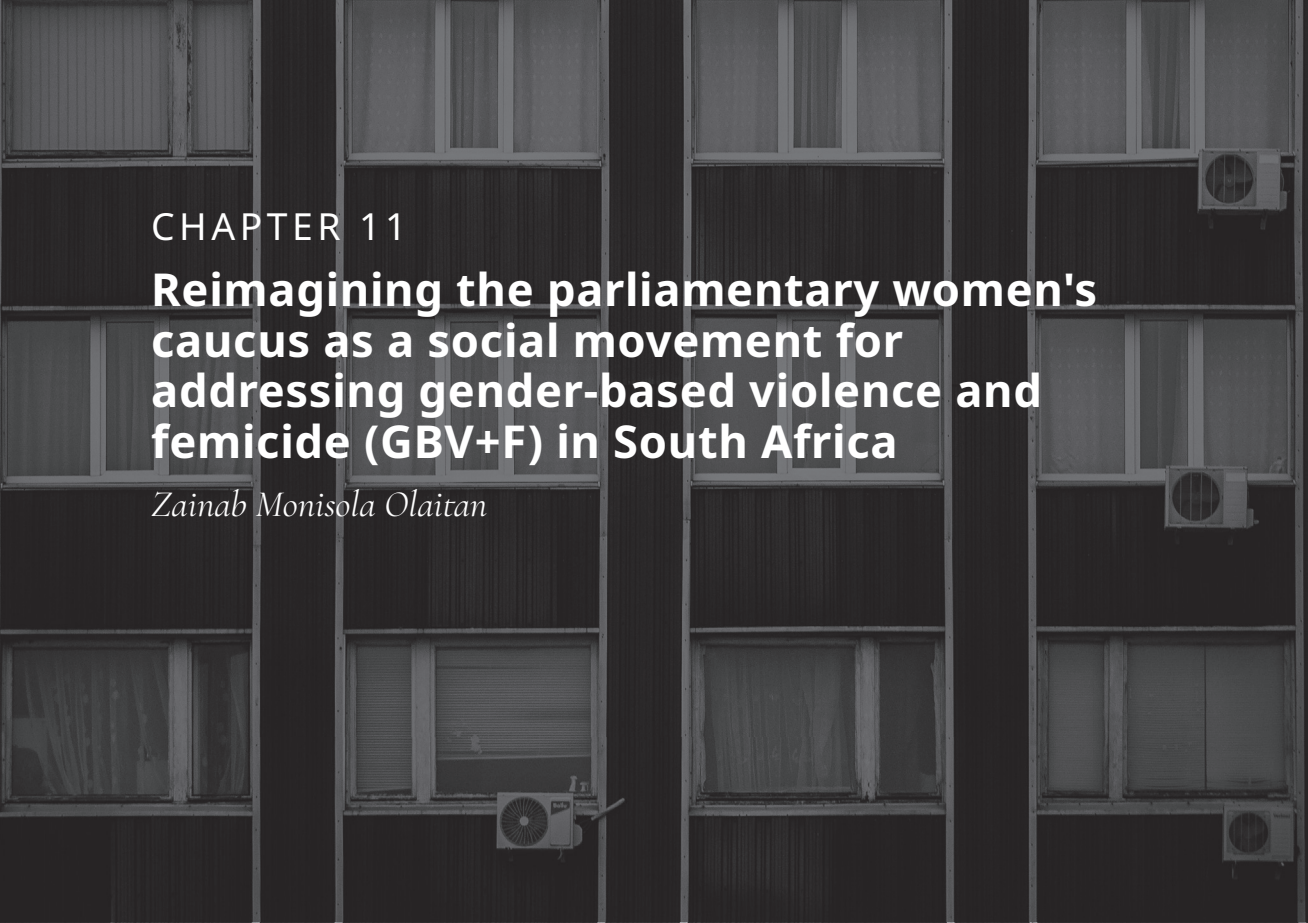




CHAPTER 11

Reimagining the parliamentary women's caucus as a social movement for addressing gender-based violence and femicide (GBV+F) in South Africa

