

ANALYSING THE EMERGING TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF POLITICAL
COMPETITION IN NAMIBIA'S DEMOCRATIC LANDSCAPE: POLITICAL PARTY
SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL ELITISM PERSPECTIVES, 1990-2024

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ABSTRACT

Critically analysing the emerging trajectories of political party systems and the concomitant political elitism that has ensued in Namibia constitutes the objective of this study. In essence, the study analyses the evolving trends and patterns of political rivalry within Namibia's democratic framework from 1990 to 2024. Namibia, one of the relatively newest democracies in Africa, has seen significant changes and developments in its political environment since attaining independence in 1990. To examine the dynamics of party systems, the impact of regional and ethnic identities, and the function of elite actors in forming political narratives and public policy, this study employed a qualitative approach. Important conclusions drawn from this study illuminate the emergence of opposition parties, the growing fragmentation of the political landscape, and the enduring political elitism that prevents wider involvement. Undeniably, these conditions are disingenuous to democratic consolidation in Namibia.

To unpack the aforementioned dynamics, the study delves deeper into how historical legacies and socioeconomic considerations impact these dynamics, offering insights into Namibia's link between political struggle, political systems, and democratic consolidation. The study found that while the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) has maintained its dominance since independence, new political parties like the Landless People's Movement (LPM), the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), and the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) have gained some traction, showing shifting political allegiances. The study also found that political competition in Namibia presents both opportunities and challenges. Although political competition has resulted in broader representation and democratic vibrancy, it is characterised by deep-rooted political elitism, limited internal democracy, and ethnicised voting patterns within

parties. Additionally, neo-patrimonialism and clientelistic practices have continued to undermine competitive multiparty politics in Namibia. The study further found that the emergence of political parties has had different effects on governance and democratic institutions. Although elections have largely remained peaceful and constitutional, the dominance of a few elites has weakened institutional accountability, undermined political participation, and hindered policy responsiveness.

Keywords: Political Competition, Democratic Framework, Political Party Systems, Political Elitism, Political Participation, Community Influence, Democratic Institutions, Political Alliances, Governance, Emerging Trends, Neo-patrimonialism, Clientelism, Corruption.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
APP	All Peoples' Party
AR	Affirmative Repositioning
CoD	Congress of Democrats
COPE	Congress of People
DA	Democratic Alliance
DFJI	De Facto Judicial Independence
ECN	Electoral Commission of Namibia
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EVMs	Electronic Voting Machines
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPC	Independent Patriots for Change
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
LPM	Landless People's Movement
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NDPs	National Development Plans

NDP	National Democratic Party
NUDO	National Unity Democratic Organisation
PDM	Popular Democratic Movement
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNITA	The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my brother, **Japher Lukatezi Kulobone**, whose promising academic trajectory was cut short. At the same time, he pursued a Chartered Accountant qualification at the University of Pretoria, with funding provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers. This would have represented his third academic credential.

I pledge to honour you by striving to achieve what you are now unable to pursue for yourself. Whenever I pause to reflect on you, I am moved to tears. You were an exceptionally bright individual who could have contributed greatly to our family. May the Lord continue to watch over you.

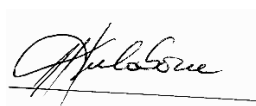
DECLARATIONS

I, **Alberts Munyanya Kulobone**, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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Name of Student

Signature

Date

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and Orientation of the Study

Contemporary political dictates require political competition to qualify democratic governance; hence, a nation's democratic landscape is significantly shaped by political competition. Political competition in the 21st century has demonstrated multiple evolving developments and dynamics shaping democratic governance, including in the Namibian context. With this said, this study employed the grounded theory research design to play a crucial role in shaping the qualitative aspect of this study by systematically generating theories, themes, and arguments from empirical data on the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia.

In the Namibian context, the dynamics of political competition have been essential to Namibia's democratic growth since gaining its independence on 21 March 1990 (Melber, 2014). Changes, continuities, and developments in Namibia's democratic landscape have emerged since 1990. Against this backdrop, this study analyses the emerging dynamics of political competition that have existed in Namibia's democratic environment since its independence. The study investigated new trends and patterns in the evolution of the political democratic competition in the country with a focus on emerging issues, inherent continuities, and changes in Liberation Movements, dominant parties, and political elitism. Therefore, the study aimed to examine the implications for political competition of the hegemonic influence of dominant political parties and the elitism they have assumed. A party system is a configuration and a set of interactions among political parties within a specific political environment (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2020).

Party systems could differ from country to country; a country can employ either a two-party system, a multi-party system, or a dominant party system (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2020). In Namibia, it is evident that the political environment is a multi-party system (Melber, 2018). With this said, the study examined the different areas of party systems, the emergence or formation of political parties in post-independent Namibia, the strategies and internal dynamics that shape party competition, the role of elites in politics, and the impact of other liberation movements in SADC on post-independent Namibia in terms of governance (Chan, 2022). Secondly, electoral processes were investigated, particularly voters' engagement and participation during election periods, the mechanisms employed in Namibia since its independence, and lastly, it analysed the fairness and transparency of political systems.

According to Tomodi (2022), electoral processes denote mechanisms and procedures in which citizens participate in choosing their representatives and making governance decisions. They also involve stages such as voter registration, political candidate nomination, campaigning, and then the voting process. For fairness, transparency, and effectiveness of democratic systems, the votes are then gathered, counted, and tabled. This study, therefore, sought to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the impact of political rivalry on democratic governance and accountability in Namibia. By elucidating the underlying dynamics and identifying potential pathways for reform, this research aims to contribute to the existing knowledge by commending the advancement of democratic principles and practices in the country, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and participatory political landscape. This is against the background of the inherent political party system challenges and elitism facing political competition in Namibia.

1.2 Background of the Study

At the core of democratic governance is political rivalry, which promotes political plurality, guarantees government responsibility, and allows for the representation of many societal interests (Lse et al., 2020). Over the years, there have been substantial changes in the dynamics and structure of political struggle on a global scale (Lse et al., 2020). Institutionalised checks and balances frequently define competitive party systems, alternating power, and somewhat transparent electoral procedures in well-established democracies like those in North America and Western Europe (Besley et al., 2021). These systems are not impervious to difficulties, though. Even in developed democracies, vulnerabilities have been revealed by recent developments like the emergence of populism, growing voter polarisation, dwindling faith in democratic institutions, and the disproportionate influence of corporate interests in politics (Lse et al., 2020).

The long-term viability of democratic principles and the ability of political institutions to adjust to shifting social needs have been called into question by these difficulties (Besley et al., 2021). On the other hand, new democracies and countries in the Global South have unique difficulties when it comes to political rivalry. Establishing strong democratic systems is frequently hampered by weak political institutions, a weak rule of law, and constrained political liberties (Besley et al., 2021). Dominant political parties or long-standing elites frequently monopolise power, silence critics, and rig elections to stay in power. This tendency is especially noticeable in countries emerging from authoritarian governance or those enduring the effects of colonisation and liberation movements (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024). Electoral violence, voter intimidation, and systemic corruption are common features of political rivalry in these

kinds of settings. These factors work together to erode democracy and restrict the power of citizens to influence government (Baker, 2019).

Political struggle in Africa is significantly influenced by socio-political and historical elements specific to the continent (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024). In many instances, liberation groups that opposed colonial control evolved into powerful political parties with considerable sway over the political system (Motz et al., 2022). Even though these movements have popular support and historical validity, their ongoing dominance frequently impedes the growth of competitive multiparty systems. For instance, after apartheid ended in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) ruled South Africa. The ANC's dominance has sparked worries about electoral complacency, deteriorating internal party democracy, and the marginalisation of opposition parties, notwithstanding its contributions to South Africa's democratic transition (Baker, 2019).

Similarly, the manner in which the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), which has held onto power since Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, has influenced the country's political landscape (Wheatley & Mendez, 2020). The democratic foundation of Zimbabwe has been severely weakened by ZANU-PF's dominance through political patronage, militarising the state, and state capture, as well as political violence and electoral fraud (Ashworth et al., 2022). Since Angola gained its independence in 1975, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has also been in power, using hegemonic strategies used by other dominant parties in Southern Africa. Patronage politics, state resource control, and restrictive policies against political opposition have all contributed to the MPLA's consolidation of power (Besley et al., 2021). These incidents show how difficult it is to preserve the

historical validity of liberation movements while simultaneously creating a truly competitive political landscape (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024).

Therefore, Southern Africa offers a complicated yet interwoven story of political rivalry on a regional level (Ashworth et al., 2022). Regional recurring themes include the emergence of political elitism, entrenched socio-economic disparities, and the supremacy of liberation groups that have evolved into political parties (Ashworth et al., 2022). Nations like Namibia, Botswana, and Mozambique have faced similar struggles with the legacy of liberation movements inside their democratic frameworks. Some countries face structural problems that impede political pluralism, while others, like Botswana, have been able to preserve a semblance of political stability and inclusivity (Marín et al., 2021). Furthermore, regional groups like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have come under fire for their poor performance in tackling shortcomings in political rivalry, electoral fairness, and governance reforms, despite the regional bloc's crucial role in fostering peace and stability (Pasini & Rebessi, 2019).

Despite the increasing occurrences of political rivalry, several important gaps remain in the literature on political rivalry and democratisation in Africa (Mutz et al., 2022). A large portion of the research focuses on democracies that have been in place for a long time or on extremely unstable countries (Mutz et al., 2022). Comprehensive research on the transitional dynamics in nations with functioning democracies but limited by structural issues like political elitism, weak opposition movements, and dominant-party systems is conspicuously lacking (Baker, 2019). Furthermore, the subtleties of how historical legacies, socioeconomic considerations, and regional dynamics interact to form political competition are frequently overlooked in previous studies (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, Namibia is a multiparty democracy with political competition primarily between South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), the ruling party since 1990, and other opposition parties such as the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) (Melber, 2018), National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO), Congress of Democrats (COD), South West Africa National Union (SWANU), United Democratic Front (UDF), Landless People's Movement (LPM), Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), Affirmative Repositioning (AR), All Peoples' Party (APP), among others (Melber, 2024). Issues such as land reform, economic inequality, and governance have been central in shaping the political discourse, and although there is intensive competition and rivalry (Melber, 2024), Namibia has generally experienced peaceful transitions of power through the election, which is administered by the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN). Be that as it may, emerging political developments analysed in this study make the future of Namibia's democratic landscape uncertain.

After gaining independence in 1990, Namibia transitioned to democracy (Kornes, 2023). It is critical to examine the dynamics of political struggle within Namibia's democratic space as a post-independent country, as political rivalry in Namibia may be traced back to historical legacies, for instance, the impact of colonisation and the struggle for independence (Melber, 2014). It is evident that factors such as historical legacies, ethnic diversity, and socio-economic difficulties have influenced Namibia's political scene, and they continue to fuel competition and rivalry among political parties (Kornes, 2023). When it comes to historical legacies, Melber (2022) indicated that the historical legacy of colonisation and the liberation struggle has deeply embedded itself in Namibia's political fabric, which influences power dynamics, political identities, and the distribution of resources.

The legacy of the colonial era, which is sometimes remembered for its exploitation and oppression, has pushed different individuals to form political parties to compete for resources or leadership that they believe to be good if it were placed under them (Chloaba, 2020). The post-independence era has witnessed continuity in the formation of new political parties in Namibia and other African countries, a trend this study examines to analyse the factors contributing to this. In Namibia, though the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) played a central role during the liberation struggle and made several sacrifices during that period, the evolving trend of political contestation is creating a complex political environment that shapes the legitimacy and standing of different political actors (Chloaba, 2020). Furthermore, ethnic diversity, which is another factor shaping political competition, plays a crucial role in the pursuit of parties to compete with one another. This factor has attracted mixed reactions from different scholars. According to Blaauw and Zaire (2023), the diverse ethnic groups in Namibia partly explain increased competition for political power and resources.

Namibia is home to different ethnic communities, each with its historical background, and this may easily influence political rivalry and competition, whereby a political party may draw support primarily from a specific ethnic target group (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). However, competition among different political parties can emerge as a result of fighting for recognition from the same ethnic groups (Mathe, 2009). Socio-economic challenges also contribute to political rivalry as different groups vie for economic opportunities, leading to tensions and competition within the political landscape (Vigne, 2016). The study maintains that challenges such as unequal access to resources and disparities in education and employment opportunities become catalysts for political tension because different groups vie for a share of limited

economic resources. So, when parties compete for these opportunities to control economic resources, it ends up in a political rivalry, which may also disrupt the policy-making process and hinder the effective functioning of government institutions. The following section provides a historical overview of the Namibian political system.

1.2.1 A Brief Historical Overview of Namibia's Political System

Namibia achieved its independence at a time when many other countries adopted democracy as an alternative form of rule to what, at some point, must have been regarded as firmly entrenched authoritarianism (Blaauw, 2017). This so-called “Third Wave” of democracy (Huntington, 1991) started during the mid-1970s in southern Europe and spread to Africa during the 1990s. The early 1990s were characterised by significant positive changes to existing non-democratic regimes on the African continent. Namibian politics saw an increase in political competition and leadership turnover after 1990, as well as significant changes to the rules of the game.

Namibia's political system has been shaped by a complex history, including struggles over territories like Walvis Bay, the evolution of kinship relations among the people, and the intersectional activism challenging colonial legacies and policies in urban areas. The country's political landscape has seen shifts influenced by economic factors, such as trade-based wealth and land ownership, impacting power dynamics and social structures (Conway, 2003). Additionally, the resistance against colonial rule and the rise of hierarchical organisations within indigenous societies, like the Khoi at //Khauxa!nas, have played significant roles in shaping Namibia's political trajectory (Conway, 2003). These historical dynamics have contributed to the current political environment in Namibia, reflecting a blend of indigenous traditions, colonial legacies, and contemporary activism for decolonisation and social justice.

The introduction of political party systems plays a crucial role in structuring electoral competition, facilitating integration into the political system, and aggregating political demand into discrete policy options (Denis, 2020). In the Philippines, for example, the development of a party system has been influenced by historical decisions that inadvertently entrenched a specific style of political party dominating the polity, hindering greater institutionalization (Denis, 2020). Moreover, the concept of political elitism has been a significant factor in African states' struggles to achieve total independence, with political elites often obstructing socio-economic expansion and independence, reflecting a broader issue of elitism impeding progress in underdeveloped countries (Polk et al., 2022). Democratic elitism, as a contemporary perspective, emphasises the role of political elites in the democratisation process, highlighting the confluence of elitist and popular elements in well-ordered states and the importance of talented leaders selected by popular assemblies in democratic systems (Polk et al., 2022).

In the Namibian context, the dominance of SWAPO has resulted in a de facto one-party system, despite the existence of multiple political parties (Ashfaq & Roofi, 2023). Other notable parties include the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), now known as the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), and newer parties like the Landless People's Movement (LPM), Affirmative Repositioning (AR), and the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC). However, these opposition parties have struggled to gain substantial traction against SWAPO's overwhelming influence (Ashfaq & Roofi, 2023). Emerging patterns shaping political competition in Namibia account for this. While the electoral system in Namibia is based on proportional representation for the National Assembly and a mixed-member proportional system for regional councils (Ashfaq & Roofi, 2023),

Namibia's political environment illuminates salient political developments, including political elitism.

The electoral system that emerged was designed to ensure fair representation of smaller parties, but SWAPO's historical and organisational advantages have allowed it to dominate the political arena (Vaughan, 2023). Arguably, this dominance, compounded by neo-patrimonialism, militates against democratisation and consolidates political elitism. Political elitism in Namibia can be traced back to the liberation movement's leadership, which transitioned into the political elite after independence (Wiechers, 2022). The early post-independence period saw the consolidation of power among former SWAPO leaders, with Sam Nujoma, SWAPO's leader during the liberation struggle, becoming the first President of Namibia. Nujoma's leadership established a pattern of strong executive control, which has continued under his successors, Hifikepunye Pohamba and Hage Geingob (Melber, 2003).

According to Nebati (2024), political elitism in Namibia is characterised by the concentration of political power within a small, well-connected group of individuals, often with liberation struggle credentials. He further states that this elite group has maintained significant control over political and economic resources, influencing policy decisions and governance structures. Salim (2024) also asserts that the persistence of political elitism has raised concerns about the inclusivity and representativeness of Namibia's democracy. He argues that the dominance of SWAPO and the entrenchment of political elites led to challenges in fostering a vibrant and competitive political environment. Other critics like Salim (2024) argue that the concentration of power within a small elite clique has hindered democratic

development and perpetuated issues such as corruption and patronage. Efforts to promote internal party democracy and broader political participation have been ongoing, but significant barriers remain (Salim, 2024).

1.2.2 Key Milestones in Namibia's Democratic Journey since 1990

Namibia's democratic journey since its independence in 1990 has been marked by significant milestones that have shaped its political landscape and governance structures. These milestones reflect the country's efforts to build a stable and inclusive democracy, promote good governance, and address the socio-economic challenges inherited from its colonial past. Nevertheless, continuities and changes in political competition have also defined Namibia's democratic journey. With this said, this analysis explores the key milestones in Namibia's democratic journey, highlighting critical events and developments over the past three decades to unpack the changes and continuities in the country's democratic landscape.

Namibia gained independence, following a prolonged liberation struggle against South African rule, and the United Nations facilitated the transition to independence through Resolution 435, which outlined the process for Namibia's transition to self-rule (UN, 1989). The first democratic elections were held in November 1989, leading to the formation of the Constituent Assembly, which was tasked with drafting the Namibian Constitution. The Constitution, adopted on February 9, 1990, established Namibia as a sovereign, secular, and democratic state with a multi-party system, separation of powers, and protection of fundamental human rights (Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, 1990).

The 1990s were crucial for consolidating democratic governance in Namibia. The first post-independence Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held in 1994, with

the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) securing a decisive victory. Sam Nujoma, the SWAPO leader, became Namibia's first President (Shanyanana, 2011). This administration focused on nation-building, reconciliation, and socio-economic development (Melber, 2003). During this period, Namibia established key democratic institutions, including the Office of the Ombudsman, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the ECN. These institutions played vital roles in promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law (Hopwood, 2007).

The early 2000s saw Namibia continue to build on its democratic foundations. In 2004, Hifikepunye Pohamba succeeded Sam Nujoma as President, marking the first peaceful transfer of power between elected leaders in the country's history. Pohamba's presidency was characterised by efforts to combat corruption and promote good governance (Jauch, 2012). Namibia also made significant strides in economic development during this period. The government implemented policies to reduce poverty, improve education and healthcare, and promote sustainable development. However, challenges such as high unemployment rates and income inequality persisted (United Nations Development Program, 2009).

The 2010s were marked by efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and enhance electoral processes. In 2014, Hage Geingob was elected President, succeeding Pohamba. Geingob's administration focused on economic growth, social justice, and addressing the legacy of apartheid-era disparities (Taplin, 2019). In 2014, Namibia introduced the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in national elections, becoming one of the first countries in Africa to adopt such technology. The move aimed to enhance the electoral process's efficiency, transparency, and credibility (ECN, 2014). Despite initial concerns and controversies, the use of EVMs has been generally regarded as a positive step towards modernizing Namibia's electoral system.

Throughout its democratic journey, Namibia has played an active role in regional and international affairs. As a Southern African Development Community (SADC) member, Namibia has contributed to regional peacekeeping efforts and promoted democratic values within the region. The country has also been a vocal advocate for sustainable development and environmental conservation on the global stage (Hengari, 2016).

1.2.3 Justification of the Elected Period of Timeframe for the Study

The period from 1990 to 2024 is appropriate for the study of political competition in Namibia because it covers the post-independence era, which is crucial to understanding the development of democracy and politics in the nation and has historical significance (Baliamoune-lutz, 2020). Additionally, it guarantees access to enough data and enables the analysis of current political events. According to Melber (2022), Namibia's transition to independence in 1990 signified a crucial historical period in which an independent Namibia saw democratic consolidation, providing insights into the challenges and successes of building and maintaining democratic institutions.

Therefore, the period 1990 to 2024 is extremely pertinent because it encompasses the full period following Namibia's independence from South Africa in 1990 (Ma, 2021). This historical period is significant for evaluating the development of political competition in Namibia's democratic space since, as supported by Cerovac (2014), it symbolises the establishment of a democratic political system in the nation. (Auerbach, 2022) postulates that, by extending the analysis through to the latter period, the research offers an insightful analysis of Namibia's current political climate, assisting scholars, policymakers, and the general public to better comprehend current trends and developments in the nation's democratic process.

Furthermore, the research period from 1990 to 2024 serves as the main focus because it includes all democratic years following Namibia's independence. The research starts in 1990 to study how the liberation movement evolved into Namibia's leading ruling party and how this development formed the basis for political competition. Additionally, the research period from 1990 to 2024 enables researchers to study how external events like COVID-19 affected voter turnout and party organisation and state reaction as part of Namibia's ongoing democratic development. The pandemic functions as a system test for Namibia's democracy because it shows how external disturbances affect the established patterns of elite control and party supremacy and citizen confidence. Therefore, the 1990–2024-time span offers both deep historical context and current significance, which enables researchers to study Namibia's democratic evolution through time.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the existence of a multiparty system in Namibia, emerging trends and patterns concerning political competition point to the trajectory of democratic reversal emanating from political elitism and the hegemony of the dominant party. Studies by Tjiurimo (2019) assert that many African countries have experienced dominant party systems where one political party holds significant power for an extended period, and this can limit effective rivalry and hinder the development of a diverse political landscape.

The SWAPO Party remained the dominant political force from independence in 1990 to the late 2020s with the committed support of its loyal following. After the COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020s, a schism opened between the government (and the ruling party) and the Namibian people. Discontent grew so fast that support for the government had fallen to an all-time low since independence (Keulder, 2021a).

Dominant parties can fail for various reasons: these include generational replacement; massive discontent linked to continuously poor performance; internal fractures leading to fragmentation in the form of breakaways and splits (Sakaiya & Maeda, 2014); the loss of control over public resources; and, ultimately, when their founding ideologies lose traction. Dominance ends either through electoral defeat or large-scale defection.

Despite achieving independence and experiencing relative political stability and peace, Namibia faces persistent concerns regarding the impact of political rivalry on the effectiveness of democratic governance and accountability mechanisms. The extent to which political rivalry has influenced, restricted, and hindered the development of robust democratic institutions and processes remains a pressing issue requiring comprehensive investigation and analysis. These concerns include the dominance of a political party such as SWAPO, which has been in power since 1990, and the strategies it has deployed to remain in power.

Although Namibia has held regular elections, these elections were won by one party only, and a prolonged ruling and dominance of one political party raises concerns regarding the health of political competition in a multiparty system, and may also hinder the development of a vibrant democratic culture. Moreover, a prolonged rule of one party may increase the risks of authoritarian behaviours that could make opposition parties struggle to gain significant influence. The second concern is the centralisation of power, where the concentration of authority may undermine power separation, which could easily impact the effectiveness of democratic institutions in ensuring accountability (De Jager & Du Toit, 2020). To ensure a robust democratic environment that encourages citizen involvement, political responsibility, and socioeconomic progress, it is essential to understand the dynamics of this political competition in Namibia (Keulder, 2021a). Dominant party systems are polities where

one party achieves electoral dominance for a prolonged period, even though the system allows the free formation of political parties and regularly holds meaningful elections (De Jager & Du Toit, 2020).

Previous research (Metheney & Ammerman, 2024, and Melber, 2024) on political competition in Southern Africa has mostly concentrated on the electoral performance of ruling political parties or the historical contributions of liberation movements (Kebede, 2023). Although these works have clarified the fundamentals of the political systems in the area, they frequently fail to thoroughly examine how these systems change over time in response to shifting socio-political and economic circumstances (Kebede, 2023). Research on South Africa, for example, has mostly focused on the ANC's hegemony, but it rarely examines the internal processes that support or stifle new opposition formations (Sireh-jallow & Ba, 2014).

Comparably, research in Zimbabwe and Angola (Ruhanya & Gumbo, 2022, and Stiftung, 2024) frequently concentrates on the authoritarian inclinations of the MPLA and ZANU-PF, respectively, failing to sufficiently explore the wider ramifications of political elitism and how it interacts with voter behaviour and public confidence in democratic processes (Gadjanova, 2021). Furthermore, not much research has looked at regional political competition patterns, which would shed light on the opportunities and problems that Southern Africa faces as a whole. Additionally, understudied are the effects of socioeconomic disparities, online political participation, and the growing call for openness and diversity in government (Canen & Wantchekon, 2022).

These disparities make it more difficult to find workable reform avenues and encourage a more competitive and participatory political environment (Kebede, 2023). By offering a thorough examination of the new trends and patterns of political rivalry

in Namibia, with an emphasis on political elitism and dominant-party systems, this study aims to close these gaps. The research aims to identify the fundamental elements that either support or undermine the power of political elites by examining the interactions between historical legacies, current socio-political circumstances, and institutional dynamics. Additionally, using cross-national comparisons to find regional similarities and distinctive differences, this project investigates how political competition affects democratic governance, accountability, and inclusivity.

The research investigates multiple political competition aspects in Namibia through party systems, elitism and neo-patrimonialism but these elements share a common focus on their combined effect on democratic consolidation. The research used political competition as its main framework to study elitism and neo-patrimonialism because these concepts work together to affect democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the study investigated political elitism through its relationship with competitive processes while analysing neo-patrimonialism as a system that interferes with fair political competition. The research framework unifies all themes by linking them to their effects on Namibia's democratic development process.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to;

- To analyse the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia's post-independence era,
- To examine the opportunities and challenges associated with the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in the country,
- To assess the impact of emerging trends and patterns of political competition on governance and democratisation, and finally,

- To formulate potential strategies for enhancing political competition and democratic processes in the country.

1.5 Significance of the Study

For several reasons, this study is extremely important. First of all, since Namibia only recently converted to a democratic system after gaining independence in 1990, an examination of political rivalry is essential to gauge how well its democratic space is operating. The second benefit of this study is that it shall shed light on the type and degree of political competition in Namibia, party dynamics, the development of elitism, and the democracy's overall health. Finally, the results of this study can help civil society organisations, political parties, and the government in their efforts to advance effective political participation and develop effective democratic governance.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

This study is aware of several limitations. Firstly, the study is based on self-reported data from political parties, candidates, and voters, which could be biased or misinterpreted. Secondly, the study's focus is just on Namibia's post-independence era, disregarding political issues from the pre-independence epoch. To minimise these limitations, the study implemented robust validation techniques such as cross-verifications of information from political parties, voters, and candidates with independent sources such as the ECN data. Lastly, interviews and surveys as data collection tools were utilised to capture a more accurate portrayal of individual political dynamics.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study focuses primarily on the emerging dynamics of political rivalry in Namibia's post-independence democratic environment. Other facets of Namibia's political scene, like governance frameworks, public policy formulation, or

international relations, are not included. The research intends to offer in-depth insights into the processes of democratic politics in Namibia by restricting the study to political competition.

1.8 Methodology Overview

This research employed a qualitative approach to thoroughly examine political competition in Namibia's democratic environment post-independence. The study's robust methodology includes structured and in-depth interviews, leveraging statistical analysis and thematic examination to provide comprehensive insights. By integrating a hybrid research design, this study effectively balances descriptive and statistical analysis, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The pragmatic philosophical framework guiding this research underscores its commitment to addressing the research objectives with a balanced and methodical approach. Through careful consideration of research ethics and rigorous data collection and analysis procedures, this study aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of political competition in Namibia.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study comprises six chapters, which are listed as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction and Orientation of the Study

This chapter sets the stage for the study by providing a historical context of political competition in Namibia since its independence in 1990. It highlights key political events and shifts that have shaped the political landscape. The chapter outlines the research problem, emphasising the importance of understanding emerging trends and patterns in political competition. It presents the research objectives and questions and

then concludes with the significance of the study and its potential contributions to the field of political science.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature review examines existing scholarly work on political competition, party systems, and political elitism, with a specific focus on Namibia. It explores theoretical frameworks and models used to analyse political competition in other contexts, drawing relevant comparisons. The chapter identifies gaps in the existing literature and positions the current study within these gaps, thereby justifying the need for this research.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter details the research design and methodological approach employed in the study. It describes the data collection methods, including primary and secondary sources, and the criteria for selecting these sources. The chapter also outlines the data analysis techniques, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach to examining political trends and patterns. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also discussed.

Chapter Four: Research Results

The results chapter presents the findings of the study based on the data collected and analysed. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia, highlighting key insights and observations. The chapter uses tables, charts, and graphs to visually represent the data, making understanding the complex dynamics at play easier.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Analysis of Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the results are interpreted and contextualised within the broader literature. The discussion explores the implications of the identified trends and patterns for Namibia's democratic framework, governance, and political institutions. It also examines the challenges and opportunities associated with these trends, providing a nuanced understanding of the political landscape.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter summarises the key findings and their implications for political competition and democratic processes in Namibia. It reflects on the research objectives and questions, assessing how well they have been addressed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and potential strategies for enhancing political competition and strengthening democratic institutions in Namibia.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Clientelism: is defined by Stokes (2011, 648) as giving material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you/will you support me?

Community Influence: this refers to the impact that political parties, groups of people or individuals have within a community; it is measured by the power that they have in shaping the opinions, actions and behaviours of people in the community (Christens & Lin, 2014).

Corruption: means the misuse of public resources or diverting public resources to personal use. This commonly involves the use of political influence for personal gain. Corruption includes extortion, nepotism, and fraud, among others (Graycar, 2020).

Democratic Framework: refers to the structure and principles that form the foundation of a democratic system, including the rule of law, separation of powers, free and fair elections, and protection of civil liberties (Dahl, 1971). In Namibia, this framework is defined by the Constitution of 1990, which established the country as a democratic republic.

Democratic Institutions: refer to the organisations and bodies that uphold democratic principles and practices, such as the judiciary, electoral commissions, and legislative bodies (Pasini & Rebessi, 2019). These institutions play a vital role in maintaining the integrity of democratic processes and ensuring that political competition is conducted fairly.

Emerging Trends: refer to the new and developing patterns or movements in political competition that have become noticeable over a specified period. For this study, emerging trends in Namibia may include shifts in voter behaviour, changes in party strategies, or the rise of new political movements from 1990 to 2024.

Governance: refers to the processes and structures used to direct and manage a country's political and administrative affairs (Gadjanova, 2021). Good governance is characterised by transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness and is crucial for the effective functioning of a democratic framework.

Neo-patrimonialism: refers to a type of regime in which ruling elites use the state for personal enrichment and profit from a public administration that is patently unstable, inefficient, non-transparent, and that fails to distribute public resources to large segments of the population (Beekers & van Gool, 2012).

Political Alliance: Involves the cooperation between two or more political parties or individuals who have a common understanding or goal (Christens & Lin, 2014).

Political Competition: refers to the rivalry between political parties and candidates to gain control of governmental positions through elections (Baker, 2019). It is a fundamental aspect of democratic systems, ensuring accountability and responsiveness of governments to the electorate.

Political Elitism: refers to a theory suggesting that a small, privileged group holds disproportionate power and influence in society (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024). In the context of Namibia, political elitism refers to the concentration of political power among a few individuals or groups within the political landscape, impacting the dynamics of political competition.

Political Participation: refers to the activities carried out by citizens that affect politics (Deth, 2021). In this study, it has been used to describe the participation of Namibians in various political activities such as elections and support for political parties.

Political Party Systems: refer to the manner in which political parties are organised and interact within a political system (Stephen et al., 2020). This includes the number of parties, their relative strength, and the nature of their competition. In Namibia, the party system has evolved since independence, with the dominance of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the presence of various opposition parties.

1.11 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has offered a solid basis for comprehending the complex dynamics of political competition in Namibia since gaining its independence in 1990. To define the nation's democratic framework, it has examined the historical and socio-political settings that have influenced the country's political landscape, highlighting the interaction between political elitism, dominant-party systems, and liberation movements. Examining Namibia's journey from colonial domination to a multiparty democracy demonstrated how socio-economic variables and historical legacies still affect political rivalry. These factors include the dominance of the ruling SWAPO party, the exclusion of alternative parties, and the ongoing problems with political elitism, unfair resource distribution, and ethnic diversity.

With an emphasis on the internal dynamics of political parties, party systems, and elitist governance structures, the chapter went into additional detail about the significance of new trends and patterns in political struggle. In addition to the wider ramifications of political rivalry for democratic accountability and governance, it emphasised the mechanisms that propel voter involvement and participation during elections. A comparative examination of regional and global trends was used to contextualise Namibia's unique position as a post-independence democracy in Southern Africa, highlighting both potential and challenges in creating an inclusive and competitive political system.

The problem statement emphasised the serious problems Namibia's democracy is experiencing, including the long-standing dominance of SWAPO, the concentration of power, and the possibility of democratic regression. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the chapter illustrated Namibia's democratic institutions' tenacity in facilitating

peaceful handovers of power and preserving a semblance of political stability. The chapter provided a clear framework for examining the effects of political competition on democratic government by defining the study questions and objectives, and the theoretical underpinnings provided a conceptual framework for examining these dynamics.

This chapter prepared the reader for a thorough analysis of Namibian political competitiveness. It explained the importance of this study in filling in knowledge gaps and advancing a sophisticated comprehension of how political competition influences democratic procedures and national governance. The chapter also offers a solid foundation for later chapters that explore the new trends, patterns, and ramifications of political rivalry in Namibia by fusing historical, theoretical, and practical viewpoints. Policymakers, political players, and civil society organisations hoping to improve democratic governance, promote inclusivity, and fortify political institutions in Namibia and elsewhere are expected to find great value in the study's conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Democratic systems are fundamentally characterised by political competition, which impacts society's evolution, policy formation, and governance. Understanding the dynamics of political conflict in Namibia is essential, especially when considering that the nation embraced democracy in 1990, to evaluate the status and trajectory of its democratic institutions. There is a dearth of studies on developing democracies like Namibia, despite a wealth of research on political competitiveness in mature democracies. Knowledge of how political rivalry changes in various political and historical circumstances is limited in the literature. Considering the above, this literature review examines the potential and challenges that come with political competition in Namibia's post-independence period and its impact on democratic institutions and governance. This review is envisioned to contribute to the larger conversation on democratisation in developing democracies by thoroughly examining political competition in Namibia.

The format of this review is as follows: The theoretical foundations for researching political competition are examined in the first section. Empirical research on political rivalry in developing democracies is reviewed in the second section. Namibia is the subject of the third section, which examines the major patterns and trends seen since the country's independence. The last section explores how these results might affect democratic government and offers some possible strategies for encouraging constructive political rivalry. This assessment includes works written between 1990 and 2024, primarily focusing on Namibia and, when appropriate, parallels with other developing democracies. Owing to the topic's breadth, this analysis concentrates on

pertinent trends and patterns that have important ramifications for democratic government rather than covering every facet of political rivalry.

2.2 Political Competition

Political competition is a critical aspect of democratic systems, influencing public economics, public policy, and the legitimisation of power (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024). It involves parties vying for support from the community, engaging citizens in active political activities, and shaping the allocation of economic resources through electoral processes. In democratic regimes, political parties are supposed to compete on equal grounds, while in authoritarian systems, pro-government parties often dominate the competition (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024). The intensity of political competition varies in mature democracies and can be measured to understand its consequences. Understanding political competition is essential for exploring socialist democracy with unique characteristics and analysing competition's impact on policy choices and power legitimisation (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024).

In their study, Ashworth et al. (2022) analysed the political competition and its effect on the performance of Finnish local authorities. According to their research, political competition serves as a check on rent-seeking behaviour and increases the effectiveness of public goods provision because it holds politicians more accountable to voters, which promotes more responsible governance and lowers the likelihood of opportunistic behaviour (Carvalho & Taylor, 2022). Additionally, Marín et al., (2021), in their study on political competition, electoral participation, and fiscal performance, concluded that electoral participation and political competition improve government accountability and performance. Marín et al., (2021)'s findings align well with this study because accountability and government performance are critical factors that have been considered while analysing political competition (Carvalho & Taylor, 2022).

Furthermore, this study's methodology offers insights into the political competition that offer valuable empirical and theoretical frameworks for analysing Namibia's political landscape.

The issues of political competition in Namibia after independence, mainly the political party systems and those of political elitism, have not attracted attention from academic researchers, a gap that this research aims to fill. The framework of government and opposition in Namibia has evolved into a dominant party system, firmly established following the nation's independence in 1990 (Du Pisani & Lindeke, IPPR 2009). They further assert that, in the past decade and a half, new political parties have emerged, seeking to challenge the long-standing ruling party, officially known as the SWAPO Party of Namibia since independence. Their emergence presents the potential to disrupt the prevailing electoral dominance of voters from the north-central regions, where SWAPO has historically garnered sufficient support to secure a majority.

The ECN has officially registered twenty-two (22) political parties as of December 2024. These parties include the Action Democratic Movement Party (ADM), Affirmative Repositioning (AR), All People's Party (APP), Body of Christ Party (BCP), Christian Democratic Voice Party (CDV), Congress of Democrats (CoD), Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), Landless People's Movement (LPM), Monitor Action Group (MAG), National Democratic Party of Namibia (NDP), Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF), National Empowerment Fighting Corruption (NEFC), National Patriotic Front of Namibia (NPF), National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia (NUDO), Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), Republican Party of Namibia (RP), South West Africa National Union of Namibia (SWANU), South West Africa People's Organisation Party of Namibia (SWAPO), United Democratic Front of Namibia

(UDF), United Namibians Party (UNP), and United People's Movement (UPM). Additionally, there is the Workers Revolutionary Party (Electoral Commission of Namibia, 2025).

