance of more equitable disciplinary practices.

This bias against women is glaring, as portrayed by a participant:

"Despite my victory in the party primaries, the party leadership decided to award the ticket to my opponent. When I arrived at the party headquarters, I was denied access by the party officials. This led to a confrontation with my supporters, who became violent due to the frustration of being blocked. Although I did not incite the violence, the party subsequently banned me from participating in any of their activities." Pt14

While Participant 14 was a victim of the biased criteria of dealing with violence, participant 01 provided a context in which that bias had been justified based on gender norms.

"The perception that women who exhibit violent behaviour equal to that of men are unusual and undisciplined has led to a belief that violence is not a feminine trait. Therefore, when a woman displays toughness compared to her male counterparts, party leaders view it as unacceptable. As a result, women are subjected to strict disciplinary measures for not adhering to traditionally feminine behaviour. However, when men conflict with the party, it is treated differently and viewed as a normal political conflict." Pt01

Women also often encounter obstacles such as long hours, rowdy meetings, and being pigeonholed into specific roles, which can deter them from fully engaging in the political process (Gutiérrez-Romero 2014). Additionally, women in political parties are subjected to a double standard that requires them to provide more explanations and justifications than their male counterparts, reflecting deep-rooted gender biases and stereotypes (Suykens 2018). Further, the lack of support from male leaders and complicity in addressing and preventing harassment contributes to a culture that tolerates and even perpetuates such behaviour. This culture of complicity can make it challenging for victims to seek recourse and protection from further harassment, as there may be a fear of retaliation or a lack of faith in the system to deliver justice (Pitot *et al.* 2022). The absence of sanctions for perpetrators of harassment can embolden them to continue their abusive behaviour, creating a cycle of victimisation and powerlessness for those targeted. This has been one of the experiences of women politicians in Nairobi. One participant, a victim of sexual harassment, recalled:

"I was told to provide evidence that one of my colleagues had sexually harassed me and when I had none, they proceeded to give me a very harsh suspension which was much harsher than any other male member had

encountered in the past for graver offences maybe to serve as a warning to others.” Pt05

This harsh suspension given to the participant, compared to the leniency shown to male colleagues for more serious offences, highlights clear gender-based discrimination. This further reflects a broader societal pattern where women often face stricter penalties and closer scrutiny than men in similar situations. I argue that this disparity represents a form of structural violence, as it perpetuates gender inequality and reinforces patriarchal norms. The demand for evidence in sexual harassment cases can be seen as a means of maintaining existing power structures. The party’s severe punishment of the respondent can be interpreted as a tactic to control and intimidate, potentially discouraging others from coming forward with similar complaints and thereby preserving the status quo. This narrative illustrates that structural violence not only impacts individuals but also sustains a culture of fear and inequality within the organisation.

The repercussions of gender bias go beyond individual experiences and can have broader implications for political party dynamics and culture. Studies have suggested that gender bias can foster a zero-sum mentality and perpetuate intergroup competition, especially in male-dominated environments (Kuchynka *et al.* 2018). In addition, gender bias can manifest in various forms, including workplace harassment, hiring practices, and disparities in leadership opportunities (Chatterjee and Shenoy 2023). Gender bias not only impedes women’s career progression but also impacts their psychological well-being and overall job satisfaction (Lekchiri *et al.* 2019).

Structural violence, characterised by the imposition of fear and the violation of electoral and personal integrity, poses a significant challenge to democracy as well as undermines the principles of fair and inclusive political participation (Wahman and Goldring 2020). The perpetuation of violence and intimidation within political contexts not only affects the electoral process but also creates an environment where women may face both heightened risks and barriers to their political engagement (Chandra and García-Ponce 2019).

“I was appointed to a key position within the party leadership by the party leadership and was expected to be a less strict leader due to my gender. However, when I adhered to the rules, my fellow party members accused me

of being corrupt without any evidence and attempted to fire me without a proper investigation; eventually, due to pressure, I decided to resign." Pt12

This report highlights gender-based discrimination, reflecting a broader societal pattern where women are often stereotyped and judged according to gendered expectations. The backlash the respondent faced for following the rules demonstrates how these stereotypes function as a form of structural violence. The researcher interprets the pressure that led to the respondent's resignation as a tactic of control and intimidation. Besides, the actions of the party members can be seen as an attempt to discourage other women from stepping into leadership roles.

Similarly, some female politicians have been vilified and called various names, labelled traitors and faced false accusations simply for being outspoken or strong-willed. This violence against women in politics is deeply rooted in misogyny, which perpetuates patriarchal norms and expectations and penalises those who challenge traditional gender roles (Krook and Sanín 2019).

"Due to my outspoken nature, false stories were fabricated about me, and the party leadership was quick to believe them without conducting any investigation. As a result, I was labelled a traitor and called various names, even though I had been an active advocate for party politics. This led to my isolation, and new male members in the house were given preference over me when it came to party committee positions." Pt15

Women also confront a wide range of difficulties beyond physical violence in various facets of their lives, such as societal expectations and gender stereotyping. Women often face early dissuasion from pursuing careers in politics, leading them to prioritise domestic duties instead. Societal norms and gender biases deeply ingrain these obstacles, perpetuating traditional gender roles and expectations (Armstrong, Riemenschneider and Giddens 2018; Shah, Jalal and Khosa 2018; Barrick 2021). Therefore, women who aspire to enter male-dominated fields, such as politics, often encounter unique impediments that extend beyond familial obligations and occupational disadvantages. These challenges encompass perceptual and political barriers that are specific to women, making it challenging for them to navigate and thrive in such environments (Chen and Morris 2020; Barrick 2021; Mahabir *et al.* 2023). In a case that highlighted how women are expected to prioritise domestic duties, a respondent shared a case in which a woman was viewed as not fit to be where they were.

"Comment about the daughter of a prominent politician needing to settle down' and prioritise her role as a homemaker over her involvement in campaigning for her father." Pt04

Whilst in many instances people ignore or minimise physical violence against women in politics, they often find it more acceptable when men use youth groups or local gangs to instil fear and violence. Women on the other hand are frequently expected to adhere to specific behavioural norms and are often criticised if they deviate from these expectations. In addition, people often perceive women as more prone to emotional decision-making and less wise than men, a perception that can undermine their credibility in political settings (Kuperberg 2018; Barrick 2021; Håkansson 2023). These stereotypes can lead to biases against women in politics, affecting not only their ability to be taken seriously but also contribute effectively to decision-making processes (Biroli 2018; Krook and Sanín 2019).

"Despite your status as a political leader, men may treat you as a sexual object simply because you are a woman. Men at all levels may disregard your position and view you in a sexualised manner." Pt05

"However, when I joined the other politicians where they sat, they would buy each other drinks. But if I, as a woman, offered to buy them a drink, I was often viewed as trying to be manly, which made bonding with men at an equal level awkward and tense." Pt11

The Kenyan political structures can be viewed as a 'boys club'. (Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo 2020) Posit that the exclusive 'boys club' is associated with men having an easier time gaining influence, while women are often marginalised and limited to secondary patriarchal roles. Despite these obstacles, a male participant in the study expressed that while some women have succeeded in accessing these spaces, they often find themselves restricted to roles that align with patriarchal interests.

"Men will talk with other men as peers but when a woman is sitting with them, the conversation changes even if you are peers. They will not see a woman as a peer. They will not respect her as much and there will be stigma even around how she looks or walks." Pt02

"Sometimes in official party meetings, male leaders in positions of authority will make a drastic sweeping statement like there are now too many women around, let's reduce the numbers and let them join now form a women's wing. Almost like the women are children and they are being a nuisance so they need to be moved somewhere else so the men can discuss important issues..." Pt02

The two narratives highlight several issues indicative of structural violence. The shift in conversation when a woman speaks can be interpreted as infantilising, reflecting a lack of respect. The creation of a women's wing, as if women are incapable of participating in the main space, can be seen as a mechanism of control and marginalisation. These kinds of remarks made by male leaders about reducing the number of women and forming a separate women's wing serve to maintain existing power structures. These actions that segregate and treat women as nuisances discourage their full participation in key discussions and decision-making processes. This isolation of women may be a tactic to deter them from challenging the status quo and asserting their rights. On the contrary, a statement made by a male highlights that some are against the structural subjugation of women.

Women in politics often face scrutiny regarding their personal lives and criticism for not conforming to conventional gender norms, highlighting a disparity in their treatment (Yates 2019). A female political figure in Kenya echoed this, recounting her experiences during and after the 2022 general elections.

“Men generally do not face the same amount of cultural and social disapproval as women for their actions, even if they behave in a way that goes against societal norms. Despite this, women who exhibit similar behaviour are often viewed as being unstable or hysterical and may be barred from certain places or situations. It does not take much for a woman to be labelled as such.” Pt01

Society frequently criticises and disapproves of women more harshly than men for behaviours that defy conventional gender norms. Cultural and social norms deeply ingrain this treatment disparity, dictating acceptable behaviour for each gender. (Blackstone, Nwaozuru and Iwelunmor 2017) Posit that women may be labelled as erratic or hysterical for actions that would not elicit the same response if performed by men. This disparity in societal reactions is observable in various contexts, such as alcohol consumption, where cultural norms accept drinking among men but disapprove of women's drinking. Similarly, smoking is typically more acceptable for men, with strong cultural disapproval attached to women who smoke (Ayuningtyas *et al.* 2020).

The criticism and disapproval are not only committed to women's drinking or smoking habits but also extend to one not having a child- a choice that men do not respect. One respondent faced criticism and belittling from men, she remembers:

"The male leaders from my area were dissatisfied when I won the seat, and as a result, they relentlessly harassed me. They constantly belittled me for not having a child, and some even went as far as offering to use objects to impregnate me, suggesting that my husband was unable to do so. They also called me a prostitute, and the insults were frequent and consistent." Pt11

Abuse of power can take various forms, including verbal insults, derogatory remarks, and threats, leading to a hostile environment for the victim (Vuckovic *et al.* 2017). Such harassment extends beyond immediate verbal abuse and can have profound effects on the well-being and mental health of the individuals targeted. Research has demonstrated that workplace sexual harassment is associated with a heightened risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, particularly when the harassment originates from colleagues or leaders and occurs frequently (Hansen *et al.* 2022). The persistent nature of the insults and derogatory comments, as experienced by the participant in question, can contribute to the creation of a toxic work environment that undermines one's sense of safety and security.

Women are vulnerable to political attacks sponsored by their adversaries in politics and society. In Kenya, physical assaults on female leaders are common during political campaigns as a deliberate strategy to either exclude or dissuade them from political participation. In addition to being attacked at political rallies, women leaders may also be targeted during constituency visits or subjected to disparaging remarks in front of their constituents. Political actors may use violence or threaten its use to prevent the transfer of political power to those outside the dominant male group (Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo 2020). This suggests that when men commit political violence against female opponents, it is often motivated by gender considerations.

"The elders and male leaders accused me of being incompetent and corrupt. They held ceremonies and rituals with the alleged purpose of forcing me to resign so that my male deputy could take my place. They also claimed that women were oppressive and that I was unfit to lead men." Pt12.

This study underscores the perception that women engaging in political activities often defy traditional gender roles and expectations. Misogyny may fuel the desire to punish these women for their transgression, motivating acts of political violence against them. Violent actors who engage in such behaviour may aim to disrupt civic engagement, citizen mobilisation, and potentially even elections, but when violence is directed specifically at women, it carries a sense of patriarchal authority and may be seen as a

corrective measure. One of the participants in the study, a lawyer who had worked with some of the political parties, provided the following insight into the direct physical violence faced by women in politics:

"Women are not naturally inclined towards physical violence, and those who exhibit such behaviour are often singled out because it is not typical for women to have private armies or be violent. This type of behaviour is more accepted and expected from men." Pt03

"The internal competition within our party has led to a vicious cycle of party primaries, causing enmity among contestants and causing some who do not receive a party ticket to leave the party. The results of these primaries are often viewed with scepticism, as many believe they are manipulated by individuals at the political level." Pt05

Women leaders often encounter political violence, a significant aspect of structural violence, in gendered forms. For instance, during political campaigns, pressure may mount on female candidates to withdraw from party nomination exercises if their candidacy appears to jeopardize the prospects of a preferred male candidate. The following responses further illustrate the point:

"During the by-elections, I was the most popular candidate, and the party leader asked me to step down in favour of my opponent. He promised to secure an appointment for me, allowing the male candidate to run unopposed. However, I did not receive the appointment and quickly faded into political obscurity, as it is difficult to reinvent oneself without a platform. Ten years later, I have not recovered my former popularity and strength, and my political career was ruined."Pt12

"The presidential elections are known for being highly competitive and often result in the emergence of factions based on tribal affiliations. This aggressive behaviour can extend to the tribal lines, impacting not only the candidates and their supporters but also those in their immediate vicinity. Those who are unsuccessful in securing their positions may switch sides and join the opposition, resulting in divisions that go beyond politics and extend into personal lives due to the various alliances that are formed." Pt01

As a result, the potential for structural violence to be utilised as a tool for achieving certain purposes, in conjunction with other forms of direct and cultural violence, must be acknowledged and addressed. This could in turn instil fear in the female candidate and her supporters, as well as highlight the need for a formal and respectful tone.

As depicted in the bar chart (Figure 5.7) below, the majority of respondents, regardless of gender, concurred that political parties bear responsibility for perpetuating structural violence against women.

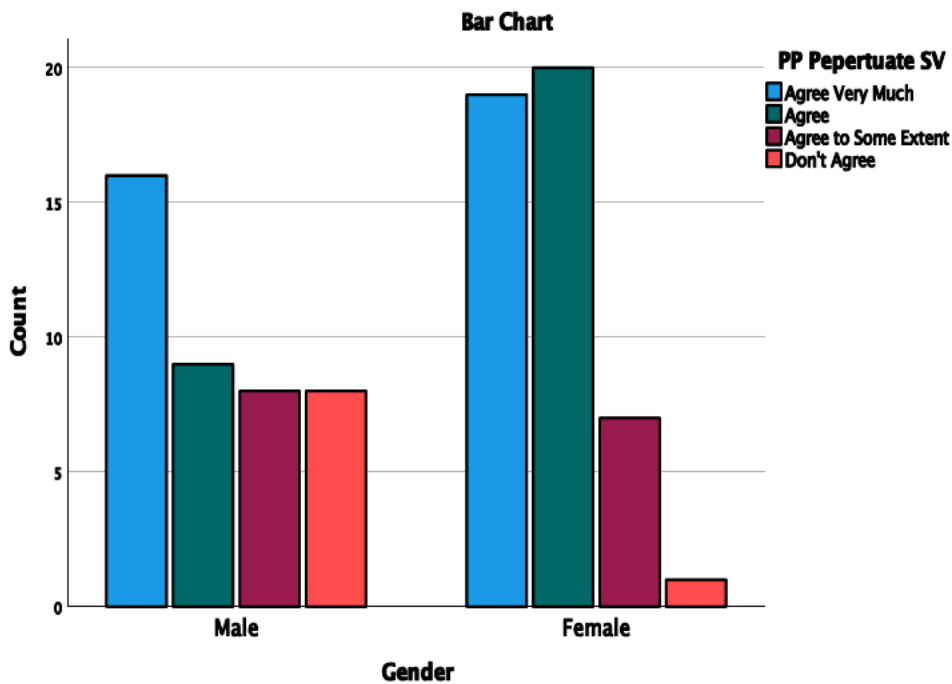


Figure 5. 1: Political parties perpetuate structural violence

Given that men primarily founded and directed political parties, it is unsurprising that the primary activities associated with these parties involve male politicians negotiating with one another. Likewise, the main argument surrounding the recent 2022 general elections in the country revolved around competition between male political rivals. A participant made the following observation:

"The leadership positions in the political parties are predominantly held by men, and the decision-makers within the parties are also mostly men. Women are often given roles within the parties for public relations and are expected to prioritise their allegiance to the party over advocating for policy change. Any agenda-setting by women is often relegated to a secondary status, and they lack real influence on the decision-making process. The meetings are also often held at night, which can make it difficult for women to participate fully in the party's activities." Pt02

"During a pre-meeting with a male leader, I could sense the discomfort of the group when I arrived. The conversation was mostly superficial and when I requested to leave, they were pleased to see me go. One of the male leaders even made a derogatory comment about women, implying that they should be home at that time. It is common for the boys club meetings in the evening to be exclusive to those they do not regularly meet with, and women are rarely present during important discussions where significant decisions are made." Pt15

Men have traditionally dominated political parties, taking the lead in establishing and heading these entities (Kenny and Verge 2016). Male politicians predominantly hold high-ranking political positions and key roles within party structures, exerting influence over organisational matters, political strategies, and campaigning. Despite some progress in women's representation within parties, men still play a significant role in leading and supporting political parties, raising concerns about the genuine inclusion of women and their issues in party agendas (Erzeel and Rashkova 2017).

The results of the facts above demonstrate the impact of structural violence on women's political leadership. It is common for women to start at a disadvantage, thereby influencing the way the media and members of the community portray their stories, as well as society's perception of their political roles. In effect, the deliberate positioning of some hazards associated with politics for women in Kenya results in unfavourable outcomes for their political careers. For another participant in the interviews:

“Due to my age and small stature, I was not taken seriously by others. The political party I belonged to was massive, and I was unable to attract attention to myself. Despite my efforts to speak at rallies, no one gave me the opportunity. Frustrated, I forced my way onto the stage and seized the microphone, which ultimately caught the attention of the party leader”. Pt12

“Emotional violence can be very harmful as it involves saying things that can make a person cry. My opponent said that I did not even have a husband, to which I responded by telling him to come and marry me.” Pt08

Furthermore, within the political parties, some behaviours and practices enforce gendered hierarchy. Norms reinforce these practices, rendering women subordinate. In the desire to punish women who violate these norms, there are countless practices, from dirty jokes to sexual assault, that target women and, in turn, fuel the discrimination and insubordination of women.

“Women face political and structural violence within political parties, including being blocked from advancing in the party by men who use their position to conspire against them and prevent them from accessing power. During rallies, women can be subjected to verbal abuse and have the microphone denied to them. Men also control the flow of information and keep women in the dark about the inner workings of the party, thereby limiting their ability to make informed decisions.” Pt04

This study also highlights the potential for familial pressure on female leaders to cede their positions to male counterparts or adopt more submissive roles in their leadership capacities. Spousal violence may also occur as a result of a woman's political affiliation.

“Your male opponents, as well as your husband, may advise you to stay at home and dictate how you should conduct your political career. However, women need to develop resilience and learn to deflect such comments. In response to harsh words from opponents, women should learn to be assertive and give a strong reply.” Pt01

This study found that violence against women has had a detrimental impact on their participation in public life. While some women leaders have been deterred from pursuing political careers, others avoid public roles due to the physical and emotional toll that can come with leadership. Online violence has also led to women closing their social media accounts and significantly limiting their use of this platform for leadership as illustrated by the following participant.

“During my campaign for women's reproductive rights, I encountered negative responses from various sources, including bloggers and individuals on social media. As a new member of parliament, I found the constant criticism to be overwhelming and had to temporarily step away from social media. However, with the guidance and encouragement of more experienced colleagues, both men and women, I have since developed a thicker skin and am better equipped to handle such situations. While I am no longer as affected by negativity, it can still be challenging at times.” Pt11

Noticeably, within political parties, gender inequalities and the limited representation of women persist, which perpetuates the belief that women are inadequate as leaders and unable to manage power and control. This discriminatory attitude impedes women's ability to fully engage in politics and exerts significant influence on policy formulation and implementation in Kenya.

Inevitably, the challenge for women to balance familial and societal obligations with the time required for political engagement is compounded by the financial constraints they face. Whilst women often face resistance and opposition from family, friends, and society when expressing an interest in politics, men are more likely to receive support in terms of resources and financial backing. This lack of economic power not only diminishes women's political standing but also reinforces gender stereotypes and

societal norms that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in politics (Feo, Fiorelli and Piccio 2021).

“Women face challenges in lobbying due to family and socialisation constraints. Men have more social forums and resources for political engagement. The nomination process often favours men, as campaigning requires time and funds. There is a cultural belief that men are more fit for leadership, and qualifications can hinder women's progress. Women in politics are often single, divorced, or in easy marriages. Women need empowerment, as they are not always supportive of each other, and politicians in general can block others.” Pt04

5.3.3 FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Women's political participation is often hindered by structural barriers that are interconnected with various aspects of political engagement. Discrimination against women during the nomination process within political parties can restrict their full engagement in the political sphere, as observed (Ndirangu 2017). On top of that, this discrimination extends to the campaign phase, where financial requirements for a successful campaign can be prohibitive for many women, as highlighted by (*Piscopo 2021*).

This disparity in financial resources between women and men has a significant impact on women's ability to participate in politics, creating barriers that impede their political engagement and influence. Men's greater access to financial resources enables them to allocate more funds towards political campaigns, providing them with a competitive edge in exerting influence on decision-makers and shaping political outcomes. This advantage is particularly pronounced when women are newcomers to politics, as gender biases often lead funders to default favouring men, thereby perpetuating the cycle of financial disadvantage for women in the political arena (Murray 2021); (Buckley 2021)

While this conversation on financial muscle has been engaged with earlier in this chapter, I did not exhaust how one aspect, which is vital for men, is not as effective for women. Women facing challenges in politics may also experience a sense of betrayal from other women who are unable to provide support, exacerbating the difficulties they encounter in the political arena (Shin 2015). The ownership of property predominantly being in the hands of men further compounds the economic disparities that women

face, limiting their financial resources and autonomy in political activities. Political parties, often prioritizing patronage and financial leverage, may overlook the support needed for women candidates, perpetuating a system where women struggle to access the resources necessary for effective political participation (Wang and Muriaas 2019).

"Having a wealthy husband can be advantageous for women seeking political influence, as they may be able to make substantial donations to their preferred party. However, such contributions do not necessarily guarantee influence, as other factors, such as the individual's reputation and connections, also play a role." Pt15

The dynamics of patronage in politics play a significant role in shaping power structures and decision-making processes, with informal networks often concentrating power in the hands of a few influential individuals. This concentration of power, known as "big man" politics, reinforces existing hierarchies and can marginalize women who lack access to these patronage networks. Moreover, the intensification of patronage efforts during election years, driven by increased electoral competition, can further entrench gender disparities in political representation (Pierskalla and Sacks 2019).

Improving women's economic empowerment is critical for enabling them to tackle various forms of violence and organize themselves effectively in society. In Kenya, although progress has been made in narrowing the gender wealth gap, women still face challenges in obtaining adequate funding for political financing and sponsorship compared to men. Whilst the pursuit of political power is often perceived as a pathway to empowerment for women, they frequently encounter obstacles such as limited campaign time and financial resources, which hinder their effective engagement in the political sphere (Porth *et al.* 2021).

" Despite the empowerment associated with politics, women face distinct challenges in this field. Men typically possess advantages in terms of campaign funding, physical violence, and access to resources, as well as family dynamics and societal expectations that may restrict women's participation. And economic resources are often contingent upon male approval." Pt04

Further to the aforementioned, the process of nominating candidates in political parties in Kenya perpetuates gender disparities, with men being favoured over women, and this impedes women's progress to leadership positions. Although efforts have been

made to increase women's representation, there are still challenges, such as a lack of financial resources, societal attitudes questioning women's suitability for leadership roles, and women often being nominated for committees with lower financial compensation, which hinders their career progression (Muraya *et al.* 2019). The underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions in Kenya is exacerbated by a lack of political will among politicians and parties, non-compliance with regulations governing party primaries, limited financial resources for female candidates, and sociocultural stigmatization and gender-based electoral violence (Pair *et al.* 2021).

