

# MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY



## FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES POLITICS AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Examining youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe from the period 2000 -  
2013: Case study of Kuwadzana

**BY**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the B.Sc. (Honors) Degree in  
Politics and Public Management at Midlands State University, Zvishavane.

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## DECLARATIONS

I, Lisben Tawanda Chigwenjere of registration number R125044P declare that this is my original research project and has not been presented to any university before. All sources are properly cited. It is being submitted in partial completion of the requirements for the B.Sc. Honors Degree in Politics and Public Management, in the faculty of Social Sciences at Midlands State University.

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God bless y'all.

## DEDICATION

To every young person in Zimbabwe - I hope that one day you will become visible and active...

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## ABSTRACT

Youths in Zimbabwe constitute the majority of the population but are either sidelined or alienated from electoral processes, weakening the very ground-works of citizenship and democracy. Young people in Zimbabwe are facing different challenges ranging from unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, crime, prostitution, lack of funding for tertiary education, and HIV/AIDS. These problems have been exacerbated by an undemocratic and unyielding ZANU PF government which has been in power since 1980. Young people in Zimbabwe have been exploited by the ZANU PF party and made into ruffians responsible for attacking and hurting members and supporters of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Factors such as political violence have contributed to the fear of politics among the youth in Zimbabwe, scaring them away from the electoral process. This has created a “participatory crisis” in Zimbabwe which is weakening the very groundworks of citizenship and democracy.

Against this backdrop, this study sought to establish the nature and extent of youth participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe, using the case study of Kuwadzana, in Harare Province. The study used a descriptive research design and a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling techniques in order to choose the participants. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and the Internet. The results of the study indicated that young people in Zimbabwe wish to participate in electoral process of their country in order to change the economic, political, and economic conditions of their country, but they fear victimization. They are also distrustful of Zimbabwe’s electoral process. The government of Zimbabwe, the political parties in the country, and the civil society, are encouraged to take measures in ensuring that young people in Zimbabwe participate in electoral processes. This is the only hope for consolidating democracy in Zimbabwe.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AYC	African Youth Charter
AV	Alternative Vote
BC	Borda Count
BV	Block Vote
DC	Delimitation Commission
ESC	Electoral Supervisory Commission
EU	European Union
FPTP	First Past the Post
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno Deficiency/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
LPR	List Proportional Representation
LV	Limited Vote
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change (Tsvangirayi faction)
MDC-M	Movement for Democratic Change (Mutambara faction)
MP	Member of Parliament
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OAU	Organization for African Union
PF ZAPU	Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union
PF	Zimbabwe People First
PBV	Party Block Vote
RG	Registrar General
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
STV	Single Transferable Vote

SNTV	Single Non-Transferable Vote
TRS	Two-Round System
UANC	United African National Congress
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
VRA	Voter's Roll Audit
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
YAD	Youth Alliance for Democracy
ZESN	Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students Union
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwean youth constitute more than 60 percent of the Zimbabwean population, yet only 18 percent of them participate in elections (ZESN, 2010). This democratic emergency is weakening the very ground-works of nationalism and democracy in the country. Many studies in the world have been conducted to probe youth participation in the electoral process. These studies have proven that there is a low voter turnout among the youth, compared to the voter turnout among the older generation (Fieldhouse et al. 2007, Putnam 2000, Milner 2005.). The focal point of this study is to assess and analyze youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe, in order to unravel the causes of youth disengagement from the electoral process, as well as encourage the extensive study of this phenomenon by other researchers. In Zimbabwe, there has not been much academic study on youth participation in the electoral process, but rather, on their participation in political violence. Mude (2014) and Sachikonye (2011) have researched on youth participation in political violence, but not on youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. This study bridges the gap by investigating youth participation in electoral activities such as voting, running for election, electoral campaigning, and political party membership.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Zimbabwe's revolutionary struggle, the Second Chimurenga (1960s and 70s), was waged by indigenous young Africans in response to the racial political and economic situation that prevailed in the country at that time. After Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980, the ZANU PF party stayed in power for more than two decades without much opposition, until the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. This youthful political party sought to bring democratic change in the country and replace the ZANU PF government. Most of the founders of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were youth. They included student leaders from organizations such as the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU). These student leaders included Nelson Chamisa and Learnmore Judah Jongwe. The MDC mobilized a lot of young people to vote, campaign for the party, run for election, and participate in the activities of the Movement for Democratic Change. ZANU PF recruited young people to execute violence and terror on MDC

supporters. Young people were engaged into ZANU PF volunteer armies in charge of inflicting pain on MDC supporters. This negative participation of young people in the political process of Zimbabwe greatly contributed to the thirty-six year rule of ZANU PF.

Most young people in Zimbabwe have disengaged themselves from the electoral process because of fear of victimization. The advent of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) between ZANU PF, MDC-T, and MDC-M in 2008 led to the reduction of greater political violence. This period in Zimbabwean history brought about relative peace and unity among the belligerents and their supporters. This peace was witnessed in the 2013 harmonized elections where reports of political violence were minimal compared to the previous years. This signified a new era in Zimbabwean politics. It signified an opportunity for young people to participate peacefully in the electoral process of their country.

Young people in Zimbabwe face a lot of challenges. These challenges include poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and lack of funding for tertiary education. Youth unemployment is estimated to be around 70 percent in Zimbabwe. It is regarded as the major cause of youth engagement in political violence (Mude, 2014). These challenges can be solved by a change of government and policies. There is need for a new government that addresses the needs of the youth. Zimbabwe has been led by one man since 1980. Young people in Zimbabwe have not been doing much to change the situation. Young people in Zimbabwe need to use their demographic advantage to influence power. The youth of Zimbabwe should arise.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

There is a democratic emergency in Zimbabwe, especially among the youth. Young people are withdrawing themselves from the electoral process. This democratic emergency is sabotaging the very cornerstones of nationalism and democracy. This study is aimed at unraveling the causes of youth withdrawal from the electoral process of Zimbabwe. It is meant to encourage relevant stakeholders to take measures in reducing this crisis.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To assess and analyze youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe, with particular attention to youth disengagement from the electoral process
2. To prove the withdrawal of young Zimbabweans from the electoral process of their country
3. To examine the causes and consequences of youth disengagement from the electoral process of Zimbabwe
4. To generate information that can be used to inform stakeholder intervention

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the nature of youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe?
2. To what extent are young people in Zimbabwe participating in the electoral process of their country?
3. What are the causes, consequences, and impacts of youth withdrawal from the electoral process of Zimbabwe?
4. How is youth disengagement from the electoral process contributing to the political crisis in Zimbabwe?

### **1.5 JUSTIFICATION**

This study is significant because youth constitute the majority of the Zimbabwean population, and therefore, their participation in the electoral process is of paramount importance. The African Union Commission (2015) has indicated that 65 percent of the humanity on the continent is made up of young people below the age of 35 years. This has qualified Africa to become the youngest landmass on the planet. The previous population census in Zimbabwe, held in August 2012, put the number of young people under the age of 15 at 40.6 percent. Those individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years were put at roughly 4.7 million, constituting 36 percent of the nation's population (ZIMSTATS, 2014). The African Youth Charter (2006) acknowledges young people's entitlement to take an interest in the different circles of life - be it political, financial or social. This also comes from the realization that young people in Africa played an important role in the decolonization of the continent.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) conducted an electoral register observation in 2008 which found out that only 18 percent of young voters were registered in the voters roll. This demonstrates young people's lack of enthusiasm when it comes to elections in Zimbabwe. The Research and Advocacy Unit also shockingly revealed that in the 2013 harmonized elections, only 8.87 percent of the youth were on the electoral register! The registration rate among those aged 80 and more was found to be at an incredible 219 percent (The Standard, 2014). These shocking results are proof that young people in Zimbabwe are not participating in the electoral process, and are thus contributing to the democratic crisis in the country. There is hardly any academic study on youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. The focal point of this study is to start to address this condition. A 2011 report by AfroBarometer on the political participation of African youngsters affirms that regardless of young people's superiority in terms of numbers, they have a tendency of voting less compared to those in other regions. Their degree of political party membership has also been discovered to be lower (International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance, 2013).

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A lot of Zimbabwean literature has been written on youth participation in political violence, and less has been written on youth participation in the electoral process. Young people have been unconstruktively and negatively portrayed as ruffians and outlaws by such academics as Mude (2014) and Sachikonye (2011). This research seeks to portray young people positively and constructively and recognize them as agents of social change. The subject of political violence in Zimbabwe has been over-researched and over-repeated and is becoming exceedingly monotonous. According to Mude (2014), urban unemployed youth have been converted into ruffians for wild political games played by political parties in the country. These political parties include ZANU PF and the MDC. However, this assertion misidentifies youth as a homogeneous group. It prejudices those urban unemployed young people who are not involved in political violence, particularly the young women. This study will dwell on youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. Increased youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe is the only hope for Zimbabwean democracy.



Robertson (2009) has researched on the participation of young people in the electoral processes of Eastern Europe. She has discovered that young people feel estranged from the formal political operators and thus withdraw themselves from the traditional types of political participation. These findings can also apply to Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. Because of political violence and allegations of electoral fraud in the country, young people in Zimbabwe now feel alienated from the electoral process. They are now distrustful of the electoral process. Other studies have seen youth to be indifferent towards formal political operations (Putnam, 2000). This means that young people have an “I-Don’t-Care-Attitude” towards the political process, even when the political process has a bearing over their quality of life. They do not feel as if the political process affects them in any way. The United States of America is not exempted from this democratic crisis. It has been widely acknowledged that the US is captured by a democratic crisis that tend to sabotage the very groundworks of citizenship (for example, Putnam 200). This democratic emergency is not only evident in the United States of America, but in Africa also. The fact that the United States of America (being an older democracy than Zimbabwe) has this democratic crisis, is proof positive that countries in Africa are also facing the same crisis. These African countries include Zimbabwe. These findings justify a more contextual research that seeks to understand the peculiar reasons behind youth withdrawal from the electoral processes of African countries, particularly Zimbabwe.

