

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**GENDERED PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOTING IN GWERU
URBAN**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this research study was exploring gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting in Gweru Urban. The main objectives of the study were to firstly to find out the views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru Urban. Secondly, the study sought to unravel the perception and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru Urban. Its last objective was to explore the push factors behind voting for men and women in Gweru Urban. A descriptive research design was used for this study and two research instruments used, namely – questionnaires and interviews. The target population for the study were mainly the man and women in Gweru urban as well as stakeholders in the area. The study findings revealed that men generally have positive attitudes and perceptions with regards to voting in Gweru urban than women. The study recommended that there be more education, gender awareness, more access to information as well as improvement of voting systems to enhance men and women's participation in voting.

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to Midlands State University for acceptance, a dissertation entitled: **Gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting in Gweru Urban**

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family – My husband and my children. I thank you so much for the prayers and moral support that you gave to me day and night. You are much appreciated.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------|
| GoZ | Government of Zimbabwe |
| MSU | Midlands State University |
| RAU | Research and Advocacy Unit |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Education Fund |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| ZESN | Zimbabwe Electoral and Support Network |
| ZEC | Zimbabwe Electoral Commission |

INTRODUCTION

Issues to do with voting and its administration have gained the attention political as well as social scientists in recent times. This is so because elections are one of the many important tenets of democracy. Citizens' participation in all political processes is the essence of all democratic societies around the world. While there are several forms of citizen participation in a democratic society, involvement in the voting is critical to achieving democracy. It is important to underline that there are demographical aspects like age, gender and educational or marital status that can be important factors in the determination of whether one participates in the democratic processes like voting in an election. Thus the noted demographic aspects might also affect perceptions as well as attitude towards voting processes in a country. This study thus sought to understand the prevailing perceptions and attitudes towards the voting in Gweru urban. It specifically looked at the views of men and women with regards to voting and its relevance, voter registration and push factors behind voting. Such an analysis was done focusing on both the current and previous processes.

Background to the Study

Political participation is important for democracy, but all democracies are plagued by systematic inequalities in participation (Galston, 2001). One of the most persistent has been according to gender, such that women are found to participate less than men, and suggesting that half the population's interests are less well represented (Galston, 2001). According to Coffe and Bolzndahl (2011) gender inequalities in political participation remain an important part of democracy's unresolved dilemma of unequal participation. For these reasons, according to the above scholars, a great deal of research has been devoted to evaluating gender gaps in political participation. Thus questions mainly centre on whether a gap exists, how large it is, and where it occurs. The above helped inspire this study.

It must be clear from the onset that there are different types of political participation. According to Marien et al (2010) gender gaps persist in most other types of political participation, and men are significantly more involved than women in a number of outlets such as strikes, demonstrations, contacting political officials, and political party membership. Dalton (2008), on the other hand, argues that women tend to be as likely, or more so, as men to engage in individualistic forms of participation such as signing a petition, political consumerism, or donating money. Men however, are more likely than women to engage in collective forms of participation (for example, a demonstration) or to directly contact a politician.

To add to the above, there are also other important political aspects worth participating in any democracy that is, taking part in the voting process. Currell (2005) notes that based on research that focuses on gender gaps in political participation among Western industrialized democracies, gender differentials in one of the most important forms of participation – voting - are shrinking to the point of insignificance and, in some countries. The above perspective also helped to inspire this research. It is interesting to find out whether such findings apply in Africa or certain local contexts. Thus, this study focused on the attitudes and perceptions of men and women towards the voting in Gweru urban. It makes a gendered analysis of the voting process in Gweru urban.

Studies outside of Africa note variables that affect perceptions, confidence and attitudes of voters towards electoral processes. Scholars like Magleby et al (2010) note education as a mixed predictor of voter confidence with other studies indicating no effect. Race has been shown to matter for blacks in terms of voter confidence and attitudes in the USA. Gender sometimes matters and sometimes it does not according to Hall et al (2010). Another factor that might affect voter perceptions in the voting system is age (Johnson and Bowler 2010).

This study concentrated on a gendered analysis of perceptions and attitudes towards the voting processes.

This study mainly focused on gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting in Gweru urban. The research study specifically sought to examine the views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru urban. In addition, it analysed views of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru urban as well as push factors behind voting in Gweru urban. The major concern at carrying out this study is the outcry on a notable gender gap on the number of men as compared to women who engage in political participation such as those involved in the voting processes in Zimbabwe. While women participation is higher in some areas and some processes, it seems different in some. In addition, the trends differ with a particular election as well as locality (Makumbe and Compagnon (2000). It was thus imperative to examine the perceptions and attitudes of men and women in Gweru urban towards the voting process in their area at this moment in time.

A study on the prevailing perceptions and attitudes towards the voting processes amongst men and women is also important in that it assessed the opinions on the new systems being introduced in the voting process in the country, which is due to hold elections this year. This study was thus conveniently timed because voting and its processes are the topical issues within the country. It is interesting to get past and new opinions towards the voting processes currently taking place and all other associated activities. The research study was thus both fascinating and practical. While assessments of electoral fields are always being carried out anywhere in the world, this one was particular to Gweru urban area. This justified it as a new study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that the population of females in Zimbabwe is larger than that of males, their participation in political affairs of the country is still low. While women participation in political processes is supported by international and local laws, and has somewhat improved since independence, there still exist inequalities, depending on the process, context and locality. This is true of women's participation in voting in Zimbabwe. Notably, there are areas where women are very much active in voting and in others where they are not. A great deal of research has been devoted to evaluating gender gaps in voting elsewhere, however, questions still mainly centre on whether a gap exists, how large it is, and where it occurs. Thus, it is important that the voting processes of countries be in constant assessment at each new election. This research study specifically sought to examine the attitudes and perceptions of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru urban. In addition, it analysed views of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru urban as well as push factors behind voting in Gweru urban.

Research objectives

- To examine the views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru Urban.
- To explore the perceptions and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru Urban.
- To examine push factors behind voting in Gweru Urban.

Research questions

- What are the views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru Urban?
- What are the perception and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru Urban?
- What are the push factors behind voting for men and women in Gweru Urban?

Conceptual Framework

Voting is a process by which a person or a group of people expresses an opinion formally or officially (Kay, 2015). People vote in many situations (such as when students elect class officers at school). But voting usually refers to the act of citizens choosing candidates for public office or deciding on public issues and laws. This study refers to voting for candidates in public office. In many countries, voting is free. It is also voluntary; no one can be forced to vote. It is also a crime to try to stop another person from voting. Voting is private — no one can see how another person votes. And a person may vote only once in any election (Kay, 2015).

Furthermore, depending with country, areas of voting are divided into voting districts called precincts or constituencies. According to EISA (2012) in Zimbabwe, voting districts might are called constituency or ward. According to Kay (2015) before voting, people must register to vote in the constituency or ward where they live. This consists of filling out a form with one's name, address, and other information. Registration ensures that people vote in the right place. In other countries, people can usually register by mail. On election day, most voters go to a polling place to cast their ballots (Kay, 2015). This is usually a public building, such as a school, recreation centre, city hall, or firehouse. Voters present themselves to the poll workers, provide identification, and receive the materials needed to vote. In most cases, people vote by machine in private voting booths. Today these have become increasingly computerized (Kay, 2015). A voter may touch a computer screen to cast a ballot or may fill out a computer-readable paper form. People can also vote by mail; they submit what is known as an absentee ballot. Absentee ballots are especially useful for those who have difficulty getting to the polling place or who are away from their hometowns on election day (Kay, 2015).

Here, the study traverses involvement or participation of men and women in all the voting processes. Thus it analyses political participation of men and women both as candidates as well as supporters from the level of a particular party, involvement in voter registration and voter education. The assessment thus includes all the processes up until the casting of the ballot is done. This study specifically focuses on gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting processes in Gweru Urban.

This study is guided by the concept that gender is a socially and culturally constructed variable pegged on the role that men and women play in their daily lives. Gender refers to the attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being a female and male, and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men, girls and boys (Kasomo, 2012). These attributes, opportunities and relationships are largely socially constructed and inculcated through socialization processes. Like the concepts of class and/or ethnicity, gender is an analytical tool for a social process. In brief, sex (biological sex) refers to the biological distinction between females and males by nature of birth (Kasomo, 2012). Gender (social sex) refers to the socially and culturally learned identity and relations: what is often referred to as woman or man, girl or boy. Unlike sex, the identity of gender does not come from birth. It is socially and culturally constructed and can therefore be deconstructed over time. Gender is not only about roles but also about relations. What people state that women or men are, or shall do, is related to the question of who sets the rules and for what functions. Gender is also about power, privileges, responsibilities, rights and duties. In any working environment or institution, the values, attitudes and beliefs of its personnel regarding gender is transformed and expressed into the institutional and structural system, the culture and the normative framework of the institution (Kasomo, 2012).

Pickens (2005) defined an attitude as a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all

objects and situations to which it is related. He notes that a simpler definition of attitude is a mind-set or a tendency to act in a particular way due to both an individual's experience and temperament. Attitudes are a complex combination of things we tend to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviours, and motivations. An attitude includes three components: an affect (a feeling), cognition (a thought or belief), and behaviour (an action) (Pickens, 2005). Attitudes help us define how we see situations, as well as define how we behave toward the situation or object.

Perception is closely related to attitudes (Pickens, 2005). He argues that perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. In other words, a person is confronted with a situation or stimuli. The person interprets the stimuli into something meaningful to him or her based on prior experiences (Pickens, 2005). However, what an individual interprets or perceives may be substantially different from reality. A person's awareness and acceptance of the stimuli play an important role in the perception process. Receptiveness to the stimuli is highly selective and may be limited by a person's existing beliefs, attitude, motivation, and personality (Assael, (1995) in Pickens, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the hormonal explanation theories. Hormonal theories of sex differences argue that men and women differ not because of the external social environment but, rather, because the sexes have different underlying hormones (Dabbs et al., 1996). It is these physiological differences, not differential social treatment that causes men and women to diverge over development and views. Men and women do differ in their levels of circulating hormones. Hormones are chemical substances secreted by glands throughout the body and carried in the bloodstream. The same sex hormones occur in both men and women,

but differ in amounts and in the effect that they have upon different parts of the body. The most important hormone which induces these differences is testosterone.

