CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTION: A CASE OF CHITUNGWIZA

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challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized election: a case of Chitungwiza

By

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections, with a focus on Chitungwiza residents. The study employed a case study approach, a widely-used method in a social science research and the study conducted a comprehensive analysis of relevant instances. The research examined various challenges faced by opposition political parties during elections and explored the operational aspects of the Zimbabwe`s legal framework for elections. Furthermore, it analysed the effects of the challenges faced by opposition political parties during elections. The study also highlighted how the measures which were taken during the 2023 harmonised elections disadvantaged the opposition political parties. The research argued for the limitations on over use of government powers as outlined in Section 67(1) (a) of the constitution and emphasised the importance of ensuring the right to make political choices freely and participate in the activities of political parties. The study also stated that to end the challenges faced by opposition political parties during elections, it is the duty of the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs has a broader mandate to oversee matters related to constitutional affairs and electoral processes in the country.

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Declaration Form

I B200914B, hereby affirm that this dissertation represents my original research and study, with the exception of cited acknowledgements and references indicated within the document. I confirm that no part of this dissertation has been submitted to any other university for the purpose of obtaining a degree.

………………   …………………

Student`s signature   Date

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Rest Dzvairo and Wadzanai Dzvairo, who did not have the opportunity to complete their own education, but demonstrated unwavering commitment and enthusiasm in supporting my pursuit of higher education at the tertiary level. I salute them for their passion for my academic journey which has been a driving force in my life, and it is with heartfelt appreciation that I acknowledge their love and dedication.

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I am deeply thankful to God for guiding me throughout my academic journey and enabling me to reach this significant milestone. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the following individuals who have contributed to the completion and submission of this study:

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ANC- African National Congress

BDP- Botswana Democratic Party

BVR- Biometric Voter Registration

CCC – Citizens Coalition for Change

DA- Democratic Alliance

ECHR- Electro Commission and European Court of Human Rights

ERTS- Electronic Results Transmission System

MDC – Movement for Democratic Change

SADC- Southern African Development Community

ZANU-PF – Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front

ZEC – Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZRP- Zimbabwe Republic Police

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Background of the study

Challenges facing opposition political parties is a profound aspect which attract the globe and many researchers continentally. It is difficult to put an exact percentage on the challenges faced by opposition parties worldwide, as each country is different and the challenges they face can vary greatly. However, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2020) the Democracy Index which ranks countries based on their level of democracy states that restrictions more than half of all countries are considered " flawed democracies." Opposition political parties often face significant challenges such as on freedom of speech and assembly, limited access to media and lack of transparency. Therefore, a significant percentage of opposition political parties around the world are facing challenges.

Worldwide they are various challenges opposition political parties are facing. This study will be focusing on global level, continental, SADC and in Zimbabwe. The challenges faced by

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opposition political parties during elections at global level are assessed by the UK Electro Commission and European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

According to Bratton (2020) organizations like the UK Electro commission are responsible for the protection of the rights of opposition parties, and have urged governments to take steps to ensure that elections are free, fair and peaceful. The UK electoral commission has the role of investigating complaints of electoral fraud, issuing guidance on electoral law and prosecuting those who break the laws. The Labor party is one of the opposition parties in UK which faced a variety of obstacles to win and form a government such as funding issues, internal party disputes and difficulty in uniting different factions of the party around a shared platform.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) opposition political parties are facing challenges such as allegations of racism and corruption, for instance in the Democratic Alliance (DA) in South Africa (Raftopoulos, 2022). It is the largest opposition party in South Africa which was founded in 1989 and is considered to be a liberal and pro-business party. The Democratic Alliance has been a vocal critic of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and has called for increased accountability and transparency from the government. The DA has also pushed social and economic reforms to gain support.

In Zimbabwe opposition political parties have been facing numerous challenges over the years. One of the biggest challenges is state violence (Rusike, 2021). Opposition parties have been subjected to attacks, harassment and intimidation by the government and its supporters. This has included physical violence such as being beaten, killed and imprisonment of opposition leaders. The government has also used its control of the media to suppress the voices of the

opposition. State-owned media has often portrayed the opposition in a negative light while independent media has been subject to censorship and intimidation.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to understand the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections in Chitungwiza.

