

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE**



**SADC MEMBER STATES' COMPLIANCE WITH THE SADC PRINCIPLES AND
GUIDELINES GOVERNING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS: CASE OF THE ZIMBABWE
ELECTORAL COMMISSION SINCE 2004.**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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2021

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my beloved wife Linda Tapererwa and my daughters Makaitaishe and Mazvitaishie. To my parents Mr and Mrs Dasva, brothers and sisters, I cherish your love and continued support forever.

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ABSTRACT

The research sought to assess SADC member states' compliance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) as a case study. To answer the research questions and as well as to achieve the objectives of the research, data was collected from a sample extracted from the electoral officials, civil society representatives, politicians, and election observer missions from different towns and from organizations and political parties. Questionnaires and interviews were employed as tools for data collection, in this regard 25 questionnaires were distributed to twenty-five individuals within the sample and 5 interviews were conducted. In addition, some of the information used in the research was extracted from published documentary sources. Data collected was presented using pie charts and tables and later followed by discussion and analysis of the data presented. The research used the Southern African Development Committee guidelines and principles governing for democratic elections as a measurement tool for analysing the way in which SADC member states are conducting elections with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as a mirror. The findings of the research have shown that although ZEC is trying to meet the demands of the guidelines, there are still more challenges being witnessed on elections system in Zimbabwe such as, victimization, high rate of electoral violence high rate of turned away voters among others that need to be addressed as such have a negative impact on the achievement of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe as a whole.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AUPW	African Union Panel of Wise
GPA	Global Political Agreement
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GNU	Government of National Unity
IG	Inclusive Government
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PF ZAPU	Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development -coordinating Conference
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Election- related conflicts and disputes have been a reality in politics in the SADC region. In the current era elections and electoral processes are sources of contestation leading to open conflicts such as protests, violence, civil wars, intimidation, torture and in worse cases loss of life causing human insecurity and instability in the region. Against this background, international, continental and regional interstate institutions such as SADC have embarked on various initiatives aimed at putting in place some democratic assessment and measuring tools to ensure the quality of elections such as the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. However, it is worrisome to note that the region to date is experiencing electoral malpractices and fraud leading to instability since the adoption of the electoral guidelines in 2004. This scenario has triggered the researcher to investigate the extent to which the SADC member states in particular Zimbabwe are implementing the electoral guidelines.

Historically, the first SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections were adopted in 2004 by the Heads of State Summit in Mauritius following the Declaration on the Principles Governing Elections in Africa by the African Union in 2002 (SADC 2004). Matlosa (2005) says, this initiative set the stage for continental and regional efforts towards acceptable, credible and legitimate elections conducted on a

level playing field and with minimum violence. Within the SADC region the electoral guidelines emanated from the 1992 SADC Treaty establishing the organization that commits member states to adhere to common political values, institutions and practices. Kondwai and Motsamai(2016) posits that, the 2004 SADC elections guidelines which were revised and readopted in 2015 include the full political participation of all citizens, freedom of association, political tolerance, equal opportunity for all political parties to access state media, impartial electoral institutions and an independent judiciary, voter education, acceptance and respect of election results proclaimed by the national electoral authorities and legal challenges of the election results. The responsibilities of member states holding elections include that they take measures to ensure implementation of these democratic principles, establish impartial, all inclusive, competent and accountable national electoral bodies fully resourced to carry out democratic elections (Lindberg 2006). It is within this framework that this study seeks to evaluate the extent to which ZEC is implementing the electoral guidelines since 2008.

SADC (2015) has it that, the revised principles compensated for the shortcomings of the 2004 version of principles and moved away from being mere suggestions and moral commitments. One key feature is institutionalization of long-term observer as part of the SADC Electoral Observation Missions allowing the regional body to observe a significant part of the electoral process beyond the event itself which was not included in the 2004 set of principles. In addition, the revised electoral guidelines called upon member states to comply and enforce the electoral guidelines through the SADC Summit and Organ on Politics, Defense and Security. According to Sanusi and Nassuna

(2017) the 2015 version of electoral guidelines improved the definition of what constitutes free, fair and credible elections as well as the inclusion of non-state actors such as civil society organizations, faith-based organizations in the SDC Observer Missions. Previously teams were composed of purely state delegates who were biased. The violation of human rights in Zimbabwe electoral processes makes the researcher to question whether ZEC is implementing these electoral guidelines during elections.

Kondwai and Motsamai (2016) says, compliance to the SADC Electoral Guidelines in the region is at different level and member states are reluctant to fully embrace the guidelines. Chikohomero (2019) submits that, Zimbabwe adopted and domesticated the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections prior to its harmonized elections in 2008 responding to pressure from SADC following intractable conflict over disputed elections in the 2002-2008 period. This was followed by adoption of selective reforms by the ZANU PF government including the establishment of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, one day voting, counting at polling stations, introduction of translucent ballot boxes and establishment of the electoral court. However, these initial reforms were not comprehensive, proposals from non-state stakeholders for example the opposition such as the Movement for Democratic Change, civil society and faith-based organizations were excluded. This minimalistic approach to electoral reforms tempted the researcher to question ZEC's will to implement SADC electoral guidelines to minimize electoral disputes and conflicts which are a source of instability and threatening human security.

Zimbabwe Human Rights Watch (2004), points out that, before the establishment of the

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in 2004 through the ZEC Bill, Zimbabwe has been using a multi-level -state centric electoral management system established in the post-independence period. The structure was headed by the Registrar General of Elections and lacked independence from the state, its commissioners were appointed by the president and government hence lacked transparency, objectivity and impartiality. However, the system appeared to be fair because there was less competition because the country had weak opposition political parties during that period. The emergence of formidable and competitive opposition political parties to be specific the Movement for Democratic Change and sound civic and faith-based organizations on Zimbabwe's political radar screen exposed the shortcomings of the system resulting in successive elections disputes to date(ZESN 2018).Therefore, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was established against a background of state collusion, political polarization, violent political conflicts, controversial legislation restricting political participation such as Public Order and Security Act and Access to Information Privacy Act of 2002. These conditions inhibited ZEC's capacity to fully comply with the election's guidelines (Matlosa 2005).

Chikohomero (2019) says that, despite the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's commitments to comply and implement the electoral principles, Zimbabwe continues to face electoral challenges as evidenced by pre-election and post elections violence, disputed elections results, intimidation of electors, media manipulation by the ruling party, lack of transparency on electoral processes like voter registration and voter education, lack of independence of the commission and commissioners. The worse

scenario was witnessed in the 2018 harmonized elections which were held with a high military presence and active participation in the electoral processes which saw the army opening fire killing innocent civilians under the guise of maintaining law and order.

1.2 Purpose of the Study.

The study aim is to:

- Appreciate the extent to which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is implementing SADC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Statement of the Problem.

None-compliance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Elections in Zimbabwe by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has resulted in electoral malpractices which have triggered pre-election, election and post-election violence. Electoral ill-practices include lack of transparency on the electoral processes like voter registration, voter education, appointment of commissioners, vote rigging, intimidation of voters and involvement of the military in electoral practices. This has triggered election related violence, condemnation of election results igniting protests which attract military action leading to death of innocent civilians. According to SADC (2005), elections and electoral processes has been a source of conflict, instability and human insecurity in Zimbabwe. It is a problem to opposition political parties because participating in elections in such an environment is a sheer waste of time because election outcomes are predetermined. The opposition supporters face election violence, politically motivated abductions, disability and death for example the controversial

disappearance of Itai Dzamara. It also costs the image of the ruling party and its leadership attracting sanctions which end up affecting lives of ordinary citizens. The ruling party may suffer legitimacy crisis making it difficult to attract foreign direct investment or credit lines from international financial institutions like IMF, World Bank and the Paris Club. It is again a problem to institutions like ZEC they lose reputation and trust from society. Civil society and non-governmental organizations advocating for reforms are also under threat of being deregistered by government. Finally, it also costs SADC resources in handling disputes as well as exposing its weaknesses as a regional body for failure to enforce compliance with the guidelines on wayward member states.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To determine the extent to which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is complying with the SADC guidelines on free, fair and credible elections.
2. To identify challenges faced by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in implementing the SADC electoral guidelines promoting free, fair and credible elections.
3. To examine the strategies used by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in trying to implement the standard electoral guidelines enshrined in the SADC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

1.5 Research Questions

1. To what extent does the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission comply with the SADC guidelines on free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the impingements encountered by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

in implementing the SADC electoral guidelines in Zimbabwe?

3. What are the strategies used by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in trying to implement the standard electoral guidelines enshrined in the SADC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

This research is based on the assumption that:

- SADC member states like Zimbabwe are reluctant to take ownership and internalize the SADC Principles and guidelines on elections.
- SADC as a regional body is failing to put in place enforcement measures to ensure that the elections guidelines are religiously followed by member states in this case Zimbabwe.

1.7 Significance of the Study.

It is envisaged that the findings of this study will be of great value to the government, political parties and civil society and faith-based organizations on the need to implement comprehensive electoral reforms in line with the region's electoral guidelines to improve the quality and credibility of elections in Zimbabwe. The findings shall also inform the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on the need to align its electoral processes in line with the regional guide. More so, the research findings shall raise public awareness on their rights, duties and responsibilities during and after elections so as to avoid election motivated violence and conflict which threatens stability and human security. The findings shall also fill the knowledge gap in the area of electoral reforms.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study used the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to investigate the extent to which SADC member states are implementing the SADC's elections guidelines.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The research findings might not be relevant to all SADC member states since the implementation of the electoral guidelines is at different levels. Politics is very sensitive in Zimbabwe, specifically the subject of elections. People were scared to talk about politics for fear of violence and in worse cases losing their lives. This impinged the data collection process as some key respondents were not able to speak out on important issues. Official Secrecy Act also inhibited respondents from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to objectively contribute to the study for fear of losing their jobs. The researcher compensated for these limitations by assuring the respondents confidentiality and anonymity.

1.10 Definition of key terms.

Elections: Heywood (1994) defines elections as a device for filling public offices by reference to popular preferences.

SADC Principles and Guidelines: The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections are benchmarks or standards meant to assess and measure the credibility of electoral processes in the region

Election fraud: is the illegal interference with the electoral processes with intention of

influencing the voting process with a view to produce an altered result (Heywood1994).

Electoral Violence: According to Sisk (2008) is defined as a subset of political violence distinguished by its timing, perpetrators and victims, objectives and methods.

