

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



Electoral Malpractice and its Impact on Good Governance in Mazowe District: A Case

Study of the Zimbabwe's 2023 Harmonized Elections

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of electoral malpractice on good governance in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe. Electoral malpractice is the failing of all electoral institutions to conduct elections in a manner that provides equal opportunity for all citizens to participate actively in choosing their leaders. Primary data was collected through the conduct of interviews with various electoral stakeholders including voters and election officials. Secondary sources of data collection were adopted and information was gathered from reports from Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and other observer missions. The research adopted a qualitative methodology and a case study design. The study however identified the various forms of manifestation of electoral fraud in Mazowe to include voter intimidation, voter registration irregularities and disinformation. The research also revealed the major cause of this violations of the people's right to choose their leaders to include desperation among the politicians. The study therefore argued that electoral fraud impacts negatively on good governance as it hinders operations of rule of law, public participation in decision making process, transparency and accountability, equity and inclusiveness in the conduct of public affairs. The paper therefore recommended for the strengthening of public institutions and rule of law which is the hallmark of any democratic government.

DECLARATION

I, Morebright Muchenga (B210418B), declare that this research is my original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for examination. I confirm that all sources used in this research have been properly cited and referenced.

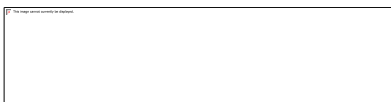
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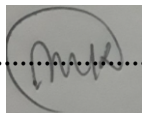
Supervisor: Dr Mahuku

Signed



Chairperson: Dr Kurebwa

Signature:



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. My sisters never left my side and are very special. I dedicate this dissertation to my twin brother who inspired my pursuit of Peace and Governance and he also guided me through the process. I also dedicate this project to God Almighty the Father of my Lord Jesus the Christ, my creator, my strong pillar, my source of wisdom and knowledge and understanding.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU- AFRICAN UNION

CCC- CITIZENS COALITION FOR CHANGE

DRC -DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

EU- EUROPEAN UNION

EUOM -EUROPEAN UNION OBSERVER MISSION

SADC- SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

ZANU- PF - ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL – PATRIOTIC FRONT

ZEC- ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

ZHRC - ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background of the study

Transitioning to democracy requires more than just holding elections; it demands credible, free, and fair processes that stakeholders widely accept (Kaburu, 2022). The acceptability of election results by stakeholders is crucial, as it significantly enhances the prospects for consolidating electoral integrity. After all, elections in democratic governance determines the legitimacy of those in power. However, electoral malpractice, encompassing various forms of manipulation and fraud, undermines the very foundations of democracy (Mare, 2022). Zimbabwe, a country with a tumultuous electoral history, provides a poignant case study. This research investigates the prevalence and impact of electoral malpractice on good governance in Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized elections.

Elections are a cornerstone of democracy worldwide, serving as a crucial mechanism for electing leaders to public office (Molomo, 2006, p 23). As Dahl (1989) notes, the electoral process is multifaceted, involving various procedures that enable citizens to participate in selecting officials and shaping policy. These procedures include rules governing candidate nominations, policy formulation, voting methods, vote counting, and campaign conduct. Therefore, elections in simple terms refers to a democratic process where citizens choose those who would represent them from a number of candidates aspiring leadership through a free, fair, and transparent vote.

Electoral malpractice is a pervasive issue affecting democratic processes worldwide. According to Norris (2015), electoral integrity is essential for ensuring the legitimacy of democratic

governments. However, electoral malpractice takes different forms including vote buying, electoral violence and manipulation of electoral processes (Birch, 2011). Globally, electoral malpractice has been linked to weakened democratic institutions, human rights abuses and social unrest (Carothers & Youngs, 2015).

In Africa, electoral malpractice has been a significant challenge to democratic consolidation. As noted by Gyimah-boadi (2021), electoral malpractice can undermine the legitimacy of democratic governments and exacerbate social tensions. It can also be noted that electoral malpractice and electoral politics does not only undermine democratic legitimacy but has become a new threat to human security in Africa (Akopari, 2012). The African Union's Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2012) highlights the significance of conducting elections that are free, fair and transparent to foster democratic governance. However, many African countries continue to grapple with electoral malpractice, including vote rigging, electoral violence and intimidation (Fundisi & Atanga, 2023). In southern Africa, electoral malpractice is a pressing concern. The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2015) underscore the crucial role of electoral integrity in advancing democratic governance. However, many SADC countries, including Zimbabwe, have experienced electoral malpractice and continues to fall short in the democratic standards (Shayamunda & Mashamaite, 2023).

Electoral malpractice in Zimbabwe has led to a plethora of problems, undermining the country's democratic processes and governance. It can be noted that voter intimidation and violence has been a persistent problem in Zimbabwe's elections (Sachikonye, 2011). The intimidation of voters in Zimbabwe's elections continues to be a challenge, undermining the credibility and fairness of the electoral processes. The ruling party, ZANU-PF, has employed various tactics to intimidate voters, including threats of violence, food aid manipulation and

traditional leadership coercion (Mwonzora & Mandikwaza, 2019). These tactics have led to a “harvest of fear” (Zamchiya, 2013, p. 955- 962), constraining voters from exercising their freedom of choice. These fears constrain voters from exercising freedom of choice by freely voting for a party of choice (Taylor, 2017). The 2013 harmonized election saw silent threats of violent reprisals, which intimidated many voters from expressing their true preferences (Gallagher, 2015). Furthermore, former Resident Minister, Shuvai Mahofa, delivered a speech at Gwindingwi High School, threatening violence to the residents of Bikita Constituency if they voted for the opposition party (Daily News, 7 January 2017). The Minister further reminded violent consequences of voting for ZANU- PF to Bikita residents (Daily News, 7 January 2017).

1.2 Research Problem

Electoral malpractice continues to persist in Zimbabwe’s electoral processes, undermining democratic processes and good governance as well as compromising the legitimacy of election outcomes (Sakarombe, 2023). Electoral malpractice compromises the legitimacy of democratic institutions and undermines accountability (Nzereogu & Nnolum, 2024). In Zimbabwe, electoral malpractice has contributed to disputed election outcomes, erosion of public trust in democratic institutions, (Shayamunda & Mashamaite, 2023). This study researches on electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe District. A case study of Zimbabwe’s 2023 harmonized election.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This research aims to explore the effects of electoral malpractice on good governance in Mazowe district, Zimbabwe, with a specific focus on the 2023 harmonized election as a case study.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To identify forms of electoral malpractice that occurred during Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election in Mazowe District.
2. To analyze the impact of electoral malpractice on good governance.
3. To examine how electoral institutions have perpetuated electoral malpractice.
4. To recommend policy reforms to enhance the holding of free, fair and credible elections.

1.5 Research Questions:

1. What forms of electoral malpractice occurred during Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election in Mazowe District?
2. How did electoral malpractice impact on good governance.
3. How have electoral institutions contributed to electoral malpractice?
4. What measures can be taken to ensure the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe.

