





## Chapter Three

# Parliamentary Female Representation and Party Candidate Selection Methods in Zambia

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### Introduction

On 12 August 2021, Zambia held general elections, which marked a significant turning point in her political trajectory. Long-time opposition leader Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development (UPND) was elected President of the Republic of Zambia, resoundingly defeating incumbent Edgar Chagwa Lungu of the Patriotic Front (PF) Party. Other notable political parties, such as the Socialist Party (SP), led by Fred M'membe, and the Democratic Party, headed by former foreign minister Harry Kalaba, scored less than 1% at the presidential level. While this election put an end to a decade-long rule of the Patriotic Front Party, official results from the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ, 2021a) show that it was also the first time that the UPND entered parliament with 46.28% of seats in the National Assembly of Zambia from 41.66% of the seats in 2016, while the Patriotic Front party won 36.66%

of the seats, compared to 42.01% in 2016 general elections (ECZ, 2021a).

Another significant outcome of the elections was that it witnessed a reduced number of women into the Zambian parliament. According to official results released by the ECZ, 23 women were elected out of the 156-seat Zambian parliament, constituting 14.6% of total parliamentarians, down from 18.4% in the previous parliament. On the one hand, women from UPND now make up one-third of the total female legislators, despite the fact that UPND won the majority with 46.28% of parliamentary seats. On the other, women from the Patriotic Front Party make up of one-third of the total female legislators in the Zambian parliament (National Assembly of Zambia, 2022). We agree with other experts (Maguire, 2018; Krook & Zetterberg, 2014), who argue that when such figures are not so inspiring, especially that political parties usually campaign on a gender equality platform, its gender parity measures to ensure women's fair and improved representation in legislative bodies become doubtful.

As noted by the European Union Election Observer Mission (EUOM, 2022) in its 2021 Elections Report for Zambia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) and others (DiRienzo & Das, 2019; Fokum et al., 2020; Tajali, 2019; Agénor & Canuto, 2015), the participation of women in decision-making in parliament is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy, but a necessary pre-condition for women's interests to be considered for policy and legislative consequences. This means that political structures or methods used by parties and governments, which do not result in the equal participation of men and women or their equal enjoyment of benefits from state interventions are, by definition, neither inclusive nor democratic. In recognising that over three decades since the reintroduction of plural politics in Zambia, women's gains in the political arena have been slow and inadequate, it is, therefore, significant to make scholarly inquiry that makes women's participation in public affairs a priority and devise a strategy that would scale-up each of the political parties' efforts to foster gender equality.

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In terms of methodology, as noted in the overture to this chapter, our goal is to provide evidence for the argument that an enhanced role of the party's central organ in the selection process is cardinal if more women are to be selected for parliamentary elections. For the purposes of electoral administration, Zambia is divided into 10 administrative provinces; the provinces are then sub-divided into 116 districts. The districts are further divided into electoral constituencies according to the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats, 2022). Each constituency is represented by one Member of Parliament. The smallest electoral unit is called the ward; the grassroots' administrative structure. Following this structure, political parties also have structures with officials corresponding to the official electoral administrative structure. Using several sources of data, such as party adoption lists and interviews, we managed to collect the information required for this from the respective party administrative structures. We analysed the adoption lists for the three political parties (PF, UPND and SP) in all 10 provinces of Zambia. Without a doubt, the 2021 general elections in Zambia were, by and large, dominated by the UPND and the Patriotic Front Party, as evidenced by the number of seats won by each party in the country's legislative body.

We also take a keen interest in the Socialist Party's performance in the election, especially the number of parliamentary candidates selected on its ticket - 137 in total out of 156 - something unprecedented in recent Zambian political history. Although the performance of the Socialist Party at the parliamentary and presidential levels was dismal, it provides a blueprint for the chapter of a centralised candidate selection system. The information obtained from parties' candidate adoption lists was used to determine which candidate selection system - centralised, decentralised or hybrid - was most effective in selecting more women as parliamentary candidates in the 2021 general elections (ECZ, 2021b).