The decline in voting among young people in Zimbabwe represents a rise in what Howe (2007) has described as customary non-voting. Customary non-voters are identified as those individuals who never vote, whilst intermittent or irregular non-voters are alluded to as the individuals who vote once in a while. It is my assumption that customary non-voting is more significant nowadays among young people in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network Report (2008) shows that only 18 percent of the electorate on Zimbabwe’s electoral register are young people aged between 18 to 30 years of age. Even in the presence of such shocking reports, there is scarcely any exhaustive academic study on youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. Most of the young people in Zimbabwe are not voting and are not affiliated to any political party. In a world where a lot of literature has been written on youth participation in the electoral process, less has been written on youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. This study will provide a contextual analysis of youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe.

## 1.7 THEORIES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theories of youth participation in electoral processes include the Life-Cycle-Explanation and the Cohort-Effects-Explanation. These theories arise from works such as Verba and Nie (1972) and Miller and Shanks (1996). Some of these theories emerged from the United States of America. In countries such as these, young people have been lowly participating in electoral processes during their phases of development. The theory identifies these development phases and how they affect the participation of young people in the electoral processes of their countries. These stages include leaving the parental home and looking for employment. With the abnormal amounts of youth unemployment in Zimbabwe, youth tend to focus more on finding a sustainable livelihood than on the political issues. They erroneously assume that participating in the political process does not bring food on the table, when in reality it does. Other phases of adult development include staying longer in full-time education. Young people in full-time education tend to be more preoccupied with studying such that they tend to ignore the different political, economic, and social developments in their countries. This has tended to delay the maturity of these young people, as they see civic engagement as something for a later stage (Environics, 2003).

The Cohort-Effects-Explanation concentrates on variables such as reduced levels of political attentiveness and the disintegration of young people's connections to society. Political attentiveness has to do with one's political interest and concern towards legislative issues in the media. It has to do with political savvy. For instance, today's young people concentrate more on watching entertainment channels on television, more than they watch the news. They can spend more time watching movies, or reading novels, rather than peruse newspapers or watch legislative issues on TV. Putnam (2000), notes that lack of electoral interest is a result of separation from community life. This separation from community life has affected younger generations intensely. He notes that the presence of this low political interest among the youth is proof of a declining social capital.

The researcher made use of the "cohort effects explanation" in his study. This was done to explain the reasons of youth withdrawal from the constituent procedure of their nation.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study made use of qualitative methods and analysis. Qualitative research include methods of data collection and analysis that are not quantitative (Lofland and Lofland, 1984). Data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews. The researcher interviewed youth in Kuwadzana who were between the ages of 18 (voting age in Zimbabwe) and 35 (maximum age of youth in Zimbabwe). He also interviewed ward councilors in these areas. The study also collected qualitative data from books, government records, NGO and civil society organizations reports, newspapers, journal articles and the Internet. Through a case study of Kuwadzana (Harare Province) the researcher provided a detailed outline of the nature of youth political participation and non-participation in Zimbabwe. A case study is an in-depth examination of a single instance, or a few instances of a social phenomenon, such as a village, a town, a family, or a juvenile gang.

## **1.9 DATA GATHERING METHODS**

Research design makes reference to the strategy that someone can choose to integrate into their study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring effectiveness in addressing the research problem (De Vaus, 2001). According to Brink and Wood (1998), the function of a research design is the provision of a design for answering research questions. It is a design for action. It sets up the design for the size, collection, and analysis of data, and how data is going to be collected, and the instruments that are going to be used to collect the data. There are three types of research design, that is, explanatory, descriptive, and causal. The researcher opted for a descriptive research design to show the nature and extent of youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. The description asked questions such as “What is the nature and extent of youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe?” The researcher also used explanatory research to explain why young people in Zimbabwe are opting out of electoral processes. Explanatory research concentrates on the “why” questions. For instance, “Why are young people dropping out of the electoral process of Zimbabwe?”

## **1.10 TARGET POPULATION**

According to Burns and Grove (2003), target population gives reference to the complete total of participants that meet the chosen criteria. This research focuses on youth based in Kuwadzana, in Harare Province. The respondents who met the criteria of this research began from the age of 18 (the voting age in Zimbabwe) up to the age of 35 (the maximum age of youth in Zimbabwe).

## **1.11 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Orodho and Kombo (2002) specified sampling technique as the procedure a researcher uses to gather places, people, or items to research on. It is a process of choosing a number of people or items from a population such that the selected group contains elements that represent the characteristics found in the whole group. The researcher decided to use stratified random and purposive sampling. Stratified random sampling is the samples that produce research data that can be extrapolated; to a large population. It is a procedure in which all the people in the defined population have an equal opportunity of being chosen as a member of the sample. The researcher chose to use stratified random sampling in order to acquire the various ideas from the youth. Purposive sampling (also known as subjective, judgmental, or selective sampling,) was used on the selection of the ward councilors. Purposive sampling is an example of a non-probability scrutinizing method. In non-probability testing, the researcher uses his judgment to choose respondents (Palys, 2008). The researchers chooses whom, where, and how to do his research. This sampling design, the researcher noted, was not time consuming.

## **1.12 QUESTIONNAIRES**

A questionnaire is simply a tool for collecting and recording information about a particular issue of interest. They were used on selected youths in Zimbabwe. The researcher used a planned questionnaire with both open ended and close-ended questions in order to capture all the required information. The questionnaires were able to capture the nature and extent of youth participation in the electoral process in Kuwadzana, in Harare Province. Questionnaires as a data collection instrument are useful because a researcher can collect a lot of information from a large number of

people in a short period of time (Popper, 1959). The chances of a researcher getting biased information are low because the same questions are asked on different participants. Many people are also familiar to the questionnaire in airing their views as compared to an interview. Most common people are not used interviews. Questionnaires can easily be quantified by the researcher. They give room for the researcher to contrast the responses among the participants. The questionnaire provided a deep understanding of the nature and extent of youth participation in electoral processes in Kuwadzana, Harare.

### **1.13 INTERVIEWS**

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2016), interviewing involves asking questions and getting answers from participants in a study. Interviewing has a variety of forms including: individual, face-to-face interviews and face-to-face group interviewing. The asking and answering of questions can be mediated by the telephone or other electronic devices. Interviews can be structured, semi-structure or unstructured. Interviews are done to collect information on a particular area. The researcher used interviews on the policy makers (councilors) in Kuwadzana in order to get information on youth participation in electoral processes from a policy maker's perspective. The interviews proved to be effective, as the researcher was able to interact directly with ward councilors. The researcher was able to read the non-verbal cues of the respondents and understand their feelings and emotions towards the subject. The researcher chose to use interviews because the researcher could easily get the valuable information on why youth are dropping out of the electoral process. Interviews allowed the researcher and the respondent to talk face to face so that the researcher could ask more information from the respondents on the nature and extent of youth participation in electoral processes in Kuwadzana. According to Edwards and Holland (2013) some of the terms that apply to qualitative interviews include in-depth, informal, non-directed, open-ended, conversational, naturalistic, narrative, and oral.

### **1.14 SECONDARY DATA**

Secondary data is information or data, which is planned and developed. It is data based on previous researchers by other scholars. They are previous documents gathered through reviewing published

and unpublished articles, pamphlets, journals and annual reports. Most of the sources used present related and enough data pertaining to the research at hand (Johnston, 2014).

### **1.15 INTERNET OR ONLINE RESEARCH**

Through online research, the researcher accessed online books, journals, newspaper articles and information which contributed to data collection results, since the research is mainly triangular in nature. Online research has its own merits when carrying out a research. Cude (2004), highlights the following merits associated with online research:

- It reduces the costs of conducting a research
- It is faster than most research methods
- Easy to access articles and databases from multiple libraries, and
- Has condensed information that makes finding relevant topics easier

### **1.16 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

The data obtained from different questionnaires and interviews was analyzed and presented by the researcher using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative content analysis is a dynamic form of analysis of verbal and visual data that is oriented toward summarizing the informational contents of that data (Altheide, 1987; Morgan, 1993). This research examined the nature and extent of youth participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

### **1.17 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research ethics educates and monitors scientists conducting research to ensure a high moral standard (University of Minnesota, 2003). It is possible that interactions with participants may unintentionally hurt them in some unintended way. My study followed the general agreements shared by researchers about what is proper and improper in the conduct of investigative examination. Subjects were not forced to participate in my research or reveal personal information about themselves. Their voluntary participation in the research project was based on a full

understanding of the risks that might be involved. Voluntary participation in a research is considered a much important ethic that legitimizes a research. The researcher was cautious in his research in order to avoid harming the participants psychologically, physically, or in any other way. Anonymity was guaranteed in interviews conducted with the youth. However, the ward councilors agreed to have their identities revealed in this study. The researcher revealed his own identity to the subjects. He also revealed the purpose of the study to them.

### **1.18 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in Kuwadzana, in Harare Province, Zimbabwe. The total population of Harare Urban is 1 435 784, which is 42% of the total Zimbabwean population (ZIMSTATS, 2012). Kuwadzana is located in Harare, and is one of the most populous towns in the city. It is divided into eight areas which are Kuwadzana 1, Kuwadzana 2, Kuwadzana 3, Kuwadzana 4, Kuwadzana 5, Kuwadzana 6, Kuwadzana 7, and Kuwadzana Extension. These eight areas are divided into two constituencies which are Kuwadzana East and West constituencies. It's farther divided into four wards which are Ward 37, Ward 38, Ward 44, and Ward 45. The councilor for Ward 37 is Urayayi Mangwiro from MDC-T. The councilor for Ward 38 is Wilton Njanjasi from MDC-T. The councilor for Ward 44 is Resias Masunda from MDC-T. The councilor for Ward 45 is Mr. Mandere from MDC-T. The Member of Parliament for Kuwadzana East constituency is Nelson Chamisa of the Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai faction (MDC-T), and the Member of Parliament for Kuwadzana West is Betty Kaseke of ZANU PF, who replaced Lucia Matibenga of MDC-T after the 2015 by-elections. Lucia Matibenga was expelled from MDC-T and consequently from Parliament after defecting to the MDC Renewal. The MDC-T, which is currently the largest opposition party in Zimbabwe, did not compete in these elections, reducing the credibility of the elections. Notwithstanding the April 2015 by-elections, Kuwadzana is a stronghold of the MDC-T.