"The parties take into account the resources you possess as a woman, such as financial resources, in determining your level of influence. To be successful as a female candidate, it is important to be well-liked by the top party leaders and to align with their agenda, even if it results in neglecting other women. Having a wealthy spouse can also provide influence, as their support makes you more appealing to the party leaders. However, even with these advantages, your influence is still limited and subject to your complete loyalty to the party leadership." Pt12

In Kenya, men are the majority property owners, which can limit women's decision-making abilities and their participation in leadership. In addition, women have less control over land, which remains a critical factor in the country's economy. A female respondent noted that:

"Women are not taken seriously when they express interest in leadership positions unless one can see they have solid financial backing..." Pt13

Gender inequality in credit access has been the focus of numerous studies. While some studies indicate that loan rejection rates and terms do not vary between male and female loan applicants (Ongena and Popov 2016), other studies suggest disparities in loan contract terms based on gender, such as interest rates, maturity, and loan amounts (Beck, Behr and Madestam 2018). (Nanayakkara and Stewart 2015) has highlighted disparities in repayment determinants based on gender, with findings indicating that males tend to perform better in repayments in certain contexts than females. As one participant commented:

"Obtaining financial assistance is more difficult for women than for men. A man may think that he can easily get funding from wealthy individuals without any conditions, but this is unlikely to be the case for women. Financial institutions may require a guarantor, which is usually a man, as women tend to have fewer resources and those who do are often overstretched and committed." Pt14

5.4. CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES IN NAIROBI

5.4.1 TRAUMA

Trauma is a significant and immediate result of the structural violence faced by women in political leadership. This violence is often seen as an unavoidable part of politics, with the expectation that individuals must show resilience and strength when confronted with it. Some participants have shared that political leaders openly claim violence is a prerequisite for leadership, suggesting that those who cannot handle the pressure are not suited for these roles. While violence is often accepted as part of leadership, it's important to recognize the toll it takes on women leaders. The pressure to appear strong and resilient in the face of violence is immense. Unfortunately, this expectation creates a toxic environment where those who struggle to cope with these challenges are viewed as unfit for leadership (Fricke *et al.* 2022).

To effectively navigate the challenges of leadership and maintain the complexity of leadership, women in leadership roles require a superwoman-like status that enables them to adapt to the masculinisation of leadership while facing hostility from both genders. As a result, women in political leadership positions experience a unique form of loneliness due to their scarcity in such roles and the fact that they are frequently perceived as outsiders rather than representatives of others (Mavin and Yusupova 2023). This lack of representation can lead to gender-based discrimination, referred to as female misogyny, from both men and women. Women who do not exhibit solidarity behaviour are often viewed as having masculine traits and are deemed to be honorary men (Mavin 2006).

Structural violence can result in a sense of betrayal for individuals who experience trauma, particularly women, who may feel isolated and unsupported. The reference to the two respondents with different experiences that made them feel isolated and unsupported. The respondents reported sexual harassment, and the one who was forced to resign presents the epitome of the lack of a support system for structural violence victims. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as flashbacks, nightmares, and hypervigilance, are common among individuals who have

experienced trauma. The impact of trauma on leaders can extend beyond their well-being, as they may lead from a place of fear and insecurity, creating a toxic work environment characterised by violence, conflict avoidance, gossip, defensiveness, disrespect, and bullying (Mavin and Yusupova 2023)

5.4.2 TRAUMA AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Trauma is frequently viewed as a direct and immediate consequence of the structural violence experienced by women who hold positions of political leadership. It is widely recognised as a crucial component of the process, requiring individuals to demonstrate strength and resilience to overcome the challenges they face Ogden, Fisher and Pain (2006); (Lohrasbe and Ogden 2017). According to several interviewees, political leaders frequently acknowledge that violence is an inherent aspect of political engagement, and those who cannot endure the pressure are considered unsuitable for leadership. The following responses demonstrate this sentiment:

“As a woman leader, unlike my male counterparts, I have been subjected to various types of violence and abuse, both physical and sexual, such as threats, intimidation, harassment, and online trolling during elections. I have also experienced verbal and psychological abuse, with no escape, and no one seemed to be able to help. The pain seemed inevitable, and it was a sorry place to be.” Pt06

Reframing trauma in terms of its psychological consequences distinguishes it from distress and suffering that do not result in a traumatic impact, even if the intensity is considerable. Without intervention, individuals who have experienced trauma may exhibit aggressive, hysterical, insecure, or oppressive behaviour as past trauma continues to manifest (van de Ven 2020).

“When I lost the elections, my situation was further made worse by the fact that I had exhausted all my resources, including borrowing, and had no access to support from either my political party or other sources. This left me feeling abandoned and alone, unsure of how to recover.” Pt09

“Following the political defeat, I experienced a profound sense of sorrow and betrayal, as some friends and family members who had previously shown support abandoned me. The pain was unparalleled, and even now, tears still come to my eyes when I think about it.....” Pt05

Regardless of the severity of the event, trauma occurs when a distressing event triggers persistent defensive responses in the subcortical regions or dissociates the

experience, leading to symptoms of hyper- or hypo-arousal. Trauma can be repressed, disavowed, or disregarded by the individual, causing them to feel unstable and insecure, even if they are unable to pinpoint the root of their discomfort (Dent 2020).

“Women can become overly emotional due to trauma and may exhibit hysterical behaviour when making speeches or defending themselves. Men, on the other hand, are less likely to be affected by such situations. Women are often traumatised by social accusations, as they are socialised to view things negatively, whereas men are not affected as much...” Pt09

Individuals who have endured trauma, particularly those who are subject to structural violence, may grapple with persistent stress as a result of their circumstances. This may engender sensations of betrayal and alienation, with some victims accusing others of failing to provide them with adequate support. As one interviewee noted:

"You feel as if you're losing your mind, and no one cares or even believes you, because you're expected to be strong and fierce. You must act as if nothing can affect you, as any sign of weakness would lead to your downfall. You cannot even show weakness to your closest companions, for you are a leader at all times...." Pt10

"The negative consequences of disappointing friends and family who feel they have wasted money and resources on you can lead to them treating you like a loser and regretting their investment. This has made access to social events and opportunities more limited, leaving me without a support system to turn to." Pt13

Usually, individuals are typically capable of coping with their emotions and incorporating their experiences into the optimal arousal range of the window of tolerance. However, if they do not receive enough comfort or containment after a threat has subsided, a traumatic injury may result, as the traumatised individual may not adequately process their experiences, thereby reducing their capacity to remain within the window of tolerance. Trauma can further cause individuals to spend an excessive amount of time in a state of either hypo- or hyperarousal, which can lead to the activation of triggers and a heightened sense of danger in non-threatening situations.

“After hearing the outcome of the presidential election, despite winning my seat, I retreated to the bathroom and was unable to leave. I spent the entire day and night sitting on the floor, immobile, as the pain was too much to bear. My body became numb, and it felt as though the burden of everything that had occurred during the election process had finally become too heavy for me to handle...” Pt15

Trauma can have a considerable impact on an individual's capacity to regulate their emotions and make sound decisions. This may result in impulsive decision-making, stress mismanagement, and reduced empathy and understanding. It is therefore not surprising that trauma-affected leaders may demonstrate alterations in their leadership style, including increased defensiveness, disregard, or bullying.

“Some female members of parliament threatened to physically assault me because I chose to vote against the political party's position. Despite my belief that voting for the bill was the right decision, the repercussions were severe, particularly for the female members. My colleagues and friends also turned against me, calling me a traitor. It was a difficult situation, and I had to summon all my strength to remain standing and continue walking into parliament, surrounded by hostile individuals...” Pt13

Moreover, trauma can impede a leader's ability to communicate and collaborate with team members, resulting in decreased confidence and support from followers. Therefore, leaders need to confront their past experiences of trauma to comprehend how it may impact their decision-making processes, leadership approach, and general effectiveness in their leadership roles.

“We are constantly being frustrated in parliament, as there are deliberate efforts to make our lives difficult because we do not belong to their political party. For me, I am now only going through the motions, feeling dejected and demotivated. Even if they want to commit heinous acts such as raping children, I would not speak up, and choose to watch them do as they please. I am emotionally spent and tired.” Pt12

This study provides insight into the long-term emotional damage that political leaders may endure as a result of both the physical and structural violence they confront in their political roles. Numerous women leaders are subject to substantial levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout due to the relentless scrutiny, criticism, and harassment they face. This sustained trauma not only impacts their mental and emotional health but can also impede their capacity to fulfil their leadership obligations efficiently.

“.....one member was hospitalised twice for trying to take their own lives during two consecutive nominations processes when they realised their name was too far down in the nomination list and they might not qualify to get in even though the party had made promises that they would get the post.” Pt15

“..... There was nothing more for me to live for, I felt empty and isolated. I was supported with the expectation that I would deliver by those closest to me who seemed to have turned on me. The party system was unfair. People told me it was the price of doing politics, however even though I was connected, and I raised a lot of funds for the party, I still did not get the position.” Pt11

Accordingly, it is crucial for leaders who have experienced trauma to examine their own experiences and understand the potential consequences of their leadership and judgment-making. This self-examination enables leaders to identify moments of provocation or internal biases, enabling them to make more deliberate and aware decisions that foster inclusivity, fairness, and a positive work environment. Besides, addressing trauma also cultivates resilience and develops coping mechanisms that empower leaders to confront challenges with greater clarity and poise Holden and Bruce (2024) emphasise the importance of understanding trauma in developing effective leadership strategies. Political parties must prioritise the psychological welfare of their leaders by providing support mechanisms, such as counselling services and mentorship schemes, to tackle the emotional challenges they confront. These support mechanisms create safe environments in which leaders can freely express their ideas and opinions through constructive discussion without fear of repercussions.

This research also highlights the necessity for political parties and governmental agencies to implement policies and mechanisms to prevent and address instances of structural violence. These policies should comprise clear guidelines for reporting and addressing instances of abuse, threats, and violence, as well as providing support and protection for targeted women leaders. Beyond that, political parties should recognise the importance of providing adequate support to political leaders to prevent burnout and promote their well-being. This can be achieved through policies that prioritise mental health services and resources, offer support for self-care, and provide mechanisms for reporting and addressing instances of violence and abuse.

5.5 FEMALE MISOGYNY, THE QUEEN BEE SYNDROME AND THE SOLIDARITY BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN LEADERS

In response to the inquiry regarding the most probable obstacle to women's involvement in political leadership within various political parties, the prevailing view, at 72.7%, attributed it to the political party system. Furthermore, a significant proportion, 72.7%, believed that political party policies were also likely to impede women's participation. The remaining factors, including leadership and patronage,

stood at 69.4% and 67.4%, respectively, and other women were also considered a potential deterrent by 61% of respondents. See Table 5.2 below.

Party	Kenya Coalition (N=39)	Kwanza Azimio Coalition (N=49)	p-value	Overall (N=88)
Party system			0.147	
Not likely	4 (10.3%)	14 (28.6%)	Fisher's	18 (20.5%)
Least likely	2 (5.1%)	4 (8.2%)		6 (6.8%)
Likely	29 (74.4%)	27 (55.1%)		56 (63.6%)
Most likely	4 (10.3%)	4 (8.2%)		8 (9.1%)
Party leadership			0.045	
Not likely	5 (12.8%)	17 (34.7%)	Fisher's	22 (25.0%)
Least likely	2 (5.1%)	3 (6.1%)		5 (5.7%)
Likely	25 (64.1%)	18 (36.7%)		43 (48.9%)
Most likely	7 (17.9%)	11 (22.4%)		18 (20.5%)
Party policies			0.830	
Not likely	9 (23.1%)	11 (22.4%)	Fisher's	20 (22.7%)
Least likely	2 (5.1%)	2 (4.1%)		4 (4.5%)
Likely	20 (51.3%)	29 (59.2%)		49 (55.7%)
Most likely	8 (20.5%)	7 (14.3%)		15 (17.0%)

Party	Kenya Coalition (N=39)	Kwanza	Azimio Coalition (N=49)	p-value	Overall (N=88)
Patronage				0.198	
Not likely	7 (17.9%)		16 (32.7%)	Fisher's	23 (26.1%)
Least likely	1 (2.6%)		3 (6.1%)		4 (4.5%)
Likely	17 (43.6%)		12 (24.5%)		29 (33.0%)
Most likely	14 (35.9%)		18 (36.7%)		32 (36.4%)
Other women				0.726	
Not likely	6 (15.4%)		11 (22.4%)	Chisq.	17 (19.3%)
Least likely	9 (23.1%)		8 (16.3%)		17 (19.3%)
Likely	12 (30.8%)		17 (34.7%)		29 (33.0%)
Most likely	12 (30.8%)		13 (26.5%)		25 (28.4%)

Table 5. 2: Party Policies, Systems, leadership and Patronage.

| % and p-values based on non-missing cases | * parametric p-value

5.5.1 QUEEN BEE VS SOLIDARITY BEHAVIOUR AMONGST LEADERS

A study on the Queen Bee behaviour indicates that it is a consequence of the discrimination and social identity threats experienced by women in leadership positions in male-dominated work environments (Mavin 2008). This response is not necessarily feminine but rather a common pattern of self-dissociation observed in other marginalised groups as well. (Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers 2016; Naomi 2018) Posits that social identity threats can be mitigated through behaviours that enhance the group's status or by psychologically distancing oneself from the group, which

negatively impacts identity and leads to attempts to improve personal outcomes by adjusting one's behaviour.

On the contrary, the promotion of solidarity behaviour is considered a crucial element in fostering social transformation, as it entails women collaborating in pursuit of common objectives and goals, with a focus on gender consciousness and solidarity. This leads to women functioning as catalysts for change at both individual and collective levels (Korbaik and Abbondanza 2004; Mavin 2006). The basis of solidarity behaviour rests on the premise that minority groups will form alliances and establish support networks that influence the culture of the larger community. This enhances the prospects of success and expansion for members of minority groups, with senior female leaders constructing networks that provide mentorship, role modelling, and support for other women.

“For more than two decades, I have been honoured to serve in elective politics. My election to public office was made possible by the unwavering support of women, who have consistently backed me throughout my career. This support allowed me to rise to national prominence and assume leadership positions of great importance. The collective weight and influence of women as a constituency provided me with a solid foundation to seek and secure top national seats.” Pt14

Nevertheless, the behaviour of solidarity among women in leadership positions is not always consistent, as some researchers suggest that women in senior positions may distance themselves from other women to succeed in male-dominated environments (Gini 2001; Bryans and Mavin 2003; Mavin 2006). This perspective highlights the complex dynamics of solidarity behaviour and the existence of the "queen bee" phenomenon. These findings reveal the intricate and often contradictory nature of solidarity behaviour among women leaders and the queen bee phenomenon.

"During my election campaigns, I did not receive support or endorsement from any women's organisations. However, after I was elected, I was frequently invited to programs and events related to women's rights and was referred to as a "woman leader." This made me feel uneasy as I did not want to be perceived as a leader specifically for women. It was the men who largely contributed to my success as a political leader. They were the ones who helped me gain my seat." Pt13

While the notion of female solidarity in leadership positions is generally well-received, it remains a complex issue. Despite the widespread assumption that women leaders naturally support and collaborate to promote gender equality, some may display

"queen bee" behaviour. This behaviour tends to involve distancing oneself from other women to succeed in male-dominated environments, which contradicts the idea of female solidarity (Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers 2016).

".. Women now wish to claim ownership of me, they attempt to obstruct my vehicle while I drive to work. However, I must clarify that I am not a female leader, but rather a leader for the entire county. Although I was elected by women too, my position was not specifically designed for them, and they played a minimal role in my acquisition of this seat. In fact, for the most part, they opposed my candidacy in favour of male candidates that seemed to wield more power than I did." Pt10

These study findings further indicate that both male and female participants have acknowledged that the trauma experienced by women due to structural violence in the political landscape can result in the "queen bee" syndrome. This means senior women establish gendered hierarchies and discrimination by distancing themselves from other women. Participant's narrative fits into what Mavin (2008) describes as the 'best enemy' of women. She now finds resonance among men and as a result, her fellow ladies view her as an extension of the patriarchy. Against this, it is pertinent to highlight that the term Queen Bee is bestowed upon individuals, and they would not view themselves as such. This behaviour frequently stems from the structural violence that female leaders confront within political parties, where their gender is perceived as an obstacle rather than a benefit for career advancement.

"...from the time I won the elections, I faced a significant, organised effort to undermine me from both men and women. The male leaders were mainly influential politicians and local leaders who united in their mission and utilised their resources to sway the entire community and force me to resign from my position, they even had a public meeting where they tried to install my deputy into my position illegally." Pt11

"The male leaders within the community asserted that a woman was not competent to hold a leadership position over men, asserting that she lacked the necessary abilities and expertise, and was merely attempting to exert control over the men. Women also joined in the criticism, mocking me and making insulting comments about my character and leadership capabilities, making the already tense situation worse. These constant assaults left me feeling helpless and without any recourse" Pt09.

This perpetuation of the "queen bee" syndrome reinforces gendered hierarchies and hinders collective efforts towards gender equality within political parties. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the complexities and contradictions surrounding female solidarity

in leadership roles and to address the structural violence that contributes to the "queen bee" syndrome.

"I have found my most formidable adversaries in parliament to be women. Despite public support, there was a great deal of infighting among us when the cameras were off. Even those who were once close to me and knew my intentions turned against me in public. The double-faced nature of the female members can be extremely disheartening, especially when those whom you believed to be friends join in." Pt12

Conversely, women who occupy top leadership positions are often expected to work diligently and be assertive to succeed, which may make them appear inaccessible and obstruct the advancement of other female leaders. This perspective perpetuates the inconsistency between leadership and gender roles without taking into account the gendered context in which women in leadership positions operate (Mavin 2006). Terms such as 'being more male than men', 'pulling up the ladder' and 'drawbridge' are used to characterise women in top leadership positions who are labelled "queen bees". In the queen bee phenomenon (QBP), women who achieve success in male-dominated settings may impede the progress of their female subordinates (Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers 2016); (Arvate, Galilea and Todescat 2018).

The research findings highlight the urgent need for interventions and systems that challenge gender stereotypes and foster collaboration and mutual support among female leaders within political parties. In essence, this study suggests that the 'queen bee' phenomenon is a result of the unresolved trauma that female leaders experience due to the pervasive structural violence in the political sphere. To address the challenge of the queen bee phenomenon and promote greater unity among female leaders, it is necessary to confront threats to social identity, alleviate the pressures stemming from gender bias and discrimination within political parties, and provide support and empowerment to female leaders.

These findings further indicate that the queen bee phenomenon is not universally applicable to all female leaders but rather a response to unhealed trauma resulting from the challenges faced in the political arena. To combat the queen bee phenomenon and foster greater solidarity among female leaders in political parties, it is essential to address the trauma that leaders experience rather than normalising it as a means of engaging in politics and to provide support for female leaders within

political parties, which is contingent upon various factors such as societal norms, biased working conditions, and the scarcity of female role models in leadership positions. (Staines *et al.* 1973).

5.5.2 FEMALE MISOGYNY

Women who hold leadership positions frequently encounter challenges stemming from gender-related complexities and the conflicting societal expectations placed upon them. These disparities can significantly influence how women in leadership roles are perceived by others and the expectations held by the broader women's community (Mavin 2006). In addition, Mavin 2006 explores the concept of female misogyny in this context. Hate (2005) notes that some women in senior leadership positions view colluding with other women against men as unmodern.

“Women are often anticipated to criticise or undermine fellow female leaders when the party leaders consider that any of the female leaders have not followed the party line. This expectation may not consistently be explicitly stated, but women might infer that they are required to exhibit their loyalty to the party and its leader by pointing out and reproaching any woman who is perceived as not backing the party's stance. In my situation, this has persisted for an excessive amount of time, and I have become the object of daily media and social attacks from these women. It appears to be a meticulously organised and choreographed campaign, as these women do not even mention my male counterparts; they solely focus on me, even though others who are male also voted against the party position.” Pt12

Although men may not possess the same level of self-awareness as women, they often form successful alliances, even when they do not always agree or view each other as equals. It is therefore essential to consider the societal, cultural, and environmental context in which women operate, as institutions such as political parties frequently promote masculine worldviews, leading to conflicts with women's feminine worldviews (Cheng, 1996; Maier, 1999; Mavin 2006).

The prevalence of women adopting masculine traits in leadership positions is indicative of the system's current perception and teaching of leadership. This can suppress feminine qualities and lead to a disconnect between women leaders and those who struggle to identify with them. Conventional gender norms often expect women in leadership positions to challenge them by exhibiting more masculine leadership behaviours, thereby creating a conflict between their expected female

gender role and their leadership role. Consequently, women in top leadership positions may have more male colleagues than female and may feel compelled to adopt similar styles to fit in with their male counterparts. This can further exacerbate the divide between women in leadership positions and other women, as observed from the following remarks by a respondent in the study:

"My fellow women leaders who had supported me throughout were quick to turn against me, basing their actions on assumptions and banding together in supposed support of party positions. In contrast, my male counterparts showed me the benefit of the doubt. The party leader was fair and lenient, listening to my side of the story and imposing a less severe punishment than my male colleagues received. This only further incensed the women, who were infuriated that the male leaders would consider my perspective." Pt12

'...One of my closest colleagues even threatened me with physical violence. As a result, I found myself increasingly isolated from the women and spent more time with the male leaders." Pt13

Promoting women's rights is widely recognised as a strategic goal, yet women who prioritise this issue and hold high-ranking positions are often labelled as feminists and excluded from the male-dominated political systems. This negative perception of feminism causes many female leaders to reject the label and distance themselves from it, ultimately perpetuating the "queen bee" designation, which accuses women in leadership positions of not supporting each other. In addition, female misogyny, such as body shaming by women and accusing women by women of using their sexuality to gain power, is prevalent in the workplace. Some of the respondent's views on the issue are as follows:

"Women leaders were often accused by other women of using sexual favours to secure promotions within the party. These accusations raise doubts about whether women could achieve success solely based on their merit." Pt12

"Due to the transactional nature of Kenyan politics, women, especially younger ones, have discovered that they can employ similar tactics. In the political sphere, some younger women even leverage sex in a purely transactional manner to advance their careers." Pt15

When women in high-ranking positions experience this form of misogyny, it is more harmful than when they face misogyny from men, as it creates hostility and disappointment in their female colleagues. This creates a double standard of opposition towards women's leadership, not only from men but also from women who feel let down by their female leaders. People often perceive these high-ranking women as lacking support for other women and failing to use their positions to assist and

empower them. As a result, female misogyny undermines the concepts of solidarity and sisterhood, further widening the divide between women in leadership positions (Mavin 2006).