We augmented this information by conducting at least one in-depth interview with grassroots or wards, district, provincial and national party officials in some selected provinces and districts. The interviews comprised a series of open-ended

questions asking respondents about their experiences with adoption and nominations of parliamentary candidates in the run-up to the 2021 general elections. The exact number of national, provincial, district, constituency and ward level officials that we interviewed is as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Provincial, Districts, Constituencies and Ward Participants

Province	District(s)	Constituencies	Wards	Participants
Lusaka	Lusaka Chilanga	Chilanga Chawama Matero	Chinyanja, New Farms, Nakachenje Misisi, Kuku, John Howard George, Mandevu, Lilanda	10
Central	Itezhi-Tezhi* Mumbwa	Itezhi-Tezhi Mumbwa Nangoma	Basanga, Nansenga (Makunku), Banamwaze Mupona, Mumba, Nalusanga Keezwa, Nalubanda	10
Muchinga	Shiwang'andu Nakonde	Shiwang'andu Nakonde	Bulaya, Chibesakunda, Matumbo Ilonda, Isunda, Mpande	10
Luapula	Mansa Kawambwa	Mansa Pambashe	Mulelenshi, Muchinka, Muleshi Ilombe, Pambashe, Kabanse	10
<b>Total</b>				<b>40</b>

Source: Authors' conceptualisation

Itezhi-Tezhi District was previously part of Central Province until October 2021, when the new administration realigned it

to Southern Province. In 2011, late President Micheal Sata had allocated it to Central Province.

Thus, the original data we collected has the advantage of including qualitative data into the statistics that we collected from the adoption list from selected political parties under investigation. However, the in-depth interviews had limited geographical coverage. This limitation was abated by including, urban, peri-urban and rural constituencies that were representative of Zambia's electoral geography.

This chapter makes a contribution to the discourse on female representation by arguing that parties' candidate selection methods have a significant bearing on the number of women nominated or selected for elections. Academic inquiry in this genre has often focused on gender quotas (O'Brien & Piscopo, 2019; Rosen, 2017; Preece et al., 2016; Reingold & Harrell, 2010) often deals with increased gender quotas as of the basic principles for the efficacy of political parties in effecting gender representation. While the use of gender quotas by political parties improved the status of women in some legislative bodies, we argue that very little can be achieved in countries without legally binding quotas for women. In countries without quotas for women, we have to rely on another mechanism – the candidate selection process. In this chapter, we therefore attempt to provide an answer to the question of what selection methods do Zambian political parties use and how do they impact selection of women and participation of women in politics? The following section answers these questions and forms the analytical framework of our chapter.

### **Political Parties as Gatekeepers, Women and Candidate Selection**

Political parties play a critical role in the recruitment of women as parliamentary candidates by virtue of being primary gatekeepers in candidate selection processes. According to Kayuni and Chikadza (2016), who studied the supply-side of women's political participation, argue that although there are some of the factors that explain why women decide to run

(or not) for political office, gatekeepers within the parties, that is the people with power within a party, can determine, for the most part, women's entry into politics. Other scholars (Mirziyoyeva & Salahodjaev, 2022; Preece, et al., 2016) point out that the gatekeeping row of political parties makes it possible for parties to effect change by recruiting more women to stand on their tickets during elections and become strategic mediums for female representation in legislative bodies.

As gatekeepers, political parties are critical players in the socialisation, recruitment, selection, nomination, and election of candidates to public office (Celis & Erzeel, 2017; Childs et al., 2010). By so doing, they expose female candidates, and other citizens, to politics by conveying the principles of democratic procedure (Siwale & Momba, 2020). The importance of the political parties in candidate selection is rooted in the fact that access to political power and decision-making typically begins at the political party level within political parties (Kayuni & Chikadza, 2016). Since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1991, the expectations have become even higher, where contesting parties represent multiple avenues for participation and representation of the hitherto marginalised segments of society, including, but not limited to, women. Despite Zambia's return to a multiparty democracy in the early 1990s, the political parties are still largely a masculine domain, with only a small minority of women represented (EUOM, 2022). For instance, there are currently only 13.4% of women in the local councils elected according to official results by the country's electoral body (ECZ, 2021b).