These sex differences in circulating testosterone have been linked with some of the traditional sex differences found in behaviour, such as aggression, dominance, and career choice. In women, for example, high levels of testosterone are linked with pursuing a more masculine career and having greater success within the chosen career (Hoyenga and Hoyenga, 1993). Testosterone is typically understood to contribute to maleness and masculinity, although it also responds to behaviours such as competition. Competition is crucial to evolution and may increase testosterone but also is selectively discouraged for women and encouraged for men via gender norms.

In political processes there exists a lot of competition such that it has been regarded as a domain for men in society. Women, because of their biological makeup with less testosterone, thus aggression and competition, chose to follow a private life away from public exposure. This in a way explains the dominance of men in political participation. This theory informed this study, where participation of men and women in voting was under scrutiny.

Significance of the study

This research might impact positively on the work of different stakeholders with interest in democratic processes, election administration, and gender issues as well social and political studies including policy formulators.

The Researcher;

The study is important in that it helped the researcher in acquiring specific as well as applied research understanding and skills. The study was also imperative in that it is obligatory for study in the Department of Development Studies at the Midlands State University.

Fellow Students;

This research might indeed be valuable as secondary literature to fellow students embarking on studies of a similar nature in the future.

Other Stakeholders;

This study also informs different stakeholders and academics who are interested in gender, political and social development studies.

Literature review

This section explores related literature to the study on gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting in Gweru urban area. There is abundance of literature on different aspects to do the electoral systems around the world, gender and politics as well as voters' behaviour. Few of the studies directly refer to perceptions of men and women to the voting processes as a whole. The researcher made a synopsis of these studies here in relation to research questions.

Views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration

There are no studies directly referring to views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration. However, there are studies which make general reviews as well as discussion on voter registration. According to Mwanyisa (2016) the starting point towards any credible election is the voter registration exercise. The scholar notes that an election that is credible must prevent voters from voting more than once and unregistered voters from voting. Contemporary discourse on elections has thus moved to how to make the register more transparent and credible.

A study by McCarthy (2016) notes that a majority of United States of America adults (63%) favour automatic voter registration, whereby citizens are automatically registered to vote when they do business with the Department of Motor Vehicles or certain other state agencies.

The study reveals that automatic voter registration is most popular in the East (69%) and West (66%), the only regions in which states have enacted it - including Oregon and California in the West, and Connecticut, Vermont and West Virginia in the East. McCarthy (2016) adds that the number of states offering automatic voter registration could increase nearly seven-fold in future, however. In 2016, 29 states and the District of Columbia considered measures that would put in place some form of the policy. In sum, Americans want easier processes for registering to vote and casting their ballots, as well as stronger checks against fraud (McCarthy, 2016).

According to the Prew Trust (2016) registration's importance to the voting process and the large number of individuals who remain unregistered have spurred several major reforms intended to increase voter registration. The need to know about eligible but unregistered U.S. citizens' exposure to opportunities to register, reasons for choosing not to, or attitudes toward the electoral system and civic engagement, or how many of them are interested in registering in the future, the Pew Charitable Trusts commissioned a nationally representative survey conducted in March and April 2016 that included a large population of unregistered individuals (Prew Trust, 2016). Findings revealed that despite publicity efforts, more than 60% of adult citizens had never been asked to register to vote and the rate was nearly identical among individuals who are and are not registered. However, less than 20% of all those surveyed reported such an occurrence, which indicates that the National Voter Registration Action has not been successful at reaching a large percentage of the population. 44% of eligible unregistered individuals noted that they do not want to vote. Another 20% said they intended to register but had not done so yet, and 25% said they are unregistered because they have not been inspired by a candidate or issue. 11% did not want to register due to privacy or security reasons (Prew Trust, 2016). The findings suggested that opportunities exist to engage segments of the unregistered population as well as have public education

campaigns designed to highlight the significance of individual voter participation to election outcomes and the connection between local policies and issues these citizens care about, such as those for which they volunteer in their communities (Pew Trust, 2017).

A study on gender gaps in political participation across Sub-Saharan African nations revealed aspects to do with perceptions on voter registration. According to Coffe and Bolzenhl (2011) a significant gender gap exists in ten of the eighteen nations included in the study, with women significantly less likely to register to vote in Benin, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda, Senegal and Tanzania. However, in every nation but Kenya and Nigeria the gap is no longer significant once there is control for socioeconomic characteristics. Coffe and Bolzenhl (2011) argue that the gender gap in voter registration can be explained by gender differences in socioeconomic status. The study also finds important differences across the region, underscoring the importance of examining results for individual nations. According to Coffe and Bolzenhl (2011) voting - thus registering to vote - is arguably the key democratic right. Therefore, it is positive news that in most of these nations, there is no gender difference in registering to vote (Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). Another group of nations is hampered by gender differences in socioeconomic resources which in turn limit women's registration (Benin, Uganda, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, and Tanzania). If women had the same socioeconomic profile as men in these nations, they would register to vote in roughly equal amounts, while Nigeria would also need women to have political attitudes and interest similar to men in order to register equally to men. Kenyan women remain the least likely to register (Coffe and Bolzenhl, 2011).

A survey on South African voter participation in elections noted that with respect to voter registration, there is a general positive trend in people's perceptions of registering as a voter (Davids et al, 2005). Positivity was also noted in the convenience of registering and the technical aspects involved including time taken to register, obtaining proof of registration and knowledge about registering in own districts; as well as intention to vote after registering (Davids et al, 2005). Throughout the nine provinces, a significant percentage of respondents seemed to be fairly satisfied with the ease of the registration process with 97% indicating that they found it easy to register based in all the provinces (Davids et al, 2005). Differences among the various demographic variables were minor. The time taken to register was not a problem either as the majority of the respondents indicated that it took them approximately 5 to 10 minutes to register as voters. High proportion of residents in Limpopo (92%) indicated that they intend registering to vote soon. The equivalent proportion for Western Cape and Free State, at the other extreme was 51%. Overall, 70% intended to register soon (Davids et al, 2005).

No studies directly referred to men and women's views on voter registration in Zimbabwe. However, after an outcry that the voter registration system was purportedly flawed and neither was it inspiring confidence in the electoral processes, a new system was adopted (Jakes, 2017). After endorsement from a majority of stakeholders in Zimbabwe supported the implementation of a continuous voter registration using biometrics technology in order to have an all-inclusive voter's role which is accurate, accessible and transparent. According to Jakes (2017) there has been some misgivings with the number of BVR machines deployed to perceived opposition areas like Bulawayo. Resultantly, lower numbers were recorded during initial registration exercise during the period.

Perception and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance

Here the first study noted, explored the attitudes of a broad sample of politically interested Swedish voters towards internet voting. Faraon et al (2015) found out that attitudes towards internet voting were positive on the whole and the acceptance of participation in democratic elections using internet voting was spearheaded by women groups with relatively short education, the unemployed and the self-employed. Unlike previous studies, it was found that age was not a significant factor in determining the attitudes towards participation in elections by means of internet voting. Concerning the security challenges of Internet voting, men were more optimistic than women and participants' confidence in security increased with age and education length (Faraon et al, 2015).

According to Benstead and Lust (2015) in their study on the gender gap in political participation in North Africa women participated less than men in the first transitional elections after the Arab Spring revolutions. In Tunisia, 75% of men voted in the 2011 constituent assembly elections, while only 65% of women voted. In Egypt, 77% of men voted in the first 2011-2012 transitional parliamentary elections, while only 58% of women voted (Benstead and Lust, 2015). In Libya, the gap in voting in the 2012 General National Congress election was 84% for men, compared to only 59% for women. This amounts to gaps of 25% in Libya, 19% in Egypt, and 10% in Tunisia (Benstead and Lust, 2015). That the gap was considerably larger in Libya than in Tunisia is important but not surprising. It reflects Tunisia's history of proactive efforts to extend gender equality and bring women into the public sphere, beginning with the 1956 Personal Status Code, which made men and women equal and gave women equal rights in marriage and divorce (Benstead and Lust, 2015).

In a survey on South African voter participation in elections by Davids et al (2005) information on participation in the previous national and municipal elections was gathered by asking the respondents to indicate whether they voted in the last elections. Generally there was a decline in the proportions of people participating in the national elections irrespective of how they were grouped. Three provinces reported a decrease in voter participation in the three previous national elections with Limpopo reporting a decline of 15% and KwaZulu-Natal and the Western a decline of 13% each from 1994 to 2004 (Davids et al, 2005). There was a slight increase from 1999 to 2004 of 3% in Mpumalanga and 1% in the Eastern Cape. Males showed a gradual decrease over the years but female participation remained constant at the 75% reached in 1999 (Davids et al, 2005). A higher proportion of males than females were interested in both national and municipal elections. These results are corroborated by the higher proportion of males than females who participated in both the national and municipal elections (Davids et al (2005).

In the same study noted above questions pertaining to general perceptions around voting issues indicated that South Africans embrace the principles of a true democracy and portray a high level of civic conscience (Davids et al, 2005). 92% of respondents indicated that they agree that each person can freely choose who to vote for without feeling forced by others. About 80% of the respondents stated that it was the duty of all citizens to vote. Just more than a quarter (27%) felt that voting was pointless since all parties are the same after being elected. Interestingly, half of the respondents indicated that voting should be made compulsory (Davids et al, 2005). When questions relating to women in politics were posed to respondents a clear gender bias was found. Female respondents campaigned much more for women than did their male counterparts for the reason that most (63%) of women felt that their needs would be better addressed if there were more women in politics. Women tended to be more sceptical, less interested and eager to participate in political issues than their male

counterparts (Davids et al, 2005). This could be related to a feeling that their needs are not sufficiently addressed by the male dominated party political structures (Davids et al, 2005).