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Introduction

Gender-based violence, which is systemic and endemic violence, is often perpetrated against women because of harmful patriarchal attitudes. Although this violence affects men, women and gender non-conforming individuals are the most affected by it. This impacts women's quality of life, necessitating new and innovative approaches to address it. The prevalence and severity of GBV are demonstrated by the fact that at least one in three women worldwide has experienced one form of abuse or another (UN, 1993). The South African Police Service (SAPS) reported that 62,649 sexual offence complaints were recorded between 2013 and 2014 (Abrahams & Gevers, 2017, p. 1). They note further that victims' relatives or close friends committed 34.6% of rapes, while 26.1% were by random acquaintances, and 24.4% of victims had no relationship with their abusers. The report goes on to state that one in five women in South Africa has been sexually abused and will experience such abuse in their lifetime. It notes that two in five women have experienced physical abuse by their intimate partner, making their homes or surroundings unsafe for them.

South Africa, being a patriarchal society, exposes women to violence because it is assumed that women are subordinate to men. Women are rendered defenceless, helpless, and disadvantaged, which inevitably increases their vulnerability to the violence meted out to them. The government has undertaken different policies and programmes to combat GBV, and marches and protests have been organised to convey the fears of women concerning GBV+F. However, there has been no significant change. The redundancy of existing strategies to reduce the high rate of GBV+F necessitates a novel approach to addressing this menace and promoting social change.

One way to achieve social change is through a dedicated social movement. Addressing the prevalence of GBV+F calls for a social movement to be centred on resource mobilisation and political opportunity to effect the needed social change. An existing body that aligns with this cause is the Multi-party Women's Caucus, a platform that brings together all female Members of Parliament across party lines to discuss, deliberate, take positions collectively as women, and present them to the larger parliament, advocating for women's issues. The South African parliamentary women's caucus could act as a social movement to address the prevalence of GBV+F in the country. The primary task of this caucus is to advocate for gender justice and women's issues in parliament, with GBV being a prominent concern.

This raises the question: can we re-imagine the women's caucus as a social movement, and to what extent can it serve as a social movement towards social change? This enables us to explore uncharted paths towards addressing GBV+F and fostering social change. Therefore, using the prism of social movements, this chapter examines how the Multi-party Women's Caucus can be a force against GBV+F incidence in South Africa. It examines how a collective of women parliamentarians can serve as an agent of change for the broader population of women in South Africa. The goal of this study aligns with broader efforts to suggest measures for reducing GBV+F incidence while also empowering women in government towards this goal.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was employed to conduct this study on reimagining the parliamentary women's caucus as a social movement for addressing GBV+F. Furthermore, an exploratory research design was employed to understand how the parliamentary women's caucus can serve as a social movement in the fight against GBV+F. A thematic analytical framework was then adopted to support

the arguments on the central research question: how can the Multi-party Women's Caucus act as a social movement for GBV+F? The chapter uses the concept of social movements as the prism through which we explore the possibility of the women's caucus as a potential agent of social change in addressing the prevalence of GBV+F in South Africa.

Understanding social movements

Diani (1992, p. 1) states that “social movements are networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts based on shared collective identities.” DeFronzo and Gill (2020) define the social movement as a continuous, organised endeavour in which a sizable number of individuals come together to collaborate to advance what they believe to be positive social change or to resist what they believe to be negative social development. Tarrow (1994) asserts that to alter existing power structures and dynamics, social movements plan their actions in sustained cycles of opposition and contestation. Menochal (2016) adds that social movements are large, usually informal organisations of people that band together against systems of power in support of a common cause. They often emerge in response to perceived injustice, oppression, and/or unmet socio-cultural, political, or economic demands. Hensmans and van Bommel (2018) describe social movements as collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities, aiming to effect change through contestation. Typically, social movements fight over resources, meaning, and practices as they attempt to achieve their objectives through emerging forms of bottom-up collective action. Tarrow (1994) asserts that the mode of organising social movements is not fundamentally ‘polite debate’ or ‘invited spaces’ of dialogue between the state and society. Horn (2013) notes that social relationships serve as the foundation of social movements; hence, the more widespread and well-known a movement’s structures and traditions are, the more likely it is to grow and endure. DeFronzo and Gill (2020) note that people frequently form social movements to address social issues when they feel societal factors are to blame.