1.11 Dissertation Outline

Chapter provided the background and setting of the problem. This was followed by review of literature related to the study in chapter two. Chapter three focused on the research methodology and design that was used in conducting the study. Chapter four of this study presented the findings and results of the study based on the data that was collected using methodologies in chapter three. The final chapter summarized the findings, discussed the results and provided conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

Developing and entrenching a culture of democracy and participatory politics undergirded by free, fair and credible elections remains a daunting and elusive task in most SADC countries. Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (2017) postulates that, Zimbabwe's recent previous three elections cycles under the management of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission that is 2008, 2013 and 2018's integrity and credibility has been questionable. These elections have seen red flags being raised in elections aspects such as the independence of ZEC, violation of human rights, manipulation of state media platforms by ZANU PF, intimidation of the electors, inadequate voter education and use of a tainted voter's roll. This has left the researcher with more question than answers on the extent to which ZEC is implementing the SADC electoral guidelines. This study was informed by the concept of electoralism. In this chapter the researcher reviewed literature related to the study using a thematic approach.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Electoralism by Terry Karl (2015)

The concept electoralism has Professor Terry Karl as its progenitor. Terry Karl (2015) has it that equating democracy with the mere holding of elections or assuming that

such elections will subsequently generate further and deeper reforms down the line commits the fallacy of electoralism. Electoralism means the process of operating through competitive elections as part of the democratic process, joining or creating parties, drafting manifestos, putting forward candidates for elections, electioneering and voting whilst undermining other democratic tenets. Chikohomero (2019), says electoralism is the equation of democracy with the holding of elections. According to Tsabora (2018), whilst democracy cannot exist without regular multiparty elections, a country can hold regular elections and yet fall far short of the democratic ideal. Most SADC member states are electoral democracies hence elections become an end in itself. To turn the electoral component of democracy in an end in itself means to reduce democracy to electoralism. Matlosa (2005) says, the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections were put in place to enhance the conduct of free, fair and credible elections which are a pillar of democracy, peace and stability. However, elections in the SADC region have been ritualized and are being done to legitimize authoritarianism. Nathan (2006) says, once in power, politicians in the SADC region use to think that it is for eternity and their governments focus on electoral and not governmental strategies. Democratic values such as the respect for human rights, good governance, respect for the rule of law, constitutionalism and separation of powers have been sacrificed by most African leaders for the sole goal of winning elections and remain clinging at the helm of power. This have triggered election related violence, vote rigging, disputed electoral outcomes, extension of the political term of reference with leaders trying to prolong their stay in power thereby risking the fallacy of electoralism.

2.1.1 Background SDC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Historically the growth of electoral norms and values and relevant instruments in the region has remained motivated by the requirements of the SADC Treaty of 1992, specifically, Article 4 of the treaty which states that human rights, democracy and the rule of law are principles managing the acts of its member states to promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions which are democratic, legitimate and effective. SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections principal objective is to promote the holding and observation of democratic elections based on shared values and principles of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights (SDAC 2015). The first set of SADC electoral guidelines were adopted in 2004 as a form of commitment to the institutionalization of democracy and good governance in the region and have since constituted the basis for the assessment of electoral processes in member states. The regional bloc adopted its revised electoral guidelines in 2015 in a bid to improve the quality of elections in the region.

2.1.2 2015 SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

The 2015 SADC electoral guidelines include the following.

- Member states shall invite SADC's Electoral Observation Missions to observe their elections, based on the provisions of the SADC Treaty on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

- Encourage the full participation of all citizens in democratic and development processes.
- Ensure that all citizens enjoy fundamental freedoms and human rights including freedom of association, assembly and expression.
- Ensure that the date or period of elections is prescribed by law. The date or period of elections shall be based upon the legal framework and applicable constitutional provisions.
- Take all necessary measures and precautions to prevent corruption, bribery, favoritism, political violence, intolerance and intimidation.
- Promote and respect the values of electoral justice which include integrity, impartiality, fairness, professionalism, efficiency and regularity of elections.
- Promote necessary conditions to foster transparency, freedom of the media, access to information by all citizens, and equal opportunities for all candidates and political parties to use state media.
- Guarantee an environment of open contest with no undue exclusion and restrictions on anyone to vote as well as the right of eligible and qualified citizens to stand as candidates in any election.
- Encourage regular reviews of the participation of citizens in the diaspora in national elections.
- Uphold and guarantee the impartiality and independence of the judiciary, the Electoral Management Bodies and other electoral institutions.
- Ensure that voter education capacitates and empowers all eligible citizens as well

as fostering ownership of the electoral process and the democratic political system.

- Ensure the adherence to a binding Electoral code of conduct.
- Ensure the acceptance of the elections results by all electoral stakeholders as proclaimed to have free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful elections by the competent and independent national electoral authorities in accordance with the respective laws of the land.
- Condemn and reject unconstitutional change of government and non -acceptance of the results after due process as announced by the legally competent government and authorities (SADC 2015 *Revised Guidelines*)

According to Chikohomero (2019), one key feature of these electoral guidelines is the institutionalization of long-term observers as a core part of the SADC Observation Missions allowing SADC to observe a significant part of the electoral processes beyond the event itself. Improved definition of what constitutes free, fair elections in the region and inclusion of non-state actors in the SDC Electoral Observation Missions. However, the adoption and implementation of electoral guidelines among SADC member states is at different levels. SADC member states are reluctant to take ownership and internalize the electoral guidelines.

2.2 Compliance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections

2.2.1 Establishment of Independent Electoral Management Bodies.

SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections implore member states

to establish independent and impartial Electoral Management Bodies. Kondwai and Motsamai (2016) has it that, after the adoption of the 2004 electoral guidelines SADC member states opened themselves up more readily to implement the guidelines in their national elections. Countries like Botswana, South Africa, Mauritius and Zambia have long established electoral institutions based on the principles and guidelines for example establishment of independent Electoral Management Bodies based on professionalism and impartiality. Chikohomero (2019) has it that, responding to pressure for electoral reforms by SADC following intractable electoral conflicts in the 2002-2008 period, the ZANUPF government adopted selective reforms including the establishment of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Before the establishment of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in 2004 through the ZEC Bill, Zimbabwe has been using a multi-level state-centric electoral management system established in the post-independence period. The structure was headed by the Registrar General of Elections and lacked independence from the state, its commissioners were appointed by the president and government hence lacked transparency, objectivity and impartiality. Therefore, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was established against a backdrop of state collusion, political polarization, violent political conflicts, controversial legislation restricting political participation such as AIPA and POSA. According to Kriger (2005), to date the appointment of commissioners is compromising Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's impartiality. The commission and commissioners suffer undue political influence. This has left the door wide open for gerrymandering. The commission is criticized for promoting partisan interests thereby promoting a culture of electoralism.

2.2.2 Ineffective Election, Monitoring and Observation

The SADC Principles and guidelines on elections implore member states to invite SADC Electoral Observation Missions to observe their elections based on the provision of the SADC Treaty on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation (SADC 2015). Kondwai and Mostamai (2016) posits that, compliance to this value by SADC member states is lukewarm for example, in 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2018, various international observer missions were not invited to observe the Zimbabwe elections. The 2015 revised version of the SADC Elections principles calls for the observation of pre-election, election and post-election phases by credible regional and international election observer missions on member states holding elections. ZANU PF government is reluctant to open its doors to regional and international election observer missions. Civil Society Organizations are not allowed to monitor elections in Zimbabwe. Monitoring is reserved to public servants who are state functionaries and as such their impartiality in elections management may be doubtful (Kriger 2005). Involvement of Security Forces, the police and army personnel in the management of elections as election staff is one area of concern. What is worrisome is ZEC's failure to implement recommendations for reforms made by various election observer missions after the 2008 elections. Election observation in the region is just a ritual meant to endorse election results regardless of election irregularities thereby promoting a culture of electoralism.

2.2.3 Political Parties Unequal Access to State Media

The SADC electoral guidelines call upon member states to promote necessary

conditions to foster transparency, freedom of the media, access to information by all citizens, and equal opportunities for all candidates and political parties to use state media. However, enforcement of the provision has been half-hearted with little commitment from either ZEC or the government. ZEC has consistently failed to call out the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation on media bias, demonstrating inherent institutional weakness and willful disregard for both national laws and SDC Electoral guidelines (SEOM 2015). ZESN (2018) has it that, what has attracted criticism is ZEC's failure to guarantee justice to all political parties to campaign equally through state and private owned media with state media inclined to ZANU PF. According to CZC (2013) in the election month of July 2013, the state-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Company covered 114 election related stories and party campaigns activities. Seventy-nine (69%) were on ZANU PF, twenty-six (23%) were on Prime Minister Tsvangirai's MDC party, four (4%) were on the other MDC formation led by Welshman Ncube, three (3%) were on ZAPU and the remaining two were on ZDP led by Kisinot Mukwazhe. In the same vein, nine out of ten of former President Mugabe's political rallies were covered live on ZBCTV whilst none of the sixty campaign rallies held by former Prime Minister Tsvangirai and other opposition was broadcast live. Therefore, ZANUPF has manipulated and dominated state media putting itself at an unfair advantage over other political parties. However, in the 2018 harmonized elections opposition parties' access to state media was improved. Nelson Chamisa's MDC Alliance was given time to launch his party manifesto however most stories and activities which were given coverage on state media were negative and denigrating on the part of opposition. This clearly indicates that the political field is uneven and is tilted in favor of ZANU PF thereby

pitting the credibility of elections pointing to electoralism.

2.2.4 Sanctity of Electoral processes, voter registration, compilation of the voter's roll and voter's roll inspection

According to Chikohomero (2019), compilation, management and maintenance of voter's roll have triggered political furor in the previous three election cycles under the supervision of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. The Registrar General under the control of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is responsible for registration of voters. Dodo and Makwerere (undated) posits that, the Registrar General's office could be influenced to fagot voters, this is where voters are immediately removed from the voter's roll just after registering. The notorious RG is also known for registering ghost voters, this is whereby the voter's roll is inflated by unknown or deceased electors meant to facilitate electoral theft and fraud. AUEOMR (2013) says that, voter's roll inspection is accorded inadequate time. In 2013 the voter's roll was availed to political parties two days before the Election Day and this gave no time for political parties to notice if there were any electoral malpractices within the voter's roll. In the same vein voters were not given ample time to verify and correct information concerning their registration leading to an increased number of voters turned away.

Early closure of the registration process barred more than 750 000 voters from registering to vote though there has been a significant increase of the voters from 5,2 million voters in 2008 to 6,4 million voters in 2013. The registration period must be reasonable enough to allow all potential and eligible voters to register and the voter' roll should be accessible because the compilation of the voters roll should be transparent

because it is the critical process where election rigging is done as most election malpractices is done before the election day. According to Kondwai and Motsamai (2019) as part of the electoral reforms following recommendations of the 2013 election observer missions the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission adopted the Biometric Voter Registration System. Registration and compilation of the voter's roll for 2018 harmonized elections was done electronically so as to minimize manipulation and tempering with the voter's roll. However, this new system was manipulated by ZANUPF as a weapon of intimidation to would be electors in the 2018 elections. The electorate was misinformed that photograph, finger prints and serial numbers on voter registration slips would be used to trace those who would have voted for the opposition. ZEC's failure to sanitize its electoral processes like voter registration, voter's roll compilation and inspection has triggered the need for this current study trying to establish the extent to which it is implementing the SADC Principles and guidelines governing democratic elections

Lack of access to the voter's roll is one component illustrating non-compliance and SADC's failure to take action over repeated violations. Article 9.1.6 of the Principles and Guidelines states that there must free access to the voter's roll, which sits at the heart of electoral processes. Before the 2018 harmonized elections, ZEC had to be compelled through the courts to release the first draft of voter's roll. It took several court applications for the updated voter's roll to be released. In 2013 SADC Election Observer Mission report noted the lack of transparency and of timeous access to an electronic voter's roll for all parties and citizens. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission claimed it had faced technical challenges and as such was unable to comply with the law. This

repeat violation clearly indicates that ZEC is a case of habitual noncompliance with the SADC Electoral laws.