"I do not subscribe to the concept of women's rights. I believe that it is not appropriate for women to segregate themselves and advocate solely for their rights. Rather, it is essential to concentrate on universal human rights. I am unable to collaborate with the feminist movement since my position is not confined to serving only women..." Pt13

"As the individual responsible for guaranteeing that the party nominations proceeded without a hitch, I was contacted by one of the most influential prominent women, who instructed me to withhold a certificate from one of the female candidates who had emerged victorious in the party primaries. However, I declined to comply and instead awarded the certificate to the rightful winner. As a result, this prominent woman now considers me an adversary and has falsely alleged that I have engaged in unethical behaviour, leading to her joining efforts with other male leaders to oust me from my position." Pt09

Institutional structures that are differentiated by gender, such as political parties, can perpetuate misogynistic attitudes and behaviours towards women. Even when there are female leaders in high positions, males may feel uncomfortable or engage in inappropriate behaviour due to their internalised belief in a male-dominated hierarchy. The blending of power and sexuality can create confusion and anxiety when interacting with female leaders. Women in leadership roles often compete with each other based on appearance, age, and professional connections, which can lead to exclusionary and undermining behaviours. This phenomenon can be seen as a form of female misogyny and can harm the relationships among women within political parties (Mavin 2006).

"The men in the community wield significant influence and authority, which they employed to organise a campaign against me. Notably, even women leaders who had previously shown support for me were swayed by the men's influence and joined the opposition." Pt06

"The female leaders in my region collectively stated that their opposition towards me was not rooted in my gender, but rather in my character. They aligned themselves with their male counterparts in questioning my competence and asserted that they would be better suited for leadership, calling for my position to be taken from me and given to one of them. Individuals who had previously been friendly towards me had now turned hostile and were actively working against me." Pt11

Although there is limited research on the potential for women leaders to unintentionally contribute to the marginalisation of other women through the perpetuation of gendered structures and norms, further investigation is necessary to understand the impact of negative intra-gender relations on women leaders in the context of structural violence.

The idea that women ought to exhibit solidarity and support one another is a widely held tenet in the realm of female political leadership. However, practical application does not always realise this ideal. Sometimes, people label women as "queen bees" or even "evil stepmothers" if they don't meet other women's expectations (Arvate, Galilea and Todescat 2018). Evidence highlights that some women face resistance and opposition from their counterparts. Participants 7 and 13 reveal how their position in the parliament was misconstrued as meant to serve only women.

"Although I have received assistance from male allies that contributed to my current position, I am now confronted with opposition from women who contend that I am not a women's leader and do not champion women's issues. And some individuals argue that my seat was granted through affirmative action and that I should not seek an additional term." Pt07

"Despite being elected as a leader for both men and women, some individuals mistakenly believed that I should only serve women due to my gender. As a result, some women have reported feeling disconnected from me because I haven't prioritised women's issues exclusively. However, I must acknowledge that it was mainly men who supported me in securing this position, and therefore, I must work to address their concerns as well". Pt13

Women are not only passive recipients of violence, but they can also act as perpetrators of violence against politically active women. While men generally benefit the most from patriarchy, both men and women may engage in violence. Some women may use violence strategically or comply with demands for sexual favours to advance their political careers. It is crucial to recognise these behaviours as a response to an environment shaped by male power, leadership, and harmful masculinities. Participants 12 and 15 brought to attention one of the issues discussed in Chapter 3, the aspect of masculine language veiled in patriarchal abuse. The use of vulgar language, mostly by men, to disparage women is what is referred to as male language.

"In the course of political campaigns, my female opponent would employ male language to criticise me, her female rival. In these situations, she would be favoured by her male counterparts as she employed a language that resonated with them, allowing them to relate to her sexist insults aimed at me.

This approach also delighted the public, as the jokes and insults received a positive response from the crowd.” Pt12

“My opponent in the race for the women's representative seat exploited a negative cultural practice by querying the crowd about how an unmarried woman from this village could be permitted to win the seat over a married and established candidate. She emphasised that the seat is designated for a "woman" representative, not a "girl" representative, and therefore should only be open to married women. According to her, unmarried women are not true women and are not entitled to a women's representative seat. Pt15

These findings problematise the notion that women are merely passive recipients of violence and instead reveal the complex interplay between male power and negative masculinity in leadership. Some female leaders in top leadership positions within party coalitions exhibit “regal leadership” qualities, promoting gender equality and displaying benevolent behaviour towards their colleagues. (Arvate *et al.* 2018; NDI 2021). Regarding this position, another respondent shared the experience of a former female leader in the country.

"Throughout her tenure in parliament, in national government and the county government, she played an instrumental role in empowering and elevating several women to positions of political leadership. She provided them with guidance on how to navigate the complexities of party structures and one of these women has since progressed to become one of the first female governors. Although the party has always been male-dominated, with no woman in the main leadership coalition, she was able to secure a position in it. Even though she primarily worked with women, she acknowledged that their support was crucial to her success. She credited her leadership to the unwavering support of women." Pt02

The research findings imply that fostering gender equality and empowering female leaders entails more than merely elevating a few women to positions of authority. Instead, it involves creating institutional environments that grant female leaders the necessary power and autonomy to support other women. It is essential to acknowledge that women in the political sphere may engage in sexist behaviour and hold inconsistent views on gender. On that account, a comprehensive approach is required to combat structural violence against women leaders within political parties, particularly in African political parties. This approach should encompass addressing gender inequality in the workplace, eliminating token systems that restrict women's opportunities, reducing threats to social identity, and tackling negative stereotypes and biases that impede women's advancement.

5.6 CRITICAL ACTS, CRITICAL MASS AND REPRESENTATION

The notion of “critical mass” has been proposed as an explanation for the lack of consistent advocacy for women's interests by women in political positions. Proponents of this perspective contend that until women constitute a substantial minority rather than merely a small number of token representatives, they are unlikely to exert a significant influence on political outcomes (Nzomo 2013). The argument is that when women collaborate to advocate for policies benefiting women, they are more likely to be effective and influential.

“Efforts have been made to unite women, but these endeavours have been impeded by the untrustworthiness of these women's loyalties. Frequently, individuals are inclined to shift their allegiance to the group that they believe will provide them with the most advantages, such as obtaining party tickets for different positions or nominations”. Pt10

However, not all researchers share this viewpoint. Some contend that an increase in the number of female legislators decreases the probability of individual women leaders working on behalf of the collective interests of women (Carroll 2001; Crowley 2004). They further suggest that when women form a smaller minority, they are more likely to make a greater impact.

According to Kanter, (1977) and Dahlerup, (1988), as the number of minority group members increases, they may initially form alliances but may later experience token isolation and be less likely to form a coalition as they become differentiated as individuals. However, by breaking free from role entrapment and performance pressure, individuals may pursue roles that challenge traditional gender stereotypes. This is consistent with the observation below.

“The women leaders tend to be tokens for the public relations of the parties. They are constantly reminded where their allegiance must lie, hence hindering them from advocating for real policy change within the party. Any agenda-setting by women becomes secondary. They don't have influence but are a rubber stamp on everything the male party leaders decide; otherwise, the consequence is dire.” Pt09

“Male leaders from the same party may forge stronger bonds than their female counterparts after an election.” Pt01

In their pursuit of re-election, female candidates may frequently opt to collaborate with male leaders whom they perceive as capable of bolstering their chances of success

rather than concentrating on the concerns of women. Subsequently, their priorities as elected officials may not consistently coincide with the needs of women; instead, they may be influenced by the objectives of their political party and its leadership.

"Frequently, proposals that promote women's issues are not successful in parliament due to a lack of quorum, particularly when many female members are abroad for parliamentary travel. This appears to be a deliberate strategy to disrupt the consideration of these proposals, making it difficult for women to pass them." Pt15

"In order to garner support from their party's leadership, some women negatively employ the women's agenda, distorting information provided by their opponents and falsely accusing other leaders of insulting women and disseminating propaganda. They adopt the mindset that the end justifies the means and join the men in misusing the women's cause. Once these women are elected and the critical mass is achieved, they tend not to contribute significantly to the advancement of the women's agenda." Pt02

It may be true that women who engage in politics could find themselves becoming callous and detached from their constituents. This is primarily because they may feel compelled to adopt a particular image to thrive in a male-dominated environment. This can also be understood using the lenses of the "Queen Bee" phenomenon. The following individuals also voiced similar sentiments.

"Some women within the women's movement have criticised me, claiming that I have not sufficiently advanced the cause of women. Despite this, I have received support from men who have helped me attain my current position. I firmly believe that we should focus on human rights rather than separating people based on gender." Pt11

"For 20 years, I have been involved in politics and the women in my constituency have played a crucial role in my success. Through their support, I have been able to secure top political positions and negotiate better seats at the table within male-dominated political coalitions." PT08

Equity institutions, such as women's quotas and equality legislation are essential for altering the position of the minority and initiating further changes. The ability of the minority to mobilise resources is crucial, even when their numbers are small, as it allows them to improve their situation and exert influence (Kanter, 1997; Dahlerup, 1988).

"I was appointed to a significant position in parliament, but when I decided to leave the coalition and join a different one, I faced criticism and calls for my resignation from some of my female colleagues, who were at the forefront of the condemnation. In contrast, the majority of my male colleagues remained friendly and did not take sides in the matter." Pt11

"Women vocally expressed their opinions both within and beyond the parliamentary walls, taking advantage of the exceptional chance they had to oust another woman, while the men passively watched, viewing it as a female-orientated matter." Pt08

"There are certain female leaders who are driven and tend to criticise women who have lost the support of their political party, intending to be acknowledged and rewarded by their party leaders for their steadfast loyalty." Pt01

The study further observed that women face obstacles in forming coalitions with one another due to performance pressure and token isolation. Besides, party identities undermine the potential for coalitions by downplaying the distinctions among women, regardless of their numbers, thereby weakening their ability to unite. However, the increasing number of women in politics has also spurred a heightened awareness of feminism among women politicians, which may signify a pivotal moment in which women achieve a critical mass and gain greater influence (Kanter 1977). Participants observed that:

"During the general elections, we, as women, worked together to promote the candidacy of a female candidate for the position of deputy president within one of the major political alliances. Our collective efforts were successful, and the alliance ultimately selected one of us from a pool of female contenders for the role." Pt15

"Women assert that they jointly advocate for the party leadership to promote other women to high-ranking positions. However, when these women face challenges, they display hostility and support the male party leader instead." Pt10

"In one case, a female leader who was nominated faced opposition from other female leaders within her party, who demanded her resignation. Meanwhile, the male members remained silent on the issue, concentrating on employing party procedures to remove her from her position since they largely control the party." Pt14

Introducing a token woman between warring parties often results in an escalation of the conflict. This occurs because the woman then becomes a target of insults for one of the parties, much like how men are admonished to "man up" in situations involving political disagreement or when someone is trying to convey that they should not be seen as weak leaders.

"The male leaders within the coalition disagreed about the party's top leadership and decided to appoint me as an interim leader during the dispute. This move was intended to provoke the sitting party leader, but I was not involved in important decision-making and was often pushed aside during press briefings and other events. It took me some time to realise that I was

just being used to angering the sitting party leader and that my position was merely symbolic." Pt06

"Amid a heated political disagreement, a male leader openly identified several individuals who were involved, specifically using their names. However, he discredited the female leaders by derogatorily referring to them as "side chicks," a derogatory term for women. This disrespectful behaviour was met with laughter and applause from the audience, demonstrating the normalisation of such behaviour towards female leaders." Pt12

The critical mass theory has two opposing perspectives regarding the decisive influence of the number of women in an institution on their behaviour. One perspective suggests that incremental change is the sole result of an increase in the number of women, while the other perspective asserts that a greater focus on women's issues arises with a rise in the number of women in the institution. The first process has slow results. Both perspectives seem to advocate for the idea that gender disparities can be resolved through a non-contentious, unchallenged process, with minimal resistance from male counterparts. Other studies have shown that when there is a higher female representation in decision-making bodies, there is a corresponding increase in the enactment of legislation concerning women's issues (Saint-Germain, 1989; Bratton 2005).

Critics such as Dahlerup (1988) and Kanter (1977) have argued that even when the representation of women in legislative bodies reaches significant levels (between 10% and 40%), there is a dearth of policy changes related to women's issues. They attribute this lack of progress to the obstacles and limitations faced by women leaders, such as legislative inexperience, political party affiliation, institutional norms, and external political norms. Despite these challenges, these critics continue to endorse the arguments put forth regarding the potential for achieving critical mass through diversity among women (Dahlerup (1988) and Kanter (1977)).

"The inadequacy of a system to deal with violence within the party has led to its acceptance as normal, making victims hesitant to seek help. Also reporting violence is frequently regarded as a sign of vulnerability, and grievances are frequently brushed off as an ordinary part of political operations." Pt06

"Healing from trauma is essential for political individuals who have experienced election loss or any form of structural violence. It is vital to have a properly structured and organised approach to trauma healing." Pt10

"The insufficient representation of women in key positions within political parties is often attributed to their limited understanding of party systems, as

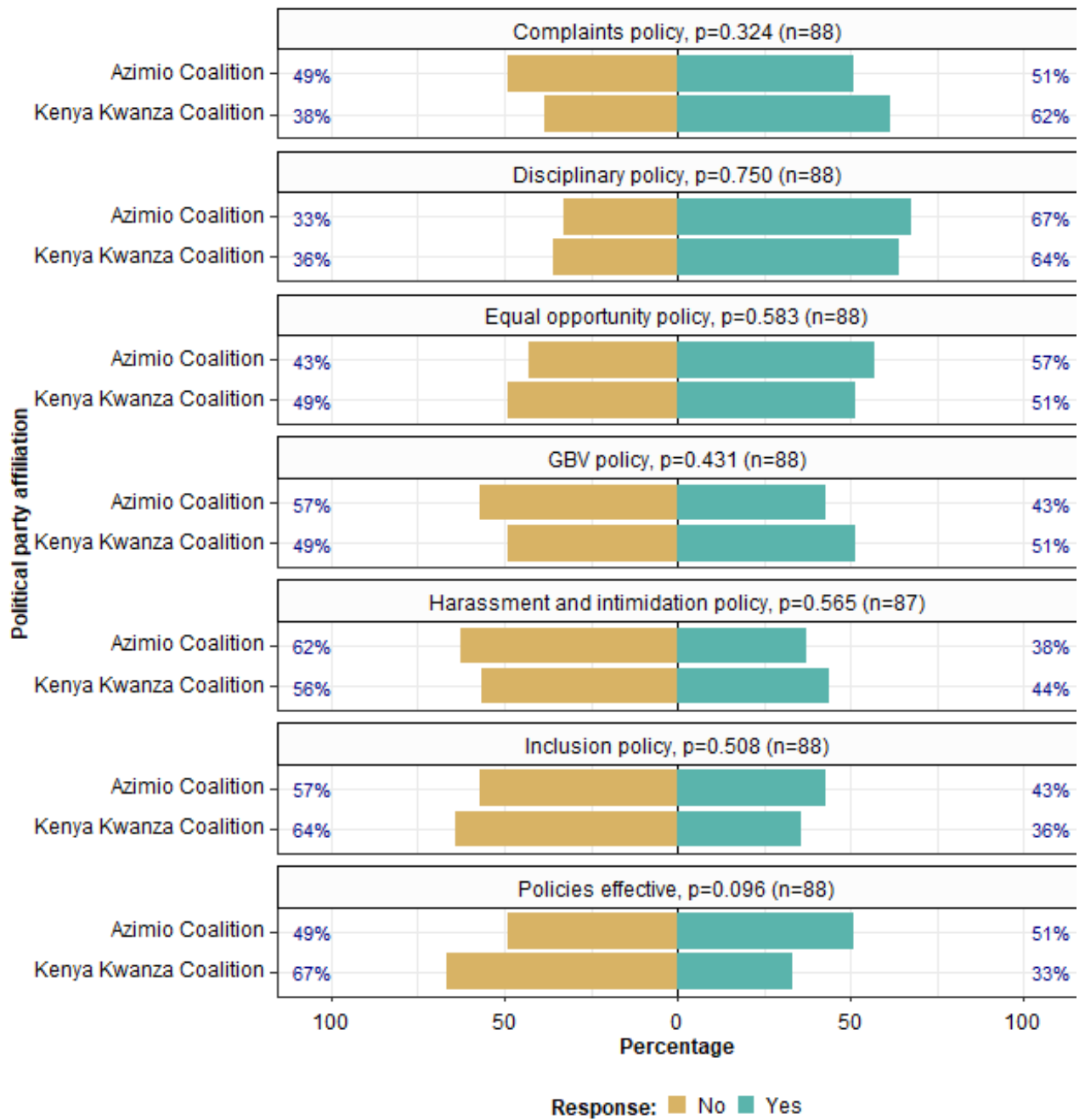
well as the societal oppression they endure. Women also frequently experience barriers and violence within these parties, such as being hindered from taking part or voicing their opinions during gatherings.” Pt14)

This study observed that mentorship, especially from women who have experienced trauma themselves, can significantly enhance trauma prevention and recovery. The support and guidance provided by these mentors can be immensely beneficial for younger individuals as they navigate their paths. It is therefore essential to regard setbacks and challenges as opportunities for growth and the development of resilience. Also, it is equally important to surround oneself with individuals who are trustworthy, empowering, and whose actions align with your values. Moreover, speaking therapy can be a valuable instrument in the healing and processing of trauma.

5.7 EXISTING INTERVENTION MODELS AGAINST STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES IN NAIROBI

56.8% of the respondents held the view that the party's policies were ineffective. Participants, at 65.9% and 55.7%, respectively, were well-informed about both the disciplinary policy and the complaint policy. However, 59.8% of the respondents were not familiar with the harassment and intimidation policy within their respective political parties. A significant proportion of respondents, totalling 60.2%, were also not aware of the inclusive policy within political party coalitions, and 53.4% were unfamiliar with the gender-based violence policy within their political parties. Table 5.3 below presents the data.

A significant proportion of those interviewed did not believe that the existing measures were adequate for addressing structural violence within political parties. Particularly, 62.5% deemed these measures ineffective, and 54.5% found them inaccessible. 60.9% considered these measures to be lacking in user-friendliness while 60.2% found them to be insufficiently inclusive and effective. Notably, when the provision of trauma support by political parties was queried, 87.5% reported being unaware of any such support or policies.



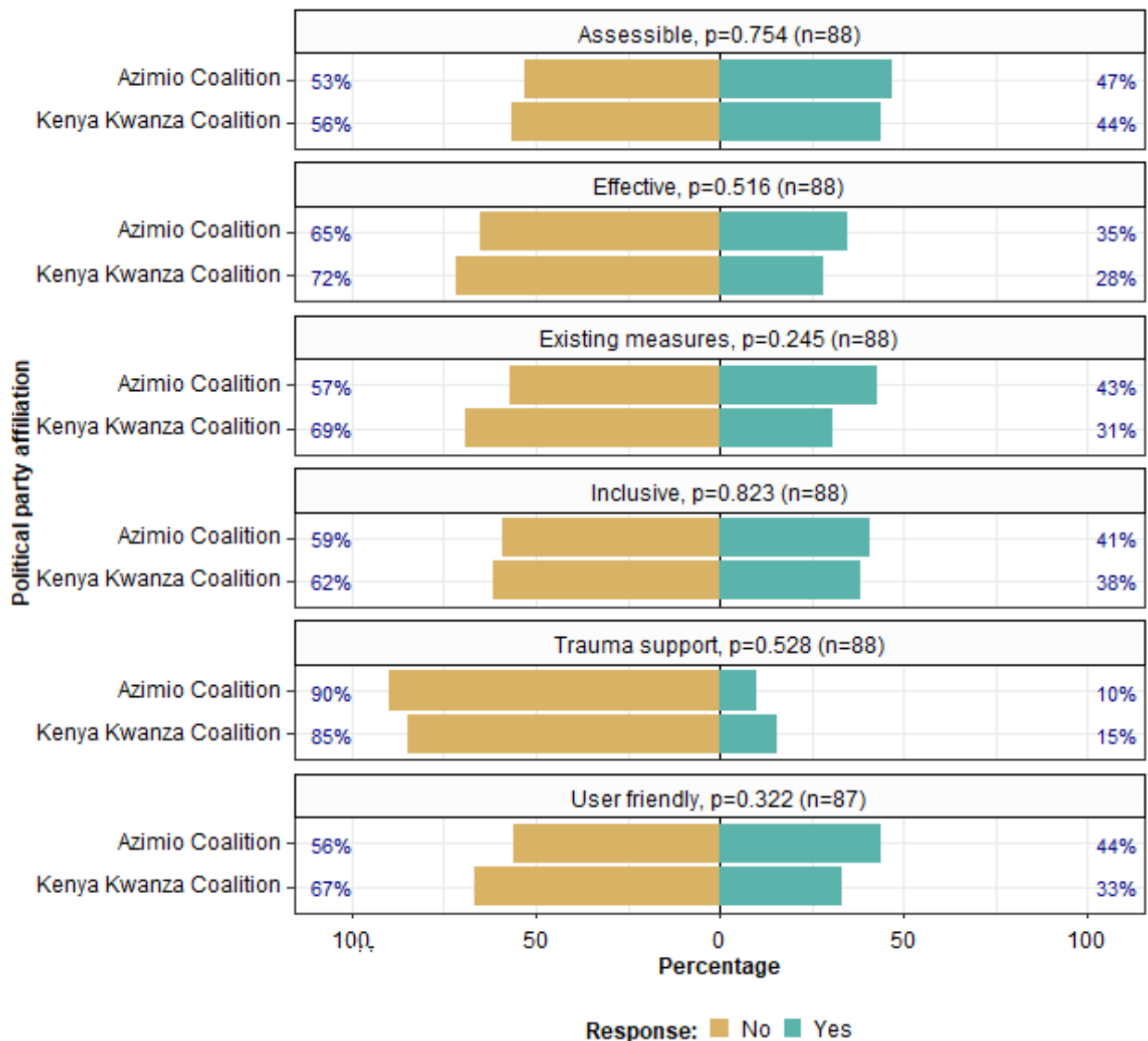


Figure 5. 2: Political Party Affiliation

The prevailing viewpoint typically links compliance to the numerical strength of a particular political party or ideology rather than the individual contributions of its members. This perspective assumes that any deviation from a party's stance constitutes failure or loss for that group. This study has revealed that the organisation of political parties in Kenya can impede women's involvement in political decision-making. Parties frequently prioritise women's support over addressing their marginalised status within the party. The study also found that political parties are centred around their male leaders and networks, which can be challenging for women

to access. As a result, women's presence within the parties may not lead to meaningful influence.

Party	Kenya Coalition (N=39)	Kwanza	Azimio Coalition (N=49)	p-value	Overall (N=88)
Existing measures				0.245	
No	27 (69.2%)		28 (57.1%)	Chisq.	55 (62.5%)
Yes	12 (30.8%)		21 (42.9%)		33 (37.5%)
Assessable				0.754	
No	22 (56.4%)		26 (53.1%)	Chisq.	48 (54.5%)
Yes	17 (43.6%)		23 (46.9%)		40 (45.5%)
User friendly				0.322	
No	26 (66.7%)		27 (56.3%)	Chisq.	53 (60.9%)
Yes	13 (33.3%)		21 (43.8%)		34 (39.1%)
Inclusive				0.823	
No	24 (61.5%)		29 (59.2%)	Chisq.	53 (60.2%)
Yes	15 (38.5%)		20 (40.8%)		35 (39.8%)
Effective				0.516	
No	28 (71.8%)		32 (65.3%)	Chisq.	60 (68.2%)
Yes	11 (28.2%)		17 (34.7%)		28 (31.8%)
Trauma support				0.528	
No	33 (84.6%)		44 (89.8%)	Fisher's	77 (87.5%)
Yes	6 (15.4%)		5 (10.2%)		11 (12.5%)

Table 5. 3: Existing measures and their effectiveness.

| % and p-values based on non-missing cases | * parametric p-value

The experience of the former President of Malawi, Joyce Banda, illustrates the use of tokenism in politics towards women. She recounts how the incumbent president appointed her as his running mate, marginalising her in favour of his brother. Banda's role was primarily to mobilise the women's vote for the party. When the president died, attempts were made to nullify her position in court, despite the constitution clearly stating that the vice president should assume the presidency. The ruling political party expelled her, leaving her without party support. Despite these challenges, Banda served as President of Malawi, but her experience supports the urgency of addressing the structural violence that impedes women's full participation in political competition.