Hensmans and van Bommel (2018) assert that since the 1950s, when scholars first began to consider how individual conduct may shift into group action for social change, there have been studies on social movements. They were not seen as reasonable, coordinated, or well-planned endeavours to advance an agenda. Moreover, their *modus operandi* was viewed as destructive, unreasonable, and

agitating, fuelling social unrest that threatened the standards and principles of the pre-existing social order. Researchers sought to fully comprehend this tumultuous social upheaval through an examination of group dynamics and collective action. However, they mostly ignored the more structured and planned aspects of social movements and their beneficial impact on social transformation. Different social movement categories depend on the overarching goal they seek to achieve.

A progressive or liberal movement seeks to transform traditional institutions, cultural norms, or societal standards. For instance, the legalisation of same-sex marriage would be pushed as a progressive agenda. Conservative movements work to maintain the status quo (resisting change), such as the one that pushes for the criminalisation of same-sex marriages. A reactionary movement seeks to reinstate previous social traditions, cultural practices, or institutions. A revolutionary movement, on the other hand, aims to topple a few significant societal structures to bring about a substantial structural change. Other examples of social movements include the civil rights movement in the USA, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and the decolonial liberation movements across the African continent. These social movements rallied around a single cause, employing various strategies to disrupt power structures and achieve their desired objectives.

Deliberating the role of social movements

Tarrow (1994) points out that social movements succeed when they establish a feeling of community and emphasise shared identities and solidarities among certain groups of people, situations, and political cultures. They often collectivise over group challenges, rely on common goals, and sustain group engagement over an extended period. Social movements seek to accomplish their goals by mobilising resources, seizing political chances, and framing problems in their favour (Hensmans & van Bommel, 2018). Attempts have been made to understand how social movements advance their goals through hegemonic conflict (van Bommel & Spicer, 2011). Stemming from these discussions, two theories, (1) resource mobilisation and (2) political opportunity, were proposed to explain social movement successes.

The resource mobilisation hypothesis posits that social movements are founded by individuals who successfully mobilise scarce resources, including knowledge, capital, facilities for organising, communication media, and technology (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Jenkins (1983, p. 533) argues that by capturing the shift from non-institutionalised movement resources to

institutionalised sources, “resource mobilisation theorised the emergence of professional social movement organisations led by professional, dedicated actors drawing on resources from conscience constituencies rather than a large direct membership and engaging in actions that ‘speak for’ rather than involve an aggrieved group”. On the other hand, political opportunity theorists argue that achieving collective action by people and organisations requires more than providing incentives and solving issues. It mostly depends on players acquainted with one another expressing their perspectives on events and how they can maximise their position of power (Tilly, 1978).

Hensmans and van Bommel (2018, p. 3) argue that “a more structural approach that demanded more focus on contextual issues, most notably the availability of political possibilities and public opinion in the social and political environment, was conceptualised” to make up for the shortcomings of the resource mobilisation theory. Building on these insights, organisational scholars conceived the relationship between stakeholders in social movements’ economic and political spheres through various nested possibilities at the industrial, national, and global levels. As a result, researchers began combining the components of the political opportunity structure and resource mobilisation to explain whether social movements succeed in enacting major institutional and social change (King, 2008). The resource mobilisation and political opportunity theories will be used to assess the effectiveness of the multi-party women’s caucus as a social movement.

Gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa

GBV+F is a multiplex concept that covers various forms of violence meted out based on gender. It is a general term used to capture violence within the framework of a particular society due to the uneven power relationships between genders and the normative role expectations connected with each (Bloom, 2008, p. 14). It can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, psychological, economic, or cultural abuse. Though GBV+F is largely perceived as violence against women, since women comprise the largest portion of the impacted population group, it can affect all people, including men and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons. Simply put, it is violence against another person because of their gender. According to Vetten (2021) the term ‘GBV+F’ is often conflated with ‘violence against women and girls’. The most widely adopted definition is found in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993, where, GBV+F is understood

as “any act of violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UN, 1993, p. 2).

As a patriarchal society, South Africans are socialised from a young age with the assumption that women are subordinate to men, thus normalising the violence by men to which women are exposed (Olaitan, 2023). One in five women in South Africa has been sexually abused and will experience sexual abuse in their lifetime (StatsSA). In such communities, women are rendered defenceless, helpless, and disadvantaged, which inevitably increases their vulnerability to violence. StatsSA (2016) notes that two in five have experienced physical abuse by their intimate partner, making their homes or surroundings unsafe. Abrahams and Gevers (2017, p. 1) cite a SAPS report that 62,649 sexual offence complaints were recorded between 2013 and 2014. Amongst these offences were rapes, of which 34.6% were committed by victims’ relatives or close friends, 26.1% by random acquaintances, and 24.4% by abusers unknown to the victims.

Gqola (2015) characterises rape as a manifestation of male power and female vulnerability, which is consistent with the idea that GBV+F results from an ongoing systemic power dynamic that maintains the objectification and stereotyping of women. Given the significance of rape kits in gathering evidence when a rape crime occurs, it is concerning that 76% of police stations in South Africa did not have rape kits in 2019 (Whitfield et al., 2019). Enaifoghe et al. (2021) report that 75% of men in the Gauteng province of South Africa reported having committed GBV+F at least once in their lifetime, compared to 51% of all the women in the sample who had experienced any violence. During the first week of the lockdown in 2020, gender-based violence (GBV) complaints rose to 2,320. According to South African minister of police Bheki Cele, this statistic was 37% higher than the weekly average of domestic violence cases reported to the police in 2019 (Commission for Gender Equality, 2022).

Maphunye (2013) argues that while there is a lack of up-to-date statistics tracking GBV+F cases, the lives of women in South Africa are devastated by this violence. The National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation claims that only one in 20 rape cases is reported to the SAPS and human rights organisations place the estimate at only one in nine cases of sexual violence. The Medical Research Council and Gender Links (in Enaifoghe et al., 2021) assert that only one in 20 women reported rape to the police, and 0.3% reported domestic violence. Between 2018 and 2019, the SAPS documented almost

330,000 assault cases involving women. High rates of sexual assault, rape, and femicide continue to occur in South Africa despite numerous campaigns and interventions conducted by government groups and CSOs related to GBV+F (South African Human Rights Commission, 2018).

The fundamental flaws of the criminal justice system in holding offenders accountable show that patriarchy and gender imbalance continue to operate and sustain gender hierarchies through essentialist ideas of gender and physical and/or sexual violence in South Africa (Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust, 2017). The low rate of prosecution and conviction of GBV+F offenders conveys impunity to perpetrators of such acts, thereby endangering the lives of women (Commission for Gender Equality, 2022). Gouws (2022) notes that South Africa has notoriously high levels of violence against women, with the latest police figures showing that 10,818 rape cases were reported in the first quarter of 2022. Targeted measures are required to address the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa.