Bauer (2010) conducted a study that revealed that the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) has had a dominant position in the country's party structure since its independence in 1990. The authors also emphasised how this has impacted political competition (Melber, 2010). Their research emphasised the need for a more heterogeneous government structure to foster healthy competition and produce a stronger democratic atmosphere (Bauer, 2010). Given this, this research looked into the dynamics of political rivalry within Namibia's democratic framework between 1990 and 2024 to produce knowledge on a thorough examination of emerging trends that have illustrated the development of elitism, new party systems, and their governance structures, as well as election procedures, all of which have received little attention from scholars thus far.

Additionally, Namawe (2019) focused on the electoral procedures while examining the inclusion and fairness of Namibian elections. Their study turned up several problems, like voter intimidation and underrepresentation of disadvantaged groups, that kept Namibia from fully embracing political competition (Namawe, 2019). Without discrediting Namawe's findings and conclusion, this study aimed to analyse Namibia's party systems, political elitism, and election processes to accumulate knowledge on the issues raised by this scholar. Therefore, it aimed to further extend knowledge on the issues influencing political party rivalry and the democratic space in Namibia. A report by Co-creation Hub Africa (CcHUB) (2025) demonstrates that Namibia's most recent national elections, held in 2024, highlighted opportunities for improvement. The voter turnout exceeded expectations, revealing significant

challenges such as the underrepresentation of marginalised groups. This issue is particularly noteworthy, as equitable representation in governance fosters systems that promote justice, enhance social cohesion, and fortify democracy.

The dynamics of political competition have also been clarified by literature on the part of political parties in Namibia's democratic growth (Melber, 2010). Without a doubt, a lot of political developments have taken place since 2010, making Melber's findings limited in comprehending current political dynamics in Namibia. The ideologies and policy platforms of Namibian political parties were examined in a study by Marinho et al.,(2020), highlighting the need for more distinct policy stances and issue-based competitiveness. Concerning Marinho et al. (2020)'s study, this study constitutes an epistemic contribution to Namibian politics by identifying and explaining factors that limit competition among political parties in Namibia. This study looked into and examined the following areas that have not been previously researched abundantly: (1) Namibian electoral systems, political elitism, and liberation movements. (2) Elements affecting democratic space and rivalry between political parties. (3) Political party rivalry's limitations. Examining how political rivalry and democratic processes have changed since the formation of self-rule in South Africa and Angola, two members of the Southern Africa Development Community, is also worthwhile.

According to a report by Kamwanyah (2024), high unemployment, inequality, and poverty continue to be significant factors in the political landscape of Namibia. Opposition parties are likely to leverage these issues, presenting populist agendas that advocate for economic reforms and strategies aimed at reducing inequality.

To tackle these concerns, Namibian opposition parties frequently propose measures that focus on several key policy areas. One major area of emphasis is job creation, with

many parties advocating for increased support for small businesses, agriculture, and local industries. They often critique the government for its inadequate initiatives to assist young people in securing employment, suggesting solutions such as offering loans or grants to small business proprietors and implementing training programs to enhance skill development (Kamwanyah, 2024).

Land reform also remains a critical issue, as a limited number of individuals hold a significant portion of land. Opposition parties commonly advocate for more proactive redistribution policies to allocate land to those in need, particularly in rural communities, thereby fostering farming, self-sufficiency, and food security.

Additionally, according to observations by Kamwanyah (2024), some opposition parties propose tax reforms aimed at wealthier individuals and large corporations, advocating for increased tax contributions from these groups. The additional revenue generated would be directed towards funding programs designed to assist the impoverished and unemployed, thereby addressing inequality.

Another prominent area of focus is the expansion of social welfare programs, which include pensions, unemployment benefits, and housing support. Opposition parties frequently call for greater government investment in affordable housing and healthcare to combat poverty and enhance living conditions (Kamwanyah, 2024).

Improving education, particularly in technical and vocational training, is also viewed as essential for addressing unemployment. Opposition parties contend that equipping individuals with the necessary skills will enhance their employment prospects and economic status.

Healthcare access is another common policy proposal, with opposition parties advocating for improvements to healthcare infrastructure, especially in underserved

rural regions, to ensure equitable access to quality health services for all Namibians. Affordable housing emerges as a significant policy concern, based on Kamwanyah's (2024) report, and with calls for increased government support for housing initiatives aimed at low-income citizens. This includes constructing additional homes and establishing programs to facilitate home ownership. Opposition parties propose the enactment of stricter laws and enhanced enforcement mechanisms to combat GBV, alongside educational campaigns to raise public awareness. Many parties emphasise the importance of cultivating a society that prioritizes respect and human dignity to mitigate the escalating violence against women and children (Kamwanyah, 2024).

Collectively, the policy proposals put forth by opposition parties embody a comprehensive approach to development, seeking to dismantle systems of inequality and foster a society in which all individuals have the opportunity to prosper.

2.3 Political Elitism: An Affront to Political Competition?

SWAPO has been a pivotal force in the process of nation-building. However, persistent socio-economic inequalities since independence, along with tendencies toward self-enrichment among the emerging elite, have contributed to increasing public discontent. After over three decades of independence, aspirations for improved living conditions remain largely unfulfilled. While there has been a slight reduction in absolute poverty, Namibia continues to experience one of the highest levels of inequality globally. The recession that began in 2016 further intensified these socioeconomic disparities, resulting in a diminished state budget and a troubling cycle of debt as borrowing became essential to sustain fiscal liquidity (Bertelsmann Transformation Index, BTI, 2024).

According to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) (2024), the business sector, particularly the still influential white minority, and the emerging black business elite benefiting from policies promoting black empowerment and affirmative action, holds considerable sway within the political landscape. Conversely, small enterprises, the informal sector, and rural communities engaged in communal farming, despite their significant demographic presence, continue to be marginalised in terms of political influence. Business associations, such as those representing tourism and commercial agriculture, function somewhat as political advocacy groups, achieving varying degrees of success and recognition. Meanwhile, although the mining and banking sectors are influential, their political activities tend to be less conspicuous.

In Namibia, property transactions are governed by strict regulations that adhere to established standards. Nonetheless, there have been sporadic reports of questionable dealings, particularly related to urban land transactions, which have raised concerns about potential embezzlement and self-serving practices among members of the new elite (BTI, 2024).

2.3.1 Elites and Social Distinction

Political elitism shapes political competition by affecting decision-making processes and power dynamics (Gutián, 2019). According to several research studies, elitism highlights how political elites manipulate and direct democratic processes, which may result in the marginalization of particular groups like ethnic minorities (Gutián, 2019). According to elitist ideas like those advanced by Denis (2020), elites have a major effect on creating and preserving political systems, which may result in a concentration of power and influence within a small number of people (Denis, 2020). Elites may dominate the narrative and results of election processes, affecting the consolidation of power and fulfilling social and economic duties (Salim, 2024). As a result, this

concentration of power may have an impact on the efficacy and equity of political competition. Comprehending the consequences of political elitism is necessary to appreciate the intricacies of political rivalry and its influence on government and society (Salim, 2024).

From the early works of Auerbach (2022) highlighting the disjunction between political elites and democracy to the more recent observations by Polk et al., (2022) on the changing nature of contemporary elites and their functions, it is clear that elites play a crucial role in shaping political systems. While Flores et al., (2022) perspective emphasises the dominance of oligarchies and the self-referencing nature of political institutions, the concept of democratic elitism has grown to incorporate the increasing power and influence wielded by political elites and leaders in Western democracies. Additionally, the critical emancipatory paradigm discussed by Ashfaq and Roofi (2023) illuminates how elitism and power relations interact, demonstrating how marginalised communities create alternative archives in opposition to the narratives promoted by elite leaders (Ashfaq & Roofi, 2023).

As discussed in numerous research papers, the African political elites tend to abuse democratic systems for personal gain, exacerbating inequality and prolonging socio-economic hardships for ordinary citizens (Marx & Nguyen, 2018). Their abuse of power, which frequently prioritizes their interests over the welfare of the people, results in violations of human rights and democratic principles (Marx & Nguyen, 2018). Elitism and democracy are intertwined in the African political landscape, challenging governance and accountability (Polk et al., 2022). Conflicts between the elite classes are reflected in election violence, which is exacerbated by racial and religious differences (Carboni, 2020). Political elitism is also blamed for the inability of African states to attain complete independence, which impedes socio-economic

growth and keeps them dependent on outside factors (Carboni, 2020). These circumstances highlight the necessity of more robust accountability frameworks and the defence of democratic principles to guarantee that African governance serves the needs of all its residents (Auerbach, 2022).

2.3.2 Theoretical Conceptualisation of Political Elitism

Advocates of the elite theory contend that comprehending the notion of "democracy as the rule of the people" is not essential. They argue that the practical execution of popular governance, particularly in extensive nations, is unfeasible from a technical standpoint (Narzulla & Nargiza, 2021). According to Arana (2017), they assert that the populace must empower an elite class to assume the necessary responsibilities of political governance. Additionally, elitist perspectives suggest that the general public lacks sufficient awareness and understanding of political matters, which could lead to detrimental outcomes for both themselves and society if they were to engage in governance. Proponents of this theory maintain that democracy could represent the most favourable form of governance when led by an elite group, provided it receives endorsement and support from the citizenry (Narzulla & Nargiza, 2021).

These revolutions brought about the capitalist mode of production, which solely considers the private accumulation of money for the sake of societal domination (Hanumanthappa, 2023). As a result, the ruling class used the state apparatus to subjugate the ruled under Marxist ideology (Hanumanthappa, 2023). This leads to unequal chances as well as the establishment and expansion of the ruling class in the military, religion, and other economic spheres, all to the detriment of the people (Mariotti, 2022). Interestingly, a political elite is also an economic elite because they have access to disproportionate perks. Hence, elitism, which derives from the above

views, is relevant in practically every sphere of human existence, from the sublime to the politically charged field of interpersonal relationships (Mariotti, 2022).

It is important to highlight that the aforementioned discussion points demonstrated the strong correlation between politics and economics, which is noteworthy when evaluating the circumstances surrounding elite political leadership (Toscano & Stolz, 2024). Both contemporary and classical elite theorists agree with this point of view. According to Damele and Campos (2022), political elitism arises from the political forces and aptitudes that give rise to any social formation, as it is a by-product of the politico-economic factors that define any society. In their theories of the elite, Damele and Campos (2022) have all argued, in different ways, that stratification holds the key to social order and that leadership issues in societies do not flourish on plurality.

According to Pareto (1916), this structure can be explained by the division of the elite group into governing and non-governing elites. Thus, it is important to observe along the lines of the reasoning of Auerbach (2022) that any member of the elite class is a superior class in any community, and this is due to the distinctive characteristics associated with the elite, whether or not they belong to the ruling group.

In light of the fact that corruption is more likely to occur when decision-makers in a political party are smaller in number, Namibian citizens should be more involved in democratic processes, particularly when it comes to joining political parties. In light of those mentioned earlier, this study focuses only on Namibia and its socio-political issues, identifying the various social and political theories that arise as a result of the disproportionate use of opportunities and resources in modern Nigerian society. These theories include the following:

Classical Elite Theory: Political scientist Pareto (1916) created this viewpoint, which contends that political power is inherently concentrated in the hands of a small elite minority. They contend that superior attributes, such as wealth, intelligence, or skill, are what make elites emerge and enable them to hold influential and powerful positions. This theory holds that elite rule is both required and inevitable for efficient government.

Marxist Theory: Marxist theory holds that the structural inequality of capitalist systems is the source of political elitism (Mariotti, 2022). Marxists contend that a small group of people, known as the capitalist class, has the majority of political power because they are in charge of the economy and can sway public policy to their advantage (Mariotti, 2022). They contend that in order to further their financial interests and take advantage of the working class, the bourgeoisie, or capitalist elite, keeps control of the political system.

Power Elite Theory: According to this viewpoint, which was established by sociologists (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), a tiny, networked number of people who hold important positions in the military, the economy, and politics hold the majority of the power in contemporary societies. This power elite controls the majority of policy decisions and collaborates to further its own goals, frequently at the expense of the broader public. He contends that this elite group makes crucial decisions that influence society while working in the background (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967).

Pluralist Theory: The pluralist viewpoint refutes the idea that power is held primarily by one elite group (Pickel, 2016). Pluralists contend that multiple rival interest groups share power and that no group has undue influence on political decision-making. This viewpoint holds that political elites are created through democratic procedures and are

answerable to the interests of society through compromise and negotiation (Pickel, 2016).

Post-Structuralist Theory: Traditional conceptions of elitism are criticized by post-structuralists for emphasizing formal institutions and obvious power structures (Noordzij et al., 2018). They contend that subtler types of power, such as discourses, ideologies, and cultural norms, are also included in the definition of elitism, in addition to centralized political power (Noordzij et al., 2018). Post-structuralists contest the notion that political elites are only identified by their institutional standing or financial means by highlighting the significance of language and discourse in creating and maintaining elite power (Salim, 2024). It is crucial to remember that these theoretical stances do not have to conflict with one another and that political systems can display traits from several angles. Furthermore, elitism's prevalence and effects could differ in other nations and situations (Salim, 2024).

It is crucial to note that the topic of interest borders on the unequal distribution and allocation of communal resources in Namibian society, which benefits the elites at the expense of the majority. This is based on the identified and overarching attributes discussed above, as well as the social and political theories underpinning this paper's arguments and viewpoints. In this sense, the paper's main focus is based on Pareto's (1916) interpretations of the classical elitist theory, which holds that a small number of people with unique abilities and innate talents strive for prominence in every community.

Their self-driven action helps them win over the people's trust, which leads to their election to public office (Hanumanthappa, 2023). After entering politics, the political elites use Marxist theory to draw in other well-off individuals with a variety of political

and economic capital resources from outside the government (Hanumanthappa, 2023). By doing so, these individuals not only help the political elites accumulate their capital but also take advantage of the chance to sway public policies in their favour. The "power elite theory" provides further protection for these political elites as well as their outside commercial colleagues and merchants, according to Mills' (1959) view. Thus, the interaction of Marxist, power elite, and classical elite theories is the discussion topic.

Given the degree of their particularisation and specificities, the pluralist theory and the post-structuralist theory, as previously described, do not appear to find substantial applications within the Namibian political situation. Additionally, they are quite democratic in practice and are not very prevalent in developing countries like Namibia. Nonetheless, industrial harmony is highly attained in nations where they are the norm. This suggests that the highly democratic methods support societal progress, industrial concord, and rapid expansion. As was evident above, modern theorists like Dahl (1971) share similar perspectives on elite dominance. Their central claim is the ability of wealthy people to influence political outcomes and influence the rest of society by using their resources to the fullest extent possible.

Because it offers a framework for comprehending the concentration of power among a select, powerful group of people who control the political landscape, the elitist theory is especially pertinent to the setting of political elitism in Namibia. According to this idea, actual political power is concentrated in the hands of a small elite, which frequently consists of prominent businesspeople, political leaders, and other important decision-makers, regardless of the formal democratic processes in existence (Stephen et al., 2020). The elitist theory aids in explaining how some groups or individuals in Namibia, where political and economic power are frequently combined, maintain

control over the state's resources and decision-making procedures, frequently at the price of greater democratic participation. The elitist theory provides a more concentrated perspective on power relations when compared to other theories like pluralism and Marxism (Stephen et al., 2020). According to pluralism, different groups that cooperate and strive for power share it, resulting in a balance of interests that shapes political results (Nebati, 2024).

This viewpoint, however, might not be as relevant in Namibia, where the actuality frequently shows a concentration of power rather than its distribution among several conflicting groups. Conversely, Marxism emphasises the role of economic structures and the domination of the ruling class over the working class, viewing political power through the prism of class conflict (Oesch & Rennwald, 2019). Marxism emphasises significant socio-economic aspects but may not adequately convey the subtleties of political elitism in Namibia, where historical, ethnic, and political considerations and class influence the power dynamics. As a result, the elitist theory sticks out as a more fitting paradigm for examining Namibia's political environment since it emphasises how elites shape political outcomes and how power is centrally located, frequently at the price of equal representation and wider democratic participation.

2.3.3 Background of Namibia's Political Elitism

Namibia's political climate has been shaped by the history of colonial rule, the post-independence administration, and ongoing struggles against elitism and inequality (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). There is still a significant wealth and land gap between the native people and the settler community as a result of the colonial administration's actions, creating a rigid social hierarchy (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). The continuation of white minority rule under South African authority was made possible by the thirty years of German settler colonialism in South West Africa (1884–1914). German

colonialism established the infamous structures of an apartheid society, where the forcible eviction of colonized people from their land in significant portions of the nation and its subsequent occupation by white settlers became an enduring and essential component of a past that remains alive in the present, as summarised, among others, by Melber (2010). The Ovaherero, Nama, and other groups who were the primary occupants of the eastern, central, and southern regions of the country were forced from their land into so-called native reserves, and this resistance to the foreign invasion led to the first genocide of the twentieth century.

Following Germany's forced capitulation of the region during World War 1, land (dis)possession persisted. Afrikaans-speaking poor whites in South Africa were given a new life as farmers under the apartheid regime in the occupied "fifth province." Resettlement and land appropriations occurred up to the 1960s. As part of the so-called Bantustan Policy, they underwent more systematization. Under a program euphemistically dubbed "Separate Development," it combined the territorial entities (reserves) for each ethnic group under differing degrees of limited self-administrative institutions.

The "Odendaal Plan," also known by the name of its chairman, the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, was published in 1963 and used additionally to force resettlements into "homelands," carrying out final physical segregation of groups based on ethnic classifications (Bauer, 2010). Since then, the uneven land allocation has mostly remained unaltered, serving as a reminder that this chapter of more than a century of foreign colonial control, which spanned from 1884 to 1990, is still open. It left festering sores in addition to scars (Bauer, 2010).

Apartheid laws were brought to Namibia under South African control, further entrenching racial inequality (Kebede, 2023). To guarantee that the white minority would continue to have control over the most productive lands and financial resources, the Odendaal Plan, which was introduced in 1964 and encouraged the creation of homelands or "Bantustans," was essential. According to Melber's (2014) analysis, these measures systematically denied voting rights to the majority black population, creating a separate white elite that benefited from political power and economic exploitation.

The South African government's colonial policies imposed on Namibian society had a significant and enduring effect (Kebede, 2023). Socio-economic disparities that still exist now were solidified by the racial hierarchy that was established during this time. (Kebede, 2023) asserts that the land policies of the apartheid state, which deprived black Namibians of their ancestral lands, left a legacy of marginalization and poverty. To preserve white supremacy and guarantee that the political and economic elite stayed within the white minority, economic disenfranchisement was employed.

Political elitism has persisted in post-colonial Namibia due in part to the socio-economic divides these policies have generated (Kebede, 2023). The country's political environment has been significantly influenced by the elite, who are mostly individuals who benefited from the colonial regime. The study of Kebede (2020) demonstrates how the structures of privilege established during the colonial era were modified to meet the new political order rather than being destroyed during the transition to independence. Because of this, the white elite has continued to hold a disproportionate amount of political and economic power, coupled with a small but growing black elite (Kebede, 2020). Namibia's political scene underwent a dramatic change in 1990 with the country's independence from colonial authority. But

colonialism's legacy still permeates the nation's political systems, especially in the form of political elitism. The colonial era's white and South African domination laid the groundwork for a ruling class that has endured in various ways throughout the post-colonial era.

The concentration of power within a select few people who have substantial influence over Namibia's political and economic course is a hallmark of political elitism in this nation. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which is the ruling party, has been instrumental in forming this elite, according to Nyaba (2019), who claims that party devotion frequently takes precedence over more general democratic ideals. This has resulted in a political culture that mirrors the centralized rule prevalent during the colonial era, with power concentrated in the hands of a select few.

Kebede (2020) goes into additional detail on the relationship between colonial dominance and modern political elitism, contending that the ruling party's power-consolidation tactics and the colonial legacy contribute to the persistence of elite control. Due to their access to opportunities and resources that the bulk of the population does not have, the elite have been further strengthened by the continuance of socio-economic disparities, which have their roots primarily in the colonial past (Slater & Smith, 2022). There are parallels and differences between Namibia's political elite development and the colonial era. A new elite emerged in the post-colonial era, mainly made up of black Namibians who were active in the independence movement, whereas the white elite of the colonial era was formed by systematic disenfranchisement and segregation. But as Melber (2016) points out, this new elite has frequently embraced colonial-era resource control and power consolidation tactics.

The permanence of socioeconomic inequality and the consolidation of political power in the hands of a limited number of people demonstrate the continuity in elite formation. Even with the fall of apartheid and the installation of a democratic government, the colonial-era privilege systems have not been destroyed. Chukwudi (2021) claims that the elite have frequently benefited from post-colonial government measures, such as land reform initiatives that have benefited those with political connections rather than the general populace.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework that guided the study. A theoretical framework helps to explain and interpret the concepts being studied by using established theories. In this case, two main theories were used: Political Systems Theory and Elite Theory. These theories were chosen because they offer useful perspectives for understanding how Namibia's political system functions, how political competition has evolved, and how power is held and exercised by political elites. By applying these theories, the study was able to explore the structure, behaviour, and changes within Namibia's democratic system from 1990 to 2024.

2.4.1 Political Systems Theory

Mohanty et al. (2016) assert that Easton's theory, which focused on the behavioural approach to politics, predicted that a political system could only be viewed as surrounded. For example, all political systems have precise boundaries and dynamic, unsolidified systems of decision-making steps that are largely designed to simplify the model. Among these processes is the first one, which highlights the shift in the social or, more accurately, the physical environment around the political system and generates calls for action or support for the status quo as inputs to the political system

and political behaviour (Easton, 1966). The demands and supporting groups that drive competition in a political system are the subjects of the second stage, which also leads to decisions or, more accurately, outputs that are aimed at certain aspects of the social and physical environment.

Furthermore, the fourth step stipulates that if the new policies, or rather, principles, interact with their environment, the results will create new demands or supports as well as groups in favour of or against the policy, which is known as the feedback or a new policy on some related matter (Easton, 1966). The third step occurs after the decision or output, such as pricing principles, interacts with its environment; the change produced by this environment is called outcomes. This creates a never-ending loop by leading to step five, also known as the feedback, and then back to step one. We have a stable political system if it operates as explained. It is deemed a dysfunctional political system if it collapses (Mohanty et al., 2016). A macro-theory or more comprehensive theory of public management and governance is another name for Easton's system theory. This idea covers the whole range of academic fields in the social and natural sciences. This type of theory analyses patterns of behaviour and events by examining the fundamental connections between the systems and subsystems of an entity, circumstance, or organisation.

Easton's (1966) political systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the dynamic interplay between political competition, party systems, and political elitism within Namibia's democratic framework from 1990 to 2024. The theory's emphasis on inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback allows for a nuanced exploration of how Namibia's political system has evolved and adapted to emerging trends and patterns.

Numerous socio-economic, historical, and cultural elements have influenced Namibia's political system's inputs, including demands and support. The demands have frequently focused on topics like land reform, unemployment, corruption, and fair access to resources, reflecting the hopes and complaints of the general public. Political parties are under pressure from these demands to modify their agendas to meet the changing needs of their constituents. Namibia's socio-political environment has both strengthened and challenged the support element, which guarantees the legitimacy of the democratic system (Kasianiuk, 2015).

The public's belief in democratic procedures, such as free and fair elections, and their assessment of the efficiency of government have impacted support. However, this support has periodically been undermined by periods of political and economic instability, such as recessions and accusations of corruption, which have put the democratic system's durability to the test.

Another crucial factor is the setting in which these inputs are produced (Kasianiuk, 2015). The historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid have permanently impacted Namibia's political environment. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which began as a liberation movement and has retained political power following independence, is a prime example of this heritage (Damele & Campos, 2022). Voters' expectations and demands of political elites have been influenced by the socio-economic inequalities left over from this era (Damele & Campos, 2022).

The architecture of political parties and the mechanisms of political rivalry moderate the political system's capacity to handle these inputs (Mariotti, 2022). Despite being protected by the constitution, Namibia's multiparty democracy has been marked by SWAPO's domination, which some academics refer to as a de facto one-party state.

Even if their impact has been modest, minor parties like the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), subsequently the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), and others have contributed to the introduction of alternative narratives despite this domination.

Namibia's political rivalry has shown both consistency and evolution (Mariotti, 2022). Due to its liberation credentials, SWAPO won resounding election victories in the early years after independence. However, the nature of competitiveness changed as the nation became a more stable democracy. New political parties started criticising SWAPO's track record of governance, concentrating on problems including corruption, unemployment, and inequality. Even if there were no noticeable changes in voter behaviour right away, the emergence of these criticisms represented a growth in political debate.

Additionally important are the procedures that take place within political parties (Toscano & Stolz, 2024). With power frequently concentrated within a small number of individuals, SWAPO, the ruling party, has demonstrated characteristics of political elitism (Toscano & Stolz, 2024). Internal party dynamics, including factionalism and leadership disputes, have impacted the party's ability to adapt to social needs. In the same vein, opposition parties have encountered obstacles, including little funding, internal strife, and trouble formulating a cogent counter-argument to SWAPO's hegemony. The more general systemic difficulties of Namibian political rivalry are reflected in these internal party activities (Blaauw, 2017).

The characteristics of political elitism and the patterns of political competitiveness have been directly influenced by Namibia's political system's outputs, which include laws, policies, and programs. SWAPO's governance model has strongly emphasised

policies like land reform programs and the National Development Plans (NDPs) that attempt to ameliorate socio-economic disparities (Blaauw, 2017). These results are frequently presented as attempts to satisfy popular desires and keep the ruling party's support. Nonetheless, there has been discussion on the efficacy and inclusiveness.

Opposition parties have used complaints about the sluggish pace of land reform, high unemployment rates, and enduring inequality as justification to attack SWAPO's record of governance (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). Even if opposition parties have not always benefited greatly from these criticisms regarding votes, they have helped broaden the political conversation (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023).

Election results, which gauge political rivalry, are also considered political system outputs (Mathe, 2020). Although most people agree that Namibia's elections are free and fair, their reputation has occasionally been damaged by problems, including voter disinterest and claims of electoral fraud. The results of the election have strengthened SWAPO's hold on power, but they have also shown that some sections of the populace are becoming increasingly dissatisfied, as seen by the drop in voter turnout and the rise in support for opposition parties in some areas (Mathe, 2020).

Namibia's political system's feedback mechanisms emphasise the interaction between outcomes and future inputs. Political competition is influenced by how the public reacts to government policies and election results, creating new demands and support (Kebede, 2020). For example, SWAPO and opposition parties have had to modify their tactics in response to the public's growing expectations for accountability and openness brought on by corruption scandals (Kössler, 2020). The shifting trends of political engagement also show feedback loops.

The emergence of civil society groups and youth movements has changed the political landscape. These organisations have challenged established political systems by using Internet channels to increase support and make their demands more widely known (Kössler, 2020).

As more voices attempt to impact governance and policy-making, this change is indicative of a larger trend of democratisation within the political system. The mechanics of political competitiveness interact with political elitism, a recurrent subject in Namibia's political system. The system's responsiveness and inclusiveness are impacted when power is concentrated within a limited number of political elites (Tomodi, 2022). Critiques of patronage politics and the exclusion of alternative voices inside the party have frequently accompanied SWAPO's control.

Opposition parties have struggled with their internal power dynamics while attempting to counteract this elitism (Tomodi, 2022). Leadership issues and a lack of grassroots involvement have hampered their capacity to offer a competitive alternative to SWAPO. These difficulties highlight the conflict between the larger objectives of democratic governance and political elitism (Tomodi, 2022). Another important factor in determining the story of Namibia's political system is the influence of political elites. Elites have been crucial in determining the agenda, shaping public opinion, and defining policy discussions (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2020). This effect emphasises how crucial it is to look at how elite behaviour interacts with the larger dynamics of political struggle. Namibia's political scene has seen several rising trends between 1990 and 2024.

These include the rise of issue-based politics, the influence of digital technology on political mobilisation, and the increased participation of women and young people in

politics (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2020). Despite SWAPO's continued dominance, these patterns show a slow diversification of the political system. The political system is now more complicated as a result of the emergence of independent candidates and fresh political groupings (Kebede, 2020). These changes show a desire for a more responsible and responsive government and put old party structures to the test. They also draw attention to Namibia's democratic framework's capacity for innovation, as fresh players and concepts aim to shape the political landscape.

A useful perspective for examining Namibia's changing political elites, party systems, and competitive dynamics is Easton's political systems theory. Through an analysis of the political system's inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback, this research demonstrates the intricate interactions between many elements that have influenced Namibia's democratic framework throughout the last thirty years (Chan, 2022). These revelations deepen our comprehension of Namibian politics and advance larger conversations about the difficulties and possibilities of democratic government in post-colonial settings (Chan, 2022).

2.4.2 The Elite Theory

Elite Theory posits that societies are governed by a small group of individuals who hold power and influence (Mariotti, 2020). The theory assumes that ruling elites maintain legitimacy by promoting ideologies that justify their rule, embodying the values of lower classes, and allowing new members to join their ranks (Mariotti, 2020). These elites come from various social classes, like Old Money, New Money, and the upper-middle class, representing different interests but often sharing power. Elite Theory also discusses elite groups' composition, recruitment, and integration, linking them to significant social and political outcomes (Damele, 2022). The theory

highlights elite groups' diverse goals, collaborations, competitions, conflicts, or coexistence in parallel worlds. Understanding these assumptions helps in comprehending power structures by revealing how elites interact, maintain control, and influence policy-making processes (Damele, 2022).

The study's use of elite theory was suitable since it provides a critical viewpoint on how political elites between 1990 and 2024 emerged and shaped Namibia's democratic framework and political competitiveness. The idea asserts that a small, unified group of elites has a disproportionate amount of political power and controls decision-making processes, frequently without the involvement of the general population. This is consistent with the study's analysis of political elitism and how it affects Namibia's party systems and democratic government.

By using elite theory, the research investigated how elite institutions have impacted the democratic process more broadly by influencing political rivalry, party ideology, and policy results. It also made it easier to comprehend how elites and the general public interact, illuminating topics like accountability, representation, and the inclusiveness of decision-making procedures. Furthermore, elite theory was especially important when analysing how Namibia's democratic system has changed over time and whether it has allowed or restricted the consolidation of power among political elites. In addition to identifying trends of continuity and change in political elitism over the post-independence era, the study critically evaluates the implications of elite dominance for the growth of a pluralistic and participatory democratic system by placing these dynamics within the framework of elite theory.

2.5 Neo-Patrimonialism in Namibia

Neo-patrimonialism is a concept that combines traditional forms of patronage and personalism with modern bureaucratic state structures. In the context of post-colonial African nations, it often describes the interplay between political power, economic resources, and social networks that favour personal loyalty over formal institutions. It is a form of rule commonly associated with ineffective governance in Africa. According to Bratton and van de Walle (1997), it combines clientelism, strong presidents, and the use of state resources for political legitimization.

On the one hand, neo-patrimonialism is predominantly perceived negatively in scholarship on African politics and development (e.g., Van der Walle, 2003; Opalo, 2012; Schartzberg, 2001). This perspective suggests that the key characteristics of neo-patrimonialism, strong Presidential rule supported by the patronage-based distribution of power, combined with weak institutional limitations, have little in common with the features of democratic regimes. On the other hand, there is some evidence that advancements in certain facets of democratisation, such as electoral competition, civil rights, political freedoms, and public goods distribution, may flourish even in neo-patrimonial contexts (Lindberg, 2006; Edgell et al., 2017; Stasavage, 2005).

When measuring neo-patrimonialism in countries, Sigman & Lindberg (2018) define it as a three-dimensional concept that includes clientelism, strong presidents (Presidentialism), and public resources for private or political benefit (regime corruption). Using this conceptual outline, Sigman & Lindberg (Working Paper (WP) 56:2018) construct an index of neo-patrimonial rule and assess to what extent African political regimes qualify as neo-patrimonial. The measure shows that sub-Saharan Africa, as a whole, appears to be less “exceptionally neo-patrimonial” than the literature on African politics suggests.

The degree of neo-patrimonialism also varies vastly within the continent. There is a clear visible difference between countries scoring lowest, i.e, Cape Verde, South Africa, and Botswana, and those scoring highest, i.e., Chad and Eritrea, on the Neo-patrimonialism index. The dimensions of neo-patrimonialism are also configured variously. For instance, clientelistic regimes tend to also score high on corruption, although there are some exceptions, such as Burkina Faso, Zambia, and Senegal, where moderate levels of political patronage are combined with high corruption. Furthermore, less Presidentialistic regimes vary considerably in the extent to which their politics are clientelistic and plagued by corruption (Sigman & Lindberg, 2018, Working Paper (WP) 56:14).

Namibia, having transitioned from a colonial state under South African rule to an independent nation in 1990, offers a compelling case for examining neo-patrimonialism. In the section that follows, the researcher explored the manifestations of neo-patrimonialism in Namibia, its implications on governance, politics, and the economy, and how it shapes the lives of ordinary citizens.

The analytical value of political elitism and neo-patrimonialism emerges from their ability to explain democratic consolidation processes. Political elitism demonstrates its significance through its dual role of power concentration, its impact on institutional development and voter conduct and policy reaction. The concept of neo-patrimonialism surpasses clientelism to include all practices which reduce accountability and protect elite advantages. The combination of formal democratic challenging. The enhanced theoretical framework demonstrates how Namibia faces an ongoing conflict between its democratic goals and its institutions with patronage networks in Namibia after independence demonstrates how these systems interact to make democratic consolidation more elite-dominated political system.

2.5.1 Historical Context

Namibia's colonial past laid the groundwork for contemporary political dynamics. Under apartheid, ethnic divisions were institutionalised, creating a system of governance that privileged certain groups. The struggle for independence, led by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), sought not only liberation but also the establishment of a democratic state. However, the post-independence political landscape has been shaped by the challenges of balancing the demands of governance with the legacies of a patronage-oriented system.

The SWAPO party emerged as the primary political force post-independence, establishing a government that retained elements of its liberation movement ethos. While SWAPO aimed to create a more equitable society, the lingering influences of neo-patrimonialism have manifested in various ways, affecting governance practices, political interactions, and economic distributions (Afrobarometer, 2008).

Recent data from Transparency International indicates that Namibia scored 49 out of 100 in the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), ranking 59th out of 180 countries (Transparency International, 2024). Although this score is above the global average of 43 and significantly higher than the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average of 33, it reflects persistent governance challenges. The lack of improvement compared to previous years suggests that efforts to combat corruption have not yet yielded substantial progress. Transparency International further highlights issues such as limited accountability, weak enforcement of anti-corruption measures, and restricted civic space as key obstacles. While Namibia performs relatively better than many of its regional counterparts, strengthening institutional accountability and enhancing transparency remain critical for sustaining democratic governance.

2.5.2 Manifestations of Neo-Patrimonialism in Namibia

2.5.2.1 Political Patronage and Clientelism

Hughes (2012) points out that in traditional systems of public administration, bureaucratic appointments were largely based on personal connections and loyalty to political leaders. Similarly, in Namibia, the distribution of resources and political favours often reflects personal loyalty to political leaders and party structures rather than adherence to institutional protocols. Political appointments in government and public enterprises frequently prioritize loyalty to SWAPO over merit-based criteria. This has resulted in a patronage system where political allies enjoy access to resources, contracts, and influential positions. Transparency International (2014) examined 82 countries, of which a quarter of them experienced degrees of conflict. The study finds that corruption risks in comparison to political, financial, operations, procurement, and personnel risks are consistently much higher (by 13 to 20 points) in conflict vs non-conflict countries. Hughes (2012) indicates that this dynamic can undermine effective governance, as it prioritises personal relationships over accountability and efficiency.

2.5.2.2 State Resources and Personal Networks

One key feature of neo-patrimonialism highlighted in Weber (1978) is the problem of uncertainty, similar to Erdmann and Engel's definition of neo-patrimonialism as being associated with instability. Based on the above theorists' assertions, the researcher explores the relationship between demand and supply for bribery on the one hand and uncertainty and neo-patrimonialism on the other. That mechanism works as follows. In a neo-patrimonial regime, appointments, promotion, and security of tenure of civil servants depend on the survival of their political patrons, whose tenure in turn depends on their ability to deliver patronage to their constituents.

Access to state resources in Namibia is largely mediated through personal networks and relationships. In many cases, individuals are more likely to benefit from government programs if they have connections to political leaders. This is particularly evident in the distribution of land, jobs, and government contracts. The “politics of kinship” can often overshadow formal guidelines, leading to uneven distribution of resources and opportunities. This patron-client relationship creates a dependency on political figures, which can fracture accountability.

Based on the literature (Erdmann and Engel 2006, Beekers and van Gool 2012, Weber 1978), uncertainty in the careers of bureaucrats, their low salaries, high discretion, weak monitoring, and accountability, plus knowing that everyone else is doing it without being punished, will motivate them to demand bribes and to “make hay while the sun shines”. This, according to the literature, is demand-side bribery.

They still opine that, similarly, uncertainty in the prospects of business will motivate business owners to supply bribes to win contracts. If everyone else is doing it and bureaucrats are expecting it, the logic goes, then I might as well offer bribes to win a contract. This is the supply side of bribery.