I observed that women express dissatisfaction with the insufficient efforts being made to combat structural violence within political parties than men.

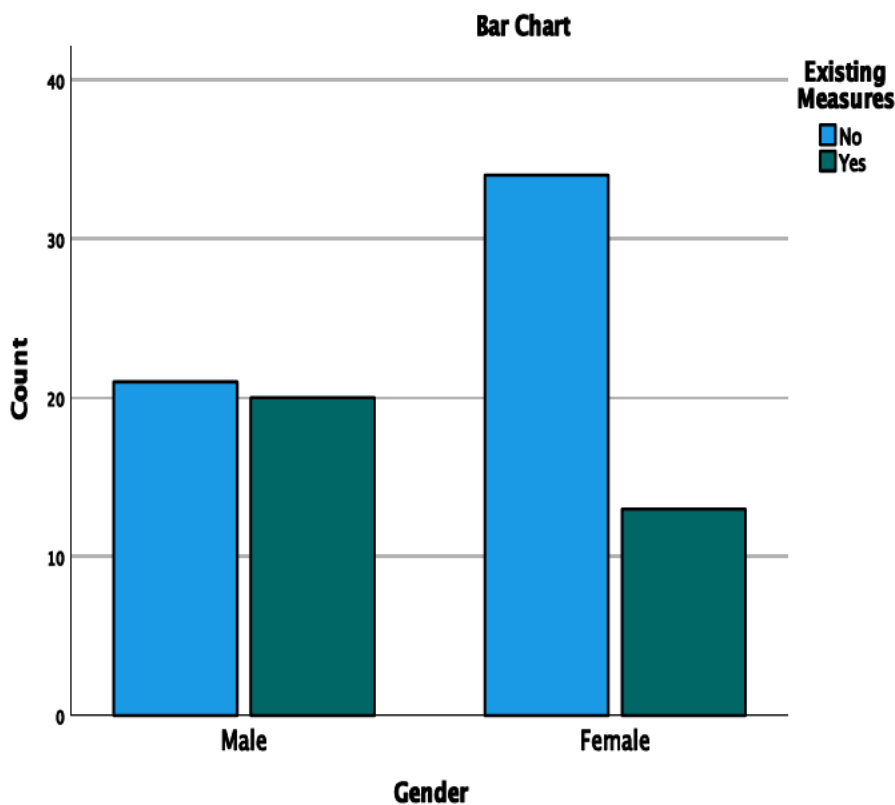


Figure 5. 3: Awareness of Existing Measures

In the past, the absence of a legal framework to safeguard women in Kenya has impeded efforts to mitigate the pernicious consequences of structural violence.

However, the 2010 constitution, which includes a provision for a gender affirmative action rule, suggests a gradual implementation of progressive measures. Although affirmative action law has prompted political parties to embrace women's leadership, structural exclusion in political institutions persists, discriminating against them both subtly and overtly. Hence, it is crucial to address these factors and ensure a more substantive integration of women within political institutions to empower them to have a more positive and assertive impact.

It is apparent from the graph below that both male and female respondents concur that this situation merits attention and a fair opportunity for leaders to actualise their potential. This sentiment is mirrored in an almost equal manner among respondents of varying genders.

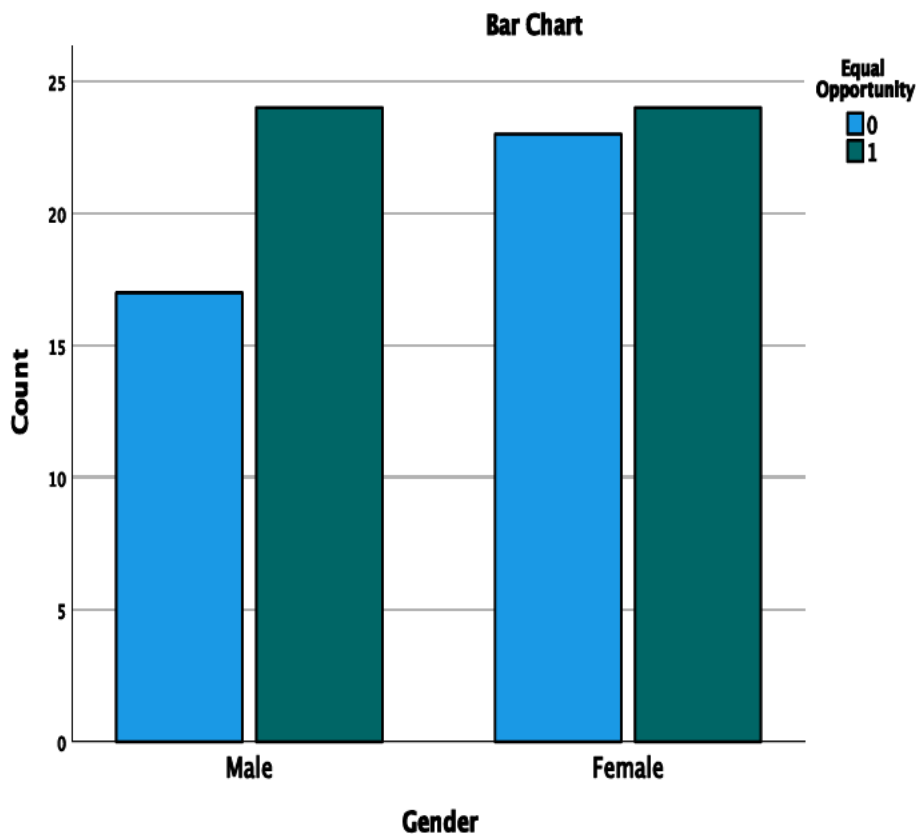


Figure 5. 4: Equal Opportunity

The experiences of women leaders in Kenya's elections in 2007 2013, and 2017 reveal the indispensable role of state intervention in determining the status of women in society. In Kenya, the state's inability to prevent and punish instances of sexual and

gender-based violence (SGBV) during electoral violence has contributed to the persistence of structural violence against women. This ongoing impunity for perpetrators of such violence sends a message that further acts of violence will be tolerated. The state is legally obligated to take measures to address the healing of victims of past sexual violence and prevent its recurrence in the future.

To ensure that women can actively participate in political debates without fear of retaliation, it is crucial to shield them from cultural backlash and threats that make equal participation unattainable. Respondents suggested that the government should implement preventive measures with a survivor-centred approach, as well as design and implement measures to reduce structural violence against women during their participation in public decision-making. This includes allocating appropriate human and financial resources to effectively implement laws and policies for the prevention of sexual violence.

The implementation of affirmative action policies to promote the inclusion of women in political spaces is essential, but it is equally important to address the underlying motives behind structural violence against women leaders. Failing to do so would perpetuate the violence that impedes women's political participation, rather than intimidating them solely based on their gender. This distinction is critical for effective public policy creation, and it is the central focus of this study.

According to one respondent, Pt06:

“There is no mechanism within the party for addressing structural violence. The use of propaganda is considered a legitimate tool; thus, it is not perceived as violence. The party expects individuals to either handle physical violence or report it to the police.”

Structural violence can cause more clinical symptoms than physical ones in those who have experienced it. Some individuals may be traumatised without realising it. When individuals become aware of their traumatic experiences, they may identify the circumstances and take appropriate action. Several respondents have suggested that political parties should raise awareness of trauma and provide psychological rehabilitation for women affected by structural violence. In addition, parties could help prevent trauma by offering mentorship, such as connecting women who have experienced trauma with younger female leaders for guidance and support.

Political parties have been advised to establish effective disciplinary procedures to address any form of violence against women leaders. This recommendation received broad approval from study participants, regardless of their gender attitudes (as illustrated in the graph, Figure 5.6 below).

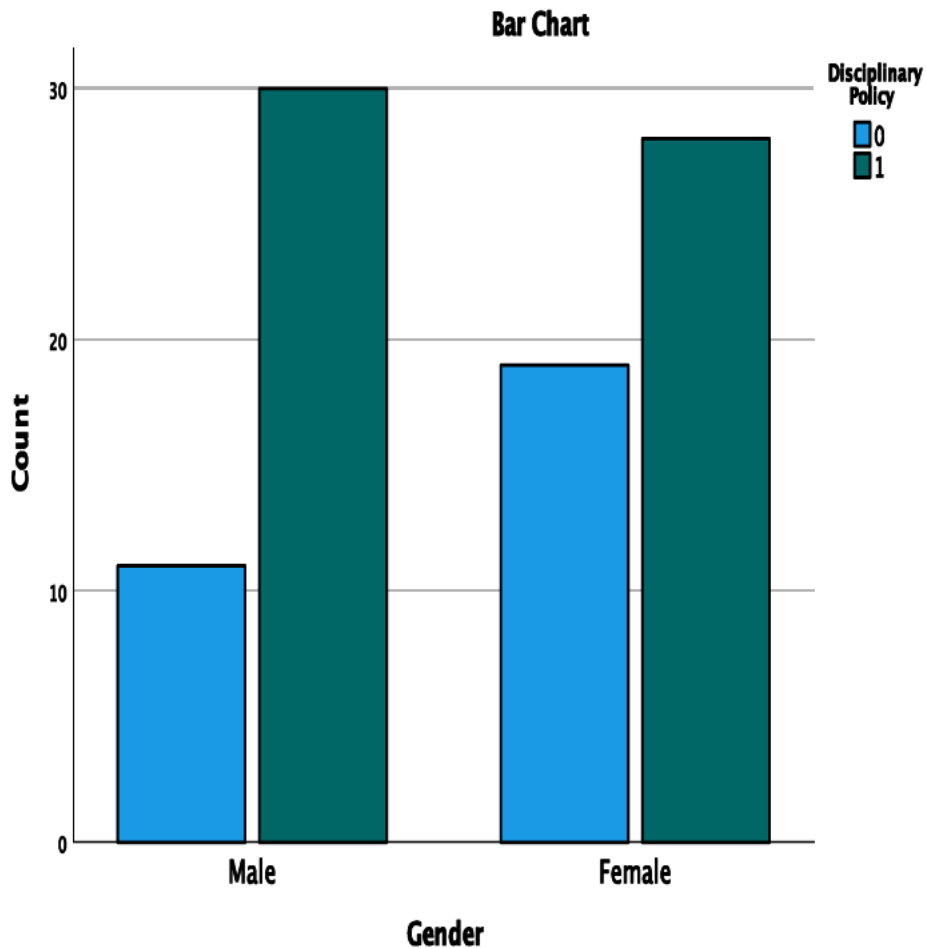


Figure 5. 5: Disciplinary Policy

The outcomes of the research indicate that the female participants exhibited a lack of self-assurance in the competency of political parties to resolve the problem of systemic violence within their ranks. A sizeable proportion of the participants advocated for the enforcement of gender-inclusive policies within the political parties as a means of addressing this dilemma. A concise summary of these viewpoints is provided in Figure 5.7 below.

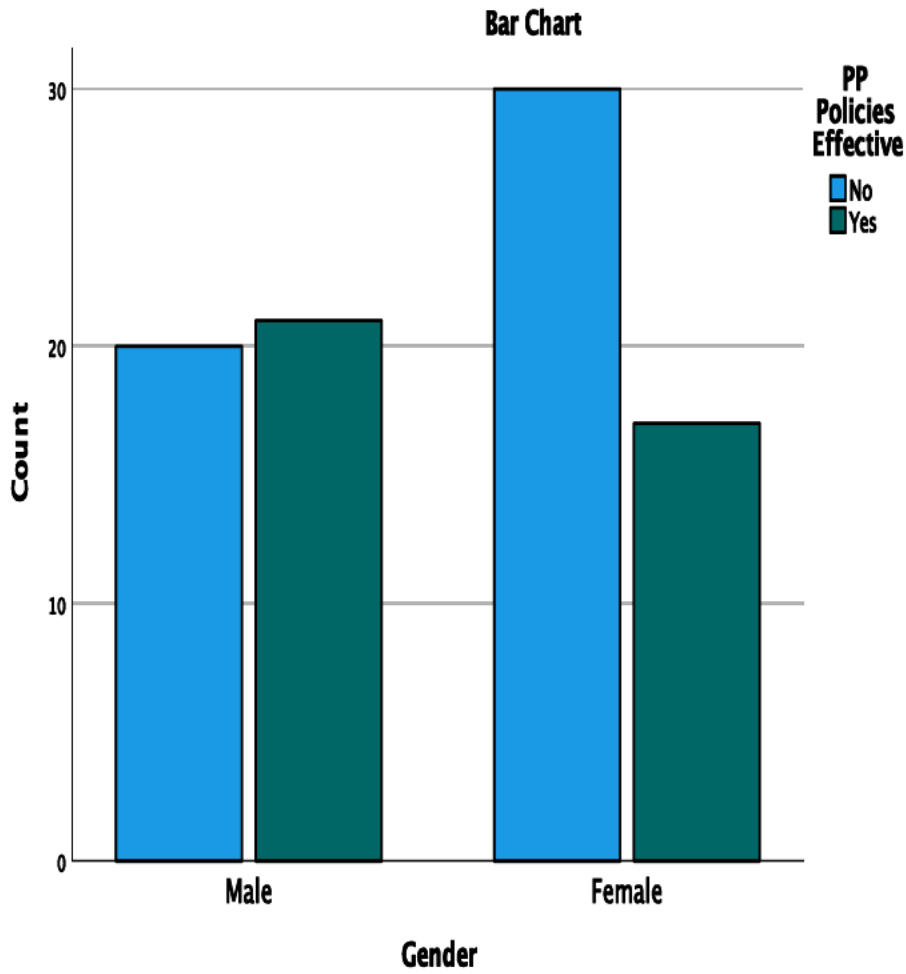


Figure 5. 6: PP Policies Effective

Even though a greater number of women than men consider gender inclusion policies crucial in political parties, fewer men in total share this same sentiment. This disparity is highlighted in the following statistics:

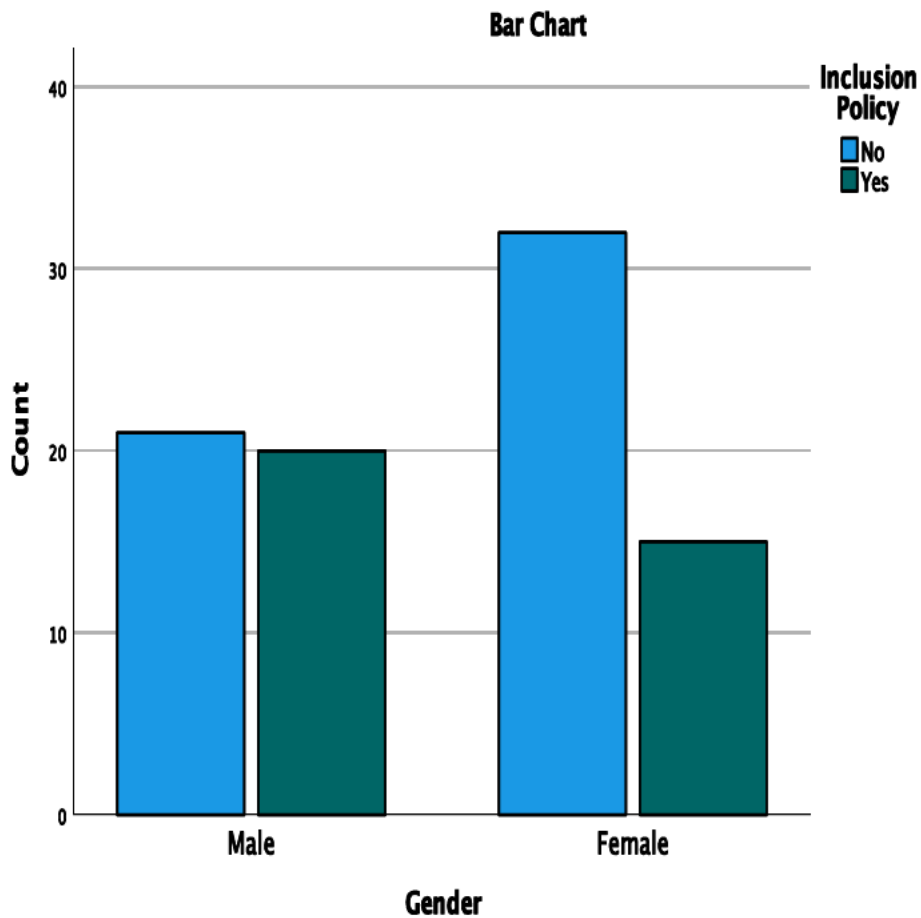


Figure 5. 7: Inclusion Policy

It is therefore imperative that political party leaders adopt a formal tone and take concrete steps to condemn structural violence against women. They must also advocate for and implement measures to address these issues. The respondents of the study have faith in the political leadership of their respective parties to raise awareness about violence towards women, promote fairness and equality between genders, and battle the prevailing problem of discrimination and unjust practices that seek to marginalise women. The study reveals that a larger proportion of men than women believe that the political leadership is competent in dealing with this matter.

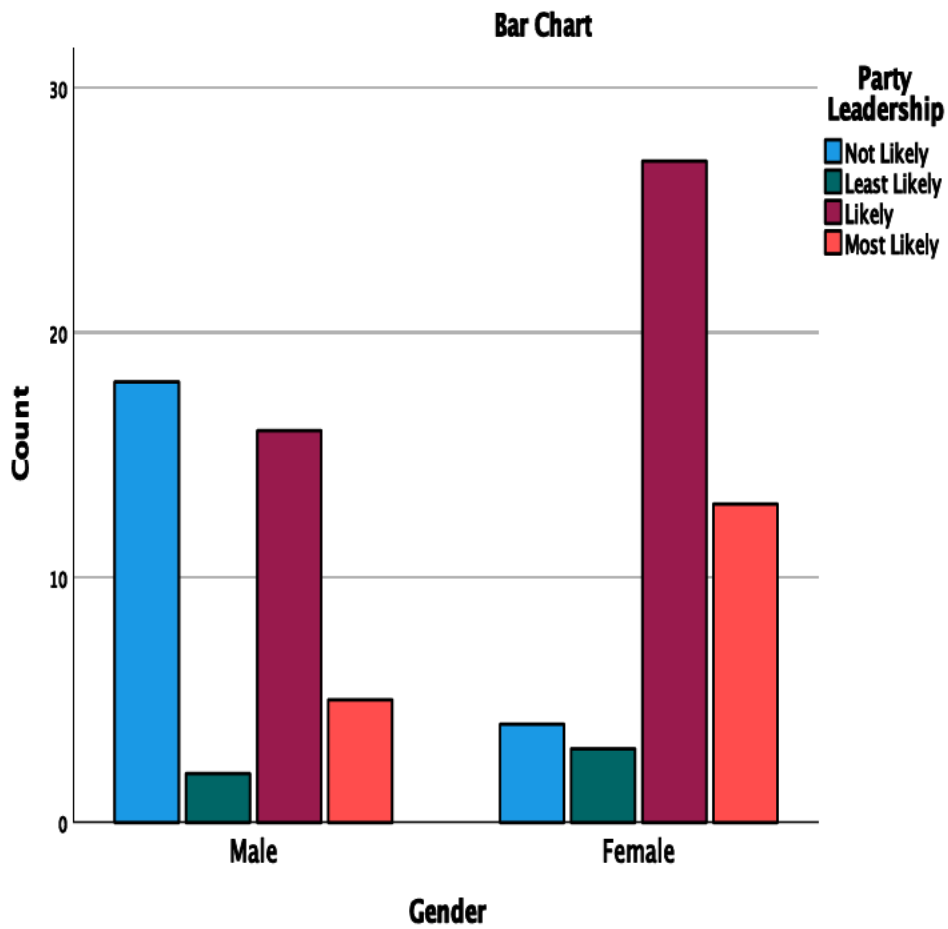


Figure 5.8: Party Leadership – Gender

Even so, according to the graph below, there is a certain degree of scepticism among younger respondents in Kenya regarding the capacity of the country's political party leaders to effectively address structural violence within their ranks or confront the issue directly. There is a perception that the leadership may not be adequately equipped to handle the situation.

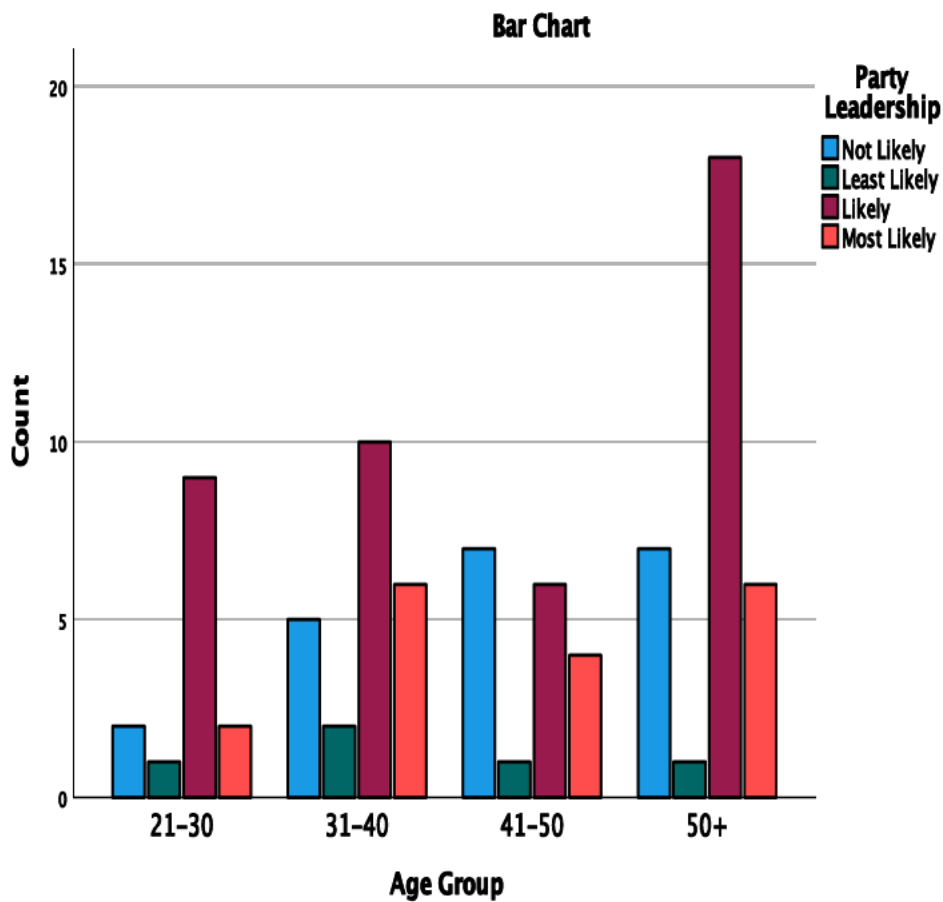


Figure 5. 9: Party Leadership - Age Group

It is widely held that political patronage, which is often exercised by male heads of political parties, will continue to shape the advancement of women in political leadership. If this perspective prevails, it suggests that the relevant institutions have not adequately addressed the issue of structural violence within political parties, particularly concerning gender. This perspective is more prevalent among female respondents than among their male counterparts, as indicated in the accompanying chart below.