2.2.5 Voter Education

The SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections encourages member states to ensure that voter education capacitates and empower all eligible citizens as well as fostering ownership of the electoral process and the democratic political systems (SADC 2015). The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission retains an absolute monopoly over voter education. However, the 2018 harmonized elections exposed the Commission's capacity to effectively carry out extensive and substantive voter education. Especially given that it was the first time the country did biometric voter registration. Several cases were reported of people being asked to surrender their voter registration slips to the headmen or party officials. On the day of voting many people were unclear about what to take with them and how the voting system worked. SDC electoral guidelines say civic and voter education are indispensable to democratic consolidation as they allow the electorate to make informed choices. The limited two weak voter education exercise flies in the face of the principles and guidelines and violates voter's right to be adequately informed and prepared for elections (ZESN 2018). The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (2018) says that, the number of assisted and turned away voters in the 2013 and 2018 elections is an indicator of inadequate voter education. Time allocated to three voter education cycles such as voter education for registration, voter education for nomination and voter education for polling is very limited. Voter educators are poorly and hurriedly trained. Material for voter education is

scarce for example pamphlets and charts. In most cases minority groups are not catered for because literature and information on voter education is conveyed in English, Shona and Ndebele. At times voter educators become victims of political violence hence the quality of voter education is compromised. Voter Education should take a multi-stakeholder approach including non-state actors such civil society organizations, non- governmental organizations and faith-based organizations for inclusivity. State security personnel should not be involved in the provision of voter education (ZESN 2018) These electoral malpractices by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission have tainted the credibility of elections in the country.

2.2.6 Pre-election, Election and Post-Election Violence

In line with the SADC electoral guidelines member states must take all measures and precautions to prevent corruption, bribery, favoritism, political violence, intolerance and intimidation, before, during and after elections. According to Kriger (2005) pre-election, election and post-election violence is a pervasive feature of Zimbabwean elections since 1980. ZANUPF continues to engage in organized political violence and intimidation against its opponents before, during and after elections. In most cases violence is unleashed by the youth brigades which includes attacking opposition political parties' supporters during rallies, threatening the electorate war if not voted into power, threatening civil servants' expulsion from the civil service for supporting the opposition, torture, abductions politically motivated detentions and arrests. Kutema (2010) says the 2008 re-run election were greatly condemned as a result of the pervasive violence that was perpetrated by the ZANUPF Youth Militia and that led to the

withdrawal of the MDC T leader Morgan Tsvangirai a few days before elections. The post-election violence in 2018 which resulted in the death of innocent civilians due to open fire by the army and the high involvement of military personnel in the electoral processes makes the credibility of elections questionable. Such inconsistencies have triggered the need for this study trying to establish the extent to which ZEC is implementing the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe. Election-related violence have seen Zimbabwean election being regarded as an end in itself people end up voting out of fear which defeats the essence of elections risking electoralism.

2.2.7 Vote buying and patronage

According to Boone and Kriger (2010) post-2000 era ZANUPF manipulated land rights to reward or intimidate voters. ZANU PF resorted to land patronage strategies of political mobilization to win electoral support. Sachikonye (2003) has it that, the ruling party seized mainly white-owned private property to distribute to their supporters. This was meant to broaden their political support that is electoral populism. The ruling party also threatened to withdraw other government resources, such as jobs and food relief from opposition voters and provide development benefits for only ruling party voters. This was followed by purging of civil service and security forces believed to be supporters of the party opposition and replaced them with party loyalists. Burry (2010) concurs that land patronage win ZANU PF votes but victory also depended on violence and rigging. State programs such as allocation of presidential inputs scheme, command agriculture, indigenization and empowerment are given on partisan basis. In this point

vote buying is among the major factors that affect the achievement of free and fair elections.

2.2.8 Diaspora Vote

The SADC electoral guidelines implore member states to encourage regular reviews of the participation of citizens in the diaspora in national elections. According to Makumbe (2010) the diaspora vote has remained a pie in the sky for the Zimbabwean electorate living abroad. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has lack of resources as a pretext which incapacitates it from extending the right to vote to the diaspora community. However, ZANU PF is fully aware that its policies are not appealing to the diaspora community and allowing the diaspora vote will make their chances of winning elections very slim. ZEC 's failure to extent the right to vote to Zimbabweans abroad is a clear violation of the SADC Electoral guidelines.

2.2.9 Security of election material, counting, tallying and announcement of election results.

The security of election related materials such as ballot boxes and ballot papers have seen red flags being raised in the Zimbabwe previous election cycles. According to Sachikonye (2003) the security of the elections material in Zimbabwe is compromised. Printing, storage and transportation of ballot papers by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission lacks transparency. In 2013 ZEC printed more ballot books and allegations are that the extra books were used to facilitate vote rigging. Counting of votes at polling stations is done during the night. In 2018 tallying of votes was a challenge, it is alleged

that numbers in the ZEC saver failed to tally with numbers on V11 forms. This triggered serious disputes which the MDC Alliance filing a court application challenging the election outcome (SEOM 2018). This was compounded by unnecessary delays in announcing the results of the presidential elections. Involvement of state security and former state security personnel in such sensitive electoral processes such as counting and tallying of votes taints the credibility of the electoral outcomes. This triggered the post-election violence in 2018 which resulted in the death of innocent civilians excising their right to protest over disputed election outcomes. Failure by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to guarantee security of such important electoral processes allows room for electoral theft which defies the whole essence of elections there by risking a culture of electoralism

2.3 Challenges faced by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

2.3.1 Lack of human and Financial Resources

Successful, free and fair elections dwell much on the abundance of resources. Governments are expected to fund the electoral processes together with funding political parties though it differs from nation to nation. According to Osman (2013) lack of resources is a major obstacle to the attainment of quality and quantity of election process. This more pronounced in developing countries especially in Africa and Zimbabwe is one of the countries which struggles to raise election funds. The situation is not unique to Zimbabwe alone, in Zambia's 2013 election lack of resources affected the smooth flow of the electoral process, failure of electronic system was pervasive twenty four out of eighty-five polling stations failed to submit their results and ended up

raising suspicion among political parties.

ZESN (2013) has it that, in the Zimbabwean 2008 harmonized election, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission failed to provide enough polling stations as well as enough staff for the electoral process, there were 1100 polling stations to cater for 5.9 million voters and the polling stations were poorly distributed to across the country as a result of lacking enough funds to sponsor the election. This concurs with the observations by AUEOMR (2013) that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission failed to conduct voter education to the voters in some areas and compilation of the voters' roll was delayed, such resulted in confusion and high rates of turned away voters who failed to know their polling stations in time. Election processes must be watertight and adequately funded to allow a quality and creditable election that is free and fair. Lack of resources by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has undermined its capacity to implement the SADC Electoral guidelines there by risking electoralism.

2.3.2 Undue political Influence on the Commission and Commissioners

Undue political influence and pressure from the appointing authority on the commission and its commissioners is one other obstacle which impinges ZEC from delivering free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe (ZESN 2018). The SADC Electoral guidelines calls for the independence and impartiality of Election Management Bodies like ZEC. However, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and its commissioners suffer undue political influence from government and the president because they are in the commission at the benevolence of the president. The Commission is infiltrated by state

security agents who are also functionaries of ZANU PF hence its impartiality is questionable. Most of the commissioners are prepared to sacrifice the Electoral laws in order to please their appointing authority (Boone and Krigger 2010). This has also stifled the reform process because individuals in the Commission are benefiting from the existing system.

2.4 ZEC'S Strategies to implement SADC Electoral Guidelines

2.4.1 Electoral Reforms

According to Chikohomero (2019) one way to ensure sustainable and constructive management of election related conflicts is electoral reforms. Adherence to the various regional instruments for election management requires far-reaching reforms. ZESN, EISA, ECF Elections Report(2004) made a number of recommendations considered critical to redressing the pervasive trend of election related conflicts and instability which includes establishment of an independent electoral commission, change of elections model from first – past – the post system and adoption of the mixed member proportional system, monitoring of elections by independent monitors and not by public servants, utilization of fixed polling stations, extension of postal voting to all Zimbabweans outside the country and use of translucent ballot boxes. However, ZANU PF adopted rather a selective approach to electoral reform without taking into account the comprehensive reform proposals by election observers.

Kondwai and Mostamai (2016) says government to date is still reluctant to allow a national dialogue on reform measures involving other key factors such as the

opposition parties, civil society and faith-based organisations. The reform processes are government-engineered which excludes broad based consultations with non-state actors who are equally concerned with political instability in Zimbabwe. The reform measures are tantamount to papering over the cracks of a collapsing wall. Though ZEC is credited for some few reforms prior to the 2018 harmonized elections which includes use of translucent ballot boxes, polling station specific voter registration and voting and the use of biometric voter registration, key areas which require immediate attention such as voter's roll compilation, tallying and counting of votes among others were excluded. Therefore, the reforms were cosmetic which gave room to electoral fraud.

The above literature has shown that there are many factors that affect Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's compliance to the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. The literature has revealed that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is a case of habitual non-compliance considering the impartiality of the commission, voter registration, voter education and election-related violence. This have resulted in electoral mal-practices such as intimidation of voters, vote rigging and disputed election results. This resonates well with the concept of electoralism which states that most elections in the SADC region are a clear indicator of a democracy in the reverse wave. Election though an important component of democracy is not an end in itself.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In short, the achievement of free, fair and credible election is affected by a multiplicity of factors as shown from varying literature. Independence and impartiality of the Electoral

Management Body, election-related violence, unequal access to the media by all political parties, registration and compilation of the voter's roll the way ZEC conduct the electoral processes are some of the factors that taints the fairness and credibility of elections in Zimbabwe. ZEC is not complying to the SADC electoral guidelines. This study therefore seeks to explore strategies employed by ZEC in reducing and curbing these electoral malpractices in an effort to achieve free and fair elections in Zimbabwe in compliance to the region's principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. The next chapter will focus on research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology of the study. The researcher explained the research techniques and methods used to conduct the research. Research methodology is a way of solving the research problem. This chapter showed the instruments used to collect data, the population target as well as the sampling procedures that were used to select the sample of key informants especially to rightfully identify institutions who make the electoral process move within the scope of democracy. It also presented the ethical issues and validity and reliability of the study that was utilized in the study.

3.2 Research Design

There are many research designs which are at the disposal for use by researchers in their endeavors to expand the frontiers of knowledge. This study used the descriptive survey research design. According to Robson (1997) research design refers to a plan on how to proceed with collecting and analyzing data. Research design consists of three components namely plan, structure and strategy. The plan is the overall programme embracing what the researcher will do from the hypothesis and implications to the final analysis. The structure on the other hand focuses on set of operational variables. The strategy is concerned with the methods to be used to gather and analyze data. A

research design is a structure with a plan within which the research will be carried out. Dawson (2012) pointed out that, a research design functions in setting parameters for data collection with minimum outflow of effort, time and money. This scholar further says that, it is anchored on how the research is set out, what happens to the participants and the type of tools to be used for data collection. In this study, the researcher attempted to discover the point at which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is complying to SADC guidelines on democratic elections.

Bryman (2000) argues that, the descriptive survey design involves gathering data that describes events and also organizes, tabulates, depicts and describes data collected. Therefore, the choice of the descriptive research design for this study was appropriate, because it enabled the researcher to describe and explain features of numerical data on observable phenomena in this case electoral processes. Descriptive survey design allows for more reliable data to be collected from the respondents because it uses instruments like questionnaires that are effective for collecting data. Descriptive survey research design, is an excellent vehicle for the measurement of attitudes and orientations prevalent in large populations. Elections and electoral processes involve large populations. This justifies the selection of the descriptive survey research design, because it gives room for the research to collect, analyze, present and interpret data associated with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's compliance with the SADC electoral guidelines.

However, descriptive survey research design has its own loopholes. The use of questionnaires means, there is no direct contact with respondents hence there is no room to probe further. There is no room for questioning to get actual facts especially on

questions that demand reasoning and confidential information. However, this study overcame this weakness by incorporating interviews which allows for further probing and questioning clarifying the grey areas. Above all, the researcher pretested the questionnaires before distributing them to the target population to get rid of ambiguous items.