1.6 Assumptions of the study

1. The research assumes that electoral malpractice exists and is widespread
2. This research assumes that electoral malpractice negatively affects good governance in Zimbabwe.
3. The research assumes that the findings from international observer missions (such as the European Union, Human Rights Commission (HRC)SADC, and Carter Center) and local reports

from organizations such as the Election Resource Centre (ERC) reflect the situation in Mazowe District, and can thus be used as reliable secondary sources to contextualize the primary data collected for the study.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the understanding of electoral malpractice's impact on good governance in Zimbabwe. By examining Zimbabwe's 2023 general election this study offers significant theoretical, practical, policy implications.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance of the study

1. The study contributes to the literature on the holding of free, fair and credible elections.
2. It also enhances understanding of the complex relationships between electoral malpractice, democratic legitimacy, and good governance.

1.7.2 Practical Significance of the study

1. Informs electoral management bodies in Zimbabwe and Africa, civil society organizations, and international observers on effective strategies to mitigate electoral malpractice.
2. It provides policymakers with evidence-based recommendations for electoral reforms.
3. The research enhances voter education and awareness on electoral processes and malpractices.

1.7.3 Policy Significance of the study

1. The study informs policy reforms aimed at strengthening electoral integrity and promoting good governance.
2. The research contributes to the development of effective electoral laws and regulations.

3. The study also enhances international cooperation and assistance in promoting good governance and electoral integrity.

1.7.4 Social Significance of the Study

1. The study promotes democratic values, human rights, and social justice.
2. The study contributes to conflict prevention and mitigation by addressing electoral violence triggers.

1.7.5 Significance of the study for Future Research

1. Comparative studies on electoral integrity in African countries.
2. Investigations into the role of technology in promoting electoral integrity.

This study's findings will contribute to the ongoing efforts to promote democratic governance, electoral integrity, and good governance in Zimbabwe and beyond.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations refer to the characteristics that define the area under study and include the conceptual delimitation, geographical delimitation, time delimitation. The research seeks to a study on electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe, using the 2023 harmonized election. The study researches on the impact of electoral malpractice in Mazowe District. The study focuses on the influence of electoral malpractice on effective governance during the Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election. The study defines electoral malpractice as actions that manipulate electoral rules, influence voters, and alter voting outcomes (Birch, 2010:1). The study also focuses on the impact of electoral malpractice on good governance.

1.9 Limitations of Generalizability

1. Results may not be generalizable to other countries or electoral contexts.
2. Results may not be representative of the entire Zimbabwean population.

1.10 Definition of keywords

1.10.1 Elections

Dahl (1989) defines the electoral process as multifaceted, involving various procedures that enable citizens to participate in selecting officials and shaping policy. These procedures include rules governing candidate nominations, policy formulation, voting methods, vote counting, and campaign conduct.

1.10.2 Democracy

"Democracy is a system of government where power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives, protecting individual rights and promoting citizen participation" (Diamond, 2019, p. 5).

1.10.3 Good Governance

"Good governance refers to the effective, accountable, and transparent management of public resources and institutions, ensuring responsiveness to citizens' needs and promoting development" (Grugel & Piper, 2015, p. 12).

1.10.4 Electoral Malpractice

"Electoral malpractice encompasses various forms of manipulation, fraud, or corruption that undermine the integrity of electoral processes" (Birch, 2016, p. 3).

1.11 Dissertation outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter gives the introduction and background from the global, continental, regional and Zimbabwean perspective.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The chapter review relevant literature and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

The chapter focuses on the methodology of the study, with particular attention paid to the research design and data collection tools that were used.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter focuses on the discussion of findings. Results and discussions are in two categories that include the participants' characteristics and research findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas Further Research

This chapter concludes and summarise all the findings and make recommendations for the study to resolve challenges being faced. This chapter proposes directions for future use.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter covered the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and research questions, significance of the study, assumptions, delimitations, limitations of the study and definition of key terms. Chapter two presents the conceptual framework and other case studies that inform the literature review. Broadly, the review expounded on the research idea, focusing on how electoral malpractice impacts on good governance in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe.

2.2 Conceptual framework

2.2.1 Good governance

Good governance, as defined by Gbemudu and Ajabor (2019) refers to a societal framework where leaders and followers operate within legal boundaries, uphold due process, and act responsibly to achieve societal or corporate goals. According to Henry (2015), governance encompasses the manner in which public institutions manage and conduct public affairs. In this context, good governance aims to optimize the efficiency and the effectiveness of public resource location, ensuring equitable and fair distribution. Every responsible and responsive public institutions always strive to uphold integrity in the conduct of its affairs by sticking to the following principles.

A fundamental aspect of good governance is the presence of a constitution and the rule of law, which ensures a fair legal framework where everyone is equal before the law. This principle is upheld by an impartial body that enforces the constitution (Ozoemena & Evangeline, 2019). As noted by Dicey in 1959, a society's constitution serves as the highest authority, guiding governmental actions and individual behavior alike. “Based on the above, therefore, it means that governmental agencies and individuals alike must abide by the laid- down rules and regulations for the good of all. Therefore, it should be noted that the conduct of elections in Zimbabwe is guided by the national constitution and other legal frameworks including the Electoral Act.

Another crucial democratic principle is public participation in the conduct of affairs. This principle aligns with democratic values by giving citizens the chance to select their leaders. As Ozoemena and Evangeline (2019) highlighted, active public involvement in decision-making processes helps prevent the abuse of power by public officials. In Zimbabwe, however, electoral processes have been marred by fraud, undermining the public's ability to choose leaders who can foster good governance (Shayamunda & Mashamaite, 2023). This situation hinders the election of leaders who could potentially bring about positive change.

Transparency and Accountability of the Public Institution is another democratic principle. The allocation of public scarce resources by public officials necessitates transparency (Androniceanu, 2021). Furthermore, public officials are accountable to citizens, a fundamental aspect of democratic governance. The accountability of governing elites is assessed through free and transparent elections, ensuring equal participation opportunities for all citizens. Governments are accountable to those impacted by their decisions and actions, and must adhere to relevant laws and regulations, thereby establishing a link between the rule of law and good governance

(Gbemudu & Ajobor, 2019). Transparent public administration fosters accountability in the utilization of scarce resources, a key component of good governance. Consequently, the general public is required to strictly follow established rules and regulations.