### **1.19 LIMITATIONS**

Politics is a sensitive issue in Zimbabwe, especially when it comes to the subject of elections. Memories of political violence and electoral fraud are still fresh in the minds of many Zimbabweans. People are scared to talk about politics for fear of losing their lives. This fear greatly limited the researcher's gathering of information as some of the respondents were not able to speak out on

important issues. Some of the respondents mistook the researcher to a secret agent of the government, whose aim was to identify young people who supported the MDC-T in Kuwadzana. This tempted the researcher to dwell on undercover research which violated ethical considerations in research. The fact that young people in Zimbabwe do not fully participate in electoral processes also meant that some of them would not participate in the survey. Another limitation was that the case study focused on one locality in Zimbabwe, and might therefore fail to fully represent the perceptions and attitudes of all the young Zimbabweans in the country. It was also difficult to access some of the policy makers in the locality, especially the two Members of Parliament for the two constituencies in Kuwadzana, Nelson Chamisa and Betty Kaseke. Two of the four ward councilors were also not accessible.

## **1.20 CONCLUSION**

The central aim of this chapter was to introduce the reader to the study. It identified the problem to be investigated and gave information on the background of the study. This background information was essential in understanding the factors leading to the disengagement of young people from the electoral process of their country. The factors included the participation of young people in political violence at the behest of selfish Zimbabwean politicians. The chapter also explained the purpose and objectives of the study. One of these objectives was to examine the nature and extent of youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. Four research questions were derived from the objectives of the study. The researcher also justified the study in the initial chapter. One of the reasons why this study is significant is because young people in Zimbabwe constitute over 60 percent of the population. Their non-participation in electoral processes can undermine democracy in the country. The researcher used civil society reports to reveal the limited number of young people turning out for elections in Zimbabwe. In this chapter, the researcher also revealed the limitations that he faced during his research. He also identified his target population and delimitation. The research methodology was also explained in this chapter.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN ZIMBABWE**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the electoral process and electoral system of Zimbabwe. It identifies three broad families of electoral systems. These are: majority systems, proportional representation systems, and the mixed systems. It reveals some of the institutional factors leading to youth disengagement from the electoral process of the country. The electoral cycle is also presented in this chapter, as well as stages in which young people can participate in, during the electoral cycle. Studies have demonstrated that institutional, personal, and poll-specific factors are significant in limiting or encouraging electoral participation.

#### **2.1 THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

Elections are an important requirement in a democratic society. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2005), elections ensure that the populace is represented in a four-fold manner, that is, geographically, ideologically, party-politically, and descriptively. When the populace is represented descriptively, it means that the parliament of that country reflects the character of the general population. The legislature will be more like a mirror of the country. The thoughts, feelings, and appearance of the nationals will be reflected in the national assembly. This means that both women and man will be represented in the legislature. It means that both the youth and the old are vicariously participating in the national assembly. It means that the parliament has individuals from different social classes - the rich and the poor. No social group should be excluded from the national assembly. The parliament ought to reflect the distinctive religions in that country, for instance, both Christianity and Islam. Linguistic groups and ethnic gatherings inside the general population should also be represented. The Zimbabwean legislature does not satisfactorily represent the young people in the country. The parliament is dominated by

the old *madhallas*, and this should not be so. The Zimbabwean Constitution (2013), provides that any person who is at least twenty-one years of age is qualified for election as a member of the National Assembly. These persons can only become disqualified if they are not a registered voter. However, the youth in Zimbabwe have been marginalized from the electoral process, leaving the National Assembly to become an “old people’s assembly”.

Elections can be non-meaningful to individuals if it is hard for them to influence how the nation is administered (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2016). In Zimbabwe, since the year 1985, elections have failed to remove Robert Mugabe from power. It has been hard for the Zimbabwean populace to influence the way their country is run, and the elections have become meaningless to them, especially because of reports of electoral fraud. The government of Zimbabwe has been using elections to masquerade as a democracy.

There are many elements that determine how simple or complicated an election can be (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). These elements have to do with the ballot paper, the voter’s roll, and the polling stations. The ballot paper has to be made of quality material, the voter’s roll should be current, and the polling stations should be convenient. Zimbabwe’s voter’s roll or electoral register has often been criticized for inconsistency. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) chairperson, Justice Rita Makarau, is quoted to having said that the electoral register is in such a bad state that it would need to be cleaned first before credible elections could be held (News Day, 2013). This inconsistency has been allegedly exploited by ZANU PF to increase its votes in the past elections. This has reduced the credibility of Zimbabwean elections. The inconsistency in the voter’s roll also makes it hard for other young people to vote, as some names are allegedly taken out of the register, and replaced after the elections.

Any representative government is expected to be accountable to its citizens for every action that it takes (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). This is one of the reasons elections are important. This means that whatever the government does should be approved or disapproved by the people. The people should be able to take action against the government if the government fails to fulfill its mandate and promises. This principle of accountability is a fundamental principle in a majority rule system. There is a risk of long-term political, economic, and social instability within a country if this principle is absent. For instance, the economic and political

instability in Zimbabwe has been long-running because the government of the country has not been answerable to the electorate. Voters ought to have the capacity to influence the affairs of their government. They should be able to kick out of office a political party which they feel has failed to produce results. In 2008, the Zimbabwean people almost kicked out of office the ZANU PF party. The leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, Morgan Tsvangirai, was leading the elections by a relative majority (plurality) of 47.9 percent, against ZANU PF's leader, Robert Mugabe's 43.2 percent. However, Tsvangirai did not acquire the absolute majority (fifty-plus percent of votes) required by the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system in order to win elections in Zimbabwe. These elections were reportedly rigged by ZANU PF in conjunction with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Zimbabwean elections have just been used as a pretext of democracy and as a mask of authoritarianism. The ZESN Report (2013) has shown that elections in the country fail to meet international standards of free and fair elections as they are characterized by intimidation and innumerable irregularities (ZESN Report, 2013). Young people in Zimbabwe are "heckled, harassed or threatened into voting" for ZANU PF (NBC News, 2008). Thus, elections in the country have been non-meaningful.

## **2.2 ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

According to Gallagher and Mitchell (2005), an electoral system is an arrangement of rules that design how votes are cast at elections and how these votes are subsequently turned into seats in parliament. There are many methods that can be utilized to do this. Each method has its own merits and demerits. Electoral systems are very significant because they establish the shape of the party system and the nature of the government (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). Elections can produce a coalition government as that witnessed in Zimbabwe from the period 2008 to 2013, or a single-party government, as that which has always been known in Zimbabwe under the ZANU PF party. The electoral system can also affect the type of decisions that an electorate has to make during elections, for instance, whether to vote for an individual or a political party. The ability of the electorate to hold their Members of Parliament personally accountable can be greatly reduced, especially in a Proportional Representation system. Not only that, but the electoral system determines whether or not the parliament will include individuals from all kinds of different backgrounds, for instance, the youth. Electoral systems can easily be

manipulated or rigged. For instance, in Zimbabwe, Mugabe has been using his presidential decrees to change the rules of the electoral game, particularly since the year 2000 (Zimbabwe Independent, 2013). He has used his powers to unilaterally amend the Electoral Act of Zimbabwe, just few weeks before the 2008 elections. This is proof that the electoral system can easily be manipulated in favor of the incumbent political party.

The way that votes are translated into parliamentary seats determines whether or not certain groups in society or political parties are included in the policy-making process (Norris, 1997). For instance, the existential electoral system in Zimbabwe has successfully ruled out different social groups and political parties from the policy-making process. For instance, the MDC party has been contesting for power in Zimbabwe since the year 2000, but has never been allowed to capture the presidential seat, even when it was evident that the majority of the electorate was in favor of the political party. The MDC has remained outside the governing system, whilst ZANU PF has remained inside the system. MDC has remained a victim of the system, whilst ZANU PF has remained a victor through the system. The same can be said about the young people of Zimbabwe. The young people of Zimbabwe have been ruled out of the policy-making process of their country. They cannot be found in parliament and other decision making bodies of the country.

Electoral systems have the ability to be changed. They can change regularly through enactment or amendment of laws (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2016). In Zimbabwe, the Electoral Act has been amended numerous times, thus altering the electoral system of the country. This has also taken place in different African countries as they underwent democratic change. The electoral system also has an impact over the intragroup union and discipline of political parties. Certain frameworks may empower factionalism in political parties. A typical example of factionalism can be given from the ZANU PF party. The party is currently divided into different factions such as the Generation 40 (G40), Team Lacoste (Emmerson Mnangagwa's camp), and Joyce Mujuru's Gamatox (News Day, 2016). Other frameworks may urge political parties to talk with one voice and stifle disagreements. Electoral systems can allow or hinder the coalition of political parties. For instance, in Zimbabwe, political parties are free to form alliances. Opposition parties in Zimbabwe are currently in the process of forming a grand coalition against President Mugabe's ZANU-PF party ahead of the 2018 elections.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2005) define three broad families of electoral systems. These are majority or plurality systems, proportional systems, and mixed systems. These three are farther divided into nine secondary families which will be shown in the table below.