2.5.2.3 Impact on Governance and Development

Hughes (2012) explains that the effects of neo-patrimonialism extend beyond individual patronage to influence broader governance issues. The blending of personal loyalty with institutional responsibilities can lead to inefficiencies and corruption. For instance, while Namibia has made significant strides in economic growth and development since independence, the persistent elements of neo-patrimonialism often hinder equitable progress. He further states that wherever neo-patrimonialism happens, there will be corruption; therefore, citizens with political connections may access

benefits and opportunities unavailable to others, exacerbating socio-economic disparities. The World Bank (2021) has noted how corruption in public sector management can stifle overall development, a phenomenon evident in Namibia's struggles with transparency and accountability.

2.5.2.4 Concluding Thoughts

Chabal (2009, p.11) is quick to admit that a closer look at the agency in Africa “reveals an ambiguity at its very core”, drawing the reader's attention to epistemological changes in the primarily Western social sciences that centres on the recognition that in “modern” societies the individual is regarded as more of a free agent than in so-called “traditional societies”. The ability of Africans “to adapt to, and to process, modernity and democracy as integral to it for their purposes and in their ways, derives from what is often dismissed as ‘tradition’”.

Explanations of the present economic and political situation in Africa fall into two distinct categories. The first lays the blame on historical, environmental, or structural factors, which range from neo-colonialism to the nature of the continent's political economy in general, and the effects of globalisation on world trade, in particular. What these explanations have in common is their emphasis on those conditions that affect Africa, which are outside local control. In short, Africa is the victim of unforgiving circumstances.

The other explanation, which stresses political factors, considers processes and events that are largely internal to the different countries and regions. Without neglecting any of the issues linked to the continent's marginalization, the principal worm in the apple in this second explanation emanates from the nature of accountability and the corrosive

neo-patrimonial impulses and complicity of African elites in the (inelegant) “*politics of the belly*”, to invoke a phrase from Bayart (1993).

The influential work, *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (1999), edited by Richard Joseph, follows the second explanation for the many ‘false starts’ in Africa. Joseph and his co-authors opined that on the eve of the transitions to democracy, “there had been little confidence that viable structures of democracy would be installed in Africa in the near future”. By 1997, on their analysis, it was clear that even a vibrant civil society, such as in Nigeria or a nascent one, such as in Zambia, “could be suppressed by regimes determined to avoid democratisation” (Joseph, 1999, p.3). More recently, of course, one can point to Zimbabwe, where civil society was systematically disempowered and silenced by the neo-patrimonial regime.

A few years earlier, the noted Africanist Goran Hyden (1992) proposed a conceptualisation of ‘governance’ as involving “the institutionalisation of values and rights and the politics of regimes”. This conceptualisation was soon rendered less useful by the transitions to democracy that took place in several African states in the early and mid-1990s. In retrospect, however, several transitions to democracy (among these, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, and Nigeria) underlined the importance of establishing the normative foundations for a viable democracy.

The overriding emphasis on multiparty elections and the introduction of new legislatures and political parties led to a view both in Africa and abroad that equated democracy with competitive elections and the (re-) introduction of multiparty politics. In 1999, Hyden suggested that “Africans must be able to perceive the emerging systems as connected in fundamental ways to their self-conception as communities, in addition to having their basic individual rights restored” (Hyden, 1999, pp. 179-196). In retrospect, it is clear that the widespread dissatisfaction with electoral approaches

to democratic transitions has led to new approaches that could keep societies intact despite the renewal of often divisive partisan competition.

Haberson (1999) explored the importance of pact-making in such transitions, which has featured prominently in studies of Southern Europe and South America. He suggested that the limited number of pacts in Africa, compared to other regions, may be a deficiency in the continent's attempts to democratize. It is widely acknowledged that the South African transition of 1994 was propelled at each critical turn by agreements that took the form of foundational pacts. Equally important has been the realisation on the part of civil society and the key political actors to create a normative foundation for the post-apartheid political and social order. The Namibian transition to democracy in 1989-90 was also instructive in that it was grounded in a core set of constitutional principles that had their genesis in 1982. While not without controversy, these principles did provide a normative foundation for the new independence constitution and the subsequent democratic state institutions (Du Pisani, 2007).

While not washing down the notable progress that Namibia has made since its independence, neo-patrimonialism continues to influence its political landscape and development trajectories. The intertwined nature of personal loyalty, political patronage, and institutional frameworks poses challenges for governance and equitable development. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort to foster accountability, transparency, and meritocracy within the political sphere. Encouraging civic engagement and empowering citizens to hold their leaders accountable will be critical in overcoming the entrenchment of neo-patrimonial practices. As Namibia continues to evolve, understanding and addressing the dynamics of neo-patrimonialism will be essential for building a more equitable and just society.

2.6 Democratic Theoretical Foundation of Namibian Politics

Liberal Democracy Theory is a complex concept that intertwines liberalism and democracy, highlighting the challenges and contradictions within (Bracco et al., 2013). Liberal democracy is rooted in human rights and constitutional principles, with a focus on individual freedoms. However, the implementation of liberal democracy faces scrutiny due to its reliance on liberal metaphysics and the questionable universality of its values (Bracco et al., 2013). The theory of deliberative democracy emerges as a potential improvement to the traditional liberal democratic model, aiming to harmonise individual interests with collective decision-making through communicative action (Shandilya, 2022).

The theoretical aspects of technology export liberal democracy emphasise the necessity of voluntary adherence to liberal principles by political elites and civil society for successful functioning (Farrell et al., 2023).

Overall, the analysis of liberal democracy theory reveals its inner contradictions, the importance of ethical grounding, and the ongoing quest for a more inclusive and effective democratic practice (Luke et al., 2020). The Liberal Democracy Theory emphasises the significance of political competition in shaping policy outcomes and international relations. Theuns (2019) highlights how party competition influences policy liberalism, showing a positive relationship with economic policy liberalism and a weaker negative relationship with social policy liberalism (Theuns, 2019).

Short (2014) argues that political competition plays a crucial role in democratic peace theory, as leaders facing viable opposition are deterred from initiating conflicts with democracies to avoid criticism and vulnerability (Shandilya, 2022). Furthermore, Deutscher and Makris (2016) discuss the ordoliberal perspective, linking competition

and democracy as essential components of competition law, emphasising the interdependence between economic, social, and political orders. These insights collectively underscore the integral role of political competition in promoting liberal democratic values and shaping both domestic policies and international interactions.

With its emphasis on the ideas of political equality, popular sovereignty, and participatory government, democratic theory offers a critical perspective for analysing Namibia's democratic system. The theory's central tenet is that the agreement and active involvement of the governed are what give a political institution its legitimacy. Regarding Namibia, this theory emphasises how critical it is to handle both the advantages and disadvantages of the nation's democratic processes. A legal basis for people's sovereignty is established by Namibia's constitution, which upholds democratic values. Article 1 of the Constitution explicitly affirms that Namibia is a sovereign, democratic state based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. A key component of democracy, elections have made it possible for citizens to participate. However, the degree to which political competition accurately represents the desire of the people has come under scrutiny due to SWAPO's dominance. When opposition parties encounter structural obstacles, such as restricted access to resources and the media, the ideals of political equality are put to the test.

The democratic theory's participatory component also emphasises how Namibian political participation is changing. Voting and other traditional forms of involvement coexist alongside more recent ones, including online activism. The growth of civil society groups and youth movements shows that there are more opportunities for participation, which reflects how dynamic Namibia's democracy is. In addition to elevating underrepresented voices, these movements have contested the political elites' monopoly on power. Democratic philosophy also highlights how institutions and

political leaders are answerable to the people. This notion has been put to the test in Namibia by corruption scandals and governance issues, as public discontent has increased in reaction to perceived shortcomings in transparency and service delivery. The democratic ideal of informed and engaged citizens is in line with the function of civil society and independent media in holding politicians responsible.

The democratic theory offers a framework for comprehending how minority rights and majority rule interact (Bracco et al., 2013). A political system that strikes a balance between these conflicting interests is necessary, given Namibia's diversified population, which includes a wide range of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groupings (Hanumanthappa, 2023). Opposition parties and civil society have called for more inclusion and representation of minority views, even though SWAPO's dominance has frequently been presented as fostering national unity (Hanumanthappa, 2023). An essential component of Namibia's democratic development is the conflict between unity and diversity. The idea emphasises how crucial institutions are to maintaining democracy (Mariotti, 2022). The election commission, Namibia's court, and other democratic institutions are essential to upholding the rule of law and guaranteeing the legitimacy of political procedures (Toscano & Stolz, 2024). However, the democratic idea of checks and balances has been called into question due to the apparent politicization of certain institutions, which has raised questions about their independence and impartiality (Damele & Campos, 2022).

The democratic theory offers a fundamental framework for comprehending the tenets, behaviours, and difficulties of democracy in Namibia's political system between 1990 and 2023, making it important to this study. To analyse the trends and patterns of political rivalry as well as the role that political parties and elites play in forming the democratic framework, the theory places a strong emphasis on fundamental principles

such as political involvement, accountability, representation, and inclusion (Banks & Kiewiet, 2016). The research determined if political rivalry has bolstered or weakened democratic values over time by examining how Namibia's democratic institutions operate in advancing these ideals (Lse et al., 2020).

Additionally, democratic theory provides a framework for assessing how well elites and political parties represent popular will, guarantee fair participation, and foster a pluralistic political environment (Besley et al., 2021). It also makes it easier to analyse how governance structures, election procedures, and institutional architecture affect the distribution of power, the conduct of political players, and the general standard of democracy (Marshfield, 2019). The study offered deeper insights into the achievements, constraints, and changing character of Namibia's democratic system by placing its political developments within the larger framework of democratic theory (Ghosh, 2002). This highlighted the system's resilience or vulnerability to issues like elitism, inequality, and changing political dynamics (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024).

2.6.1 The Elitist Foundations of Political Competition in Namibia

The elitist foundations of political contestation in Namibia warrant interrogation, and it suffices to employ assumptions of the elite theory in this regard. The Elite Theory posits that societies are governed by a small group of individuals who hold power and influence (Mariotti, 2020). The theory assumes that ruling elites maintain legitimacy by promoting ideologies that justify their rule, embodying the values of lower classes, and allowing new members to join their ranks (Mariotti, 2020). These elites come from various social classes, like Old Money, New Money, and the upper-middle class, representing different interests but often sharing power. Elite Theory also discusses elite groups' composition, recruitment, and integration, linking them to significant social and political outcomes (Damele, 2022). The theory highlights elite groups'

diverse goals, collaborations, competitions, conflicts, or coexistence in parallel worlds. Understanding these assumptions helps in comprehending power structures by revealing how elites interact, maintain control, and influence policy-making processes (Damele, 2022).

The application of elite theory in this study was appropriate, as it offers a critical perspective on how political elites have influenced Namibia's democratic framework and its political competitiveness since independence (Brown, 2020). This theory posits that a small, cohesive group of elites wields disproportionate political power and controls decision-making processes, often sidelining the general population (Brown, 2020). This aligns with the study's examination of political elitism and its impact on Namibia's party systems and democratic governance (Ciampini, 2022). By employing elite theory, the research explored how elite institutions have broadly affected the democratic process by shaping political competition, party ideologies, and policy outcomes (Flores et al., 2022).

It also made it easier to comprehend how elites and the general public interact, illuminating topics like accountability, representation, and the inclusiveness of decision-making procedures (Flores et al., 2022). Furthermore, the elite theory was especially important when analysing how Namibia's democratic system has changed over time and whether it has allowed or restricted the consolidation of power among political elites (Noordzij et al., 2018). In addition to identifying trends of continuity and change in political elitism over the post-independence era, the study critically evaluates the implications of elite dominance for the growth of a pluralistic and participatory democratic system by placing these dynamics within the framework of elite theory (Noordzij et al., 2018).

This viewpoint enables a thorough comprehension of Namibia's power concentration and exercise by concentrating on the influence of elites on political systems (Krawiec & Krawiec, 2019). These elites have been crucial in defining and giving priority to these concerns, especially within the ruling South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). SWAPO has gained a great deal of credibility thanks to its liberation credentials and subsequent supremacy. Nevertheless, accusations of resource mismanagement, nepotism, and elite-driven corruption have repeatedly eroded popular confidence, causing shifts in the base of support. The public's opinion of the political elite's efficacy significantly influences support for the political system. Namibia's colonial past has resulted in socio-economic inequality, which emphasises the elite's role in upholding or altering the status quo (Ciampini, 2022).

Elite control over political and economic resources is reflected in the environment in which these inputs are produced (Genieys & Colin, 2020). Because of its elite-dominated structure, SWAPO has been able to entrench its control and frequently silence critics. The elites' concentration of power has maintained a hierarchical political climate, which has reduced the potential for demands from the bottom up to acquire momentum. The concentration of power among elites significantly impacts Namibia's political system's operations. The internal dynamics of SWAPO show a strong elitist structure, with a small number of powerful leaders frequently having the only say in decisions (Genieys & Colin, 2020). Despite mounting popular discontent, SWAPO has been able to sustain its supremacy because of this concentration of power (Genieys & Colin, 2020).

Elite control has also influenced Namibian political competitiveness. The former two main opposition parties, the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), found it difficult to contest SWAPO's hegemony

successfully. Internal conflicts, elite-driven tactics, and restricted access to resources have hampered their capacity to offer a convincing alternative. Although they are competing with entrenched elites, the rise of independent candidates and new political groups has not yet seriously upended the existing power structures (Ege & Springer, 2021). Additionally, elite theory clarifies how intra-party dynamics influence political competitiveness. Factionalism and leadership conflicts within SWAPO frequently mirror larger conflicts among the elite. These internal disputes may affect the party's capacity to uphold its hegemony and react to social pressures. Similar difficulties confront opposition parties, whose unity and electoral effectiveness have been weakened by elite-driven agendas and leadership conflicts (Ege & Springer, 2021).

It can be argued that Namibia's political system produces laws, policies, and initiatives that frequently reflect the goals of the elite. To preserve power and solidify its legitimacy, the ruling class usually frames policies like national development plans and land reforms that attempt to solve socio-economic disparities (Krawiec & Krawiec, 2019). Nonetheless, these policies' efficacy and inclusion are regularly questioned. Critics contend that elite-led projects frequently put political survival ahead of real socio-economic change (Krawiec & Krawiec, 2019). For example, opposition elites have had the chance to criticise SWAPO's governance record because of the delayed progress in land redistribution and ongoing inequality, which has led to a more contentious political debate.

Another important product of the political system is the outcome of elections, which shows how elites shape political rivalry. Although most people agree that Namibia's elections are free and fair, elite manipulation of the electoral process, including resource distribution and patronage, has sparked questions about the system's actual competitiveness (Flores et al., 2022). Growing disenchantment with elite-driven

politics is reflected in declining voter turnout and regional changes in electoral support. Namibia's political system's feedback mechanisms emphasise how elites react to public requests and grievances (Flores et al., 2022). Both the ruling and opposition elites have had to change their tactics in response to public discontent with problems like inequality and corruption. For example, to allay public fears, SWAPO's leadership has periodically implemented economic reforms and anti-corruption measures, even if these efforts have been condemned as cosmetic.

Elite domination is being challenged by the emergence of youth movements and civil society groups (Auerbach, 2022). By amplifying their demands and mobilising support through digital channels, these organisations have created new feedback loops that put pressure on elites to change. However, the influence of these movements is frequently curtailed by elite control over governmental resources and conventional media, upholding established power structures. Namibia's political system is characterised by political elitism, which shapes the dynamics of government and competitiveness (Auerbach, 2022). The system's responsiveness and inclusiveness are significantly impacted when power is concentrated within a limited number of political elites. Accusations of patronage politics, in which allegiance to the elite is rewarded above merit or the general welfare, have frequently accompanied SWAPO's rule.

While attempting to counteract SWAPO's elitism, opposition parties have comparable problems within their membership. The wider difficulties of elite-driven politics are reflected in leadership issues and a lack of popular involvement (Breindl, 2020). These internal dynamics weaken the opposition's capacity to offer a unified and respectable alternative to the ruling party (Breindl, 2020). Elites' influence on Namibia's democratic framework is demonstrated by their role in defining the political agenda and formulating policy discussions. Even when new players and groups aim to upend

the status quo, elites have preserved their supremacy by regulating access to resources and influencing public discourse.

A slow transition to a more inclusive political system is shown in the growing popularity of issue-based politics, the increasing involvement of women and youth in politics, and the development of digital technology as a vehicle for political mobilisation (Cerovac, 2014). However, when existing leaders adjust to or appropriate these new dynamics, these developments also demonstrate how resilient elite control is (Ma, 2021). The rise of independent candidates and fresh political movements indicates a possible change in Namibia's political environment. These changes show a desire for a more responsible and responsive government and put old party structures to the test. It is unclear, nonetheless, if these movements will be successful in overthrowing elite domination (Ma, 2021).

Baliamoune-lutz (2020) also opines that elite theory offers a useful foundation for comprehending Namibia's political elitism, party structures, and competitive politics. The study highlights the importance of elite behaviour in impacting Namibia's democratic framework by looking at how elites shape inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback within the political system. These revelations, he argues, deepen our knowledge of the difficulties and possibilities of post-colonial administration, emphasising the necessity of ongoing examination of elite dynamics in determining the nation's political direction (Baliamoune-lutz, 2020).

2.6.2 Political Parties' Strategies and Behaviours: An Institutional Perspective

In democratic societies, institutions play a crucial role in shaping political competition by influencing parties' strategies and behaviours. Following the Institutional theory, Organisations conform to widely accepted practices to gain legitimacy, a principle

applicable to political parties as well. Damele & Campos (2022) emphasise the significance of institutionalised political competition in democratic peace, where high-competition states are averse to initiating conflicts with democracies due to potential vulnerability to opposition criticism (Mohanty et al., 2016). Furthermore, the research underscores how the degree of consensual characteristics in political institutions affects parties' electoral strategies, with consensus models incentivising parties to pursue voter uncertainty through broad, appealing strategies, particularly in advanced democracies (Mohanty et al., 2016). Overall, institutionalist theory shapes the incentives for parties to adopt specific strategies in democratic societies, ultimately influencing the dynamics of political competition (Kelleher, 2017).

The idea of institutionalism offers a strong framework for comprehending political rivalry, particularly in light of Namibia's developing democratic system (Bracco et al., 2013). Institutionalism provides important insights into the new trends and patterns in political rivalry, political party systems, and political elitism in Namibia after 1990 by analysing how formal and informal institutions influence political conduct, norms, and results (Bracco et al., 2013). This study examines the idea of institutionalism, its applicability to Namibian politics, and its use in analysing the country's democratic transition from independence until 2023. Institutionalism theory mainly focuses on how institutions influence social, political, and economic consequences (Theuns, 2019). Formal regulations, unwritten conventions, and organisational frameworks that control political conduct and decision-making are referred to as institutions (Theuns, 2019). The many branches of institutionalism provide different viewpoints on how institutions affect political rivalry and party systems, including historical, rational choice, and sociological institutionalism (Roemer, 2014).

This strand focuses on how crucial junctures and route dependence shape institutional development over time (Ma, 2021). According to historical institutionalism, choices taken at early stages, like Namibia's independence process, have a lasting impact on party dynamics and political competitiveness (Baliamoune-lutz, 2020). According to this perspective, institutions are the result of strategic exchanges of logical players looking to maximise their interests. It draws attention to the incentives and limitations imposed by institutional norms and structures, which influence political conduct, particularly the establishment and development of political parties (Polk et al., 2022). This viewpoint emphasises how shared identities and values impact political rivalry and the actions of political elites, concentrating on the cultural and normative aspects of institutions.

2.7 A Comparative Analysis of Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Angola, Namibia, and South Africa.

When we look at Angola, Namibia, and South Africa, these neighbouring countries share more than just borders. Their histories are tied together through shared struggles, colonial legacies, and aspirations for independence. Yet, their paths toward democracy and political competition could not be more different. That is why selecting them for comparative purposes will be very interesting and intriguing. Let us take a closer, more open look at what makes each of their political landscapes unique.

2.7.1 Liberation and Dominance

It's fascinating and heartbreaking to see how history shapes nations. All three of these countries wrestled their way out of colonial control through liberation movements. Picture decades of struggle, sacrifice, and solidarity. In each case, this fight gave rise

to political parties that became almost synonymous with independence itself. These parties were more than just names on ballots; they were symbols of hope (Habib, 2013).

Take South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), for example. The ANC didn't just represent a political choice; it embodied liberation from apartheid. But time has weighed heavily on the ANC. As South Africa transitioned into democracy, the party initially gave space to a range of political voices. Yet frustration has crept in, fueled by unmet socio-economic expectations and growing corruption scandals. This has opened the door for opposition voices like the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the unapologetically bold Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Slowly, South Africans are beginning to explore the political alternatives available to them (Habib, 2013).

2.7.2 Angola: A Blocked Path to Pluralism

Now, let us shift to Angola, a country where political competition feels more like a distant dream. The Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) has ruled since independence, and it wields its power with an iron grip. Imagine running a race but finding the track blocked at every turn—that's what opposition parties face in Angola. Soares de Oliveira (2015) argues that the MPLA uses its control over state resources and the media to maintain its dominance, leaving little room for dissenting voices. He opines that, despite a multi-party system in theory, the political field is heavily skewed, and contesting power feels like an uphill battle.

2.7.3 Namibia: The Middle Ground

Namibia, in many ways, serves as a bridge between the extremes of South Africa and Angola. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) holds tight to its liberation legacy, much like the ANC and MPLA (Southall, 2013). He states that it is easy to see why SWAPO still commands loyalty; its role in bringing independence

remains a point of pride for Namibians. In his theory, he further asserts that, yet, unlike Angola's MPLA, Namibia's political landscape is not completely closed off. While SWAPO dominates, opposition parties are not as hamstrung. Still, the playing field is far from even, and SWAPO's influence permeates key sectors of society (Southall, 2013).

2.7.4 Closing Thoughts

What is striking is the diversity of political competition across these three nations. South Africa is cautiously edging towards more pluralism, with a public increasingly vocal about their frustrations. Angola remains tightly under MPLA control, its potential for political change stifled by systemic roadblocks. Namibia strikes a kind of balance, where opposition exists but struggles to break through SWAPO's stronghold (Southall, 2013). These trends reveal so much about the delicate dance of democracy in Southern Africa. They also remind us that political competition is not just about numbers or parties, it is about the people, their voices, and their dreams for a better future. The citizens hope that these nations inch closer to political systems that truly reflect the will of their citizens and the sacrifices of the past.

2.8 Historicising Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia

Namibia formed a multiparty democratic system following its independence in 1990, with the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) emerging as the main political force (Loculy, 2023). Due largely to its origins in the liberation movement against South African rule, SWAPO established a foothold in national politics thanks to increased public support and popularity (Loculy, 2023). Many opposition groups have emerged in the political environment over time, including the Popular

Democratic Movement (PDM), the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), and the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) (Melber, 2021).

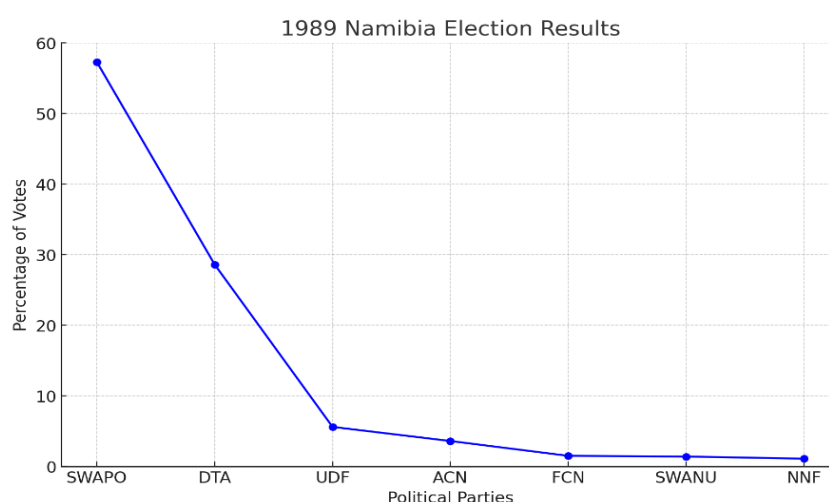
These parties have addressed topics such as social injustice, corruption, and governance to challenge SWAPO's hegemony. But thanks to its long history and widespread popularity, SWAPO has managed to hold onto a majority in both the National Assembly and the Presidency (Blaauw, 2017). Namibia's political competitive dynamics are shaped by various elements, including the nation's ethnic diversity, socio-economic difficulties, and regional differences (Blaauw, 2017). Ethnic affinities frequently influence voter behaviour as political parties strive to win over members of particular ethnic groups (Keulder, 2021b). It has occasionally resulted in conflicts and division within the opposition, making it difficult to present a united front against SWAPO (Kornes, 2023).

Youth and urban populations have grown increasingly dissatisfied in recent years due to high unemployment rates, poor service delivery, and perceived government corruption (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). This discontent has given rise to new political movements and independent candidates, particularly in municipal and regional elections. These new patterns show that people are looking for alternatives to the status quo in politics, which is leading to a change towards more competitive politics (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). Despite these advancements, structural problems like the concentration of power in the executive branch and the limited ability of opposition parties to raise funds and support continue to hinder Namibia's political competition (Melber, 2021). Furthermore, the election system favours larger parties like SWAPO and blends a constituency-based strategy with proportional representation (Kössler, 2020).

2.8.1 Post-Independence Era

After a protracted liberation war, Namibia held its first democratic elections in 1989, overseen by the United Nations (Electoral Commission of Namibia - ECN, 2024). After that, Namibia underwent a dramatic political change between 1989 and 1999, beginning with its independence from South Africa and ultimately becoming an independent nation (Kornes, 2023).

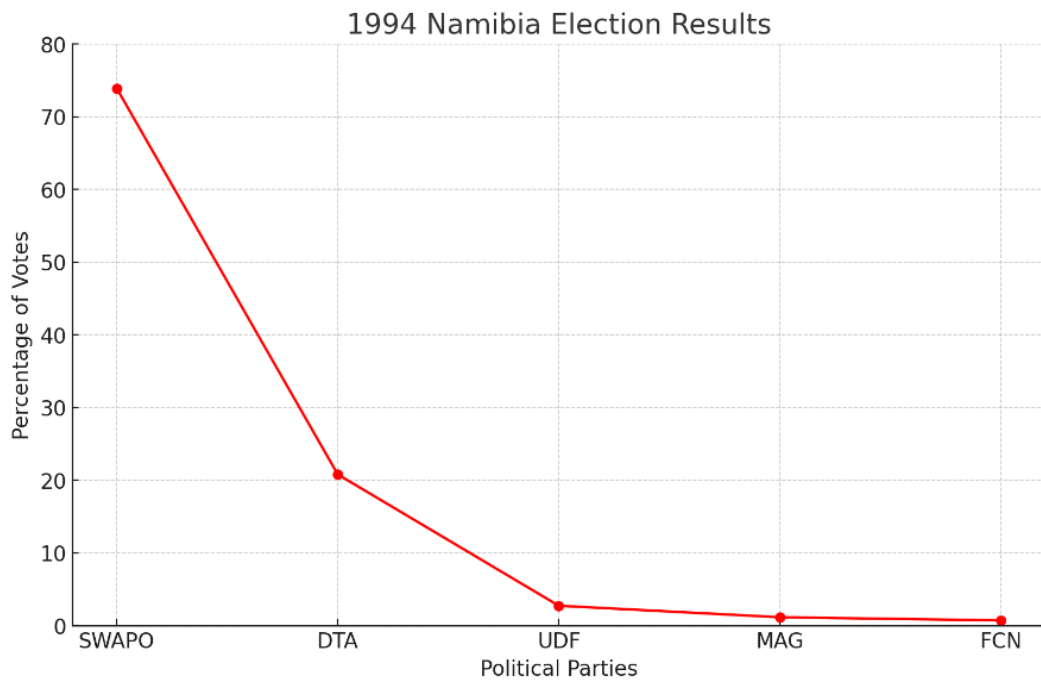
Figure 2.1: Namibia 1989 Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

The SWAPO party dominated the 1989 elections and emerged as a political force in the new and democratic Namibia (Kössler, 2020). With this triumph, SWAPO was able to guide Namibia into independence on March 21, 1990, and Nujoma became the nation's first president. Around 97% of eligible voters cast ballots, which is an extraordinarily high turnout for elections (Kössler, 2020). According to the results, SWAPO won 41 seats in the constituency assembly, DTA came in second with 21 seats, and the smaller parties won the final 10 seats, as shown in Figure 2.2 below.

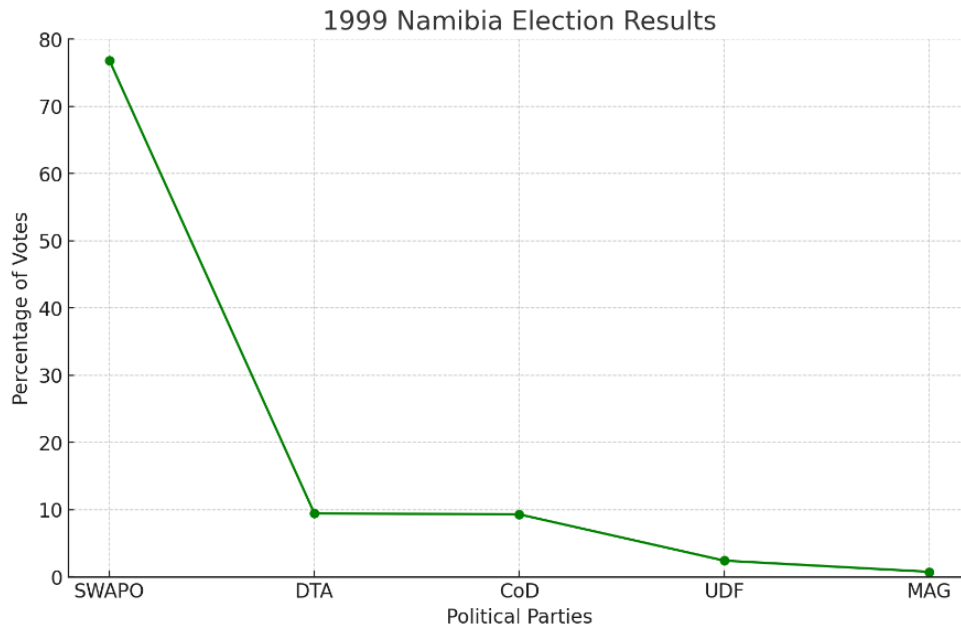
Figure 2.2 Namibia 1994 National Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

The SWAPO's supremacy was further cemented in the 1994 Presidential and National Assembly elections (see Figure 2.3 below), as Nujoma secured 76.3% of the vote in the Presidential contest and 53 out of 72 members in the National Assembly (Melber, 2020). A multi-party system was also established during this time, even though opposition parties like the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) continued to be weak and had difficulty gaining support from voters (Melber, 2020).

Figure 2.3 Namibia 1999 Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

SWAPO's political domination was further cemented in the 1999 elections (see Figure 2.4 below), which also marked Nujoma's third term as President as a result of a constitutional reform. SWAPO gained 76.8% of the vote in the Presidential election and expanded its majority to 55 seats in the National Assembly (Melber, 2021). Political stability prevailed during this time, and SWAPO's rule was mainly unopposed, although worries about the concentration of power and the silencing of opposing voices started to emerge (Digital Citizenship, 2023).

2.8.2 Political Trends in the 21st Century (2000-2024)

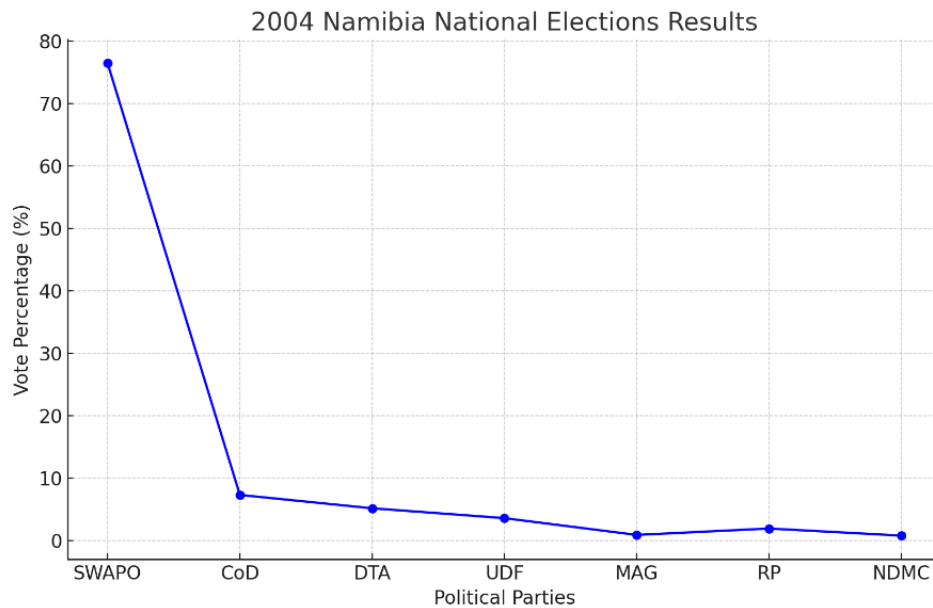
In the year 2000, Namibia experienced significant political developments, including growing tensions within the governing SWAPO Party (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023), deepening ethnic divides fuelled by controversies such as the Joint Declaration with

Germany on the colonial genocide, and a renewed focus on land reform as a critical issue in Namibian politics (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). These developments were accompanied by challenges such as high rates of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), sexually transmitted infections, and maternal mortality, highlighting ongoing social and health issues in the country (Simon, 2022). Moreover, the influence of international frameworks like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the National Development Plans (NDPs) like Vision 2030 shaped ideas of poverty reduction through political technologies of calculation and multi-scale partnership arrangements (Digital Citizenship, 2023).

Overall, these dynamics underscored the complex interplay between domestic politics, social challenges, and international influences in shaping Namibia's political landscape in the year 2000 (Obeid & Mendelsohn, 2022). In the end, Ben Ulenga of the CoD came in second during the 2004 elections with seven percent (7%) of the vote, behind Hifikepunye Pohamba, who received 200,000 more votes than Nujoma had ever received (Obeid & Mendelsohn, 2022). Although there were not many issues during the campaign, there was a commotion over the protracted counting process, which took five days to produce a result.

At the end of November 2002, Namibia held its first-ever simultaneous elections, offering 48 Local Authorities and 13 Regional Councils for election (Melber, 2020). The United Democratic Front (UDF) obtained majorities in two local authorities and the DTA in nine, while SWAPO took control of 32 out of 48 local authorities (Melber, 2020). In five municipalities, no single party held absolute power. There were 534,437 registered voters on the most recent voters' roll, and over 80% of registrants cast ballots in both elections (Melber, 2021).

Figure 2.4 Namibia 2004 Election Results



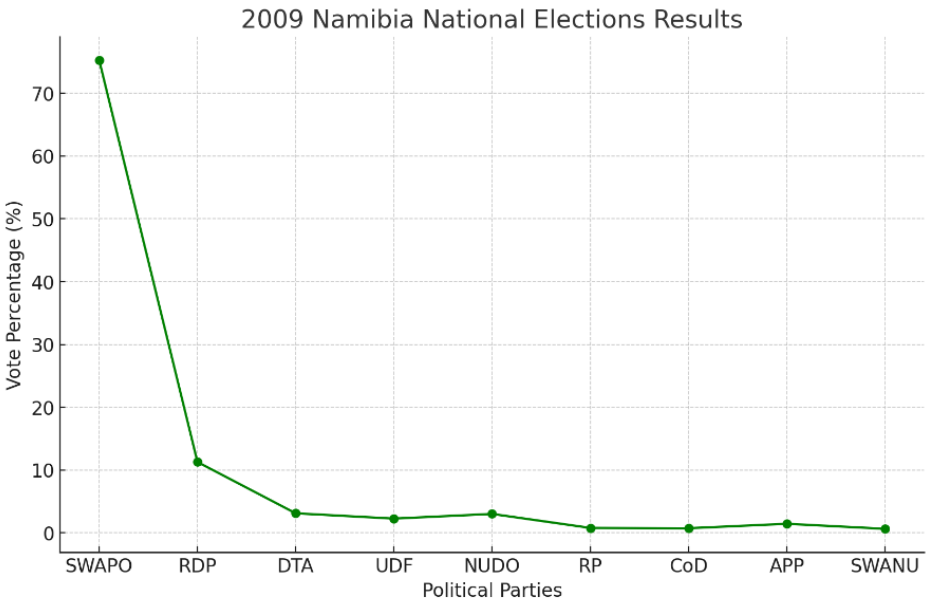
Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

The CoD and RP filed a lawsuit to request a recount of the National Assembly ballots due to concerns about potential anomalies that would have affected the count's accuracy (Melber, 2020). Only a few days before the new National Assembly was scheduled to take office, the High Court ordered a recount after the parties ultimately prevailed in the lawsuit in March 2005 (Melber, 2020). The results of the recount were very similar to those of the initial count, and the distribution of National Assembly seats remained unchanged. SWAPO won 96 out of 107 constituencies nationwide in the November 29th and 30th Regional Council elections (Melber, 2020).

The election was held shortly after the national elections, which may have contributed to voter fatigue, according to the ECN, which verified a 55% turnout. After voting for Councillors on a Regional Council level, the UDF obtained three seats, the DTA obtained two, and SWAPO held one. This made Kunene the only region in the country that remained outside of SWAPO's authority (Melber, 2021). To give the other party

a better chance of victory, the opposing parties decided to withdraw their candidates in specific seats, contributing to their strong performance in Kunene (Melber, 2021). While the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) won its first-ever seat on the Regional Council in Omaheke, NUDO earned three seats, two of which were in Omaheke and one in Otjozondjupa (Melber, 2020). The CoD did not win a single seat, even though they received more votes than any other opposition party in the entire nation (Melber, 2020).