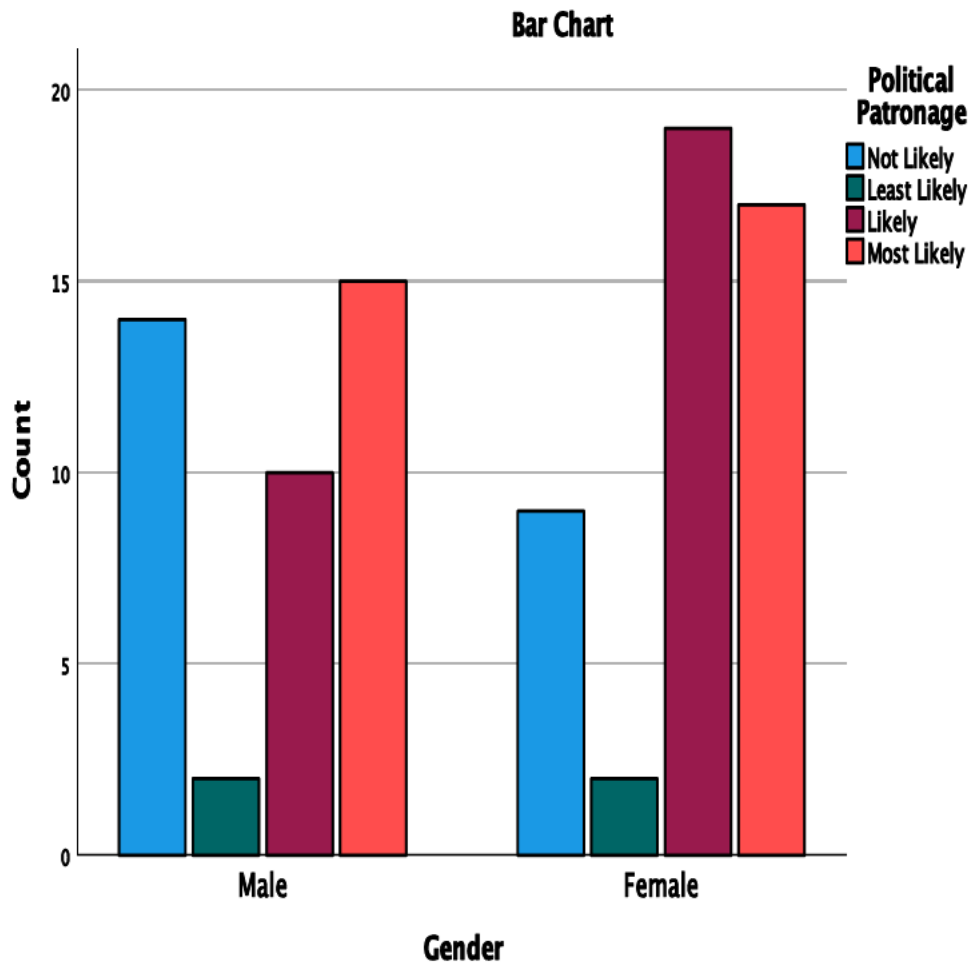


Figure 5. 10: Political Patronage – Gender

Political parties can collaborate to foster a culture where individuals who experience trauma can accept their situation and seek appropriate care. Institutionalising a culture around trauma can help to reinforce measures for addressing it. Providing trauma healing, guidance, and counselling to party members who have been victimised can be an effective solution as well. This approach can help to strengthen the mental resilience of women and empower them to break free from disempowering situations. Equally important to consider as best practice is developing clear policies, codes of conduct, and manifestos that condemn such violence.

5.7.1 TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Conflict transformation has received considerable attention in academic literature, with a focus on the concept of transformative dialogue. This process is viewed as a means

to achieve conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Various approaches, such as mediation, negotiation, and social learning, are integrated to address conflicts and promote positive change within (Larrauri and Kahl 2013; Sang 2013; Ayunts, Zolyan and Zakaryan 2016; Schultz *et al.* 2016; Dwivedi, Joshi and Misangyi 2018; Schultz *et al.* 2018; Sultana *et al.* 2018; Martins *et al.* 2020; Allen and Friedman 2021; Cleven and Saul 2021; Stokke 2021).

Conflict transformation involves a process aimed at addressing the root causes of conflicts and achieving sustainable peace through dialogue, reconciliation, and structural change, as outlined by Greer, Jehn and Mannix (2008). Transformative dialogue serves a critical function in the realm of learning and conflict resolution, particularly in fostering critical reflection and mutual understanding among individuals. It further highlights the value of creating safe spaces for open and honest communication, which can lead to deep personal and collective development.

In addition, the communicative approach has been proven to promote transformative impact by improving relationships and encouraging understanding among individuals. Transformation as a process is rooted in different types of conflict management, such as transformative facilitation, transformational mediation, and narrative mediation, emphasising the significance of dialogue in these processes (Putnam 2004). It is widely believed that conflict transformation through dialogue involves developing shared understandings of problems and devising ways forward that meet the needs of all parties involved (Allen and Friedman 2021). The potential for dialogue to bring about change in peacebuilding and conflict resolution has been widely recognised. Dialogue can alter the dynamics of conflict by fostering inclusive interactions that shape behaviour and attitudes (Larrauri and Kahl 2013).

Research has established the importance of dialogue in promoting dialogue proficiency and enhancing cognitive functioning. It has been noted that interactive problem-solving strategies, such as sustained dialogue and conflict transformation, are significant in promoting constructive conflict management through effective communication and interactive problem-solving techniques (Holper and Kyselova 2021).

The purpose of dialogue has been described as finding and realising values together, seeking and creating platforms for cooperation, and encouraging development, emphasising its transformative potential in fostering collaboration and societal development. The framework for dialogue has been based on bridging differences through an inclusive vision and the understanding of predominant dialogue scholars, highlighting the transformative potential of dialogue in addressing differences and fostering understanding (Wilhelmson 2006).

It is therefore essential to have a transformative dialogue to tackle the structural barriers that women face in politics. The way the media portrays female politicians reinforces patriarchal views of politics and highlights the implicit and explicit obstacles that women encounter in the political sphere (Ette 2017). Additionally, structural factors can affect the supply and demand for female candidates, which ultimately influences the opportunities available to women in politics (Krook 2016). Research has also explored the facilitators and obstacles to women's dialogue in contentious societies, highlighting the fragility of established solidarity and the need for a willingness to engage in open and challenging dialogue (Çelik and Göker 2021).

Extensive research has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of gender quotas and positive action policies in enhancing women's representation in politics while simultaneously grappling with the myriad social, cultural, and institutional impediments that obstruct women's path to political office (Perdana and Hillman 2020). The establishment of political parties with gender-inclusive objectives has been recognised as a potent means of eradicating gender oppression and reshaping gender relations, promoting shared values of care and concern (Johnson *et al.* 2013). In addition, scholarly inquiry has pinpointed corruption as a formidable barrier to women's political representation, blocking the recruitment of women through male-dominated networks and deterring citizens from engaging in political affairs (Sundström 2021).

Corruption has been identified as a significant barrier to women's political representation, affecting the recruitment of women directly through male-dominated networks, influencing candidate selection and indirectly influencing citizens' engagement in political matters (Sundström and Wängnerud 2014). Recommendations for addressing these obstacles include implementing deliberate

policies and legislation targeting women's quotas, eliminating structural barriers, and reforming the electoral process to reduce the cost of political participation for women (Çelik and Göker 2021; Dan-Azumi and Asan 2021).

The practical realm of politics is frequently characterised by acts of violence and intimidation, thereby posing formidable obstacles for female political actors who aspire to engage in political pursuits (*Alex, et al 2023*). Besides, female politicians in diverse settings confront limitations and are typically assigned a subordinate position in the political domain, thereby emphasising the necessity of addressing gender equity and the particular difficulties encountered by women in the political sphere (*Yirmibeşoğlu 2008*).

To address these challenges, transformative dialogue plays a crucial role. This approach emphasises inclusive and deliberative communication, self and social transformation, and critical evaluation, highlighting its potential to overcome divisions and bring about social and political change. Moreover, the participation of women in democratic innovation apparatuses has revealed the obstacles encountered in governance processes, pinpointing the importance of addressing barriers to women's meaningful participation in political decision-making (*Palacios, et al2016*).

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter revealed the prevalence of violence against women in political leadership positions in Kenya, which includes the exclusion of women from political networks, the dominance of men within political parties and public institutions, and the use of electoral violence and thuggery targeting female candidates in competitive elections. This chapter also illuminated the financial constraints faced by female candidates, which contribute to the disparity in power and representation in the political arena.

In other words, women persistently encounter psychological and physical abuse, along with structural barriers that have become commonplace. There is no currently established solution, policy, or intervention to alleviate their suffering within their political parties or across broader political institutions or structures. The findings indicate that structural violence against women politicians is deeply rooted within

Kenya's main political parties, leading to their exclusion from political networks and their limited access to decision-making positions.

Therefore, the findings suggest that a comprehensive approach is necessary to address the structural violence against women leaders within political parties in Nairobi. This approach should include policy interventions, financial resources, and support to empower women leaders, as well as efforts to challenge asymmetrical societal expectations and norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women. There is an urgent need for systematic changes within political party structures and wider political institutions to ensure gender equality and support of women leaders in their pursuit of political participation and representation. Political parties need to foster a supportive and inclusive political environment that values and respects women's leadership. By addressing these structural barriers and promoting gender equality, political parties can become more inclusive and representative of the diverse population they serve.

Finally, the chapter agrees that an urgent need is required for concerted efforts at multiple levels political, societal, and international to address the structural violence within the political parties. This emphasises the importance of support for initiatives that promote gender equity in political organisations. These initiatives should aim to raise awareness about the issue of structural violence against women leaders, provide psychological support alongside other initiatives and programs for both men and women in political leadership positions, and advocate for policy reforms that prioritise gender equality, inclusivity, and psychological healing. In the future, further research will still be required to explore the specific dynamics and manifestations of structural violence and its psychological impact on political leaders in different political contexts.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: PLANNING, DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

To address trauma healing, conflict transformation, and structural violence against women within political parties in Kenya, this chapter discusses the planning, development, and subjective outcome evaluation of the Trauma Support Groups and Dialogue Sessions. The chapter commences with a recap of the review of literature in Chapter Two, which explored effective interventions for mitigating structural violence, with a specific focus on fostering an understanding of harmful attitudes and promoting the necessary skills to create an enabling environment for structural violence and its legitimisation. The review of structural violence interventions served as the foundation for the development of trauma support groups and conflict transformation dialogue sessions. In addition, the chapter describes the action-research groups' involvement strategies and the action-planning meetings that preceded the implementation of the support groups and dialogue sessions. Specifically, the dialogue sessions were structured as participatory forums for collaborative discussion and conflict transformation, engaging stakeholders in policy dialogue, joint problem-solving, and collective action planning aimed at addressing manifestations of structural violence. In contrast, the trauma support groups were dedicated to emotional and psychological support; they provided a confidential, empathetic space for women to share personal experiences of trauma, express their feelings, and develop coping strategies and mutual support networks to facilitate emotional healing and resilience. While the chapter may at times read as if the two terms, dialogue sessions and support groups, are interchangeable, it is important to clarify that they refer to distinct interventions, each with its purpose, structure, and outcomes, as outlined in the subsequent sections of the chapter. The planning, development, and evaluation of the intervention were the

final stages of this research, and the methodology of this stage was based on the triangulation of moral development, conflict transformation, and contact theories with action-research principles. This final stage was based on the following two research objectives:

Research Objective 3: Using a participatory action research approach to plan and implement interventions that can mitigate structural violence within the main political parties in Nairobi.

Research Objective 4: To evaluate the short-term outcomes of the intervention.

6.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN OF THE INTERVENTION

The design process comprised a series of activities, the first of which was a review of Chapter 2, which provided insight into the gap in the mitigation of structural violence against women in political leadership. This was followed by the design of trauma support groups, leadership and dialogue sessions, which were informed by the recommendations provided by participants during both the quantitative and qualitative interviews of the research process. The ultimate aim of these efforts was to address the issue of structural violence against women in leadership positions within the main political parties in Kenya.

6.2.1 EXISTING INTERVENTIONS (MITIGATION OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE)

Adhering to fundamental procedures is critical when designing and evaluating any type of intervention. To create an effective intervention, it is important to take into account previous interventions. In the political sphere, women face considerable structural obstacles, including under-representation, discrimination, violence, and cultural barriers. Various interventions have been suggested and implemented to overcome these challenges. One effective strategy is the use of gender quotas, as highlighted by Perdana and Hillman 2020, which have demonstrated promise in increasing women's representation in political office in political office to surmount social, cultural, and institutional barriers. Affirmative action policies, such as access to improved education, government support, financial services, and civic education, have also been recommended to empower women politically.

Addressing violence against women in political spheres is vital for their empowerment. Electoral violence is a significant barrier that impedes women's full participation in political, social, and economic domains. Implementing measures to combat this form of violence is crucial to ensuring that women can exercise their rights and contribute to shaping their nations' futures (Al-Qaralleh, Bader and Al-Majali 2022). In addition, Hazel and Kleyman (2019) emphasise the importance of understanding the social functions of violent behaviour and the systemic forces of inequality in interventions with women. Interventions that teach women to advocate for themselves and become civically engaged can help dismantle oppressive structures that limit women's political participation.

However, interventions often face obstacles due to inadequate policies and regulations. There is a need to address economic, legal, and political barriers concurrently with interventions aimed at transforming gender norms and beliefs (Vyas and Henrica 2018). That said, it is also crucial to consider the severity of the issue when designing interventions. Short-term interventions may not be effective for women experiencing severe forms of abuse (Alhusen *et al.* 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to design interventions that cater to the unique needs and circumstances of the affected individuals.

To mitigate the consequences of structural violence inflicted upon women leaders, it is essential to develop an all-encompassing intervention plan. Adopting a trauma-informed approach is critical when examining relevant literature. This method recognises the impact of trauma on individuals and designs interventions that cater to their specific needs, such as alleviating trauma symptoms and psychological distress (Myers *et al.* 2018). Also, it is equally important to consider the intersections of culture, class, and gender when addressing all types of violence is imperative.

Community leaders also play a significant role in preventing gender-motivated violence. They help shape societal norms and can change attitudes towards violence against women (Dery, Akurugu and Baataar 2022). Equally crucial is empowering women through educational programs and advocacy campaigns. A more supportive environment can be promoted by educating women on violence prevention and engaging opinion leaders to eliminate taboos around the issue (Shams *et al.* 2017).

Therefore, the contribution of women leaders who have overcome trauma is noteworthy. These leaders can serve as powerful agents of change, offering support, empowerment, and reconciliation to other victims of violence. A support network can be established to help in healing and empowerment by harnessing the resilience and experiences of women leaders who have navigated trauma (Restrepo 2016)

Contact theory serves as a beneficial intervention method to combat the structural violence endured by women in politics. This approach emphasises positive interactions among groups to reduce prejudice and discrimination (Jewkes, Flood and Lang 2015); (Corboz *et al.* 2019). Despite the belief of most male leaders that only women should participate, this research included both genders. Nevertheless, the male participants demonstrated knowledge of gender issues and offered constructive suggestions for progress. Implementing contact theory in the political sphere can assist in eradicating the structural violence that women encounter in politics. Men can actively involve themselves in advocating for and driving transformative changes.

It is therefore crucial to tackle coercive control and the structural nature of violence against women through political interventions (Feresin *et al.* 2019). This supports the idea that structural violence acts as an impediment to women's empowerment Sinha *et al.* (2017). Besides, Afşar (2016) points out the role of power dynamics and control in perpetuating structural violence. Understanding violence as a tool to maintain dominance and control over women allows interventions to target the inherent power imbalances in political settings. In addition, the intersectional approach to violence against women emphasises how race, class, status, and gender intersect to shape experiences of violence (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). This intersectional analysis is crucial in developing effective interventions that consider the diverse challenges faced by women in politics.

As a result, to tackle structural violence against women in political settings, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that targets the root causes of this violence, challenges conventional gender norms, enacts supportive legislation, and empowers women to confront violence in political contexts. Legislative measures, empowerment initiatives, and interventions addressing systemic barriers can contribute to the creation of a safer and more equitable political environment for women. The current

action research intervention was informed by contact theory, moral development theory, and conflict transformation theory, which were all discussed with the participants during planning sessions and integrated into the support groups and dialogue sessions.

It is not unexpected, therefore, that the participants in this study remained largely consistent throughout all the stages. Commonly, action research follows a cyclical structure, which is both beneficial and necessary. These stages include diagnosing, action planning, action implementation, evaluation, and learning specification. The development of a client-system interface, which can inform all of these phases, is at the core of this cyclical process. The use of the cyclical process in action research aims to enhance knowledge regarding a particular subject by actively engaging with the problems and learning through the process of implementing change. This learning is characterised by a hands-on approach where the researcher directly interacts with the complexities of the matter under investigation. Through this engagement, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the variables at play in the study. The cyclical process of research and the development of a dynamic relationship between the researcher and the participants were crucial in this particular study, as they effectively addressed the sensitive variables (Kaye, Harris and Eds 2017).

In the context of the political divide within the country, which is reflected in both the Azimio One Kenya Alliance, where the Orange Democratic Party (ODM) is the dominant partner, and the ruling Kenya Kwanza Alliance, where the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) is the majority party, the study maintained its study clients for all investigations, briefings, intervention actions, and evaluations. It is important to note that the methodology not only entails observing the cyclical process but also involves participation (democratic or egalitarian) from all stakeholders.

The research initially intended to conduct a dialogue session with a diverse group of current members of parliament (MPs), women representatives (WRs), senators, and party directors from various political parties participating in the study. The aim was to ensure a balanced representation of gender and age. After the initial dialogue, the county and local/grassroots political leaders convened another meeting. This was due to the pervasive issue of structural violence throughout the political system. The

second dialogue featured several serving members of the county assembly (MCA) and local leaders in various political positions within the parties. On 14 September 2023, and 24 March 2024, Nairobi hosted two trauma support and transformative dialogue sessions. The participants emphasised the significance of such forums in facilitating the healing process after a traumatic political campaign experience. The dialogue sessions served as a form of support group, enabling the participants to revisit and discuss their experiences, as well as share stories about their coping mechanisms and actions taken as part of the healing process.

At least thirty-eight individuals, mostly from the previous two sessions and including those who were part of the study from the beginning, attended the final gathering, organized in collaboration with the political parties. During the discussions on the structural violence that leaders, particularly women leaders in political parties, face, the meeting took on a therapeutic aspect, as the participants chose to share their traumatic experiences before discussing the actions they have taken to confront them and ways to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

The dialogue session featured individuals from various party levels as well as leaders who have previously participated in party nominations and lost for one reason or another. The sessions underscored the significance of understanding the context of structural violence within Kenyan political parties to formulate effective measures to tackle the issue and safeguard their welfare.

6.2.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY INTERVENTION

The support group meetings lasted for half a day and brought together attendees from both the ruling Kenya Kwanza Coalition and the opposition Azimio Coalition in Kenya. Both male and female political leaders participated in the meetings. However, due to the challenges of scheduling the political leaders to commit to attending at the same time, we had to work with those who were available at the planned time hence the disparity in numbers for this study.

The role of the research assistant organised the logistical arrangements for the meetings, coordinate the invitations for the leaders, access their profiles and contact details, liaised with them to confirm their attendance, and select the meeting venue.

The presence of the researcher during the meetings was instrumental in guiding the sessions. However, the program adopted a participatory action research approach, empowering the participants to actively facilitate the sessions. The participants established their own ground rules, formulated the discussion agenda, designated a meeting rapporteur, and ensured the preparation of an outcome document at the end of the sessions. The meetings commenced by identifying the significant issues that shape political decisions and actions in Kenya and from which the common characteristics of structural violence within political parties arise. Box 6.1 below summarises this.

Box 6. 1: Context in which structural violence happens:

Patriarchal Society:

Political patronage, lack of resources,

Cultural diversity of the country (marital status, religion)

Gender perception

Political patronage

Political financing

Skewed intellectual ratio that favours men

Security

Impact of Information Technology and social media - Cyber Bullying – Are you married?

Sexual harassment of female aspirants by party oligarchs

Poverty/economic deprivation

Discrimination -Age, Tribal/Clan politics, Disability

Religion/spirituality

The integrity of the electoral body

Political patronage

Box 6. 1: Context in which structural violence happens.

The participants shared their experiences of pain and anguish during the political betrayals, horse trading, and physical violence they faced during electoral campaigns. The participants discussed their experiences with political parties. Many women shared stories of their political indoctrination by strangers, often men, in their formative years. They frequently felt undervalued and hated, attending party meetings uncertain about the value of their contributions. They made financial contributions to party leaders without requesting accountability. Parties denied these victims, mostly women, party nominations and prevented them from participating in national elections. Party officials demanded bribes and other favours to allow them equal participation in party affairs. Women were often forced to compromise their principles and integrity to compete in the murky electoral environment.

Many women leaders discussed that whilst they participated in competitive national elections, they lacked an understanding of their party's policies and structures. For instance, a woman leader grappling with her party's stance on gender-based violence might remain unaware of the party's approach and yet engage in party activities. This lack of clarity was a significant source of frustration for women leaders in the country.

Many participants in the transformative dialogue sessions desperately seek practical solutions to their political dilemmas. They aspire to achieve specific goals within political parties but fear that their proposals and suggestions may not be taken seriously. The women particularly yearn for political maturity in party dealings, focussing on issues such as financial resources, gender mobilisation, and transparent engagements within the political parties. Unfortunately, they have witnessed numerous underhand dealings and backroom politics that have dashed their hopes of political leadership, especially in the context of electoral politics.

The challenges faced by both male and female political participants are interconnected. Certain male participants acknowledged the difficulties faced by women but also emphasised that men experience stifling opposition and obstacles that can hinder their ambitions. The discussions raised the issue of sexual harassment, including demands for sexual favours. They also highlighted the lack of accountability within political parties as a significant concern, as it hinders meaningful engagement with party members and transparency in party affairs.

The political victimisation of party members is a complex issue. The participants stated that they had traumatic experiences as a result of these challenges. Candidates who feel cheated in the party nomination process suffer from feelings of isolation and betrayal. They often invest large sums of personal wealth in political campaigns and lobbying, only to come away empty-handed. Sometimes, this leads to the breakdown of marriages and relationships, causing irreversible damage to trust.

As the dialogue sessions progressed, several participants engaged in self-reflective discussions, sharing examples of their harsh experiences. Some of the participants have had to endure feelings of rejection and betrayal by close associates within political networks and parties, as highlighted in chapter five. This kind of experience has even led to the deaths of many individuals. The sessions revealed that some women had contemplated suicide due to their political failures. Some people have fallen ill, succumbing to the afflictions of psychosocial conditions that can lead to diseases such as depression, high blood pressure (hypertension), and diabetes.