<b>MAJORITY SYSTEMS</b>	<b>PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEMS</b>	<b>MIXED SYSTEMS</b>
The First Past The Post (FPTP)	List Proportional Representation (List PR)	Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)
Block Vote (BV)	Single Transferable Vote (STV)	Parallel Systems
Party Block Vote (PBV)		
Alternative Vote (AV)		
Two-Round System (TRS)		

*Figure 1: Types of Electoral Systems*

Other electoral systems include the Borda Count, the Limited Vote, and the Single Non-Transferable Vote. These systems are said to be square pegs in a round hole, as they fail to fit into a specific category.

### **2.3 PLURALITY/MAJORITY SYSTEMS**

The plurality or majority system is regarded as the most uncomplicated electoral system in the world. People vote, and the votes are counted, and those candidates or parties that have acquired the most votes are announced as the winners (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). This system obligates candidates to win a plurality (relative majority), or an absolute majority (fifty-plus percent of the votes) in order for them to be announced as winners. For instance, the Zimbabwean parliamentary elections are run under the plurality formula, whilst the presidential elections are run under the absolute majority formula. This means that Members of Parliament in

Zimbabwe just need one or more votes over their rivals in order for them to win the elections. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, ZANU PF acquired a plurality (relative majority) of 47.2 percent of the vote and 62 seats, while MDC won 45.6 percent of the vote and 57 seats (Lodge, et al, 2002). As noted in Figure 1, there are five types of plurality or majority frameworks. However, my discussion is going to focus on only two of them. These are, the FPTP and the TRS.

### **2.3.1 FIRST PAST THE POST (FPTP)**

The First Past the Post system utilizes a one-member district and a candidate-centric voting. The electorate is given the names of the nominated campaigners, and he or she selects only one of them for public office (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). The candidate with the most votes is the one who wins the elections. The winner may just be one vote ahead of his or her rival but is declared the winner. He or she doesn't have to acquire a fifty-plus percent of the total votes. Apart from Zimbabwe, other countries that use the FPTP system include the UK and most of her former colonies. The First Past the Post system can produce an efficient government, but fail to represent all the views of minority groups in the country. The big political parties become bigger, whilst the smaller political parties become smaller. The smaller political parties remain unpopular and never go past a certain level of popularity. In Zimbabwe, political parties such as ZAPU and Mavambo/Kusile/Dawn (MKD) never go past a certain level of popularity. They just remain little Davids in front of big Goliaths such as ZANU PF and the MDC-T. This is why Laponce and Saint-Jacques (1997) remarked that the FPTP is a system that is punitive to the smaller political parties. The smaller political parties that suffer most are those that have their supporters distributed all over the country. The smaller political parties are not fairly represented in the sense that the votes they receive in all the different electoral districts (even if they lose) become wasted when the votes are not converted into seats that are equivalent to the total percentage of votes received in the districts they contested in. For example, 5 percent of the votes they acquired could be enough to win them an estimate of 5 percent of the parliamentary seats. This framework also has a negative impact on the ability of women to be chosen as Members of Parliament. Women are usually despised in a patriarchal society. The only way they might find way into parliament is through the proportional representation system, just as is currently happening in Zimbabwe.

### **2.3.2 THE TWO-ROUND SYSTEM (TRS)**

The Two-Round System is an election that takes place in two turns (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). The second turn is spontaneous. It is not planned for. It only takes place when the first round of the absolute majority election fails to produce an absolute winner. If a candidate or party acquires a defined ratio of the vote, the candidate or party is immediately announced the winner, and there will be no need for a second ballot. If no candidate or party acquires a fifty-plus percent absolute majority, then a runoff election is held. The candidate who acquires the absolute majority in this second round of elections is announced the winner of the elections. This type of a system was invoked in Zimbabwe during the 2008 elections. It is popular for its ability to stop Morgan Tsvangirai from ascending to power after he had acquired a relative majority (plurality) of 47.9 percent against Robert Mugabe's 43.2 percent. The period before the second round of elections saw the unleashing of greater political violence against MDC-T members and supporters. Because of these attacks, the MDC-T boycotted the run-off elections, leaving ZANU PF in a one-man race which they won in a land-slide. The MDC-T did not accept the run-off election results, and together with the international community, they pushed the ZANU PF party into forming a coalition government. According to Laponce and Saint-Jacques (1997), the TRS system is used in fifteen different countries in the world.

### **2.4 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEMS**

The Proportional Representation system converts a political party's portion of the votes into an agreeing ratio of seats in parliament (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). The International IDEA acknowledges two major types of PR system. These are the Party-List Proportional Representation system (LPR) and the Single Transferable Vote (STV). This system involves the utilization of electoral districts which have numerous members. It is popular in new democracies such as South Africa. The Proportional Representation system is praised for its ability to bring about a representative national assembly. According to Laponce and Saint-Jacques (1997), the inclusion of all significant groups in the national assembly can be a significant precondition for democratic consolidation. Neglecting to guarantee that both minorities and majorities have a stake in creating political frameworks can have calamitous results. The Proportional Representation

framework loyally makes an interpretation of votes cast into seats won. It gives smaller political parties access to the legislative body even if they have acquired a small number of votes. It creates an environment conducive for the formation of political parties. Young people in Zimbabwe can be able to form their own political parties and be assured of the probability of gaining access into the Zimbabwean parliament.

Norris (1997) criticizes the Proportional Representation system for its tendency of creating a rise of coalition governments and a divided political party system. He argues that smaller political parties end up acquiring an out-of-proportion great amount of power, giving them the ability to veto any proposition that comes from the bigger political parties. By forming coalition governments, the principle of accountability is then taken away as the electorate loses the ability to throw a party out of power. Figure 1 shows that the Proportional Representation system is split up into two families, the LPR and the SBV, but the researcher is going to focus on the LPR system only.

## **2.5 LIST PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (LIST PR)**

According to Laponce and Saint-Jacques (1997), the List Proportional Representation system includes the presentation of a list of campaigners by the political party, to the electorate. This is done in every multi-member electoral district. Unlike the First-Past-The-Post framework, the List Proportional Representation framework allows the electorate to vote for a political party, and not an individual. The political parties acquire parliamentary seats which are symmetrical to their total share of the ballot in the electoral district. The candidates who win are withdrawn from the lists in accordance to their position on the lists. The government has to choose the system of rules which will be used to compute the allotment of seats after the votes have been counted. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2005), the Highest Average or Largest Remainder Method can be used to ascertain the distribution of the seats after the votes have been counted. The chosen formula has the ability of negatively affecting the results of the elections, though to a lesser extent. The International IDEA gives an example of Cambodia in the year 1998, whereby a change in the formula affected the election results. The formula was changed a couple of weeks before election day. The change ended up giving the biggest party more undeserved seats in the national assembly.



Recent democracies such as South Africa have demonstrated that the List Proportional Representation system gives room for political parties to include candidates who are youthful, multiracial and multi-ethnic on their party lists (Norris, 1997). The system makes it more probable for women to be elected. One should be reminded that Zimbabwe is currently using this system in allocating the reserved seats for women in parliament. Young women such as ZANU PF legislator Tionei Melody Dziva have already accessed parliament through this system. The young woman is currently 31 years of age, qualifying in the bracket of youth (The Standard, 2016). Other than advancing women into politics, the system can also be used to to advance young people into politics. Political parties can put young people on their party-lists and allow the electorate to choose youthful candidates. However, the system is criticized for destructing the connection between the electorate and their Members of Parliament (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005). There are open and closed party lists, and where lists are closed, the electorate has no chance to ascertain the personality of the individuals who will be representing them. It will also be difficult for the electorate to reject an individual Member of Parliament in the event of poor performance.

## **2.6 ZIMBABWE'S ELECTORAL PROCESS**

Before Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980, the indigenous Africans did not have the right to vote, and it is for this reason that they waged the liberation struggle. The indigenous black people did not have the right to vote, to be voted for, to campaign for a political party, or join any political party. The first democratic elections in Zimbabwe were held in 1980, resulting in the victory of Robert Mugabe as the first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe. The proportional representation system was used in these elections (Sachikonye, 2003). There was a five percent threshold for allocation of seats in eight provinces in the country. The seats were won by three political parties, ZANU-PF, PF-ZAPU and the United African National Congress (UANC). The new administration of Zimbabwe inaugurated a new electoral framework and constituted a new electoral management structure.

According to Musanhu (2005), this structure was made up of the Electoral Supervisory Commission, the Registrar-General of Elections, the Delimitation Commission, and the Election Directorate. The Lancaster House constitution was amended in 1987 and an executive presidency substituted the ceremonial presidency. The twenty seats which had been specially reserved for the white minority in

1980 were done away with. According to Sachikonye (2001), the advent of the Fast-Past-The-Post system rendered a favorable condition for ZANU-PF.

The Government of Zimbabwe adopted the SADC Guidelines and Principles Governing Democratic Elections in the year 2004 (Musanhu, 2005). These included changes such as voting in one day and counting the votes at the point they were cast. The country introduced new laws that brought about the Electoral Court, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), and the Registrar-General of Voters. The first elections to be held under these new changes were the March 2005 parliamentary elections.

## **2.7 THE ELECTORAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK IN ZIMBABWE**

The electoral legislative framework for Zimbabwe comprises of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), the Electoral Act Chapter 2:13 (2004), and the SADC Principles and Guidelines for Democratic Elections. Among other things, the Zimbabwean constitution accommodates standards of election frameworks, provisions to incorporate into the Electoral Law, timing of elections, and the delimitation of constituent limits by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). Each Zimbabwean is given the right to periodic, free and fair elections and referendums. They may likewise run for public office and, if chosen, hold public office. They have the right to make political choices uninhibitedly. They have the entitlement to form, join and partake in the exercises of a political party, and the right to campaign unreservedly and peacefully for a political party. Notwithstanding these political rights, youngsters in Zimbabwe have been sidelined from the political procedure. Their entitlement to vote and to be voted for has been curtailed by the trepidation of brutality and victimization. Due to the political savagery that has been seen in Zimbabwean elections since the attainment of independence in 1980, young people's entitlement to make political decisions freely has been hindered.