Figure 2.5 Namibia 2009 Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

The National Assembly and Presidential elections were held on November 27th and 28th, 2009 (Namawe, 2018). SWAPO won convincingly with 74 percent of the vote, while Hifikepunye Pohamba did slightly better than his party by topping 75 percent in the Presidential poll (Melber, 2020). The campaign was the most fractious and violent build-up to an election since 1989. There was also controversy over the accuracy of the voter register, which appeared in several versions prior to the election, often with

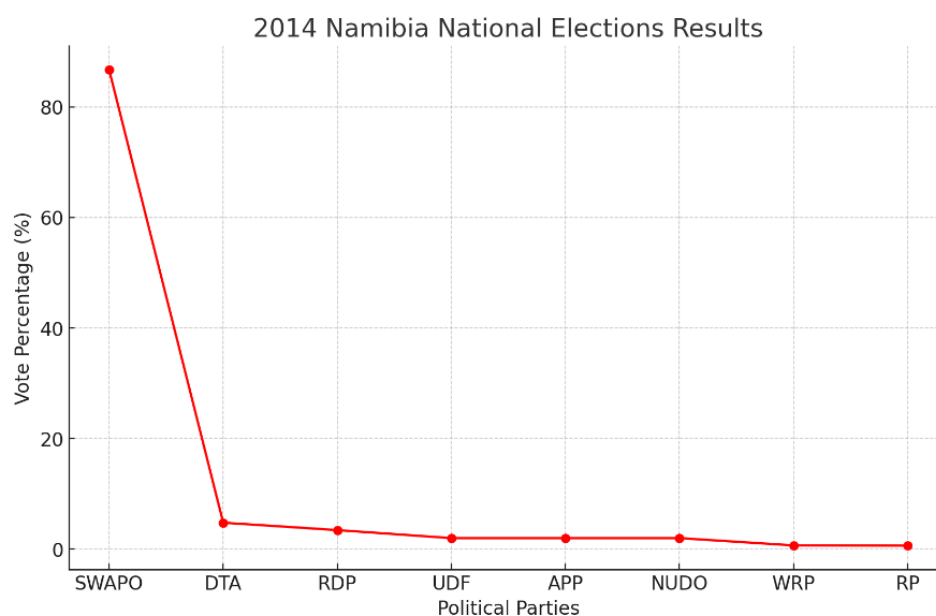
wildly fluctuating figures (Melber, 2020). The polling days passed without incident, but it then took the ECN almost a week to announce the final results, which fuelled suspicions that figures were being tampered with. The eventual results, released on December 4, saw most of the opposition parties boycott the official announcement in protest at how the ECN had organised the election (Obeid & Mendelsohn, 2022). The Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) scored 11 percent of the vote, a respectable showing for a new opposition party but far below their expectations (Obeid & Mendelsohn, 2022).

The performance of the rest of the opposition continued to deteriorate to the point where three of the parties that entered parliament received less than one percent of the vote each (SWANU, CoD, and RP) (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). They scraped into the NA with one seat each due to the system of vote quotas. With the support of eight other opposition parties, the RDP challenged the result of the NA election (Vollan et al., 2020). The case rumbled on in the courts for over two years and was only resolved when the Supreme Court rejected the opposition's arguments in October 2012.

The local and regional elections were held at the same time on November 26 and 27. The regional picture remained very similar to 2004, with SWAPO gaining almost 80 percent of the vote while the RDP replaced CoD as the strongest opposition party, although it only won one Regional Council seat countrywide (Windhoek East) (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). The only hotly contested region was the Kunene, where DTA and UDF combined to hold off SWAPO's challenge. In the rest of the country, SWAPO controlled the remaining regions, winning 98 out of 107 seats (Vollan et al., 2020). SWAPO strengthened its support levels in the local poll, going up from 64 percent to 69 percent of the vote and taking control of 38 out of 50 local authorities (Vollan et al., 2020). The UDF and NUDO held on to their traditional strongholds but

did little more. Campaigning was mostly low-key, but violence did flare in Opuwo – the capital of the Kunene region, where DTA and SWAPO supporters clashed in the week before the election. The turnout dropped to below 40 percent in both votes.

Figure 2.6 Namibia 2014 Election Results

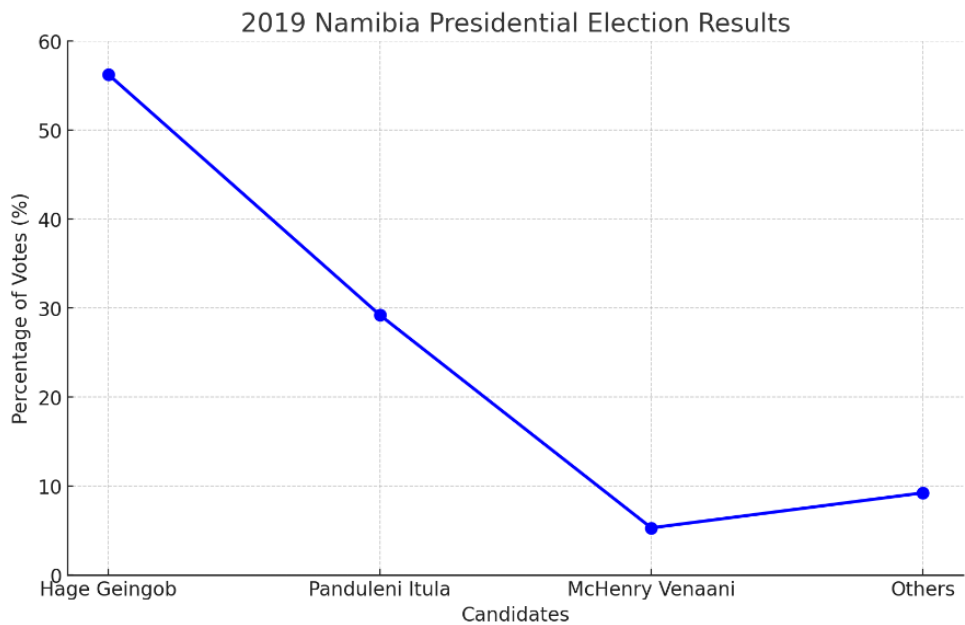


Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

From 2010 to 2014, Namibia experienced significant political developments, including President Pohamba's term in office, which led to him being awarded the Mo Ibrahim Prize for good governance. Namibia's competitiveness during this period was evaluated (Melber, 2021), highlighting the need to enhance educational attainment, reduce skills mismatch, and diversify exports to improve competitiveness (Melber, 2021). The SWAPO party congress played a crucial role in shaping domestic politics, indicating potential leadership choices for upcoming elections and addressing contentious issues like the German-Namibian Joint Declaration and the government's stance on international matters such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Simon, 2022). Additionally,

new mining and exploration activities fuelled Namibia's economic prospects, positioning the country as a potential energy hub in Africa (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023).

Figure 2.7 Namibia 2019 Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

From 2019 to 2023, Namibia experienced significant political shifts marked by a decline in the hegemonic status of the former liberation movement, SWAPO, as seen in the National Assembly and Presidential elections in November 2019 (Melber, 2020). This decline continued with SWAPO's loss of support in the Regional and Local authority elections of November 2020, leading to new political alliances taking control in various municipalities and towns (Alexiou et al., 2020). Factors contributing to this shift included dissatisfaction over governance, delivery of services, socio-economic constraints, and a lack of trust in the government's ability to bring about meaningful socio-economic transformation (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023).

2.8.3 Effects of COVID-19 on Political Competition in Namibia

Additionally, growing frustrations over corruption and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic further deepened the divide among the electorate. These trends highlight a changing political landscape in Namibia, with new contestants entering the political sphere and shaping the country's social contract and democratic contestation. The global COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased social and political tensions (BTI, 2024), and Namibia received its fair share as a result of the pandemic. Namibia has faced several challenges in its democratic framework, mainly economic difficulties, exacerbated by the outbreak of the coronavirus in December 2019, which brought panic not only in China and the European continent, which were considered the virus's epicentre, but worldwide. In Africa, the cases of the virus have increased significantly since February 2020. The evolution of the disease and its economic impact is, however, uncertain, thereby making it difficult for policymakers to formulate an appropriate macroeconomic policy response.

The immediate response that countries adopted was the lockdown "stay at home" measure, aiming to avoid the movement of people since the virus was believed to spread through contact with infected persons. The lockdown also had its economic impact as it put a halt to most economic activities and operations, except for essential services. In the MPRA paper (2020), the estimated economic impact of the virus on the Namibian economy was concerning. The findings, as listed by Julius (2020), were that an estimated amount of 5 to 7.5 billion Namibian dollars was lost in GDP owing to the impact of the lockdown measures on the various sectors in the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. Due to loss of income, loss of business trading hours, and loss of jobs, a loss of private demand (consumption) of N\$6 billion to N\$12 billion was estimated for

Namibia. This loss, according to Julius (2020), took back the country's private consumption to the level it was 4 to 5 years back before the pandemic.

Although the government already implemented the fiscal stimulus aimed to cushion the impact of the pandemic, the researcher established that a once-off income grant aimed at the unemployed and those who lost income was far lower than the lost income due to the lockdown. It would have been commendable if, among the proposed policy recommendations, the informal sector was allowed to operate under specified conditions to ensure that not so much is lost in the informal sector, which the government may need to again issue fiscal stimulus on an already limited fiscal space. Another policy proposal was the need to draw up a post-recovery strategy in dealing with the most affected sectors of the economy.

Unemployment, particularly among the youth, remains a significant issue, contributing to social unrest and calls for government accountability (Africa Development Bank, 2020). Social movements, such as the #ShutItAllDown protests against gender-based violence and Affirmative Repositioning as well as the Landless People's Movement's calls for land reform, have gained prominence, reflecting growing public demand for social justice and inclusive governance (New Era, 2020). These movements have highlighted the need for the government to address underlying socio-economic issues and ensure that democratic principles are upheld in practice. These concerns have seen opposition parties gaining more votes and seats in the 2024 November Presidential and National Assembly elections, reducing the dominance of the ruling Party's number of seats in Parliament. It is safer to say the pandemic has contributed to the current state of political affairs in the country, as most people would want to see change from the predominant ways of doing business by the government.

2.8.4 The Current Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia

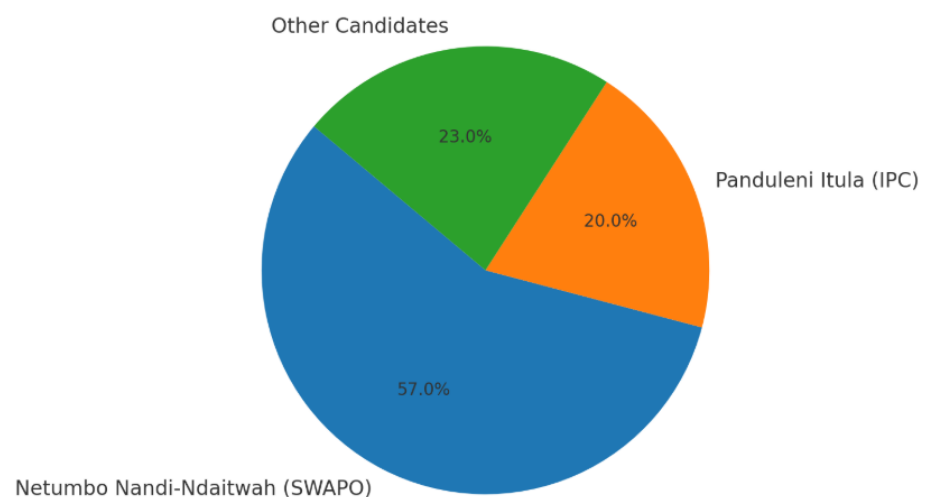
Several noteworthy events that changed Namibia's party structure and governance made 2024 a turning point in the country's political history. Following President Hage Geingob's untimely death in February, some political changes took place, leading to the historic election of Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah as SWAPO's first female President (Ndeyanale, 2024). President Hage Geingob died at the age of 82 on February 4, 2024 (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2024). Vice-President Nangolo Mbumba became Namibia's fourth president after his death. In anticipation of the national elections in November, the ruling SWAPO party had to re-evaluate its leadership and electoral strategies due to this abrupt change. Prior to these occurrences, in March 2023, President Geingob announced Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who was the Deputy Prime Minister at the time and the Vice President of SWAPO, as the party's 2024 Presidential candidate (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2024). Nandi-Ndaitwah's historic candidacy put her in a position to become Namibia's first female head of state.

Namibia's economic challenges greatly impacted the political climate in 2024 (The World Bank, 2024). The COVID-19 outbreak worsened the country's 2016 recession, resulting in lower state budgets and an alarming debt spiral. According to projections, the economy took until at least 2024 to reach its 2015 levels. Public discontent was exacerbated by this economic hardship, which affected voter mood and made politics more competitive (The World Bank, 2024).

Due to logistical issues, the general elections, which were initially planned for November 27th and 28th, 2024, were extended in some locations until November 30th, 2024. Poor planning was blamed for these delays, which led to opposition parties vowing to contest the results in court and boycotting the results announcement

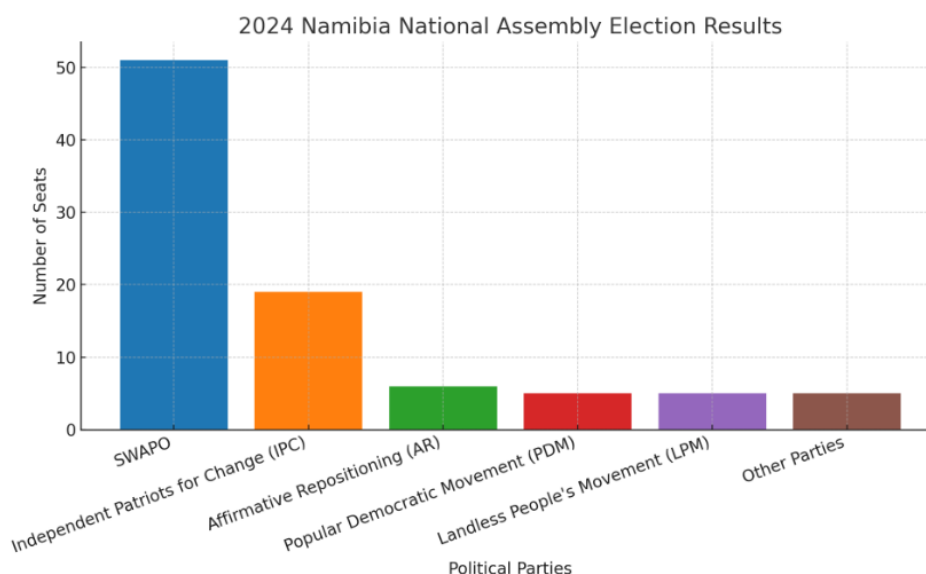
(Peterson & Ndeyanale, 2024). Despite these obstacles, the elections went forward, and the results were announced. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, with 57% of the vote, became the first female President-elect of Namibia, and SWAPO extended its 34-year dominance (Peterson & Ndeyanale, 2024). Her triumph was particularly noteworthy in a year when other liberation groups in southern Africa suffered electoral reverses. However, as public discontent with economic stagnation and inequality grew, SWAPO's majority in the National Assembly shrank from 63 to 51 seats.

Figure 2.8 Namibia 2024 Presidential Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia (2024).

Figure 2.9 Namibia 2024 National Assembly Election Results



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

These findings point to a more divided political environment, where SWAPO is still in control but is up against a more formidable opposition in the National Assembly. Voter preferences have changed, as evidenced by the rise of parties like IPC and AR, which are probably motivated by a desire for change and economic concerns. In general, the 2024 elections were held in a tranquil setting. Namibia's peaceful pre-election and election periods were praised by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), highlighting the youth's active participation in politics. Opposition parties, however, challenged the results, claiming that voting was prolonged by a day due to technical difficulties and ballot paper shortages. They intended to file a lawsuit, claiming irregularities, to contest the election results.

President-elect Nandi-Ndaitwah highlighted her dedication to peace, stability, and youth empowerment in her victory speech. She acknowledged Namibia's economic difficulties and promised to use mining, tourism, and agriculture to generate jobs. She is well-positioned to handle the complexity of Namibia's political and economic

environment thanks to her broad background, which includes work as a liberation activist, study in the Soviet Union and the UK, and numerous government positions since 1990. Significant legal changes also occurred throughout the year. A landmark decision for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) rights in Namibia was made on June 21 when the High Court declared that two laws from the colonial era that criminalised gay sex were unconstitutional (Namibian High Court Rulings, 2024).

With the support of recent offshore oil and gas discoveries, Namibia's economic goal was to double its annual GDP growth to 8% in ten years (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2024). Major energy firms were drawn to these findings, which offered a chance to boost the economy. New resources must be carefully managed to assist the general populace due to persistent issues like excessive unemployment and inequality (New Era, 2024). Significant discussions between political parties have been sparked by Namibia's oil findings, mainly concerning the possibility of economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and the fair allocation of future profits. Certain political parties proposed more excellent state action and resource nationalisation to guarantee that local populations profit from oil production and prevent a "resource curse" that can worsen poverty and inequality (New Era, 2024). It was further reported that others highlighted the disparities in policy objectives by emphasising the need to draw in foreign investment to boost economic growth and employment creation. The economy continues to be a hot topic of conversation, with discussions about wealth distribution and measures to lessen socio-economic disparities becoming more heated due to increased unemployment and inflation (New Era, 2024).

2.9 Political Competition and Elitism in South Africa

Significant political trends and patterns have emerged in South Africa since independence (Pildes, 2020): The nation has moved from a state ruled by whites with a strong state-capitalist nexus to a post-colonial era characterised by radicalisation, anti-colonial sentiments, and a leftward shift in political ideology; this transition has been matched by a re-evaluation of the post-apartheid era (Pildes, 2020), which has been defined by confrontational politics and a retrospective analysis of the colonialist past (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024). Political unpredictability has made people more dissatisfied with society, given rise to new progressive political players, and increased calls for quick change, especially in the higher education sector (Oesch & Rennwald, 2019). With universities becoming hotbeds of ideological conflict and calls for social justice and decolonisation, these shifts have created a politically unstable environment that affects public institutions like theirs (Oesch & Rennwald, 2019).

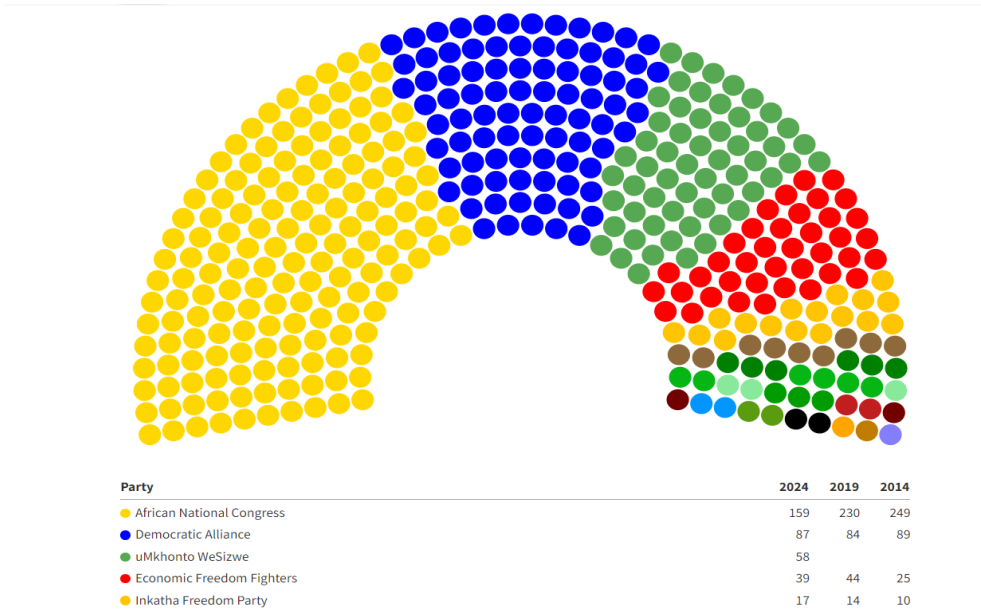
2.9.1 Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in South Africa

South Africa's emerging trends point to a trend toward more political competition, which is driven by elements like federalism, local electoral competitiveness, and political advertising (Motz et al., 2022). The country's federal structures are progressively promoting positive political competition by giving opposition parties multiple platforms for political expression (Motz et al., 2022). Local electoral competitiveness is also critical to accountability and public goods provision at the local level, as competitive municipalities face greater pressure to provide services than single-party municipalities (Wheatley & Mendez, 2020). Furthermore, the surge in political advertising in South Africa has profoundly altered the political discourse and the broader culture of newspapers, highlighting the country's dynamic environment of political communication and engagement (Wheatley & Mendez, 2020).

Since South Africa's independence, the African National Congress (ANC) has maintained a strong position in the political landscape, facing challenges from numerous opposition groups (Pasini & Rebessi, 2019). Due to internal ANC fractures, leadership disputes, and ideological disagreements, new opposition groups, such as the Congress of the People (COPE), have emerged (Pasini & Rebessi, 2019). Despite its hegemonic ambitions, the ANC has demonstrated that it is willing to act like an electorally focused party in a liberal democracy, even if this means that some internal challenges from the party's rank and file members are accepted (Gadjanova, 2021).

According to academics, the primary obstacle facing opposition parties in Africa is not party system fragmentation but rather party system concentration (Gadjanova, 2021). This emphasises the necessity of electoral engineering to boost competition and maybe create a two-party system (Kenneth & Kinyua, 2020). The Western Cape province elections in South Africa have become more competitive, demonstrating how opposition forces can gain ground by taking subnational positions and establishing a track record of good government to draw in new followers (Kenneth & Kinyua, 2020).

Figure 2.8 South Africa Party Performance



In the first elections in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) garnered roughly 62% of the vote, solidifying its position as the dominant political force (Kariuki et al., 2022). Over time, the ANC's share of the vote fluctuated, reaching a peak of roughly 69% in the 2004 elections but then gradually declining to just under 58% (230 seats) in the 2019 elections (figure 2.8). The decline can be attributed to rising voter discontent, corruption concerns, and the rise of powerful opposition parties (Bogaards & Elischer, 2016). The Democratic Alliance (DA), South Africa's main opposition party, has steadily grown since its founding, taking 22% of the vote in 2014 compared to roughly 16% in 2009 (Bogaards & Elischer, 2016).

On the other hand, the DA's expansion seems to have stopped, as seen by its 21% vote in the 2019 elections. Founded in 2013, the relatively new Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party has also made considerable gains, especially with younger people, receiving 6% of the vote in 2014 and rising to 11% in 2019 (Short, 2014). Another significant development in South African elections has been voter turnout. Voter turnout has steadily decreased, with only 66% of eligible voters casting ballots in the 2019 elections, compared to an astonishing 86% in the first post-apartheid elections. This pattern indicates growing voter disenchantment and apathy with the political process (Short, 2014).

2.10 Political Competition and Elitism in Angola

Political competition in Angola has been a significant aspect of the country's history, marked by the struggle for power between different political parties (Jonathan & Humphrey, 2021). The ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has maintained hegemony through electoral victories, consolidating power, and limiting opposition influence (Jonathan & Humphrey, 2021). The MPLA's

dominance has led to concerns about the country's political landscape becoming a de facto one-party state, with limited space for dissenting voices (Hamdun, 2022). Furthermore, the debates about democratic representation have been brought to light by the protests in Angola, where people are calling into question the legitimacy of the ruling party and pushing for more inclusive political participation (Hamdun, 2022). Despite these obstacles, Angola has concentrated on reforming its foreign policy, especially in relation to the BRICS nations, exhibiting a realistic approach to cooperative political, economic, and developmental efforts (Santos, 2022).

2.10.1 Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Angola

Since the warfare ended in 2002, there have been significant changes to the Angolan political landscape (Pacatolo, 2022). Without a doubt, the most significant of these developments is the return of peace, which is necessary for any political community to grow and, in Angola's case, has sparked the country's democratic process again (Pacatolo, 2022). The nation has made strides in creating a fully democratic political system, as demonstrated by the following instances (Carboni, 2020). These include the planning of three separate election systems, the adoption of a new constitution, and the 2020 date of the eagerly anticipated first local elections in the nation (Wanda et al., 2023). Angolans have cast ballots three times since the end of their civil war: in 2008, in 2012, and in 2017.

These elections saw the participation of several political parties, confirming the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola's (MPLA) electoral dominance (Wanda et al., 2023). According to Gastrow (2020), "the politics of Presidential succession" made the 2017 election process especially significant. President João Lourenço became the new head of state when President dos Santos, after nearly forty

years in office, opted not to run for office again (Dye et al., 2020). A new constitution was also enacted in Angola during the post-war period. All public and private affairs in the Angolan polity were governed by a constitutional law that was passed in 1991 and amended in 1992 until the new constitution was approved in 2010 (Dye et al., 2020).

The agreement was provisional in nature since, at the time of its passage, it was anticipated that the legislature would write a new constitution following the 1992 national multiparty elections (Carvalho & Taylor, 2022). Nevertheless, the fact that the civil conflict resumed following the elections prevented this from occurring. As a result, the lengthy process of crafting a new constitution came to an end with the adoption of a new one in 2010 (Schubert & Schubert, 2022). The new constitution upheld elements present in earlier constitutions, even if it introduced significant improvements like the elimination of direct Presidential elections (Schubert & Schubert, 2022).

Articles 217–222 of the CRA 2010 address the institutionalisation of *autarquias locais*, or elected local government entities, which are composed of a president, an executive body with collegiate status, and an assembly with decision-making authority (Gaio, 2017). There were previously no elected local authorities in Angola. At the local level (province, municipality, and district), the central government appoints all state officials. The first local elections in the nation's history were slated for 2020, following a series of postponements (Gaio, 2017).

In Angola's fourth election cycle (2022), the ruling MPLA saw a further decline in its percentage of the vote, at 51% (Rodrigues, 2022). In light of their prior election outcomes, which were 82% in 2008, 71% in 2012, and 61% in 2017, this drop is

noteworthy (Rodrigues, 2022). Two unofficial parallel counts cast doubt on the National Electoral Commission's official results, which are declared to be independent. According to these alternate tallies, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the main opposition party, was ahead of the MPLA by 51% to 44.5% (Péclard, 2021). However, all opposition challenges to the results were dismissed by the judiciary, leading to the new parliament being sworn in based on the official figures. Despite the dubious official results, UNITA managed to secure a significant victory in the capital city, Luanda, where one-third of the population resides, winning by a wide margin of 63% (Péclard, 2021).

Most voters had a quick and easy time casting their ballots on election day, which was a largely calm and well-organised voting procedure nationwide (Elsharkawy, 2024). Nonetheless, a few grievances surfaced, such as accounts of voting places opening later than expected and opposition members not being allowed access to the voter records (Elsharkawy, 2024). In several voting places, law enforcement officers also positioned themselves closer than the legally required 100 meters, and at the end of the day, some polling places declined to make their results available to the public (Daniel, 2021).

More importantly, the MPLA manipulated the results of the election to its advantage by abusing its position as the incumbent, even beyond these anomalies on election day (Daniel, 2021). This includes limiting media coverage in state-affiliated publications, resulting in unequal airtime and skewed reporting, and altering the makeup of judges and the electoral commission (Ndlovu, 2020). State resources were also used for campaigning. To impede the registration and authorization of new political parties, administrative barriers were also put in place. Voter registration has gotten easier and faster, but people without the right identity documents, especially in rural regions, have

had trouble registering to vote (Ndlovu, 2020). Parties opposed to the administration persisted in voicing concerns about the existence of deceased individuals who supported the government on the voter lists.

The shift from former President dos Santos to President Lourenço has greatly reduced the role of an unelected elite (i.e., the dos Santos family and its allies) in weakening the authority of elected political representatives (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). However, despite the departure of this elite from their former unquestioned position of power, the fundamental power structures have not undergone considerable changes. In both the flawed 2017 and 2022 elections, President Lourenço emerged victorious as the leader of the MPLA's candidacies, establishing himself as a duly elected political figure with substantial administrative ability to rule (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). Lourenço continues to be the final arbiter in all political affairs since he personally selects ministers and regional governors.

The National Assembly, on the other hand, reports directly to the executive branch (Jonathan & Humphrey, 2021). The House rules provide opposition representatives with a limited amount of time to voice their opinions, and the MPLA has little incentive to have serious conversations with the opposition beyond token gestures because of its majority. Moreover, policy innovation is restricted even inside the MPLA, as parliamentarians essentially replicate the President's directions (Santos, 2022).

Government meddling and limitations frequently affect the freedoms of assembly and association (Pacatolo, 2022). There are various obstacles in the way of citizens and groups expressing their right to criticize the government. While there was a brief period of political relaxation in the wake of President Lourenço's election in 2017, the government again curtailed these liberties starting in 2019 (Carboni, 2020). Despite

initial appearances of progress, Lourenço's measures proved ineffective in alleviating the deep economic crisis and improving citizens' lives (Wanda et al., 2023). Consequently, public discontent with the government grew, especially as Lourenço faced an electoral challenge in 2022. This led to increased restrictions on protests. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic provided the government with a convenient excuse to limit association and assembly rights for most of the period from 2020 to 2022 (Wanda et al., 2023).

In the Angolan context, the first improvements in press freedom after Lourenço's election in 2017 were noteworthy (Gastrow, 2020). Nevertheless, most major media outlets, many of which are either owned by people connected to the regime or under official control, continue to exhibit some degree of self-censorship in their content (Dye et al., 2020). Libel and media laws are quite expansive, allowing the government to restrict and limit press freedom as it sees fit (Carvalho & Taylor, 2022). When journalists expose the government, especially when it comes to corruption and human rights violations, they frequently risk being sued, harassed, or even physically attacked (Schubert & Schubert, 2022). Even while independent weekly journals no longer routinely shut down completely or destroy their whole print run, their reach is still restricted, mostly to Luanda (Elsharkawy, 2024).

In addition, several private news Organisations were seized and placed under state supervision as part of Lourenço's anti-corruption initiatives, which worried Angolan journalists about the freedom and diversity of the media environment (Elsharkawy, 2024). Media freedom was further curtailed in the run-up to the 2022 elections, with the state seizing ZAP, a cable television provider, in April on the grounds of purported "illegalities" in the company's activities (Daniel, 2021). When José Honório, a journalist for the state press agency Angop, attempted to stop police officers in

Benguela from employing violence on female street vendors in November 2022, he was physically attacked and strangled by the police (Daniel, 2021). The political competition and elitism in South Africa and Angola have implications for Namibia's political stability and economic development. Namibia, despite its transition from colonial rule to a stable democracy with significant economic growth, has faced challenges related to governance and socioeconomic constraints, leading to a decline in the ruling party's credibility.

In contrast, Botswana's elite democracy, characterised by centralised power and weak executive accountability, has maintained stability through limited citizen dissatisfaction and passive democracy. Additionally, regionalism in Angola and Namibia has aimed at economic development through integration processes, although challenges in cooperation and compliance have hindered the achievement of set objectives. These factors collectively shape Namibia's political landscape, influencing its social contract, democratic contestation, and economic prospects.

2.11 Opportunities and Challenges of Political Competition

It is necessary to start by clarifying the peculiarities of political competition (Hays, 2017). On the one hand, it is broader than the electoral process; on the other hand, it is difficult to imagine free and fair elections without competition. The concept of political competition encompasses pluralism and opposition (Hays, 2017), being similar to the former, broader than the electoral process, and existing in various forms and on different levels while being an important factor in connection to the electoral process (Carvalho & Taylor, 2022). The researchers (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023; Elsharkawy, 2024; Gastrow, 2020) associate political competition with different factors chosen for analysis, such as elections, decentralisation, parties and factions, social movements, among others (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023). Consequently, the positive

correlation between political competition and certain positive consequences, or its negative correlation with certain negative phenomena of politics, is exposed (Blaauw & Zaire, 2023).

Democracy and the welfare state provide a suitable political, social, and economic environment for the promotion of human welfare (Jonathan & Humphrey, 2021). The functioning of political competition is crucial here; it ensures collective decision-making and the combination of candidates' and voters' control, Santos (2022). So, the positive impact of political competition on social and economic policy is acknowledged. Every time it is accentuated that the impact of political competition is ambivalent; political stability may be stipulated by the high level of political competition on the federal level and in states as soon as no party has a majority (Umar, 2022). The second opportunity of political competition, then, is that it increases accountability. If candidates are genuinely able to compete for power (Wanda et al., 2023), the members of the winning team cannot know in advance who they are going to be, and for the losers, there is a reasonable chance of enjoying the spoils at some time in the future (Wanda et al., 2023).

Presidential candidates may lose a battle in one term but prosper in another, and it is reasonably unlikely that they will be severely punished by the incumbents, even if they have been disloyal, once a new leader has taken over in the executive office (Schubert & Schubert, 2022). Politicians should, therefore, want to desist from destroying one another to facilitate the benefits of maintaining their long-term business associations. They should do so by acting as honest agents, visiting the interests of their electors, and lending their expertise to the knowledge of their peers (Schubert & Schubert, 2022). The promotion of accountability is a simple concept. Elections are designed to control politicians in carrying out their promises. In democratic countries, politicians

are expected to submit to control by electors, and repeated elections supposedly provide tools for the general public to make sure that politicians fulfil their promises (Hamdun, 2022). During elections, candidates voice their opinions in guiding voters. Voters then use this information to select agents that will represent them. The chosen representative must then adhere to his previous commitments (Hamdun, 2022).

Often-cited sources of political competition and party competition, ranging from IO or comparative political economy (Carboni, 2020), do not provide much micro-level diagnosis of how competition shapes a party's policy choices. Particularly, because both competition and policy choices are moving parts (Carboni, 2020), the existing literature does not tell us effectively how changes in competition should lead us to expect changes in parties' policy choices. Collaboration with formal modelers in economics and political science is necessary here (Dye et al., 2020). The raft of models that clarify the ways that increased competition should reshape policy platforms and related electoral behaviour as the uncertainty component associated with the change in this environmental variable is reduced is needed. Our interpretation of market-based signalling of party policy positions through campaign contributions and voting is that the party's current policy platforms embed lots of ingenuity rents if they are accurate (Dye et al., 2020).

2.12 Impact of Political Competition and Elitism on Governance and Democratic Institutions

Over the last few decades, many countries have undergone processes of political change which had as their main attribute the progressive creation of more democratic societies and systems (Stephen et al., 2020). In many cases, following severe social and political repressions, the transition towards more democratic societies was accomplished through processes of national reconciliation, which carried with it the

commitment that something similar would never happen again (Stephen et al., 2020). These represent the success stories where all the players involved in national politics committed themselves to nonviolent and democratic politics (Franzmann, 2019), based mainly on the resolution of disputes by a majority-adherent consensus mechanism, namely by free, fair, and periodic elections carried out according to the protocols commonly practised in such conditions (Franzmann, 2019). The fact that the opposition could replace the government without the prior necessity of a violent confrontation thus guaranteed a pluralism essential to a democratic state and valley (Nye & Vasilyeva, 2019).

Political competition and elitism significantly impact governance and democratic institutions (Gutián, 2019). High levels of political competition can create conditions supportive of de facto judicial independence (DFJI) in democracies, with electoral institutions influencing the incentives for supporting DFJI (Gutián, 2019). In post-colonial Africa, weak commitment to the common good and public interest due to amoral politics leads to the privatization of public resources and undermines political and public institutions, contributing to governance crises (Alfano et al., 2019).

Additionally, the prospect of rural elite capture of local governments in democratic countries can affect the effectiveness of pro-poor programs, highlighting the importance of political competition in local governance and accountability (Goldsmith, 2019). Understanding the dynamics of political competition and elitism is crucial for the consolidation and sustainability of democracy and the functioning of independent judiciaries worldwide (Goldsmith, 2019). Political competition is a crucial aspect of democracies, influencing policy choices and citizen engagement (Ashfaq & Roofi, 2023). It involves parties vying for support, legitimizing power, and engaging citizens in active political activities (Marshfield, 2019). Party competition is

essential for issue innovations and democratic functionality, requiring both responsiveness and innovation for effective competition (Goldsmith, 2019).

Studies on electoral competition in Canada show that the intensity of political competition fluctuates over time, with economic indicators playing a role in electoral success and the timing of elections (Vaughan, 2023). Understanding political competition is vital for comprehending policy choices, democratic functioning, and the dynamics of power within political systems.

2.13 Strategies for Enhancing Political Competition and Democratic Processes

In the age of widespread social media, political rivalry, party tactics, and communication are becoming more and more problematic. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of awareness regarding these difficulties (Mutz et al., 2022). Across disciplines, there is discussion over the value of communication and its impacts. The problem of defining politically important problems and their impact on voters' decisions was explained by Pasini and Rebessi (2019). Both the supply and demand sides of politics are interesting because of (1) voters' potentially selfish and irrational thinking (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024), and (2) decision-makers who are either strongly motivated to win re-election or who are very different from the presumptions of rational homo economics (Lse et al., 2020). Political strategists can use well-known biases to sway or even control people's decisions.