2.2.2. Electoral malpractice



Figure 1. The Electoral Cycle and Electoral Malpractice (source: IDEA, 2012)

Concerns about election integrity, including political and technical threats, are increasingly becoming a priority on the global political scene. There is growing acknowledgement that electoral fraud can occur at any stage of the electoral process. Birch (2011) proposed a detailed classification system for electoral malpractice. Birch identifies three main types of malpractice: broad categories: manipulating electoral institutions and laws, influencing voter choice formation and expression, and altering the implementation of electoral processes such as polling, counting and tabulation.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Pluralist Theory

Robert Dahl introduced the Pluralist Theory in his 1961 book "Who Governs?." The theory is primarily concerned with understanding how democracy functions in societies where multiple groups, rather than a single elite, contend for influence and power. According to Dahl, (1961) a democratic society is one in which power is distributed among different groups, organizations, and individuals who compete with one another for access to political resources. Pluralism assumes that democracy is best understood as the result of such competition, where various factions have the opportunity to influence public policy and governance, ensuring that no single group dominates the political landscape (Dahl, 1961). In this context, the role of elections is crucial, as they are the primary mechanism through which diverse groups express their preferences and interests (Wojtasik, 2013). Despite the competition among diverse groups, pluralism maintains that democracy is based on the principle of majority rule, where the preferences of the majority of voters guide political decisions (Lagerspetz & Lagerspetz, 2016).

Therefore, electoral malpractice can be understood through the lens of pluralist theory by considering the influence of various political and social groups on the electoral process. In a pluralist system, the competition among various political parties and interest groups should represent interests of the majority of voters (Lagerspetz & Lagerspetz, 2016). However, when some groups or elites gain disproportionate power, either through manipulation or control of resources, it can distort this balance, leading to electoral malpractice (Birch, 2011). For instance, the occurrence of electoral malpractice such as voter intimidation can be understood as a result of dominant political parties using their power and resources to suppress opposition or manipulate the electorate. In a pluralist system, good governance is expected to arise from the healthy

competition of diverse interest groups, which should result in policies that reflect the collective will of the people (Raj, 2010). However, when electoral malpractice distorts this competition, several negative consequences for governance arise.

2.4 Democratic Republic of Congo

Electoral malpractice is a challenge not unique to Zimbabwe, as it has also compromised the integrity of elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during its past democratic electoral cycles, specifically in 2006, 2011, 2018 and 2023 (Isser et al, 2024). Despite national and international media reports suggesting that the DRC faces more severe threats to electoral integrity compared to other African countries, its issues are comparable to those experienced by other countries on the continent (Ali-Diabacte, 2020). Interestingly, the DRC may have a better election integrity than many other African nations, particularly those in francophone Africa, and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), to which the DRC belongs. The DRC's recent electoral experiences offer valuable lessons that could inform and improve electoral practices in other African countries, ultimately contributing to enhanced electoral integrity across the continent (Ali-Diabacte, 2020).

2.5 Forms of electoral malpractice in DRC

Voter intimidation stands out as a prevalent form of electoral malpractice in DRC electoral processes. Intimidation is essentially the act of instilling fear or timidity in an individual. As posited by Ani et al. (2013), voter intimidation entails exerting undue influence over a voter or a collective of voters to sway their voting decision in a specific direction. In such scenarios, certain voters might voluntarily abstain from participating in the electoral process due to a perceived lack of protection. Within the Democratic Republic of Congo's electoral process, voter intimidation

has emerged as a persistent challenge, manifesting in various forms including violence and threats thereof. A notable instance occurred on November 4 when a high-ranking UDPS official was captured on video cautioning Katumbi, the presidential candidate for Ensemble, during a UDPS rally. The warning was that Katumbi would face physical harm should he proceed with campaigning in Kasumbalesa, a town situated on the southeastern border of Haut- Katanga province. Additionally, the official threatened Katumbi with repercussions from the president should he enter Kasumbalesa, as documented in a 2023 report by Human Rights Watch. Such instances of voter intimidation in DRC compromises the integrity of the electoral process, leading to votes cast out of fear rather than freewill.

Vote buying is another prevalent electoral malpractice in the DRC. This malpractice involves the sale of votes to the candidate who offers the most incentives, constituting a form of material, monetary, or promised inducement or reward by a candidate, political party, agent, or supporter to influence electorate choice. According to (Kisangani 2023), instances of vote buying were documented in DRC by the local observers, including the catholic church, who reported that candidates acquired voting machines and placed them in private residences to manipulate votes (National Episcopal Conference of Congo, 2023). Consequently, voters cast their votes not according to their beliefs but instead on financial gain.

Voter registration irregularities is another electoral malpractice that continues to undermine electoral integrity in DRC. For any democratic election voter registration is a crucial aspect, however in the 2023 DRC elections, irregularities in the process were rampant. Issues such as the inclusion of ineligible voters, duplication of names, and exclusion of legitimate voters were reported in many regions ((Nantulya, 2024). For instance, in the Haut-Uele and Ituri provinces, many voters found their names missing from the registry, while others found multiple individuals

registered under the same name (Ngandu, 2023). These irregularities not only frustrated voters but also raised concerns about the integrity of the election results. The absence of openness and responsibility in the voter registration process compromises the fundamental principle of universality that underpins democratic elections. According to Barkan and Mungiu-Pippidi (2014), electoral manipulation during the registration phase can disenfranchise significant portions of the population, often along ethnic or political lines, distorting electoral outcomes in favor of those in power. In the DRC, such irregularities have been used as tools for political control, disenfranchising opposition supporters and ensuring that certain constituencies remain loyal to the ruling party.

2.6 The Impact of Electoral Malpractice on Good Governance

Electoral malpractice has profound implications for good governance in the DRC. Good governance relies on fair, free, and transparent elections that reflect the will of the people. Electoral malpractices undermine this foundation, leading to the election of leaders who do not genuinely represent the interests of their constituents. The result is a government that may be less responsive to the needs of the people and more prone to corruption and inefficiency.

For instance, when electoral outcomes are influenced by vote buying, the winners may feel beholden to those who funded their campaigns rather than to the broader electorate. This can lead to policies that favor a narrow elite, further exacerbating inequality and hindering the development of the country (Schedler, 2002). Additionally, irregularities in voter registration can disenfranchise large sections of the population, particularly marginalized groups, thus weakening the legitimacy of the electoral process (Diamond, 2020). Voter intimidation not only discourages participation but can also lead to the election of leaders who rely on coercion rather than public trust.

Good governance also requires the establishment of accountable and transparent institutions. When electoral malpractices are prevalent, it is often an indication of broader institutional weaknesses, such as lack of independence in electoral commissions, weak rule of law, and a politicized judiciary. These weaknesses hinder the ability of the state to address the needs of the people and contribute to a cycle of poor governance.

2.7 The Role of Electoral Institutions in Perpetuating Electoral Malpractice

Electoral institutions, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission in the DRC, plays a crucial role in ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. However, in the 2023 elections, the electoral process was engulfed in widespread irregularities that made it difficult to validate CENI's results (Nantulya, 2024). These electoral irregularities rose significant concerns about the effectiveness and impartiality of CENI. Many reports highlighted allegations of bias in favor of the ruling party, with accusations of complicity in vote buying and the failure to address voter registration irregularities (UMUHIRE, 2024). Furthermore, CENI's inability to ensure security at polling stations created a conducive environment for voter intimidation to flourish, undermining the credibility of the elections.

Bogaards (2009) argue that electoral institutions can inadvertently perpetuate malpractices if they lack independence or are heavily influenced by political elites. In the case of the DRC, the electoral commission's inability to act impartially or transparently has led to a lack of trust in the electoral process and the election results. When electoral institutions are weak, they are often unable to act as effective checks on electoral fraud or malpractice, allowing those in power to manipulate the system to their advantage (Katz, 2012).