1.3. Statement of the problem

There was media coverage, banning of door to door campaigns and police clearance on campaigns. According to Fadzai Mahere (2023), a prominent Zimbabwean lawyer and politician the government`s control of media during the elections limited the visibility of the opposition and created a false narrative about the elections. She argued that the media coverage during the 2023 harmonized elections by independent media monitoring groups was that the state-owned media devoted an average of 80% of its coverage to the ruling party, while the opposition received on 20%. Piers Pigou of the International Crisis Group and Thabiso Ndlovu of the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute have highlighted the restrictive legal and financial environment that the opposition faced during the 2023 elections. Zimbabwe`s Public Order and Security Act requires opposition parties to get permission from the police to hold rallies and meetings which can be denied for arbitrary reasons. This may result in opposition parties find it difficult to effectively compete with the ruling party as they have greater access to resources and the media.

1.4. Research Objectives

This study will be guided by the following objectives;

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I. To understand the measures taken during the 2023 electoral harmonized elections.

II. To analyse the root causes of these challenges.

III. To investigate on potential solutions for addressing these challenges in

the future.

1.5. Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions;

I. What are the measures taken during the 2023 electoral harmonized election?

II. What are the root causes of these challenges?

III. How does the investigation of potential solutions for addressing these challenges will be

attained in the future?

1.6. Assumptions of the study

This study assumes that;

I. The political environment during the 2023 harmonized election was not free and fair.

II. Opposition political parties in Zimbabwe needed to develop innovative strategies to

overcome these challenges and effectively engage voters in the 2023 harmonized

election.

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1.7. Significance of the study

I. Academics

The study provided valuable insights for students because it can help them to understand the challenges that the opposition parties face in other countries and how they can overcome them in the future, basing on the case studies given in the research. It can help students to develop critical thinking skills as they analyse and evaluate the information presented in the research. In addition, students gain a greater understanding of the importance of free and fair elections for the success of democracy.

II. Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)

The study is important to ZRP because it can help them to understand the effectiveness of their actions on the democratic process. Furthermore, the ZRP is responsible for enforcing the Public Order and Security Act which has criticized for its restrictions on opposition parties. This study will make the ZRP understand the challenges this law creates for the opposition and they can make changes to their enforcement of the law to ensure that it is applied in a fair and transparent manner.

III. Political Parties

The study will benefit political parties as it provides a clear assessment of the challenges they face which can help them to develop strategies for overcoming the challenges. The research can raise awareness of the challenges that the opposition faces and encourage public support for addressing these challenges. In addition, it can serve as a guide for political parties in other countries who are facing similar challenges.

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1.8. Delimitations of the study

The study will be focusing on the challenges related to the 2023 harmonized election in Chitungwiza, rather than a broader historical perspective. It will also focus on the role of the media in shaping public opinion and influencing the outcome of the elections. The study will examine how the media has been used by the government to promote their own agendas.

1.9. Limitations of the study

The challenges which the research might face is lack of access to resources such as funding. There might be difficulty in obtaining access to certain information or data sources, due to factors like government restrictions or lack of public availability. Time or resources might be limited to conduct a comprehensive study of all the challenges facing opposition parties in Zimbabwe.

1.10. Definition of key terms

Elections: Is a system for selecting political office-holders through a combination of popular participation and the rule law (Norris, 2014).

Political parties: Are formal organizations with rules and procedures and that they compete for office in elections (Fazekas, 2019).

Politics: Is the process of decision-making which comes from a range of sources including the work of political theorists (Muller, 2016).

Democracy: It is a system in which all members of the society have an equal and effective opportunity to make their views known and counted in the making of binding collective decisions (Dahl, 2017).

Media: Is a key institution that provides citizens with information about their government and society (Manovich, 2016).

Conflict: Is a complex process that involves a struggle for control, resources and is often rooted in deeper societal and historical issues (Mayer, 2016).