Like most African countries, Zambia has a long history of male domination in politics. Studies (Ikegbu, 2018; Culhane, 2018; Abbo, 2012) suggest that men usually enjoy privileged access to the necessary material and political resources, even in traditionally matrimonial communities. In addition, data released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2017) indicates that male domination in African politics means that fewer women have been able to reach positions of decision-making within the political parties, and that women are nominated by the major parties in fewer numbers than men. In order to

improve the number of women in politics, some institutions such as the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA, 2005) and scholars (Celis et al., 2014) suggest that the use of gender quotas which stipulate that the number or percentage of women must be included in a candidate list or the number of seats to be allocated to women in a legislature. The main aim of these gender quotas is to reverse discrimination in law and practice and to provide equal opportunities for women and men in politics.

Those who support the implementation of gender quotas, such as Krook and Norris (2014) and Larserud and Taphorn (2007), argue that such mechanisms regulate political parties' actions and emphasise the notion of political parties as the 'gatekeepers' through which citizens pursue opportunities for political recruitment into the country's leadership. Gender quotas play a critical role in providing meaningful and effective opportunities for female party members to access elected public offices. In many countries, electoral gender quotas have proved to be the single most effective tool for 'fast-tracking' women's representation in legislative bodies.

Krook and Norris (2014) suggest the implementation of one or a combination of all three forms of gender quotas – legislated, legislated reserve seats, and voluntary party quotas for women – is cardinal to achieving effective female representation. Legislated quotas are those which regulate the gender composition of the candidate lists and are binding by law for all political parties in the election; they are mandated either through national constitutions or by electoral legislation. Over 60 countries and special areas around the world use legislated candidate quotas, which may be used in conjunction with other types of electoral gender quotas. Under Zambian electoral law (Electoral Process Act, Number 16 of 2016 and the Constitution of Zambia, Amendment Act Number 2 of 2016), political parties are not bound to effect any form of quota for women during candidate selection processes, although the constitution clearly states that political parties should be gender sensitive in their policies and outlook but does not stipulate whether parties should reserve special seats for women.

The only type of mechanism applicable to Zambian political parties is voluntary party quotas for women. According to Krook and Norris (2014), these are quotas adopted by individual political parties for their own candidate lists and are usually enshrined in party statutes and rules. In about 37 countries and territorial jurisdictions, at least one political party represented in the legislative body uses a voluntary party quota. However, it is important to note that as an extensive body of research in this genre suggests, such quotas may have a differential impact in different contexts and in different electoral systems and may take longer than a single electoral cycle to produce the desired impact (Celis et al., 2014). Furthermore, we believe, as noted by other scholars (Langston & Aparicio-Castillo, 2011; Chaney, 2014), that gender quotas do not remove all structural, institutional and societal barriers for women in politics and need to be complemented by other measures designed to create equal opportunities for women in politics. This brings us to the question of the selection procedure or method used by respective political parties because the method of selecting candidates matters whether quotas exist in a political jurisdiction or not.

Regarding methods or procedures for candidate selection, political parties in Zambia use three methods for candidate selection. The first method of candidate selection is the *decentralised system*, where ordinary members at the local level – control the process by pre-selecting candidates during party primaries and recommend candidates to the next tier in the party hierarchy, usually a regional or provincial committee which further shortlists candidates and submit to the national level agency. The national level agency makes the final decision by endorsing the decisions of the lower organs for adoption. According to Hazan and Rahat (2002b), in extremely decentralised systems, the ordinary members of the party decide without any participation or involvement of the party leaders. In this chapter, this scenario is illustrated by the manner that the UPND selected its candidates in most constituencies, where members of constituency and district electoral college elected the party candidates through direct votes. The election for

adoption is between all candidates that present themselves, and the process takes place under the supervision of local party officials – largely outside the control of the party's National Management Committee (NMC). According to one party official, the NMC ensures that the person who won the primary election will be on the ballot chapter representing the party (Interview with UPND member, 2 June 2022).