It can also be noted that international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have been criticized for failing to provide sufficient oversight during the 2023 elections. While these organizations deployed observers to monitor the elections, their influence over electoral institutions and practices was limited. As a result, electoral malpractice was allowed to persist, further entrenching the status quo (International Crisis Group, 2023).

2.8 Zimbabwe: A Roadmap

Zimbabwe has a tumultuous electoral history marred by various forms of malpractice, undermining the credibility and legitimacy of election outcomes. Election malpractice has been a persistent challenge to democratic governance in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. Studies have shown that various forms of electoral manipulation, including voter suppression, vote-buying, and electoral violence, have compromised the integrity of electoral processes (Sakarombe, 2023). The 2000, 2002, and 2005 elections were marred by violence and intimidation, with the ruling ZANU-PF party accused of perpetrating human rights abuses (James, 2009). The 2008 elections saw widespread electoral violence, resulting in the deaths of over 100 opposition supporters (Aonndowase, 2015). The 2013 elections were criticized for lacking transparency and accountability, with allegations of voter registration irregularities and ballot stuffing (ZESN, 2013). The 2018 elections, although relatively peaceful, were marred by allegations of voter suppression and manipulation of the voters' roll (MISA-Zimbabwe, 2018).

Research by Veritas (2013) has also highlighted the role of state institutions, including the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), in perpetuating electoral malpractice. State institutions play a significant role in perpetuating electoral malpractice through manipulation of electoral rules, voter registration and vote counting which is normally done by electoral commissions {Duval,

2022}. The judiciary also plays a role in electoral malpractice through selective enforcement of electoral laws, favoring ruling parties (Levitsky & Way, 2020). In Zimbabwe the military has also been implicated in electoral violence and intimidation, particularly in rural areas (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2018). Civil society organizations have called for electoral reforms to address these issues.

Siachiwena & Saunders (2021), also argues that Zimbabwe's democratic performance has been consistently weak according to various democratic metrics, and elections have been marred by violence and other gross irregularities. They argue further that the existence of a functional multi-party electoral system is largely superficial, and some dispute that there is any significant space for democratic politics in Zimbabwe. Therefore, it should be noted that electoral malpractices continue to persist in Zimbabwe's electoral processes and undermining democracy and electoral integrity.

2.9 Chapter Summary

From the DRC case study, it appears that electoral malpractice is not only a Zimbabwean challenge but a challenge in most democratic governments across the world. Studies have found that electoral malpractice affects negatively on good governance. The African studies seem to indicate electoral fraud adversely affects the integrity of elections and the overall governance of democratic systems. The Zimbabwe study's findings are consistent with the African studies, suggesting a negative effect on good governance. In conclusion, the types of electoral malpractice and their impact varies across different contexts. Therefore, organizations and governments need to carefully consider the implications of electoral malpractice on human rights, democracy and good governance. This empirical review has provided insights into the existing literature and

highlighted the need for more research in the Zimbabwean context to better understand the impacts of electoral malpractice. The next chapter present the research methodology utilized for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented a comprehensive research methodology, utilized to examine the effects of electoral malpractice on good governance in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on the 2023 harmonized elections. A qualitative research design was adopted for this investigation." previous chapter covered Literature Review which consists of conceptual framework, theoretical framework and empirical evidence. This chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe, with a focus on the 2023 harmonized elections. The study employed a qualitative research design.

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study adopts an interpretivist research philosophy, which highlights the significance of comprehending the social world through the lens of the individuals involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interpretivist approach is well-suited for this research as it enables a detailed exploration of the phenomenon within its specific contextual framework

3.2 Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate electoral malpractices and their impact on good governance in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe. Qualitative research is an important method of research that provides a deep understanding of the human experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research type focuses on exploring and comprehending the subjective experiences of individuals, groups, and communities. A significant advantage of qualitative research is its ability

to provide researchers with a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and viewpoints (Wang et al., 2019). This is accomplished using methods like in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observational studies. These methods provide a level of detailed and nuanced data that is not possible with quantitative methods. Qualitative research help researcher to uncover the underlying motivations and beliefs that drive human behavior, as well as social and cultural factors that influence decisions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2021).

The qualitative methodology will also help in this research to explore complex or sensitive issues. For example, it may be difficult to study topics such as electoral malpractice, good governance or electoral violence through quantitative methods, as these issues are often deeply personal and difficult to measure. Qualitative research allows researchers to approach these topics with sensitivity and empathy, and to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of those affected (Bryman, 2012). More so, qualitative research can help to generate new ideas and hypotheses for future research. By exploring the experiences and perspectives of participants in depth, researchers can identify new areas of inquiry and potential avenues for future research. Qualitative research can also help to challenge existing assumptions and theories, and to provide a more nuanced understanding of complex social and cultural phenomena (Makoni et al., 2021).

Qualitative research is also highly flexible, allowing researchers to adapt their methods and approaches to suit the needs of the study. This is particularly important when working with diverse populations, as researchers must be able to tailor their methods to the unique cultural, social, and linguistic contexts of the participants. This flexibility also allows for iterative research, where researchers can refine their methods and research questions over time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2021).

3.3 Research Design

This study employs a case study approach as its research design, which involves a detailed analysis of a single case or phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Case study research involves an in-depth examination of a single case or a limited number of cases to gain a profound understanding of the subject matter. In this research, Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election was used as a case study. Case studies are often conducted in a naturalistic setting, which means that the research is conducted in a real-life context rather than in a controlled environment. This can help to increase the ecological validity of the study, as the results are more likely to be applicable to real-world situations (Sandelowski, 2018).

Additionally, case studies can be used to formulate hypotheses for further investigation and offer practical implications that are relevant across different contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2018). A significant advantage of case study research design lies in its capacity to provide a thorough and detailed comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation (Braun et al., 2020). Case study research can also provide a comprehensive view of the social context in which the phenomenon occurs, as well as the individual and organizational factors that shape it. However, one of the main weaknesses is that they are often difficult to generalize to larger populations. Because case studies typically concentrate on a limited number of cases, making it difficult to generalize to a broader population. This can limit the generalizability of the findings and may make it difficult to apply the results to other contexts.

3.4 Research Instruments

The primary data collection instrument for this study was an interview guide. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face and via telephone, depending on the participants' preferences. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency and focus on the research objectives. The decision to use interviews as the primary data collection instrument in this study was based on several factors.

Interviews offer a flexible approach, enabling researchers to delve deeply into the topic and acquire a thorough grasp of participants' experiences and viewpoints (Fontana & Frey, 2018). This is especially crucial in research examining the effects of electoral malpractice on good governance, a complex issue necessitating thorough investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 2018). Additionally, interviews allow participants to express their experiences using their own language, thereby granting them a voice within the research framework (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This approach helps ensure the study remains rooted in participants' experiences and viewpoints, rather than being guided exclusively by the researcher's preconceptions and analyses.