3.3 Research Approach

This study utilized the qualitative research approach. Kruger *etal* (2005) points out that, qualitative research evaluates objective data which consists of numbers. Therefore, the study used the qualitative research approach. Fox (2007) has it that elections and democracy are politically and socially constructed institutions as these can only be expressed in words to better come up with data. Qualitative approach has to do with assessment of opinions and behavior. This enhanced the researcher to closely analyze the opinions of the electorate, representatives from the electoral management body and election observers with regards to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's adherence to the SDC electoral guidelines. Qualitative research was used as a process of analysis that is based on complex structured methods to confirm or disapprove a hypothesis since it is a result of numbers. Results in this research were shown in graphs and tables. The qualitative method pertains to the researcher getting to the ground to get first-hand information. Maxwell (2004) described qualitative method as being systematic subjective approach that is used to describe people's life experiences and situations with the objective of giving a meaning. Tuckman (2005) says that, qualitative research aims to explore and discover issues about the problems at hand because very little is known about the problem. In this context non-compliance with SDC electoral guidelines

by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission resulting in electoral malpractices culminating to election violence and disputed election outcomes thereby risking electoralism. Qualitative data sources include observation, interviews, questionnaires, documents and texts as well as the researcher's impression and reactions (Myers 2009). This wide range source of qualitative data enhanced the researcher to gather a variety of data in a bid to expose problems associated with electoral processes by ZEC. The researcher focused on the way participants were interpreting and making sense of their own experiences about the world in which they find themselves in.

3.4 Study Population

According to Best and Kahn (2006) a population is defined as a group of individuals, with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group of individuals. Babie (2001) referred study population as a package of all subjects that you need to concentrate on. In this study the target population was electoral officers, government officials and academic personnel within the geographical location. Electoral administrators, politicians and academic personnel were important in this current research because they provided different opinions of conduct of the election management with depth and synthesis knowledge. Above all they have in-depth knowledge about the SADC electoral guidelines unlike ordinary citizens.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample size for this study is thirty respondents. The researcher distributed 25 questionnaires to citizens in Dotito, Mt Darwin, Bindura and Harare. Of the 25

questionnaires ten were distributed to the election officials, another ten to academic personnel and five to officials from civic organisations because of their appreciation of election related issues and SADC electoral guidelines. The researcher also carried out interview discussions with one representative from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, one political party member from ZANU PF, one from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change Alliance, one election observer and one from Civil Society. These were very instrumental in this study because they are directly involved in electoral issues almost on a daily basis. The sample size was made small because of covid 19, the researcher minimized conduct with many people to reduce the risk of covid 19. Online platforms were used in the distribution of questionnaires so as to avoid physical conduct with respondents.

3.6 Sampling Methods

Cooper (2004) avers that sampling is a research technique whereby, the researcher selects a few elements within a sampling frame which reflects the characteristics of the entire population for study so as to draw conclusions about the entire population. According to this school of thought, the importance of sampling is hinged on limiting expenses involved in studying the entire population, enhancing the authenticity and increasing the speed of data collection. The study had a large population to consider collecting data from all stakeholders involved in electoral processes for instance voters, election management staff, civic organisations and election observer missions. However, the researcher selected a sample of individuals hoping that the sample was representative sampling and was concerned with selecting a subset of individuals from

the entire populace with the expectation of conducting the normal entire populace unit. In this study, purposive sampling and simple random techniques were used. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental selective or subjective and is a type of non-probability sampling technique. In this study, the researcher used both probability and non-probability methods. Both these sampling techniques uses non-random system of choosing the respondents and every element have a chance to be chosen. All probability sampling techniques which use the random system of selecting increases chances of any member of the study population to participate in a study. Non probability sampling has techniques which uses non-random sampling to choose the respondents. Simple-random sampling and purposive sampling were used in order to have a sample of the study. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants for the interviews. Simple random sampling was also utilized to select respondents to questionnaires. Therefore, the random selection presented every respondent a chance to be selected and this reduced the chances of getting biased information.

3.7 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling can also be called judgmental sampling. Creswell (2014), alluded to the fact that purposive sampling is selecting a sample on the premise of your own insight into the populace, its components and the way of your examination. Purposive sampling is helpful if a researcher needs to think about a little subset of a bigger populace in which numerous individuals from the subset are effortlessly recognized. This sampling technique unequivocally rejects undesired components of the populace that may prompt the twisting and deception of information. This kind of sampling

enhanced the researcher to utilize his judgment to choose components of the populace who were imminent suppliers of exact information pertaining the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's compliance with the SADC electoral guidelines.

3.8 Simple Random Sampling

According to David and Sutton (2004), simple random sampling involves randomly selecting individual units from a sampling frame giving all units an equal chance of being selected. Simple random sampling was used in the collection of data from residents of four places. This sampling method was applied to randomly select 25 residents from these sites respectively and five people were selected from each station. This simple random sampling thrived to be gender sensitive. Both men and women were required to give information on how they perceived the electoral processes in Zimbabwe. This method was relevant to the study because every member had a chance of being selected. Simple random sampling was easy to administer and its time and cost effective

3.9 Data collection

It refers to a process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypothesis and evaluate outcome, (Polit & Beck, 2012). The study utilized primary and secondary qualitative data collection methods. According to Polit and Beck (2012) data collection methods should be of high quality so that the evidence is viewed as authentic by other researchers.

3.10 Semi-structured interviews

Bowling (2009) states that primary data collection methods are means and procedures used in the acquisition of data with which to test the research questions. According to Creswell,(2014) questionnaires comprise a list of written questions answered by the respondent. These written series of questions can be open or closed ended questions, the respondents may be choosing from a list of given answers or giving their own answers. The researcher shall distribute 25 questionnaires to the participants. Questionnaires are advantageous as sometimes respondents together with other people would gather around one questionnaire helping each other through discussing the essence of a question. Where the researchers sought opinion of one, sometimes it becomes a shared response from a group although that would not have been the original plan. More so there is greater anonymity which was associated with the absence of the interviewer. Anonymity increases the chances of genuine responses. In this study the respondents were not asked to identify themselves, hence the chance of getting accurate and sensitive information was high.

3.11 Key informant interviews.

As secondary data the researcher used key informant interviews which are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community (McMillan and Schumacher, 2011). The researcher conducted five interviews with representatives from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Movement for Democratic Change Alliance, SADC observers and Civil Society involved in 2008, 2013 and 2018 harmonized elections.

Interviews were suitable as they enabled the researcher to have direct conduct with the respondents. They enabled the researcher to clarify where the respondents failed to understand the requirements of the interview questions. Interviews are less expensive and save time. The interviews were planned between the researcher and the respondents ahead of the actual day and this enabled the researcher to get quality data for the research as the representatives were prepared for the interview.

3.12 Validity and Reliability

Majumdar (2011) argues that validity of a scale is important when we want to be sure that the measurement obtained by the scale is stable and dependent. Under this study the researcher identified the past literature which answered all research questions and satisfied the research objectives of the study; this enabled the researcher to be confident with the research design applied in the research. Trieman (2009) defined reliability as consistency in measurement; different measures of the same concept of the same measurement repeated over time should produce the same results. The primary objectives should be that if a later investigation followed exactly the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conduct the same study all over again, this later investigator should be able to arrive at the same results and conclusions. Thus, the study is considered highly reliable. The researcher ensured reliability by conducting a pilot survey test by collecting the same data from 25-35 people from the same population but not within a sample.

3.13 Data presentation and analysis.

Data analysis according to Cohen (2007) involves organizing, accounting for and making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Before data is categorized, the completeness and accuracy of questionnaires and interview was checked. Proper scrutiny of those instruments was undertaken to get rid of mistakes, omissions and contradictions in responses. Data presentation principally is about how data is presented so that information is conveyed in a clear manner to the audience . The researcher used tables, bar graphs and pie charts in the presentation of data. Data analysis is concerned about ordering and breaking down of data leading to statistical calculations being performed with the objective of finding answers to research questions. The data gathered through interviews was subjectively analyzed and related to the findings from the questionnaires. The respondents' viewpoints pertaining the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's compliance with SDC electoral guidelines was coded into meaningful themes.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

Kumar (2011) explains ethics in research as a set of conduct in the way the research will be done. The social science researcher is obliged to protect the rights of their research participants, and obliged as well to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, a knowledge that will be used for the greater welfare of the society (Majumdar, 2005). The researcher assured the anonymity and confidentiality of the personal data obtained from research participants. In this case it was vital for the researcher to protect his respondents because political issues are sensitive revealing their names and identity will expose them to victimization.

3.15 Pilot testing

In order to predict the future outcomes researchers, engage in pre-testing. It is also referred to as pilot testing. A pilot testing is a preliminary study conducted before the main research to check the feasibility or to improve the design of the research project. The researcher conducted a pilot test in Mount Darwin and Bindura. It is meant to test the questionnaires and interview guide relevance, suitability and precision with items not meeting the criterion being dropped.

3.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology and design of the research chosen by the researcher to be the most appropriate. Research design, instruments that were used in data collection, the targeted population together with the techniques that were used in coming up with the sample. Procedures in data collection and the way data shall be

presented are also part of the chapter contents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. The chapter commenced by data presentation followed by data analysis and discussion of findings. The findings in this chapter are from interviews and questionnaires. The chapter linked the research findings with reviewed literature and the conceptual framework informing this study in this case the concept of electoralism coined by Professor Terry Karl. The data obtained was presented in the form of tables, graphs and pie chart.

4.2 SECTION A: Demographic profile of respondents.

4.2.1 Gender distribution

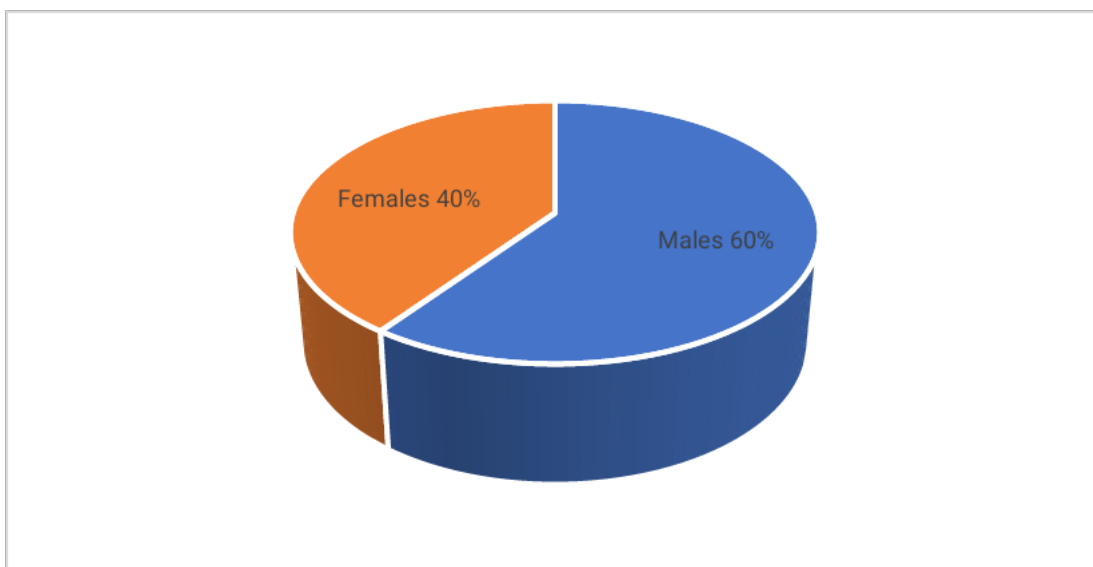


Fig 4.1: Gender distribution

Pie chart above indicates the number of males (60%) and females (40%) who participated in the research in both questionnaires and interviews. Although the statistics from previous election cycles indicated that there are more female electorate than male it appears that more male participated in the research than female as some female did not answer the questionnaires but rather referred the questionnaires to their male counterparts because women are still afraid to be involved in anything to do with politics as a result of past political violence that scared women to participate.