The second type of candidate selection is a *centralised system*; that is, where the top national level agencies control the candidate selection and recommend them to the regional and grassroots members (Hazan & Rahat, 2002b). As noted by others (Krook & Norris, 2014; Hazan & Rahat, 2002a; Farrell, 1994) in a centralised candidate selection system, a national party agency would decide on the candidate selection without any involvement by the more local branches of the party. However, the actual practice for candidate selection even in centralised parties is usually somewhere between the two extremes. In some centralised parties, candidates are chosen at the local level but the national level of the party has enough degree of influence on who is selected for a particular electoral district or constituency (Krook & Norris, 2014). In this way, the influence of the national level agency is to be proactive by encouraging, recommending, or forcing the local branch to choose a particular candidate – or negative by the national level party reserving the right to veto candidates. In this case, the centralised party often tries to strike a difficult balance between national level strategies and preferences of party officials and local sensitivities. This scenario seems to have been the system used by the Socialist Party to select its candidates prior to the August 2021 general elections in Zambia. This is not strange for a party that espouses the principle of democratic centralism.

We also had to look at the former governing party, the Patriotic Front Party, which employed a mixture of centralised and decentralised system. We have called this the *Hybrid System*, where local, regional or national – controls the candidate selection based on party interest and local realities. According to Krook and Norris (2014), in extreme cases, where the party central organ decides to be highly involved, a national party

agency would decide on the candidate selection without any involvement by the local branches of the party. At the other end of the scale would be a system where the most local branches of the party would decide on candidates with little participation from the national level agency. In most Zambian political parties, candidates are chosen at the local level even though the national level of the party has a varying degree of influence. As witnessed in the 2021 general elections, the Patriotic Front Party, which used a hybrid system often had a pro-active influence on the process by encouraging, recommending, or forcing the local branch to choose a particular candidate – or negative by the national level party reserving the right to veto candidates.

Although there is little evidence that any of these methods were decisive in selecting women in safe seats, it would be natural for all the political parties selected in this chapter to be more influential in fulfilling electoral gender quotas than participation which tend to favour decentralised candidate selection method (Field & Siavelis, 2008). While the decentralised system encourages democratic participation, it has serious implications as far as women's capacity to sustain electoral campaigns during primaries. Like in most electoral primaries, there is enough evidence that so many disadvantages, such as electoral malpractices, which disadvantage female candidates during the adoption process. On the one hand, a decentralised candidate selection system lowers the chances of women being selected because of structural and socio-economic reasons at the grassroots level. On the other hand, a centralised system allows the party's national-level agency to determine its course by affirmative action, which is selecting more women. We think that there should be evidence suggesting this could have been the reason for the lower number of women in the Zambian parliament after the 2021 general elections.

In the analysis and discussion that follows in the next sections, we offer a combination of quantitative data from the party candidate list described above and qualitative analysis and discussion of interview information from party officials and candidates as well as information from other written

sources. We analysed data from the 2021 Zambian elections that covered the calendar, selection criteria and structural characteristics of candidate nomination in the political parties under investigation. Further, the chapter examines the challenges faced by the women during the adoption process, campaigning after adoption as well as after winning for those who emerge victorious.

### **Results for Decentralised, Hybrid and Centralised Adoption System**

This section highlights evidence in support of the argument that centralised method of selecting candidates is most effective if a political party wants to achieve gender parity.

Table 2 shows that the centralised method of selecting candidates is most effective if a political party would like to maximise the number of women. In the run-up to the 2021 general elections, 41% of the candidates nominated by the Socialist Party were female. The Socialist Party also had the highest number selected per province, except in Lusaka with only 8% female candidates compared to 24% and 32% for the UPND and the Patriotic Front party respectively. The rest were all above 30% minimum, albeit contesting for the first time in general elections, presented quite an interesting result to the election process. Unlike many new entrant political parties, the Socialist Party managed to field 137 candidates out of the 156 parliamentary seats. Of the 137 candidates, 59 were female candidates, representing 41% of women adopted by the party (ECZ, 2021b).