Participants were asked to discuss how they had dealt with the various situations they found themselves in. This would enable them to share models of responses relevant to them when they face similar circumstances again. Some of the women found hope in sisterhood networks led by women with similar experiences. There were examples of women who went out of their way to take care of female victims, providing them with financial or food support, and offering counselling and solidarity.

The country's entrenched cycle of violence against women in politics has highlighted the lack of such support structures within Kenyan political parties. Many women support the establishment of such frameworks within parties.

Political parties must demonstrate accountability and integrity by engaging with women in a clear, respectful, and lawful manner to promote the non-discrimination provisions of the Constitution. Participants called for civic education programs within parties to empower women and for the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties to ensure that parties comply with their internal rules and policies on gender empowerment. As well as the above, participants also advocated for increased funding for political parties to support gender-friendly activities, including providing psychotherapy support to victims when necessary.

6.2.3 TRAUMA SUPPORT GROUPS AND DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Action research, as a comprehensive approach, aims to diagnose and address complex issues from multiple perspectives. It involves encouraging participants to express their thoughts and opinions freely throughout the process. During the intervention sessions, discussions among participants revealed reflections on the issues affecting political parties and society at large, leading to the violent exclusion of women from leadership roles. The central question in this study is how the findings can offer practical feedback on the methodology of action research to improve the situation of women leaders, facilitate change, and enable other participants to learn more effectively.

Action research is based on the belief that practical knowledge and experience gained over time should benefit the research process. Action researchers possess expertise in conducting research and theoretical knowledge about the change process being studied, while participants bring their unique perspectives and experiences to the process (Cockerham,2023; Wittmayer and Schöpke 2014). Together, these three groups collaborated on an appropriate intervention plan that emerged from the research findings and recommendations from the participants themselves. This culminated in trauma support group sessions and conflict transformation dialogue. Box 6.2 below illustrates some of the discussions that transpired during the support group and dialogue sessions:

Box 6.2: Overview of Dialogue Participant (DP) Discussions

'The mainstream party influencers make you feel you are unsuitable because of age, resources and generally for expressing that you want to compete in politics openly. However poor you are, by the time you are pulled out of the nominations list, it is very traumatic. You have spent resources regardless. Without attributing it to my gender, it's a trauma that I have gone through and a session like this helps with the healing process – it heals' (DP08)

'Expectations on women political leaders are heavy in and out of the home. There is an expectation of sexual favours to climb the party ladder while at home, other women have access to your husband. This is the first time I have spoken freely in a forum to express this openly as others here have been through it' (DP10)

'This leadership and dialogue session provided a platform to not only talk through my trauma when seeking the party nomination but challenged me to think of ways political parties can make real improvements' (DP11)

'Integrity in politics is a tall order but we cannot sit here and be pessimistic. All of us have a role to play as political leaders in instituting the changes we want to see in our political parties.'(DP12)

'Changes in political parties must come from us the political leaders. Even if only one suggestion we make here works, we start with that. Change can only happen if we each take action'(DP13)

'The session was good, helped me think about what role I need to play in effecting change.' (DP14)

'The situation is helpless but there are things we can start to put in place at our level as aspirants, community level and in, say, 10 years these will be big changes' (DP16)

'Within the political parties, there appear to be no support structures, psychological or otherwise for both genders. Campaigning doesn't appear to end' (DP17)

'Session showed the importance of having reconciliatory meetings after elections within the political parties- talking forums to help with the healing process.' (DP18)

'I realised that most of us locked ourselves away after unfair party elections - Now that we know how political parties operate, I wish they have opportunities like this for political aspirants -we need forums such as this one to share experiences and to heal' (DP19)

'How about the male political leaders, they do not want others to see their tears and so they hide-this process is traumatic and can lead to death—they also need such forums' (DP20)

'Many of us who vie for positions rarely understand what the party by laws say, they never read it until when they fail. Sometimes we blame the system but it is us who are in the wrong-learn about your party first before contesting for a seat' (DP22)

'I think issues like with the party structures, issues like financial resources, lack of gender mobilisation and political maturity are issues that are a problem in our political parties...'

'Positions here depend on the decisions of the party leaders. When you see him and other leaders like the governor together, it means that the party has decided on the position they take. House committees and other positions are decided in the same way'

'In politics, tactics and emotions matter. You can play around with the cultures and traditions, and come out to win leadership positions but first, understand what your political party is about, its structures and rules.'

'I had been told that I would not be given the certificate but I said I'm just going to try even if they don't give me the nomination. The person who ended up with the certificate was number five in the nominations. After that, I went to the party headquarters. I didn't know anybody but an insider in the party known to party leaders helped me back my certificate because I was the winner.'

'In the elections of 2022, somebody came to me and told me that I would not get the party ticket for the area MCA because we were letting an independent candidate for the position of MP get back in our ward time and again. I told them that the information was wrong but that was it. I didn't get the party ticket and that confirmed to me that the nomination list of the party, and people who get the nomination certificates are compiled long before the elections'

'We are in a war of egos. We fight over turfs all the time and we can't have any of the house tasks assigned to us. It is a maddening experience.'

'After I became the MCA, and joined the assembly, I faced new wars as the other members refused to work with us. We were accused of supporting someone else who lost the position of the speaker of the assembly.'

'Leadership comes with many things; emotional intelligence is one of the key ones – let's invest in this' (DP05)

'There should be an element of duty of care by political parties. They should have forums like this to heal, share experiences, and report unfair practice issues to the party.' (DP07)

'I found the introduction by the researcher helpful as it clarified the purpose and objective of the session.' (DP04)

'Election rigging, structural violence in politics has become normalised' (DP01)

'Mental Wellbeing – there should be a mental health section in every political party. Members could pay party fees towards this'. (DP03)

Box 6. 2: Overview of Dialogue Participant (DP) Discussions

The goal of the trauma support group and conflict transformation dialogue sessions was to explore the underlying causes of the challenges faced by both men and women as political leaders tackle the normalisation of structural violence. By participating in

these sessions, participants worked together to find alternative actions that could lead to positive change, with a particular focus on addressing structural violence against women. The participants identified the following action points as crucial for future attention (see Box 6.3 below). The sessions aimed to offer insights into strategies for tackling structural obstacles within political parties in the future. Through these processes, participants stimulated learning and interaction and worked together to find alternative actions that could lead to positive change.

Box 6.3: Action Points from Dialogue Sessions

Break the patriarchal bubble.

Challenge the lack of integrity in the political parties and stand for fair party nominations in elections.

Ensure active political education of women in the political parties, ensuring that they read and understand the party constitution and bylaws, and involve themselves in the party process.

Managing expectations of women in political leadership to mitigate frustrations associated with disappointments

Work towards strengthening the regulatory mandates on political parties, especially the roles of the Office of Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP)

Ensure economic empowerment of all women.

Ensure extensive Advocacy, civic education and awareness by women, involving civil society organisations in gender development.

Be strategic; ensure that women are prepared well for leadership roles, have strong emotional intelligence and maintain effective political alliances and networks.

Promote political maturity in the parties and respect towards the electorate.

Ensure steps for reconciliations after general elections, and structural therapy programs for those who require it for healing. With Kenya's 2007 post-election violence, political parties should ensure duty of care for members; institute forums to heal, share experiences, and report relevant issues to the party after election campaigns.

Institute Coaching and Mentoring by the political parties as well as civil society groups (CSOs): discuss issues such as preparation of aspirants on the realities of political life and political party memberships; Campaign strategies, Politics of loss and win etc

Ensure the Social welfare of political leaders to support those who fail in the nomination process for one reason or another.

The state electoral body should punish violators and follow through with deterrent penalties for violation of electoral laws.

Support Women to invest in their leadership capacity.

Ensure robust Political party funding, with a proportion of the funds designed to support women's empowerment and well-being, addressing issues of GBV and accountability in the parties.

To ensure mental well-being, political parties require a mental health section in every party, and party members may be required to pay fees for requisite services.

Affirmative action to women- vie and be allowed to go back to their jobs if they fail to be elected.

Box 6. 3: Action Points from Dialogue Sessions.

6.3 THE EVALUATION OF THE SESSIONS

A structured questionnaire containing enquiries related to the day's proceedings was distributed after each dialogue session. A total of 38 completed questionnaires were gathered and analysed. The analysis results, presented in Table 6.1 below, indicate that: i) the presenters effectively defined the session objectives; ii) the support groups and dialogue sessions successfully achieved their objectives; iii) participants intended to utilise the information from the sessions; iv) the sessions were well-organised and effective, with practical and beneficial content.

The majority of the participants agreed that the presented material was well-organised and effective. They viewed the session content as practical and offered valuable suggestions to the researcher for improving the practicality of the content for future engagements with political parties, ensuring the implementation of some of the proposed ideas.

	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N) Total
	Positive Response	Percentage	Negative Response	Percentage	
Participant's perception of the program					
1. The Support group and dialogue sessions fulfilled my expectations	36		2		38
2. The Support group and dialogue sessions were interesting	37		1		38
3. Would you like to participate in other similar support groups and dialogue sessions in the future	34		4		38
4. Would you recommend such a session to a colleague	34		4		38
5. Do you think that regular support groups and dialogue sessions should be organised for political leaders	34		4		38
Total mean score					38
Participant's perception of program facilitators					
1. The methods used support group and dialogue session promoted my active engagement	36		2		38
2. The support group and dialogue session activities stimulated my learning	38	100	0		38
3. The support group and dialogue session encouraged active participation and expression of ideas	38	100	0		38
Successfully					
4. I enjoyed the activities during the sessions	38	100	0		38

5.	The co-facilitation was well coordinated and prepared	38	100	0	38
6.	Enough time was devoted to each session	24		14	38
7.	There was adequate time allocated for discussion	24		14	38
Total mean score					38
Participant's perception of program effectiveness					
1.	To what extent did the dialogue sessions contribute to enhancing your knowledge and understanding of Conflict transformation and trauma healing	37		1	38
2.	Would you like to participate in other similar support groups and dialogue sessions in the future	34		4	38
3.	Support group and dialogue sessions have helped you recognise incidences of structural violence	38	100	0	38
4.	Support group and dialogue sessions helped you begin your journey of trauma healing	34		4	38
5.	To what extent do you now feel ready and more capable to take action towards mitigation of structural violence within political parties in Kenya	34		4	38
Total mean score					

Table 6. 1: Evaluation of the Intervention

Positive view = rating of 3 or above on a 5-point scale; negative view = rating below 3 on a 5-point scale

The comments below represent the primary areas of evaluation by the participants on the management of the sessions:

Box 6.4: Overview of Evaluation Outcome

'Thank you for the refreshments and a really good lunch' (DP02)

'Good venue for the event' (DP06)

'Well-structured discussion' (DP09)

'Good facilitation by the chair' (DP10)

'We should have had more time to discuss' (DP13)

'I expected the meeting to be lively and it was but I liked the structure - there was an opportunity to speak even when from opposite sides'. (DP15)

'Thank you for this forum—I feel there are small steps I must take e.g. find out where all my party policies are and understand them' (DP20)

'It was easy to contribute to this forum—lively but no shouting over each other.'
(DP21)

Box 6. 4: Overview of Evaluation Outcome.

In summarising this discussion on the practical elements of intervention planning and actions, which necessitated adherence to the qualities of action research, the study represented a period of investigation that aimed to explain, interpret, and clarify the situations under examination while concurrently putting into effect a change intervention geared towards betterment and involvement. This embodies the issue-oriented backdrop of action research, and in this chapter, the researcher hopes that

this has been illuminated throughout the intervention journey, with the particular and prospective aspects of the methodology being noticed and upheld.

6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of the outcomes of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the trauma support groups and dialogue program, which emphasises the use of storytelling and group dialogue sessions to promote trauma healing and conflict transformation. The program was successful in helping most participants recognize and acknowledge their trauma, as well as understand the need for support to begin the healing process. Crucially, the sessions also helped participants to identify the hidden aspects of structural violence and strategies to overcome the obstacles they have encountered.

This chapter outlines the planning, design, and implementation of interventions aimed at mitigating structural violence against women in Kenyan political leadership. The action research methodology employed facilitated a dynamic and interactive process, allowing for continuous refinement and adaptation based on participant feedback and emerging insights. A comprehensive review of existing mitigation strategies informed the intervention design, incorporating elements such as gender quotas, affirmative action policies, and trauma-informed approaches. The study's innovative approach combined trauma support groups with transformative dialogue sessions, creating a space for political leaders to share experiences, heal from past traumas, and collaboratively develop strategies for change. The key outcomes of these interventions include increased awareness of structural violence within political parties, identification of specific challenges faced by women in politics, development of action points for addressing structural violence, and the creation of a supportive environment for healing and empowerment. The evaluation of these sessions demonstrated their effectiveness in meeting participants' expectations and fostering active engagement. Participants reported increased knowledge of conflict transformation, trauma healing, and a greater readiness to take action against structural violence within their political parties. This chapter underscores the importance of adopting a holistic, participatory approach to addressing structural violence in politics. By engaging both male and

female political leaders in reflective dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, the study has laid the groundwork for sustainable change within Kenyan political parties. The chapter provides an overview of the outcomes of the trauma support groups and dialogue program, which emphasized the use of storytelling and group dialogue sessions to promote trauma healing and conflict transformation. The program successfully helped participants recognize and acknowledge their trauma, understand the need for support to begin the healing process and identify hidden aspects of structural violence and strategies to overcome obstacles.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLEXIVE DISCUSSION ON THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

“When a concrete experience is enriched by reflection, given meaning by thinking, and transformed by action, the new experience created becomes richer, broader, and deeper.” (David Kolb 2017)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the design, implementation, and evaluation of the trauma support and conflict transformation dialogue sessions, which aligned with the study's goal of designing, implementing, and evaluating an action intervention. However, the researcher felt that the study's development of a subsequent intervention would be incomplete without a reflection on the action-research process. Therefore, the researcher chose to write a reflection of this research to demonstrate the feasibility and drawbacks of collaborating with political leaders within political parties on a small scale to mitigate structural violence against women in political leadership. This reflection has enabled the researcher to enhance the understanding of the methodology and highlight its strengths and weaknesses.

As action research is both interactive and dynamic, it requires active engagement with the research participants in the research context. This approach is underpinned by three fundamental principles: reflection, reflexivity and reciprocity, which are critical in ensuring the efficacy of the research process. Reciprocity, a key principle of action research, emphasises the significance of mutual respect and cooperation between the researcher and the participants. This principle is essential in ensuring that the research is carried out with due consideration for the perspectives and experiences of all parties involved. Kaye and Harris (2018), highlight the non-linear nature of action research as a complex methodological approach which is not orderly nor linear. Researchers who engage in action research are likely to confront a variety of challenges that require

flexibility, adaptability, and resilience. These challenges may include negotiating power dynamics within the research context, managing conflicting viewpoints among participants, and coping with unforeseen obstacles. Friesdorf, Conway and Gawronski (2015) also highlight the fact that the key to the action research cycle is observation, planning, reflection and observation.

Reflexivity in action research entails the continuous examination of the researcher's biases, assumptions, and values that may affect the research process and outcomes. This enables researchers to critically appraise their positionality and its impact on the research, thus enhancing the rigour and validity of the study. By reflecting, researchers can pinpoint strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in their research, leading to continuous learning and development throughout the research journey. Throughout the action research process, principles such as reciprocity, reflexivity, and reflection play a vital role (Friesdorf, Conway and Gawronski 2015).

Moreover, these principles guide researchers in engaging with research participants, critically examining their own biases and assumptions, and reflecting on the outcomes of their actions (Robertson 2000). Researchers, applying the action principle approach, may require less prior experience compared to other research methodologies, making it accessible to PhD students and assistant professors (Lacity, Willcocks and Gozman 2021). In addition, the study by Hoek, Larsen and Lacity (2022) extends these action principles and identifies various research opportunities that can be explored within this framework. Davison, Martinsons and Kock (2004) also emphasise additional principles, such as the importance of theory, change through action, and specifying learning implications for both research and practice.

7.2 ACTION RESEARCH AND WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

This research took a proactive stance from the onset, establishing support groups and providing transformative dialogue intervention sessions to create a secure environment for leaders to heal and explore ways of addressing systemic obstacles that have led to their suffering as a result of structural violence. It was crucial for political leader participants to receive trauma healing support, which involves

recognising the suffering experienced by a third party, as this initiates the healing process. By sharing their experiences, individuals who have undergone trauma can better understand their experiences and develop a clear path forward for objectively addressing the systemic issues within their political party institutions.

This research employed a tailored action research methodology, empowering political leaders to actively participate in formulating solutions to the underlying issues impacting them. This type of intervention allowed political leaders to plan, reflect, and act rather than being passive recipients of traditional research, where the researcher is the principal and presents findings. In this research, political leaders were actively involved in the action research process as the researcher addressed the issues and problems facing the participants. The research findings were shared with the participants, who remained engaged, informed, and interested.

Conventional research has often neglected to treat participants as co-investigators in the research process, opting instead to conduct research "on" participants rather than "with" them and, as a result, excluding their subjective experiences and perceptions. This highlights the need for action research that proactively involves participants. Some literature refers to this type of action research as participatory action research (PAR). Researchers use PAR as a research method to involve participants as active researchers, not just as study subjects.

Participant Action Research has been defined and described in different ways. McDonald (2012) views it as a qualitative methodology that actively involves participants in the research process, aiming to effect social change and address power imbalances in traditional research approaches. Jacobs (2018) argues that PAR has gained popularity in social sciences due to its potential for joint knowledge production and community relevance. For this study, it was essential for the researcher to collaborate with political leaders as co-researchers, as this would facilitate their taking ownership and initiating systemic change. The process began with political leaders finding a secure space to explore healing and change, which was completely new to them and would require time. However, discussions with political parties have now been initiated. Participatory action research was deemed the most suitable research method for this objective, as it permits not only academic researchers but also political

parties, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and government departments to engage and participate in the research process actively.

Furthermore, PAR is designed to devise interventions to resolve critical issues that participants encounter while simultaneously equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities to succeed in life (Lawson et al. 2015). Similarly, the present study employed PAR to furnish political leaders with the necessary knowledge and skills and facilitate their participation in addressing systemic obstacles within various political parties. The study offered a unique opportunity for political leaders to consider and implement practical action strategies.

7.3 RECIPROCITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

Reciprocity is a key element of participatory action research, as it influences the quality of relationships, outcomes, knowledge, significance, and consequences of such research endeavours (Krook and Sanín 2019). The relationship between reciprocity and the structural violence experienced by women in political leadership positions can be examined in terms of the power and control dynamics that underpin acts of violence and harassment targeting female politicians. This perspective is supported by the work of scholars such as Evans and Kenny (2019), who highlight the relevance of reciprocity in understanding the challenges faced by women in leadership roles. Further, political leadership is a reciprocal process involving both the leader and potential followers. While individuals often perceive participation in research as empowering, it is crucial to acknowledge and address potential feelings of disappointment, exploitation, and representativeness issues that may arise due to power differentials (Roura 2020). By proactively managing power dynamics, facilitating spaces for dialogue, and considering the risks faced by community partners, researchers can promote a more equitable and empowering research environment (Egid *et al.* 2021).

The study's purpose was communicated to the participants, along with an invitation to collaborate and the advantages of a reciprocal relationship. The participants, who had not previously been involved in such research as collaborators, showed enthusiasm for the opportunity. They acknowledged the scarcity of research on this topic and the

lack of support services for political leaders experiencing trauma and structural violence. The researcher arranged a lunch meeting with the participants to facilitate a deeper understanding of the research topic. Although they were familiar with one another, the meeting provided an opportunity for the participants to become better acquainted and for the researchers to build a rapport with them. Participating in the project proved beneficial for most participants, as it helped them begin to heal from their past traumas, openly discuss their challenges, and consider strategies for overcoming systemic obstacles.

Throughout the research study, a culture of inquiry emerged within the action group. They actively engaged in learning, exploring, and exchanging ideas on how the intervention could address systemic issues. As the investigation progressed, the political leaders recognised their involvement in the research process, and their insights shaped the direction of the intervention. Through this process, insights into the political leaders' experiences, including their trauma and fears, as well as both individual and collective struggles were gained. Participatory action research provided the impetus for the establishment of support groups, the creation of a secure space for sharing common experiences and acknowledging the trauma that all participants had endured.

In light of these circumstances, action-research methodology was the most appropriate approach to achieve the desired results. We conducted the study in a familiar environment, and the action-research methods facilitated and enabled participants to conduct research and develop this action project. Although the participants viewed me as the primary authority, they considered themselves active participants and took charge of the process themselves, as evidenced by the images provided below.



Figure 7. 1: Trauma Support, Leadership and Dialogue Sessions in Nairobi (April 2024)

The small size of the groups and the close, circular manner in which they sat made it easy for the members to bond over time and delve into issues that were close to their hearts during the trauma support group and conflict transformation dialogue sessions.

As the lead researcher, the researcher was fully aware of the responsibilities of a leader. The researcher encouraged all participants to take on various roles, only speaking when necessary to challenge them to delve deeper into discussions. If a participant's response to a question was unclear, the researcher would ask follow-up questions, although this was a rare occurrence. The conversation flowed easily because everyone was eager to participate and had a lot to say. The researcher released control over the research and constantly reminded them that this was a collaborative effort with the political leaders, thus creating an environment where reciprocity could flourish.

Reciprocity was important as a means of negotiating meaning and power between the researcher and the research participants. However, the researcher believes it went beyond that. The participants formed a research team and were already in leadership positions, which meant that as a group, they needed to define their responsibilities and be committed to each other to come up with and agree on what type of intervention would appeal to other political leaders within the political parties. The use of a feedback system throughout the action research cycle also further facilitated a reciprocal relationship between political leaders and the researcher. The researcher emphasised the significance of participants' participation and their role as "transformers" or change agents in addressing structural violence during support groups and dialogue sessions. The researcher's presence in action-group sessions encouraged political leaders to reflect on their intervention ideas and helped manage group dynamics, particularly during trauma support group sessions.

The study's reciprocity had several benefits for participants, allowing them to improve their knowledge and skills and make significant contributions to trauma support and conflict transformation dialogue sessions. There was a mutual exchange in the sessions, with the researcher benefiting academically from the opportunity to enhance the researcher's action-research skills, particularly in working with political leadership. The researcher was able to learn more about political leaders and parties, as well as forge relationships that will be useful in future collaborations.

The principle of reciprocity has been a cornerstone of this study, permeating every aspect of the research process. There was a mutual exchange of knowledge and benefits between the participants and the researcher. Valuable insights, some of which extended beyond the scope of this thesis but enriched its overall context were gained. The interactive nature of the study ensured that participants were not merely subjects but active collaborators in the knowledge-creation process. In return, the participants benefited in various ways from the interactive nature of the research. Reciprocity in this study was aimed at addressing and mitigating the inherent power imbalances often present in research relationships. Jointly, with the participants, we engaged in a collaborative process of inquiry and learning, fostering an environment where knowledge on structural violence was co-created rather than extracted.