In Zimbabwe a recent report on the 2013 elections noted enormous improvement in the rate of voting by women (RAU, 2014). Evidence from other researches shows that women see participation in politics as important and have increasingly participated, at least as voters (RAU, 2010). However, a significant factor affecting participation in elections, and especially since 2000, has been political violence associated with elections (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000). Women surveyed by RAU reported relatively little political violence between 1980 and 2000, despite documented violence in Matabeleland between 1982 and 1987 and in association with elections in 1990 and 1995 (RAU, 2010). The big change came in 2000, with very high rates of political violence associated with the 2000 parliamentary election, the 2002 presidential election, and the notorious 2008 presidential re-run election (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009). A startling 62% of women surveyed said they experienced political violence in 2008 (RAU, 2010). The 2010 sample also reported very high rates of feeling unsafe during elections, with 68% of women feeling “unsafe” or “extremely unsafe” during the elections in 2008, up from 22% in 2000 and a mere 5% in 1999 (RAU, 2010). The recent RAU (2014) report indicated that so many women had turned out to vote despite fears about violence, and perhaps because of the more peaceful atmosphere prevailing since 2008.

Push factors behind voting

According to Davids et al (2005) there are factors that might influence or predict voting in the elections. It was found that factors that predicted whether a person will vote or not were: satisfaction with democracy, issues of service delivery, floor crossing issues, signage at voting stations, the time it took to vote, satisfaction with national government, race and

geographical area of residence. The more satisfied respondents were with democracy the more likely they were to vote in any elections (Davids et al, 2005). Those respondents that agreed with the statements: “I will not vote because of a lack of services” and “Floor crossing discourages people to vote” were less likely to vote. Actual issues pertaining to voting on the day, the amount of money it cost to get to the voting station, the time it takes to queue, the time it takes at the voting station also have a bearing on whether people will vote or not. The more dissatisfied the respondents were with the time and money spent during voting process, the less likely they were to vote (Davids et al, 2005).

According to Suh (2001) although voting is not compulsory by law in North Korea, the political prescriptions laid down in the party catechism prescribe it as the correct behaviour of every citizen. A simple negligence, let alone denial to take part in the polls would be followed by harsh discrimination in the living and working sphere of the person concerned (Suh, 2001). On the other hand in countries like the USA where voting is voluntary and there is little social pressure to vote.

A study on the behaviour of Turkish voters by Akarca and Tansel (2007), notes that the state of the economy influences the voters in casting their ballots as well as in turning out to vote. According Akarca and Tansel (2007) to Turkish voters are found to take government’s economic performance into account but not look back beyond one year. A poor performance is found to benefit the extremist opposition parties at the expense of the major incumbent party. The minor incumbent and the centrist opposition parties appear to be unaffected by economic conditions. Voters also exhibit a tendency to vote against the parties holding power. The party preferences of Turkish voters depend on their socioeconomic characteristics as well.

In a survey on South African voter participation in elections, when asked what might encourage voters to vote, about a third indicated that they would be encouraged to vote if they felt that their vote would make a difference (Davids et al, 2005). Just under a quarter (24%) indicated that shorter queues would encourage them to vote, followed by if there were a political party that they believed in (20%), they were more convinced that it was important to vote (15%), the polling station was closer and parties tried harder to get their votes (10%). 91% of respondents said they ultimately decided who to vote for and were not influenced by any other factors. 3% of respondents further indicated that a history of struggle influences their ultimate decision of who to vote for.

Research methodology

Research Design

According to Bhattacharyya (2003) a research design is the description of approaches as well as techniques of obtaining the data required to carry out a study. It can also be taken to be the general functioning outline of the research project that specifies the data to be collected and the sources as well as the processes for collecting information. This study used the descriptive research design in exploring gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting in Gweru Urban. A descriptive research design outlines what is seen, thence exposes the real picture of circumstances through the developing trends from the study (Tichapondwa, 2013). This design allowed the researcher to concentrate on a limited quantity of participants.

Population and Sample

Population

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) argue that a population is a group to whom the investigator wishes to generate the results of the research. In other words the population is the group of people which the study is about. This is sometimes referred to as the target population. The population for the research was identified before coming up with a research sample. In this

context the population comprised of residents of Gweru urban both male and females above 18 years of age. In addition, to the noted men and women were stakeholders who work in organisations with interest in voting and all processes associated with it. The colossal number of men and women who could have taken part in the study in Gweru urban prompted the researcher to have a limited target population. Thus, the researcher settled for 120 participants. These were broken down as follows – 50 men, 50 women and 20 stakeholders (both men and women).

Sampling

According to Zimkund (2000) sampling is a process of selecting individuals to take part in the research. Moreover, a sample is said to be a subset of the population meant to characterise the whole population. In addition, Oso and Onen (2009) affirm that a sample is part of the target population that has been procedurally carefully chosen to represent it.

Sample Size

Reardon (2006) explains a sample size as a smaller portion of a normal sized item. He maintains that for one to come up with the sample size, a sample frame or target population has to be carefully chosen. Given the large number of Gweru urban residents who were capable of taking part in the study, the researcher settled for 120 participants as the target population – this was noted above. Factors such as financial constraints and limited time were the main concerns in choosing the participants.

A sample of 50% was further taken from the noted target population of 120 participants to produce the sample size. According to Fourie (2008) a sample size that is at least 30% can be illustrative enough, in any study, to produce reliable research results. Resultantly, a sample size of 60 participants took part in the study - broken down as follows – 25 men, 25 women

and 10 stakeholders. The sample size for this research exceeded the one recommended by Fourie (2008) hence the results are reliable.

Table 1 below details the target population, its size and the sample size that was used in the study.

Table 1.1 on study population, target population and sample size

| Study Population | Population size | Sample Size |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Men | 50 | 25 |
| Women | 50 | 25 |
| Stakeholders | 20 | 10 |
| Total | 120 | 60 |

Primary Source

Sampling Procedure

In this study the researcher made use of the stratified random sampling method in selecting the participants in Gweru urban. David and Sutton (2011) underscore that stratified random sampling occurs when the target population is separated into groups or strata before sampling. Here, the groups or strata were the men and women in Gweru urban. The main advantage of employing stratified random method of sampling was that it provided a complete illustration of the sub groups in the population in Gweru urban.

Research Instruments

Primary and secondary data sources were mutually utilised in the research study. Primary data sources in the enquiry meant the use of questionnaires and interviews in an attempt to ascertain the perceptions and attitudes towards the voting processes in Gweru urban. The noted instruments were crucial in information gathering. Secondary data sources complemented primary sources.

Primary Data Sources

Questionnaire

According to Green et al (2004) a questionnaire contains of a set of questions that are used to get data from participants in the population under study. The questionnaire as an instrument in research has the advantage in that it allows respondents to respond to asked questions at their own time devoid of the pressure to answer to the questions hurriedly as well as upsetting their everyday activities. Additionally, through the use of the questionnaires, the researcher had a wide exposure of respondents at least possible cost. Hence the researcher made use of structured questionnaires with both closed and opened questions. All in all 40 questionnaires were distributed amongst the participants

Interviews

In addition, the researcher made use of interviews in this research study. Interviews in the study were face to face interviews only. According to Buglear (2005) an interview is a discussion which is meant strictly for the gathering of data. Interviews involve direct verbal interaction between the researcher and the participants. Utilisation of interviews enabled the researcher to make follow up on vague responses. Structured questions which comprise a series of questions intended to elicit specific answers on the part of respondents were used in the research. A total of 20 interviews were scheduled in this study.

Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data denotes to information collected from key research stakeholders such as government departments as well as local and international Non-Governmental Organisations. Critical documents which comprise annual and quarterly reports, organizational newsletters

and magazines as well as program evaluation reports were used in this study. Online journals and books were also use of.

Collection of Data

Questionnaires were at first circulated to fellow students as well as the research supervisor before they were administered in the field. This was done to enable the identification of unsuitable wording, poor language and ill structured questions. Thus the researcher was able to lessen errors and omissions as well as determine the relevance of information to be gathered. The researcher personally distributed questionnaires to participants. In the field, the researcher helped respondents – where there was need - in clarifying the data needed in answering the questionnaires. More notably, the respondents were assured that the information they provided was confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. Interviews were done at suitable places agreed with respondents. These were made as short as possible, that is, they took an average of 15 to 25 minutes to avoid disturbances to programs of respondents.

Limitations of the study

The main restraining aspect to the study was time. It was done amid other commitments, thus difficult. The other constraining features were the limited financial resources that the researcher had to embark on in the study. The researcher succeeded in balancing her time to mitigate against time limitations. She also sourced enough finances to fund the research study to fruition.

Delimitations

The study only focused on gendered perceptions and attitudes towards voting processes in Gweru Urban.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the research study was obtained from the local city council and police.

Burn and Groove (2003) argue that conducting a research require not only expertise and diligence but also honesty and integrity. They argue that this is done through recognizing and protecting the rights of human subjects through observing anonymity, confidentiality and self-determination. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Burns and Grove (2003) define anonymity as when subjects cannot be linked, even by the researcher, with his or her individual responses. In this study, anonymity was ensured by not disclosing the person's name in the study. When subjects are promised confidentiality, it means that the information they provide are not to be publicly reported in a way which identifies them. The researcher sought subject consent before engaging in an interview or discussion.