Background

Increased women's presence in parliament: Catalyst for a multi-party women's caucus

The 1996 Constitution enshrines the right to equality and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, sex, age, disability, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, culture, language, and place of birth. The Constitution facilitated the adoption of several national legislations promoting gender equality and the establishment of comprehensive national institutions for its advancement, such as the Commission for Gender Equality and the National Gender Machinery, whose mission is to safeguard and promote gender equality in South Africa. Several specific pieces of legislation were also important for ensuring women's participation and representation in decision-making processes and for promoting gender quotas, such as the Electoral Act No. 73 of 1998, which enjoins every registered party to uphold women's rights. This mandates that political parties follow the Act's requirement to ensure that female candidates can interact freely with other parties and candidates, and engage fully and equally with their male counterparts.

Additionally, it calls on political parties to ensure that women have unrestricted access to all public gatherings, marches, protests, rallies, and other public events and to take all reasonable measures to protect their right to participate freely in

political activities. Based on this, political parties have adopted gender quotas to increase women's representation in politics, particularly in national legislatures. To boost the representation of women at all levels of governance, the African National Congress (ANC), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) adopted a voluntary quota system for their party lists. The ANC has a gender parity (50%) quota system for women; EFF uses the zebra approach (50%) wherein men and women are alternated on the party lists, while the IFP has a 40% gender quota. So far, the ANC has achieved gender parity using the voluntary quota system, while the EFF is one percentage point short of meeting the 50% mark. At 46.4%, South Africa sits among the top 3 African countries with increased women's political representation. Overall, South Africa has made significant advancements, and its parliament, which ranks third in Africa, is undoubtedly one of the most gender diverse in the world. Political parties like the ANC, EFF, and IFP are committed to increasing the number of women in the political system. As a result, the number of seats held by women in the National Assembly has increased significantly since the 1994 general elections. The Dullah Omar Institute's Women and Democracy Initiative (2019) notes that the African National Congress (ANC) appears to have achieved its 25-year goal to boost women's seniority and leadership. Newer political parties, such as the EFF, have implemented progressive strategies to increase women's political participation, influenced by the governing party's strategy (the diffusion effect) in advancing women's representation. However, while the ANC, EFF and IFP use gender quotas for their electoral lists, other opposition parties, such as the DA, ACDP, and FF+, do not commit themselves to quotas for women's representation (Lowe Morna et al., 2009, p. 11).

The Multi-party Women's Caucus in the South African parliament

The increased representation of women in South Africa's national parliament created an opportunity for female Members of Parliament to come together and form the Multi-party Women's Caucus. The Multi-party Women's Caucus comprises all-female National Assembly members and female permanent representatives to the National Council of Provinces. The chairperson and five other members chosen by the caucus comprise the steering committee overseeing the multi-party women's caucus (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG], 2023).

The Multi-party Women's Caucus acts as an advisory, influencing, and consultative body by introducing a women's perspective and focus on parliamentary activities, including debates; advocating for the interests and

concerns of women members of parliament; encouraging the discussion of women's issues in parliament; making submissions to the portfolio committee overseeing women's issues, either at the committee's request or on its own initiative; engaging in developmental and empowerment issues with women in political structures outside of parliament (PMG, 2023). The main task of this caucus is to advocate and speak for women's issues in parliament, amongst which GBV+F ranks highly. The caucus enables them to come together and deliberate on women's issues, determining a collective position before presenting it to the larger parliament. The caucus is tasked with addressing issues that affect women without recourse to party mandates, thereby demonstrating its unity on women's issues. They also act as a cohesive force in advocating women's issues in parliament and the broader political system.