Furthermore, interviews serve as an effective means of gathering extensive and nuanced data, which can then be subjected to thorough analysis (Seidman, 2013). Through the use of open-ended questions and follow up inquiries based on the participants' responses, the researcher can develop a more profound comprehension of the impacts of electoral malpractice on good governance. Interviews enable researchers to foster a connection with participants, cultivating an environment of trust and openness (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). This can help to ensure that the participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives, leading to more accurate and nuanced data.

3.5 Population and Sample

The study's population encompasses of all stakeholders with a vested interest in Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election, including voters, political parties' representatives (MPs and Councilors), election observers, election officials. The sample of this study also consists of secondary data from reports by election observer missions and data from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

3.6 Sampling Method/s

This study employed purposive sampling, a method that involves choosing participants with specific attributes or qualifications (Creswell, 2014). The samples were chosen for their relevance to the research problem, resulting in a sample size of 35 participants. Purposive sampling is a common approach in qualitative research, allowing researchers to obtain a more profound insight into a particular issue or examine specific viewpoints (Bryman, 2012). However, this method could restrict the applicability of results to a larger group because of a non-random participant selection process of participants. The goal of this sampling method is to ensure that the sample represents a diverse range of experiences and perspectives related to electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe District.

In qualitative research, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to determining the ideal sample size. However, scholars recommend that a sample size of 30 participants or more is typically sufficient to achieve data saturation, where no new information is being generated from the data collected (Guest et al., 2020). With the sample size of 35 participants, this study meets this criterion, ensuring that the gathered data is thorough and representative of the research topic.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

This study employed a multifaceted approach to data collection, incorporating in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including election officials, political party representatives, voters who may have witnessed or experienced electoral irregularities. Additionally, secondary data analysis and documentary analysis were utilized to examine various documents, such as election reports, social media posts and newspaper articles. Secondary data was sourced from reports international election observation organizations, such as the European Union's electoral observation team European Union Election Observation Mission and the Carter Center. Furthermore, documentary analysis involved a thorough examination of data from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and other pertinent sources.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher used multiple sources of data and triangulated the findings to increase validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014).

3.9 Data Presentation

The findings from the thematic analysis was presented using narrative descriptions. Narrative descriptions provide a detailed account of the themes and categories that emerged from the data.

3.10 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to examine transcripts, focusing on the identification of recurring patterns and themes within the data. The analysis process was flexible, allowing for either manual execution or the software tool, based on the discretion of the researcher. Data

collected from interviews underwent analysis through the application of thematic analysis techniques. To conduct thematic analysis subsequent steps were undertaken.

The researcher read the transcripts to become familiar with the data and gain a general understanding of the participants' experiences and perspective (Christensen, 2007). The researcher identified and labeled the important features of the data using descriptive codes. These codes were generated systematically and applied to the relevant sections of the transcripts (Laegreid, 2007). The researcher identified patterns and connections between the descriptive codes and group them together into themes. The themes were refined and revised as the analysis progresses (Zhang 2020).

The researcher reviewed the themes and their associated codes, refining and defining the themes as necessary. The themes were checked against the data to ensure that they accurately capture the participants' experiences and perspectives (Montinola, 2002). Themes were named and described, providing a summary of the associated codes and data extracts. This was to ensure the themes are clear and meaningful to the research audience (Jackman, 2002). The researcher interpreted the findings, drew conclusions and made recommendations based on the themes that emerged from the data (Ferrinho, 2001)

3. 11 Ethical Considerations

According to Namey et al. (2008), ethics encompasses moral principles and upright behavior. In the context of research, ethical considerations involve behaviors that align with established norms, principles, standards, and values expected by research participants. Collecting data from individuals without regard for ethical concerns is highly unethical (Kumar, 2011). The following

ethical issues were respected and upheld in carrying out this research. This study adhered to the following ethical issues.

3.11.1 Confidentiality and privacy

Braun and Clarke (2006) define confidentiality as the practice of managing participant information with professionalism and discretion to protect privacy and maintain secrecy. To uphold this principle, the researcher refrained from collecting participants' names, thereby fostering an environment conducive to confidential and honest responses.

3.11.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher provided participants with clear information about the study's objectives, emphasizing its academic nature. As Namey et al. (2008) noted the principle of voluntary participation underscores the importance of participants' autonomy to decide whether to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. The researcher ensured that participants' involvement was voluntary and free from coercion, aligning with ethical standards for data collection.

3.11.3 Honesty

The researcher presented, analyzed and interpreted data and research findings impartially and without embellishment.

Furthermore, the study was carried out with utmost respect for the rights and dignity of all participants, adhering to ethical research practices.

3.12 Summary

In summary, this chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election. The study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research philosophy adopted in this study is pragmatism, which emphasizes the use of multiple methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a discussion and analysis of the findings from the research topic on electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe District, a case on the Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized elections. The study aimed to identify the forms of electoral malpractice, analyze its effects on good governance, and examine the role of electoral institutions in perpetuating these malpractices. The findings are discussed in relation to the research objectives

and supported by relevant literature, empirical evidence, and reports from organizations such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Center for Applied Research and Technology (CATER), the European Union (EU), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

4.1 The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

Characteristic	Number of participants	Percentage
Gender		
Female	25	71,4%
Male	10	28,6%
Age		
21 – 24	7	20%
25 – 34	12	34,3%
35 – 44	8	22,9%
45 – 54	5	14,3%
55 +	3	8,6%
Electoral stakeholders		

Voters	23	65,7%
Election officials	7	20%
Candidates	5	14,3%

Table 1: Socio- economic and political demographic characteristics

The participants in the study had diverse socio-demographic characteristics. The age range of the participants was from 21 to 55+ years old, with the majority falling between 25 to 44 years old. Out of the 35 participants, 25 were female (71.4%) and 10 were male (28,6%).

The participants also included various electoral stakeholders including voters, electoral officials and candidates. The voters recorded highest frequency with a total number of 23 (65,7%), electoral officials were 7 (20%), and candidates recording a number of 5 participants (14,3%).

For the purpose of preserving the anonymity of the participants and in accordance with the ethical considerations of the research project, each participant was assigned a number which was used rather than their names.

4.2 Forms of Electoral Malpractice

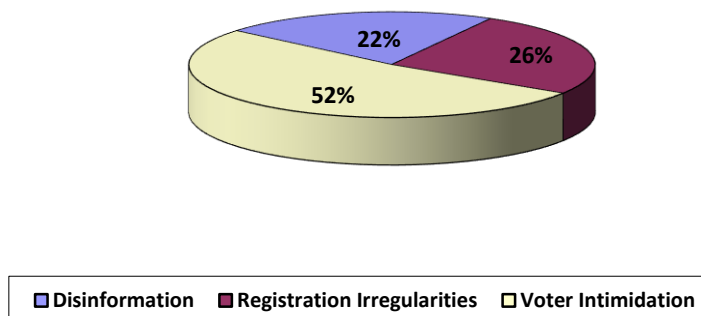


FIGURE 2.