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVER VIEW OF VOTING IN ZIMBABWE FROM 1980 TO DATE

Chapter Overview

This chapter makes an over view of voting in Zimbabwe from 1980 to date. It starts with providing a brief history of elections in Zimbabwe since 1980. It proceeds by providing an analysis of voting laws and regulations in relation to gender since 1980. In addition, the chapter provides an exploration of men and women participation in important voting processes like voter education, voter registration, election candidacy and voting in all the elections.

Elections in Zimbabwe since 1980: a brief history

It is important that a brief history of elections in Zimbabwe be provided in this section to set a foundation for discussion of the voting processes in the country. In 1980 Zimbabwe (previously, Southern Rhodesia) held general elections in accordance with the conclusions of the Lancaster House Constitution to decide upon a government that would rule the country (Sachikonye, 2003). The most important constitutional provisions of the new constitution was on the proportional representation system that had to be used in the 1980 which safeguarded white representation for seven years (Sachikonye, 2003). The provisions had the objective of building confidence in a country had been torn apart in a protracted civil conflict. Using the proportional representation system, the 1980 elections incorporated a 5 per cent threshold in sharing of seats to the contesting parties. 3 parties representing the black majority and 1 for whites took part in the elections took seats. The black parties were Zanu-PF (under Robert Mugabe), PF-Zapu (under Joshua Nkomo) and the United African National Congress (UANC – under Abel Muzorewa). The main white party was the Rhodesian Front (RF – under Ian Smith). Zanu-PF won 57 seats, PF-Zapu 20 and the UANC 3, while the RF swept all 20 seats

reserved for whites. However, this was the last election in which the PR system was used (Sachikonye, 2003).

The first election after the watershed ones of 1980 came in 1985. According to Sachikonye (2003) the newly independent Zimbabwe's constitution agreed at Lancaster House set election at every 5 years. Thus in 1985 the country got on to its first parliamentary elections. The Zanu PF leader Robert Mugabe was re-elected with an improved majority in parliament (Sachikonye, 2003). In 1990, the country marked the first polls to be done under the amended constitution of 1987. The amendment elected an executive presidency and eliminated the senate. Edgar Tekere, then ex-Minister of Labour and Manpower Planning contested against the incumbent Zanu PF party as the candidate of Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). Robert Mugabe and his Zanu PF party won the 1990 elections amid controversial deaths and injury of the opposition supporters and candidates (Sachikonye, 2003).

In 1995 in another round of parliamentary elections Zanu PF won by 81, 4% and retained majority in parliament (Samukange, 2013). In 1996 followed other presidential elections that were contested by the incumbent President Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe –Rhodesia era Prime Minister – Abel Muzorewa and Zanu Ndonga – Ndabaningi Sithole. Again Robert Mugabe won, claiming 90% of the vote – though the voter turnout was just 32.3%. Low voter turnout was largely attributed to Sithole and Muzorewa withdrawing their candidacy shortly before the elections. However, their names remained on the ballot (Samukange, 2013).

Samukange (2013) further notes that the next election to be held in Zimbabwe occurred in the year 2000 and these were parliamentary elections. The ruling Zanu PF won by 48.6% but was closely followed by a new political outfit called the Movement for Democratic Change which had 47% of the votes. The 2000 parliamentary elections were immediately followed by the 2002 presidential election. The new political party MDC gave the ruling Zanu PF a run for its

money in a closely contested presidential race. Zanu PF presidential candidate – Robert Mugabe, however, won the election by 56.2%. The MDC presidential candidate – Morgan Tsvangirai got 42% of the total vote (Samukange, 2013).

Furthermore, parliamentary elections continued in Zimbabwe in the year 2005. Notably, elections in Zimbabwe were no longer a one party affair since the year 2000 when the Movement for Democratic Change came into the fold (Samukange, 2013). Thus in 2005 Zanu PF acquired 78 parliamentary seats and the closest contender MDC got 41 seats. In the same year the constitution was amended to allow for the bicameral system of representation. Thus senate elections were retained and also held and the ruling Zanu PF got 43 seats while the MDC got 7 (Samukange, 2013).

The 2008 elections were the first in Zimbabwe's history when the election of the President, the Senate, the National Assembly and the local authorities was held on the same day, hence the term harmonised (ZESN, 2013). The constitutional amendment introduced a two-round or absolute majority electoral system for the election of the president. This requires that the victor in the presidential race must win by attaining 50 per cent plus at least one valid vote in the first round, or failing that a simple majority in a run-off election between the two candidates with the highest number of votes from the first round (ZESN, 2013). In 2008, the election results for the first round of the presidential election took five weeks to be released, a situation that compromised the credibility of the results and of the election management body. According to ZESN (2013) Morgan Tsvangirai of MDC received 47.9 per cent of the votes and Robert Mugabe of Zanu PF 43.2 per cent. As neither attained the 50 per cent plus one vote required, a run-off became necessary. ZESN (2013) further notes that in an effort to ensure victory in the run-off election ZANU-PF is alleged to have unleashed a wave of violence across the country which caused the death of opposition supporters while displacing more others. The extent of the violence led the MDC led by Morgan Tsvangirai to withdraw

from the run-off. On the other hand Robert Mugabe had a one candidate contest and won amidst wide criticism by the international community including SADC and African Union (ZESN, 2013).

ZESN (2013) further notes that pressure from the SADC and AU in 2000 forced ZANU PF and President Mugabe, to compromise with the two MDC formations in a unity government. Consequently, treaty of cooperation called Global Power Agreement (GPA) was signed between the leaders of the three parties with the most seats in the National Assembly, namely President Mugabe representing ZANU-PF, Morgan Tsvangirai representing MDC-T, and Arthur Mutambara representing the MDC-M (ZESN, 2013). The agreement was guaranteed by SADC, and the AU, which took responsibility of ensuring its successful implementation (ZESN, 2013). New elections under a new constitution were guaranteed under the new arrangement by the political parties.

In July 2013 Zimbabwe held harmonised elections for the Presidency, the National Assembly, the Senate and local authorities. A few weeks before the elections a new Constitution had been adopted in Zimbabwe following a successful referendum held in March 2013 (ZESN, 2013). Accordingly, the legislative framework governing elections were conducted using an electoral framework that had been reformed through the Electoral Amendment Act of 2012, the new Constitution of Zimbabwe, and various statutory instruments that were passed shortly before the elections. In parliamentary contests Zanu PF won 160 seats and MDC won 49 seats (ZESN, 2013). The presidential contest saw Zanu PF's Mugabe getting 61.09% of the votes and MDC's Tsvangirai got 34.94% of the votes while the other smaller parties got the other chunks (ZESN, 2013).

According to ZESN (2013) it is significant to note that since the year 2000 all national elections in Zimbabwe were tainted by accusations of voter intimidation, harassment of

candidates and political parties. Losing political parties have, over the years, raised claims of organised electoral fraud committed by the election management bodies. In addition, the role of security forces in elections and biased media coverage, amongst other issues have also been repeatedly raised (Gaidzanwa, 2004). According to ZESN (2013) increased competition brought increased violence and conflict to Zimbabwean elections, notably during the 2002 presidential elections, which recorded the highest levels of political violence until the 2008 run off. This year, 2018, the country is headed for other harmonised elections, albeit, interesting conditions.

An analysis of voting regulations in Zimbabwe

According to the UN (2005) a country's constitutional and legal framework must guarantee equal civil and political rights to every person on a non-discriminatory basis. Rights that are not clearly affirmed in the national constitution or other laws may have to apply by virtue of their inclusion in international treaties a government has ratified. Zimbabwe is signatory to international as well as regional treaties which promote participation in political processes by its citizen despite their sex, race and religion (ZESN, 2013). Accordingly, every citizen has the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; and vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors (Gaidzanwa, 2004).

UN (2005) further notes that a wide variety of laws can affect citizens' (particularly women's) prospects for full participation in all aspects of the voting and other processes. The most important of these is the election law. However, other laws relating to political parties, gender equality, gender-based violence, citizenship, personal status, the family, identity documents for returnee and internally displaced persons, and other issues can also have a significant impact (UN, 2005). According to the UN (2005) some laws may cause indirect

discrimination; for instance, literacy requirements may disproportionately disadvantage women. Also important to note is that even laws that are good might have little impact if not effectively implemented and enforced (ZESN, 2013).

Zimbabwe enacted a new Constitution on 22 May 2013 which replaced the Lancaster House Constitution of 1980 as the supreme law of the land (ZESN, 2013). The new constitution brought with it new provisions that enrich and seek to promote the principles of democracy and good governance in line with international and regional standards. These include the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (ZESN, 2013). The new Zimbabwean Constitution introduced some new provisions that promote the political rights of citizens and also retained some from the Lancaster House Constitution. According to ZESN (2013) major highlights include the recognition of the right to freedom of assembly and association (Section 58), the right to freedom of conscience (Section 60) and the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media (Section 61). The new Constitution also specifically provides for the enjoyment of political rights by citizens and the entitlement to participate, in different ways in free, fair and regular elections. In addition, the new Constitution gives every Zimbabwean the right to make political choices freely; to form, join and to participate in the activities of a political party or organization of their choice as well as participate individually or collectively in peaceful political activity (ZESN, 2013).

Furthermore, in terms of section 155 of the 2013 Constitution particular principles of electoral or voting systems must be implemented in letter and spirit whenever there are national elections or referendums (ZESN, 2013). These include the regular holding of elections which are peaceful, free and held in a fair manner. In addition, the elections must be conducted by secret ballot, be free from violence and any other electoral malpractices. Under the noted section it is the state's prerogative that appropriate measures, including legislative measures, are implemented for operationalization of these principles. Measures that the state

has to take include making sure that all eligible citizens wishing to exercise the right to vote are registered to do so, that every citizen who is eligible to vote in an election or referendum has an opportunity to cast a vote and also facilitate voting by persons with disabilities or special needs (ZESN, 2013). To add to the above, the state needs to make sure that all political parties and candidates contesting an election have reasonable access to all material as well as information necessary for them to participate effectively. It is also the responsibility of the state to provide all political parties and candidates contesting an election, or participating in a referendum, with fair and equal access to electronic and print media, both public and private (ZESN, 2013).