7.4 REFLECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

As reflection is a crucial element of action research, this study used the Kolb experiential learning circle to inform the reflection process. This cycle involves acquiring knowledge through concrete experiences, reflecting on those experiences, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Bouzioti 2023). The Figure 7.2 below illustrates this process:

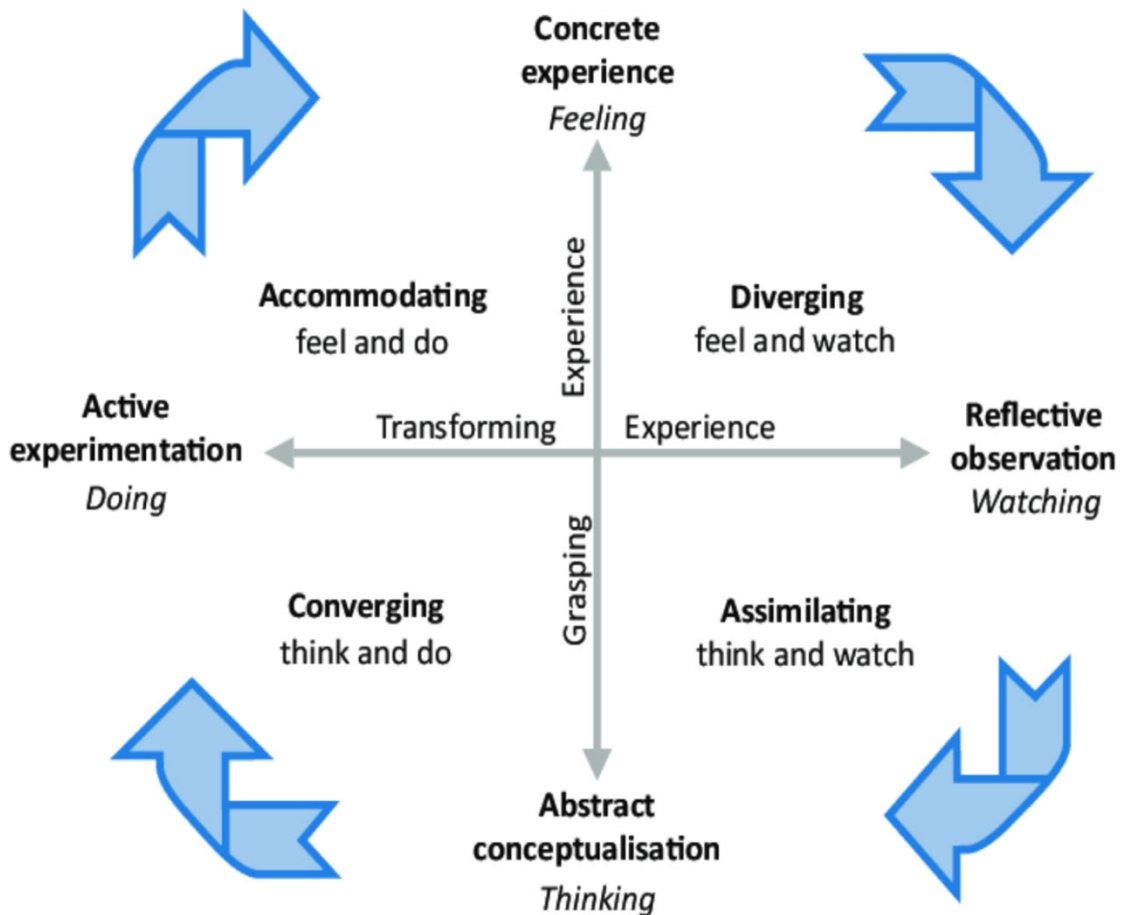


Figure 7. 2: David Kolb's Model for Experiential Learning Theory and Learning Styles. Source: Kolb, (2017)

7.4.1 CONCRETE EXPERIENCE:

The learning process, according to Kolb, begins with a concrete experience, which can either be entirely new or a reimagined experience from the past. For instance, a learner

may engage in a task or activity. Kolb emphasises that the crucial aspect of learning is actively participating in the task rather than merely reading or observing.

7.4.2 REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION:

After engaging in practical experience, the learner retires to contemplate the task at hand. This phase in the learning process allows the learner to formulate questions and engage in dialogue with others about their experience. This cycle entails acquiring knowledge through practical experiences, reflecting on those experiences, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Bouzioti 2023). The figure above depicts this process as vital, as it helps the learner identify any discrepancies between their understanding and the experience. Possessing a diverse vocabulary is also advantageous, as it enables a thorough evaluation of the events that occurred.

7.4.3 ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALISATION:

The next step in the learning process is to comprehend and make sense of the events that have occurred. This entails reflecting on prior knowledge, utilising familiar concepts, and engaging in discussions with peers about possible theories. The learner transitions from observation to abstract conceptualisation when they begin to categorise concepts and draw conclusions about the events. This comprises interpreting the experience and comparing it to their present understanding of the concept. Learners can evaluate new information and revise their conclusions based on existing ideas, regardless of whether the concepts are familiar or unfamiliar.

7.4.4 ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION:

The evaluation phase of the cycle involves learners engaging in tasks to apply their conclusions to new experiences. They are capable of making predictions, analysing tasks, and devising plans to utilise their acquired knowledge in the future. One can ensure that learners retain the information for future use by enabling them to apply their knowledge and demonstrate its relevance to their lives.

Therefore, Kolb's model underlines the importance of actively engaging in experiences, reflecting on them, forming abstract ideas, and testing these concepts in

new situations (Steck *et al.* 2011; Jackson and Sadler 2022). Reflecting is crucial in Kolb's model to gain insights from experiences by applying them to future actions (Bwegyeme and Munene 2021). This is also essential for learners' development as it links education, work, and personal growth thereby allowing individuals to make sense of their experiences and apply the insights gained to future actions, fostering learning (Pittaway and Thorpe 2012). Kolb's theory of experiential learning suggests that reflection also improves individuals' problem-solving abilities (Winarso and Toheri 2021).

The integration of Kolb's experiential learning theory into training and dialogue practices emphasises the cyclical combination of action and reflection to facilitate learning and development (Ayad, Wilkinson and Matthews 2019), thereby providing a structured approach for professionals to exchange experiences, engage in reflective observation, conceptualise abstract ideas, and experiment actively, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Močinić and Juraković 2021).

Kolb's theory also emphasises the value of debriefing and reflection in evaluating the quality and depth of learning that occurs during simulations or experiential activities. Reflection entails comprehending experiences and transforming them into knowledge through a cyclical process. French *et al.* (2019) introduced a framework for radical healing, highlighting the importance of community-orientated approaches to coping with trauma. This framework extends beyond individual healing to encourage collective healing and resilience within marginalised communities. Trauma healing typically incorporates reflection as a crucial element of the recovery journey.

Beltrán and Begun (2014) discussed the significance of storytelling in examining historical traumas and cultural strengths and offering paths for healing within institutions and communities. Storytelling, as a mode of reflection and narrative sharing, can help explore past traumas and promote healing on individual and collective levels. Furthermore, trauma recovery frequently involves establishing secure spaces for contemplation and processing experiences. In the context of trauma healing, especially in marginalised communities, there is a growing recognition of the need for radical healing approaches that go beyond individual coping mechanisms

(French *et al.* 2019). These approaches aim to tackle systemic issues like oppression and structural violence that contribute to trauma.

Reflection served as a means to facilitate cooperation among participants in addressing structural violence through a trauma support group and conflict transformation dialogue sessions. The program highlighted the importance of giving participants a voice in selecting and developing the action research intervention, with a focus on the 'what, how, and who'. The participants were regarded as a reflective and self-reflective group of researchers who were responsible for researching and determining the content and delivery method of the intervention, as well as identifying the suitable individuals to deliver it. However, during trauma support group sessions, the researcher worked closely with the participants. Although some of them were familiar with trauma healing, they were uncertain about how to collaborate through reflection, storytelling, and dialogue to initiate the healing process. During support group and dialogue sessions, participants acknowledged the presence of the researcher as helpful in maintaining collaboration among them. The participants, as political leaders, found it easy to take charge, while the researcher ensured that they remained focused on the research invention's interests and did not stray from the topic.

Following the exploration of structural violence within political parties, the participants enquired about their comprehension of the idea. After clarifying the definition, the participants showed their eagerness to participate in storytelling, trauma healing, and dialogue sessions. The participants were able to connect with the topic of structural violence and were provided with the chance to ponder over their own experiences and insights. The researcher also incorporated their insights into the intervention techniques used. The participants actively participated in planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and evaluating as a collective throughout the action project. The study provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on intervention session processes at various stages.

To make the process of reflection easier, participants in the group and the researcher kept diaries so that they could jot down the activities and progress with the action research intervention. The use of these notes made in the diaries provided a written record of activities and self-reflection about the action-research process, encouraged

a culture of self-reflection, and assisted participants to become “reflexive spectators who reflect on their actions and transform their ideas and their future action in the light of reflection”. Everyone's inner action researcher emerged because of the study's practicality for both the participants and the researcher. The action project consistently employed the characteristics of action research, including the planning stage, the storytelling and dialogue stage, the developing stage, and the reflecting stage. However, this did take time to develop; it was not instant.

Action research, as a potent means of professional development, encourages inquiry, contemplation, and problem-solving, ultimately leading to action or change (Levin and Rock 2003). Reflective practices, such as reflecting, modifying practice, and re-planning, have been identified as crucial components of action research that can enhance individuals' self-assurance in their professional capabilities (Laprise 2017). Moreover, cultivating action confidence through planning, skill acquisition, and exhibiting proficiency in new actions, behaviours, or roles is considered a critical element in bringing about transformative change (Pomeroy and Oliver 2020). The participants in this study were extremely enthusiastic and eager to participate more in the action process.

7.5 REFLEXIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

Reflexivity plays a pivotal role in action research by impacting various aspects of the research process. It entails continuous engagement with the researcher's background and position, which affects the choice of investigation, methods used, findings, and communication of conclusions (Ripamonti *et al.* 2015). While reflection aims to enhance practice, reflexivity goes beyond this by placing the researcher within the research context and recognising their role in shaping social and organisational realities (Barrett, Kajamaa, and Johnston 2020). This distinct positioning involves acknowledging the embeddedness of participant-researchers and researcher-participants in events and the construction of realities (Ripamonti *et al.* 2015).

Reflexivity is also identified as a key element for teams, resulting in improved performance over time (Schippers, Homan, and Knippenberg 2012). Hopman (2019) characterises it as a capacity that guides action, focusing on self-referential processes

that reveal deeply ingrained assumptions and emotions, thereby shaping relationships and subsequent actions. Moreover, it is emphasised as a process that influences the meaning-making patterns and action potential of teams, particularly in terms of communication dynamics (Hedman-Phillips and Barge 2016).

In the context of research methodology, it is considered an essential component involving reciprocity, reflection, and reflection on reality. Although researchers may endorse reflexivity, putting it into practice can be challenging as it is perceived as a means of developing knowledge through practice, suggesting the use of systematic clinical case studies to promote a reflexive action research approach (Lees 2001).

Most action research includes a self-reflexive practice concerning one's normative orientation and internal and external power dynamics. To some extent, power dynamics were present in this action research, and reflexivity was used to address the challenges. Reflexivity can in some cases be achieved through critical inquiry, as it helps develop the self-awareness of the researcher and participants (Robertson 2000).

In this study, the researchers attained reflexivity through a combination of dialogical meetings and journaling. Action research encourages reflexivity by following several steps, such as designing research that involves multiple investigators. This approach promotes communication and helps to develop complementary and divergent conceptualisations of the research. In addition, it creates an environment where the researchers' values, beliefs, views, and assumptions can be disclosed and debated. In this research, the scholars achieved reflexivity through a combination of dialogical gatherings and maintaining a journal.

Action research encourages reflexivity by adhering to various steps, such as designing research that involves multiple researchers. This approach fosters communication and assists in developing complementary and divergent understandings of the research. It further creates an environment where the researchers' values, beliefs, opinions, and assumptions can be divulged and debated. The use of reflexive journals is also vital in action research, as it allows the researcher to make regular entries about their methodological choices, logistics, and personal feelings about the study. This type of journaling helps to create a supportive environment for the research team to reflect

and for the participants to freely express their concerns and address them throughout the research process.

As the researcher reviewed the collected data, it became clear that simply observing from a distance or remaining a passive bystander was not enough. To carry out the study effectively, the researcher had to be proactive and hands-on, which entailed engaging the participants in the study and exerting the maximum effort possible. This level of engagement was essential, as it demonstrated the researcher's dedication to the study and the willingness to go the extra mile in that role. By participating in dialogical meetings and engaging in reflexive activities, the researcher was able to foster awareness among the research participants and collaborators. These meetings also served to establish the researcher's position within the group and their responsibilities as co-researchers. By becoming more self-aware, the research participants were able to recognise their critical role within the study and maintain their interest and involvement throughout the process. Reflexivity enables the researcher to adjust principles, goals, and processes by inviting multiple interpretations and addressing the various activities and roles that arise during the research process.

As a researcher, it is essential to recognise that the generation of knowledge transcends the realm of academia and may encompass individuals of all ages, including those in their formative years. Action research serves as a valuable methodology that fosters collaboration and engagement between researchers and participants, enabling vital discussions and critiques that contribute to the evolution of action projects and interventions. Subsequently, research participants came to understand that they could raise awareness about various concerns, such as electoral violence, harassment, discrimination, biases etc during meetings. This affirms the emancipatory nature of action research, as researchers can serve as agents of change to some extent, empowering participants to tackle problems within their educational institution.

This chapter elucidates the action research methodology employed in this study to devise the trauma healing and conflict transformation dialogue session. In this instance, action research served as a means for data collection, but more crucially, it allowed participants to function as researchers and formulate an intervention to

address structural violence within political parties. By promoting critical-dialogical discussions, the study sought to elevate awareness of structural violence. Action research can be applied for various objectives, including research and action, which may culminate in the emancipation of research participants. The study adhered to an action research approach that entailed collecting data on the reduction of structural violence, participants undertaking their research, and evaluating the consequences of the trauma support and conflict transformation dialogue sessions. The research praxis adopted by the researcher was reciprocal, resulting in self-reflexivity for both the researcher and participants.

7.5.1 NAVIGATING POWER DYNAMICS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A critical aspect of this study involved navigating the power dynamics and ethical considerations inherent in working with women political leaders who have experienced trauma and structural violence. The participatory action research (PAR) methodology adopted for this study was instrumental in challenging traditional hierarchies between researcher and participants. Rather than positioning participants as passive subjects, the study facilitated their active involvement as co-researchers, thereby shifting the balance of power and enabling a more equitable research process.

Power was negotiated through several deliberate strategies. Participants were involved in shaping the structure and content of the trauma support groups and dialogue sessions, and their feedback consistently informed the direction of the intervention. The researcher adopted a facilitative role, encouraging participants to take the lead in discussions and decision-making processes. This approach helped foster a sense of shared ownership and mutual accountability. Informal interactions, including shared meals and one-on-one conversations, further strengthened trust and rapport, contributing to an atmosphere of reciprocity and collaboration.

Ethical considerations extended beyond formal protocols of consent and confidentiality. Given the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, particularly during trauma support sessions, it was essential to create a safe and confidential space where participants could share their experiences without fear of judgment or harm. Emotional safety was prioritised throughout, with the group encouraged to support one

another and set their boundaries regarding what they chose to disclose. Journaling and reflective dialogue were also incorporated to help participants process their experiences at their own pace and on their terms.

Reflexivity was central to navigating both ethical and power-related challenges. The researcher remained attentive to their positionality throughout the process, acknowledging the influence of their role and continuously reflecting on how their actions and assumptions might shape participant engagement. Dialogical meetings and the use of reflexive journals provided ongoing opportunities for both the researcher and the participants to critically examine our roles, assumptions, and interactions. This process helped maintain a research environment that was both inclusive and responsive to participants' needs.

7.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter clarifies the action research methodology employed in this study to devise the trauma healing and conflict transformation dialogue session. In this instance, action research served as a means for data collection, but more crucially, it allowed participants to function as researchers and formulate an intervention to address structural violence within political parties. By promoting critical-dialogical discussions, the study sought to elevate awareness of structural violence. Action research can be applied for various objectives, including research and action, which may culminate in the emancipation of research participants. The study adhered to an action research approach that entailed collecting data on the reduction of structural violence, participants undertaking their research, and evaluating the consequences of the trauma support and conflict transformation dialogue sessions. The research praxis adopted by the researcher was reciprocal, resulting in self-reflexivity for both the researcher and participants.

This chapter has provided a comprehensive reflection on the action research process employed in this study, highlighting its efficacy in addressing structural violence against women in political leadership. The methodology's core principles of reciprocity, reflexivity, and reflection have been instrumental in shaping a collaborative and empowering research environment. Reciprocity emerged as a fundamental aspect of

the study, fostering mutual benefits for both the participants and me. This approach not only enriched the research findings but also empowered political leaders to actively engage in the knowledge-creation process and initiate systemic change within their parties.

The application of Kolb's experiential learning cycle facilitated a structured reflection process, enabling participants to derive meaningful insights from their experiences and apply them to future actions. This cyclical approach of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation proved particularly valuable in the context of trauma healing and leadership development. Reflexivity played a crucial role in navigating the complex power dynamics inherent in the research process. Through dialogical meetings and journaling, both the researcher and participants cultivated self-awareness and critical inquiry, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the research context and their roles within it. The action research methodology demonstrated its transformative potential, allowing participants to function as co-researchers and change agents. This approach facilitated the development of tailored interventions, such as trauma support groups and conflict transformation dialogue sessions, which addressed the specific needs of women in political leadership.

Action research, with its unique epistemology, is particularly well-suited for research involving marginalised groups or women in leadership. Nevertheless, utilising action research is not without its challenges, including managing time constraints and reconciling theoretical and philosophical presumptions with practical applications.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to identify and find ways to begin the process of elimination of structural or systemic obstacles that women face within political parties in Nairobi, Kenya. To achieve both the overall aim and the objectives, the researcher deployed a mixed methods approach. This method led to the development and implementation of trauma support groups and conflict transformation dialogue sessions with the action research participants. In achieving the objectives of the study which included exploring the nature and extent of structural violence experienced by women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County, qualitative research was vital. I used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyse the causes and consequences of structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were equally important in identifying previous and current attempts to mitigate structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi County and to assess their effectiveness. The last objective of assessing the immediate impacts of the participatory intervention, focusing on stakeholder engagement, policy responsiveness, and shifts in political party discourse on gender equity was achieved by the use of a mixed methods approach.

A subjective outcome assessment evaluated the effectiveness of the intervention by examining the participants' perception of the overall project, the facilitators' preparation and delivery, the content delivery, learning outcomes, and suggestions for improvement. The data collected from the evaluation was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The results of this study demonstrate the action research project's potential to prevent structural violence, particularly against women in political parties in Nairobi. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research, limitations, and recommendations.

8.2 PRINCIPAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

In evaluating the key results of this research, several crucial factors were taken into account: the characteristics, scope, and development of the structural violence experienced by female leaders within the leading political parties in Kenya; the origins and implications of structural violence within the political parties in Kenya; and measures that have been implemented to tackle structural violence, with a special focus on the Kenyan context. By presenting the findings in this way, other research users can interact with the study and, if the information applies to their work, particularly in the context of political parties, incorporate it into their practices.

8.2.1 NATURE, EXTENT AND TREND OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN KENYA

The study's outcomes unveiled the presence of structural violence in Nairobi's political parties, affecting both male and female leaders. The research provided essential information regarding the nature, causes, coping mechanisms, and consequences of this violence. Furthermore, it emphasised the unequal nature of these experiences, especially for female leaders.

The research findings demonstrated that women confront a variety of obstacles, including structural violence, discrimination, limited access and control, insufficient support, and asymmetrical societal expectations. Furthermore, female leaders face psychological and physical violence, as well as structural barriers that have been normalised to some extent. The study found that there are no existing measures or policies in place to alleviate women's negative experiences within the political party framework or broader political institutions and structures.

The challenges that women confront when entering politics later in their careers can be substantial. These obstacles include a lack of financial resources and limited experience, which can hinder their ability to build a strong public image. Furthermore, female candidates are often subjected to political violence and hooliganism during elections, leading to intimidation and a reluctance to participate in politics. Nevertheless, research has demonstrated that women with prior political experience tend to have a higher likelihood of success in electoral competition.

Propaganda, media bias, corruption, and the fight for gender equality within political parties were among the gender biases revealed by the action research on this issue. To address the systemic violence against women, recommendations were presented for trauma-healing practices, merit-based selection, and psychosocial strengthening. Finally, the findings emphasise the significance of empowering women, promoting democracy, and holding political parties accountable for addressing these issues and mitigating structural violence.

8.3 CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

This research found that political parties in Nairobi engage in gendered violence, which constitutes a form of structural violence that impedes women's ability to participate in politics. Although this problem may be global, the study revealed that the lack of understanding and attention from political party leaders and other decision-makers impedes gender equality in leadership positions. Women worldwide face gender-motivated political violence, but in this study's context, the issue has received little attention.

The study also noted that both male and female participants perceived structural violence as primarily manifesting as physical violence inflicted on women during political campaigns. Most respondents identified subtle, systemic barriers and inequities affecting female party members. However, participants initially failed to recognise the structural nature of the issue, viewing it as an individual experience, which elicited empathetic concern but did not require addressing the institutional structures hindering women's empowerment.

Violence against women in politics is rooted in structural violence, which is embedded in social structures that perpetuate the unequal distribution of access to basic human needs based on ascriptive group membership. This unequal distribution of resources leads to disparities in life chances and has far-reaching negative consequences for individuals' physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

The study confirmed the view that the exclusion of women from political participation is linked to ancient and modern political theories that associate men with the public

sphere and women with the private sphere (Alexander 2018; Hossain *et al.* 2018). The involvement of institutional structures, notably political parties, can restrict women's full participation in public life and impede their ability to claim their political rights. Women may encounter obstacles when advocating for their agenda due to household responsibilities and social expectations, as well as the notion that lobby meetings occur in male-dominated "boys clubs" where they are unwelcome. Moreover, men tend to have greater access to social forums and networks than women. The interviewees in the action research repeatedly affirmed this.

Moreover, recognising the experiences of structural violence that women encounter can be a challenging task due to the private and indirect nature of the violence, which is often concealed from others. The study's results indicate that such frequent occurrences tend to diminish women's chances of achieving equal standing with men as leaders. Studies have linked the portrayal of women in subordinate, submissive roles to a reduction in their belief in their accomplishments and a diminished interest in political participation.

Female politicians often alter their conduct and social connections to ensure their success, especially in high-level positions. This can involve modifying their appearance and communication style to meet the expectations of their constituents and colleagues. Regrettably, inadequate support for women in politics can result in emotional trauma, which they may conceal to maintain their reputation and stay competitive in their careers.

Prominent responses to the plight of women could originate from the male patriarchy within the political parties themselves. These individuals can be viewed as party patrons or even owners. The parties may endorse women's nominations for public offices and related appointments, advocate for progressive policies that support women's political ascendance, or urge the state to implement gender-friendly policy measures. However, this is not merely a token gesture to accommodate women who meet the requirements set by men; effectively, it allows the men to gain new allies among the women and prevent any significant women's participation in the party's mainstream. This is what the research showed. In this context, party politics routinely disregard personal trauma and prejudices against women as common casualties.