The Electoral Act (2004) accommodates the terms of office, capabilities and vacation of office of individuals from the ZEC, the system and meetings of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the appointment of the Chief Elections Officer. It likewise accommodates the Registrar-General of Voters and constituency registers; the enrollment of voters and the lodging of protests thereto. The Act provides for the preparation, compilation and upkeep of electoral registers. It empowers The

President of Zimbabwe with the prerogative of making election proclamations, among other provisions.

The SADC Principles Governing Democratic Elections (2004) aims at upgrading the transparency and believability of elections and majority rule systems, as well as guaranteeing the acknowledgment of election outcomes by all contesting political parties. Zimbabwe has ratified these principles and standards, but her adherence to the principles is questionable. The rules incorporate standards for directing democratic elections, the mandate and constitution of the SADC observers' mission, rules for the observation of polls, set of principles for election observers, rights and obligations of SADC elections monitors, and obligations of the member state holding elections. SADC Member States, including Zimbabwe, are expected to stick to the principles of full participation of the citizens in the political process, freedom of association, and political tolerance. They are supposed to hold regular elections and provide equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for and conduct voter education. Zimbabwe needs to fully follow these principles in its conduct of the democratic process.

The rules-of-thumb for the observation of elections (according to the SADC Principles Governing Democratic Elections) also include the existence of an updated and easy to obtain voters roll, and timely proclamation of election outcomes. In Zimbabwe in 2008, the presidential election outcomes were announced more than a month after voting day, raising suspicion to the credibility of the results. This is against international standards regarding elections. ZANU PF and ZEC allegedly gave themselves enough time to tamper with the election results. Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was said to have won 47.9 percent of the vote and Mugabe had acquired 43.2 percent of the vote, necessitating a run-off election.

Zimbabwe's current voters roll is in shambles. According to the ZESN Report (2013), the electoral register contains the names of thousands of dead people. It has not been updated and is fraught with inaccuracies. Despite numerous complaints from political parties such as the MDC-T and civil society, the roll has been continuously used for years, with critics saying ZANU (PF) has manipulated these anomalies to win elections. The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN, 2013) has found out that at least 400 000 young voters are missing from the electoral register.

## 2.8 ELECTORAL CYCLE



Figure 2: Source: International Idea (2016)

The electoral cycle consists of interconnected parts and is a continuing and repetitive activity (European Parliament, 2011). It comprises of three stages which are the pre-electoral period, the electoral period, and the post electoral period (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2016). The pre-electoral period is the period before the “Election Day”, and distinct activities take place during this period. Activities which take place in this period include civic education, voter information, voter registration, political party affiliation and candidature, intra-party elections, and electoral campaigns. In Zimbabwe, this period is popular for political rallies held by two major political parties in the country, which are ZANU PF and MDC-T. This is the period of propaganda, whereby ZANU PF uses state-owned media, particularly the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), to tarnish the image of the opposition party. This is the period in which young people in Zimbabwe are used by politicians to perpetrate political violence against members and

supporters of the opposition party. Hence, the pre-electoral period of Zimbabwe also includes political violence.

The electoral period is the period when votes are cast, counted, and announced. During the counting of votes, votes can be manipulated in favor of, or against the incumbent political party. It is said that the people who matter in an election are not the ones who vote, but the ones who count the votes. In Zimbabwe, in the year 2008, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) took more than three weeks counting votes, instead of one or two days as forwarded by international standards regarding elections. These votes were allegedly manipulated in order to stop Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC-T from gaining power (The Standard, 2008). Election results are also announced in this period, and complaints and appeals are also made. The MDC-T party in Zimbabwe is popular for complaining against all the elections in Zimbabwe since the year 2000. Their complaints and appeals in 2008 led to the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in Zimbabwe. Other activities included in this period are shown in Figure 2. The post-electoral period is the period after the elections have taken place and results have been announced. The activities include lawmaking, legal reform, and delimitation of electoral boundaries. .

Young people in Zimbabwe should participate in all these electoral phases, in order to ensure the consolidation of democracy in the country. They should participate before the elections, during the elections, and after the elections. They can participate in voter registration, civic education, voter information, electoral campaigns, voting, vote counting, or by joining or forming political parties, and other processes in the electoral cycle. Young people should be encouraged to register to vote, so that when elections come, they will be able to vote for their parties of choice. Failure for young people to register to vote automatically disenfranchises them, giving an advantage to the ageing ZANU PF party, which enjoys the support of the elderly and uniformed youth in Zimbabwe.

Young people in Zimbabwe need to receive civic education to help them effectively participate in the governance of their country. Civic education is a vital segment of training that develops citizens to take an interest in the general life of a popular government system, to utilize their rights and to discharge their obligations with the essential know-how and abilities (Branson, 1998). If young people in Zimbabwe are not taught on how to live, they will not become effective citizens. Their ignorance can become an avenue for exploitation by politicians, just as what is currently happening

in Zimbabwe. Young people in Zimbabwe are being exploited for lack of knowledge. They are used as perpetrators of political violence because they do not know that they themselves can seek election for public office, and assume it.

Youngsters in Zimbabwe need to start joining or framing political parties with the goal of turning themselves into the masters of their destiny and the drivers of progress in their country. They ought to begin partaking in the exercises of political parties. They ought to begin crusading for their political parties so that their political parties possess the hallways of power and initiate change in the country. It is their responsibility to change the mentalities of those voters who support the long-reigning and quickly-deteriorating ZANU PF party. They ought to turn out amid elections and vote in favor of their political parties of choice. Young people can also participate in vote counting. It is my assumption that informed young people in Zimbabwe, those who were born after Zimbabwe's attainment of independence in 1980, cannot be easily manipulated. Those kind of young people should participate in vote counting to avoid vote rigging. After the elections, they can also follow up on the elected officials and push them into fulfilling their promises. It is my assumption that youth participation in the electoral period can help reduce the manipulation of the electoral system by the ruling ZANU PF party, since most young people in Zimbabwe are assumably looking for democratic change. As indicated by the United Nations Development Programme (2011), the political participation of young people ought to extend across the electoral cycle.

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter looked at the electoral process and electoral system of Zimbabwe. The researcher identified elections as one of the requirements of a democratic society. He categorized electoral systems into three broad families: plurality/majority systems, proportional systems, and mixed systems. The chapter looked at how ZANU PF has used the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system to maintain its political dominance in Zimbabwe, whilst marginalizing the smaller political parties and social groups such as the youth. Zimbabwe should consider reforming its electoral system and adopt the List Proportional Representation system. The chapter also looked at the history of Zimbabwe's electoral system. It identified the legislative framework that governs elections in Zimbabwe. It also identified stages in the electoral cycle and stages in which young people can participate in. These stages include civic education, voter information, voter registration, election observation, political

party affiliation and candidature, electoral campaigns, vote counting, and others. Youth participation in these stages has the ability of strengthening democracy in Zimbabwe.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL PROCESS OF ZIMBABWE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. It also reviews literature from countries such as the United States and Canada on the subject of youth participation in the electoral process. It seeks to prove that young people worldwide are dropping out of the electoral process. The chapter also notes how young people in Zimbabwe have been exploited by ZANU PF and made to physically attack members and supporters of the opposition parties in Zimbabwe.

#### **3.2 THE HETEROGENEITY OF 'YOUTH' AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

Youth are categorized differently in different countries. The government of Zimbabwe defines youth are those individuals who are between the ages of 15 and 35 years (Zimbabwean Constitution 2013, Zimbabwe National Youth Policy 2013). The South African National Youth Policy (2009) puts young people in the bracket of 14 to 35 years of age. Often times, people tend to make a mistake of identifying young people as a close-knit homogeneous group, but this is not the case. There are different groups of young people who face different kinds of challenges that emanate from different situations. Youth have their own special interests that are different from the interests of the older generation. These groupings of young people include young women, youth with disabilities, pupils and students, unemployed youth, out-of-school youths, youth living with HIV, and youth in the Diaspora.

The special interests of each group of young people distinctly affect how they participate in the electoral process of their country. For instance, a blind and deaf young person might not participate in the electoral process because of his or her condition. Their condition might hinder them from accessing voter information that's needed for them to effectively participate in the political process.



Their physical challenge becomes a hindrance to their participation, unless they find someone who can assist them with information, in a way they can easily understand. Full-time students, especially those at university, might not participate in the electoral process because of their engrossment with studying. This is also supported by the “cohort effects explanation” (Putnam, 2000, and Hooghe 2004). This group of young people might have a sense of inexperience that rises from little contact with real life and its difficulties. This group of youth may take electoral campaigning, for instance, as a reserve of the uneducated and unemployed youth. Young women are sidelined from the electoral process, or rather, sideline themselves from the process, because of reasons such as their femininity. Electoral processes in Zimbabwe have been associated with violence, and violence has been associated with masculinity, and thus, young women have disassociated themselves from the political process because of their biological nature.

### **3.3 YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL**

Other than providing for the entitlements of young people in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy (2013) also caters for the responsibilities of the youth. Young people in Zimbabwe are under the moral obligation of actively participating in decision making at all levels that affect their lives. They are obliged to promote and defend democracy and the rule of law in the country. These decision making levels include village level, ward level, provincial level, or national level. At village level, young people can participate in the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), and at ward level, they can participate in the Ward Development Committees (WADCO). They can be represented in these committees so that the decisions made by the committees are friendly to the youth. Young people can also participate in the parliamentary outreach programmes and make their voices heard. In a society, there are two things that are involved, it's either the youth become the leaders of social change, or they become casualties of societal changes (United Nations 2010).