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is given a mandate through the 2013 Zimbabwean constitution take steps to eliminate electoral violence, electoral malpractices as well as ensure the safekeeping of electoral materials (ZESN, 2013). All the provisions noted above were meant to make certain that the electoral processes in Zimbabwe adapt to regional and international minimum standards on democracy, good governance and elections. It is especially important to note that new methods of voting representative members into Parliament have been incorporated into the country's electoral laws through the new constitution (ZESN, 2013). The new system has the major aim of promoting inclusivity and the accommodation of diverse classes of people while maintaining the balance of accountability through elected representatives. To this end the new Constitution creates a system of mixed-member system of representation in Parliament (ZESN, 2013).

In continuation to the above, the new Constitution retains the bicameral legislature consisting of the National Assembly and the Senate (ZESN, 2013). The seats to the National Assembly are filled through a combination of the first-past-the-post system and a system of proportional

representation for the election of the seats reserved for women. In terms of Section 124(1) (b) of the new Constitution 60 seats are reserved for women in the National Assembly for the life of the first two parliaments after the 2013 constitution has come into effect (ZESN, 2013). There are six seats, reserved for women in each of the 10 provinces of the country that have been filled via a party-list system. The number of votes a political party gets from the National Assembly votes in each province determines the number of seats a party gets in that province (ZESN, 2013). The introduction of the quota system was meant to enhance the representation of women at the legislative level as a means of redressing the gender imbalance and inequality created through historical and patriarchal suppression of women (ZESN, 2013).

Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution also changes the electoral system for the election of Senators from the previous systems when they were elected directly by the voters. The system introduced makes use of the system of proportional representation based on the votes cast for the National Assembly elections (ZESN, 2013). Thus, 6 senators in each province are elected based on the proportion of seats that each party will have won in the National Assembly election in that province. The 6 senatorial seats are allocated per province for all 10 provinces as provided for under section 45C (3) of the Electoral Act (ZESN, 2013). In terms of section 120 (2) (b) of the new Constitution the party-list that will be submitted for the senatorial seats must take the "zebra format", that is, interchanging female and male candidates, beginning with a female. That way any party will inevitably have at least 50 per cent female representation for these seats. Consistent with the spirit of the Constitution to promote gender equity, the Electoral Act (2013) reflects this in section 45E (2) (f).

According to (ZESN, 2013) other new features introduced by the 2013 Zimbabwean constitution relate to the provincial and metropolitan councils. These emanate from the 10

provinces of the country. According to section 268 (3) of the new Constitution a party list must be submitted alternating male and female candidates with a female name at the top to guarantee enough representation of female candidates in the councils (ZESN, 2013). Overall, the new provisions were created to allow for representation of diverse groups including women and the disabled, people living with disabilities while maintaining the accountability of directly elected representatives (ZESN, 2013). The downside is that voters do not have control of the representatives that end up being selected via proportional representation. It is up to the contesting parties to come up with their list of preferred candidates and in the order they prefer (ZESN, 2013).

Men and Women's participation in voting and its processes since 1980

For elections to be truly free and fair, women must have the same opportunities as men to participate in all aspects of the electoral process (UN, 2005). They should have an equal chance to serve at all levels within local and national election management bodies. In addition, women should be engaged on an equal basis as election monitors or observers. Also, they should be able to participate fully in all aspects of political party operations (UN, 2005). Women candidates and issues of special concern to women should be given fair and equal treatment in the media. Focusing on areas of the greatest potential impact can help ensure that women's participation in the electoral process is more than a pro forma exercise, and that free and fair elections fulfil their potential for contributing to the advancement of women (UN, 2005)

i) Voter education

There is scant literature on the participation of men and women in voter education in the 1980 election. Prevailing circumstances at the time point to a limited participation of ordinary citizens. What is clear is that women took part in voter education process, more as recipients and men as the educators. However, the participation of women as voter educators in civil

society, government as well as within political parties increased over the subsequent elections after 1980. Notably, before the year 2000 voter education was not mandatory within the country's electoral laws. According to Gaidzanwa (2004) at the time of the 2000 parliamentary election, Zimbabwe's Electoral Act did not contain any provisions pertaining to voter education. The act did not make voter education the responsibility of any of the statutorily established electoral authorities. Although this void was filled by civil society as best as possible, citizens – particularly women, were short changed.

The General Laws Amendment Act (GLAA), which introduced various changes to the Electoral Act, was passed in time for the 2002 presidential election and came into effect on 4 February 2002 (Gaidzanwa, 2005). The GLAA was, however, challenged and annulled by the Supreme Court on 27 February. The nullified act contained sections that criminalised the provision of voter education by civil society groups and prohibited these groups from receiving foreign funding for voter education (Gaidzanwa, 2005). After the nullification of the GLAA, the then President reintroduced the above provisions, thereby limiting the scope for voter education. Voter education fell within the domain of the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) (now ZEC) as only the ESC or organisations or persons appointed by it could provide voter education (Gaidzanwa, 2005). From the aforementioned it is clear that voter education was not a priority for the government in all the elections from 1980 to 2002.

It is important to note that although voter education was legalised in 2002, it was still fraught with problems. According to Gaidzanwa (2004) the voter education materials disseminated by the ESC during the 2002 presidential elections lacked gender sensitivity and focused on the technical aspects of voting and the requirements for voter registration. Gaidzanwa (2004) also criticised the less effective method of voter education of distributing fliers without a

people to explain or answer questions. Thus such methods of voter education were less effective.

Voter education, however, improved in the elections following the 2002 presidential elections. In 2005, 2008 and 2013 elections, ZESN (2013) notes the participation of women in voter education, both as educators as well as recipients. In the 2008 harmonized elections the country's electoral body actually deployed voter educators who moved around all the constituencies. However, according to ZESN (2013) the educators – both men and women were at risk due to the violence associated with 2008 elections. In the 2013 harmonised elections ZESN (2013) notes that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission had limited outreach and spread itself too thin in voter education. Its officers did not stick to the training manual and sometimes even misinformed citizens.

ii) *Voter registration and voting*

In Zimbabwe, voter registration constitutes the most crucial component and qualifier for participation in elections. Registration is entirely voluntary. The Zimbabwe government allows its citizens to register or check their registration status each time there are planned elections and this normally kicks off about nine months prior the elections (MPOI, 2007). Any Zimbabwean with 18 years and above can also register since they would have become eligible. The government also provides time for inspecting the voters' register. Researches have consistently shown that while a majority of Zimbabweans express much enthusiasm and desire to vote, fewer take the necessary and required step towards voting, that is, registration and fewer still actually turn out to vote (MPOI, 2007).

From 1980 the process of voter registration has always preceded each election. Men and women have participated in this process both as voter registration officials as well as those registering to vote. While the process of voter registration has improved over the passage of

time, it still is criticised for some structural and operational problems (MPOI, 2007). Some political parties have at every election cried foul over distribution of voter registration centres and have times accused incumbents of manipulation to alienate their supporters.

According to RAU (2014), the number of women who have registered to vote and have voted has been increasing over the years in Zimbabwe. However, women participation in these important processes remains low in comparison to men. In voter registration (at every election) ZESN (2013) argues that many potential voters, particularly women, are always disenfranchised as a result of the limited duration of the voter registration exercise and a pervasive lack of information about its activities. For instance, information about the location of registration centres is not easily accessible. Women in rural and urban areas perform multiple gender roles within their homes and communities and cannot afford the time to stand in queues for many hours waiting to register to vote (ZESN, 2013). In addition, some women are always shut out of the voter registration process altogether as a result of difficulties arising from the documentation required for proof of residence (ZESN, 2013). Generally houses in urban areas are not registered in the name of the wife, and women sometimes have great difficulty obtaining independent proof of residence (ZESN, 2013).

A recent report on the 2013 elections noted enormous improvement in the rate of voting by women (RAU, 2014). Other researches in Zimbabwe note that women now see participation in politics as important, and have increasingly been participating at least as voters (RAU, 2010). However, a significant factor affecting participation in elections, and especially since 2000, has been political violence associated with elections (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000). Women surveyed by RAU reported relatively little political violence between 1980 and 2000, despite documented violence in Matabeleland between 1982 and 1987 and in

association with elections in 1990 and 1995 (RAU, 2010). The big change came in 2000, with very high rates of political violence associated with the 2000 parliamentary election, the 2002 presidential election, and the notorious 2008 presidential re-run election (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009). A startling 62% of women surveyed said they experienced political violence in 2008 (RAU, 2010).

In continuation to the above, RAU (2010) reported very high rates of feeling unsafe during elections, with 68% of women feeling “unsafe” or “extremely unsafe” during the elections in 2008, up from 22% in 2000 and a mere 5% in 1999 (RAU, 2010). However, in 2013 so many women are noted to have turned out to vote despite fears about violence, and perhaps because of the more peaceful atmosphere prevailing since 2008. Nonetheless, as suggested above, voting is a minimal requirement for democracy, and in most views democracy is more than merely voting: it requires active citizenship (RAU, 2014).