4.2.2 Age of respondents

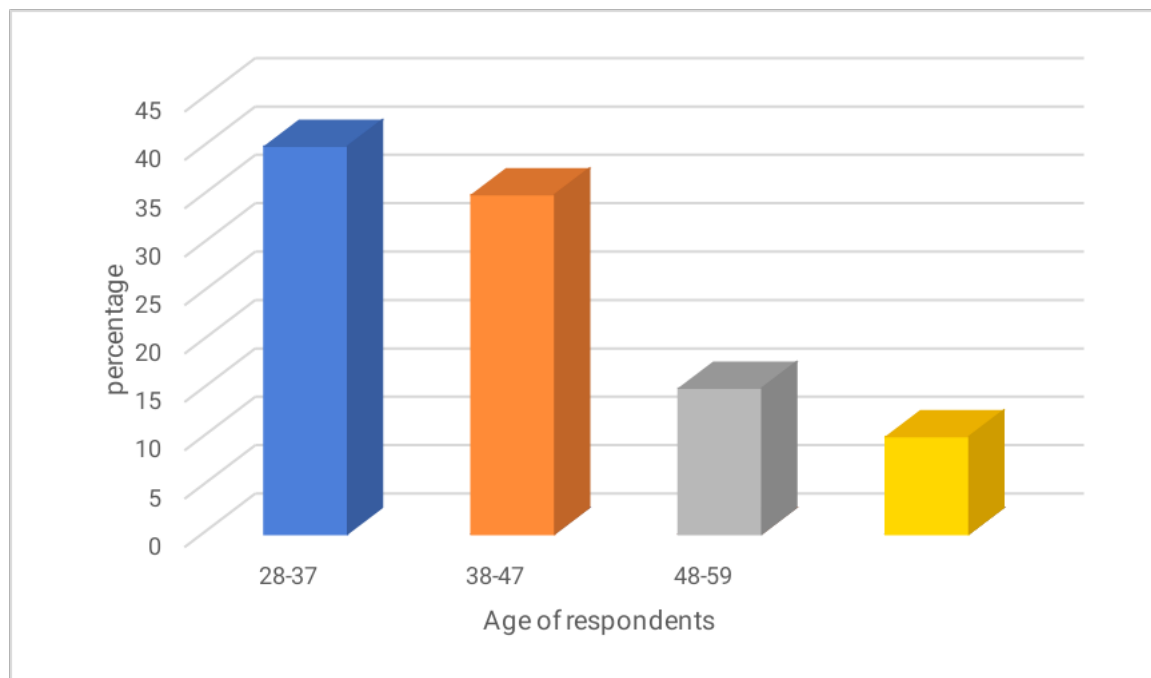


Fig 4.2: Age of respondents

respondents

The fig 4.2 shows age range and frequency of the respondents. Respondents aged around 18-27 have got the highest participation percentage. This age group consists of youth showing their interest in election related issues. There was less participation of people aged 48 and above and this can be attributed to their less expectation from

elections.

Table 4.1: Response rate (interviews)

Category of Respondents	No. of Interviewees
Zimbabwe Electoral Commission	1
Opposition Political Party (MDC A)	1
Ruling Party (ZANU PF)	1
Election Observer (SADC)	1
Civil Society Organisations	1
Total Number of Interviewees	5

Table 4.1 shows the number of key informant interviews carried out by the study; the study conducted five interviews which culminate to 100 % respondent rate. The high response rate on key informant interviews was achieved because the study took time to visit the interviewees. Interview with Civil Society representative was conducted online.

4.2.3 Response rate (questionnaires)

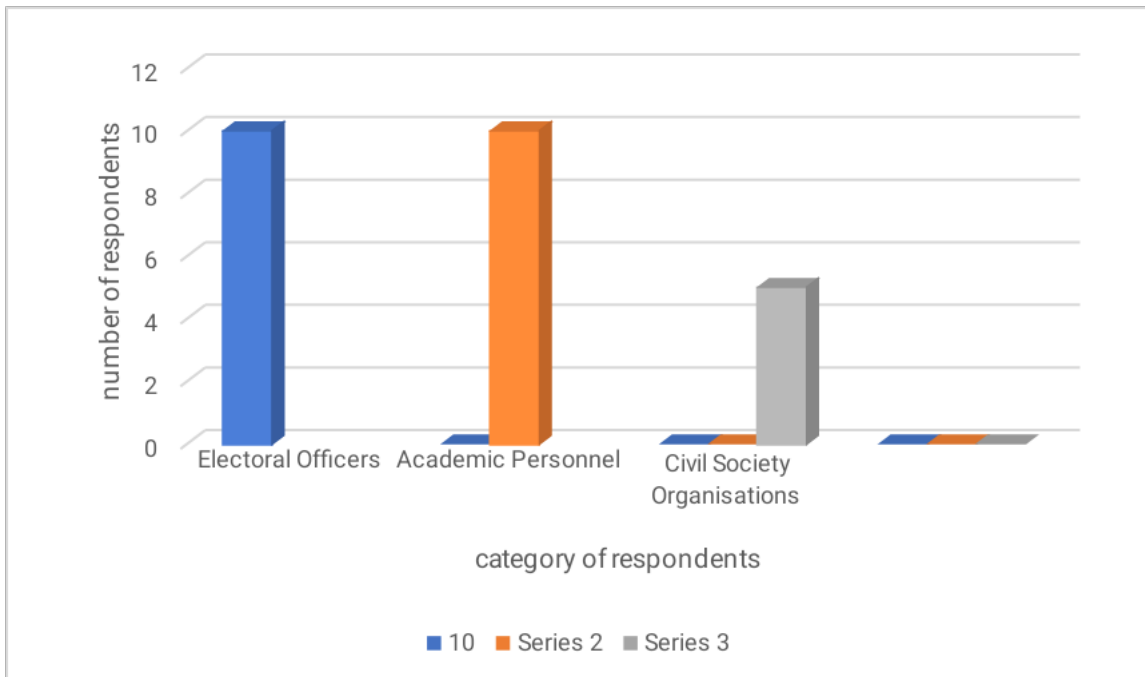


Fig
4.3

Response rate (questionnaires)

The respondent rate out of the 25 questionnaires distributed among electoral officials, academic personnel and civil society organisations from selected towns in Zimbabwe. The researcher got 100 % respondent rate. The high-rate respondent to questionnaires was due to tireless effort by the research to be patient and persuaded the respondents to answer the questionnaire. More so people were eager to participate in the study as they were motivated by the research topic. The relaxation of the Covid 19 restrictions by the government also enhanced the movement in some cases online platforms were used.

4.3 SECTION B: SADC member state's compliance with the principles and guidelines governing democratic elections.

4.3.1 Establishment of Independent and impartial Electoral Management Bodies.

Responses from questionnaires and interviews reveal that SADC member states' compliance to the regional electoral guidelines pertaining establishment of independent and impartial electoral management bodies is questionable. The Academic Personnel, Civil society and Opposition who participated in this study were of the opinion that, Electoral Management Bodies in the region in this case the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission appears to be blatantly partial as it has over the years failed to level up the political playing field conducive for free, fair and democratic elections. This is supported by Kriger (2005) who posits that the appointment of commissioners is compromising the independence and impartiality of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. The Commission suffers undue political influence because they are appointed by the president who has partisan interests.

One of the respondents said:

"The independence and impartiality of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is questionable because the body is appointed by the president who is also a player in elections. In some cases, its commissioners are seen at government functions putting on partisan regalia like the ZANU PF scuff showing strong allegiance to the ruling party when they are supposed to be neutral. As long the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission chairperson is being appointed by the President, free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe will remain a dream".

Conversely, ZEC officials and members of the ruling party who took part in this study

were of the view that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is an independent, impartial and professional body. They held the view that, the enactment of ZEC in 2004 through the ZEC Bill was in compliance with the provisions of the SADC electoral guidelines. More so, its mandate is clear as enshrined in section 238 of the constitution, appointment of commissioners is done following the constitutional provisions.

One official said:

“ZEC is independent, impartial and professional; its officials are nonpartisan and are not allowed to collude in party politics. However, critics are skeptical about the degree of impartiality because government is responsible for funding the commission and appointment to office is done by the head of state through the Ministry of Justice Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. That is constitutional and does not imply the president or the minister has influence in elections and electoral processes.”

In the same vein one ZANU PF respondent said that;

“The losing team always blames the referee for losing. ZEC has been conducting elections in this country bound by the Electoral Law as given in the constitution”

Though the supreme law in section 238 gave the incumbent president the power to appoint the chairperson of ZEC including its commissioners this remains an issue of concern as the president who is also a player come election time is likely to anoint persons who are loyal to his or her political party and in retain the appointed personnel are likely to be inclined to the ruling party as a way to secure their positions. ZESN (2018) has it that, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is alleged to be militarized as the appointed members were once military personals and are linked to the Central Intelligence Organisations. Though ZEC appears to be independent and impartial on

paper in practice the commission's impartiality is elusive. This clearly shows that SADC member states has failed to uphold and guarantee the impartiality and independence of the Electoral Management Bodies and other electoral institutions as revealed by the shortcomings of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

4.3.2 "Observation and Monitoring of elections by SADC is half backed."

Interviews and questionnaire responses from MDC Alliance, Civil Society and Academic personnel reveals that observation and monitoring of elections by SADC is half backed. They were of the opinion that SADC tends to focus their observation on the Election Day ignoring pre-election and post-election phases where a lot of electoral malpractices can take place unnoticed. SADC Election Observer Missions have failed to take into account abuses, intimidation and torture on the electorate in the run-up to the polls and post-poll period. Interview with the SADC Observer indicates that observers mainly focus in towns unlike the rural areas where torture and brutality prior to elections is common. One respondent from the Academic personnel said;

"SADC does a half-baked observation. In most cases they do not deploy observers to hot spot rural areas where most electoral violence and intimidation of voters take place. Their reports are not a reflection of what transpires on the ground. It is felt that the observation period before and after elections is too short to give a true reflection of what really takes place."

In the same vein SADC Election Observer Missions are state-centric thereby sidelines the participation of non-state actors such as civil society, opposition political parties and faith-based organisations who can objectively observe electoral processes. Interview with the MDC Alliance revealed that SADC is a body headed by Liberation War

Political Parties who share strong bonds and have a tendency to endorse only those candidates from such brotherly parties even if they are the losing candidates. For example, Thabo Mbeki chose to lie about the political crisis that followed the 2008 disputed election results in Zimbabwe thereby saving ZANU PF a brother in the liberation struggle. His perception of the Zimbabwe political climate was opposite from that of the international observers, the opposition and civil society organisations.