Baker (2019) showed that communication among participants (i.e., voters) strengthens group identities and pre-existing opinions in laboratory tests. He further asserts that the growing use of social media by voters and politicians needs a deeper comprehension of this communication channel in order to comprehend election procedures.

The old idea of a good government that maximizes utility is no longer relevant. Besley et al., (2021) noted that behavioural factors are becoming more and more significant in political economics. The majority of the literature, however, focuses only on voter behaviour and choice. Politicians and parties are either disregarded or viewed as naturally occurring (Ashworth et al., 2022). The assessment of party communication should not be overlooked because of the increasing significance of social media and discussions over the impact of filter bubbles. Party-specific issues are analysed using hand-coded party programs in a few studies that involve parties. But there are two reasons why party programs aren't the best (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). First, these shows don't reflect shifts in the thematic focus because they are released before elections. Second, party policies have a limited reach since only a tiny percentage of voters read them (Wheatley & Mendez, 2020).

Direct communication is more crucial for party rivalry as a result of parties' and voters' growing social media presence. The outcomes demonstrate how accurately party-relevant concerns may be calculated (Marín et al., 2021). The frequency of subjects throughout time and how positive or negative they are is also given. These findings make it feasible to operationalize topic prevalence for evaluating the impact of party strategy on voter participation and the subjects' pertinence to voters (Marín et al., 2021). Vote-maximizing parties are said to align themselves as closely as possible with just a little deviation to the right or left on the ideological left-right continuum, mimicking the tactics of profit-maximizing businesses (Canen & Wantchekon, 2022). Even in multiparty systems, this leads to an equilibrium if voters' preferences are assumed to be single-peaked. This method was challenged by Goldsmith (2019) because it makes rigid assumptions that are incompatible with actual election

situations. In a multifaceted environment, it is unacceptable to assume dominant positions.

If voter selections are unclear or candidates are difficult to identify, Alfano et al. (2019) rejected the equilibrium at the median. Modelling equilibria for multi-dimensional problems and various voter preference types has advanced in several ways (Gadjanova, 2021). It is often acknowledged that cognitive biases and constraints cause unreasonable or inefficient market behaviour. Nonetheless, the conclusion has frequently called for a paternalistic official intervention to fix market results, at least historically. According to Goldsmith and Semenovich (2020), there is doubt about the premise of a benign maximiser of social welfare. The supply and demand system is a complicated web of principal-agent interactions, self-interest, cognitive constraints, and irrational conduct in politics. Franzmann (2019) concluded that voters believe they know the truth but are unaware of their cognitive limits. Additionally, rather than bringing people together, political communication usually causes polarisation (Franzmann, 2019).

Preconceived notions appear to significantly impact how incoming information is processed, according to empirical data primarily derived from lab tests. According to information-processing theory, preconceptions are based on experiences, beliefs, and values (Nye & Vasilyeva, 2019). Racial, religious, and educational backgrounds influence these. As demonstrated by early tests, preconceived notions about complicated subjects result in skewed perceptions of actual data (Marshfield, 2019). Stephen et al. (2020) examined how the public's assessment of the death sentence was impacted by both positive and negative evidence.

2.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the dynamics of political competition in Namibia within the broader context of democratic governance. It examines theoretical frameworks like elite theory and institutionalism, emphasising their relevance to understanding Namibia's political landscape. The chapter identifies significant gaps in the existing literature, particularly regarding developing democracies like Namibia, and highlights the persistent dominance of SWAPO, ethnic divisions, and socio-economic disparities. Furthermore, it situates Namibia's experiences within global and regional trends, presenting opportunities for improving democratic accountability and inclusivity. The findings set the stage for analysing how political competition shapes governance and policy outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter thoroughly describes the research approach used to conduct the empirical investigation. It covers the researcher's philosophical presumption, the selected research design, the data-gathering techniques and sources, the study population, the sampling process, and the data analysis framework. The topic of possible restrictions and issues related to the chosen study approach and its application is also presented to readers. The chapter concludes with a review of ethical standards that were upheld during the study process to guarantee the output's overall quality and scientific integrity.

3.2 Qualitative Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which was most appropriate given the study's focus on analysing the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia's democratic landscape from 1990 to 2024 (Mweshi, 2020). The central aim of the study was not to measure variables statistically but rather to explore the meanings, perceptions, and lived experiences of political actors, institutions, and communities as they navigate Namibia's evolving democratic processes (Mweshi, 2020). According to Bellagambi et al. (2020), qualitative research is well-suited for studies that seek to understand how individuals interpret their social and political realities, thereby providing depth and context beyond numerical generalisations.

The choice of a qualitative approach was justified on two grounds (Luo, 2020). First, the study sought to capture the nuanced and context-specific dynamics of political competition and elitism in Namibia, phenomena that are best understood through rich narrative accounts and contextual analysis. Second, political competition is a complex

and evolving process influenced by historical legacies, socio-economic structures, and cultural narratives. These factors required a research strategy that privileges interpretation over measurement (Luo, 2020).

The research was anchored in interpretivism, which holds that reality is socially constructed and can only be understood through the perspectives of those experiencing it (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Within this paradigm, the role of the researcher is not to remain detached, as in positivism, but to interpret the meanings and subjective realities of participants (Divakar, 2021). This was critical for the current study, as political competition and elitism in Namibia cannot be divorced from the interpretations and lived realities of politicians, voters, and other stakeholders. Interpretivism therefore provides the philosophical grounding for understanding how different actors perceive issues such as party dominance, electoral participation, and the concentration of power among elites (Divakar, 2021).

Aligned with interpretivism, this study adopted an inductive research approach. Induction emphasises building theory from the ground up by moving from specific observations to broader generalisations (Veloza et al., 2022). Although the study did not seek to formulate a new theory, it adopted an inductive approach because the analysis was grounded in empirical evidence and allowed patterns and themes to emerge from the data. These emergent insights were then interpreted in light of existing theoretical perspectives, such as Political Systems Theory and Elite Theory, thereby enriching their application to the Namibian democratic context. As Kunimasa et al., (2022) emphasises, inductive inquiry provides the flexibility to capture unexpected dynamics and new trajectories that may not be visible under a deductive, hypothesis-testing model.

Padilla-Díaz (2020) underscores the value of qualitative research in political science and democratic studies. Kunimasa et al., (2022) argue that qualitative approaches are indispensable for examining phenomena where human interpretation, institutional dynamics, and historical processes play central roles. Similarly, Bellagambi et al. (2020) maintain that qualitative inquiry allows for a deeper interrogation of power relations, social meanings, and institutional practices all of which are crucial in understanding Namibia's political competition. By employing interpretivism and an inductive approach, this study ensured that its findings reflected the authentic voices, lived experiences, and historical realities that shape Namibia's democratic journey (Ha, 2022).

3.3 Research Design

The general approach a researcher takes to integrate the many elements of a study coherently is referred to as research design (Mahajan & Shaikh, 2021). It guarantees that the research problem is successfully resolved (Mahajan & Shaikh, 2021). Explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive research are the primary types of research, and deductive, inductive, and abductive research methodologies can all be connected to their use (Bonache & Festing, 2020). Additionally, research might use mixed, qualitative, or quantitative approaches, each of which has advantages and disadvantages of its own. Conducting successful and meaningful research requires understanding these components and how they relate to one another (Basti & Madadizadeh, 2021).

3.3.1 Explanatory, Exploratory, and Descriptive Research Designs

This study adopted a combination of exploratory and descriptive research designs within the qualitative research approach. The exploratory design was appropriate because the study sought to investigate how political competition and elitism have

evolved in Namibia's democratic landscape from 1990 to 2024. Exploratory research was particularly suitable where existing knowledge is limited, as it enabled the researcher to identify emerging issues, clarify concepts, and generate insights that can inform future studies (Muzari et al., 2022). In this study, the exploratory design facilitated the identification of themes related to political party dynamics, electoral competition, and the role of elites in shaping governance (Muzari et al., 2022).

At the same time, the study incorporated a descriptive design, which allowed for a detailed portrayal of the trends and patterns observed in Namibia's political system. As Saunders and Darabi (2024) notes, descriptive research in qualitative inquiry provides an in-depth account of participants' perspectives and contextual realities without necessarily establishing causal relationships. In this study, the descriptive design ensured that political processes, party structures, and elite influences were presented in a systematic and holistic manner, enabling a rich narrative of Namibia's democratic trajectory (Budianto, 2020).

By combining exploratory and descriptive designs, the study was able both to uncover new insights into under-researched dimensions of Namibian politics and to provide thick, detailed descriptions of the political phenomena under investigation (Solovyev et al., 2022). Importantly, while the research adopted an inductive orientation, it did not seek to construct a new theory (Turale, 2023). Instead, the inductive process was used to derive categories and themes from empirical evidence, which were subsequently interpreted in light of existing theoretical frameworks, namely Political Systems Theory and Elite Theory (Buchner, 2023). This approach ensured that the findings were both contextually grounded and theoretically informed, consistent with the expectations of doctoral-level qualitative research (Sakyi et al., 2020).

3.4 Research Philosophical Assumptions

The type of research methodology a researcher uses for a study is influenced by their philosophical presumptions about the world. Philosophical assumptions include opinions on ontology (the nature of reality), methodology (the research process), axiology (the role of values in research), and epistemology (what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified) (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Chege & Otieno, 2020b; Khatri, 2020; Mark Saunders, 2016; Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022; Muzari et al., 2022; Solovyev et al., 2022; Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Ontology and epistemology, according to Marsh and Furlong (2017), are the cornerstones upon which a researcher must construct his or her research because "they shape the approach to theory and the methods." The primary ontological presuppositions are foundationalism and anti-foundationalism (Mahajan & Shaikh, 2021). Supporters of foundationalism maintain that life or the world is built on a real world that exists apart from our knowledge (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). However, anti-foundationalists hold that the world is socially and discursively constructed, hence dependent on a certain era or culture and that there is no such thing as a genuine reality (Wei et al., 2022). One's epistemological stance reflects the "view of what we can know about the world and how we can know it" (Bonache & Festing, 2020).

The two primary epistemological stances are interpretivism and positivism (Chege & Otieno, 2020b). Testing hypotheses and deriving conclusions from a tested sample might be of interest to an investigator who adopts a positivist perspective on the universe, which holds that reality is objective, independent of the observer, and hence measurable and predictable (Chege & Otieno, 2020b). A foundationalist ontology is adopted by positivism (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). It emerged from natural science's empiricist tradition and believes that social science has the same potential as natural

science. Since quantitative approaches are regarded as objective and their findings are replicable and generalisable, positivists typically use them as research instruments (Chege & Otieno, 2020b). In addition to not trying to test theories or draw generalisations from a sample population, this researcher does not subscribe to a positivist view of the world.

The foundation of positivism is the conviction that knowledge can be measured objectively, free from human interpretation, and that knowledge is generated from observable occurrences (Saunders, 2023). Positivists contend that, like the natural world, the social world is governed by rules that may be discovered using logical reasoning and empirical observation. According to Saunders (2023), positivism supports testing hypotheses using scientific techniques like experiments and quantitative analysis. Positivist researchers aim for objectivity, dependability, and reproducibility in their pursuit of cause-and-effect links (Mkansi & Acheampong, 2020). The proponent of positivism, Comte (1858), emphasised using data to reveal universal truths and promoted a methodical approach to studying social phenomena (Khatri, 2020).

On the other hand, interpretivism highlights how subjective reality is and aims to comprehend the meanings people ascribe to their experiences (Rao, 2020). Interpretivists contend that the objective techniques of the natural sciences are insufficient to fully comprehend the complexity of human behaviour. According to Creswell (2019), interpretivism is frequently linked to qualitative research techniques that enable a thorough examination of participants' viewpoints, such as ethnography and interviews. The idea of "Verstehen" (understanding), which emphasises the significance of interpreting social activities within their particular cultural and historical contexts, was first proposed by Max Weber, a prominent interpretivist.

Interpretivists hold that because participants' values and interpretations impact the research process, researchers actively participate in co-constructing knowledge with them (Rao, 2020).

Pragmatism, which emphasises practical results and applying several approaches to research topics, helps close the gap between positivism and interpretivism (Haigh & Withell, 2020). Pragmatists like William James and John Dewey contend that the worth of study is found in its capacity to provide information that can be put to use and solve problems (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). Depending on the research problem and goals, pragmatism permits researchers to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, according to Saunders (2023). Pragmatism rejects the divide between objectivity and subjectivity, pushing for a flexible and integrative approach that promotes usefulness and relevance (Saunders, 2023). Though it acknowledges the intricacy of the social environment and the impact of invisible structures, realism is similar to positivism (Cronje, 2020).

Realists contend that although reality exists apart from human perceptions, it can be interpreted in various ways depending on the situation (Mahajan & Shaikh, 2021). By making a distinction between the empirical (observable events), the actual (occurring events), and the real (underlying mechanisms), Bhaskar's critical realism emphasises the multi-layered character of reality (Mahajan & Shaikh, 2021). According to Ugwu et al. (2021), realism is frequently employed in social science research to examine phenomena that have both observable and unobservable components, like institutional structures or power dynamics (Ugwu et al., 2021). The study's goals, the phenomena's characteristics, and the intended results all influence the choice of research philosophy. Pragmatism concentrates on workable solutions, positivism looks for objective and quantifiable truths, interpretivism examines subjective meanings, and realism looks at

complex realities by fusing observable and underlying structures (Marancik et al., 2020).

The study adopted the interpretivism research philosophy because it allowed for a thorough examination of the subjective and intricate nature of political competition, party systems, and political elitism within Namibia's democratic framework (Mkansi & Mkalipi, 2023). A sophisticated grasp of the relationships, actions, and motives of political players and the changing attitudes of voters, political elites, and other stakeholders throughout time is necessary for this subject. It highlights how crucial it is to comprehend these dynamics within their historical, cultural, and social contexts, where interpretivism is especially appropriate. The philosophy makes it easier to examine various viewpoints on how political competition has changed over time (Mahajan & Shaikh, 2021).

Looking at how party systems have formed and changed, and how political elitism has influenced democratic processes by employing qualitative techniques like case studies, interviews, and document analysis (Mkansi & Mkalipi, 2023). Furthermore, interpretivism was perfect for capturing the complexity and variety of Namibia's political landscape from 1990 to 2024 because it recognises that these events are influenced by particular contextual elements rather than being regulated by universal principles. This methodology guaranteed that the research offered a thorough and contextually aware examination of political trends and tendencies.

3.5 Research Population

Population is an aggregate or total composition of all the objects or members that conform to a set of research specifications (Chege & Otieno, 2020). The study population refers to the subsets of the target population that can be included in the

study. The target population refers to the entire membership of the research interest (Chege & Otieno, 2020a). The research population of this study was nineteen (19) Political parties, nineteen (19) Registered Associations with the Electoral Commission of Namibia, and lastly, nineteen (19) key players in Namibia's post-independence politics, and these are current and former top government officials, parliamentarians, and political analysts.

Nine (9) civil society organisations and ten (10) community leaders. These numbers are estimates and may vary based on the specific context and timeframe of the study. The input from the research population was used to construct insights, themes, concepts, and inferences that are useful in the thorough understanding of political rivalry in the democratic sphere by considering various viewpoints.

3.6 Research Sample

The political parties, candidates, and voters for this study were chosen using a purposive sample technique from a variety of Namibian regions and constituencies. To represent a wide range of political competition, a sample of seventy-six (76) people were selected from the forty (40) political groups, ranging from modern political parties to traditional groups based on tribal authority. The following criterion was utilised, and it included representatives from both large political parties and smaller parties: One (1) member of the executive committee or leadership position within the party, and one (1) spokesperson or a representative designated by each party. The representatives from the nineteen (19) registered Associations were: one (1) member of the executive committee or leadership position within each association, then nine (9) civil society organisations' leaders or delegates, and lastly, ten (10) community members.

The researcher conducted interviews with these selected individuals to gather data on their perceptions, experiences, and engagement with political competition in Namibia. The purposive sample technique ensured representation from a variety of Namibian regions, constituencies, political parties, and associations to capture diverse perspectives on political rivalry and engagement. Creswell (2019) states that the major reason for sampling is feasibility. The use of samples yields more accurate information than would have been obtained if the entire population had been studied. This is because, with a sample, time, money, and effort can be concentrated to produce better-quality research, more accurate instruments, in-depth information, and better-trained interviewers or observers.

3.7 Research Instruments

A research instrument is a scientifically and systematically designed tool used to collect, measure, and analyse data related to research interests and alignments (Poghosyan, 2020). Researchers usually need to decide on the instrument to use based on the type of study they are conducting: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method “i.e., research alignments” (Mkansi & Acheampong, 2020). Types of instruments include but are not limited to: surveys, tests, questionnaires, achievement/aptitude tests, interviews, scales (measuring and weighing tapes), archival documents and government sources, oral histories, focus group discussions, experiments, observation forms, tally sheets, etc. Each instrument has merits and demerits (Mkansi & Acheampong, 2020). For this research interviews, desktop, and thorough literature reviews were used. This study employed these instruments because it was convenient and easy to reach out to the target groups intended for the study. These instruments are explored in the following subsections.

3.7.1 Interviews

An interview is an important data-gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). Interviews are commonly used in survey designs and exploratory and descriptive studies (Solovyev et al., 2022). There is a range of approaches to interviewing, from completely unstructured, in which the subject is allowed to talk freely about whatever they wish, to highly structured, in which the subject's responses are limited to answering direct questions (Sakyi et al., 2020). The quality of the data collected in an interview depends on both the interview design and the skill of the interviewer (Haigh & Withell, 2020). For example, a poorly designed interview may include leading questions or questions that are not understood by the subject (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Structured interviews enable the interviewer to ask each respondent the same questions in the same way (Ugwu et al., 2021). In many structured interviews, not only will the questions be set in advance, but the possible choice of answers will also be (Ugwu et al., 2021). This study used a semi-structured interview guide to guide the researcher during in-depth interviews. A total of 21 in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from political parties, activists, and community leaders. During the interviews, the participants were asked about their experiences and knowledge of Namibia's political competition and elitism.

Their responses were audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The researcher had two research assistants who helped with the interview appointments and interviewing the study participants. All the participants opted to have the interviews at their organisation's premises in Windhoek, except for a few community leaders who were either interviewed at the work premises or residential premises. Each interview

lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes, and all the interviews were conducted in English.

3.7.2 Desktop and Thorough Literature Review

By offering a more comprehensive backdrop and historical basis for examining the new trends and patterns of political rivalry within Namibia's democratic framework, desktop research was essential in enhancing primary research. To better understand the dynamics of Namibia's political party systems and political elitism between 1990 and 2024, secondary data sources, including scholarly articles, government reports, electoral commission records, policy documents, political party manifestos, and media coverage, were examined. Using this method, the researcher could track historical trends, pinpoint significant occasions, and create a timeline of political changes that influenced Namibia's democratic growth.

The study validated conclusions from the original research, compared Namibia's experience with more general regional and global trends, and highlighted recurrent themes by examining secondary data. Furthermore, desktop research helped contextualise the original data gathered through surveys or interviews by offering important insights into previous studies and theoretical frameworks. Additionally, it made triangulation possible, guaranteeing that results from primary research were confirmed and backed up by previously published works and historical documents. The study's depth and dependability were improved by this integrative strategy, which also made the analysis thorough and solid.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher gathered primary data by conducting in-depth interviews with important key informants from political parties and other stakeholders. Specifically,

the study relied on a semi-structured interview guide with the use of open-ended questions. After obtaining ethical clearance and data collection permission from the ethical committee, the researcher dispatched his data collectors to various organisations to inform them about the intention to collect data from their representatives. For some political organisations, it was easy to approach the leaders and invite them to participate in the study, while for others, it was not possible; thus, only part of the representatives were approached.

After obtaining permission from the organisations studied, the research assistants scheduled in-depth interviews with various participants. For participants who were not readily available, the interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants. Before commencing the interview, informed consent was sought from each participant, and thereafter, the interview started. The verbatim was audio recorded, and each research assistant had a pen and a notebook to write down key information from the research participants.

The desktop review was also used to assess the body of knowledge regarding political competitiveness in Namibia after independence. An extensive amount of secondary documentation was used to triangulate the research analysis to supplement the primary data and strengthen data reliability. Most of this documentation is accessible to the general public via websites run by governmental or intergovernmental organisations. Archival records, project and program reports, technical reports, policy papers, meeting minutes (especially from conferences, congresses, journals, and Party meetings), research articles, and media resources (such as press releases and interviews) taken from publicly available online databases are some examples of these documents. When there is enough data to reproduce the study, when obtaining more

data is not feasible, and when supplementary examination of the problem under inquiry is no longer practical, data saturation occurs.

3.9 Data Quality

Ensuring data quality in this study was paramount, and the key aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were diligently adhered to throughout the research process (Mwita, 2022). Credibility was attained by using strong data collection and analysis methods, such as triangulation using primary and secondary data sources, which improved the validity of the findings by comparing various viewpoints on Namibia's political competition trends (Cronje, 2020). Participants with first-hand knowledge of the political landscape and relevant expertise were specifically chosen to ensure the insights' authenticity. Extended interaction with the data and iterative participant consultations to confirm interpretations further strengthened the research's credibility.

To address transferability, thorough explanations of the study's background, methods, and conclusions were given. The research enables readers to determine if the conclusions are generalizable to other similar contexts or settings by providing a detailed account of the political, social, and economic environment in which Namibia's democratic framework developed. Other scholars or interested parties can make comparisons and apply the findings to similar democratic systems or political contexts when rich contextual information is available (Muhaise et al., 2020).

The study's rigour allowed future researchers to replicate the study or trace its methodological decisions, reinforcing the consistency and reliability of the findings. Regular peer debriefing and feedback from subject-matter experts also helped refine the study design and ensure adherence to high methodological standards

(Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear and systematic research process and creating a transparent audit trail at every stage of the study, from data collection to analysis (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). To confirmability and reduce researcher bias, confirmability was given top priority (Mkansi & Acheampong, 2020).

Reflective approaches, such as maintaining a research notebook to record choices, presumptions, and potential biases throughout the study, helped achieve this (Beatty et al., 2020). Furthermore, the conclusions were supported by facts rather than subjective opinions, thanks to the triangulation of data sources and methodologies, participant quotes, and secondary data. Peer reviewers' participation and external audits further improved the study's results' objectivity and reliability. When taken as a whole, these metrics strengthened the validity and dependability of the study and created a solid basis for data quality.

The research acknowledged that political actors who report their own experiences through self-reporting might introduce biased information because they tend to remember events differently or present themselves in a particular way, or support their political affiliations. Thus, the valuable lived political experiences from these perspectives might distort the understanding of political realities because they tend to focus on elite viewpoints. Therefore, the research used Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) reports and secondary literature, and archival records to verify statements about party operations, electoral results, and governance results. The study used documented public protests, official election monitoring reports, and media coverage to verify the consistency of reported information whenever possible. The research method of triangulation decreased bias risks while making findings more

reliable through the integration of personal accounts with documented evidence from various sources.

3.10 Pilot Study

The pilot study's purpose was to evaluate the research tools and techniques to ensure they were appropriate and efficient for the primary investigation (Kunimasa et al., 2022). A small sample of participants who were typical of the target group was chosen for the pilot. After distributing the surveys, the researcher performed an initial examination of the answers to see whether participants encountered any difficulties comprehending or responding to the questions.

The pilot research assisted in locating and resolving problems that may have impacted the data's dependability, such as ambiguous language or leading questions. To improve the instrument and ensure the questions were pertinent, understandable, and in line with the study's goals, participant input during the pilot was crucial (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). Additionally, the pilot study allowed the researcher to assess logistical factors, including how well the distribution strategies worked and how long it took to finish the interviews. These findings improved the primary study's data-gathering technique, increasing its overall accuracy and efficiency.

3.11 Data Analysis Procedure

According to Braun and Clarke (2023), content analysis is a method for examining documents that focuses on the investigator's participation when creating the meaning of statistics and transcripts. Content analysis is the summarisation and organisation of content using several content criteria and thematic order. The researcher followed this strategy, which entails categorisation and aggregation of the field notes and interview transcripts.

Data was organized thematically based on recurrent themes and patterns using data analysis tools (Google Forms), data analysis software NVivo 14, transcribed interviews, and field notes. The researcher carried out multiple cycles of content analysis when examining the resonance of the source of information. The information gathered from various sources was contrasted with the data previously available on Political Competition and emerging political trends and elitism in a post-independent Namibia, and then recommendations were made.

3.12 Research Ethics

According to Mazhar et al. (2021), ethical considerations are a constant companion for a researcher, and they are meant to check possible, fair, and just factors in their given situations. Research ethics are employed to safeguard both the researcher and the research subjects from harm.

3.12.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent refers to the process where participants voluntarily agree to partake in a study after being fully informed about its purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring their decision is made autonomously (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013).

In the study on political competition in Namibia, informed consent was achieved by providing participants with a detailed explanation of the research objectives, methodology, and potential implications. This was communicated through an information sheet and consent form in clear, accessible language. Participants were given sufficient time to review the materials, ask questions, and make an informed decision about participation. The researcher emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without needing

to provide a reason. This principle was upheld to respect participants' autonomy and promote trust in the research process.

3.12.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality ensures that identifiable information about participants is not disclosed without consent, while anonymity involves removing or masking identifiable details so that individuals cannot be linked to the data (Muzari et al., 2022). To uphold this principle, all data collected in the study were anonymised by assigning pseudonyms or numerical codes to participants. Identifiable information, such as names or affiliations, was omitted or securely stored in encrypted files separate from the main dataset. Only the researcher had access to this information. Additionally, data reporting avoided details that could indirectly reveal participants' identities, especially given the politically sensitive nature of the study. This ensured that participants' privacy was protected, fostering a safe environment for them to share their insights candidly.

3.12.3 Avoidance of Harm

Avoidance of harm refers to the ethical obligation to protect research participants from physical, psychological, or social harm as a result of their involvement in the study (Israel & Hay, 2006). The researcher designed the study to minimise any potential harm to participants. Given the politically sensitive nature of the research topic, participants were assured that their contributions would remain confidential, and no politically controversial statements were directly attributed to them. Interview questions were carefully crafted to avoid causing psychological discomfort or distress. Participants were informed in advance that they could decline to answer any question they found sensitive or objectionable. These measures ensured a safe and respectful interaction between the researcher and participants.

3.12.4 Voluntary Participation

Voluntary participation ensures that individuals engage in research without coercion, manipulation, or undue influence, preserving their freedom to choose (Diener & Crandall, 1978). Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The researcher ensured that participants understood they were not obligated to participate and that declining would not result in negative consequences. No incentives or pressures were used to compel participation. The voluntary nature of participation was reiterated throughout the study, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any point without justification. This approach respected participants' autonomy and ensured that their willingness to contribute was genuine.

3.12.5 Honesty and Transparency

Honesty and transparency involve providing participants with truthful and complete information about the study to foster trust and prevent deception (Resnik, 2020). The researcher was transparent about all aspects of the study, including its purpose, potential outcomes, and how the data would be used. Participants were informed that the study aimed to analyse political competition and that their contributions would play a critical role in understanding emerging trends and patterns. There was no use of deceptive practices or withholding of critical information. Upon request, participants were offered a summary of the study findings, reinforcing the commitment to honesty and transparency.

3.12.6 Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance is the formal approval granted by a recognised ethics review board to ensure that a study complies with established ethical standards and safeguards participants' rights and welfare (NHREC, 2014). Prior to data collection, the researcher sought and obtained ethical approval from an accredited ethics review committee. This

process involved a thorough review of the research design, data collection methods, and participant interaction protocols to ensure ethical compliance. The ethics review board provided guidance on managing sensitive data and avoiding harm to participants. This step ensured that the study met the highest ethical standards and adhered to institutional and national research guidelines.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the methodological premises of this study. It explores how the study employed a qualitative approach. The chapter also presented the interpretivism research philosophy, which emphasises understanding the complex, subjective nature of political competition and party systems. It also emphasised that a pragmatic philosophical framework ensured that the study addressed its objectives with methodological rigour. Ethical considerations and measures for data reliability, such as triangulation and thematic analysis using tools like NVivo 14, ensure robustness. The qualitative approach used provided a comprehensive lens for data collection, collating, and analysing Namibia's political party systems, elitism, emerging trends, and patterns of voter behaviours from 1990 to 2024.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

As stated earlier, this study aimed to investigate the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia's democratic framework. Therefore, the study comprehensively analysed the political party systems and political elitism from 1990 to 2024. This chapter presents the study results, which were analysed based on the content data analysis, and the results were presented and arranged according to themes. The first section of the study presented the demographic profile of the participants. The subsequent sections present the findings that addressed the specific study objectives. The data analysis process was also explained before delving into the result presentation.

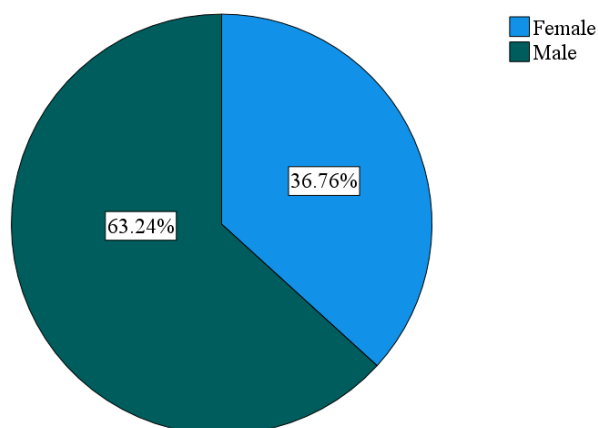
4.2 Demographic Profile

To understand the characteristics of the study participants, demographic information that described the participants' gender, positions, and political party was collected. The following figures and table present the results.

4.2.1 Gender

The following figure presents the findings on the gender distribution of the study participants.

Figure 4.1: Gender



The data collected, as shown in the figure above, indicates that the majority of the participants, who constituted 63.24 percent of the respondents, were male, while 36.76 percent were female. The data indicates a clear gender imbalance among the participants, with males making up the majority at 63.24 percent, while females account for 36.76 percent. This disparity suggests that men were more represented in the study or that they were more likely to participate in the context under investigation. The results could reflect broader societal or cultural trends, such as differences in political engagement, access to resources, or roles between genders.

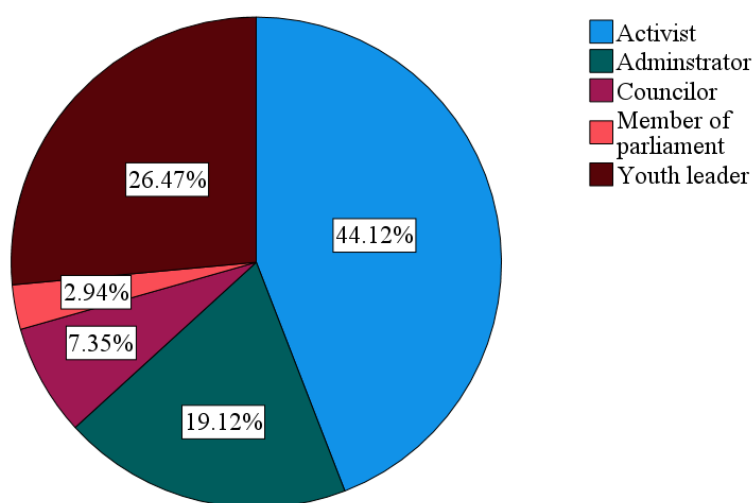
The study findings are consistent with Quadri (2018), who argued that women's participation in politics and decision-making at the national and regional levels is far from satisfactory. However, the Namibian government has undertaken various measures to advance women's position in society and promote gender equality in all spheres (Quadri, 2018). A practical problem experienced with these legal requirements is that there are still negative attitudes exhibited towards gender equality at the national level. These attitudes pose a serious challenge to the implementation of gender-

responsive policies and development programs. Despite the impressive social policy issues, the objective reality regarding gender equality still has to be fully realized

4.2.2 Position

The figure below presents the study findings on the position of the participants

Figure 4.2 Position



According to the figure above, the majority of the participants, who constitute 44.12 percent, were activists belonging to various political parties. About 26.47 percent of the participants were youth leaders, while 19.12 percent of the participants were administrators. Only 7.35 percent were members of parliament, while 2.94 percent were members of parliament.

4.2.3 Political Party

The participants belonged to different political parties, and the following table shows the results from the information collected.

Table 4.1 Political Party

Political organisation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Affirmative Repositioning (AR)	5	7.3	7.3	7.3
	All People's Party (APP)	2	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Community Leader	13	19	19	19
	Independence Patriots for Change (IPC)	10	14.7	14.7	44.1
	Landless People's Movement (LPM)	4	5.8	5.8	45.6
	Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF)	2	2.9	2.9	47.1
	National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO)	2	2.9	2.9	48.5

	Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)	7	10.2	10.2	54.4
	Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP)	5	7.3	7.3	61.8
	SWAPO	16	23.5	23.5	98.5
	United Democratic Front (UDF)	1	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

The data presents the distribution of respondents based on their political organisation affiliations. The majority of respondents (23.5%) identified with the ruling party, SWAPO, reflecting its continued dominance in Namibia's political landscape. A significant portion (19%) identified as community leaders, indicating strong representation from non-partisan or local governance figures. The Independence Patriots for Change (IPC) attracted 14.7 percent of respondents, positioning it as a notable political force. Other parties had smaller representations, such as the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) with 10.2 percent and the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) with 7.4 percent. Affirmative Repositioning (AR) and the Landless People's Movement (LPM) each garnered 5.8 percent of respondents, as did several other parties, including the All-People's Party (APP), Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF), National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO), and United

Democratic Front (UDF). The diverse representation reflects a multiparty system, though SWAPO remains the dominant political entity.

4.3 Data Analysis

As stated in chapter three of this study, a thematic data analysis, defined by Braun and Clark (2021) as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. It provides a flexible, accessible approach to analysing complex datasets and helps researchers interpret meanings across datasets, which was followed for this study. All the interviews were transcribed during the first phase of analysis. Open coding was used to create codes, excluding the use of existing categories. This allowed the data to guide the data analysis process, and during the analysis, each segment of the data was assigned a code concerning the study objectives. A total of 48 initial codes (Table 4.2) were formulated and categorised. Codes with similar meanings and relevance were put into the same category. For instance, codes related to political competition were grouped into the same category. A total of seven themes were formulated, and the themes were linked to the interview questions and research objectives.

Table 4.2 Initial Codes Derived from the Interview Transcripts

Political Competition	Historical Background	Economic Freedom and Shifts	SWAPO Strategies for Retention of Power	Challenges in Governance	Influence on Democracy
Regional Comparisons	Sustainable Development	Democratic Adaptation	Opportunities for Political Engagement	Youth and Gender Representation	Role of Religion

					and Social Stability
Platforms for Inter-Party Cooperation	Reflections on Political Documentation and Legacy	Party Identity	Youth Voter Engagement and Expectations	Internal Party Challenges	Civic Engagement and
Social Media	Impact of External Alliances on Policy	Promoting Democratic Norms	Collaboration	Post-Independence Solidarity	Reducing the Number of Political Parties
Public Discourse	Governance	Transparency	Coalition-Building Among Political Parties	Policy Alignment	Influence of Liberation Movements
International Influence	Public Accountability	Infrastructure Investments	Public Perception	Party Dynamics	Progressive Democracy
Youth Engagement	Educational Initiatives	Voter Engagement Challenges	Impact of Economic Conditions	Role of Opposition Parties	Media and Civic Education
Inter-Party Collaboration for Democratic Reform	Role of Community Leaders	Civic Engagement and Public Accountability	Need for Political Education	Community-Level Democratic Reforms	Impact of Liberation Movements

The table above shows the initial codes generated during the initial coding process; 48 initial codes were generated from the initial coding process, and nine (9) categories were formulated as seen in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Categories Derived from the Initial Codes

Political Engagement and Education
Influence of Historical Legacy on Political Loyalty
Social Media and Public Discourse
Challenges to Informed Political Participation
Collaborative Political Frameworks
The Role of Political Dominance and Competition Dynamics
Community Engagement and Political Awareness
Historical Legacy and Political Loyalty
Barriers to Democratic Participation

Table 4.4 Themes

Perceptions of Political Competition
Community Influence on Political Participation
Impact on Governance and Democratic Institutions
Historical and Regional Political Alliances

The table above shows the themes that were formulated from the nine categories, which are linked to the research questions and objectives.

4.4 Results

The following sections present the study findings according to the main themes and sub-themes. The results are linked to the interview transcripts or participant quotations related to each research question and interview question.

4.4.1 Theme One: Perceptions of Political Competition

The first theme that emerged was perceptions of political competition, formulated after rigorous analysis and review of the themes. The theme was linked to the main research question that sought to analyse the merging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia's post-independence era. Therefore, the study participants were asked how they perceived the current level of political competition in Namibia, the strategies that their Parties employed to compete in the multi-party system since independence, and how the dominance of SWAPO has influenced political competition and democracy in Namibia.

Table 4.5 Theme one: Perceptions of Political Competition

Ranked significance	Sub-theme	Explanation of the sub-theme
1	Intensity and Fragmentation of Political Competition	Examines perspectives on the range and diversity of political options available to citizens.
2	Dominance and Adaptation of SWAPO	Reflects on the level of trust or mistrust toward political entities and institutions

3	Opportunities and Challenges of a Multiparty System	Assesses general enthusiasm and active participation in politics within communities
4	Influence of SWAPO's Dominance on Political Competition and Democracy	Reflected on the longstanding dominance of SWAP in the Namibian political space.