Many observations and studies have indicated strong differences between rural and urban women in registering and voting. For example, an analysis of the 2013 voters’ roll showed many more women registered in rural as opposed to urban areas (RAU, 2013). Afrobarometer surveys confirmed marked differences between rural and urban women, with consistently higher rates of voting by rural women. In addition, there was a significant drop in voting by urban women in 2005 (after violent elections in 2000 and 2002), but this recovered in 2008. According to RAU (2013) this drop in 2005 suggests more than mere difficulty in registering and is perhaps the combined effect of difficulties in registering as well as fear generated by the political violence in 2000 and 2002 elections. When the environment became more peaceful, as it was between 2005 and 2008, urban women were more likely to participate,

which is strongly demonstrated by a study of participation by women in the 2013 elections (RAU, 2014).

iii) Men and women candidacy in elections

The participation of men in as candidates in the electoral processes has always been high since 1980. Though women’s participation has risen since 1980, it has remained low and fluctuated over the successive elections. After the 2000 parliamentary elections, it was quite clear that women had not fared very well at the polls. In fact, a historical analysis of the simple numbers shows that women’s numbers in parliament reached a high in 1990-1995 and in 2005-2008 in both parliament and senate. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 below summarises the gendered composition of both the lower and upper house in Zimbabwe since 1980 to date.

Table 1.2 - Gendered Composition of Zimbabwe House of Assembly since 1980

| Elections and Appointments | Seats | Men | Women | % of women |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1980-84 | 100 | 91 | 9 | 9% |
| 1985-1990 | 100 | 92 | 8 | 8% |
| 1990 | 150 | 133 | 17 | 11.3% |
| 1995 | 150 | 129 | 21 | 14% |
| 2000 | 150 | 136 | 14 | 9.3% |
| 2005 | 150 | 126 | 24 | 16% |
| 2008 | 210 | 176 | 34 | 16.1 |
| 2013 | 270 | 185 | 85 | 31.5% |

(Sources: Parliament of Zimbabwe (undated) and Gaidzanwa (2004)

As can be seen in Table 1.2 above the representation of women as compared men in the house of assembly has fluctuated over the years, but steadily rose during the years from 1980 up to 2013. The highest figure for representation has been for the last election which has a record 31.5% representation of women.

Table 1.3 - Gendered Composition of Zimbabwe Senate (1980-1989; 2005-2008)

| Elections and Appointments | Seats | Men | Women | % of women |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1980 | 40 | 37 | 3 | 7.5% |
| 1985 | 40 | 37 | 3 | 7.5% |
| 2005 | 66 | 42 | 24 | 36% |
| 2008 | 93 | 70 | 23 | 25% |
| 2013 | 80 | 42 | 17 | 42.5% |

(Sources: Parliament of Zimbabwe (undated) and Gaidzanwa (2004))

Table 1.3 above details the representation of women as compared men in the senate of Zimbabwe since 1980. Again representation has fluctuated over the years, but steadily rose during the years from 1980 up to 2013. The highest figure for representation has been for the last election which has a record 42.5% representation of women in the upper house.

Chapter Summary

This chapter made an over view of voting and its processes in Zimbabwe from 1980 to date. It started with providing a brief history of elections in Zimbabwe since 1980. It proceeded by providing an analysis of voting regulations in relation to gender since 1980. In addition, the chapter provides an exploration of men and women participation in important voting and its processes like voter education, voter registration, election candidacy and voting in all the elections.

CHAPTER TWO PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOTING IN GWERU URBAN; A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the perceptions and attitudes towards the voting processes in Gweru urban. Thus findings from the study are discussed here. It specifically unravels, firstly views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru urban. Secondly, it explores the actual perceptions and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru urban. The chapter ends by exploring the push factors behind voting for men and women in Gweru Urban.

Views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru urban

Importance of registering to vote

Interesting aspects came out of the study with regards the views of men and women with regard to the process of voter registration in Gweru urban. Participants were initially asked whether they thought voter registration was an important aspect in the voting process. Here there was a general consensus amongst the participants, with 80% of both men and women, arguing that it was imperative to register to vote. One of the male participants had this to say:

Voter registration, I think, is the most fundamental aspect throughout the voting process. If one does not register to vote and, of course take part in other processes like voter education, one will not ultimately be able to cast their ballot.

In addition, one of the female participants noted that:

Voter registration is a crucial aspect of the whole electoral process. I discovered this in the year 2005 when I decided to go and vote on the voting day. I had taken it for

granted that because am 21 years old I will automatically cast my ballot. My name was not on the voters' role. From then onwards I make sure that I register to vote. It is important.

The above sentiments reflect views of most of the participants with regards the importance of registering to vote. Notably, 20% of the participants had reservations with regards to the importance of voter registration. Below are some of the responses by this group:

- *I am not a politician.*
- *Politics is dirty.*
- *Registering to vote for thieves.*
- *It's not important more than fending for my family.*
- *I am a mother – I have children to look after, I do not have time for play.*
- *Its too cumbersome to stand in a line.*

Surveyed literature noted general positivity towards registering to vote. According to Davids et al (2005) a survey on South African voter participation in elections noted that with respect to voter registration, there is a general positive trend in people's perceptions of registering as a voter. This is corroborated in this study where 80% of both males and females in the study affirmed to the significance of registering to vote. While the other 20% had different reasons for not recognising voter registration most residents in Gweru urban appreciated its importance. The exercise of registering to vote, according to Mwanyisa (2016), the starting point towards any credible election and that an election that is credible must prevent voters from voting more than once and unregistered voters from voting.

Whether participants had registered to vote or not

The participants in the study were further asked on whether they had registered to vote in the just ended biometric voter registration exercise. 70% of the male participants noted that they did register to vote. On the other, 60% of the female participants noted that they had indeed participated and registered. Various reasons were given by the different participants in the study with regard to why they took a decision to register to vote. One male participant said:

I merely took an important step towards exercising my democratic right to vote. Registering guarantees me participation in the upcoming harmonised elections in the country.

In addition, a young female participant noted:

I have never voted before and felt it important to register to vote so that I can effect the change that I think has eluded this country for a long time. I feel registering to vote and ultimately voting is an obligation to my generation as well as the future ones.

Other reasons for registering to vote by the respondents are noted below:

- *I am tired of the system.*
- *To exercise my rights*
- *I was told that the soldiers are going around asking for registration slips and those without slips were going to be beaten and arrested.*
- *My husband forced me to.*
- *I had nothing to do, I am unemployed.*
- *I was excited of the new system of voter registration.*

- *My mother in the rural areas informed me that Zanu PF was carrying out an exercise to see who had registered and who had not. Even here in the urban areas. I decided to register.*

Thus the above sentiments reflect various views with regard to registering to vote. The reasons vary, from the participants registering to vote to exercise their rights to being excited about the new voting system. Interestingly there is sign of coercion in which some participants registered to vote because they had been forced or had fear generated from an outside source.

In relation to the above, 30% of the male participants noted that they had not registered to vote in the latest voter registration exercise. On the other hand 40% of the female respondents noted that they had not registered to vote in Zimbabwe's 2018 harmonised elections. The participants were thus further probed on the reasons why they did not register to vote. One of the male participants made the following contribution:

While I appreciate the importance of registering to vote, I was too busy to go and register to vote. You see my friend, I am unemployed and I have to fend for my family. Thus, a day lost for me means my family has to go without food. The work that I do , allows only for hand to mouth.

On the other hand, one female participant gave some interesting contribution to the whole debate. She noted:

Why should I register to vote when voting is a waste of time. We have voted for a very long time and nothing has changed. I have since given up because the elections are always rigged.

Other participants noted the following reasons:

- *I encountered some problems with proof of residence, thus I gave up.*
- *The mobile registration team stayed for a very short time in our area, thus when I wanted to register they had gone.*
- *I lost my documents*
- *I am a lodger.*
- *As a wife I was too busy with house work, I just could not find the time.*

Here it is clear that more women than men did not register to vote, thus depicting a negative attitude towards the process. Also clear is a noticeable fatigue with the whole process of voting and its outcomes that is expressed by the participants.

As has been noted in this section the majority of participants both male and female thought that voter registration was fundamental in the voting process. Most of these participants, notably, are the ones who went on to register to vote. Only a few dismissed voter registration as important and, again are the same respondents who failed to register to vote because of various reasons. From studied literature Davids et al (2005) notes that likelihood in registering to vote was especially dependent on issues such as the convenience of registering and the technical aspects involved including time taken to register, obtaining proof of registration and knowledge about registering in own districts; as well as intention to vote after registering. Sentiments in Gweru urban can all be categorised within Davids et al (2015)'s variables.

It is significant to note that while the majority of participants in the study did register to vote, more of those who did so were men. According to Coffe and Bolzenhl (2011) a significant gender gap still exists in terms of registering to vote in some African countries, with the major reason being the differences between the socioeconomic status of men and women. In Gweru urban it seems like the general attitude that participation politics is a male domain still

prevails. However, equally interesting is the fact that a notable number of men in Gweru urban had not registered to vote with economic responsibility being the major reason.

Perceptions and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru urban

Significance of voting

Participants in the study were further asked to provide insights into voting and its relevance in Gweru urban. A number of interesting issues were raised on the stated issues. Of interest is the fact that there came both positive and negative sentiments towards voting and its relevance. As a first under this section, participants were asked the significance of voting. 60% of all the participants (both male and female) argued that voting was important, while the other 40% thought that it was not important. Thus respondents were asked to explain further why they thought the way they did.

To start with 60% of both male and female participants in the study noted that voting was a vital component in the voting process. One of the male participants had this to say:

Voting is the actualisation of the right to choose a leader of one's choice. It would not make sense to participate in all the other voting processes and not cast the ballot. I personally think that it is most important.

Other responses by both male and female participants who felt that voting is relevant are as follows:

- *Voting allows you to determine your local regional and national leadership. Thus it is a relevant exercise in any functioning democracy in the world.*
- *It allows for the opportunity to choose a councillor, an MP and the president.*

- *Voting is relevant for me because it gives me the chance to define my future by choosing leadership from a political party that resonates with my aspirations as a young person.*
- *Voting is a chance of defending our values through electing leaders from the party that I support.*

The above responses reflect an appreciation of the importance and relevance of voting. Notably, the quotations were captured from both males and females, thus cannot be said who were more positive than the other. More noticeable in this category is the fact that the participants made emphasis on their right to vote as well as that of being able elect leaders of choice.