The study revealed that the forms of electoral malpractices in Mazowe District vary. The most prominent forms of malpractices included voter intimidation (52%), voter registration irregularities (26%), disinformation (22%), with intimidation of voters recording higher frequency.

Voter intimidation was one of the forms of electoral malpractice reported by both electoral officials and voters in Mazowe District. Several participants, particularly from Protea farm, shared experiences of intimidation by political party agents or local leaders. A significant number of respondents (52%) claimed they felt pressured to vote for specific candidates and parties, often accompanied by threats.

The respondents from Protea farm remarked, " *we were clearly told if we would vote for the opposition party or make it win in our ward we were going to be driven out from the farm and having nowhere to go, we had no choice.*"

According to SADC (2023) observer mission reports, it noted that "*there were credible allegations of intimidation in other parts of the country, particularly in opposition strongholds*"

Similarly, the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) highlighted the use of "fear-based tactics" to control voter choices (EU, 2023).

These forms of intimidation undermine the principle of free and fair elections, as voters are unable to make their choices without fear of consequences.

Voter registration irregularities were another significant form of electoral malpractice in Mazowe district. Several respondents (26%) noted that their names were missing from the voter rolls, despite having registered in previous years. In particular, the respondents who ascribed to this were those who had their names missing when they reached their polling stations, especially those who went to vote at Twin Baobab Junior school and Glendale Country club ward 17. Electoral officials confirmed that there were instances where voters were excluded due to administrative errors or deliberate manipulation of voter rolls.

One participant, a voter, shared their frustration:

"I went to vote, but they told me that my name was not on the list. I had registered, but somehow my name was not there. They couldn't give me a good explanation, and I was unable to cast my vote"

One of the chancellors also highlighted the challenges in voter registration that were brought about with the delimitation process.

The respondent noted that, *"There were irregularities in the voter rolls; some voters were registered in wrong constituencies, and some of them were left off entirely."*

The ZHRC also, in its post-election report, acknowledged that "inaccuracies in the voter register led to a significant number of voters being disenfranchised, especially in rural constituencies" (ZEC, 2023).

These challenges continue to raise concerns about the fairness and accuracy of the electoral processes, as these registration errors are often seen as a form of exclusion from the voting thereby disproportionately affecting opposition supporters.

Disinformation, was another significant form of electoral malpractice particularly through social media platforms. A number of respondents (22%) noted that misinformation about the voting process, candidates and alleged electoral fraud was widespread, often circulating in the days leading up to the election.

One of the participants shared his concern:

“I saw a post on social media before the election which was saying don’t vote the election has already been rigged. I still went on and vote but I was confused.”

This does not only undermine electoral integrity, but also shapes voter’s perceptions and manipulate public opinion.

4.3 Impact of Electoral Malpractice on Good Governance

4.3.1 Erosion of Trust in Electoral Institutions

The most significant impact of electoral malpractice identified by the study is the erosion of trust in electoral institutions and democratic processes. A majority of voters (n = 22) expressed a deep sense of disillusionment with the electoral system, stating that the 2023 election was marred by irregularities that rendered the outcome illegitimate.

One voter summarized:

"After what happened, I don't believe elections in this country can ever be fair. If you don't support the ruling party, your vote doesn't count. We have seen this happen again and again in the previous elections, and it's hard to trust the system anymore."

The lack of confidence in the electoral process is a negative sign as far as democratic governance is concerned, as citizens are less likely to participate in future elections if they see the process as unfair as well as deceitful.

4.3.2 Weakening of Political Accountability

Electoral malpractice in Mazowe District has also led to a weakening of political accountability. Many voters felt that politicians who won through fraud were not beholden to their constituencies. This lack of accountability was perceived as a contributing factor to poor governance, as elected officials were seen as more loyal to their political parties than to the needs of the people they were supposed to serve.

A participant explained:

"Politicians who win through these illegal means never listen to the people. They do not represent us. They are there because of scheming, not because of the people's will. They don't care about our needs. They are only after the benefits that comes with that aspired political office"

This perception of unaccountable leadership makes worse frustrations with governance and contributes to the public's disappointment with electoral processes.

4.3.3 Increased Social Division and Political Conflict

Electoral malpractice in Mazowe District has also worsened social divisions, leading to increased political conflict. The data revealed that electoral malpractice created a polarized environment

where supporters of different political parties are involved in clashes. These tensions undermine social cohesion and often results in violence.

A member of parliament candidate from Citizens Coalition for Change noted:

"The election results continues to divide our community. People from different political parties perceive each other as enemies. It's therefore difficulty to live together in peace when elections are conducted unfairly."

It can be noted that such divisions may not only hinder social harmony but also affect the ability of local people to work together towards shared development goals.

4.4 Role of Electoral Institutions in Perpetuating Electoral Malpractice

4.4.1 Lack of Electoral Integrity and Independence

One of the key findings from this study is the role of Zimbabwe's electoral institutions in perpetuating electoral malpractice. Many respondents (n = 16) believed that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) lacked independence and that its decisions were influenced by political pressures. Participants reported that ZEC failed to adequately address complaints about electoral irregularities, which further undermined the legitimacy of the election.

One electoral official expressed frustration, which was in line with the argument of most respondents regarding the independence of ZEC, saying:

"The Electoral Commission is not independent. It is clear that decisions are often made based on political judgements rather than the law. This lack of impartiality makes it difficult to ensure fair elections."

Another respondent noted that: *“the decisions and rulings of ZEC has always been biased in favor of the ruling party. ZEC and ZANU PF are one.”*

Therefore, it can be noted that lack of electoral integrity and transparency within the electoral institutions has contributed to the continuation of electoral malpractices.

4.4.2 Inadequate Training and Resources for Electoral Officials

Another contributing factor to electoral malpractice was the inadequate training and resources provided to electoral officials. Several respondents (n = 10) pointed out that many election officials were not adequately trained in election procedures, which contributed to mismanagement and irregularities during the electoral process.

One electoral official revealed:

“We did not receive enough training on how to handle election materials properly. Some of the procedures were unclear, and this led to errors in the voting and counting processes.”

These shortcomings in training and resources allowed malpractices to go unchecked, as officials were either unaware of their responsibilities or lacked the capacity to ensure a fair process.

4.5 Forms of Electoral Malpractice in Mazowe District

The findings of the study on electoral malpractice in Mazowe District during the Zimbabwe’s 2023 harmonized election is consistent with a research by the observer missions like SADC, Cater Centre, European Union and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission(ZHRC). The research cited instances where voters were coerced into supporting certain political parties through threats of violence. This aligns with reports from the SADC observer mission, which noted that there were credible allegations of intimidation in some rural areas, particularly in opposition strongholds,

(SADC, 2023). Similarly, the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) highlighted the use of "fear-based tactics" to control voter choices (EU, 2023). These forms of intimidation undermine the principle of free and fair elections, as voters are would make their choices out fear of repercussions, a finding which is consistent with existing literature on electoral integrity (Norris, 2014).