Chikohomero (2019) says SADC electoral guidelines calls for the observation of pre-election, election and post-election phases by credible regional and international election observer missions on member states holding elections, however compliance to this value is lukewarm. Interviews with ZEC and ZANU PF indicated that external observers are not that important as states have the sovereignty to hold their own elections. However, MDC Alliance emphasized on the need for international observers as they indicated that regional observers can be biased to revolutionary political parties that emerge from colonial history as they may be sharing common interests. Participants from the academic fraternity advocated for the accreditation of multiple non-state actors to also partake in observing elections this can be from the liberal view that talks of plurality in government issues. It is therefore clear that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission must at least tolerate views from all political parties and be in a state to invite both regional and international observers so as to allow transparency in election process as a way to achieve free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe.

4.3.3 Political Parties' Unequal Access to State Media.

Unequal access to campaign on mass media by all political parties is another theme that emerged from research findings when respondents suggested that free and fair

election is only achieved when the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission ensures equal access to all political parties to campaign on state media. Civic Society, MDC Alliance and Academic personnel held the opinion that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has failed to guarantee justice to all political parties to campaign equally through state and private owned media with state media inclined to ZANU PF. Recent research has revealed that, there was biased treatment of political parties in accessing state owned media in previous elections. It is argued that both state media and private owned media establishments were evidently inclined to a certain political party in their reportage, in this case state media was pro ZANU PF and private owned pro MDC and the concern is on state media which is publicly owned and is supposed to be nonpartisan. CZC (2013) concurs with AUEOMR when it argued that, print and electronic media was partisan and openly supported ZANU PF. One respondent said;

“Political parties are not given access to campaign on national television. Only ZANUPF is given airtime on ZTV, radio stations and state-owned newspapers (Herald, Sunday Mail, Sunday News, Chronicle and Manica Post). The Movement for Democratic Change relies on independent owned media especially the News Day and Daily news and in some cases Studio 7. This scenario has resulted in political polarization which is a recipe for election related violence.”

ZESN (2018) has it that ZANU PF has manipulated and dominated state media thereby putting itself at an unfair advantage over other political parties. Though, some respondents felt that access to media improved prior to the 2018 harmonized elections the provision was temporary, in most cases stories and activities which were given coverage on state media were negative and denigrating on the part of the opposition.

This clearly indicates that the political field is uneven and is tilted in favor of ZANU PF thereby pitting the credibility of elections pointing to electoralism.

4.3.4 Transparency of voter registration, compilation of voter's roll and access to the voter's roll

4.3.4.1 Transparency of voter registration process.

Lack of transparency and sanity in the voter registration process is one central theme which emanated from research findings as respondents proposed that free, fair and credible election is only possible when voter registration is done transparently because the voter's roll is the heart beat of all electoral processes. Civil Society, MDC A and members of the Academic world strongly argued that, though the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission came up with the biometric voter registration system, the system remained open for manipulation. In the run up to the 2018 harmonized elections voters were misinformed by ZANU PF politicians that, the registration slips, finger prints and photographs required during the registration process were going to be used to trace those who would have voted for the opposition. The rural electorate was forced to surrender the registration slips to village heads who are also functionaries of the ruling party so people voted out of fear of threats of violence. In the same vein the MDC and Civil society lamented the biased distribution of registration centers. They suggested that, more voter registration centers should be established countrywide and there should be equal distribution of these centers in urban and rural areas.

One MDC Alliance member said;

'The unequal distribution of voter registration centers in rural areas and urban centers is worrisome. It appears more centers are established in rural areas which are ZANU PF strongholds compared to urban areas where the opposition dominates. ZEC is a

captured institution we feel it is an extension of ZANU PF.”

On the other hand, ZEC and ZANU PF were of the opinion that, the biometric voter registration allows for greater transparency. They argued that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was pacing up with recommended reforms and is in a process of modernizing its conduct of electoral processes.

One respondent said;

“The voter registration is a genuine process, claims by the opposition and other civic organisations are unfounded. The opposition should focus on mobilizing their supporters to register to vote rather than to shoulder the blame on ZEC.”

Kondwai and Motsamai (2018) concurs that, as part of the electoral reforms following the recommendations of the 2013 election observer mission the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission adopted the Biometric Voter Registration System. Registration and compilation of the voter’s roll was done electronically so as to minimize manipulation and tempering with the voter’s roll. However, the new system was manipulated by ZANU PF as a weapon of intimidation to would be electors in the 2018 harmonized elections. The electorate especially in rural areas was misinformed that photograph, finger prints and serial numbers on voter registration slips would be used to detect those who would have voted for the opposition.

4.3.4.2 Transparency in voter’s roll compilation

Transparency in the compilation of the voter’s roll by all stakeholders is another sub

theme which developed from the findings of the study, when respondents suggested for a multi-stakeholder approach during compilation of the electronic and hard copies of the voter's roll by all stakeholders to enhance transparency. Interview with ZEC officials revealed that, compilation of the voter's roll was done by the Registrar General under the control of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission suggesting that it was a critical process which needed a lot of security. Members of the Academia and Civil Society shared the same opinion with the opposition that compilation of the voter's roll should be open for all parties interested in elections to enhance transparency. They were of the view that, the Registrar General was appointed by the president and is a state functionary whose neutrality in undertaking such a sensitive process is questionable. Dodo and Makwerere (undated) posits that, the Registrar General under the control of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is responsible for registration and compilation of the voter's roll could be influenced to fagot voters, this is where voters are immediately removed from the voter's roll just after registering. The notorious RG is also known for registering ghost voters, this whereby the voter's roll is inflated by deceased voters meant to facilitate electoral fraud and theft. It can therefore be argued that compilation of the voter's roll should be transparent involving all stakeholders because it is the critical process where election rigging is done as most election malpractice is done before the Election Day.

4.3.4.3 Timeous access to the voter's roll for inspection by all stakeholders.

Another subtheme which emerged from the findings of this current study relates to lack of timeous access to the voter's roll to all interested parties and the public for inspection which participants suggested guarantees transparency in the holding of free,

fair and credible elections. ZEC official in an interview reiterated on the importance of making accessible electronic and printed copies to the public on time however was quick to point to technical challenges which hindered the commission to comply to this value prior to 2013 and 2018 harmonized elections which saw the commission being dragged to the court.

One respondent from the opposition said;

“In 2013 the voter’s roll was availed to us two days before the Election Day and this gave us no time to check for irregularities within the document. The same happened prior to the 2018 harmonized elections when together with Civil Society compelled ZEC through the courts to release the updated voter’s roll. We strongly feel that it is where ZANU PF rig elections and we participate in elections with results which are predetermined.”

This goes in line with Chikohomero (2019) who argued that, lack of access to the voter’s roll is one component illustrating non-compliance to the electoral guidelines by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and SADC’s failure to take action over repeated violations. Article 9.1.6 of the electoral guidelines states that there must be free access to the voter’s roll, which is at the heart of electoral processes. This repeated violation clearly indicates that ZEC is a case of habitual non-compliance with the SADC electoral laws.

4.3.5 Quality and quantity of voter education.

Another theme which emanated from data collected relates to quality and quantity of voter education where the respondents emphasized the importance of voter education if free, fair and credible election is to be achieved. The SADC principles and guidelines

governing democratic elections encourages member states to ensure that voter education capacitates and empower all eligible citizens as well as fostering ownership of the electoral processes and the democratic systems (SADC 2015). Elections Officers who participated in this study observed that many people were unclear about what to take with them and how the system worked on the voting day thereby an increase in the number of voters turned away. This exposed the commission's capacity to effectively carry out extensive and substantive voter education. One respondent said;

"In the 2018 harmonized elections the electorate was not fully informed about the concept of ward based and polling station specific election that some people were turned away as they fail to attend to their respective polling station as required."

ZCC (2018) says that, the number of assisted and turned away voters in the 2013 and 2018 elections is an indicator of inadequate and unreliable voter education. ZEC took the greater space in conducting voter education, although there was clearly insufficient time for effective delivery given the short period between proclamation and the election date. Civil Society personnel interviewed was of the opinion that, voter education must take a multi-stakeholder approach to improve in terms of quality and quantity. ZEC alone is incapacitated to effectively carry out voter education. In the same vein they also lamented the involvement of state security personnel in the voter education process. One of them said;

"Civil Society, non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations should also be allowed to partake in voter education to allow for transparency and inclusivity. Such people should be from the local area so that potential voters are not suspicious especially the elderly."

However, the Zimbabwe government applied pressure on ZEC to disqualify some civil society organisations to conduct voter education such as Electoral Institute of Southern Africa and Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. Consequently, voter education was limited because ZEC could not reach remote and marginalized areas. Such is against the SADC electoral principles governing democratic elections which call for comprehensive voter education for the achievement of free, fair and credible elections.

4.3.6 Election related violence perpetrators and victims

Respondents have shown that, political polarization is the major cause of election related violence. The political environment in Zimbabwe is highly polarized and tense.

One of the respondents said;

“Political polarization is the major cause of political violence; political parties are always at each other’s throat.”

SADC (2015) has it that the electoral guidelines implore member states to take all measures and precautions to prevent corruption, bribery, favoritism, political violence, intolerance and intimidation before, during and after elections. However, such is not the case with Zimbabwe where political parties continue to engage in organized political violence and intimidation of political opponents because of lack of political tolerance. Civil Society and opposition parties pointed that, ZANU PF is at the forefront of unleashing political violence through its youth brigades attacking opposition supporters during rallies, threatening the electorate war if not voted into power, threats of expulsion of civil servants for supporting the opposition, torture, abductions and politically motivated detentions and arrests. One of the respondents said;

“Testimonies given by former ZANU PF Youth leader Jim Kunaka during the commission of inquiry into post -election violence of 1 August 2018 clearly indicated that the ruling party could employ dirty tricks to win elections including killing.”

Kruger (2010) has it that, election related violence is a pervasive feature of Zimbabwe elections since 1980. However, what is worrisome is the involvement of the Zimbabwe National Army in this violence as witnessed in 2018 where innocent civilians were shot dead in the post-election violence. Kutema (2010) argues that, violence against political opponents is the major factor that hinders the free participation of citizens in political spaces thereby raising political concerns. SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections stipulate that member states must allow for political tolerance. Political tolerance allows citizens participation in elections without fear. SADC electoral guidelines are in sync with the Zimbabwe electoral law that states that citizens have the right to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition of policies of government. However, Zimbabwe’s previous election cycles since 1980 were characterized by violence against political opponents which got at its peak in the 2008 harmonized elections. To date members of the opposition parties feel insecure due to coordinated threats of violence by ZANU PF party supporters based on previous experiences which left some dead and some disabled. In the 2013 and 2018 elections there was no freedom from fear of violence which saw the violence of 1 August 2018 unfolding as a result of disputed electoral outcomes. To date ZANU PF supporters constantly threaten the opposition with violence synonymous with the previous election related violence thereby instilling fear in the electorate (CZC 2019).

Therefore, it can be deduced that election violence manipulates election outcome as a

result affecting the attainment of free, fair and credible elections, such is against the SADC electoral guidelines. It implies that politicians are prepared to ignore human rights issues including political tolerance, right to freedom and right to life for the sole goal of winning elections and retain to power thereby risking the fallacy of electoralism. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, though working towards the achievement of free and fair elections in line with the SADC principles has dismally failed to guarantee a peaceful pre-election, election and post-election environment. In this retrospect, findings of this study tally with the previous research that election violence affects the achievement of free, fair and credible elections.

4.3.7 Vote buying and vote rigging allegations

Data collected has also shown that, though not substantiated by any tangible evidence allegations are that vote buying and rigging is prevalent in Zimbabwe's elections. Resources such as land, agricultural inputs and food relief are distributed on partisan basis. Barry (2010) concurs that land patronage win ZANU PF votes but victory also depended on violence and rigging. One respondent said;

"According to sources there is a lot of vote rigging going on through its difficult to quantify the rigging because we are no part and parcel of the counting and tallying processes. In 2013 ZANU PF hired a company from Israel called NIKUV to facilitate vote rigging. In 2018 the Excel gate saga also points to vote rigging."