The other group of participants who equalled 40% had a negative perception on voting and its relevance. They were further asked why they had such sentiments and different issues were brought forward. One male participant argued thus:

Some of us are disillusioned when it comes to issues of voting. We vote for politicians and nothing changes. We see them driving the best cars and hear so many of their scandals of corruption, but we continue suffering. Life is become harder and harder every day. Why waste my time voting for someone to get rich.

In addition, a female participant had this to say:

I don't see any benefits of voting. Why should I vote for men who abuse us every day? I would probably vote if here in this constituency we had a female candidate. Even though male or female candidates are all selfish – politicians exist only for self-aggrandisement.

There are also other sentiments expressed by other participants both male and female expressing disinterest in voting. These are noted below:

- *Voting is a waste of time because elections are always rigged.*
- *I usually do not like some candidates fielded by political parties – hence voting becomes irrelevant.*
- *Voting is irrelevant as I am too busy fending for my family.*
- *I have discovered that democracy is a farce. Politicians lie to us, promising us heaven on earth. When they get into office they become untouchables. You waste your time attending their rallies, canvassing for them and voting for them. They are working for themselves and their families, never for me and my family. Politics is not important.*

Scepticism towards voting dominated the responses of this group. It reflected the distrust of the voting system as well as dismissal of current leadership as whole.

It must be made clear that within both categories of optimists as well as pessimists regarding elections the percentages differed for males and females. Within the 60% of those who noted that voting was relevant – 60% were males and 40% were females. Also within the group of pessimists 51% were male and the other 49% were female. Thus males dominated the optimist group while males dominated the pessimist group. This seemed like a contradiction. Scholars like Faraon et al (2015) brings out interesting views by arguing that males are generally optimistic than women in all political processes because the processes are mostly dominated by men. In Gweru urban while more men affirmed that voting was important, it seems the number of the same men who are pessimists is on the increase. This is despite the fallacy that politics is a male dominated field. The reasons behind this, as noted from

participant's sentiments, are mainly to do with disappointment with the current political players such that aspects such as voting are seen as less important.

Whether participants had voted in the last election or not

Respondents in the study were further asked on whether they had voted in the last elections or not. A number of interesting aspects were noted from the responses that were given. 59% of participants intimated that they had voted in the 2013 harmonised election. Notably, within this grouping 60% of these participants were males and 40% were females. Again this shows a gender disparity within voting patterns. However, in as much as there are differences in Gweru urban research has proven that women are participating more and more in the voting process than each previous election (RAU, 2013). This is a break from the past.

Participants provided reasons why they voted. These are noted below:

- *I wanted to change the corrupt officials with better ones.*
- *I always exercise my democratic rights despite the circumstances.*
- *I wanted to defend the gains of the revolution against machinations of imperialist led parties.*
- *I felt it was time for change.*
- *My uncle was contesting as an MP.*
- *I liked the candidate because he gave us gifts and groceries.*

Again within the 41% of participants who did not vote 51% were females and 49% were males. Incongruence with regards to participants who previously supported voter registration and those who end up not voting was noted. This corroborates ZESN (2013) which noted that a number of participants do register to vote but do not turn up on the particular day.

Participants provided reasons why they did not vote. These are noted below:

- *The electoral field was not even. I do not know why some of our leaders decided to take part in that plebiscite. We were headed for an obvious defeat.*
- *The elections were already rigged.*
- *How could I vote when the authorities refused to publish the voter's role.*
- *My name was absent from the voter's role, despite having registered to vote.*
- *I was at work.*
- *I had crossed the border to replenish stock for my flea market.*

In a survey on South African voter participation in elections by Davids et al (2005) information on participation in the previous national and municipal elections corroborate some of the findings here. Generally there was a decline in the proportions of people participating in the national elections irrespective of how they were grouped. Males showed a gradual decrease over the years but female participation remained constant. The same is true for Gweru urban residents. However, just as in the study by Davids et al (2005) a higher proportion of males than females were interested in voting in elections in Gweru urban.

Whether there were female candidates in Gweru urban in upcoming or previous elections

Under this section, participants in the study were further asked whether there had been any female candidate in the Gweru urban constituency as Member of Parliament or councillor. Interestingly 60% of the participants gave a vehement no to that question. All the other 40% noted that they were not sure. None of the participants answered in the affirmative to this question.

Poor participation of women candidates, either, as members of parliament or as councillors probably explains negative participation of the generality of women in all other political processes like voting. This is the predominant theme in the study. The same is corroborated by Davids et al (2005) in a study in South Africa noted in reviewed literature. The study

noted that women tended to be more sceptical, less interested and eager to participate in political issues than their male counterparts. This could be related to a feeling that their needs are not sufficiently addressed by the male dominated party political structures.

Push factors behind voting for men and women in Gweru Urban

Data analysis revealed different reasons that compelled men and women to participate in the voting process. When asked the possible factors that push them to vote 40% of both male and female participants in the study constantly referred to the existence of political rights such as voting. This was thus noted as an important push factor for both groups. Some of the participants said:

- *I vote because it is my constitutional right to do so.*
- *It is important that I exercise my freedom to choose a leader of my choice through voting.*
- *Voting is an inalienable right that I have and I have to enjoy it.*

It is significant to note that responses here emphasised the aspect of the right to vote as a push to vote. Respondents with such views seemed well knowledgeable with civic right education.

In addition another push factor to voting noted in the study is the desire to change the political system. The message from other 35% of both male and female participants in the study was a deep desire to change the political system and culture. This desire was noted through expression of criticizing certain political parties as well as corrupt tendencies by officials from these outfits. One of the participants argued:

- *One thing that pushes me to want to vote and participate in politics is a need to change the way our country is administered. You see we have had enough*

of crooks who get into office to line up their pockets and do all sorts of criminal activities in the guise of representing people. This needs to change.

The desire for political change, interestingly, while it pushed others to vote – sentiments in the study showed that some of the participants are fed up of voting. The major reason to that is as a result of disappointment with previous election result which had not brought the anticipated change as well as allegations of vote manipulation.

Another interesting push factor to voting noted by 40% of the participants was less satisfaction with the current economy. This factor was a constant reference by both male and female participants in the study. Some participants felt that their participation in voting had a bearing on the ultimate performance of the economy through leadership elected. Dissatisfaction with the economy was noted through reference to unemployment as well as the high cost of living. Some of the responses in this section are noted below:

- *My sister things are not moving at all, look we run around to make ends meet. I am unemployed. Maybe if I vote there could be change of leadership that could provide employment for many people.*
- *Things are hard. The economy is at a standstill. The only solution is to vote these failures out.*

Interestingly, economic hardships gave zeal to want vote while it discouraged other participants as well. This is noted in the previous section when some participants argued that they had no time to waste participating in politics because they needed to fend for their families.

Furthermore, loyalty to a particular party proved to be another important factor that pushed participants to vote. Interestingly 47% of both male and female participants who took part in the study exuded alliance to a political outfit. Loyalty to political parties was enough push for some respondents to want to vote. Loyalty was even shown through expression of party ideology. The researcher was able to discern that a participant belonged to either ZANU PF or MDC which are the dominant parties in Zimbabwe. ZANU PF supporters have a tendency of supporting the status quo while those from MDC tend to criticise. Thus these elements were clearly observed in the study. These zealots for their political party tend to vote for the party despite anything.

Another factor that pushed some participants to vote, as noted in the study, is rewards from candidates who want to be voted into office. Remarkably some participants, both male and female were excited by candidates who provided rewards and promised more of the same if they proceeded to vote and make the candidate win the election. Some of the responses from this category of respondents noted:

- *They have to give us something if they want us to vote for them.*
- *These politicians tend to forget us when they are in office. Election time is when they have to buy something so that we vote for them.*
- *The old man has to buy us some drinks; of course we will go and vote for him.*

In the same vein as above, 5% of the participants pointed out they voted because they had a relationship to candidates. This push factor to voting, though not so common, was, interestingly mentioned by some female participants in the study. A pointer to vote buying as well as the electorate which is willing to be bought is noticeable here.

Also, an important push factor to voting in Gweru urban unravelled in the study was the fear factor. Here different aspects that pointed to coercion and fear of consequences of not voting were discerned from the responses of participants. Interestingly, fear was mainly expressed by female participants. One participant noted:

- *My husband usually tells me that all hell will break loose in our house if I do not go to vote. I respect him, so I comply.*

In addition to the above, another female candidate noted that she had decided to participate in voter registration and ultimately voting because she had heard rumours of soldiers who would come asking about evidence of voter registration. In addition, another female participant intimated that her mother in the rural areas had informed her that Zanu pf members needed to see voter registration slips hence she registered out of terror. The fear expressed by the female participants will ultimately push them to vote.

Discussed literature noted a survey on South African voter participation in elections, where participants were asked what might encourage voters to vote, about a third indicated that they would be encouraged to vote if they felt that their vote would make a difference (Davids et al, 2005). It was found that other factors that predicted whether a person will vote or not were satisfaction with democracy, issues of service delivery, floor crossing issues, signage at voting stations, the time it took to vote, satisfaction with national government, race and geographical area of residence. The more satisfied respondents were with democracy the more likely they were to vote in any elections (Davids et al, 2005). Some of the factors were noted by participants in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the perceptions and attitudes towards the voting processes in Gweru urban. Thus findings from the study were discussed here. It specifically unravelled, firstly views of men and women with regards to the process of voter registration in Gweru urban. Secondly, it explored the actual perceptions and attitudes of men and women towards voting and its relevance in Gweru urban. The chapter ended by exploring the push factors behind voting for men and women in Gweru Urban.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS GREATER PARTICIPATION BY BOTH MEN AND WOMEN IN VOTING IN GWERU

Chapter Overview

This chapter concentrates on the best ways to enhance greater participation of men and women in voting processes in Gweru urban. In other words it will proffer some solutions and recommendations to some of the challenges they face in participation in the voting process in Gweru urban.