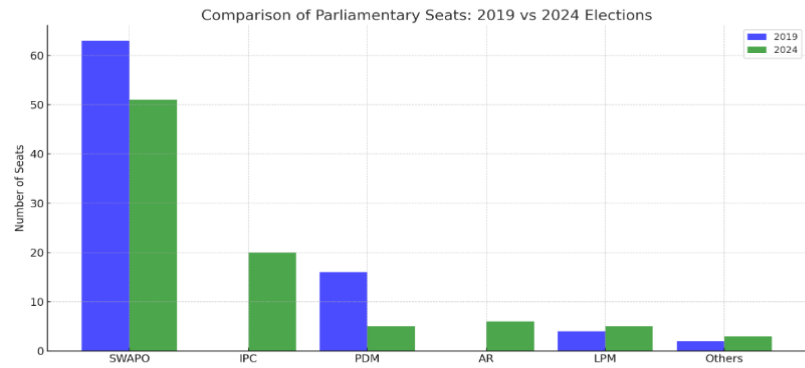
4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Intensity and Fragmentation of Political Competition

The intensity and fragmentation of political struggle arose as a sub-theme to the major theme. According to participants 1, 2, 3, 7, 12, 14, and 15 (2024), Namibia's political rivalry is lively yet dispersed. As an illustration, Participant 3 (2024) asserts that *"Political competition remains intensive but somewhat fragmented. Opposition parties have struggled to form an effective coalition, limiting their overall impact."* This fragmentation, while introducing diversity, weakens the ability of opposition parties to challenge the ruling party effectively. This fragmentation has been evolving since 1990 as political parties have continued to emerge due to Namibia's changing political and socio-economic conditions. Such conditions necessitating these developments include the intensification of poverty, unemployment, neo-patrimonialism, corruption, and democratic backsliding, among others.

With the ruling SWAPO party gaining 51 seats, down from its 2019 total of 63 seats, the newcomer Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) emerging as the official opposition with 20 seats, and the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) seeing a significant decline, gaining only five seats, Namibia's general elections of 2024 showed a significant political fragmentation among opposition parties (Electoral

Commission of Namibia - ECN, 2024), down from 16 in 2019. The fragmented political landscape that weakened the opposition vote and hindered the creation of a unified front against SWAPO was highlighted by the fact that other opposition parties, such as the Landless People's Movement (LPM) and the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement, received six and five seats, respectively (Electoral Commission of Namibia - ECN, 2024).

Figure 4.3 Evidence of Political Fragmentation within Namibian Opposition Parties



Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia (2024)

The number of parliamentary seats that each political party gained in Namibia's 2019 and 2024 elections is shown in this bar graph. It highlights the division and changes among opposition parties and shows how party representation has changed. For instance, the rise of IPC and the fall of SWAPO show how the political environment changes. In previous elections, Namibia's opposition groups might have greatly improved their prospects of undermining the power of the incumbent SWAPO party if they had banded together. For instance, SWAPO won 51 seats in the 2024 elections, compared to 39 for the opposition parties IPC (20), AR (6), LPM (5), PDM (5), and others (3). By combining these votes, a cohesive opposition alliance would have been

able to close the deficit or possibly overtake SWAPO in terms of parliamentary seats, which might have changed the balance of power. Additionally, combining resources and campaign tactics would have improved their capacity to rally supporters, offer a unified set of policies, and more successfully challenge the incumbent.

The figure showed that SWAPO maintains its position as the leading party since 1990, but its vote share has decreased since 2014. The voting behaviour of citizens has evolved through time because people now support different political parties. Additionally, the decline in SWAPO's electoral performance indicates that Namibia's ruling elite is losing its ability to maintain control and legitimacy. SWAPO's electoral dominance used to depend on its control of state resources and patronage networks, but these mechanisms have lost their effectiveness because citizens now protest against corruption and social inequality, and clientelism. Further, the inability of the ruling elite to deliver policy responses to citizen demands has created negative feedback loops, which Easton's systems theory shows through voter disengagement and decreasing participation rates, and younger voters moving to support the LPM and IPC. The electoral decline of SWAPO represents more than a simple voting pattern change because it shows Namibia's democratic system faces internal challenges between elite power consolidation and competitive political pluralism.

Additionally, by showing a strong alternative to SWAPO's established rule, this unity may have given hesitant voters more confidence. In contrast, the dispersed opposition lessened its influence, enabling SWAPO to hold onto its majority despite dwindling voter support. Participants agree that Namibia's political climate is changing and becoming more competitive. While acknowledging SWAPO's ongoing dominance, Participant 1 (2024) sees this as a chance to promote responsibility and growth. The

increasing dynamism is also mentioned by Participant 2, who highlights how political campaigns have begun earlier and are more engaging than in past years, indicating higher political involvement.

I perceive the current level of political competition in Namibia as both challenging and an opportunity while SWAPO remains the dominant party the image of the emergence of the opposition party has introduced new dynamics encouraging more diverse political discourse this competition can foster accountability and drive development but it also requires us to remain responsive to the needs and concern of all Namibians to maintain our support and legitimacy the political landscape (Participant 1, 2024).

The political competition in Namibia at the moment is becoming very much interesting. It is very interesting that we have never seen something in years, whereby we have even witnessed political campaigns for elections that have kick-started a long time, as far as the 21st of March 2022, when the elections are only this year on November 27 (Participant 2, 2024).

Although Participant 14 (2024) adopts a critical stance, they corroborate the underlying sentiment of change expressed by the others, highlighting dissatisfaction with governance issues such as corruption. This shared concern underscores the need for improved accountability and transparency, which Participant 1 (2024) also identifies as a positive outcome of competition.

The current level of politics is not really that satisfying, to be honest. We know the fact, to state the fact, the fact is that we suffer within the reality of voting. They don't really come clear as it is, even though the people are forcing, because we see the corruption and we see what is happening (Participant 14, 2024).

Participant 1 (2024) sees the emergence of opposition parties as introducing diversity into the political discourse, encouraging a more democratic and inclusive process. This perspective aligns with Participant 2's (2024) observation that the political competition has become *"very much interesting"* and unprecedented, implying a shift towards a more active engagement in politics.

Moreover, Participant 13 (2024) emphasised that, despite over 20 political parties, *"the number of political parties that we have registered does not reflect their competitiveness... Some of them are just briefcase political organisations."* This highlights a disparity between quantity and quality in political competition.

Participant 2 (2024) expressed that political campaigns have become more dynamic, noting, *"We have even witnessed political campaigns for elections that have kick-started a long time as far as 21st of March 2022,"* indicating a heightened level of political activity and competitiveness. Despite these developments, there is a consensus among participants that only a few opposition parties have the resources and strategies to rival SWAPO effectively. There is a general agreement that Namibia's political competition is intensifying, leading to new dynamics in governance and democracy. However, participants differ in their levels of optimism about the system's ability to deliver meaningful change. The dialogue highlights the dual reality of an evolving political system: it fosters diversity and accountability, but persistent issues like corruption and voter dissatisfaction remain critical challenges.

4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Dominance and Adaptation of SWAPO

SWAPO's enduring dominance in Namibia's political landscape stems from its liberation history, robust Organisational structure, and ability to adapt to changing

demographics. Participant 15 (2024) elaborated on SWAPO's strong base, stating, *"SWAPO is having an upper hand, being a liberation movement, and having stable followers... Its philosophy has been followed because it is a liberation movement that has been there."* The party's appeal to older generations and liberation-era loyalists has helped maintain its influence. Subsequently, this has made SWAPO gain leverage in Namibia's democratic framework and culminated in increased neo-patrimonialism. As a result, new political parties continue to appear to challenge this dominance.

It is a really quite difficult question because I might say, I have to say it in a positive way because I do see every year there are new parties coming up, they try to compete, they allow freedom of speech, freedom of multi-parties, they are not really a dictating party to be honest, which is one of the good things we see in SWAPO. We have the freedom, we have a few problems that just need to be tackled, even though the people see it as blind, but there are a few though. Our country is at peace because of SWAPO, it's at war because of SWAPO, because they are the ruling party, so they will obviously be implementing it for whatever good (Participant 14, 2024).

I think it has affected the community or the governance, or perhaps the understanding, because in my community where I came from, people have been in that politics of the struggle. They suffered because they were on the border. Either they get the soldiers from Angola, SWAPO soldiers, or the apartheid South African soldiers to go to their houses and perhaps beat them or interrogate them (Participant 7, 2024).

The accounts above capture the totality of the political landscape in Namibia. However, the party has not been immune to challenges. Participant 4 remarked on the growing competition, saying, *"We have seen IPC, AR, LPM, PDM, and the giant SWAPO itself... SWAPO has lost some of its majority compared to those years."* Such

growing competition illustrates the changing nature and course of Namibia's democratic landscape. SWAPO's strategy to incorporate youth into its structures reflects its efforts to remain relevant amid increasing political contestation. Participant 8 (2024) confirmed this, stating, *"Our strategy as SWAPO party is to participate in a fair competition... we intend to incorporate some younger people as much as possible into the party structure."* The question that arises is what does this entail for Namibia's political terrain?

I feel that the SWAPO party has influenced the other parties to participate. Though SWAPO has dominated since independence, and because of the SWAPO party's tolerance, there is peace in the political space in the country. Compared to other countries, where you could find members of the opposition, those who oppose the government being arrested, and so on (Participant 8, 2024). Participant 8's reflections offer an optimistic take on the political environment in Namibia, suggesting that SWAPO's tolerance has contributed positively to political participation. This analysis informs the study by illustrating the interplay between political dominance and a peaceful atmosphere, ultimately contributing to the understanding of democratic resilience in Namibia.

I can say that SWAPO has influenced political competition in such a way that at least it allows other oppositions to also be active in doing their day-to-day party activities. It has run a country in a smooth way, and the transition of power has always been smooth. There has never been any sort of attempts at coups or wars (Participant 18, 2024).

Overall, Participant 18's (2024) comments frame SWAPO as a stabilizing force in Namibia's political landscape, allowing for the participation of opposition parties

while maintaining a peaceful governance structure. Their observations are crucial for understanding the dynamics of political competition within a dominant party framework and the broader implications for democratic governance.

However, while this analysis points to positive aspects, it also invites critical questions. For instance, to what extent is the opposition truly effective and representative, given SWAPO's dominance? Are there structural factors that allow for genuine competition, or are these activities largely symbolic? Additionally, how does the political landscape evolve as new generations seek political representation and voice their perspectives?

According to Participant 19 (2024), *to a great extent, actually, by SWAPO influencing campaign in Namibia, it has led to other political parties to be active, making sure Namibians live according to our good living standards. This will actually help the political party to gain more votes, and it is actually by the public to have freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and freedom from discrimination.* Participant 19's insights reveal a positive perspective on SWAPO's influence in fostering political participation and promoting democratic values in Namibia. Their observations suggest that SWAPO, while a dominant political force, plays a role in motivating not just itself but also other parties to focus on citizens' welfare and democratic principles.

However, this raises important questions worth exploring further: To what extent does SWAPO's influence translate into genuine democratic engagement among all political parties? Are the freedoms and standards mentioned genuinely upheld across the political spectrum, or do issues of repression or discrimination persist? Additionally, how do the actions and rhetoric of SWAPO and competing parties shape public perceptions of democracy and governance?

Moreover, while the positive impacts of SWAPO's initiatives and influence are evident, it is essential to critically examine the challenges and limitations that may arise from a dominant party system. How do these dynamics affect opposition parties and their ability to contribute meaningfully to political discourse and governance?

Despite these efforts, SWAPO's dominance has been questioned by some participants, with Participant 16 asserting, *"We are living in a system that is very communist-like, dictatorship-like... people are more forced to believe that one political party is superior."* This critique underscores the perception of SWAPO's continued grip on power, even as emerging parties are slowly challenging its dominance.

4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Opportunities and Challenges of a Multiparty System

The multiparty system is seen as a cornerstone of Namibia's democracy, fostering greater accountability and discourse. Participant 1 (2024) viewed political competition as an opportunity, stating, *"This competition can foster accountability and drive development, but it also requires us to remain responsive to the needs and concerns of all Namibians to maintain our support and legitimacy."*

However, challenges persist, including allegations of corruption and the lack of clear strategies among opposition parties. Participant 14 (2024) observed, *"We know the fact... we see the corruption, and we see what is happening... it destroys the input that the youth are trying to look into the political system of the country."* These sentiments reflect frustrations with systemic issues that undermine democratic processes.

Participant 19 (2024) concurred by stating that:

There are a lot of opportunities. Honestly speaking, the Swapo political party creates employment that is basically for the youth and also for the adults. They actually gave the youth free business training and also gave a little bit of a grant for the youth to actually set up their own business, and the adults as well. And this business training they actually gave to the youth, it actually includes the free food, free transport, and free accommodation. And also, basically, they gave a raise to the civil workers' salaries. Participant 19's (2024) remarks underscore the importance of economic initiatives initiated by SWAPO in promoting youth empowerment and improving civil servant livelihoods.

This analysis can contribute to a broader understanding of the effectiveness of political party programs in enhancing socioeconomic conditions in Namibia. Moreover, while these positive initiatives reflect SWAPO's commitment to economic development, it is essential to examine whether they are sufficient to address the systemic issues facing youth and the broader economy. Are these measures merely addressing symptoms of unemployment, or do they involve more profound structural changes? Additionally, how do these efforts compare with those of other political parties in Namibia?

Both participants, 19 (2024) and 20 (2024), acknowledged that SWAPO created employment opportunities, emphasizing that these benefits were directed at both the youth and adults. They both highlighted the free business training provided to the youth by the party. This training was supported by additional benefits such as free food, transport, and accommodation, making it accessible. Additionally, both participants noted that SWAPO provided grants to help the youth set up their businesses. Participant 19 (2024) also mentioned that adults benefited from similar support. Participant 20 (2024) maintained that:

“There are a lot of opportunities, honestly speaking, the SWAPO political party created employment, which is basically for the youth, and also for the adults. They actually gave the youth free business training and also gave a little bit of a grant for the youth to actually set up their own business, and the adults as well”.

The lack of ideological conviction among opposition parties was highlighted by Participant 15 (2024), who said, *"The opposition is lacking a conviction of ideology."* This limits their ability to present a credible alternative to SWAPO, which continues to dominate the political arena. Nonetheless, some participants acknowledged that the multiparty system provides equal opportunities for political engagement, as Participant 18 (2024) noted, *"The competition of all political parties is at a level that gives every political party an opportunity to go out and mobilize."*

The evolution of Namibia's political landscape has also shifted public focus from liberation to economic issues. According to Participant 21 (2024), *"The paradigm shift from people fighting for common interests... to economic freedom has a lot of dynamics that bring about breakaway parties."* This shift has introduced new political players but also intensified disputes among parties vying for relevance.

4.4.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Influence of SWAPO's Dominance on Political Competition and Democracy

SWAPO's dominance in Namibia's political landscape has shaped both political competition and democratic processes in profound ways. Its long-standing leadership has brought stability and continuity, which Participant 1 (2024) highlighted, stating, *"SWAPO's long-standing leadership has provided political stability, which can facilitate development and attract investment. However, it can also lead to*

complacency and reduced responsiveness to public concerns." While its dominance has contributed to a peaceful political climate, some participants expressed concern about its potential to suppress civic engagement over time.

Participant 13 (2024) acknowledged SWAPO's role in maintaining democratic principles: *"We have always allowed people to exercise their campaign, even insulting and beating up members of the ruling party. And nobody has been either killed or jailed as a result."* This tolerance has allowed for the peaceful coexistence of political parties, distinguishing Namibia from other nations with more volatile political environments. Similarly, Participant 18 (2024) pointed out the absence of political harassment, stating, *"There have never been any sort of attempts at coups or wars. So, it has all been peaceful, and SWAPO has influenced that in a very political way and in upholding democracy."*

However, other participants criticized SWAPO's pervasive influence over public institutions and media. Participant 2 (2024) remarked, *"They have been affecting almost all the institutions in the country... because of its dominance, it has influenced, and it continues to influence the decisions that are being made."* This influence extends to media visibility, with SWAPO often dominating coverage.

The party's structural and organisational advantage was also emphasised by Participant 15 (2024): *"People will belong to structures of SWAPO from the section up to the central committee of the Politburo, while other organisations may lack those kinds of consistency and force operations."* These robust structures ensure a continuous grassroots presence, contrasting with smaller parties that often become active only during election seasons.

SWAPO's legacy as a liberation movement also reinforces its dominance, as noted by Participant 17 (2024): *"A lot of people just thought since SWAPO took the power from liberation, they were unstoppable or unbeatable giants... they gave a facade that SWAPO should be number one in Namibia."* This perception has hindered the development of a competitive political culture, creating a barrier for opposition parties to challenge SWAPO effectively.

While some participants viewed SWAPO's dominance as a stabilizing force, others expressed concern about its effect on the vibrancy of political competition. Participant 19 highlighted the freedoms allowed under SWAPO's rule, such as freedom of speech and expression, but also noted that these freedoms alone might not be sufficient to foster robust opposition.

4.4.2 Theme Two: Community Influence on Political Participation

Theme two addressed the view of the community leaders on their influence on political participation. The theme had two main sub-themes: the opportunities for political growth and inclusion, and challenges hindering political competition and development.

Table 4.6: Theme two: Community Influence on Political Participation

Ranked significance	Sub-theme	Explanation of the sub-theme
1	Opportunities for Political Growth and Inclusion	Discusses how community leaders encourage or discourage political participation.
2	Challenges Hindering Political Competition and Development	Explores community leaders' methods to mobilize members, such as organizing local events or recruitment drives.

4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Opportunities for Political Growth and Inclusion

Namibia's political landscape offers various opportunities for fostering growth, especially through SWAPO's influence as the dominant party. Participants underscored the potential for inclusivity in leadership structures. Participant 21 (2024) remarked, *"We create a balance of leadership with young, middle-aged, and more senior people,"* highlighting how SWAPO provides pathways for individuals across age groups to contribute meaningfully to national development. The presence of diverse leaders, including the youngest Member of Parliament in Africa, further emphasises this inclusive leadership model.

Economic empowerment programs driven by SWAPO were also noted as significant opportunities. According to Participant 20 (2024), *"The SWAPO political party creates employment... they gave the youth free business training... [with] free food,*

free transport, and free accommodation.” These initiatives provide young people with resources to develop entrepreneurial skills and improve their economic standing. Additionally, salary increases for civil servants were identified as another example of SWAPO’s efforts to uplift specific sectors.

However, opposition parties see opportunities to leverage gaps in governance created by SWAPO’s dominance. Participant 17 (2024) pointed out that SWAPO’s focus on election campaigns often neglects long-term support for the masses, stating, *“They have been working on a false promise system... they let the masses go and hardly support any projects.”* This creates a fertile ground for opposition parties to address neglected areas, such as poverty reduction and bridging socio-economic inequalities.

Some participants also identified tribal politics as a potential opportunity for smaller regional political parties. Participant 16 (2024) noted, *“Opportunities are there. People are believing in going back to their tribal political parties.”* By focusing on local issues and leveraging regional loyalties, these parties could gain traction in areas where SWAPO has been perceived as neglectful.

4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Challenges Hindering Political Competition and Development

Despite these opportunities, the political environment in Namibia faces significant challenges. Internal conflicts within SWAPO, particularly regarding gender representation, were highlighted by Participant 21 (2024): *“With the gender balance, there was some resistance... women still feel not highly represented even though there is now 50-50.”* While SWAPO has made strides toward gender equality, resistance

from certain factions within the party demonstrates that the transition toward equitable representation remains incomplete.

Participants also pointed to external pressures that challenge the stability of political competition. Participant 20 (2024) observed, *“There will be a lot of problems coming from all different directions... bringing up discrimination to the public and also threats to keep away voters”*. Such actions not only undermine voter confidence but also disrupt the democratic process.

A significant challenge is the general lack of political education among the populace. Participant 17 (2024) explained, *“A lot of people do not understand politics... they only take power from liberation... not just what benefited you in the past but also what’s going to benefit you in the future.”* This historical loyalty to SWAPO as a liberation movement diminishes critical political engagement and limits the electorate’s ability to evaluate alternative parties or policies.

Additionally, tribalism remains a divisive issue in Namibia’s political landscape. Participant 16 emphasised, *“SWAPO predominantly recruits from the Omusati region. Why can we not run ours from Omaheke or other regions?”* This perception of regional bias fosters disunity and weakens the national focus of political engagement. Smaller political parties are often drawn into this regionalism, which can limit their capacity to address broader national concerns effectively.

A perception of broken trust between political parties and the electorate compounds these challenges. Participant 17 (2024) stated, *“The current government has always been neglecting its people after the election campaigns... they only cater to the rich.”*

Such dynamics deepen socio-economic divides, eroding public confidence in political institutions.

4.4.3 Theme Three: Impact on Governance and Democratic Institutions

Theme three was formulated from the analysis and helped address how emerging trends in political competition affected governance and democratic institutions in Namibia from your party's perspective. Additionally, the theme helped address how political competition has contributed to strengthening or weakening democratic practices and institutions. Therefore, four sub-themes are linked to the theme: strengthening accountability and democratic process, elite dominance, enhancing citizen participation and institutional accountability, and Limitations and Risks to Democratic Practices.

Table 4.7: Theme three: Impact on Governance and Democratic Institutions

Ranked significance	Sub-theme	Explanation of the sub-theme
1	Strengthening Accountability and Democratic Process	Addresses challenges faced by smaller or newer parties in establishing a foothold.
2	Persistent Challenges in Governance and Elite Dominance	Explores reasons behind declining public interest in political participation.
3	Enhancing Citizen Participation and Institutional Accountability	Investigates how corruption or unfulfilled promises contribute to public scepticism.
4	Limitations and Risks to Democratic Practices	Considers how economic status or education impacts political engagement levels.

4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Strengthening Accountability and Democratic Processes

The emergence of political competition through parties like IPC, AR, and LPM has enhanced accountability and strengthened democratic processes in Namibia. These opposition parties have challenged the longstanding dominance of SWAPO and created a platform for citizens to demand better governance and transparency. Participants highlighted the transformative role of this competition.

Participant 2 (2024) noted that before IPC's rise, institutions such as municipalities operated with minimal accountability: *"Most of the institutions were not really exercising democracy... now people have got the right to question and air their views."* This illustrates how new political movements have encouraged broader participation in decision-making processes. Participant 18 emphasised that this competition has motivated the ruling party to take action: *"Councillors are being held accountable... some are being fired if they are not complying."* This indicates a shift towards greater institutional responsiveness.

Participant 17 (2024) noted that people have become more aware of the laws and more interested in the politics of the country: *"Especially from the past three years, the emerging political competition has been necessary, and actually it has boosted our law and it woke up most of the people that were in front, not just making them comfortable as comfortable for them to think they are leading ship, now they actually see and recognize that the people are tired and they are thinking and they recognize what they need and require so they have to compete with the other political parties for them to show that they are still dedicated to our government or the people who choose otherwise"*.

These findings suggest that increased political competition has disrupted entrenched practices, leading to improved governance outcomes, such as better accountability, reduced corruption, and increased public engagement. The participants' observations align with the study's focus on understanding how political party systems contribute to the evolution of democratic governance in Namibia.

4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Persistent Challenges in Governance and Elite Dominance

Despite progress in accountability, systemic challenges rooted in political elitism and a lack of meaningful reform continue to impede governance and democratic development. Participants expressed concerns about overlapping roles, inadequate qualifications among politicians, and the pervasive influence of SWAPO's dominance over public perception.

Participant 15 (2024) criticised the overlap between party and government roles: *"You are a minister in the government, you do not have to occupy a prominent position within the party... parliament becomes a rubber stamp."* This observation underscores how such overlaps erode the checks and balances necessary for effective governance.

Participant 16 (2024) highlighted the enduring psychological influence of SWAPO over the electorate: *"The majority of our people were forced to believe that SWAPO is the only party... the mentality of our people should change".*

Additionally, concerns about inadequate qualifications among lawmakers were raised. Participant 15 (2024) emphasised: *"Law-making is a very difficult exercise... but here we have people that cannot even retain rights sitting in parliament."* These structural issues highlight how political elitism and limited capacity among leaders can hinder institutional reform and democratic progress.

The findings reveal a dual narrative in the impact of political competition on governance and democratic institutions in Namibia. On one hand, emerging trends in political competition have injected new life into the democratic framework. The presence of opposition parties has enhanced public participation, introduced greater scrutiny of governance processes, and encouraged accountability within the ruling

party. For instance, IPC's rise has led to tangible changes, such as the cessation of controversial land sales and improved municipal transparency. This aligns with democratic theories suggesting that competition fosters institutional responsiveness and curtails unchecked power.

On the other hand, persistent challenges rooted in political elitism and structural deficiencies undermine the full potential of these gains. The entrenched dominance of SWAPO, overlapping roles within its ranks, and the lack of minimum educational qualifications for politicians create barriers to effective governance. Participants' reflections on these challenges, such as the psychological loyalty to SWAPO and the inefficacy of some lawmakers, reveal a system where reform is slow and uneven. These factors illustrate how political competition, while a catalyst for change, must overcome significant systemic hurdles to achieve comprehensive democratisation.

The study underscores the importance of balancing emerging competition with structural reforms. While competition has disrupted the status quo and introduced new avenues for accountability, it must be complemented by capacity-building measures, stricter standards for political participation, and efforts to address voter perceptions shaped by historical dominance. Only through such a multifaceted approach can Namibia's democratic framework evolve into a more inclusive and effective system.

4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Enhancing Citizen Participation and Institutional Accountability

Political competition in Namibia has strengthened democratic practices by fostering increased citizen participation and creating pressure for institutional accountability. Participants highlighted how competition has empowered citizens to recognize their

rights and actively engage in governance processes, particularly through voting and dialogue.

Participant 2 (2024) noted that the emergence of opposition parties like IPC has led to citizens demanding services that reflect their actual needs: *"People knowing their rights... whatever that will be delivered to the people... must be based on the demand that the people are demanding."* This shift represents a move away from the passive receipt of government services toward active citizen involvement in decision-making.

Participant 18 (2024) emphasised how political competition has mobilized young people to participate in the electoral process: *"It has actually woken some young people... they have found the importance of voting."* This highlights the role of competition in educating and involving previously disengaged segments of the population.

Participants also identified progress in institutional accountability. Participant 17 (2024) observed that political competition over the past five years has prompted policymakers to address issues more effectively: *"These past five years have been more progressive... it is due to the upcoming and very pressure-rising competition in politics."* This suggests that the pressure from opposition parties has led to improvements in governance and policy implementation.

These findings underline how political competition can strengthen democracy by fostering a more engaged electorate and holding institutions to higher standards of accountability and responsiveness.

4.4.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Limitations and Risks to Democratic Practices

While political competition has strengthened certain democratic practices, participants expressed concerns about its limitations and potential risks. Weak opposition parties, the self-serving motivations of some political actors, and the lack of constructive dialogue were cited as challenges that undermine the effectiveness of political competition.

Participant 15 (2024) critiqued the oppositional approach of some parties, stating: *"Our oppositions are more looking for points to score... they don't bring anything to the table."* This lack of constructive engagement has limited the ability of opposition parties to contribute meaningfully to democratic progress.

Participant 8 (2024) warned that some individuals form political parties not to promote governance but as a means of employment: *"Some are just coming in... taking politics as a source of employment."* This observation reflects the risk of diluting the quality of political competition by prioritizing personal gain over collective governance. Participant 3 highlighted the challenges posed by fragmented opposition parties: *"There has been limited policy change due to the opposition's struggle to build effective coalitions."* This fragmentation weakens the ability of political competition to drive substantive legislative or policy reforms.

Despite these risks, participants acknowledged that the presence of multiple parties remains a critical feature of Namibia's democratic system. Participant 16 (2024) asserted: *"Political competition can never be a weakening point... it is fair that everybody supports and votes where they think their message will be heard."*

The results reveal a complex relationship between political competition and democratic practices in Namibia. On one hand, competition has significantly strengthened democratic engagement by mobilizing citizens, fostering accountability, and encouraging institutions to address public demands. For example, the increased voter turnout and responsiveness to public needs demonstrate how political competition has reinforced democratic ideals. The findings align with democratic theories, suggesting that vibrant political competition enhances citizen participation and institutional responsiveness.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of political competition is constrained by weak opposition structures, personal interests among political actors, and a lack of collaborative policymaking. Participants' concerns about opportunistic behaviours within politics and fragmented opposition efforts highlight the risks of ineffective competition. These dynamics suggest that while competition is a necessary element of democracy, its impact is moderated by the quality and integrity of political actors and processes.

For political competition to contribute more fully to the strengthening of Namibia's democratic framework, there is a need for structural reforms. These could include fostering a more united and constructive opposition, promoting policies that prioritize public service over personal gain, and enhancing civic education to ensure informed political participation. By addressing these limitations, Namibia can leverage political competition to deepen democratic governance and institutional resilience.

4.4.4 Theme Four: Historical and Regional Political Alliances

The fourth theme that emerged during the analysis was historical and regional alliances. The theme helped facilitate understanding of the reforms that are necessary

to enhance political competition and democratic governance in Namibia. Additionally, the theme helped uncover your party's strategies to improve political competition and democratic processes in Namibia. The question of how political parties can collaborate to foster a more competitive and democratic political environment was answered by this theme. Furthermore, the specific instances where SWAPO's alignment with MPLA, ZANU-PF, and ANC (liberation movements) influenced policy decisions or political strategies in Namibia were described under this theme. The cooperation between these two parties affected the implementation of democratic norms and institutions in Namibia.

Table 4.8: Theme four: Historical and Regional Political Alliances

Ranked significance	Sub-theme	Explanation of the sub-theme
1	Reform	Investigates the impact of historical alliances, such as MPLA, ZANU, and ANC, on Namibia's political landscape.
2	Political Competition Strategy	Examines how historical ties shape current policy priorities and cooperation
3	Cross-Border Political Influences	Analyses the effects of neighbouring countries' political climates on Namibia's political competition.
4	Effect on Democracy	Analyses the effect of cross-border political influence on Namibian democracy.

4.4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Reform

The transcripts from Participants 15 (2024), 17 (2024), and 21 (2024) offer valuable insights into the types of reforms that could enhance political competition and democratic governance in Namibia. These perspectives are closely tied to the study's main theme of investigating political competition and its sub-theme of reforms, particularly in the context of historical and regional political alliances.

Participant 15 (2024) focuses on structural and electoral reforms to address inefficiencies and conflicts within Namibia's governance framework. Participant 15 (2024) emphasised the need for a clearer separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, stating, *"We need to have a clear guideline that nobody is sitting in the executive and the parliament."* This reform would enhance transparency and accountability by ensuring that ministers are not simultaneously part of the legislative body to which they must report.

Additionally, the participant critiques the current proportional representation system, proposing a hybrid model that combines proportional representation with first-past-the-post elections. This would balance party representation with direct accountability to the electorate, potentially increasing political responsiveness. They also question the role of deputy ministers, describing the position as *"a waste of government resources,"* and advocate for clearer lines of accountability between ministers and Executive Directors to improve governance efficiency.

Participant 15 (2024) provides a detailed critique of existing governance structures, advocating for systemic reforms that would enhance accountability and responsiveness. These perspectives demonstrate that addressing these areas is crucial

for fostering a more inclusive, dynamic, and competitive democratic environment in Namibia.

Participant 17 (2024) shifts the focus to accessibility and accountability, identifying significant gaps in policy implementation that hinder public participation in governance. They argue that while reforms and policies exist, they have limited access due to a lack of decentralised government offices and platforms to disseminate information. As Participant 17 (2024) argued that *“We need more centres and more platforms where the information is actually displayed... the problem is there is no accountability for the person to bring the information to the people.”* This logistical barrier, compounded by the challenges of expensive and unsafe transportation, particularly affects marginalised communities. Decentralising government services would empower citizens by improving their access to essential information and enabling informed political participation. This reform could lead to a more inclusive and competitive democratic process by addressing disparities in access and engagement.

Participant 21 (2024) emphasises the importance of ideological consistency and democratic principles in maintaining a competitive political environment. They highlight the governing party’s commitment to learning from global best practices and ensuring the longevity of its ideology. As they put it, *“We tolerate democracy... the ideology of the party remains forever and forever. Yeah, democracy, we adapt to the democracy we live in, we are a democratic party, and so far, we have handled that very well, and that is the principle that is driving us. We tolerate democracy. We, as a governing party, have footprints, energy footprints, all around the world, where we also learn from best practices. As a party that has lived for so many years, we are more than 50 years old now; we tolerate political competition. Of course, as we grow*

our party, we make sure that the party remains and outlives all of us who today are in various leadership structures, so that the party outlives everybody and so forth, and make sure the ideology of the party remains forever and forever.

The above perspective underscores the role of institutional learning and adaptation in sustaining competitive democratic governance. However, the participant's emphasis on preserving the party's ideology above all else suggests a potential rigidity that could hinder political pluralism and limit the vibrancy of political competition. While the participant asserts that their party tolerates democracy, there is a noticeable tension between ideological preservation and fostering an open, inclusive political environment.

These insights collectively reveal that Namibia's democratic framework would benefit from reforms targeting institutional structures, enhanced access to services, and a balance between ideological consistency and political pluralism. Participant 21 (2024) highlights the importance of ideological endurance but also raises questions about its impact on fostering political competition. Participant 17 (2024) underscores the need to bridge the gap between citizens and government services to ensure inclusivity and participation: *"Currently, we seriously need government offices amongst the people, we have communities where thousands and hundreds of thousands are living, but you cannot even find one single public office in amongst them, they have to travel tens or hundreds of kilometres to go to the nearest government essential office which is very difficult because transportation is already one thing a difficult thing to find in Namibia, it's very expensive and the second thing is sometimes to travel from one place to another is not safe, especially for younger people and very elderly people, they might get lost and so if they could just bring the offices closer to us it will be very much helpful and it will make it easier for people to be more educated."*

4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Political Competition Strategies

The transcripts from Participants 13 (2024), 15 (2024), 17 (2024), and 21 (2024) provide diverse perspectives on strategies to improve political competition and democratic processes in Namibia. These insights reflect the challenges and opportunities within the country's political landscape, contributing to the broader discourse on political competition strategies within Namibia's democratic framework.

Participant 13 (2024) emphasises the importance of delivering on election promises and driving socio-economic development as a strategy to maintain political dominance and appeal in a competitive landscape. They state, *"You can only perhaps cement that position by delivering on your promises... taking people out of poverty and driving the socio-economic development of the country."* This perspective highlights the centrality of governance performance in political competition, where effective delivery of manifesto commitments strengthens voter loyalty and enhances a party's credibility. By prioritizing socio-economic transformation, parties can create a compelling case for their continued leadership, thereby fostering a competitive political environment driven by tangible outcomes.

Participant 15 (2024) proposes a structural approach to political competition, emphasizing the need for a stronger ruling party and opposition. They suggest adopting a model similar to American or European politics, where two dominant parties compete, arguing, *"We need a stronger opposition and a stronger ruling party... rather than having 20 parties, they cannot even sit under one table."* This perspective reflects a desire for streamlined political competition where major parties are better resourced and capable of advancing coherent policies. They further suggest that funding mechanisms should favour larger parties to enable effective competition, potentially reducing the fragmentation often associated with multi-party systems. This strategy

aims to foster a more stable and impactful political environment by ensuring that the main contenders are well-equipped to lead and represent diverse societal interests.

Participant 17 (2024) advocates for greater transparency and accountability as essential strategies for enhancing political competition. They stress the importance of concrete evidence to back government activities, stating, *“The party that is in charge should be able to show the activities to the public... with actual physical proof.”* This approach highlights the demand for measurable progress and openness in governance to build public trust and encourage informed political participation. By ensuring transparency in policy implementation and resource allocation, political parties can differentiate themselves based on their commitment to ethical governance, thus intensifying the competitive landscape.

Participant 21 (2024) focuses on tolerance and resilience in political competition, underlining their party’s historical strength and ability to adapt to challenges. They discuss the phenomenon of members leaving to form new parties and later returning, noting, *“The movement, SWAPO, that animal has lived, that animal has been tried and tested... even before independence.”* This view illustrates how a party’s historical legacy and internal stability can serve as a competitive advantage. However, the participant’s emphasis on external forces influencing political decisions raises questions about the role of misinformation and trust within political competition. Their narrative underscores the need for fostering informed political engagement to ensure that competition remains substantive and not clouded by manipulation or disinformation.

These strategies, taken together, highlight the multifaceted approaches necessary to enhance political competition in Namibia. Participant 13 (2024) focuses on

governance performance as a means to build credibility and voter loyalty, while Participant 21 (2024) emphasises the role of resilience and legacy in maintaining competitiveness. Participant 17 (2024) calls for transparency and accountability to foster trust and informed participation, and Participant 15 (2024) advocates for structural reforms to reduce political fragmentation and enhance the strength of key political actors. These diverse viewpoints underscore the complexity of political competition in Namibia, suggesting that a combination of governance excellence, institutional reforms, and enhanced transparency is essential for fostering a more vibrant and competitive democratic framework.

4.4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Cross-border Political Influences

The participants offer varied insights into how SWAPO's emerging alignment with other former liberation movements, such as MPLA, ZANU-PF, and ANC, has influenced Namibia's political strategies and policy decisions. These perspectives illuminate the historical and ongoing collaborations among these movements and their implications for Namibia's political landscape.