According to the African Youth Charter (2009), every young person has the right to take part in all circles of society. These circles can be political, economic, or social. Zimbabwe has ratified the African Youth Charter (AYC), and is therefore obliged to fulfill the requirements of the Charter. The country should take measures to advance dynamic youth involvement in national issues. These measures incorporate ensuring the involvement of youth in parliament and other basic leadership bodies as per the recommended laws. Currently, the constitution of Zimbabwe provides for a women quota in parliament, but young people are not awarded the same privilege also.

Studies of youth participation in electoral processes (for example, Verba and Nie 1972, Barnes and Kaase 1979) differentiated between conventional and unconventional ways of participation. When young people participate conventionally, they will be participating through official channels such as voting or party activism. When they are participating unconventionally, they will be participating through unofficial channels such as demonstrations or occupying a building or open space. Though young people in Zimbabwe rarely participate in both of these channels, my study will focus on their participation through official channels such as voting.

Classic examples of unconventional participation include the “Fees Must Fall” protests in South Africa in 2015, the recent “#This Flag Campaign” in 2016 in Zimbabwe, and the “Occupy Africa Unity Square” campaign in Zimbabwe. The Occupy Africa Unity Square campaign was conducted in 2014 in Zimbabwe and organized by a 35 year old young man by the name of Itai Dzamara (Nehanda Radio, 2015). The young man wrote a letter to the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, presenting a position and demand on behalf of many Zimbabweans, over the failure of his government to properly and effectively manage the country. The petition demanded that Mugabe immediately admit and declare that he and his government had failed to run the country, and must therefore step down. The young man and his supporters convened and gathered at Africa Unity Square in Harare's Central Business District, waiting for Mugabe's response. However, before the response came, the young man was abducted by alleged state security personnel on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2015 (The Zimbabwean, 2016). It's now one year later, and no one has ever heard from the young man. This is also one of the reasons why Zimbabwean youth fear participating in the political process. To them, participating in politics is putting oneself into jeopardy.

The recent “#This Flag” campaign is a social media campaign by a Zimbabwean citizen by the name of Evan Mawarire. He organized a campaign from the 1<sup>st</sup> of May to the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 asking Zimbabweans to put on their Zimbabwean flags and make a statement to the government that the citizens are alive and they want their country back (SABC News, 2016). The video he posted on social media attracted over ten thousand views and within days over a hundred thousand. Zimbabweans reacted with photographs of themselves draped in the national banner to show loyalty to their country, and their desire for change.

### 3.4 YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Recently, young people in Zimbabwe have occasionally been enrolled into semi-military gatherings of political parties such as ZANU PF and MDC-T to perform politically instigated acts of savagery (Ndebele and Billing 2011). Elections in Zimbabwe have been characterized by political violence. The major highlight of this political violence is probably the 2008 elections and run-off. Houses belonging to opposition party supporters were burned to the ground and devastated. Individuals were mutilated and kidnapped. All these acts of savagery were perpetrated by young people who were recruited to support the the major political parties in Zimbabwe in their bid to win or consolidate power. Sachikonye (2011), notes that several opposition party members and supporters from the MDC-T were slaughtered in the 2000, 2002 and 2008. He notes that thousands of them were harmed and dislodged from their houses. Since Zimbabwe achieved its independence in 1980, young people have been utilized as devices for politically spurred brutality. Youth have been selected into gangs such as ‘Chipangano’ in Mbare and ‘Al-Shabab’ in Kwekwe (Mude 2014). Instead of participating in such gangs, young people in Zimbabwe should form political parties or civil society organizations (CSOs) that seek to promote peace and democracy in the country.

History has shown that young people in Zimbabwe are capable of transforming the country into a better society. This is evidenced by the youth-led liberation war (1960s and 1970s) in Zimbabwe which transformed the political, economic, and social conditions of the country. Today’s youth should take their cue from the youth of old. They should become dissatisfied with the prevailing conditions of this dictatorial era and instead of using the bullet, they should use the ballot to change the political, economic, and social conditions of the country. The fact that the youth of Rhodesia were able to decolonize their country is proof-positive that today’s generation of young Zimbabweans are also able to democratize their country. The recent 2013 elections signaled the possibility of peaceful elections in Zimbabwe, as they were relatively peaceful. The elections were held near the end of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), an agreement which discouraged political parties and their supporters from the use of violence. Young people in Zimbabwe should maintain this peace and refuse to be ill-used during election time. Inokoba and Maliki (2011) notes that during the time of elective legislative issues, young people are abused and mishandled to accomplish the unreasonable political aspirations of the narrow minded segment of the political class.

### **3.5 FACTORS LEADING TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE**

There are many factors that can be attributed to youth participation in political violence in Zimbabwe. These factors include unemployment (Mude, 2014), poverty, youth voter apathy, the quest for power by political parties, and ignorance among the youth. Studies have identified unemployment as the major factor contributing to this phenomenon. Worldwide, youth are 43.7 percent of the total unemployed people (International Labor Organization Report, 2010). Studies have shown that there is a correlation between political violence and the economic conditions of a country. This is the reason urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe have been transformed into ruffians for savage political games played by political parties (Mude, 2014). This has fulfilled the proverb which says, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” There is need for better economic policies in the country, so that jobs are created for the youth. When youth have jobs, their chances of participating in political violence are reduced.

### **3.6 YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

The participation of Zimbabwean youth in vote-based systems is very imperative, especially because young people in the country make up the majority of the population. However, young people in the country have been kicked downstairs, when it comes to electoral processes. The future of our country rests in the hands of the youth, but it seems as if the youth in Zimbabwe are waiting upon the elderly to determine the future of the youth on behalf of the youth. Instead of young people using the ballot to change the situation in Zimbabwe, young people in Zimbabwe have been using violence to worsen the country’s political situation. Young people in Zimbabwe are ignorant and apathetic when it comes to the electoral process, and this can also be attributed to the lack of civic education. The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network Report (2013) has noted with shock the gradual decrease in voter turnout in the country.

In April 2010, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), a civic organization whose objective is to advance majority rule decisions in Zimbabwe, ventured on a Voters’ Roll Audit (VRA) to assess the quality of the electoral register in Zimbabwe. The computer test demonstrated that only 18 percent of those enrolled to vote are youth aged between 18 to 30 years of age (ZESN,

2010). These shocking statistics are proof positive that young people in Zimbabwe are not participating in electoral processes. Young people should not only begin participating in civic life when they have reached the voting age, but even when they are still young - even at school, in small different ways. In Zimbabwe, the views of the youth are rarely taken into account. One of the reasons is the judgmental attitudes that the elders of ZANU PF have towards young people who were born after Zimbabwe's attainment of independence in 1980. These young people are often regarded as naive and labeled as "born frees".

There is much evidence from different nations that voter turnout among the youthful voters is much lower when compared to the voter turnout among the older electorate (Fieldhouse et al. 2007, Putnam 2000, Milner 2005). As indicated by Robertson (2009), youngsters are either aloof about or estranged from formal channels of political participation. She notes that the political participation of youngsters in post-socialist Eastern Europe has not been adequately and academically studied on. This is also true in reference to Africa, and Zimbabwe, in particular. There is barely any thorough academic study on youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. The focal point of this study is to start to address this issue, and through a case study of Kuwadzana, in Harare Province, provide a detailed outline of the nature of youth political participation and non-participation in Zimbabwe. This study will probably be the first of its nature to be conducted in Kuwadzana. Other academics in Zimbabwe have only discussed on youth participation in political violence, and have neglected young people's peaceful participation in the electoral process. These scholars include Mude (2014) and Sachikonye (2011). This study therefore bridges that gap by investigating youth participation in electoral processes such as voting, standing for election, campaigning for a political party, and joining and participating in the activities of a political party.

Understanding the reasons for poor participation of youth in electoral processes can help inform stakeholder intervention and result in an informed young person who will effectively participate in the governance of his/her country. The subject of youth participation in political violence has been over-researched and over-repeated, whilst the subject of youth participation in the electoral process has been under-researched. If there is any study on Zimbabwe's electoral process, the study might be focused on the participation of the general populace in the electoral process, and not the participation of young people as a social group. Rather than try to understand the reasons of youth participation in political violence, my research sought to understand the reasons for youth

disengagement from the electoral process. It has been found that electoral participation can be affected by different factors such as the type of institutions in a country and factors that are personal to the electorate (Gray and Caul 2000). This shows that youth non-participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe goes beyond individual factors, but is also affected by systems and institutions utilized by the Zimbabwean government. Individual factors include personal lack of interest in politics. Other institutional determinants include Zimbabwe's use of the First-Past-The-Post electoral system and the alleged partisanship of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

The Majoritarian System (FPTP) that Zimbabwe has been using has been favoring big parties like ZANU PF and marginalizing small and youthful political parties and hindering them from winning parliamentary seats and assuming public office. Numerous young Zimbabweans quit conventional types of political involvement because they feel far away from the formal political operators. They feel that their votes do not count in Zimbabwean elections. Electoral fraud in Zimbabwe, which has been allegedly conducted through different means such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and an inconsistent electoral register, has created a distrust of political processes in the youth. Even the domination of political party structures by the elderly (especially those in ZANU PF) has left the young feeling irritated and banished from the traditional political operators, procedures, and establishments. This has led them to opt out of participating in elections. The United States herself is assailed by a participatory emergency that tends to weaken the very establishments of citizenship. This became largely acknowledged through the book 'Bowling Alone', which was written by Putnam and published in the year 2000 (Robertson, 2009). It is my perspective that this democratic emergency is additionally familiar to Zimbabwe. These international findings can also help us understand the situation in Zimbabwe. It pushes me to probe this participatory crisis in the context of Zimbabwe and seek to understand the reasons behind the emergency, so as to proffer possible solutions.