According to Socialist Party statutes, contained in its constitution, the selection of candidates is supposed to be driven by the party structures from below where the majority of party members specifically within their electoral boundaries can participate directly in the selection of candidates to represent their constituencies. Thereafter, the central committee of the Socialist Party presides over the top four candidates in choosing the final candidate to represent the party. While the party constitution commits itself to ensuring the equal participation

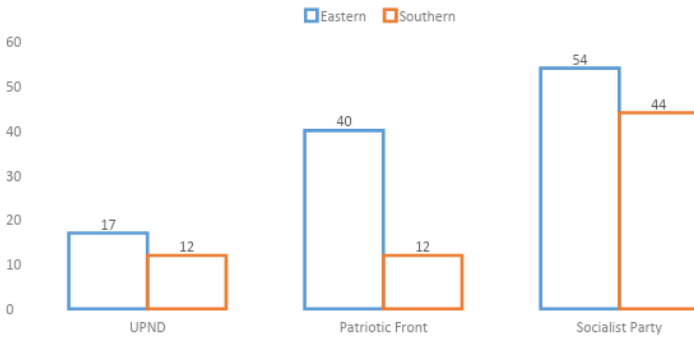
in the party regardless of race, gender, tribe or colour, the party does not have a quota system for adopting candidates to balancing gender representation in the party (Interview with Secretary General of Socialist Party, 5 June 2022). It is the party’s national level agency which takes precedence in all matters of policy, including candidate selection.

**Table 2:** Percentage and Method of Candidate Selection by Gender in 10 Provinces of Zambia in 2021

Province	UPND – Decentralised System		Patriotic Front Party– Hybrid System		Socialist Party – Centralised Method	
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Central	80	20	88	12	68	32
Copperbelt	100	00	77	23	55	45
Eastern	83	17	60	40	46	54
Luapula	94	06	88	12	66	34
Lusaka	76	24	68	32	92	08
Muchinga	90	10	80	20	40	60
Northern	100	00	92	08	38	62
North-Western	92	08	92	08	66	34
Southern	88	12	88	12	56	44
Western	89	11	79	21	68	32
<b>Ave. %</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>81.2</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>

**Source:** Authors’ compilation based on Electoral Commission of Zambia validly adopted candidates.

The selection criteria in the Socialist Party, however, shows that more women are more interested in contesting in the party structures as leaders, especially in agrarian provinces, such as Eastern and Southern provinces as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Percentage of Female Candidates by Party in Agrarian Provinces. Source: Authors' compilation

It can also be seen that the Socialist Party had the greatest number of women candidates in the parliamentary elections with 59 female candidates out of 156 seats representing 40% of female candidates from one party. This is consistent with our argument that a party that has centralised the adoption process tends to be responsive to the gender and control for a balanced gender representation in national elections. As a result of the nature of adoption process in the Socialist Party, most respondents could not explicitly state the challenges that they faced in the adoption process as it was the first time that the party was fielding candidates in a general election and most contestants knew each other during campaigns.

The UPND had the lowest number of female candidates, which is represented by only 10.8% of its candidates. Only 20 out of 156 parliamentary seats were won by women candidates, representing 13% of the total parliamentary seats (ECZ, 2021a). This is way below the target that the country has set to equalise the gender gap in political participation and the decision-making process. Zambia is a signatory to the Southern Africa Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development which requires 50% women's representation in all areas of decision-making by the year 2030 (SADC, 2008). This means that the decentralised candidate selection method may not be the best method as far as political participation of women is concerned, despite the party having an arrangement where

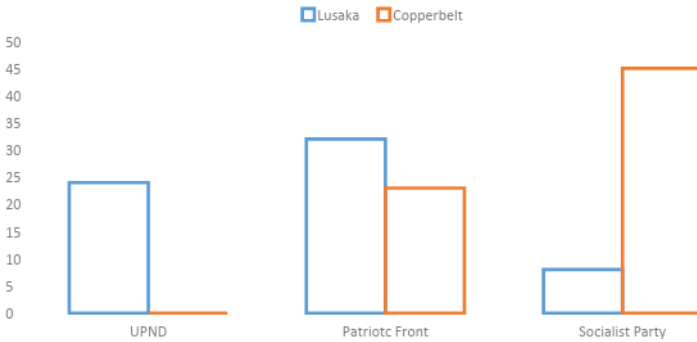
at each party level there is respective representation of each gender. For instance, at district level, there is a party chairman as well as women chairladies (Interview with UPND member, Chilanga District, 18 May 2022). However, much as women have been given some of those positions, they are somewhat nominal, as most influential positions are occupied by men, and women only perform women-related functions. For instance, all the ten provincial structures are headed by men (Interview with UPND member, Lusaka Province, 10 April 2022).