Participant 13 (2024) emphasises the sovereign decision-making of Namibia while acknowledging the role of alliances with former liberation movements. They argue that Namibia operates through bilateral agreements influenced by allies like the MPLA and ZANU-PF, but assert that these partnerships do not compromise the country's sovereignty. The participant underscores that while Namibia shares ideological and historical ties with these movements, the alignment primarily functions within a framework of mutual respect rather than external control.

Participant 21 (2024) highlights the institutionalised relationships among former liberation movements, describing platforms for collaboration, such as leadership

forums for party presidents and secretaries-general. These platforms are portrayed as spaces for learning and exchanging strategies to address shared challenges. The participant who personally participated in such events underscores the importance of guarding the legacy of these movements and maintaining strong ties to preserve their political influence. This narrative reflects the strategic use of historical solidarity to reinforce political cohesion and continuity among these parties.

Participant 17 (2024) critiques political parties' strategic use of liberation history to bolster their credibility. They argue that such tactics can mislead the public by over-emphasizing the role of specific parties in achieving independence while sidelining contributions from others. According to the participant, this approach perpetuates reliance on a “painful and unnecessary history” during election campaigns, which may hinder progress by anchoring political legitimacy in past struggles rather than future-oriented governance. Participant 17 (2024)’s insights highlight the need for a shift towards future-oriented governance in political discourse, cautioning against the overuse of historical legitimacy. This analysis aligns well with the broader themes of democratic resilience and the evolving nature of political legitimacy in this paper. The liberation struggle is long gone, and as mostly mentioned by the liberators themselves, it is now a struggle for economic emancipation. Using liberation credentials to win support during elections undermines the involvement of other parties that only emerged after independence or those that were not in exile before independence.

Participant 18 (2024) provides specific examples of cross-border influences, including electoral observation missions and strategy-sharing initiatives. They note instances where SWAPO and its allies, such as ZANU-PF and ANC, collaborated to support each other’s campaigns and fundraising efforts. These activities are portrayed as deliberate efforts to sustain power and reinforce solidarity among the movements. For

example, the SWAPO Youth League's engagement with the ANC during South Africa's elections reflects how these alliances extend beyond historical ties to practical political strategies. Participant 18's (2024) insights bring to light significant dimensions of how historical relationships influence contemporary political practices among liberation movements. The assertion that these alliances extend into practical, strategic collaboration indicates a recognition of the need for ongoing solidarity to address the evolving political landscape in the region.

However, this cooperative approach can lead to questions concerning the implications of such alliances on democratic practices. For instance, does this collaboration create an environment that sidelines local opposition parties, or does it foster greater political engagement overall? This perspective contributes significantly to this paper's examination of how historical and contemporary factors shape democratic practices and political legitimacy in Namibia. Several opposition parties, including the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), Landless People's Movement (LPM), Affirmative Repositioning (AR), All People's Party (APP), and Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), accused ZANU-PF of meddling in Namibia's elections. These parties suggested that ZANU-PF leveraged its alliance with Namibia's ruling party, SWAPO, to influence the electoral outcome.

AR leader Job Amupanda expressed concerns over ZANU-PF's relationship with SWAPO, warning that such external influence could lead to political instability (investigations.namibian.com.na). In response to these allegations, President-elect Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah dismissed claims of foreign interference, questioning the basis of such assertions and emphasising Namibia's sovereignty. She described the allegations as part of a failed campaign against SWAPO. Similarly, ZANU-PF

officials refuted the accusations, stating that they do not interfere in the sovereign process of other nations (newzimbabwe.com).

Participant 15 (2024) reflects on the liberation movements' broader objectives and challenges, emphasizing their initial success in achieving independence but critiquing their subsequent governance. They argue that the focus should shift from self-enrichment and exclusivity to prioritizing the well-being of the masses. The participant laments the disconnect between leaders and the populace, attributing it to cultural and structural practices such as the elevation of Very Important Persons (VIPs). They advocate for a more egalitarian approach to leadership, aligning with liberation movements' original ethos. The insights provided by Participant 15 (2024) emphasise the need for a reflective and critical approach to governance among former liberation movements. Their critique highlights the importance of accountability and the necessity of aligning political practices with the original ideals of equality and empowerment that motivated the struggle for independence.

This perspective is crucial for understanding the challenges faced by many post-colonial states, particularly how leadership can inadvertently shift away from the needs of the populace and become entrenched in elitism. It raises important questions about the role of political parties in fostering social cohesion and inclusivity: How can liberation movements reclaim their original mission in contemporary governance? What structural changes are necessary to bridge the gap between leaders and the people they serve?

By addressing these questions, Participant 15's (2024) reflections contribute to a deeper understanding of the need for transformative leadership within Namibia's political landscape. Their advocacy for an egalitarian approach provides a framework

for discussing potential pathways to restore faith in the political system and enhance democratic practices.

Together, these perspectives reveal that SWAPO's alignment with former liberation movements influences political strategies in Namibia through shared platforms, historical solidarity, and collaborative initiatives. However, they also highlight the tensions between leveraging liberation history for political legitimacy and addressing contemporary governance challenges. While the alliances provide opportunities for mutual learning and support, they also risk perpetuating outdated practices and creating a divide between leaders and citizens. Addressing these dynamics requires a balance between honouring historical ties and fostering inclusive, forward-looking governance.

4.4.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Effect on Democracy

The cooperation between SWAPO and other former liberation movements has been portrayed by participants as largely positive concerning the implementation of democratic norms and institutions in Namibia. Despite the alliances with movements like ANC, ZANU-PF, and MPLA, participants consistently emphasise Namibia's sovereignty and democratic integrity. They argue that these relationships have neither compromised democracy nor influenced electoral outcomes negatively.

In my view, this response reflects a nuanced understanding of how historical alliances shape contemporary governance. The fact that participants describe the cooperation as largely positive indicates a collective agreement on the necessity of unity among former liberation movements without forsaking democratic values. The response highlights the importance of maintaining sovereignty and ensuring that historical alliances serve democratic purposes, reinforcing Namibia's commitment to effective

governance while appreciating the role of its liberation history in contemporary politics.

Participant 13 (2024) asserts that Namibia's democratic practices remain uncompromised:

"I don't think there has been any affected implementation of democratic norms. You also agree with me that whether it's Africa, whether it's Namibia, there are always democratic elections. You have never seen elections being postponed or an opposition being prevented from participating in elections and all that."

This perspective underscores the regularity and transparency of Namibia's elections, which are upheld as a benchmark for democratic governance. Similarly, Participant 15 (2024) praises Namibia's commitment to honest elections and adherence to the rule of law:

"We are a country governed by the rule of law. We are a country with the most honest election outcomes. This government has not come to a level of rigging votes."

The participant contrasts Namibia with Zimbabwe, where incidents of resource mismanagement and undemocratic practices have been reported, emphasizing that such issues do not occur in Namibia. From the responses, it is clear that both participants share a strong belief in the integrity of Namibia's democratic processes, which they attribute to good governance and adherence to legal norms. Their comments suggest a collective national identity in valuing democratic stability, distinguishing Namibia from other African nations where democratic practices may be more compromised.

Moreover, by contrasting Namibia with Zimbabwe, the participants not only affirm their faith in the local political structure but also invoke regional contexts to underline

the positive aspects of Namibia's governance. This comparison signals a desire for national pride and an assertion of justice and fairness within the political landscape.

However, while this perspective is overwhelmingly positive, it will be beneficial to explore any underlying tensions or criticisms that are not articulated in their responses. For instance, are there internal challenges to democracy in Namibia that participants may not openly acknowledge? Exploring dissenting opinions could provide a more comprehensive view of the political climate.

The statements reflect a strong endorsement of Namibia's democratic practices and governance model, positioning the country as a leader in ensuring fair and transparent elections in comparison to its neighbours. This positivity can serve as a foundation for exploring the resilience of Namibia's democracy while recognizing the complexities present in any political system.

Participants also highlight the positive role of collaborative platforms between liberation movements. Participant 21 (2024) notes that these platforms allow for the exchange of best practices in governance and democracy:

"All these platforms have prepared the party to address different challenges of a democratic nature with best practices. These platforms have really made a very, very positive contribution to how we handle certain aspects or certain complex nature that are emerging in the society that we live in."

This suggests that cooperation among liberation movements has facilitated learning and adaptation, contributing to Namibia's democratic resilience. The insights from Participant 21 (2024) suggest that cooperative mechanisms among liberation movements are crucial for enhancing democratic governance, fostering resilience, and promoting adaptive strategies in response to emerging challenges. This perspective

aligns well with the broader themes of political cooperation and democratic integrity in this research paper.

On the subject of potential external influence, Participant 18 (2024) dismisses the notion that foreign alliances undermine Namibia's democracy:

"I will not say anything was really compromised because democracy is the rule of the majority, the rule of law. Whoever gets the numbers gets to win, and that's democracy. It has been practiced all along, and it's still the same thing that is being practised."

However, the participant raises a cautionary note about perceptions, questioning why political parties from allied countries might observe national elections, suggesting this could create doubts among the public:

"Why should a political party observe a national election? Maybe the masses may think that something is not adding up or there are some loopholes."

While such observations do not directly undermine democracy, they highlight the importance of managing public trust and maintaining the perceived neutrality of electoral processes. The insights from Participant 18 (2024) offer a balanced view that emphasises both the robustness of Namibia's democratic practices and the importance of managing public perception to maintain trust in electoral processes. This analysis can serve as a foundation for exploring the complex relationship between external influences and the perception of democracy.

All Participants agree that Namibia has upheld its democratic norms despite historical and ideological ties to liberation movements. They credit the alliances for fostering a collaborative environment that strengthens governance while maintaining a firm commitment to democratic principles. These insights, grounded in participants' reflections, reinforce the narrative that Namibia's democratic institutions are robust

and resilient, bolstered but not overshadowed by its cooperation with former liberation movements.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter Four presented the findings of this study, offering a detailed examination of the emerging trends, patterns, and implications of political competition in Namibia's democratic framework. This chapter highlighted the persistence of SWAPO's dominance since independence, which has defined Namibia's political landscape as a *de facto* one-party system. The analysis revealed the interplay of factors such as historical legacies, ethnic affiliations, and socio-economic inequalities in shaping voter behaviour and party dynamics. These factors have entrenched the ruling party's position and limited the opposition parties' ability to effectively challenge its dominance.

Additionally, the chapter emphasised the structural challenges within Namibia's electoral system and governance structures, which have contributed to the marginalisation of smaller parties and independent movements. The findings also identified new trends, such as increased political activism among youth and urban populations, driven by dissatisfaction with unemployment, corruption, and service delivery issues. These trends indicate a growing demand for political reform and inclusivity, signalling potential shifts in the country's political competition.

By presenting these findings, Chapter Four provides critical insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with political competition in Namibia. It lays the groundwork for the interpretative analysis in Chapter Five, where these results will be contextualised within theoretical frameworks and existing literature to further understand their implications for Namibia's democratic development and governance.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the interpretation and contextualization of the findings outlined in the previous chapter that presented the results in detail. This discussion aims to connect the study's findings with the broader theoretical frameworks and existing literature on political competition, party systems, and democratic governance. By analysing the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia, this chapter examines their implications for the country's democratic framework and governance structures.

The discussion is structured to address each research objective, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Namibia's political dynamics have evolved over time. Key themes include the persistence of dominant party systems, the role of political elitism, and the challenges posed by socioeconomic inequalities. The chapter also evaluates how these trends align with, diverge from, or extend existing theories, such as Pluralist Democracy, Elite Theory, and Institutional Theory, providing a nuanced understanding of Namibia's unique political trajectory.

By situating the findings within the context of Namibia's historical, social, and political realities, Chapter Five seeks to highlight both opportunities for reform and areas requiring further investigation. This critical discussion serves as the basis for the recommendations presented in the subsequent chapter, offering insights into how Namibia can foster a more inclusive and competitive political environment.

5.2 Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia

The findings revealed vibrant yet fragmented political competition, dominated by SWAPO's historical legacy and structural advantages. Despite over 20 registered political parties, few exhibit significant competitiveness. This aligns with Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) Cleavage Theory, which posits that historical and social divisions significantly shape political systems (Kriesi, 1998). Namibia's political landscape reflects a similar historical cleavage, with SWAPO's liberation-era narrative sustaining its dominance.

Opposition parties' lack of coalition-building capacity limits their impact, echoing challenges identified in studies on multiparty systems in Africa (Wolff, 2017). The active but fragmented competition mirrors broader regional trends, where liberation movements maintain influence through entrenched networks and organisational strengths (Wolff, 2017). However, the emergence of dynamic players like IPC and AR signals a shift, reflecting Huntington's theory of political modernisation, which emphasises the rise of new political forces in transitioning democracies.

Younger voters have played a significant role in shaping electoral outcomes, particularly in regions where social justice movements, economic reforms, and activism are key concerns. Political parties in the country are increasingly tailoring their messages to address the aspirations of younger demographics, whose engagement through social media and grassroots activism has made a substantial impact, a case in point is the six seats obtained by Affirmative Repositioning, a seat obtained by National Democratic Party (NDP), as well as a seat for the Body of Christ National Party in the 2024 elections.

Political elitism shapes political competition by affecting decision-making processes and power dynamics (Baliamoune-lutz, 2020). According to many research studies, elitism highlights how political elites manipulate and direct democratic processes, which may result in the marginalisation of particular groups like ethnic minorities (Okwara & Momoh, 2018). According to elitist ideas like those advanced by (Matfess, 2018), elites have a major effect in creating and preserving political systems, which may result in a concentration of power and influence within a small number of people (Sole, 2021). Elites may dominate the narrative and results of election processes, affecting the consolidation of power and fulfilling social and economic duties (Sole, 2021). As a result, this concentration of power may have an impact on the efficacy and equity of political competition. Comprehending the consequences of political elitism is necessary to appreciate the intricacies of political rivalry and its influence on government and society (Atta-Asiedu, 2020).

From the early works of Paget (2024) highlighting the disjunction between political elites and democracy to the more recent observations by Polk et al., (2022) on the changing nature of contemporary elites and their functions, it is clear that elites play a crucial role in shaping political systems. While Sudarta's (2022) perspective emphasises the dominance of oligarchies and the self-referencing nature of political institutions, the concept of democratic elitism has grown to incorporate the increasing power and influence wielded by political elites and leaders in Western democracies. Additionally, the critical emancipatory paradigm discussed by Mpaata & Mpaata (2018) illuminates how elitism and power relations interact, demonstrating how marginalised communities create alternative archives in opposition to the narratives promoted by elite leaders (Mpaata & Mpaata, 2018).

As discussed in numerous research papers, the African political elites tend to abuse democratic systems for personal gain, exacerbating inequality and prolonging socioeconomic hardships for ordinary citizens (Simura, 2019). Their abuse of power, which frequently prioritises their interests over the welfare of the people, results in violations of human rights and democratic principles (Simura, 2019). Elitism and democracy are intertwined in the African political landscape, challenging governance and accountability (Chukwudi, 2017). Conflicts between the elite classes are reflected in election violence, which is exacerbated by racial and religious differences (Flores et al., 2022). Political elitism is also blamed for the inability of African states to attain complete independence, which impedes socio-economic growth and keeps them dependent on outside factors (Flores et al., 2022). These circumstances highlight the necessity of more robust accountability frameworks and the defence of democratic principles to guarantee that African governance serves the needs of all its residents (Ogele, 2020).

Easton's Political Systems Theory, Democratic Theory, Elite Theory, and Institutionalism Theory offer valuable lenses for analysing Namibia's political competition. These theories, supported by empirical findings, reveal a vibrant yet fragmented political competition dominated by the historical legacy and structural advantages of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). Despite a multiparty system with over 20 registered political parties, significant competitiveness is largely absent among opposition parties, aligning with established theoretical frameworks and empirical observations.

Easton's (1966) political systems theory views the political system as an open system that interacts with its environment (Nzau, 2019). Inputs such as demands and support from citizens influence the decision-making processes, while outputs like policies and

laws generate feedback. In Namibia, SWAPO's dominance illustrates how historical narratives and liberation-era legitimacy serve as critical inputs sustaining the party's control (Nzau, 2019). The structural advantages SWAPO enjoys, such as access to state resources and entrenched networks, are pivotal to maintaining its dominance, even amidst fragmented opposition.

Empirical findings corroborate these observations; for example, the alignment between SWAPO's policies and the liberation struggle narrative sustains its support base. Namibia's political system also demonstrates resilience, but feedback loops often reflect limited responsiveness to public demands due to entrenched elitism and a lack of coalition-building among opposition parties. These dynamics align with Lipset & Rokkan's (1967) Cleavage Theory, which emphasises historical and social divisions shaping political systems. Democratic Theory emphasises the principles of equality, participation, and accountability in governance. In Namibia, the democratic framework allows for multiparty participation, yet structural and systemic challenges hinder the effectiveness of this system. Despite the presence of numerous political parties, very few exhibit significant competitiveness. Opposition parties' inability to form coalitions limits their influence, reflecting Norris's (2012) findings on multiparty systems in Africa, where fragmented competition often benefits dominant parties.

Namibia's democratic institutions face challenges in ensuring equitable participation and accountability. While electoral processes are largely free and fair, systemic issues such as limited media access for smaller parties and the disproportionate influence of SWAPO undermine the principles of democracy. Empirical studies highlight these deficiencies, noting that liberation movements like SWAPO leverage their historical legitimacy and organisational strengths to maintain dominance. Huntington's (1991) theory of political modernisation provides further insights, as the emergence of new

political players like the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) and the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement signifies a shift towards greater political dynamism in transitioning democracies.

The Elite Theory examines the role of political elites in shaping governance and decision-making. In Namibia, political elitism significantly influences competition, decision-making processes, and power dynamics. Research by Nebati (2024) underscores how elites manipulate democratic processes, often marginalising certain groups, such as ethnic minorities. Denis's (2020) perspective highlights the concentration of power within a small elite, which influences political systems and perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities.

The dominance of elites in Namibia mirrors broader regional trends. Studies by Salim (2024) and Auerbach (2022) reveal how political elites consolidate power, affecting electoral outcomes and the distribution of resources. In Namibia, this concentration of power exacerbates challenges in governance and accountability. Elites often dominate political narratives and election processes, marginalising alternative voices and limiting the efficacy of opposition parties. This dynamic aligns with the observations of Flores et al., (2022) on the dominance of oligarchies and the self-referencing nature of political institutions.

Empirical findings further demonstrate the interplay between elitism and democracy in Africa. Visagie & Pretorius (2020) highlight how elites in African political systems often prioritise personal gain over public welfare, exacerbating inequality and undermining democratic principles. In Namibia, these patterns manifest in election violence and the marginalisation of opposition parties, reflecting the challenges of elitist governance in promoting accountability and inclusivity.

Institutionalism Theory focuses on the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping political behaviour and outcomes (Wolff, 2017). In Namibia, institutional structures such as the Electoral Commission and the judiciary play critical roles in maintaining the democratic framework. However, these institutions often face limitations in countering the entrenched influence of dominant parties like SWAPO.

Empirical studies reveal the strengths and weaknesses of Namibia's institutional framework. While the country's institutions ensure relatively stable governance, systemic biases and resource limitations constrain their capacity to promote equitable competition and accountability. For instance, opposition parties often lack access to state resources and media platforms, hindering their ability to compete effectively. These findings align with Okwara & Momoh's (2018) observations on the challenges of institutionalising multiparty competition in Africa.

The emergence of dynamic political players such as IPC and AR highlights the potential for institutional reforms to promote greater inclusivity and competitiveness (Sole, 2021). Sole (2021) further asserts that Huntington's theory of political modernisation emphasises the importance of adapting institutional frameworks to accommodate new political forces. In Namibia, such reforms could strengthen democratic institutions and enhance the representation of diverse political interests. The inability of opposition parties to form coalitions limits their competitiveness. This fragmentation mirrors patterns observed in other African democracies, where dominant parties leverage systemic advantages to maintain power (Atta-Asiedu, 2020). The rise of IPC and AR signals a shift towards greater political dynamism. These movements reflect Huntington's theory of political modernisation, as new political forces challenge the dominance of established parties in transitioning democracies (Atta-Asiedu, 2020).

The concentration of power among political elites shapes governance and decision-making processes (Paget, 2024). Research highlights how elitism perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities and undermines democratic principles, a pattern observed across African political systems (Paget, 2024). Namibia's institutional framework faces limitations in promoting equitable competition and accountability. Structural biases and resource constraints hinder the effectiveness of democratic institutions, reflecting broader regional challenges. Comparative studies provide additional insights. For instance, research on multiparty systems in Africa highlights the importance of coalition-building and institutional reforms in promoting competitive democracy (Sudarta Surd, 2022). Namibia's experience underscores the need for robust accountability frameworks and the protection of democratic principles to ensure governance serves all citizens.

Easton's (1966) Political Systems Theory, the Democratic Theory, the Elite Theory, and the Institutionalism Theory provide valuable frameworks for understanding Namibia's political competition. Empirical findings reveal a vibrant yet fragmented political landscape, dominated by SWAPO's historical legacy and structural advantages. While opposition parties struggle to achieve significant competitiveness, the emergence of new political players signals a shift towards greater dynamism. However, challenges such as elitism, institutional limitations, and systemic biases hinder the effectiveness of Namibia's democratic framework.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Strengthening democratic institutions, promoting coalition-building among opposition parties, and ensuring greater accountability and inclusivity are essential for enhancing political competition. By leveraging the insights of political theories and empirical findings,

Namibia can foster a more equitable and dynamic political system that reflects the principles of democracy and serves the needs of all its citizens.

The research results demonstrated that Namibia operates with a political system that combines elements of pluralism and authoritarianism. Additionally, the MPLA maintains complete control over Angola through its long rule, which prevents the development of pluralistic politics, and opposition parties face continuous suppression. The ANC maintains control over South Africa, which brings stability but creates worries about declining accountability and weakening opposition forces. Similarly, the political system of Namibia combines Angolan-style neo-patrimonial practices that support ruling elite power with South African-style deterioration of public trust in the dominant liberation movement. The country maintains peaceful elections and independent electoral oversight while developing multiple opposition parties, which sets it apart from its regional peers. The research positions Namibia between Angola and South Africa to explain regional dominant-party trends while highlighting its distinct democratic development path.

5.3 Opportunities and Challenges of Political Competition

Opportunities identified include enhanced accountability and citizen engagement driven by emerging opposition parties. The multiparty system fosters dialogue and responsiveness, consistent with Dahl's (1957) Polyarchy Model, which emphasises inclusivity and public contestation as pillars of democracy. Economic empowerment programs and increased youth engagement provide avenues for growth, showcasing the potential for broader political inclusivity.

Challenges, however, remain substantial. Gender imbalances, lack of political education, and tribalism hinder meaningful engagement. These findings align with

Simura's (2019) work on democratic consolidation in Africa, which highlights systemic issues such as weak institutions and regional biases. Furthermore, fragmented opposition parties dilute the effectiveness of political competition, limiting their ability to challenge SWAPO substantively.

It is necessary to start by clarifying the peculiarities of political competition (Chukwudi, 2017). On the one hand, it is broader than the electoral process; on the other hand, it is difficult to imagine free and fair elections without competition (Ogele, 2020). The concept of political competition encompasses pluralism and opposition (Nzau, 2019), being similar to the former, broader than the electoral process, and existing in various forms and on different levels while being an important factor in connection to the electoral process (Dibia, 2024). The researchers (Dibia, 2024; Okwara & Momoh, 2018; Sole, 2021; Visagie & Pretorius, 2020; Wolff, 2017) associate political competition with different factors chosen for analysis, such as elections, decentralisation, parties and factions, social movements, among others (Omodia, 2019). Consequently, the positive correlation between political competition and certain positive consequences, or its negative correlation with certain negative phenomena of politics, is exposed (Omodia, 2019).

Democracy and the welfare state provide a suitable political, social, and economic environment for the promotion of human welfare (Denis, 2020). So, the positive impact of political competition on social and economic policy is acknowledged. Every time, it is accentuated that the impact of political competition is ambivalent; political stability may be stipulated by the high level of political competition on the federal level and in states as soon as no party has a majority (Sogunro, 2022).

The second opportunity of political competition, then, is that it increases accountability. If candidates are genuinely able to compete for power (Okeke, 2019), the members of the winning team cannot know in advance who they are going to be, and for the losers, there is a reasonable chance of enjoying the spoils at some time in the future (Okeke, 2019).

Presidential candidates may lose a battle in one term but prosper in another, and it is reasonably unlikely that they will be severely punished by the incumbents, even if they have been disloyal, once a new leader has taken over in the executive office (Govenden, 2022). Politicians should, therefore, want to desist from destroying one another to facilitate the benefits of maintaining their long-term business associations (Olabode, 2019). They should do so by acting as honest agents, visiting the interests of their electors, and lending their expertise to the knowledge of their peers (Govenden, 2022).

The promotion of accountability is a simple concept. Elections are designed to control politicians in carrying out their promises (Jansen et al., 2020). In democratic countries, politicians are expected to submit to control by electors, and repeated elections supposedly provide tools, using which the general public can make sure that politicians fulfil their promises (Sweatman et al., 2019). During elections, candidates voice their opinions to guide voters. Voters then use this information to select agents that will represent them. The chosen representative must then adhere to their previous commitments (Sweatman et al., 2019).

Often-cited sources of political competition and party competition, ranging from elitism or comparative political economy, as stated by Roelofs (2021), do not provide so much-needed micro-level diagnosis of how competition shapes a party's policy

choices. Particularly, because both competition and policy choices are moving parts, the existing literature does not tell us effectively how changes in competition should lead us to expect changes in parties' policy choices (Roelofs, 2021). Collaboration with formal modelers in economics and political science is necessary here (Ihejirika, 2021). The raft of models that clarify the ways that increased competition should reshape policy platforms and related electoral behaviour as the uncertainty component associated with a change in this environmental variable is reduced is needed. The interpretation of market-based signalling of party policy positions through campaign contributions and voting is that the party's current policy platforms embed lots of ingenuity rents if they are accurate (Ihejirika, 2021).

Easton's Political Systems Theory emphasises the dynamic processes through which political systems respond to demands and support from the environment. The findings on Namibia's political competition illustrate how SWAPO's dominance and the fragmented opposition affect the system's feedback mechanisms. Despite vibrant citizen engagement driven by emerging parties, the systemic input-output balance remains skewed due to structural inefficiencies and entrenched networks. The lack of coalition-building among opposition parties undermines their ability to present unified demands, thereby weakening the system's responsiveness and adaptation capabilities.

Democratic Theory, particularly Dahl's (1971) model, underscores inclusivity and contestation as essential elements of democracy. Namibia's multiparty system embodies these principles, as evidenced by enhanced youth and citizen participation. However, systemic challenges such as gender imbalances and tribalism hinder full democratic consolidation. Mathebula's (2021) findings on weak institutions resonate here, highlighting the importance of strengthening democratic structures to ensure equitable participation and accountability. The alignment with empirical findings

showcases how democratic principles are both upheld and challenged within Namibia's political framework.

Elite Theory sheds light on the concentration of power among political elites and its implications for competition. Namibia's political landscape, dominated by SWAPO's historical legacy and entrenched networks, reflects the monopolization of power described by elite theorists such as Ihejirika (2021). Elites' ability to manipulate democratic processes and marginalize certain groups, including ethnic minorities, underscores the persistent inequalities in the system. Empirical findings further reveal how elites' dominance affects policy outcomes and perpetuates socio-economic disparities, emphasising the need for more inclusive and accountable governance mechanisms.

Institutionalism Theory highlights the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping political behaviour and outcomes. The systemic weaknesses in Namibia, such as fragmented opposition and tribalism, align with Adolph's (2016) work on institutional challenges in Africa. The inability of opposition parties to build cohesive coalitions reflects a lack of institutional robustness, which undermines effective competition. Conversely, SWAPO's entrenched networks demonstrate the enduring influence of institutional legacies in maintaining political dominance. Empirical findings support the theory's emphasis on the interplay between institutional structures and political dynamics, illustrating the critical need for institutional reforms to foster competitive and equitable politics.

5.4 Impact of Emerging Trends on Governance and Democratic Institutions

Emerging political competition has strengthened democratic accountability. The rise of opposition parties like IPC has disrupted entrenched practices, leading to better

governance and public scrutiny. This supports Democratic Theory, which argues that competition enhances institutional responsiveness. Participants' acknowledgement of improved municipal accountability aligns with Schumpeter's idea of democracy as a competitive leadership selection. However, SWAPO's dominance still imposes challenges, such as elite control and overlaps between party and government roles. These issues resonate with Dibia's (2024) framework on political and economic institutions, where entrenched elites hinder inclusive governance. Despite progress, public skepticism persists due to unfulfilled promises and corruption, underlining the need for systemic reforms to build institutional trust and capacity.

Over the last few decades, many countries have undergone processes of political change which had as their main attribute the progressive creation of more democratic societies and systems (Mathebula, 2021). In many cases, following severe social and political repressions, the transition towards more democratic societies was accomplished through processes of national reconciliation, which carried with it the commitment that something similar would never happen again (Stephen et al., 2020). Ihejirika (2021) states that these represent the success stories where all the players involved in national politics committed themselves to nonviolent and democratic politics, based mainly on the resolution of disputes by a majority-adherent consensus mechanism, namely by free, fair, and periodic elections carried out according to the protocols commonly practised in such conditions. The fact that the opposition could replace the government without the prior necessity of a violent confrontation thus guaranteed a pluralism essential to the existence of a democratic state and valley (Roelofs, 2021).

Political competition and elitism significantly impact governance and democratic institutions (Sweatman et al., 2019). High levels of political competition can create

conditions supportive of de facto judicial independence (DFJI) in democracies, with electoral institutions influencing the incentives for supporting DFJI (Okeke, 2019). In postcolonial Africa, weak commitment to the common good and public interest due to amoral politics leads to the privatization of public resources and undermines political and public institutions, contributing to governance crises (Alfano et al., 2019). Additionally, the prospect of rural elite capture of local governments in democratic countries can affect the effectiveness of pro-poor programs, highlighting the importance of political competition in local governance and accountability (Sogunro, 2022). Understanding the dynamics of political competition and elitism is crucial for the consolidation and sustainability of democracy and the functioning of independent judiciaries worldwide (Omodia, 2019).

Political competition is a crucial aspect of democracies, influencing policy choices and citizen engagement (Denis, 2020). It involves parties vying for support, legitimising power, and engaging citizens in active political activities (Visagie & Pretorius, 2020). Party competition is essential for issue innovations and democratic functionality, requiring both responsiveness and innovation for effective competition (Visagie & Pretorius, 2020). Studies on electoral competition in Canada show that the intensity of political competition fluctuates over time, with economic indicators playing a role in electoral success and the timing of elections (Okwara & Momoh, 2018). Understanding political competition is vital for comprehending policy choices, democratic functioning, and the dynamics of power within political systems.

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improved municipal accountability aligns with Schumpeter's idea of democracy as a competitive leadership selection.

However, SWAPO's dominance still imposes challenges, such as elite control and overlaps between party and government roles. These issues resonate with Sole's (2021) framework on political and economic institutions, where entrenched elites hinder inclusive governance. Despite progress, public skepticism persists due to unfulfilled promises and corruption, underlining the need for systemic reforms to build institutional trust and capacity.

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Easton's Political Systems Theory provides a lens to understand the functioning of Namibia's political dynamics. The theory highlights the input-output model, where

demands and support from citizens are transformed into decisions and policies. The emergence of opposition parties like IPC reflects increased citizen demands for transparency and accountability. The feedback loop in Easton's model is evident as public dissatisfaction with entrenched elite dominance (e.g., SWAPO's control) pushes for systemic changes. However, the theory also reveals challenges, such as the inability of fragmented opposition to effectively channel these demands into meaningful outputs, thereby limiting the responsiveness of the political system.

Democratic Theory emphasises the role of competition, inclusivity, and public participation in fostering robust democratic institutions. Findings from Namibia, such as improved municipal accountability and the rise of opposition parties, align with Dahl's (1971) Model, which underscores the importance of contestation and inclusivity. However, challenges such as gender imbalances, tribalism, and weak political education hinder broader democratic consolidation. Empirical studies, such as Brown's (2020) research on democratic consolidation in Africa, corroborate these findings, highlighting systemic issues that prevent the full realization of democratic ideals.

Elite Theory offers insights into the dominance of SWAPO and the broader implications of elite control in Namibia's political landscape. The theory posits that a small group of elites holds disproportionate power, shaping policies and governance. Empirical findings reveal how elite dominance overlaps party and government roles, echoing Ciampini's (2022) argument on how entrenched elites hinder inclusive governance. Research by Krawiec & Krawiec (2019) on the role of elites in shaping political systems underscores the challenges of power concentration, highlighting the need for mechanisms to promote broader participation and reduce elite manipulation.

Institutionalism Theory emphasises the role of institutions in shaping political behaviour and governance. Namibia's fragmented opposition and entrenched party dominance can be analysed through this lens. The theory highlights how institutional structures, norms, and practices influence political competition and decision-making. Findings on systemic challenges, such as weak institutions and regional biases, align with Flores et al. (2022) observations on the role of institutional weaknesses in undermining democratic consolidation. Empirical studies, such as those by Auerbach (2022), further illustrate how institutional weaknesses in postcolonial contexts perpetuate governance crises and hinder effective political competition.

The empirical findings demonstrate a vibrant yet fragmented political landscape in Namibia. The rise of opposition parties like IPC and AR reflects Huntington's theory of political modernization, which emphasises the emergence of new political forces in transitioning democracies. However, SWAPO's dominance and the challenges of fragmented opposition align with Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) Theory, which posits that historical and social divisions significantly shape political systems.

Political elitism, as evidenced by overlaps between party and government roles, aligns with Cerovac's (2014) perspectives on elite manipulation of democratic processes. These findings underscore the need for systemic reforms to promote inclusivity and reduce elite dominance. Additionally, the challenges of weak institutions and regional biases resonate with Institutionalism Theory, highlighting the importance of strengthening institutional frameworks to foster effective political competition and governance.

The interplay between Namibia's political competition and governance is deeply rooted in theoretical frameworks such as Easton's Political Systems Theory,

Democratic Theory, Elite Theory, and Institutionalism Theory. Empirical findings reveal both opportunities and challenges, emphasizing the need for systemic reforms to strengthen democratic institutions, reduce elite dominance, and promote broader political participation. Understanding these dynamics through the lens of these theories provides valuable insights into the complexities of Namibia's political landscape and the broader implications for democratic consolidation in post-colonial contexts.

The research results showed that citizens continue to express their discontent about the way elites control power and the practice of clientelism, and the unresponsiveness of political institutions. The political system's feedback loops, according to Easton's Political Systems Theory, show how citizens' demands for fair resource sharing and party internal democracy, and leader accountability receive insufficient responses from ruling elites. The policy outputs that citizens view as serving elite interests create system-wide discontent, which manifests through voter disengagement and rising support for new parties, including LPM, IPC, and AR. The feedback loop shows how elite non-responsiveness damages democratic consolidation by eroding system legitimacy. Therefore, the study demonstrated how Namibia's political system shows uneven responses to social demands, which mainly perpetuate elite control instead of reducing it.

5.5 Strategies for Enhancing Political Competition and Democratic Processes

Potential strategies include structural reforms, such as decentralising government services, enhancing political education, and fostering ideological clarity among parties. These align with Institutionalism Theory, which advocates for robust institutional frameworks to support democratic practices. Participants emphasised the need for greater transparency and the adoption of hybrid electoral systems to improve representation.

Strengthening opposition parties is crucial, as fragmented competition undermines their credibility. Comparative studies on African democracies. Ma (2021) suggests that reducing the number of parties and fostering coalitions could enhance competitiveness. Additionally, leveraging Namibia's history of peaceful elections and upholding democratic norms provides a strong foundation for deepening democratic engagement.

In the age of widespread social media, political rivalry, party tactics, and communication are becoming more problematic. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of awareness regarding these difficulties (Denis, 2020). Across disciplines, there is discussion over the value of communication and its impacts. The problem of defining politically important problems and their impact on voters' decisions was explained by Damele and Campos (2022). Both the supply and demand sides of politics are interesting because of (1) voters' potentially selfish and irrational thinking (Mariotti, 2022), and (2) decision-makers who are either strongly motivated to win re-election or who are very different from the presumptions of rational homo economics (Lse et al., 2020). Political strategists can use well-known biases to sway or even control people's decisions. Mariotti (2020) showed that communication among participants (i.e., voters) strengthens group identities and pre-existing opinions in laboratory tests. The growing use of social media by voters and politicians needs a deeper comprehension of this communication channel to comprehend election procedures (Easton, 1957).

The old idea of a good government that maximizes utility is no longer relevant. Damele and Campos (2022) noted that behavioural factors are becoming more and more significant in political economics. The majority of the literature, however, focuses only on voter behaviour and choice. Politicians and parties are either disregarded or viewed as naturally occurring (Hanumanthappa, 2023). The assessment of party communication should not be overlooked because of the increasing significance of

social media and discussions over the impact of filter bubbles. Party-specific issues are analysed using hand-coded party programs in the few studies that involve parties. But there are two reasons why party programs are not the best (Kasianiuk, 2015). First, these shows don't reflect shifts in the thematic focus because they are released before elections. Second, party policies have a limited reach since only a tiny percentage of voters read them (Brown, 2020).