Moreover, the research findings voter registration irregularities also align with the reports from the ZEC, in its post-election report which acknowledged that there were inaccuracies in the voter's roll which led to a significant number of voters being disenfranchised, (ZEC, 2023). This is consistent with the findings from previous elections in Zimbabwe, particularly the 2018 election where issues of voter registration have been highlighted as a major problem in ensuring electoral legitimacy (Chitsike & Sithole, 2018).

Furthermore, the research finds out that disinformation was one the forms of electoral malpractice which was widespread during the election period, with the use of social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and twitter (now X) to spread misleading information. These findings are consistent with literature by Bradshaw & Howard, (2019) on the role of digital platforms in modern electoral malpractices, where disinformation has been shown to manipulate public opinion and increase polarization through the use of social media platforms. This is also in line with the research by Mare (2024), which shows that Zimbabwe experienced electoral disinformation during the 2023 disputed elections where electoral disinformation took center stage before, during, and soon after the voting process. The CATER report (2023) also noted that "false claims about electoral outcomes were intentionally spread by political actors seeking to destabilize the process," a response repeated by local voters who reported confusion and doubt about the election's fairness due to these false narratives. This was consistent with research by Mare & Matsilele, (2020) who

argued that in August 2023 false narratives related to imposter content were generated and circulated. This disregarded the elections as free and fair thus undermining good governance and good democratic practices.

4.6 Impact of Electoral Malpractice Good Governance

The research also examined the broader implications of electoral malpractice on good governance in Mazowe District, focusing on its effect on public trust, political accountability, and social cohesion. These findings align with Norris (2014) argument that electoral malpractices erode public confidence in democratic institutions, leading to lack of concern and disengagement. The SADC observer mission also reported that "a perception of institutional bias and inefficiency among electoral bodies severely undermines the legitimacy of the election results" (SADC, 2023). This is also in line with the research by Tendai and Mapuranga (2023) who identified the lack of transparency in the ZEC's operations, coupled with incidents of voter intimidation which led to widespread disengagement in the electorate, particularly among youth and opposition supporters. Their findings reinforce the argument that electoral malpractice contributes to the weakening of democratic institutions and processes, further undermining good governance.

Moreover, the research findings also indicated the role of electoral malpractice in weakening political accountability which is consistent with the work of Diamond (2015), who argues that electoral malpractice leads to a situation where politicians are not held accountable for their actions, as their positions of power are not derived from legitimate, free, and fair elections. In addition, the research by Chikwana, (2020) shows that such malpractices result in a lack of political accountability and undermine citizens' trust in electoral institutions.

Furthermore, electoral malpractice also had a significant impact on social division and political conflict within Mazowe District. The findings are consistent with the literature on how electoral fraud exacerbates existing social divisions and fosters long-term political instability (Pippa, 2017).

4.7 Role of Electoral Institutions in Perpetuating Electoral Malpractice

An important objective of this study was to examine the role of electoral institutions, specifically the ZEC, in perpetuating electoral malpractice. The findings suggest that the ZEC's lack of independence and insufficient training and resources for electoral officials contributed significantly to the prevalence of electoral malpractice in Mazowe District.

One of the key issues identified by the study was the lack of electoral integrity and independence within the ZEC, undermining its ability to carry out impartial electoral processes. These findings are consistent with the research by the EU EOM (2023) which noted that "the ZEC's credibility is severely compromised by its lack of autonomy, resulting in perceptions of bias in favor of the ruling party." This finding resonates with previous research on the importance of independent electoral commissions in maintaining democratic processes (Pippa, 2017). Veritas (2013), also highlighted the role of state institutions, including the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) in perpetuating electoral malpractice. State institutions play a significant role in perpetuating electoral malpractice through manipulation of electoral rules, voter registration and vote counting which is normally done by electoral commissions (Myagkov & Ordeshook, 2019). The judiciary also plays a role in electoral malpractice through selective enforcement of electoral laws, favoring ruling parties (Levitsky & Way, 2020). In Zimbabwe the military has also been implicated in electoral violence and intimidation, particularly in rural areas (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2018).

The study also revealed that many electoral officials in Mazowe District lacked the necessary training and resources to conduct elections fairly. The ZEC's failure to provide sufficient training on electoral procedures, as well as the inadequacy of logistical resources, led to confusion and errors during the election. This issue was highlighted in the CATER report (2023), which argued that "inadequate resources and poorly trained election officials contributed to the mismanagement of polling stations in several districts." Scholars such as Norris (2014) have emphasized that well-trained electoral officials and adequate resources are crucial for ensuring the transparency and fairness of the electoral process.

4.8 Summary

Electoral malpractice in Mazowe District during the 2023 harmonized elections had significant negative impacts on good governance, leading to a loss of trust in electoral institutions, weakened political accountability, and increased political and social division. The findings of this study highlight the critical need for electoral reform in Zimbabwe, focusing on improving the independence and capacity of electoral institutions, enhancing transparency, and providing adequate resources and training for electoral officials. Addressing these issues will be key to restoring public confidence in the electoral process and ensuring that future elections are free, fair, and credible. The study also contributes to the broader literature on electoral integrity, providing empirical evidence of the challenges faced by countries in transition like Zimbabwe. These findings and recommendations presented here will inform future efforts to strengthen democratic governance in Zimbabwe and other similar contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study investigated on electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe District, focusing on Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized. The study employed a qualitative research method approach, involving a survey and interviews with voters and electoral officials. This chapter provides a summary of the study's findings, conclusions drawn from the analysis, recommendations for practice, and areas for further study.

5.1 Summary

This dissertation explored electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance in Mazowe district, Zimbabwe, focusing on the 2023 harmonized election. The research objectives included identifying forms of electoral malpractice, examine its impact on good governance, and investigate the role of electoral institutions in perpetuating electoral malpractice. A qualitative methodology was employed, using in-depth interviews with key stakeholders such as election officials, politicians, and civil society activists. The literature review highlights the historical context of electoral malpractice in Zimbabwe and examines the various forms of electoral malpractice and their impact on good governance. The research has identified significant forms of electoral malpractice in Mazowe District during the 2023 harmonized elections. These malpractices included voter intimidation, voter registration irregularities and the spread of disinformation. Each of these forms of malpractice was found to have severe implications on the electoral process and democratic integrity in the district.

Voter intimidation was widespread, where voters faced threats of violence, eviction, or social exclusion if they did not support the ZANU PF party. This tactic was particularly prevalent in opposition strongholds and was widely reported by respondents. Voter registration irregularities were another significant issue, as many eligible voters found themselves excluded from the voters' roll, while others experienced difficulties during the registration process. These irregularities disproportionately affected rural populations and contributed to a sense of disenfranchisement among voters. Disinformation, particularly on social media, was also a major problem. False information regarding the election process, candidates, and alleged electoral fraud was widely disseminated, leading to confusion and further eroding trust in the electoral system.