Encouraging men and women's participation in the voting process

The study has shown that there exists gender disparity between men and women in Gweru urban with regards to participation in the voting process. While there is evidence of improvement of increased women's participation in general the difference between men and women is still noticeable. Thus, this points to some challenges that still hinder women's full participation. Another worrying factor, noted in the study, is a growing apathy and carefreeness amongst men themselves who traditionally assert themselves in the voting process. Evidence from the responses of some males, who took part in the study, points to disillusionment with the current political leadership in government. This has induced a bit of apathy and unwillingness to participate in the electoral process. However, despite prevailing circumstances citizens' participation in all political processes is the essence of all democratic societies around the world. While there are several forms of citizen participation in a democratic society, involvement in the voting process is critical to achieving democracy. Be that as it may, it is important that men and women continue to be encouraged to participate in the voting process. Encouragement can be done in different ways including the ones noted herein under.

Education

The study showed the need for massive education on the part of both men and women in Gweru urban with regards to electoral or voting processes. Discussion with most respondents in the study reflected lack of knowledge with regards to political participation in general. Of note is the fact that most participants regard political participation as merely casting their ballot on the day of voting. As noted in the study voting entails much more than just casting one's ballot. Thus citizens need constant education on such processes. Education on political participation, that include voting processes, is a responsibility of government institutions as well as non-governmental organisations. Other political parties as well as church organisations are also expected to be at the forefront of providing civic education to citizens in a country. The misnomer noted on educating citizens on the voting process is that it should be the prerogative of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), a body mandated to run elections in the country. While the commission has the mandate it must not be left to it alone. It needs complementarity because voting is part of the whole subject of civic rights as well as civic education. In addition, ZEC needs to role out voter education throughout the year, without just waiting for the outset of elections.

In addition to the above, voter education plays a crucial role in making the electoral environment hospitable to all potential voters. As stated earlier, however, this environment is usually male dominated. This feature is sometimes coupled with beliefs that politics, including elections, is the business of men and that women need not participate as voters and that they lack what it takes to be political leaders. In many societies men have greater access to political power and decision making than women. Electoral participation depends on access to education about the electoral system and how to navigate it. According to Gaidzanwa (2004) voter education must have the following priorities; that is - to teach voters that if they elect men or women into government they should be sure that the candidate will

prioritise issues that are of benefit to both men and women; to mobilise women and men to vote for women and men equally and to raise awareness among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society on gender issues. In addition education on the voting process should have aim to promote awareness of women's political rights, to encourage women, in particular, to register and to vote for those working on behalf of women's causes; and to develop an understanding that the vote is secret and that both women and men do not have to inform anyone, particularly male relatives, about who they voted for.

Furthermore, it is important to note that education on the voting process should be part of a range of civic education that should start to be taught in schools as early possible. Notably, the attitude of apathy towards participation in some voting processes exhibited by some participants is especially a result of not enough civic education at an early. Thus school curriculum should make it compulsory that students get enough civic education so that they be equipped with knowledge on voting and its impact in everyone's everyday life.

Gender Awareness

Another important issue that is conspicuous in the study is the need for gender mainstreaming and awareness with regards to men and women's participation in voting. While the new constitution and electoral laws of Zimbabwe has even gone on to provide for quotas for women to bridge the gap between men and women's participation in the electoral process, gender awareness and sensitivity should go beyond counting the number of women who are in positions of authority. The noted view is not to discredit the quota system as it is one of the most important tools to gender equality, but to reflect the need for gender awareness in all activities. Thus gender awareness needs to improve not only in the elections bodies, but also in political parties. While political parties have also adapted the quota system in their party constitution they sometimes pay lip service to it and sometimes cite little number of women are eligible for the system.

A good example, in relation to the above, is that in Zimbabwe, the electoral system places a great burden on women since membership in a political party is a prerequisite for election into parliament. Membership in political parties is a strongly gendered process based on the availability of one's time, energy, resources and skills to participate in the public domain. According to Gaidzanwa (2004) political parties hold meetings, rallies and workshops and require their members to devote time to relationships with other party members to enhance their chances of attaining electoral office. These requirements therefore rule out the participation of large numbers of women, especially those of childbearing and child-caring ages who also shoulder domestic responsibilities. Thus gender awareness is a pre-requisite in the planning of voting from voter education, contesting in elections up until the time citizens have to cast their ballots as well in the post-election period.

Access to information

Access to information is another crucial aspect in encouraging men and women in participating in the voting process. According to Waldahl (2004) a fundamental problematic connected to the political agenda is how an issue is communicated and entrenched as relevant in the public domain. A connection exists between the emphases put on various issues by the communication instruments and how these issues end up in society's opinion-forming process. Control and access to information is therefore an important issue in the formation of opinions about pertinent political issues including voting.

Access to relevant as well as gender sensitive information is thus crucial to encouraging men and women to participate in voting. Access to information while also related to education, covered above, also includes media coverage. Thus the way the media cover the voting process and its candidates usually has the effect of encouraging citizens to participate or not. A good example closer home is the net effect of media houses that always claim irregularities in elections. While informing citizens, this message might have the net effect of discouraging

them from participating in the process. A point from this study noted some respondents pointing out to the country's harmonised elections as having been already rigged exemplifies this point. Irresponsible media coverage with wrong information results in apathy by men and women to participate in all of the voting processes.

Furthermore, The SADC Electoral Support Network (SADC-ESN) (2002) notes that elections, like any other political processes, are gendered; this also applies with respect to access to the media. Given the argument that women have only just become visible in politics, the media sometimes lacks gender sensitivity and considers women candidates as lightweights who are not politically interesting, choosing to focus instead on the male heavyweights such as party leaders and other office holders. The coverage given to women during elections therefore tended to be cursory, patronising and not gender sensitive, often limited to cases where women have been beaten, raped or violated. Such information might discourage women from participating in the overall politics and the voting process in particular. Thus, access to information is vital for men and women to fully participate in the voting process.

Improving the voting system

After everything has been said and done, it is important to emphasise that the voting system and its preceding processes need to be wholly improved. Thus electoral management bodies need to improve how voter education is done, for example, by introduction of aspects like automatic voting. The deflating factor for some of the participants in the study was the hassles they encounter in all the processes towards voting. Even so, the very day of voting is usually hectic for those who want to vote. Thus an improvement of the system is important.

Also important is that the image of the electoral body itself needs to improve. In other words, there should not be allegations of vote malpractices, with officials from the organisation mainly implicated. There needs to be true independence of the electoral management institution so that it inspires confidence in all stakeholders, including the ordinary men and women in the street. That way participation in voting and its preceding process improves.

CONCLUSION

The study unravelled that the actual attitudes as well as perceptions noted in the study towards voting are more positive for men and more negative for women in Gweru urban. Notably, both men and women positively affirmed to participation in voting and its preceding processes like political activism and voter education, although the percentage for women was lower for men than that for men. All negatives that were noted in voting and its preceding aspects are higher in females participants than they are for males. Thus, men generally have positive attitudes and perceptions with regards to the voting processes in Gweru urban than women.

It must, however, be underlined that while women views and attitudes were generally negative, there seem to be unexpected rise in negativity on males also. This rising negativity and apathy by males in participating in voting has been deciphered to have developed over a long period of disappointments with previous election results. It would be interesting to have a comparative study with males in a rural set up on their attitudes towards the voting processes in their area. In addition, it would also be interesting to find out the attitudes and perceptions of women also in a rural setup with regards to the voting processes in the area they stay.

The study also showed that men and women experience the voting and some of its processes differently. In as much as the study illuminated that women's participation in voting which include political activism, voter education, participation as candidates as well as the actual voting itself has increased over the passage of time, there still are some glaring aspects that need to be improved. Experiences which translate into attitudes and perceptions of men and women in this study, notably, are different because the Zimbabwean society still remains a patriarchal society and men still dominate the political space, and particularly the voting

process. It is important to dismiss the contention that political participation has something to do with hormones. Hormonal theories do not apply here, rather Zimbabwean society's cultural norms hinder women from fully participating in politics. This is slowly changing though.

In the end, the study reflects that participation in electoral activities is influenced by the time, energy, skills and opportunities that men and women of different classes, races, ages and ethnicities access in their societies. Thus, in Zimbabwe, men and women tend to experience different gender divisions of labour that create more time for the middle and upper classes, and more skills and choices for men than women in the political and electoral domains. In Zimbabwe, women's associational lives are not focused on political parties, which are male dominated. Few women are willing to compete in the electoral field with men. The numbers have increased because of the introduction of the quota system for these women.

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4. Have you registered to vote?

Yes.....

Give details.

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No.....

Give details.

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5. Do you think voting is important?

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Why?

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6. Have you voted before?

Yes.....

Give details.

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No.....

Give details.

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7. Are there any female candidates who have ever participated as MP or councilor in your area?

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8. What do you think needs to be done to persuade men and women to participate more in voting?

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Thank You For Your Time

Interview Guide for Men and Women

1. **Gender:** Male Female
2. **Age**
3. Do you think registering to vote is important?
4. Have you registered to vote? Explain further
5. Do you think voting is important? Why?
6. Have you voted before? Give details.
7. Are there any female candidates who have ever participated as MP or councilor in your area?
8. What do you think needs to be done to persuade men and women to participate more in voting?

Thank You For Your Time

Interview Guide for Stakeholders

1. **Gender:** Male Female
2. **Age**
3. What are the perceptions of residents' towards registering to vote?
4. Are people in your area registering to vote? Explain further
5. What do they think about voting? Why?
6. What are the statistics of residents who have voted before? Give details.
7. Are there any female candidates who have ever participated as MP or councilor in your area?
8. What do you think needs to be done to persuade men and women to participate more in voting?

Thank You For Your Time