Reimagining the Multi-party Women's Caucus as a social movement

Seeking a novel lens through which to address gender-based violence and femicide is pertinent due to its prevalence and the redundancy of the government's current strategies. However, the role of policies, laws, and strategic plans in driving the agenda towards addressing the prevalence of GBV+F cannot be overstated. However, their continued ineffectiveness requires a much more targeted and personalised strategy, thereby motivating the reimagining of the multi-party women's caucus as a social movement towards the cause of reducing GBV+F in South Africa. To effectively create a women's caucus that can serve as a social movement for GBV+F, there must be unity of purpose (i.e. the members are united in their dedication to addressing the prevalence of GBV+F in South Africa). To achieve this, the caucus must prioritise women's interests over party affiliation. Second, they must be grounded in the cause they are fighting for; unifying a cause differs from knowing what needs to be done to actualise the cause. Hence, they must understand what, when and how to organise to create social change. As their core functions centre on women's issues, we can argue that the caucus will mostly prioritise women's issues in their agenda. Additionally, their positions as Members of Parliament create a platform where they can collectively drive the GBV+F agenda.

Using the two theories of social movements discussed earlier, we can argue that the women's caucus has the resource mobilisation and political opportunity structure to act as a social movement for addressing gender-based violence and femicide. By weaponising these, they can engender change

in the system to the extent that it involves gaining public buy-in, holding government institutions accountable, and challenging the patriarchal system. It is essential, however, that they view themselves as a microcosm of the larger women's population and take care to maintain popular support. Social movements get their strength from their large numbers, which often translate into support for the cause. Hence, the women's caucus must tap into the larger women's population as a resource. Additionally, they have a favourable political opportunity structure due to their status as Members of Parliament and the presence of women in positions of power. This becomes a very important tool they can use to drive their agendas and agitate for social change. The combination of collective force, unity of purpose, resource mobilisation and political opportunity enables the women's caucus to be a social movement that could effectively address GBV+F prevalence in South Africa. More broadly, they can use this advantage to achieve specific objectives towards the larger goal of creating social change by reducing the rate of GBV+F. These objectives are:

Use social capital for advocacy and awareness raising

An important and often underestimated aspect of addressing GBV+F is societal education and orientation on what GBV+F is and how certain behaviours constitute violence against women. Often, perpetrators of these acts of violence are not aware that their actions constitute gender-based violence. For instance, a husband who engages in sexual intercourse with his wife without her consent would often displace the notion of marital rape with the justification that he has paid for her bride price; hence, he owns her body and can do as he wishes. This, along with many more instances, makes raising awareness and educating people on GBV+F imperative. There is a need for society at large to be informed about what gender-based violence is and how it can be avoided. Women's organisations, non-government organisations and members of civil society have embarked on many awareness-raising programmes in South Africa on GBV+F; notable were the demonstrations and rallies in 2019 following the death of UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana. To bring the women's caucus into this equation, considering the social capital they have as members of parliament and as women in power, they can embark on raising awareness of GBV+F.

Using the two approaches of how social movements can succeed, the women's caucus has the resources and political opportunity to command the attention of the socio-cultural system that legitimises GBV. At the same time, the women's caucus has the ears of government institutions such as the justice

system, the executive and the legislature, which they are part of. The essence of the movement would be to lend their resource, power, and cohesion as women with a focused goal to educate the public on GBV, its ills, and how to avoid it, towards a safer society for women and girls. The women's caucus can collectively work towards social change due to their organisation, unified goal, and position of power. They are more likely to engender social change due to these factors, while also encouraging the general female populace to join their cause of raising awareness of GBV+F.

Push for targeted policies and legislation

A distinct element derived from the intersection of the women's caucus, GBV+F, and social movements is the propensity of female members of parliament to address GBV+F. The political opportunity approach provides sufficient impetus to make this argument. This is most often observable when NGOs and members of civil society react to cases of GBV+F: they are at the mercy of the government and its institutions to make the right call, starting with legislation that criminalises GBV and the policies in place to change this legislation. However, the women's caucus can translate this hope for strict and effective laws and policies into reality. They are in parliament, which is responsible for establishing and safeguarding the country's laws and protecting its citizens. Their status as members of parliament, their organisation as the women's caucus, and their lived experiences as women mean they are best placed to push for targeted legislation that criminalises and addresses GBV+F.