The analysis of these malpractices revealed their profound impact on the broader concept of good governance. The study found that electoral malpractice in Mazowe District contributed to the erosion of trust in electoral institutions, a weakening of political accountability, and an increase in social division and political conflict.

The erosion of trust in institutions like the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was a key finding. Many voters felt that the electoral process was compromised, leading to a widespread belief that the elections were neither free nor fair. This loss of trust has far-reaching consequences, as it undermines the legitimacy of elected officials and the political process as a whole, as it discourages voters from continuous participation in elections.

Weakening political accountability was another significant outcome of electoral malpractice. Voters felt that their votes did not count, and as a result, they were less likely to hold elected officials accountable for their actions. This weakened the democratic system and made it more difficult for citizens to engage in meaningful political dialogue and action. Finally, electoral

malpractice fostered social division and political conflict. The findings show that electoral fraud and manipulation fueled political polarization in the district, particularly between supporters of opposing political parties. The widespread division created an environment of distrust and hostility, hindering cooperation and social cohesion, particularly in development initiatives.

The role of electoral institutions in perpetuating electoral malpractice was also a central focus of the study. The research found that the ZEC's lack of electoral integrity and independence, as well as its inadequate training and resources for electoral officials, played a significant role in enabling electoral malpractice. The lack of electoral integrity and independence within the ZEC was highlighted as a major issue, with reports of political interference and bias. The ZEC's perceived partiality in overseeing the election process contributed to the belief that the election was not conducted fairly. The inadequate training and resources for electoral officials also emerged as a critical issue. Many officials lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage the electoral process, resulting in errors, confusion, and inefficiencies at polling stations.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made to address the issue of electoral malpractice and improve good governance in Zimbabwe.

1. There is need for strengthening of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission for the practicality of its autonomy through a transparent and inclusive appointment process for ZEC commissioners involving various stakeholders and civil societies as well as appointment of officials who have no background of being part of any political party.

2.The second recommendation is that of enhancing Electoral Transparency through adoption of technological and more robust mechanisms for monitoring and verifying the accuracy of the voters' roll and ensure that all eligible voters are able to register without hindrance.

3.The third recommendation is on improving voter education focusing on educating voters about their rights, the importance of voting, and how to identify and report electoral malpractices such as intimidation and disinformation.

4. The fourth recommendation is that of addressing political polarization. More efforts should be made by ZEC and other relevant stakeholders and democratic institutions to bridge the political divide in Zimbabwe. This can be achieved through dialogue, public reconciliation processes, and initiatives aimed at fostering unity and cooperation between different political parties and social groups. Reducing political conflict and social division will help to restore trust in the electoral system.

5.3 Areas for further study

The study identified several areas for further research that can help democratic organizations and electoral institutions better understand the impact of electoral malpractice on good governance. One area for further research is investigating on the effectiveness of election observation and monitoring mechanisms in preventing electoral malpractice in Zimbabwe during the 2023 harmonized elections.

Another area for further research is examining the role of media coverage in perpetuating or preventing electoral malpractice in Zimbabwe during the 2023 harmonized elections. The study would include the positive and negative impact of media on good governance.

Finally, Examining the impact of political party financing on electoral malpractice and good governance in Zimbabwe during the 2023 harmonized elections could also help in understanding electoral and its impact on good governance.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, electoral malpractice in Mazowe District during the 2023 harmonized elections had significant negative impacts on good governance, leading to a loss of trust in electoral institutions, weakened political accountability, and increased political and social division. The findings of this study highlight the critical need for electoral reform in Zimbabwe, focusing on improving the independence and capacity of electoral institutions, enhancing transparency, and providing adequate resources and training for electoral officials. Addressing these issues will be key to restoring public confidence in the electoral process and ensuring that future elections are free, fair, and credible. The study also contributes to the broader literature on electoral integrity, providing empirical evidence of the challenges faced by countries in transition like Zimbabwe. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations presented here will inform future efforts to strengthen democratic governance in Zimbabwe and other similar contexts.

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APPENDIX 1

Private Bag 1020, Bindura

16 March 2025

The Human Resources Officer

Mazowe Rural District Council

Glendale, District Office

P.O Box

Bindura

Dear Sir/Madam

Yours Faithfully

B210418

Dear Sir/Madam

**REF: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN YOUR
DISTRICT**

I am a 4th year student at Bindura University of Science Education, studying towards attaining a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Peace and Governance. In fulfilment of my studies, I am required to carry out a research project. I am therefore kindly seeking permission to carry out a research in your district on electoral malpractice and its impact on good governance.

Be assured that the information will specifically be used for academic purposes only and shall be treated with confidentiality.

Yours Faithfully

B210418B

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Date of Interview.....

Introduction

- i. Introduction to the study and research objectives
- ii. Explanation of the purpose of the study

Explanation of the informed consent process and confidentiality

Interview Guide

Background information

- i. How long have you been involved in the electoral processes?

Section 1: Forms of Electoral Malpractice

1. What forms of electoral malpractice did you witness or experience during the Zimbabwe's 2023 harmonized election in Mazowe district?
2. Can you describe any personal experiences with electoral malpractice during the election?

Section 2: Impact of Electoral Malpractice on Good Governance

1. Can you explain how electoral malpractice undermine good governance?
3. Are you still willing to participate in electoral processes due to electoral malpractice?

Section 3: Role of Electoral Institutions

1. What role do you think the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) played in preventing or perpetuating electoral malpractice during the 2023 harmonized election?
2. Can you suggest any reforms that could strengthen the ZEC's ability to prevent electoral malpractice in future elections?

3. How do you think other electoral institutions, such as the judiciary, can help prevent electoral malpractice?

Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age: _____

2. Sex: _____

3. Role in the electoral process: _____

Section 2: Forms of Electoral Malpractice

1. Which of the following forms of electoral malpractice did you witness or experience during the 2023 harmonized election in Mazowe district? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Vote buying
- ☐ Intimidation and violence
- ☐ Ballot stuffing
- ☐ Voter registration irregularities

Other (please specify) _____

2. How prevalent do you think electoral malpractice was in the 2023 harmonized election in Mazowe district? (Scale: 1-5, where 1 is "not prevalent at all" and 5 is "very prevalent") -----

Section 3: Impact of Electoral Malpractice on Good Governance

1. How do you think electoral malpractice affected the legitimacy of elected officials in Mazowe district? (Scale: 1-5, where 1 is "no impact" and 5 is "significant impact") -----
2. Can you rate the level of trust you have in the electoral process in Zimbabwe? (Scale: 1-5, where 1 is "no trust at all" and 5 is "complete trust") -----
3. Have noticed any changes in service delivery as a result of electoral malpractice? Yes/No

Section 4: Role of Electoral Institutions

1. How effective do you think the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was in preventing electoral malpractice during the 2023 harmonized election? (Scale: 1-5, where 1 is "not effective at all" and 5 is "very effective"). -----
2. Do you think the judiciary played a significant role in preventing electoral malpractice during the 2023 harmonized election? (Yes/No)

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