While women are given positions to perform certain functions that lean towards representing women affairs within the party, there is limited participation of women as candidates in national elections. In 2021, UPND only fielded 16 female candidates out of the 156 constituencies, representing 10% of women candidates from the party. The main reason for the lower women participation in elections rests in the adoption method as explained in the above section. The party followed a decentralised approach where all party members without regard to structural imbalances that disadvantages women to compete with their male counterparts on a free and fair level. The party was aware that it has traditional strongholds where it enjoys over 90% support. These are areas where the party could have exercised due consideration to challenges that women face when paired with male counterparts in political competition. For instance, in Southern province, where the party holds all 20 of the parliamentary seats and was guaranteed of retaining them, the party only adopted two female candidates to represent the party in parliamentary elections in 2021.

The adopted female candidates from the UPND did raise concerns regarding how hard it was for them to finally be accepted on the party ticket as candidates. The perception that society has on women in politics that they engage in promiscuous relationships with the party leaders in order to win acceptance in the party creates an environment that makes it difficult for women to come into the open and freely declare interest to compete in national politics (Interview with UPND member, Mumbwa District, 13 May 2022). Further, economically, Zambian society has for a long time favoured

men which better advantages in an environment where there is a strong political culture of expecting gifts from political candidates such as party regalia, alcoholic beverages, and to a greater extent, money, in exchange for political support, and therefore, women tend to fail to mobilise supporters and fairly participate in political contests (Interview with UPND member, Shiwang’andu District, March 2022).

Since the main drawback is the economy, it is shocking that even in Copperbelt, where the Socialist Party and Patriotic Front had few female candidates, the UPND female candidates failed to win any primary elections. In Lusaka, only 2 female candidates out of 12 managed to win primary elections.



**Figure 2:** Percentage of Female Candidates in Copperbelt and Lusaka. Source: Authors’ compilation

This means that even where modern economic livelihood matters most, there are structural challenges that prevent women from competing favourably with male counterparts. Hence, we argue that the decentralised system may not be ideal for parties that would like to select more women as parliamentary candidates.

Regarding the hybrid method used by the former governing party, only 18.9% of candidates nominated by the Patriotic Front were female. The Patriotic Front fielded candidates in all the constituencies. Out of the 156 constituencies, the party adopted 25 women as candidates for

parliamentary elections, representing 18% of female candidates for parliamentary elections. One striking observation is that in the adoption process, the party secretariat had a greater role in selecting who finally contests on the party ticket (Interview with Patriotic Front member, Nakonde District, May 2022). The adoption method as explained above started with recommendations from constituency structures on the available candidates and their strengths and weaknesses (Interview with Patriotic Front member, Mumbwa District, 28 January 2022). The Secretariat had to scrutinise the candidates based on the information provided by lower structures and ultimately, the final list of candidates reflected that the party settled for more male candidates even if the number of aspiring women candidates was far below that of aspiring candidates (Interview with Patriotic Front member, Lusaka, 28 May 2022).

It is very clear from the analysis and discussion in this section that much needs to be achieved to increase the number of female candidates for parliamentary elections. Since Zambia has not yet made legislation for mandatory gender quotas, it may be plausible for political parties that need to maximise the number of women, by using a centralised system for candidate selection. Of course, there is a need to take into consideration structural barriers to female adoption. We turn to this subject in the next section.

### **Structural Barriers to Female Adoption**

Although there are commitments by political parties in their manifestoes and constitutions, national policies as well as international regimes and agreements to which Zambia subscribes, reality shows that the country is far from reaching any target set by respective political parties as well as the nation at large. The fact that political parties are free to craft their own constitutions which have not embraced a gender quota system, in order to provide a base on which a substantial number of women could aspire to compete with their male counterparts, creates a big gap to balance women's representation in parliament.