Unity of purpose among the Multi-party Women's Caucus is of utmost importance to this strategy; the need for them to prioritise women's interests above party mandates becomes crucial. As a social movement, they need to constantly drive the agenda of GBV+F on how laws and policies are potent measures to actualise this agenda. GBV+F has been acknowledged as a systemic and social problem that affects South African society in several ways, importantly, the safety of women and girls. The women's caucus can unify towards solving this social problem, bearing in mind that the patriarchal system is at the base of it all. The awareness that they are also victims of the same system that legitimises GBV+F enables them to conscientise themselves individually and collectively towards pushing for effective laws and policies against GBV+F. Their status as members of parliament allows them to push for these laws, while their numbers help garner parliamentary support for the bills to be passed into law. The importance of solidarity and unity of purpose

is pertinent for this strategy to be actualised when we view the women's caucus through the lens of a social movement.

Advocacy and accountability group for the implementation of GBV legislation

A major feature of social movements is their propensity to organise and agitate for social change, which manifests in protest, social action, advocacy, and other forms of action. Having established that the women's caucus can raise awareness to ensure societal education on GBV+F and push for legislation and policies to address GBV+F, they must act as watchdogs to ensure the proper implementation of the legislation and policies. It is not enough that there are laws and policies on GBV+F, but to what extent are they effective at curbing acts of violence against women and girls? This is why despite its many laws and policies, issues like GBV persist in South Africa. The problems lie in the implementation process. Remembering that the ultimate goal of a social movement is the actualisation of social change, the women's caucus can utilise its collective force to advocate for and act as an accountability group for implementing laws and policies on GBV+F. They can ensure the justice system properly delivers judgement on GBV+F cases while administering commensurate sentencing to perpetrators. They can push for more resources to be allocated to the SAPS to ensure that systems are in place to support victims of GBV+F, improve the reporting system, and protect the victims.

In the face of numerous laws and policies, what happens is that when a victim of GBV+F goes to report at a police station, they are either attended to lackadaisically or they are sent back to where the violence occurred. There is a need for proper training of policing institutions and the judiciary on how to handle cases of GBV+F. Here, the provision of psychosocial support for victims of rape or sexual abuse cannot be overstated. The women's caucus can channel efforts to advocate for safe spaces for victims of violence. In cases where the justice system is lagging in holding a perpetrator accountable, they can act as a lobby group that forces the system to do the right thing. The discourse on how to advocate against GBV+F begins and ends with ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable, ensuring the proper implementation of policies and laws on GBV+F, and providing necessary support for victims of GBV+F. In cases where this is not happening, they can channel their social capital as parliament members to pressure the judiciary and relevant stakeholders to create the needed social change.

Significance of the Multi-party Women's Caucus as a social movement

Reimagining the women's caucus as a social movement against GBV+F allows us to also centre women in the fight against GBV+F, women with legislative powers who understand the plights of the larger collective of women. These female MPs are already conscientious towards the cause of GBV because of their gender, as well as the fear that they could also be victims of this menace. Secondly, their position as members of parliament enables them to push the agenda either through their law-making powers or their collective lobbying force as women. The common experience of being women, members of parliament, and targets of gender-based violence allows the women's caucus to advocate for social change and social justice. They can organise themselves towards a common interest and for the collective of South African women. By viewing the women's caucus as a social movement that addresses GBV+F, we can begin to expand the frame with which we view female members of parliament and politicians as advocates and representatives of women, not only within policy-making but also in ensuring that women's interests are catered to beyond the halls of parliament. This furthers into the realm of agitation, advocacy, lobbying and organising to ensure the reduction of gender-based violence in South Africa.