8.4 PLANNING, DESIGNING AND EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTION

After examining structural violence within political parties, the participants were questioned about their comprehension of the concept. Once we clarified the definition, they showed enthusiasm for participating in storytelling, trauma healing, and dialogue sessions, despite certain responses being ambiguous and focusing on physical violence. The participants were able to connect with the topic of structural violence and were allowed to reflect on their own experiences and insights. In addition, the researchers shared their insights on the intervention techniques used. The participants actively engaged in planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and evaluating collectively throughout the action project. This enabled them to reflect on the processes at various stages of the intervention sessions.

To encourage reflection, the group participants and the researcher kept diaries to record the activity and progress of the action research intervention. The use of these notes provided a written record of activities and self-reflection on the action-research process, fostered a culture of self-reflection, and assisted participants in becoming "reflexive spectators who reflect on their actions and transform their ideas and future actions based on reflection." Since the study was practical for both the participants and the researcher, it brought out the action researcher in everyone. The study consistently employed action research characteristics throughout the action project, including the planning stage, the storytelling and dialogue stage, the developing stage, and the reflecting stage. The action project took time to develop; it was not instant.

Action research demonstrates a powerful means of advancing professional development by encouraging inquiry, contemplation, and problem-solving, ultimately leading to action (Reason and Bradbury 2008). Action research identifies reflective practices like reflecting, modifying practice, and re-planning as essential components that can enhance individuals' confidence in their professional capabilities (Laprise 2017). Moreover, cultivating action confidence through planning, skill acquisition, and demonstrating proficiency in new actions, behaviours, or roles is considered a critical element in bringing about transformative change (Vila and Pomeroy 2020). The

researcher observed this in the action groups, which responded positively to the action-research process. The participants were incredibly enthusiastic and eager to participate more in the action process.

This chapter, therefore, clarified the action research methodology employed in this study and demonstrated how to design trauma healing and conflict transformation dialogue sessions in response to action research. In this instance, action research served as a means for data collection, but more importantly, it provided participants with the opportunity to function as researchers and formulate an intervention to address structural violence within political parties. The study aimed to raise awareness about structural violence by encouraging critical-dialogical discussions. Action research can serve a variety of purposes, ranging from conducting research to taking action, ultimately leading to the empowerment of research participants. The study followed an action research approach that included collecting data on structural violence reduction, participants conducting their research, and evaluating the consequences of the trauma support and conflict transformation dialogue sessions. The researcher adopted a reciprocal research praxis that resulted in self-reflexivity for both the researcher and participants.

8.5 THEORY UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

This research employed a triangulation of theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of structural violence, specifically Galtung's theory of violence, Lederach's conflict transformation theory, and moral development theories. Johan Galtung's foundational work, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," underpins his theory of violence, which delves into the various forms of violence present in society. Galtung's theory distinguishes between direct violence (physical harm), structural violence (inequalities embedded in social structures), and cultural violence (legitimisation of violence through norms and values). Researchers can utilise Galtung's framework to identify the root causes of violence and address them effectively.

Lederach's conflict transformation theory, as outlined in "Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies," emphasises the importance of addressing

conflicts at various levels and promoting sustainable peace. Lederach's approach involves fostering relationships, engaging diverse stakeholders, and transforming the underlying dynamics of conflict. By integrating Lederach's perspective, researchers can develop strategies to not only address immediate manifestations of violence but also to create long-term solutions that promote reconciliation and peacebuilding.

This triangulation also includes moral development theories, which offer a valuable lens for examining the ethical implications of addressing structural violence. These theories, as outlined in works such as Kohlberg's "Moral Development Theory" and Gilligan's "Ethic of Care," explore how individuals and societies can develop and refine their moral reasoning and decision-making. Researchers can ensure that their strategies for addressing structural violence are grounded in an understanding of the ethical complexities and nuances involved by incorporating these theories.

Moreover, integrating moral development theories, such as Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development and Carol Gilligan's ethics of care, adds a layer of ethical contemplation to the examination of violence. These theories provide valuable insights into how individuals perceive and respond to moral dilemmas, shedding light on the fundamental values and beliefs that guide behaviours associated with violence. By incorporating moral development theories, the participants, as researchers, broadened their comprehension of the ethical implications of violence and explored ways to encourage moral growth and accountability in resolving conflicts that result in structural violence.

Overall, the combination of these three theories offers a robust framework for understanding and addressing the intricate challenges of structural violence. By integrating Galtung's framework for understanding the various forms of violence, Lederach's perspective on conflict transformation, and moral development theories, researchers can develop effective strategies that address the root causes of violence and promote sustainable peace and reconciliation. Although these theories were the foundation of the study, they also directed the intervention. The intervention was guided by a critical perspective, as the intricate issue of mitigating structural violence against female leaders and, more importantly, gender-based violence in general, requires critical engagement.

8.6 ACTION RESEARCH WITH POLITICAL LEADERS

This research project utilised action research as a method to involve political leaders in initiatives aimed at reducing the structural violence inflicted upon women within political parties in Nairobi. A fundamental aspect of action research is that both the researcher and the participants share a common agenda. Thus, the relationship between the researcher and participant researchers is reciprocal, facilitating the achievement of both parties' objectives. Action research played a crucial role in facilitating discussions among participants about issues that affected them and matters that they considered significant in addressing structural violence within political parties. The study emphasises that utilising action research helped to reinforce the research's relevance and resulted in an effective action intervention. This was achieved through the active participation of participant researchers, which contributed to the sustainability and ownership of the research.

The implementation of action-research methodology played a vital role in enhancing the knowledge and practices of the participants. In this process, the researcher acted as a collaborator with the participants, who functioned as co-researchers, thereby promoting active engagement and dialogue among them. The methodology enabled continuous interaction with political leaders throughout the research procedure. The leaders acquired valuable research and personal skills through their participation, while significantly contributing to the reduction of structural violence within political parties in Nairobi. The sessions involved a reciprocal exchange of ideas, and as a participant in the discourse, the researcher gained both professional and personal benefits. This study emphasised the importance of political leaders initiating change and being part of the solution, with leaders themselves acting as agents of change within their political parties. The use of action research served as an empowering tactic for all parties involved.

Although action research has several advantages, it is not without its disadvantages. For instance, participants found it challenging to view themselves as co-researchers rather than mere participants. The researcher repeatedly reminded participants that they were in charge, not the researcher or expert. Moreover, working with political

leaders presented various difficulties, such as scheduling meetings. These leaders were often busy and could not all meet at the same time, making it challenging to find a suitable time for all participants. Due to time constraints, the researcher had to accommodate whoever could attend each of the three meetings on different days. Additionally, managing the workload associated with these time constraints was also a challenge. Power relations and group dynamics emerged during the research process when some participants tried to defend their political parties, as they were suspicious of others attending the meetings. Effective dialogue and trust are essential values when conducting action research.

8.7 LEARNING, NEW KNOWLEDGE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION RESEARCH

To address the systemic violence experienced by women leaders in political parties, it is crucial to adopt trauma-informed approaches and support systems. This involves providing mental health resources, creating safe spaces for women leaders to discuss their experiences and seek healing, and implementing policies that prevent and address gender-based violence and discrimination within political parties. A comprehensive and intersectional approach is necessary to effectively tackle the structural violence against women leaders, which involves challenging patriarchal power structures, addressing prevailing societal norms and attitudes, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of political leadership.

The research on the experiences of female leaders in political parties in Kenya has provided several key insights. Firstly, women leaders face a range of abuse and harassment, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic forms, which intersect and compound one another, perpetuating cycles of oppression and marginalisation. Secondly, the normalisation of violence against women leaders impedes their ability to perform their duties effectively. Thirdly, patriarchal power structures and societal norms deeply ingrain this systemic violence, restricting women's political participation and leadership. Fourthly, discrimination and exclusion disproportionately affect women leaders from marginalised backgrounds, including those from lower socioeconomic classes, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and

those with disabilities. This research underscores the role of political parties in perpetuating structural violence against female leaders. Often, these parties lack internal mechanisms or policies to address and prevent gender-based violence and discrimination, resulting in a culture of impunity for the perpetrators.

In addition, the study emphasises the importance of eliminating the financial barriers faced by women leaders in politics. These obstacles include limited access to funding and resources, which exacerbates the marginalisation of women leaders and restricts their ability to participate actively in political processes. Furthermore, the study suggests that media coverage has a crucial impact on either perpetuating or challenging patriarchal norms or stereotypes.

Despite the conduct of several studies on peace in Kenya, the action research methodology offered a unique perspective on the region. The study's participants acknowledged that they had received peace training, but they had not actively participated in related studies. For them, this was a new and welcome experience. Participants in the action research study among political parties acknowledged evidence that the effects of stigma and social distrust have intensified women's trauma in political processes. However, they generally believed that women possess strong bonds of solidarity and identities for resilience. Nevertheless, this study revealed that this belief is misleading. Many women political leaders suffer in silence, confront stressful moments individually, and lack the support groups that many people assume they possess. Some of the presented analyses have touched upon these issues.

Sometimes, the trauma women endure, especially during political campaigns, has severe repercussions that impair their social and occupational functioning and significantly impact their health. These experiences also tend to deplete their financial resources. While previous studies did not necessarily identify women within the political class as being at an increased risk of trauma due to their experiences, as revealed by this study, women are indeed at risk and must be supported wherever any inquiry is made into both power and politics. Their suffering and exposure to the negative consequences of traumatic stress have not received proper consideration for several decades.

Furthermore, political parties have disregarded structural political violence, which affects participants regardless of gender. The political parties we collaborated with asserted that research has failed to address the trauma experienced by leaders, as they are often viewed as strong, resilient, and hardly human. People consider a study like this, which incorporates the political class, to be innovative. Structural violence has been politicised.

The study's findings demonstrated that the pursuit of leadership within political parties exposes female leaders to traumatic or adverse events. These events are systematic and can range from over-controlled decision-making participation within parties to physical harassment and violence during political campaigns. Traumatic events can have a negative impact on the confidence and performance of women leaders and are often accompanied by psychiatric problems, such as depression and high blood pressure. As the study continued, it became clear that political parties must take measures to minimize these negative outcomes for female leaders who are party members.

During the transformative dialogue sessions, the participants discussed the psychological pressure faced by the victims. The study participants shared their experiences of systematic violence within parties, which helped identify this issue. It would be interesting to note whether the research participants called for trauma therapies within political party establishments for women, in particular, to ensure their mental health and advance women's leadership. This would represent a novel area of intervention for peace researchers. The study argued that trauma therapies within political party establishments can reduce symptoms such as anxiety, flashbacks, and avoidance of trauma triggers, including women's fear of public leadership if implemented effectively.

The study highlights the need for a responsive and consistent approach to providing trauma therapy to women leaders in political parties. This therapy must be respectful and engaging, as it is crucial for lowering traumatic stress symptoms. The research found that the clients would appreciate a supportive network of therapy that fosters relationships and strengthens ties within political parties. A successful therapeutic

relationship can create a safe, stimulating, and positive environment for skill-building and therapeutic tasks.

This study emphasises the need for concerted efforts at multiple levels, including political, societal, and international, to address the issue of structural violence against women leaders in political parties. This confirms the importance of supporting initiatives that promote gender equity in political organisations, raise awareness about the issue, provide psychological support for both men and women in leadership positions, and advocate for policy reforms that prioritise gender equality and psychological healing. Future research should investigate the specific dynamics and manifestations of structural violence in different political contexts, as well as its psychological impact on political leaders.

8.8 CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that fostering gender equality and empowering female leaders involves more than simply elevating a few women to positions of authority. Rather, it necessitates creating institutional environments that grant female leaders the necessary power and autonomy to support other women. It is crucial to recognise that women in the political realm may engage in sexist behaviour and hold inconsistent views on gender. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is required to combat structural violence against female leaders within political parties, particularly in African political parties. This approach should encompass addressing gender inequality in the workplace, eradicating token systems that restrict women's opportunities, reducing threats to social identity, and tackling negative stereotypes and biases that impede women's advancement.

Political parties have the potential to significantly impact gender equity in society by intentionally transforming their overall culture, attitudes, and leadership structures to respect and promote gender equity. Parties can form their views on gender roles from a variety of sources, but any authority guiding these changes should include recommendations for immediate actions, such as integrating trauma therapy for victims of systemic violence. The action study revealed clear evidence of structural violence against women, particularly within the political parties in Nairobi. There is a

clear and urgent need to address these issues and promote gender equity by conducting practical and specific activities that address the mental health of women leaders, among other interventions.

The participatory design of the action research facilitated collaboration with several political leaders, who together shared valuable insights on structural violence and related gender issues. Throughout the intervention phase of the research, despite the challenges of working with politicians, such as the complexities of discussions, limited time, and competing local patriarchal interests, the researcher, as the action researcher responsible for breaking down censorship surrounding gender constructions and relations, brought some of the participants into transformative dialogue sessions that led to a commitment to drive reforms within their parties. The researcher strongly emphasised the importance of establishing peaceful and equitable democratic relationships, as well as the need to sustain dialogue on themes such as these within the parties. The study participants suggested institutionalising trauma response programs within the parties.

Gender is a critical issue that necessitates a reflective approach. As the study progressed, unique insights into gender and explored actions political parties can take to develop capacities capable of confronting their violent history and architecture emerged. To overcome the common resistance to change in patriarchal institutions such as political parties, we should encourage enduring reflections.

As an action researcher, the researcher frequently had to shift their role to enable involvement in both dynamic cyclical analysis and action-taking. This enabled the researcher to conduct successful dialogue sessions at the end of the research study. The participants, having become accustomed to the process, gained the emotional confidence necessary to share their genuine experiences and reflect collectively on their thoughts and observations. The sessions provided a conducive environment where women and men could engage in dialogue. This was a significant finding from the study, as many participants gained greater freedom to think and address their issues. Political parties can also incorporate the outcomes of this study into their programs.

The findings suggest that a comprehensive approach is necessary to address the structural violence against women leaders within political parties in Nairobi. This approach should include policy interventions, financial resources, and support to empower women leaders, as well as efforts to challenge societal expectations and norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women. It is essential to implement systematic changes within political party structures and broader political institutions to ensure gender equality and support women leaders in their pursuit of political participation and representation.

Moreover, efforts should be made to increase media coverage and visibility of women leaders, as media representation plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards women in leadership positions. Media organisations should be encouraged to depict women leaders fairly and without bias, challenge gender stereotypes, and highlight their achievements and capabilities.

Political parties need to nurture an inclusive and supportive political environment that values and respects women's leadership. By tackling structural barriers and advocating for gender equality, political parties can become more inclusive and representative of the diverse population they serve. Understanding this global shift necessitates an evolving comprehension of the state's role post-World War II, given the increased sensitivity to discrimination and its detrimental effects on political stability and economic growth. About the advancement of women's rights and participation, legal quotas to guarantee women's representation have also been a significant factor.

Accordingly, targeted interventions and policy changes are necessary to address the barriers and challenges confronted by female leaders in political parties. These interventions should concentrate on reforming party structures, promoting gender equality, offering financial support and resources for women leaders, reinforcing mechanisms to address violence and harassment against women leaders, and challenging societal norms that perpetuate discrimination. Political parties must also actively promote and implement gender quotas to ensure more equal representation of women in leadership positions. Robust support systems should accompany these quotas, addressing the challenges faced by women leaders and providing them with necessary resources and advancement opportunities. This calls for a transformative

approach that challenges the underlying power dynamics and patriarchal structures of political parties.

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Election observer

Others-----specify

Please state how much you agree that women’s participation in political parties is undermined through systematic violence perpetuated by patriarchy. Do you agree?

Agree Very Much

Agree

Agree to some extent

Don’t Agree

In your view:

Do you understand what structural violence against women is? 01Yes 02 No

If yes, please explain _____

If yes, do you believe that structural violence exists within the political party? 01 Yes
02No

Have you experienced structural violence within the political party? 01 Yes 02 No

Please explain

Have you observed structural violence against women in your political party? 01 Yes
02 No

On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is least likely and 5 is most likely, rate the following statements, circle your response:

The political party **system** is the main challenge faced by women within the various parties. (1 2, 3, 4, 5)

The political party **leadership** is the main challenge faced by women within the various parties. (1 2, 3, 4, 5)

The political party **policies** are the main challenge faced by women within the various parties. (1 2, 3, 4, 5)

The political **patronage** is the main challenge faced by women within the various parties. (1 2, 3, 4, 5)

Other women leaders within the political party structure are the main challenge faced by women within the various parties. (1 2, 3, 4, 5)

In your view, does _____ hinder women's participation within the political party?

poverty, Yes/No

education Yes/No

culture Yes/No

In your view, does your party have effective policies that mitigate violence against women? Yes/No

Please circle the policies that you are aware of within your political party:

Inclusion policy

Equal opportunity policy

Harassment and intimidation policy

Disciplinary policy

Complaints Policy

Gender based violence

Does your party have other measures to mitigate violence against women? (Yes/No)

If Yes, what are the other measures taken to mitigate violence against women within your

party?.....
.....
.....

In your view, are the measures taken to mitigate violence against women within your political party:

Accessible? (Yes/No)

User friendly? (Yes/No)

Inclusive? (Yes/No)

Effective? (Yes/No)

In your view, does your political party provide trauma healing support for women who have experienced violence within the party? (Yes/No)

Evaluate the possibility of attaining women's equal participation within political parties in Kenya

It is possible

It is nearly possible

It is impossible

Don't know

12a Which party has the best policies of mitigating against women structural violence _____?

To what extent do you agree with the statement that "Violence against women in politics in Kenya is planned and systematic".

I agree

I disagree

Agree strongly

Disagree Strongly

What are your recommendations in relations to structural violence against

women within the political parties:

.....
.....

INTERVIEW GUIDE (QUALITATIVE)

Interview Guide

Describe the main challenges women within the political parties face in political participation in Kenya.....

Do women within the political parties face different kinds of challenges than men. Elaborate your answer

In your experience, what are the types of violence that women face within the political parties.

What are the mechanisms for managing structural violence within your political party?

What role can trauma healing practices play in addressing violence against women within the political parties

Give any three recommendations for tackling structural violence against women in the Kenyan political parties.

APPENDIX B: SUPPORT GROUP AND DIALOGUE GUIDE

Interview Guide:

Describe the main challenges women within the political parties face in political participation in Kenya.....

Do women within the political parties face different kinds of challenges than men. Elaborate your answer

In your experience, what are the types of violence that women face within the political parties.

What are the mechanisms for managing structural violence within your political party?

What role can trauma healing practices play in addressing violence against women within the political parties

Give any three recommendations for tackling structural violence against women in the Kenyan political parties.

APPENDIX C: EVALUATION GUIDE

THE EVALUATION FORM

(To be completed by dialogue participants)

The purpose of the self-assessment evaluation is to assist the Researcher in evaluating the dialogue implementation excise. Accordingly, the survey or questionnaire will usually ask questions aimed at evaluating the following:

The Topic of study

The Dialogue - contribution and effectiveness

Venue and logistics

Please insert in the appropriate box the answer that best reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is (1= strongly disagree 2=disagree, 3= Somewhat Agree, 4= strongly agree). **(THE RATING SCALE)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Rating
Topic of Study					
1. The objectives of the study are clear.					
2. The recommendations of the study are					

practical/workable					
3. The study is relevant					
4. The study tackled the issues comprehensively					
Management of Dialogue meeting					
5. The dialogue meeting was held at the appropriate time of day.					
6. The right number of participants was attained					
7. The chair kept the meetings on track.					
8. The participation at the					

discussions was lively.					
Venue of meeting					
9. The venue of the meeting was appropriate					
10. The food for participants was suitable					
Overall Evaluation					
11. Overall, I am satisfied with my contribution to the dialogue meeting					
12. Overall, I am satisfied with the group's contribution to the meeting.					

OVERALL ACTION: _

Please provide comments and suggestions for your further action after dialogue:

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM



LETTER OF INFORMATION.

Title of the Research Study: Reducing Structural Obstacles Against Women Leaders within Political Parties in Kenya

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: (Walkowa Akinyi Odinga PhD Public Management/Peace Studies/ Mphil Management Coaching, PGDs African Studies/Women Studies /Psychotherapy)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: (Dr Sylvia Kaye PhD)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Outline of the Procedures:

The overall aim of this study is to reduce structural violence against women leaders within the political parties. The concept of Structural violence refers to avoidable harm caused by institutions or social structures through impairment of fundamental human needs. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The interview will last for an hour in the privacy of your own space. I will also invite you at a later date to attend a training workshop on leadership. The study will explore structural violence against women leaders within the main political parties in Nairobi. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, the study will engage an equal number of women and men, a total number of 109, directly through Participatory Action Research.

Further the study will use mixed method approach which will not only enable this research to examine the experiences of the participants but also the extent of the

structural violence thereby leading to an in-depth broad understanding of this phenomenon. To this end, you have been selected because you are a member of a political party based in Nairobi, Kenya and your participation can, therefore, help us to gain more practical insight into this important topic.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts to the participant that will arise because of the study.

Benefits:

The study is likely to result in the following benefits:

This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on structural violence against women leaders by demonstrating how political parties can transform internally with a view to reducing structural violence against women within the party system.

Through Participatory Action Research the study will provide the political party leadership strategies that could enable them tackle structural violence at the various levels of the political party structure.

The Study could serve as a blueprint for policy formulation on structural violence against women within the political parties in Kenya.

The study will could also be replicated in other regions as structural violence against women leaders is still rampant in many areas across Africa and beyond.

Reason/s why you as a participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study:

This is to inform you that your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and should you decide to withdraw at any given time you will be allowed to do so.

Remuneration:

You as a participant will not be offered any form of remuneration or incentives to participate in the study.

Costs of the Study:

You will not incur any costs throughout the research process.

Confidentiality:

In terms of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy, the study will refrain from referring to respondents by their names or publishing any other sensitive information about them. The researcher will engender confidentiality at all costs.

Research-related Injury:

It is not anticipated that you will incur any injury related to the research. However, should this occur, the research will meet your treatments costs.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings: All correspondence and data will be kept on my password- protected computer only for five years and hard copies will be kept at my home in a locked cupboard and after five years destroyed. Nowhere will a link between data and person be maintained. We are not interested in findings per individual, but mostly in findings and patterns across the sample of political leaders. We expect that certain specific stories and contexts may be interesting to highlight. We will do that with caution to protect your identity and check with you before reporting in the research publication

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at akinyiwalkowa@gmail.com or +27 82 483 4029; or my supervisors, Dr Sylvia Kaye at sylviak@dut.ac.za or +27 31 373 6860, or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.



CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher

Walkowa Akinyi Odinga about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study -
Research Ethics Clearance Number: **IREC 275/21**

I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant
Letter of

Information) regarding the study.

I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex,
age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this
study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.

I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the
study.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare
myself prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research
which may

relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant Date Time Signature / Right

Thumbprint

I, Walkowa A
Odinga

herewith confirm
that the above
participant has
been fully

informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher Date Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) Date Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date

APPENDIX D: E PROOF OF EDITING

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The pen is mightier than the sword

To whom it may concern

I edited the thesis titled: Mitigating Structural Violence against Women Leaders within Political Parties in Nairobi, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management—Peace Studies in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology by WALKOWA AKINYI ODINGA, Student Number: 22173804

Sury Bisetty [REDACTED] 08 October 2024
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APPENDIX E TURNITIN REPORT

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