If young people are not introduced to the political process from a tender age, they end up becoming what Howe (2007) termed "customary non-voters". These customary non-voters are depicted as the individuals who never vote, come rain come thunder. He also identified "irregular non-voters" and alluded to them as those individuals who vote some of the time, but not always. This means that they either skip or boycott some of the elections. It is my assumption that customary non-voting is more significant these days among young people in Zimbabwe, than ever before. Milner (2005) has

termed young people as “political dropouts”. This is from the realization that youngsters from all over the world infrequently take part in electoral procedures. There are many reasons why young people all over the world disengage themselves from electoral processes, and these reasons differ according to the context. The reasons for poor youth participation in electoral processes in the United States slightly differ from the reasons of poor youth participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe. This is because the United States is an older democracy than Zimbabwe. The solutions, therefore, might also differ because of the differing contexts.

Understanding the peculiar reasons for poor youth participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe is imperative in identifying the solutions needed to address the participatory crisis in the country. Tinashe Msiyambiri, the national coordinator of the Youth Alliance for Democracy (YAD) is quoted to have said, "Young people should not just be road runners and stone throwers for politicians. We need young people to represent young interests" (The Zimbabwean, 2013). This statement recognizes that young people are participating in the political process, but are doing so on the wrong side. This calls for an exhaustive academic study that will be able to unravel the reasons for youth non-participation in electoral processes, and thus reduce the exploitation of youth by politicians through offering solutions to their problem. The Research and Advocacy Unit shockingly revealed that in the 2013 harmonized elections, only 8.87 percent of the youth in Zimbabwe were on the voter's roll while the registration rate among those aged 80 and above was an incredible 219 percent (The Standard, 2014). These shocking statistics show that youth non-participation in the electoral process is a huge problem in Zimbabwe - a problem which is sabotaging the very cornerstones of citizenship and democracy. This phenomenon justifies an in-depth study so as to unravel the root cause of the problem and proffer possible solutions thereof. It is very saddening to note that only 8 percent of the 60 percent young people in Zimbabwe are participating in the electoral process. These numbers do not add up. It is my belief that if young people in Zimbabwe begin to participate in the governance of their country, Zimbabwe can become a stronger and better democracy.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter explored youth participation in Zimbabwe. It looked at youth participation in both formal and informal processes such as protests. It also explored the concept of youth and the heterogeneity of the group, and how this heterogeneity differently affects youth participation in

electoral processes. The chapter also looked at youth participation in political violence and how youth have been exploited in the past elections as a method of ZANU PF's power consolidation. Factors leading to youth participation in political violence were also explored. Civil society reports on youth participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe were also unpacked. An example of these reports included the ZESN report of 2010. This chapter thus validated the fact that youth disengagement from electoral processes is not only a phenomenon peculiar to Zimbabwe, but a phenomenon witnessed in most of the democracies in the world.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND OUTCOMES IN KUWADZANA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of data obtained from 200 questionnaires and two research interviews. The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network Report (2010), revealed that 18% of young people in Zimbabwe do not participate in elections (ZESN, 2010). This chapter will unveil the reasons for youth disengagement from electoral processes in Zimbabwe, using the case study of Kuwadzana, Harare Province. The data was collected from young people in Kuwadzana, as well as their policy makers, who in this case are ward councilors. It is presented in descriptive and statistical form. Gathering and collecting data is useless if the gathered data is not analyzed and exhibited. The reason of data presentation and examination is to sort out the discoveries from various wellsprings of data-gathering like survey researches. Data presentation and examination makes sense out of raw information (Blaxter, et al, 2006). This study made use of the “cohort effects explanation” to explain the disengagement of young people from the electoral process of Zimbabwe. From this lens, youngsters in Zimbabwe are extensively less intrigued and educated about legislative issues than older nationals, and fundamentally less inclined to peruse daily papers or take after governmental issues on TV.

#### **4.2 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

The objectives of the study were to:

- To assess and analyze youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe, with particular attention to youth disengagement from the electoral process
- To prove that young people in Zimbabwe are dropping out of the electoral process

- To examine the causes and consequences of youth disengagement from the electoral process of Zimbabwe
- To generate information that can be used for stakeholder intervention

The researcher chose a sample where the interviews and surveys were going to be administered. According to Lohr (1999), the sample method includes taking a representative selection of the populace and utilizing the gathered data as research information. Sampling must be done whenever you can gather only a fraction of a population of a group or a phenomenon which you want to study. The researcher targeted the young people in Kuwadzana as well as their policy makers. Two hundred questionnaires were sent to youths at random in the selected areas. Although some youth were refusing to participate in the research for fear of victimization, all the 200 questionnaires were responded to. This gave a response rate of 100 percent for the questionnaires. The Kuwadzana constituency has four councilors. The researcher managed to interview two of the councilors, Resias Masunda from MDC-T and Urayayi Mangwiro from MDC-T. The data he collected from councilor Resias Masunda was collected through a tape recorder, and is safely kept by the researcher. The other two councilors were not available for the interview. This gave a response rate of 50 percent for the interviews. The survey respondents were predominantly man. Out of the 200 questionnaires, 163 respondents were man, whilst the 37 respondents were women. This gave the male respondents a percentage of 81.5 percent, and the female respondents a percentage of 18.5 percent. This response rate shows that young women are not interested in discussing political issues. They think that politics is the prerogative of man, when in reality it affects everyone, regardless of gender.

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
MALE	163	81.5%
FEMALE	37	18.5%

*Figure 3: Total number of respondents and their gender*

### **4.3 YOUTH AFFILIATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES**

As indicated by Johnston (2005), strong political gatherings are vital to open, competitive democratic issues, especially in rising majority rule governments. Through political parties, young Zimbabweans are able to influence the political and governmental decisions of their country. This is why youth in Zimbabwe should join political parties that advance the same political views and goals. Young people in Zimbabwe do not know the importance of affiliating themselves to political parties. This is evidenced by the responses from the survey. Only three (1.5 percent) of the 200 respondents revealed that they were card-holding members of a political party! The rest revealed that they were just ordinary supporters of their political parties. They responded that they were not interested in politics, what's more, joining a political party. This lack of interest in politics among the youth in Zimbabwe validates the "cohort effects explanation" which claims that today's young people are considerably less intrigued and learned about governmental issues than more seasoned natives. Some of the young respondents revealed that they did not have any political alternative since all the political ideologies held by the different political parties in the country were not appealing to them. However, this lack of political choice in Zimbabwe should be the one that pushes young people in Zimbabwe to start up political parties that would provide alternatives to the young people in Zimbabwe and the populace at large. Political parties like ZANU PF were formed by young Rhodesians who were enraged by the suppression of the colonial era and sought to free their country from imperialism.

### **4.4 YOUTH AND VOTER REGISTRATION**

According to the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2000), voter enrollment is vital for political support in a democratic setting. There must be a surety that the privilege to vote in elections is far reaching, proportional, direct and secret. The researcher shockingly discovered that 147 of the 200 young people he questioned were not registered as voters. This represents 73.5 percent of the total respondents! Some of them saw voter registration as a waste of time. Others felt that they would rather do "more fruitful things" such as engage themselves in entrepreneurial activities than waste time involving themselves in politics. Some of them were not even aware of the process and its requirements. Only 53 of the respondents were

registered voters who had voted in the past. This represents 26.5 percent of the respondents. Those who were registered complained at the cumbersome process of registration. Others suggested the use of an automatic method of voter registration. The respondents who had never voted before felt that voting will never change anything in Zimbabwe. Some of them were afraid of political participation. The fear of victimization was the biggest reason for youth disengagement from elections. Others said that Zimbabwe lacked political choice and the ideologies of all the political parties in the country were unappealing. Those who have voted before said that they vote just for the sake of voting, but they were convinced that their vote could not count under the Mugabe regime.

#### **4.5 YOUTH AND NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARDS**

Of all the 200 respondents, only one of them (a male aged 21 years from Kuwadzana East constituency) did not have a national identity card. This represents 0.5 percent of the respondents. This also shows that there are a few young people in Zimbabwe who do not know that a national ID card is very important for participating in the electoral process. It also shows that young people in Zimbabwe have no excuse for not participating in electoral processes since they have the required documents.

#### **4.6 YOUTH WHO HAVE STOOD FOR ELECTION BEFORE**

Of all the 200 respondents have never attempted running for election before, not even as an independent candidate. This is proof positive that young people in Zimbabwe have not been trained in leadership. They think that running for election for public office is the reserve of a few people (especially the elderly). They do not know that they themselves can also participate directly in policy making. They also fear that if they run for election for public office they will be victims of political violence. One of them said that even if young people run for election in Zimbabwe, they will never be allowed to win.

#### **4.7 YOUTH WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS BEFORE**

Basically defined, a political campaign is the period right before nationals make a real political decision (Brady and Johnston, 1987). This is the period when political parties try to convince the electorate to vote for them and to support their political goals and ideologies. The researcher took time to question the youth in Kuwadzana about their participation in electoral campaigns. Of all the two hundred (200) respondents, only seven (7) of the young people had participated in electoral campaigns before. This represents 3.5 percent of the respondents. Of the seven (7), six (6) of them had campaigned for the MDC-T, whilst one of them had campaigned for the ZANU PF party. Fear of victimization was cited as one of the reasons why young people in Zimbabwe are afraid of publicly acknowledging their political parties. This also proves that the reason why ZANU PF maintains its political dominance in Zimbabwe is because young people in the country are not willing to support their alternative political parties in gaining power.

#### **4.8 YOUTH WHO HAVE RECEIVED VOTER EDUCATION BEFORE**

According to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (2011) voter information and voter education campaigns help give citizens an educated voice and help them possess the political space provided by an election. Citizens regularly need fundamental learning about the procedure of elections. If they lack appropriate information about the electoral process, they may experience hindrances to voting. This is why the researcher had to ask the young people in Kuwadzana about voter education in their locality. All of the respondents cited that they had never received voter education before. This proves that youth disengagement from electoral processes in Zimbabwe is also contributed by ignorance among the youth, as the government is failing to take up its constitutional and legal mandate of educating the citizens on the importance of civic engagement.