Limitations on the possibility of women's caucuses as social movements

The possibility of the women's caucus as a social movement to address gender-based violence creates hope for social change in South Africa. However, this possibility is not without its limitations. First, considering that members of parliament have fixed terms that they can serve in office, the sustainability of the women's caucus as a social movement comes under threat. Some of these women not be re-elected to office after their 5-year term elapses, and some may exit parliament before their term expires. However, these limitations are not existential threats as the Mutli-party Women's Caucus is an established committee in the South African parliament. Therefore, irrespective of member composition, the platform would always serve a purpose. Moreover, some members of parliament can serve multiple terms, which can also add to the sustainability question. Second, the possibility relies on the assumption that every member of the women's caucus is grounded and dedicated to the platform's cause of acting as a movement for social change. Often, female parliament members prioritise their party mandate over women's interests. So, it is problematic

to assume that the women's caucus, even though it was created to advance women's interests in parliament, will always do so.

Additionally, this possibility might overstate the power that the women's caucus has in relation to how they can impact the system towards actualising their goal. Considering the systemic and institutional roots of GBV, the women's caucus might be limited in how it can lobby the judiciary to hold perpetrators accountable or traditional institutions to enjoin the community to discard centuries- and/or decades-long traditions that often constitute gender-based violence. Nonetheless, the identified limitations of the women's caucus as a social movement to address GBV+F are not existential enough to affect the caucus's capacity to actualise its goal. The most important strength to counteract these limitations would be for the women's caucus to ground itself in popular support of the general women's populace. This enables it to carry out its mandate, bearing in mind that it represents not only itself but also women and girls who comprise many victims of gender-based violence and femicide.

Conclusion

Social movements have always been a part of history. They have epitomised the need for organising and collective action to engender social change, even when the system pushes back. The vulnerability of a situation will often require people to organise towards a common cause. Looking at the prevalence of gender-based violence and femicide across the world, and in this case, South Africa, raises the question of what can be done differently. The government has passed several laws and policies to address this menace, yet widespread incidences of rape, sexual abuse, and violence against women and girls persist. The current approach to addressing GBV+F has not yielded satisfactory results. This implies that novel and innovative ways are required to address it. This chapter addresses one innovative way and gives attention to the multi-party women's caucus in the South African parliament and how it could act as a force for reducing the rate of gender-based violence and femicide in the country.

Based on this context, this chapter undertakes an exploratory study of reimagining the multi-party women's caucus as a social movement for addressing GBV+F in South Africa. Using a qualitative methodology and exploratory research design, the author sought to provide insight into the intersection of the multi-party women's caucus, social movements and GBV+F. The chapter expanded on the understanding of social movements to provide context for reimagining the women's caucus. It highlighted two

approaches by which social movements can either succeed or fail, serving as a roadmap for reimagining their possibilities. It provided context on the prevalence of GBV+F in South Africa, explaining why this novel approach is needed and the desired social change. The chapter also touched on how the increased participation of women in the South African parliament is a precursor for the formation of the multi-party women's caucus. Importantly, the high rate of female members of parliament (46%) is needed for such a caucus to be effective.

In actualising its aim, the author argued that the women's caucus can be a social movement for addressing GBV+F due to its collective sense of purpose, its numbers in parliament, access to resources, and political opportunities. By virtue of these strengths, they can utilise their social capital to raise awareness of GBV+F, advocate for targeted laws and policies, and push for the effective implementation of these laws to reduce GBV+F in South Africa. While there is a possibility that the women's caucus could evolve into a social movement, limitations may threaten its sustainability. Limitations include terms of office for MPs, lack of public buy-in (considering social movements thrive on large numbers). However, social movements are not without challenges and limitations, yet they have been able to agitate for and actualise their goals in the face of these.

By reimagining the women's caucus as a social movement, we can centre women, particularly women in power, as agents of change in relation to gender-based violence. We can weaponise their positions as members of parliament and lived experiences as women to drive the agenda for the eradication of harmful socio-cultural norms that legitimise violence against women. Finally, we open the possibility for innovative ways to create social change to mitigate GBV+F by focusing on the affected population and their life experiences.

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