Direct communication is more crucial for party rivalry as a result of parties' and voters' growing social media presence. The outcomes demonstrate how accurately party-relevant concerns may be calculated (Ciampini, 2022). The frequency of subjects throughout time and how positive or negative is also given. These findings make it feasible to operationalize topic prevalence for evaluating the impact of party strategy on voter participation and the subjects' pertinence to voters (Krawiec & Krawiec, 2019). Vote-maximizing parties are said to align themselves as closely as possible with just a few deviations to the right or left on the ideological left-right continuum, mimicking the tactics of profit-maximizing businesses (Flores et al., 2022). Even in multiparty systems, this leads to an equilibrium if voters' preferences are assumed to be single-peaked. This method was challenged by Auerbach (2022) because it makes rigid assumptions that are incompatible with actual election situations.

In a multifaceted environment, it is unacceptable to assume dominant positions. If voter selections are unclear or candidates are difficult to identify, Vasilopoulou and Zur (2024) rejected the equilibrium at the median. Modelling equilibria for multidimensional problems and various voter preference types has advanced in several ways (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024). It is often acknowledged that cognitive biases and constraints cause unreasonable or inefficient market behaviour. Nonetheless, the conclusion has frequently called for a paternalistic official intervention to fix market

results, at least historically. According to Pildes (2020), there is doubt about the premise of a benign maximiser of social welfare. The supply and demand system is a complicated web of principal-agent interactions, self-interest, cognitive constraints, and irrational conduct in politics. Oesch and Rennwald (2019) concluded that voters believe they know the truth but are unaware of their cognitive limits. Additionally, rather than bringing people together, political communication usually causes polarisation (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024).

Preconceived notions appear to significantly impact how incoming information is processed, according to empirical data primarily derived from lab tests. According to information-processing theory, preconceptions are based on experiences, beliefs, and values (Segovia-Martin & Rivero, 2024). Racial, religious, and educational backgrounds influence these. Preconceived notions about complicated subjects result in skewed perceptions of actual data, as demonstrated by early tests (Pildes, 2020). Oesch and Rennwald (2019) examined how the public's assessment of the death sentence was impacted by both positive and negative evidence.

The strategies for enhancing political competition and democratic processes, as outlined, can be further contextualised within the theoretical lenses of Easton's Political Systems Theory, Democratic Theory, Elite Theory, and Institutionalism. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the mechanisms and implications of political competition and governance, supported by empirical findings. Easton's Political Systems Theory offers a systemic perspective, positing that political systems are dynamic entities that respond to inputs (demands and supports) and produce outputs (policies and decisions). Within this framework, strategies such as decentralisation, fostering transparency, and adopting hybrid

electoral systems can be viewed as mechanisms to enhance the political system's responsiveness and feedback loop.

Empirical evidence highlights how increased citizen engagement through social media platforms has amplified the volume and diversity of inputs into political systems. Studies by Brown (2020) demonstrate that digital communication has become a key channel for voters to express demands, aligning with Easton's notion of input flows. However, challenges arise in effectively filtering and managing these demands, which underscores the importance of institutional reforms to process inputs into meaningful outputs. The emphasis on strengthening opposition parties also aligns with Easton's framework, as it ensures a more competitive input environment. A fragmented opposition, as seen in Namibia's political landscape, weakens the system's ability to address diverse demands comprehensively. Comparative studies from Ciampini (2022) suggest that coalition-building among opposition parties in Africa enhances their collective influence, thus enriching the systemic input-output dynamic and fostering a more robust policy response.

Democratic Theory emphasises participation, competition, and inclusivity as core principles of democratic governance. The strategies outlined in this discussion resonate strongly with Schumpeter's competitive model of democracy, where effective political competition ensures accountability and responsiveness. The adoption of hybrid electoral systems aimed at improving representation reflects the principles of inclusivity central to Democratic Theory. Empirical findings by Krawiec and Krawiec (2019) show that proportional representation systems increase voter satisfaction and trust in democratic processes by ensuring that minority voices are heard. Namibia's peaceful elections and adherence to democratic norms provide a foundation to build upon, as highlighted in Flores et al., (2022) study of democratic transitions.

Furthermore, political education initiatives address the challenge of voter irrationality, as identified by Auerbach (2022). Democratic Theory underscores the importance of an informed electorate for meaningful participation. Empirical evidence from Cerovac (2014) suggests that well-informed voters are less susceptible to manipulation and more likely to hold political leaders accountable.

Elite Theory focuses on the concentration of power among a small group of elites and its implications for governance and democracy. The findings on SWAPO's dominance and the overlap between party and government roles are indicative of elite entrenchment, a recurring theme in Elite Theory. Strategies aimed at fostering ideological clarity and reducing the number of parties to promote coalition-building can help mitigate the influence of entrenched elites. Ma's framework on inclusive institutions highlights the importance of breaking elite monopolies to enable broader participation.

Empirical evidence from Baliaoune-lutz (2020) on rural elite capture in local governments illustrates how entrenched elites can undermine pro-poor programs, emphasizing the need for institutional checks and balances. The rise of social media as a platform for political communication challenges traditional elite dominance by democratizing access to information. However, as Denis (2020) points out, political communication often exacerbates polarisation rather than fostering consensus. This underscores the need for strategies that empower citizens and promote dialogue and collaboration among competing political actors.

Institutionalism Theory emphasises the role of institutions in shaping political behaviour and outcomes. The strategies outlined, such as enhancing transparency and strengthening institutional frameworks, align with this theoretical perspective.

Decentralisation of government services, for instance, reflects the principles of New Institutionalism, which advocates for the creation of local governance structures to improve service delivery and accountability. Empirical findings by Salim (2024) on the impact of decentralisation in postcolonial Africa underscore its potential to enhance governance by bringing decision-making closer to the people. The recommendation to adopt hybrid electoral systems also aligns with Institutionalism Theory, as it involves institutional design to address the limitations of existing systems. Studies by Nebati (2024) show that mixed electoral systems combine the benefits of proportional representation and majoritarian systems, leading to improved representation and voter satisfaction.

Additionally, fostering political education and awareness addresses the cognitive biases and preconceived notions identified by Wiechers (2022). Institutional reforms that promote civic education can help voters make more informed decisions, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of democratic processes. The use of social media to amplify citizen demands highlights the need for institutional mechanisms to process these inputs effectively, as seen in (Vaughan, 2023). The emphasis on political education and hybrid electoral systems aligns with empirical evidence from (Ashfaq & Roofi, 2023), which demonstrates the benefits of informed participation and improved representation. Balamounie-lutz's (2020) insights into the role of inclusive institutions provide a framework for addressing elite entrenchment, supported by Polk et al., (2022) findings on rural elite capture. The role of decentralisation in enhancing governance, as highlighted by Ashfaq & Roofi (2023), underscores the importance of robust institutional frameworks for effective service delivery.

The strategies for enhancing political competition and democratic processes are deeply intertwined with theoretical frameworks that provide valuable insights into their

potential impact. Easton's Political Systems Theory underscores the importance of systemic responsiveness, while Democratic Theory highlights the role of competition and inclusivity. Elite Theory draws attention to the challenges posed by entrenched power structures, and Institutionalism Theory emphasises the significance of institutional design in shaping political behaviour. Empirical findings reinforce these theoretical perspectives, offering evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of proposed strategies. By grounding these strategies in robust theoretical and empirical foundations, policymakers and stakeholders can better navigate the complexities of political competition and governance in Namibia and beyond.

5.6 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, Chapter Five has provided an in-depth analysis of the findings, linking them to the theoretical frameworks and existing literature on political competition and democratic governance. The chapter has highlighted the complexities of Namibia's political landscape, shaped by the legacy of liberation movements, the dominance of SWAPO, and persistent socio-economic challenges.

The discussion underscored the opportunities inherent in Namibia's democratic framework, such as its multi-party system and regular elections, while also emphasising the barriers to fostering genuine competition, including ethnic divisions, structural inequalities, and the concentration of power within political elites. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrated how Namibia's experiences both align with and challenge established theories, calling for adaptations that reflect the realities of post-colonial and emerging democracies.

These insights form the foundation for the recommendations presented in Chapter Six, which propose actionable strategies to address the challenges identified in this study.

By implementing these reforms, Namibia can strengthen its democratic institutions, promote political pluralism, and enhance the inclusivity and accountability of its political processes. The findings and discussions in this chapter thus contribute to the broader discourse on democratisation and governance in the global South, offering lessons that extend beyond Namibia's borders.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study on the emerging trends and patterns of political competition in Namibia's democratic framework. It reflects on the findings presented in the preceding chapters, emphasising their significance in understanding the dynamics of Namibia's political landscape from 1990 to 2024. Political competition is central to democratic governance, influencing party dynamics, voter behaviour, and the functioning of democratic institutions. However, as the study reveals, Namibia's post-independence political environment is shaped by the dominance of liberation movements, the concentration of political power among elites, and socioeconomic inequalities, all of which pose significant challenges to fostering a truly inclusive and competitive democratic system. Essential insights into the prospects and difficulties facing Namibia's democracy can be gained by examining the dynamics of political party systems and the phenomenon of political elitism.

The study shows that although Namibia has made significant progress toward democratisation, it still faces challenges such as campaign finance, political elitism, and the need for more muscular accountability systems. The results emphasise the importance of developing a thriving multi-party system that promotes diversity and inclusive representation in all spheres of society to achieve genuine democratic ideals.

It will be crucial for Namibia to embrace change and be flexible as it continues on its democratic path. Policymakers, political parties, and civil society organisations can use the study's recommendations as a guide to create a more responsive and competitive political climate. They stress the significance of improving electoral integrity, encouraging civic engagement, and ensuring political processes are open and answerable to the Namibian people.

The ability of Namibia to empower its people, foster political inclusivity, and successfully reduce elitism within its political systems will ultimately determine the country's democratic destiny. Namibia can strengthen its democratic accomplishments and establish itself as a model of democratic resilience in Southern Africa by prioritising these factors.

The road ahead may be difficult, but the dedication to promoting a deeper understanding of political competition in Namibia will be a crucial step in guaranteeing that democracy endures for generations to come. As we look to the future, all stakeholders must continue to be watchful and proactive in addressing the issues that threaten to undermine the democratic ethos.

This chapter is organized into three key sections. First, it provides a summary of the main findings, aligned with the study's objectives, to highlight the emerging trends, opportunities, challenges, and impacts of political competition in Namibia. Second, the practical and theoretical implications of the findings are discussed, providing insights into how these results contribute to the broader understanding of political competition and governance in emerging democracies. Finally, the chapter presents actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing political competition, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting good governance in Namibia.

Through this synthesis, the chapter aims to bridge the gap between theoretical insights and practical applications, offering strategies to address the challenges identified in the study while ensuring the sustainability of Namibia's democratic processes. It also sets the foundation for further research and policy reforms to advance political inclusivity, accountability, and the equitable participation of all stakeholders in Namibia's political future.

6.2 Summary of the Main Findings

6.2.1 Summary of Research Questions

The study highlighted that Namibia's political landscape since independence in 1990 has been characterised by the sustained dominance of the SWAPO party, which evolved from a liberation movement into a ruling party with widespread support. This dominance has resulted in a de facto one-party system despite Namibia being a multi-party democracy. Emerging trends include increased voter dissatisfaction, especially among urban and youth populations, driven by economic challenges, high unemployment rates, and perceived government corruption. This dissatisfaction has given rise to new political movements, independent candidates, and a shift toward more competitive local and regional elections. However, ethnic affiliations continue to influence voter behaviour, leading to fragmented opposition efforts and weakening their ability to challenge SWAPO's dominance effectively.

Namibia's multi-party democratic framework and regular elections provide significant opportunities for fostering political participation and ensuring representation. However, the study found that various challenges undermine these opportunities. The dominance of SWAPO has created structural barriers that limit the growth of opposition parties. These include the party's superior access to resources, strong organisational structure, and historical legitimacy tied to the liberation struggle. Furthermore, the electoral system, which combines proportional representation with constituency-based elections, tends to favour larger parties, further entrenching SWAPO's position. Ethnic divisions and regional disparities also exacerbate these challenges, leading to uneven political representation and reduced competitiveness in the political arena.

Political competition in Namibia has had mixed effects on governance and the functioning of democratic institutions. On the one hand, SWAPO's dominance has contributed to political stability and continuity in governance, which has been critical for the country's nation-building efforts. On the other hand, this prolonged dominance has raised concerns about accountability and transparency. The concentration of power within a small elite, often tied to the ruling party, has limited the effectiveness of checks and balances within democratic institutions. Electoral processes have faced criticisms related to fairness, such as delayed results and allegations of voter intimidation. While Namibia's judiciary and the Electoral Commission have maintained relative independence, their perceived inability to address these issues comprehensively has affected public trust in democratic institutions.

The study underscores the importance of addressing systemic and structural issues to enhance political competition and democracy in Namibia. Key strategies include fostering internal democracy within political parties to ensure broader participation and representation in decision-making processes. Electoral reforms are necessary to level the playing field for opposition parties, such as reviewing the proportional representation system to ensure a fairer distribution of seats. Additionally, targeted interventions to address socioeconomic inequalities, particularly in marginalised communities, can reduce the reliance on ethnic-based politics and promote issue-based political competition. Strengthening civic education and encouraging active citizen engagement in political processes is also critical to fostering a more inclusive and vibrant democratic culture.

6.3 Implications

6.3.1 Practical Implications

The findings highlight the need for Namibia's policymakers to prioritize reforms aimed at reducing the dominance of a single party and fostering a competitive political environment. This includes empowering democratic institutions such as the judiciary and the ECN to operate independently and transparently. Electoral processes should be reviewed to ensure greater fairness and inclusivity, such as adopting more stringent measures to prevent voter intimidation, enhancing access for marginalised groups, and reducing delays in the announcement of results. These reforms would not only strengthen public confidence in democratic institutions but also enhance their legitimacy and effectiveness.

The study underscores the importance of promoting political pluralism in Namibia's multi-party democracy. Practical measures include offering capacity-building programs for opposition parties to improve their organisational structures, resource mobilization, and the ability to articulate clear policy alternatives. Encouraging the formation of coalitions among smaller opposition parties can help present a more unified challenge to dominant parties. Additionally, incentives such as public funding for political campaigns and equitable access to media platforms should be established to create a more level playing field for all political actors.

Socio-economic inequalities, particularly unemployment and unequal access to resources, are key drivers of voter dissatisfaction and influence political competition. The government and other stakeholders must implement policies that address these disparities, such as investing in education, job creation, and rural development. By tackling the root causes of inequality, the political landscape can shift from ethnic- and

region-based competition to issue-based competition, fostering a healthier democratic culture.

The study emphasises the critical role of civic education in enhancing political participation and fostering an informed electorate. Practical steps include integrating civic education into school curricula and launching nationwide public awareness campaigns to educate citizens on their political rights and responsibilities. This would empower voters to hold political actors accountable and participate actively in democratic processes. Strengthening civic education programs can also mitigate the influence of patronage politics and encourage voters to prioritise policy over party loyalty.

The dominance of political elitism within Namibia's party system highlights the need for internal reforms. Political parties, particularly SWAPO, should adopt mechanisms that promote inclusivity, transparency, and broader representation in their decision-making processes. Introducing term limits for party leadership positions, promoting merit-based leadership selection, and encouraging youth and women's participation within parties can diversify political leadership and reduce the concentration of power.

Namibia can benefit from studying and adopting best practices from other democracies within and beyond the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Collaborations on regional electoral monitoring, capacity building, and the sharing of governance strategies can help Namibia address political elitism and resource inequality challenges. Partnerships with international organisations can also provide technical and financial support for implementing electoral reforms and capacity-building initiatives.

6.3.2 Theoretical Implications

The study builds upon Easton's Political Systems Theory, which emphasises the feedback loop between a political system and its environment. Namibia's political system demonstrates how dominant parties like SWAPO adapt to external challenges, such as voter dissatisfaction, by reinforcing patronage networks and leveraging historical legitimacy. However, this feedback has also produced outcomes such as rising opposition movements and youth discontent that challenge the stability of the system. These findings highlight the dynamic interplay between systemic inputs (e.g., voter demands) and outputs (e.g., policy and governance), contributing to a nuanced understanding of how systems evolve in emerging democracies. The findings of this study reaffirm Easton's assertion that political systems rely on a steady inflow of support and legitimacy. However, the Namibian case also illustrates the limits of Easton's framework, as it does not fully capture informal elite dominance and patronage networks that shape political outcomes. Here, Pareto's insights on elitism complement the analysis, though they too understate the resilience of citizen agency. Taken together, the adaptation of both theories provides a more balanced lens for understanding Namibia's evolving political competition.

This study reinforces and critiques aspects of Liberal Democracy Theory, particularly the tension between democratic ideals and the realities of governance. While Namibia's formal institutions, such as the Electoral Commission, align with the principles of liberal democracy, the entrenched dominance of SWAPO limits genuine competition. The findings align with Dahl's Pluralist Theory of Democracy, which posits that multiple centres of power are critical to democracy. However, in Namibia, power remains concentrated in a political elite, suggesting that the pluralist model may

need to account for post-colonial and socio-economic dynamics when applied to emerging democracies.

The study validates the relevance of Classical Elite Theory by Pareto (1916), which argues that political power is concentrated in the hands of a small, well-connected elite. This elite emerged from the liberation struggle in Namibia, transitioning from resistance leaders to political rulers. The study also aligns with Wright (1956)'s Power Elite Theory, showing how Namibia's political elites control key decision-making processes and resources, thereby limiting inclusivity and diversity in governance. However, the findings extend the theory by incorporating post-colonial perspectives, emphasizing how historical legacies of colonial rule and liberation movements shape the formation and persistence of elites in Namibia.

The findings contribute to Institutional Theory, which examines how institutional frameworks shape behaviour and outcomes. Namibia's proportional representation system, intended to ensure inclusivity, instead reinforces SWAPO's dominance due to its historical advantages and resource access. This aligns with theories by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) on how institutions conform to dominant norms to maintain legitimacy. The findings suggest that institutional reforms, such as revising electoral systems to ensure fairer representation, are necessary to counteract the unintended consequences of entrenched systems.

The study deepens understanding of Democratic Elitism, as outlined by Schumpeter (1949) and later Dahl (1971). Namibia's democracy functions within the bounds of elite control, where political elites shape electoral and governance processes. However, the study also reveals growing dissatisfaction with elite-dominated systems, particularly among marginalised groups and younger voters, suggesting that the

balance between elite governance and popular participation is shifting. This contributes to the evolving discourse on the compatibility of elitism with democratic principles in post-colonial states.

The study expands on theories of political competition in post-colonial contexts by illustrating how historical legacies and socio-economic factors influence party systems. For example, the persistence of ethnic-based voting behaviour and the dominance of liberation movements align with the post-structuralist critique of elitism, which highlights the role of historical narratives and power dynamics in shaping political outcomes. These findings challenge pluralist assumptions of fair competition and suggest that democratisation theories must account for the unique trajectories of post-colonial states.

Namibia's political landscape demonstrates a fusion of Marxist Theory and Mills' (1959) Power Elite Theory, where the political elite also holds economic power, leveraging state resources to maintain dominance. This dual role highlights how elites in Namibia perpetuate inequalities while limiting access to political power for marginalised groups. The findings suggest that addressing structural inequalities is essential for breaking the cycle of elite dominance, which resonates with Marxist critiques of capitalist systems and their impact on governance.

The study contributes to the Democratic Peace Theory, which emphasises the role of political competition in fostering stability and avoiding conflict. While Namibia has maintained relative peace and stability, the dominance of one party and limited competition raise concerns about long-term sustainability. The findings suggest that strengthening political pluralism and inclusivity can enhance stability, aligning with the theory's focus on robust democratic practices as a foundation for peace.

6.4 Recommendations

Political parties, particularly SWAPO, should implement internal reforms to enhance transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. This includes introducing democratic mechanisms for leadership selection, such as internal elections, and limiting the tenure of party leaders to prevent excessive power consolidation. Encouraging the active participation of women, youth, and marginalised groups within party structures will foster diversity and innovation in party policies and practices.

The electoral system in Namibia should be re-evaluated to ensure a more level playing field for opposition parties. The major recommendations of the study are: to review the proportional representation system to prevent excessive dominance by one party. However, proportional representation systems do not guarantee the prevention of excessive dominance by one party. If one party consistently receives a large majority of votes (as is the case with South Africa's ANC from 1994 to 2019), it can still dominate. Introduce public funding mechanisms to support opposition parties in their campaigns and operational activities, and lastly, ensure equitable access to media platforms for all political parties during election campaigns to enhance visibility and outreach. However, introducing public funding mechanisms to support opposition parties in their campaigns and operational activities does not guarantee the prevention of dominant party systems. For instance, political parties are all funded through public funding mechanisms in Zimbabwe, South Africa, among other African countries, but the dominant party system still exists in those countries. In addition, dominant parties often benefit from other advantages beyond money, such as control over media, patronage networks, or state institutions, among others.

The additional recommendations below should also be read and considered by policymakers for rapid implementation or inclusion in future policy-making discussions and decisions.

6.4.1 Strengthen Democratic Institutions

Institutions such as the ECN and the Judiciary should be empowered to operate independently and impartially. This requires allocating adequate resources, ensuring the transparency of their operations, and protecting them from political interference. To safeguard the independence of institutions such as the ECN (according to Article 94 of The Constitution) and the Judiciary (Article 78 and 79 of The Constitution), it is essential to uphold the principles enshrined in the Namibian Constitution. Individuals who attempt to undermine or abuse these institutions must be held accountable and punished by the law. Furthermore, the public should be regularly informed and educated about the constitutional independence and roles of these institutions to promote transparency, accountability, and civic trust. Strengthening these institutions will enhance public confidence in electoral processes and governance. Namibia can draw lessons from other African countries such as Ghana and Kenya, where democratic principles have been upheld through strong and independent electoral bodies and judiciary. For instance, the ECN can earn public trust by regularly engaging with its stakeholders, implementing transparent voter registration processes, and making use of digital tools to eliminate fraud.

Although the Namibian judiciary enjoys a degree of respect, more needs to be done in terms of securing the tenure of the judges, promoting merit-based appointments, and generally ensuring that the judiciary remains a bulwark against unconstitutional actions.

6.4.2 Address Socio-Economic Inequalities

Socioeconomic disparities, particularly unemployment and poverty, must be addressed as they fuel voter dissatisfaction and ethnic-based politics. The government should prioritise policies that create employment opportunities, particularly for youth, through targeted investments in agriculture, tourism, and renewable energy sectors. These sectors can provide many opportunities for employment, especially in rural areas.

The study also recommends that access to quality education and skills development programs should be improved to equip citizens with tools for self-reliance. This will provide young people with the skills, knowledge, and tools that they need to be self-reliant and participate in the economy. More attention should be given to technical and vocational education and other skills that match the current job market.

Namibia should implement land reform programs and equitable resource distribution policies to address historical injustices. To achieve desired results, the distribution of resources and land reform should be done transparently and fairly. For instance, the government can achieve this by ensuring that the resources and services are shared equally across the country's regions.

6.4.3 Enhance Political Education and Civic Engagement

Educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities in a democracy is essential for fostering informed political participation. Integrating civic education into the school curriculum to instil democratic values from an early age. Conducting nationwide public awareness campaigns to promote voter education, focusing on the importance of policy-based voting rather than ethnic or patronage-based decisions. Encouraging civil society organisations to facilitate dialogues and forums where

citizens can engage with political leaders on issues affecting their communities. The policymakers and the ECN should introduce and implement thorough civic education initiatives that shall educate the public about their rights, the electoral process, and the value of involvement in politics. An electorate that is better informed could result from increased voter turnout and participation in political discourse.

6.4.4 Support Opposition Parties and Independent Movements

Opposition parties need to be capacitated to provide viable alternatives to the ruling party. Training programs focused on leadership development, policy formulation, and effective campaign strategies should be offered to all selected political party representatives. The system should encourage coalition-building among smaller opposition parties to present a united front against the dominant party. Policymakers and stakeholders should provide platforms for independent candidates and grassroots movements to voice their concerns and contribute to the political discourse without fear or favour.

6.4.5 Implement Inclusive Policy-Making Processes

To foster trust in governance, policy-making processes should involve broader stakeholder participation, including opposition parties, civil society organisations, and community representatives. Participatory governance mechanisms, such as public consultations and town hall meetings, can ensure that policies reflect the needs and priorities of all citizens.

6.4.6 Improving the Dynamism of Political Party Systems

Encourage the creation of a multi-party system that fosters inclusivity and competition. Legislative changes that provide fair financing and resources for all parties, significantly minor and up-and-coming, can help assure diverse representation. The

current political funding mechanism in Namibia gives funding by the actual voter support (number of seats in Parliament). Although this current mechanism seems fair and promotes democracy, there is a need to strengthen it by including smaller and emerging parties, even as proportionality remains the main funding principle. By linking funding to the actual performance of the political party incentivises the smaller parties to improve their competitiveness, improve internal structures, and improve engagement with the electorate. This improves political competition, reduces reliance on dominant political parties, and as a result a more balanced and pluralistic political environment. Additionally, to prevent dominance, minimum baseline funding can be guaranteed for all the political parties in Namibia that meet transparency and accountability standards.

6.4.7 Strengthening Electoral Processes

The policymakers and the ECN should ensure changes to the electoral framework, such as frequently revising and reviewing electoral legislation to handle new issues. Implement safeguards like biometric voting, independent electoral commissions, and heightened election monitoring to guarantee transparency.

6.4.8 Dealing with Elite Capture and Accountability

The government, communities, and Stakeholders should support creating systems that encourage political elites to be more accountable. This can entail strengthening laws governing lobbying, campaign finance, and conflicts of interest, and encouraging whistle-blower protection to reveal wrongdoing or corruption in political circles.

6.4.9 Promoting Inclusivity

The Namibian government should formulate laws that would increase the number of underrepresented groups in political office, such as women, young people, and

members of ethnic minorities. This can entail incorporating affirmative action policies into the selection procedures that political parties use to choose their candidates.

6.4.10 Using Technology for Political Participation

Social media and technology can enhance political communication and interaction between parties and voters. The Namibian government should promote digital platforms to increase political process openness and establish public discussion and feedback platforms on political matters at various levels.

6.4.11 Strengthening Civil Society Organisations

Encourage collaborations with civil society groups to increase their ability to monitor, educate, and advocate politically. This may result from an informed populace and active electorate that holds political parties responsible.

6.4.12 Carrying Out Longitudinal Research

The study suggests that continuous research and long-term studies of Namibian political competitiveness are necessary. This can assist in regularly monitoring elitism and political party system changes and advancements, offering insightful information for future policymaking.

6.4.13 Establishing Dialogue Platforms

Promote the creation of inter-party dialogue platforms that enable fruitful conversations about policy concerns, political disagreements, and national objectives. In Namibia's political context, this can encourage a culture of cooperation rather than conflict.

6.4.14 International Cooperation and Comparison

To improve Namibia's democratic processes, think about working with foreign political and electoral organisations to exchange ideas and best practices. By doing this, Namibia can establish itself as a regional leader in political development. By

boosting political rivalry, guaranteeing accountability, and encouraging an involved populace, these suggestions seek to improve Namibia's democratic framework and the general well-being of the country's political system.

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12/transcending-elitist-approach-making-paradigm-shift-growth-without-

development-populist-development-hauwa-evelyn-yusuf-adefarakan-adedayo-

yusuf

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FOC/01/11/ 17

Date: 01/11/2024

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Ethics Committee (REC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the ethics committee.

Title of Project: Investigating the Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia's Democratic Framework: A Comprehensive Analysis of Political Party Systems and Political Elitism, 1990-2023.

Student: Alberts Munyanya Kulobone

Student Number: 9308261

Supervisor(s): Dr. Torque Mude

Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
 - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Precious Mushendami'.

Precious Mushendami (Chair: FOC Decentralized Research Ethics Committee)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Davis Mumbengegwi'.

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH LETTER

University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneerspark
☎ +264 61 206 3111; URL: <http://www.unam.edu.na>



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND POLITICAL STUDIES

Telephone no: +264-61-206 4679

13 November 2024

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter serves to inform you that Mr Alberts Kulobone (Student Number: 9308261) is a PhD student at the University of Namibia, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies. In this regard, the student is required to conduct a research project as part of the requirement to complete the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Science successfully. This research project may take her a minimum of two months to do fieldwork. The topic of the research project: Investigating the Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia's Democratic Framework: A Comprehensive Analysis of Political Party Systems and Political Elitism, 1990-2023. Therefore the University is humbly requesting your good offices to grant the student all the necessary assistance for her to obtain the information required to write her thesis. The research findings will mainly be used for the PhD Degree in Political Science thesis only and the participants' opinions/views will be kept confidential..

Yours Sincerely,

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Mude', is written over a horizontal line.

Dr Torque Mude
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Public Management and Political Studies,
Email: tmude@unam.na

APPENDIX C: TURNITIN REPORT – SIMILARITY INDEX CHECK

A M Kulobone Final Thesis			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
10 %	8 %	5 %	4 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	www.catalogue.safaidns.net Internet Source	1 %	
2	namibia.hss.de Internet Source	1 %	
3	www.v-dem.net Internet Source	<1 %	
4	onlinelibrary.wiley.com Internet Source	<1 %	
5	bti-project.org Internet Source	<1 %	
6	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1 %	
7	www.kas.de Internet Source	<1 %	
8	www.rosalux.de Internet Source	<1 %	
9	repository.unam.edu.na Internet Source	<1 %	
10	Submitted to Polytechnic of Namibia Student Paper	<1 %	
11	www.coursehero.com Internet Source	<1 %	
12	Submitted to University of Cape Town Student Paper	<1 %	
13	dochero.tips Internet Source	<1 %	
14	oapub.org Internet Source	<1 %	
15	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	<1 %	
16	ir.canterbury.ac.nz Internet Source	<1 %	
17	etd.uum.edu.my Internet Source	<1 %	
18	Submitted to Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre Student Paper	<1 %	
19	Submitted to Namibian College of Open Learning Student Paper	<1 %	
20	Submitted to University of Namibia Student Paper	<1 %	

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

CC/2022/06021
P O Box 41229
Ausspannplatz
Namibia

To Whom It May Concern

This letter serves as a formal confirmation that Kanobe Consulting Services has conducted language editing and proofreading for the academic research dissertation titled "**ANALYSING THE EMERGING TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF POLITICAL COMPETITION IN NAMIBIA'S DEMOCRATIC LANDSCAPE: POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL ELITISM PERSPECTIVES, 1990-2024**", submitted to **THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA**, authored by **ALBERTS MUNYANYA KULOBONE**.

The editing process involved a thorough review of grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, and coherence, ensuring that the dissertation meets high academic writing standards. Additionally, attention was given to improving sentence structure and overall readability while maintaining the integrity of the author's original ideas and arguments.

Kanobe Consulting Services confirms that the revised document reflects proper academic language conventions and adheres to the required scholarly tone and style. However, the final responsibility for the content remains with the author.

Should you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



KANOBE CONSULTING SERVICES

CC/2022/06021
P.O. Box 41229, Ausspannplatz
Cell: 081 380 7836
Email: kanobeconsultingservices@gmail.com

EDITING FOR PERFECTION

APPENDIX E: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Interview Guide Addressed to Respondents from Political Parties



Introduction

My name is Alberts Kulobone. You are invited to participate in academic research on **Analysing the Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia's Democratic Landscape: Political Party Systems and Political Elitism Perspectives, 1990-2024.**

Your insights and perspectives are invaluable to understanding the broader context of political competition and the role of political parties and elites in Namibia. Your participation will involve a brief interview, where we will discuss your Organisation's observations and experiences related to the political environment in Namibia. This will greatly contribute to a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject, ensuring that the study reflects diverse viewpoints and grounded realities.

The research is part of the academic requirements for PhD (Political Studies) studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an informed consent form.

Section A: Demographics

Gender	
Position	
Political Organisation	

Section B: Understanding Current Trends and Patterns

1. How do you perceive the current level of political competition in Namibia?
2. What strategies has your party employed to compete in the multi-party system since independence?
3. In what ways do you believe the dominance of SWAPO has influenced political competition and democracy in Namibia?

Section C: Opportunities and Challenges

4. What opportunities has your party identified in the current political landscape of Namibia?
5. What significant challenges does your party face in the current political environment?
6. How does your party engage with voters, and what challenges have you faced in this engagement?

Section D: Impact on Governance and Democratic Institutions

7. How have emerging trends in political competition affected governance and democratic institutions in Namibia from your party's perspective?
8. In what ways has political competition contributed to the strengthening or weakening of democratic practices and institutions?

Section E: Strategies for Enhancing Political Competition and Democratic Processes

9. What reforms do you think are necessary to enhance political competition and democratic governance in Namibia?
10. What strategies does your party propose to improve political competition and democratic processes in Namibia?
11. How can political parties collaborate to foster a more competitive and democratic political environment?
12. Can you describe specific instances where SWAPO's alignment with MPLA, ZANU PF, and ANC (liberation movements) influenced policy decisions or political strategies in Namibia?
13. How has the cooperation between these two parties affected the implementation of democratic norms and institutions in Namibia?

Registered Associations with the Electoral Commission of Namibia



Introduction

My name is Alberts Kulobone. You are invited to participate in research on **Analysing the Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia's Democratic Landscape: Political Party Systems and Political Elitism Perspectives, 1990-2024.**

The research is part of the academic requirements for PhD (Political Studies) studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an informed consent form.

Section A: Demographics

Gender	
Position	

Section B: Role and Impact of Associations

1. What role does your association play in promoting political competition in Namibia?

2. How do associations like yours contribute to enhancing democratic governance in Namibia?

Section C: Assessing Electoral Processes

3. How do you assess the transparency and fairness of electoral processes in Namibia?

4. What specific practices or policies have you observed that either support or undermine electoral transparency and fairness?

Section D: Challenges and Engagement

5. What challenges has your association encountered in engaging with political parties and the electoral system?

6. How does your association address these challenges to fulfill its mission?

Section E: Enhancing Democratic Governance

7. What initiatives has your association undertaken to promote political awareness and participation among the public?

8. In what ways can associations collaborate to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in Namibia?

Section F: Recommendations for Improvement

9. What are your recommendations for improving political competition and inclusivity in Namibia's democratic system?

10. How can the Electoral Commission of Namibia support associations in their efforts to enhance political competition and democratic processes?

11. What reforms do you believe are necessary to ensure more effective and equitable participation of associations in the political landscape?
12. Can you describe specific instances where SWAPO's alignment with MPLA, ZANU PF, and ANC (liberation movements) influenced policy decisions or political strategies in Namibia?
13. How has the cooperation between these two parties affected the implementation of democratic norms and institutions in Namibia?

Key Players in Namibia’s Post-Independence Politics



Introduction

My name is Alberts Kulobone. You are invited to participate in research on **Analysing the Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia’s Democratic Landscape: Political Party Systems and Political Elitism Perspectives, 1990-2024.**

The research is part of the academic requirements for PhD (Political Studies) studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an informed consent form.

Section A: Demographics

Gender	
Position	

Section B: Evolution and Impact of Political Competition

- 1. How has political competition in Namibia evolved since independence?

2. What impact has the dominance of SWAPO had on political competition and democratic governance?

Section C: Challenges and Obstacles

3. Can you identify key challenges to achieving a more competitive political environment in Namibia?

4. How have these challenges influenced the political landscape and the behaviour of political actors?

Section D: Strategies and Reforms

5. What strategies or reforms do you believe could improve political competition and accountability in Namibia?

6. Which reforms have been proposed or implemented, and what have been their outcomes?

Future Outlook

7. How do you foresee the future of political competition and democracy in Namibia?

8. What emerging trends or patterns do you think will shape Namibia's political landscape in the coming years?

Section E: Recommendations for Enhancement

9. What role can key political players, including opposition parties and civil society, play in fostering a more competitive political environment?

10. What specific actions or policies would you recommend to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in Namibia?

11. Can you describe specific instances where SWAPO's alignment with MPLA, ZANU PF, and ANC (liberation movements) influenced policy decisions or political strategies in Namibia?

12. How has the cooperation between these two parties affected the implementation of democratic norms and institutions in Namibia?

Community Leaders



Introduction

My name is Alberts Kulobone. You are invited to participate in the research with the title, **Analysing the Emerging Trends and Patterns of Political Competition in Namibia's Democratic Landscape: Political Party Systems and Political Elitism Perspectives, 1990-2024.**

The research is part of the academic requirements for PhD (Political Studies) studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an informed consent form.

Section A: Demographics

Gender	
Position	

Section B: Perception and Influence

1. How do you perceive the current state of political competition in your community?

2. What role do community leaders play in influencing political participation and competition?

Section C: Challenges and Obstacles

3. What are the main challenges your community faces in engaging with the political process?

4. How do these challenges impact political competition and democratic governance at the community level?

Section D: Impact of Dominance

5. How has the dominance of SWAPO affected political competition and governance in your community?

6. In what ways has this dominance shaped the political behaviour and attitudes of community members?

Section E: Recommendations for Improvement

7. What changes or reforms do you believe are necessary to improve political competition and democratic engagement at the community level?

8. How can community leaders work together to foster a more competitive and participatory political environment?

Section F: Future Strategies

9. What strategies do you think are effective for increasing political awareness and participation in your community?

10. How can community leaders collaborate with political parties and civil society to enhance democratic processes locally?

11. Can you describe specific instances where SWAPO's alignment with MPLA, ZANU-PF, and ANC (liberation movements) influenced policy decisions or political strategies in Namibia?

12. How has the cooperation between these two parties affected the implementation of democratic norms and institutions in Namibia?