#### **4.9 DO YOU KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ELECTION?**

As indicated by Douglas (2013), voting is the foundational idea for our whole vote based structure. Voting is evidence that the nationals rule themselves by free choice. The researcher also questioned if the young people in Kuwadzana knew the importance of an election. His assumption was that one of the reasons why young people in Zimbabwe do not participate in elections was because they did

not know the importance of an election. The young respondents knew the importance of an election. Only two of the respondents revealed that they did not know the importance of an election. The rest responded that elections help them to choose a leader of choice who might be able to change the economic, social, and political conditions of their country. Some of them mentioned that it was their right to vote, and that when they vote they will be exercising this right. They said that leaders are supposed to come and go, and not stay in office for life. It was amazing that the youth in Kuwadzana knew the importance of an election, yet they did not have adequate information to help them effectively participate in the elections.

#### **4.10 YOUTH PARTICIPATION FROM A POLICY MAKER'S PERSPECTIVE**

The researcher interviewed Councilor Urayayi Mangwiro from ward 37, Kuwadzana East constituency. The councilor is 40 years old, way above the constitutional definition of youth. He revealed that young people in Ward 37 are not voting because they do not know the importance of elections. The economic hardships are also forcing them to opt out of politics so that they may channel their energies towards entrepreneurial projects that can help them earn a living. This further validated the “cohort effects explanation” theory which suggests that youth drop out of the electoral process because of other commitments such as jobs and full-time education (Putnam, 2000). The councilor revealed that some of the youth in Kuwadzana feel that participating in the electoral process will not change anything for them. He also mentioned the fear of violence and victimization among young people in his ward. In his political party (the MDC-T), few young people are participating in primary elections. Those who participate in electoral campaigns take it for granted. This is the reason youth are being exploited by the politicians. He also cited that one of the challenges in youth participation in electoral processes is the lack of voter education. Young people do not know the reasons for participating in the electoral process.

The researcher also interviewed Councilor Resias Masunda from Ward 44. The data he collected from councilor Resias Masunda was collected through a tape recorder, and is safely kept by the researcher. Councilor Masunda also emphasized on the points that had been raised by Councilor Mangwiro. He revealed that young people in his constituency are not participating in elections. He said that if young people in Zimbabwe were participating in elections, the ZANU PF government would have gone a long time ago. He mentioned that although youth are participating in primary

elections in his own party (MDC-T), they were despised by the elders and not voted for. He said that voter education should be taken into schools so that young people in Zimbabwe grow up knowing the importance of the political process. He also mentioned that young people in his ward are not participating even in the Ward Development Committee (WADCO).

#### **4.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter unveiled the reasons for youth disengagement from electoral processes in Kuwadzana, in Harare Province, Zimbabwe. These reasons included fear of victimization, a cumbersome registration process, distrust of the political process, youth voter apathy, ignorance, lack of civic/voter education, lack of political interest, lack of a political alternative, and preoccupation on sustainable youth livelihoods. The chapter unveiled information acquired from the youth of Kuwadzana and two ward councilors in the constituency. The data was collected from young people in Kuwadzana, as well as their policy makers, who in this case are ward councilors. The data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. It was presented in descriptive and statistical form to enhance the understanding of the nature of youth participation as articulated by the respondents. This chapter proved that young people in Zimbabwe, as represented by youth in Kuwadzana, are not participating in the electoral process of their country, and thus weakening the very establishments of citizenship and democracy. Young people in Zimbabwe are not participating in the activities of political parties. Many of them are not registering to vote, thus disenfranchising themselves. They are not interested in politics and many of them do not envision themselves taking up public office through standing for election. Only a few of them help their political parties campaign for public office, reducing the chances of political change in the country. This is also because of lack of civic education among the youth. This research has proven that youth in Zimbabwe are starved and deprived of civic education. There is a lot that the government, civil society organizations, and political parties need to do to encourage youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 CONCLUSION

The first chapter of this book gives the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, research questions, the research methodology, the justification of the study, the literature review, the theories and conceptual framework, the delimitation of the study, ethical considerations and anticipated limitations. One of the goals of the research was to assess and analyze the nature and extent of youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe, and this goal was achieved. Answers to the research questions were answered through the surveys and questionnaires. The two theories (the “life-cycle explanation” and the “cohort effects explanation”) were also proven in the research.

The second chapter of the research deals with the electoral process and electoral system of Zimbabwe. It identified stages of the electoral cycle in which young people in Zimbabwe should participate in. These stages include civic education, voter information, voter registration, election observation, political party affiliation and candidature, electoral campaigns, vote counting, and others. The researcher identified the different electoral systems that are used all over the world. These are categorized into three expansive families which are: majority systems, proportional representation systems, and the mixed systems. The electoral system of Zimbabwe (FPTP) has contributed to the sidelining of young people from the electoral process of the country.

The third chapter of the research talks about youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe. It distinguishes between formal and informal methods of political participation. Informal ways of political participation include protests such as the 2014 “Occupy Africa Unity Square Campaign” in Zimbabwe. Youth participation in political violence is also discussed in this chapter. The chapter also reviews literature from countries such as the United States and Canada on the subject of youth participation in electoral processes. It seeks to prove that young people in Zimbabwe and the world at large are dropping out of the electoral process and undermining the democracy in the country.



The fourth chapter presents and analyzes data collected during the study. Data was collected through 200 questionnaires and two qualitative interviews. This data proved that young people in Zimbabwe are dropping out of the electoral process. The sixth chapter concludes the research and gives recommendations on how the government, political parties, and civil society in Zimbabwe can encourage and promote youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe.

The research has shown that the ZANU PF government has succeeded in sidelining and alienating young people in Zimbabwe from the electoral process through the use of violence, an unrepresentative electoral system and alleged electoral fraud. This has scare away young people in Zimbabwe from participating in elections, thus weakening the very cornerstones of citizenship and democracy in the country. This electoral system ought to be changed and Zimbabwe should embrace the List Proportional Representation system such as that which used in South Africa. This will allow equal representation of social groups and political parties in the national assembly. The research has proven that young people in Zimbabwe are not participating in the electoral cycle in activities such as voter registration, voter information, vote counting, standing for election for public office, joining or participating in the activities of political parties, and electoral campaigns. This has contributed to a de facto one party state system in the country. The reasons for dropping out of the electoral process included fear of victimization, preoccupation with employment issues, distrust of the electoral process, gender, ignorance, apathy, lack of civic education, allegations of electoral fraud, and lack of a good-enough political alternative. Once these problems are solved, Zimbabwe will become a stronger democracy than it is today. In the meantime, Zimbabwe has a participatory crisis that is strongly sabotaging the very cornerstones of citizenship and democracy. Young people should make use of their demographic superiority to change the political, economic, and social complexion of the country.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The electoral arrangement of Zimbabwe (First-Past-the-Post) has been utilized to the advantage of greater political parties such as ZANU PF, much to the detriment of smaller political gatherings and social gatherings such as the youth. Zimbabwe needs to change its appointive framework and embrace the List Proportional Representation (LPR) framework. The LPR is utilized by neighboring South Africa, and it has turned out to be more comprehensive as it gives smaller political parties and

the youngsters the chance to get into parliament and straightforwardly impact policy. The present "champ takes all" FPTP framework appears to support the major political gatherings in Zimbabwe, for example, ZANU PF and the MDC-T. This has been detrimental to the smaller political gatherings in the nation. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has often been criticized for allegedly allying with ZANU PF to rig elections in Zimbabwe. The ZEC chairperson is appointed by the President of the Republic Zimbabwe after consultations with the Judicial Services Commission. This has reportedly compromised the impartiality of the commission. This researcher recommends that the ZEC should be independent in order to increase credibility in terms of impartiality. This will give room for youth to assume public office. The appointment of the ZEC chairperson and leading members should not be the sole right of the president or the government as it seems to be. The commission should also be given adequate financing. The freedom enjoyed by Ghana's Election Commission is praiseworthy.

Zimbabwe ought to encourage affirmative action policies such as youth quotas in its electoral laws. This should also be done within political parties. Political parties ought to support solid youth wings. Zimbabwe should audit its National Youth Policy and create an environment conducive for youth participation. Youth should be admitted into all phases of civic/voter education campaigns. They should be incorporated into the advisory board of Zimbabwe's electoral management board, the ZEC, as polling station workers and election observers. The voices of the youth should be heard in parliament and government. Zimbabwe ought to adjust the minimum voting age with the minimum age of eligibility for public office. The voting age in Zimbabwe is 18 years, whilst the age of eligibility for a seat in parliament is 21 years. This should be synchronized. The voting age should be the same with the eligibility age for public office, so that more of the youth are afforded the opportunity to run for public office. Government and civil society organizations should train and mentor young people (especially young women) on civic engagement. The government should support the participation of young Zimbabweans throughout the electoral cycle. Youth should participate in voting, civic education, voter information, voter registration, election observation, political party activities and candidature, electoral campaigns, vote counting, and other activities in the electoral cycle. Youth should participate in the electoral process during the pre-electoral period, the electoral period, and the post electoral period. Government and civil society organizations ought to prepare and tutor youngsters (particularly young women) on municipal engagement. The administration ought to bolster youth participation all through the electoral cycle. Youth should be encouraged to

register to vote, so that they might enjoy their right to vote. Youth participation in the electoral process of Zimbabwe has the ability of consolidating democracy in the country.

## **THE FUTURE**

This research is essentially a pilot study. There remains a need for further systematic and in-depth comparative studies in Zimbabwe. The dissertation shows that there is a link between youth participation in electoral processes and democracy in Zimbabwe. The youth of Zimbabwe, since they are the majority of the Zimbabwean population, have the demographic advantage needed to change Zimbabwe's political system. The sooner they utilize this advantage; the sooner Zimbabwe's democracy is consolidated. The future of the country rests in their hands.

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