Conversely ZANU PF and ZEC officials strongly dispel these claims. One said;

"There are mere allegations, political parties and individuals are failing to give evidence which points to vote rigging. For example, in 2018 the MDC Alliance failed to

substantiate their claims of electoral theft in the constitutional court.”

According to Sachikonye (2003) it is alleged that printing of ballot papers lacks transparency. In 2013 ZEC printed more ballot books and allegations are that the extra books were used to facilitate vote rigging. Such is against the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections which implore member states to shun electoral theft. This is crystal clear evidence of non-compliance with the principles where elections results are predetermined and elections become a mode of endorsing authoritarian regimes. This clearly indicates that, though elections are a pillar of democracy, politicians in the SADC region through electoral malpractices such as vote rigging have reduced elections to an end where the ultimate goal is election victory even when it means trembling upon the SDC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. The findings of this current study are in sync with the previous research which also points to the idea that vote rigging has affected the achievement of free, fair and credible elections in the region.

4.3.8 Diaspora vote

One sensitive theme, which emerged during data collection, is non-compliance by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to extent the vote to the diaspora community. According to Makumbe (2010) the diaspora vote has remained a pie in the sky for the Zimbabwean electorate living abroad and this concurs with the findings of the current study. According to Kutema (2010) the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has lack of resources as a pretext which hinders it from extending the right to vote to the diaspora community. However political analysts are of the opinion that ZANU PF is fully aware that its policies are not appealing to those living abroad their chances of winning this

vote are very slim.

One of the respondents said;

“ZANU PF is fully aware that giving the diaspora community the right to vote is like shooting themselves on the foot. Most people in the diaspora are victims of political violence seeking safety.”

In the light of the above ZEC’s failure to give the franchise right to the Zimbabwean living abroad is a clear violation of the SADC electoral laws which implores member states to extend the right to vote to citizens in the diaspora in national elections. This implies that, election outcomes in the previous elections have seen the diaspora constituency being deliberately denied access to vote because it is allegedly inclined to the opposition, so the ZANU PF regime is influencing ZEC not to give the diaspora vote citing resource and logistical constraints which is just a scapegoat (ZESN 2018). This clearly points to manipulation of the electoral outcomes which is against the regional electoral laws.

4.3.9 Transparency in the counting, tallying and announcement of election results.

Lack of transparency in the counting and tallying of votes is on theme that culminated from the findings of the study. Interviews with MDC Alliance revealed that, vote counting and tallying is partially transparent because it is being done in the absence of other stakeholders such as the opposition. One of the respondents said;

“The counting, tallying and verification of votes in the 2018 harmonized elections was done in the absence of the main opposition party MDC Alliance which saw Morgan Komichi distancing himself from the announced presidential results because his party was not involved in the verification of results. This has triggered election violence which

followed pronouncement of the results as well creating a legitimacy crisis to current incumbent.”

Collected data through questionnaires revealed that state security and former state security personnel were also involved in vote counting and tallying and this tainted the credibility of electoral outcomes because their presence raises eyebrows and suspicions that in one way or the other may influence the election outcomes. According to CZC (2018) such collusion with key electoral processes has triggered the post-election violence in 2018 which resulted in the death of innocent civilians excising their right to protest over disputed election outcomes which saw Emmerson Mnangagwa being declared winner in controversial circumstances which has also seen him in a legitimacy storm. Failure by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to guarantee transparency in such electoral processes allows room for electoral theft which defies the whole essence of elections as the voice of people thereby risking a culture of electoralism.

4.4 Challenges faced by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

4.4.1 Lack of resources.

Data collected revealed that, successful, free and fair elections dwell much on the availability of resources. All the respondents were in agreement that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission lack financial and human resources, this has affected the smooth flow of electoral processes such as voter education and voter registration. Osman (2013), has it that, lack of resources is a major obstacle to the attainment of quality and quantity of election processes. ZESN (2013), has it that, in the 2008 harmonized elections, ZEC failed to provide enough polling stations as well as enough staff for

electoral processes, there were 1100 polling stations to cater for 5.9 million voters and polling stations were poorly distributed across the country as a result of lacking enough funds to sponsor the election. One official from ZEC said;

“Resource constraints sometimes the budget is too small to cater for an array of needs such as vehicles, office space and ICT tools to enhance E-election management systems. Government should allocate more financial resources for the commission to carry out its mandate effectively.”

In the same vein interviews with Civil Society confirmed that ZEC was further crippled by the Covid 19 pandemic to conduct pending by-elections because it lacked financial resources to purchase material which could enhance it to operate in the new normal. AUEOMR (2013), suggested that election processes must be watertight and adequately funded to allow quality and credible elections that are free and fair. Lack of resources by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has undermined its capacity to implement the SADC electoral guidelines thereby risking ritualization of elections risking electoralism.

4.4.2 Undue political influence on the Commission and its commissioners.

Another challenge which emerged from the findings of the study relates to undue political influence on the commission and its commissioners. Interviews with Civil Society and MDC Alliance reveal that, ZEC suffers undue political influence from government and the president because its commissioners are handpicked by the president. According to Boone and Kriger (2010), the Commission is infiltrated by state security agents who are also functionaries of ZANU PF hence its impartiality is questionable. One respondent said;

“ZEC Commissioners are appointed by the Head of the State who is also a player in the

political field and could influence electoral outcomes. There is need to amend the constitution to allow the commission to be headed by an experienced judge preferably a foreigner who would be non-partisan”.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission must be an independent board, free from manipulation from any political party. Once it gets influence from politicians it also implies that electoral processes and outcomes can also be manipulated, such is against the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. Elections should reflect the will of the people. However most African states have stifled the voice of people expressed through elections by manipulating electoral processes which points to the emergence of a culture of electoralism.

4.5 ZEC's strategies to implement SADC Electoral Guidelines.

4.5.1 Pacing up with long overdue electoral reforms.

Though at varying levels all the respondents to both interviews and questionnaires concurred that ZEC must pace up to implement electoral reforms given that the nation is towards the 2023 harmonized elections. Chikohomero (2019), concurred with the study findings, he noted that one way to ensure sustainable and constructive management of elections is electoral reforms. Interview with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission indicated that ZEC over years have been working tirelessly trying to reform the system these include introduction of biometric voter registration, polling station specific elections to curb busing of voters, introduction of translucent ballot boxes and one day voting. One respondent said;

“Since the inception of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in 2004, so many reforms

have been put in place only that those reforms should be done gradually. Shortage of resources have stalled some critical reforms which require a lot of money such as establishment of E-election management systems which may see counting and tallying of votes being done electronically.”

However Civil Society and MDC Alliance were of the opinion that though the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission can be credited for coming with reforms prior to the 2018 harmonized elections they felt that the reforms were cosmetic and gave room to electoral fraud. The reforms process is government engineered excluding proposals from non-state actors who are also equally concerned with election issues. One of them said;

“Reform measures are tantamount to papering over cracks of a collapsing wall key areas which needed attention such as allowing inclusivity in the compilation of the voter’s roll and counting and tallying of votes were ignored.”

4.6 Chapter Summary.

The data collected has shown that, using the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as a mirror, SADC member states are trying to comply with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. The research has shown that, though electoral reforms are being implemented at a snail’s pace, introduction of the biometric voter registration, concept of ward based and polling station specific elections, use of translucent ballot boxes among other minor reforms has added weight to the achievement of free and fair election in Zimbabwe. However, it is pivotal to note that, there are still outstanding issues such as lack of transparency in the compilation of the

voter's roll, insufficient voter education, election related violence, lack of independence and impartiality of the commission, unequal access to state media, issue of the diaspora vote which needs immediate attention as a way to achieve more free and fair elections in the future. The finding of the study has revealed that there are challenges such as lack of resources and undue political influence on the Election Management Body which have impinged it from meeting most of the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections thereby defeating the whole purpose for the attainment of free, fair and credible elections to member states. The study also implores the Electoral management Body to embrace electoral reforms as a way of improving compliance with the regional electoral framework. The following chapter focuses on summarizing the entire research, giving conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on summarizing the entire study, drawing conclusion based on the findings of the fieldwork and makes some recommendations and areas for further study. The flow of this chapter shall start by the summary of the study, conclusions followed by recommendations and areas for further research. It also focused on how the study objectives were met during the study and how the research questions were answered from the findings. Recommendations were also made to political parties, ZEC and SADC.

5.2 Summary

This study aimed to appreciate the extent to which SADC member states are implementing SADC's principles and guidelines governing democratic elections using the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as a case study.

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To determine the extent to which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is complying with the SADC guidelines on free, fair and credible elections.
2. To identify challenges faced by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in implementing the SADC electoral guidelines promoting free, fair and credible

elections

3. To examine the strategies used by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in trying to implement the standard electoral guidelines enshrined in the SADC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections

Chapter one looked at the background of the study which comprises the overview of the study, evidence of non-compliance with the SADC guidelines by member states with Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as a mirror of the SADC as a region, followed by the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study and definition of key terms which were used in the research study.

Chapter two focused on literature review and theoretical framework. This chapter dealt with literature on SADC member states' compliance with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections using the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as a case study using a thematic approach. The concept of electoralism by Professor Terry Karl informed the study. Literature review was guided by the research questions and objectives by taking a comprehensive review on what has been propounded by reputable authors and authorities in the area of elections.

Chapter three identified and explored the research design and methodology used during data collection process. The chapter justified the choice and adoption of the Descriptive Survey Design and the Qualitative research approach. This was followed by outlining the sampling and data collection methods and presentation that was used in the study. It also presented the ethical issues and validity and reliability of the study that were attended to in the study.

Chapter four focused on data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. The chapter presented data collected during field work in different places in Zimbabwe. Twenty-five questionnaires were distributed among the members of the academic world, electoral officials and civil society and also five interviews from two political parties, and three organisations to solicit data pertaining to the extent to which SADC member states are complying with SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections using ZEC as a case study. It provided data presentation and analysis which consists of the demographic profile of respondents utilizing a thematic approach to present data.

Chapter five focused on study summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research. The chapter commenced by giving a summary of the whole research that is from chapter one to chapter five. It also gave a conclusion from the research findings in line with the objectives of the study as well as recommendations. Lastly it also suggested areas for further research.

5.3 Conclusions

The study conclusions were given guided by the three themes that emerged from the research objectives. These themes include, the extent to which SADC member states are complying with the principles and guidelines governing democratic elections followed by challenges that impinge the member states from complying with the regional electoral framework and strategies which the member states should employ to improve compliance using the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as a case in point.

1- To determine the extent to which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is

complying with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections.

From the study, it was deduced that SADC member states came up with the principles and guidelines governing democratic elections to its member states guided by the SADC legal and policy instruments and the major principles emanating from the African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, however compliance is at varying levels. Zimbabwe as member state is expected to comply with such principles in conducting elections. To a limited extent the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has been implementing these guidelines in conducting elections in Zimbabwe. It has been managing to invite and accredit election observers, conducting regular elections though the same cannot be said about fairness, conducting voter registration and compiling of the voter's roll though lacking transparency. However, ZEC was not able to guarantee equal access to all political parties to campaign on state media, to extent the diaspora vote, provide adequate voter education, guarantee transparency in vote counting and tallying among other failures.