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Most primaries are marred with corruption and abuse of the electoral process by party officials (Ndambwa, 2020). Although this form of malpractice is not often noticed, it does not just undermine the integrity of the entire electoral process but also discourages and disadvantages women from contesting as candidates. For instance, one respondent who was adopted for a seat in a rural constituency and later the party replaced her with a male candidate, recounted how difficult it was for her to just express interest in contesting for a parliamentary seat where the incumbent was a man and was willing to recontest the seat. She said that “a number of social media groups were created to de-campaign me where a lot of hate speech was advanced towards me. Although I won at the district level and the national level approved my adoption, within a week I was replaced by a male counterpart by the secretary general of the party” (Interview with 2021 parliamentary aspiring candidate, 29 December 2021). What this entails is that political participation by women in the realm of political competition is dependent on a number of factors, chief amongst them enough resources and the dominance of men in these political parties which tend to present a gender-skewed approach when making important decisions in the party, such as selecting candidates (Wang & Muriaas, 2019; Rosen, 2017; Ndambwa, 2015).

Furthermore, the ownership of political parties determines who holds what position and eventually is adopted on the party ticket as a candidate. In Zambia, political parties are mostly founded and funded by men (Siwale & Momba, 2020). In most cases, the founder remains the engine of the party and life president. For that matter, they cannot be challenged for as long as they are willing to maintain their position. It is this ‘big man’ syndrome that gives almost exclusive powers to the party founders to almost hand-pick friends as candidates on their ticket (Siwale, 2016). The majority of their friends are not women. As a result, women tend to lag in competing for parliamentary seats with their male counterparts who actually own the political parties.

Another aspect affecting women’s participation in politics as well as the adoption process is political culture. Today,

Zambia's political culture posits somewhat signs of upward mobility from parochial to a civic political culture. There is still a firm narrative that leadership is a preserve of the men, especially in rural areas and religious families. Therefore, socialisation processes tend to tilt towards the dominant norms in Zambian society that men should lead and eventually it affects the desire of women to aspire for political leadership as well as men's openness to work with women. As much as there are a number of policy initiatives and international regimes to which the country subscribes to reduce the gender gap in politics, political parties remain male-dominated and to a greater extent male-dominated decisions made by political parties and parliament (Rosen, 2017; Bjarnegård, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

The chapter endeavoured to explore the nature of female representation in the Zambian Parliament in relation to the adoption methods employed by various political parties in the country. Three political parties, namely, the UPND, Patriotic Front and Socialist Party, were used as chapter cases and showed that the political parties employed three different methods in the name of centralised, decentralised and hybrid adoption methods. The chapter revealed that the Socialist Party, which used a centralised method of adopting candidates, had adopted more female candidates than the party that used decentralised and hybrid methods put together in the 2021 parliamentary elections.

To explain why women are under-represented in parliament in Zambia, the adoption method stands out as one of the primary reasons why women fail to make it onto the ballot as candidates. Several candidates interviewed revealed that to become adopted in their respective communities, there are issues that they need to attend to; chief amongst such as providing money, party regalia, food and other gifts to mobilise support, which the party uses as benchmarks to measure the popularity of the candidate. However, many women in the country are economically disadvantaged in most households in Zambia, as they depend on working men to fend for them. This

eventually discourages political parties from adopting women who are not able to sponsor themselves as well as helping the party to campaign. Women find it hard to penetrate parliament because of the electoral system that tends to support a two-party system which equally banks on traditional strongholds. From the adoptions of the two major parties in the 2021 parliamentary elections, we note that the dominant parties adopted few female candidates and placed them in constituencies that were not their strongholds, when in fact they had safe seats which could have been allocated to women.

Further, the chapter revealed that ownership of political parties in most cases determined the nature of party adoptions whether the party has a written constitution stipulating how adoptions and other decisions should be made. It must be stressed that political parties are formed and owned by men. The owners of the parties are usually the main funders of the parties, with the help from a few of their friends. These tend to be the key decision-makers, and they mostly settle for economically well-off male candidates to stand on their tickets knowing that the party will not spend much on the campaigns of such candidates. This has resulted in the marginalisation of a number of women from actively participating in politics. In the absence of legislation that would help to facilitate the establishment of adoption quotas amongst political parties, we believe that centralised methods would compel party leaders to at least adopt enough women for parliamentary elections.

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