Failure to secure these processes by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has resulted in the manipulation of the Electoral processes thereby undermining the credibility of elections. Elections in Zimbabwe are held as mere ceremonies to endorse the rule of ZANU PF. They remain sources of contestation threatening peace and stability. Relating to theme on compliance with regional electoral guidelines, this study has concluded that ZEC has been a case of habitual non-compliance because of repeated violations in each and every election with the latest being the 2018 harmonized elections.

Objective 2- To identify the challenges faced by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in

Implementing the SADC electoral guidelines promoting free, fair credible elections

The study has established lack of human and financial resources and undue political influence as the main challenges which hinder the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission from complying with the SADC principles and guidelines governing free, fair and credible elections. Section 239 of the constitution provides for ZEC to conduct and supervise electoral processes such as voter registration, voter education, compilation of the voter's roll, setting up polling stations. The electoral law provides that voter education should be adequate accurate and unbiased. However, ZEC has not been able to fulfill its mandate due to lack of resources.

In the same vein, undue political influence on the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has also impinged ZEC from achieving its constitutional mandate. The ZEC Chairperson and eight commissioners are appointed by the president who is also a candidate come election time and this compromises the independence and impartiality of the commission. Section 239 of the constitution set out some key functions of ZEC to register voters to compile the voters' roll and registers. However, the Electoral law lags behind in providing for these functions as it conflates some of the functions with the office of the Registrar General of Voters and his officials. Therefore, the study concurs that, though ZEC has been trying to comply with the standard regional electoral guidelines it has been so hard for them due to lack of resources and undue political influence.

Objective 3- To examine the strategies used by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in trying to implement the standard electoral guidelines enshrined in the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections

From the study it has been seen that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, though faced by challenges has embraced electoral reforms targeting full compliance with the SADC principles and guidelines. These reforms include adoption of the biometric voter registration, one day voting, use of the translucent ballot boxes, polling station specific elections among others. However, these reforms are cosmetic and fly past the face of the electoral guidelines. Key electoral reforms remained untouched for example appointment the commissioners remained in the hands of politicians, compilation of the voter's roll is not transparent and allows for manipulation of election results, denial of the diaspora vote, media reforms and reforms in the counting and tallying of votes as well as putting in place mechanisms to reduce election related violence.

Complacency by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to reform these key electoral processes proposed by non-state actors such as the opposition civil society and faith-based organisations has seen it failing to comply with the SADC electoral laws. This has triggered election related violence, disputed election results and legitimacy crisis on the incumbent president. Therefore, the study established that though ZEC has electoral reforms as one of the strategies to cope up with compliance with SADC guidelines the reforms were rather too narrow and selective leaving room for manipulation of the electoral processes.

5.4 Recommendations

To the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZEC must be an independent board that is impartial and apolitical. It must be free from political manipulation and appointment of ZEC Chairperson and Commissioners must

be done in consultation by all stakeholders based on competence and reputation in the judiciary system for a reasonable period. If possible, the ZEC Chairperson should be a reputable judge and a foreigner to allow for greater transparency and impartiality.

The study further recommends the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to embrace electoral reforms starting with establishment of E-Election Management Systems to enhance transparency in the compilation of the voter's roll, counting and tallying of votes. This will enhance citizens to access the voter's roll on the internet and citizens will be able to follow elections results on the internet.

The research also implores the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to put in place mechanisms to protect citizens from election-related violence for instance prosecution and imprisonment of perpetrators of election violence

Invitation and accreditation of both regional and international election observer missions should be done timeously to allow them ample time to observe pre-election, election and post-election period. Election observers should cover both rural and urban areas because most election violence and manipulation of electoral processes are prevalent in rural areas.

Voter registration and voter education must be carried out effectively and in an open and transparent manner. The quality and quantity can be achieved through the involvement of other stakeholders such as civil society and faith-based organisations to allow for inclusivity and transparency

To political parties

The research implores all political parties to develop and cultivate political tolerance so as to reduce political polarization the major cause of election related violence.

To SADC

The study recommends SADC to come up with a framework to enforce compliance by member states with the principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. Deviant members must be sanctioned because commitments without swords are not binding.

5.5 Areas for further research

This current study focused on SADC member states' compliance with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as the case study. It focused on the extent to which member states are complying with these guidelines, challenges that hinders implementation and strategies to enhance compliance. Further research is needed to fully appreciate the effectiveness of the strategies put in place by SADC to enforce compliance of members states with the electoral guidelines.

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire

My name is Clifford Dasva. I am a second-year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Master Science Degree in International Relations. As part of my study, I'm carrying out a research entitled, **'SADC member states' compliance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections: Case of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission since 2004.** I humbly request you to make time to respond to the questions that I wish to ask. I strongly assure you that the information will be used for academic purposes only as such will remain and be treated with privacy and confidentiality.

N.B Do not write your name.

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

TICK THE CORRECT CHOICE

1. Sex.....Male () Female ()
2. Marital Status
Married () Single () Separated () Divorced () Widowed ()
3. Age.....
below 18 years () 18-24 () 25-30 () 31-40 () 41-50 () over 50()
4. Are you a registered voter? Yes () No ()

5. If you are a registered voter how many times have you participated in elections?

Once () Twice () Thrice ()

6. What is your understanding of the role of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?

.....
.....

7. Do you think the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is fulfilling its constitutional mandate?

.....
.....

SECTION B: VIEWS ON ZEC'S COMPLIANCE WITH SADC ELECTORAL GUIDELINES FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

8. How independent is the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as an election management body?

.....
.....

9. What is your view on the way SADC conducts its observation on Zimbabwe elections?

.....
.....

10. How transparent is voter registration, compilation of the voter's roll and voter's roll inspection prior to elections in Zimbabwe?

.....
.....

11. Are political parties given equal access to campaign on national media?

.....
.....

12. Does the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission give adequate voter education?

.....
.....

13. What are the causes of electoral violence in the previous election cycles?

.....
.....

14. How transparent is vote counting and tallying by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in the previous elections?

.....
.....

15. Are elections in Zimbabwe free, fair and credible?

.....
.....

16. What do you think are the major challenges encountered by ZEC in executing its constitutional mandate?

.....
.....

17. What strategies do you think ZEC should employ to improve the way it is handling elections in Zimbabwe?

.....
.....

Appendix 2

Key Informant Interview

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Official

Introduction

My name is Clifford Dasva, a second-year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Master of Science in International Relations. As part of my study, I'm carrying out a study entitled, **'SADC member states compliance with SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections: Case of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission since 2004.'** I kindly request you to create time to respond to the questions that I wish to ask. The information will be used for academic purpose only as such it shall be treated with privacy and confidentiality. The interview shall not take more than 45 minutes.

Date of Interview

Time

1. What is your understanding of the role of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
2. Do you think the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is fulfilling its constitutional mandate?
3. What is your understanding of the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections?
4. Do you think that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission work in line with the SADC guidelines on democratic elections?
5. Do you think that ZEC has managed to guarantee equal access to the media to all political parties during election campaigns?

6. What is your overview on the conduct of voter registration, voter's compilation and access to the voter's roll by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
7. How justified are allegations of vote rigging and vote buying by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
8. How independent and impartial is the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as an election management body before, during and after elections?
9. From your experience as a ZEC Official, what are the causes of election related violence and who are the perpetrators of this violence in Zimbabwe?
10. How do you relate with Election Observer Missions and to what extent do you consider their recommendations to improve future elections?
11. Do you think that ZEC as an institution is allocating enough time and resources towards voter education?
12. Are elections in Zimbabwe free and fair?
13. What do you think are the challenges that are being faced by ZEC in the management of elections in Zimbabwe?
14. What strategies do you think ZEC should employ to overcome the challenges it is facing as an election management body?

Appendix 3

Representatives from Political Parties

Introduction

I'm a My name is Dasva Clifford final year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Master of Science Degree in International Relations. As part of my study, Im carrying out a study entitled," **SADC member states compliance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections: Case of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission since 2004.**" I humbly request you to make time to respond to questions that I wish to ask. The information will be used for academic purposes. No name or identification is required.

1. What is your experience in political and electoral issues?
2. What do you think is the role of political parties in elections?
3. What is your understanding of the role of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
4. Do you think all political parties are getting equal access to media during elections campaigns?
5. To what extent is ZEC complying with the SADC guidelines on democratic elections?
6. How transparent are electoral processes such as voter registration, voter's role compilation and inspection?
7. What are the causes of electoral violence and who are the perpetrators of election violence?
8. How authentic are vote rigging allegations by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
9. Do you think ZEC is giving adequate voter education?
10. How transparent is counting and tallying of votes by ZEC?

11. Does ZEC invite, accredit and deploy Election Observers across the country? If yes, do you think election observers are objective?
12. What do you think are the major challenges being faced by ZEC in conducting elections?
13. If any, what do you think are the strategies which ZEC should employ to overcome such challenges?
14. Give any overview of elections in Zimbabwe?

Appendix 4 Key Informant Interview

Election Observer

Introduction

My name is Dasva Clifford a final year Master of Science in International Relations student at Bindura University of Science Education. I'm currently carrying out a research on the topic, **"SADC member states compliance with the Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections: Case of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission since 2004."** I kindly request you to participate in this study by responding to questions that I wish to ask. The information will be used for academic purposes.

1. What is your experience as an Election Observer?
2. What is your understanding of the mandate of Election Observer Missions during elections?
3. Are you aware of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections in the region?
4. If yes, do you think ZEC is complying with the regional electoral guidelines on free and fair elections?
5. How impartial and objective is the SADC Election Observer Mission in observing elections in Zimbabwe? In your response consider pre-election, election and post-election phases.
6. From your experience as an Election Observer what do you think are the causes of election violence and who are the perpetrators of election related violence?
7. How transparent is voter registration, voter's compilation and inspection by the

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?

8. What is your view on the quality and quantity of voter education by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
9. Is the political terrain fair during campaigns including access to the media in the Zimbabwean Elections?
10. From an observer's point of view, how valid are allegations of vote buying and vote rigging by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
11. How impartial and professional is the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as an Election management Body?
12. How transparent is vote counting and tallying by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
13. What do you think are the major challenges faced by ZEC conducting elections?
14. What strategies do you think ZEC should adopt to overcome these challenges?

Appendix 5 Key Informant Interview

Civil Society

Introduction

My name is Clifford Dasva, a final year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Master of Science Degree in International Relations. As part of my study, I'm carrying out a study entitled, **"SADC member states' compliance with SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections: Case of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission since 2004.** I kindly request you to create time to respond to the questions that I wish to ask. The information will be used for academic purposes only as such it shall be treated with privacy and confidentiality. The interview shall not take more than 45 minutes.

Date

Time

Designation of Interviewee

1. What is your experience in Civil Society work related to elections?
2. What is the role of Civil Society Organisations like yours in election-related issues?
3. What is your understanding of the role of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission?
4. Are you aware of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections?
5. Do you think ZEC is complying with these guidelines as it delivers its constitutional mandate?
6. What is comment pertaining the impartiality of ZEC?

7. Are you invited to participate in voter education, voter's roll compilation, counting and tallying of votes? If so, how transparent are these electoral processes in your view?
8. Do you think political parties are given equal access to media during election campaigns?
9. In your own view, are election observers doing justice in covering pre-election, election and post-election periods in Zimbabwe?
10. What do you think are the causes of election violence, is ZEC doing enough to curb election-related violence?
11. What are the challenges faced by ZEC in complying with the SADC principles?
12. What strategies do you think ZEC should employ to enhance compliance with the guidelines?
13. Your overview on elections in Zimbabwe?