1.11. Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is made up of five chapters as indicated below:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter focus on the introduction and background of the study. It consists of the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the questions of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter contains the theoretical framework and the literate review that guides the study. This chapter comprise of the literature and texts that are related to the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections a case of Chitungwiza. In this chapter, the researcher will give information on what was studied in the past and what other

researchers have asserted relating to the challenges that opposition political parties face during elections.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research philosophy, research designs, data collection methods, sampling techniques and other data collection methods that will be used to conduct the study. This chapter also describe and explain how data was collected during the research to understand the challenges facing opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections in Chitungwiza.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

This chapter focuses on data analysis and data presentation of the information found during the research.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research

This is the final chapter which consist of summary, conclusions and recommendations of the whole study.

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CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the literature review and the theoretical framework that will be used in the study. This chapter will be based on the resource mobilization theory which asserts various views on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. This chapter will also how the political opportunity structure theory which focuses on the external environment in which social movement operate can be used to explain the challenges faced by opposition political parties. The researcher will discuss what other researchers have studied and observed on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

2.2. Theoretical framework

This chapter will be guided by the Resource Mobilization Theory. The theory was developed by Tilly (1978) and later built upon by Dr Tarrow (2011). The resource mobilization theory emphasizes on social movements. It states that social movements is a way used by people

to find meaning and identity in their lives (Alexander, 2012). The resource mobilization theory also highlights the importance of resources in determining the success of political parties (Capoccia, 2014). The theory states that political parties with more resources such as money, staff and media support will be more likely to succeed than those with fewer resources (Dalton, 2010). Lack of resources makes it difficult for opposition political parties to compete with incumbent parties who have more resources (Janda, 2008). In addition, the resource mobilization theory is not just a matter of money, but it also requires effective organization and strategy (Tormey, 2006). In the African context, the resource mobilization theory was adopted by Botswana in particular as the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has a strong hold on power and enjoys a large majority in Parliament, and it also have other advantages such as more funding, media coverage and some resources than opposition parties have (Southall, 2011). According to Paller (2018) this theory is also applicable in Zimbabwe as the ruling party ZANU-PF party is seen as an entity that seek to mobilize resources in order to achieve political power.

Lack of financial resources was a major obstacle for opposition parties during the 2023 harmonized elections (Kurebwa, 2023). He notes that opposition parties struggled to raise funds to run their campaigns as most donors were not willing to support them. Kurebwa also highlights the unequal opportunity to be published to the media as another challenge faced by opposition parties.

2.3. History of elections in Zimbabwe

The colonial history of Zimbabwe is marked by a period of British colonial rule that lasted from 1890 to 1980. During this period, the British introduced a white minority rule which gave the white minority unequal political and economic power and left the black majority

marginalized and impoverished (Tendi, 2017). This system led to the rise of nationalist movement which demanded an end to white minority rule and establishment of a democratic and independent Zimbabwe. This movement started in the liberation struggle of the 1970s which the nationalist forces waged a guerrilla war against the colonial government. The liberation resulted in the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 which paved way for Zimbabwe`s independence from the British colonial government (Tendi, 2017). The agreement resulted to a transitional government which allowed for the election of a new government in 1980. The agreement also established the drafting of a constitution which was adopted in 1980 and promised civil liberties and democratic elections. The Lancaster House Agreement was an important meeting which led to Zimbabwe`s independence and its provisions have shaped the country`s landscape (Madhuku, 2020). The agreement`s legacy is both positive and negative as it was credited for bringing independence, but also been criticized for failing to address the causes of the conflict (Raftopolous, 2018).

2.3.1. The 1985 elections

After the country had got its independence Mugabe was appointed the president and served his 37-year rule. He was accused of authoritarianism, the use of violence and intimidation to suppress opposition (Kagoro, 2016). The first election which was held in Zimbabwe was the 1985 election which was done after the adoption of a new constitution in 1982, which gave the ZANU-PF party more control over the electoral process (Chan, 2018). The election was rejected by the main opposition party the Zimbabwe African People`s Union, which claimed that the electoral system was not free and fair (Moore, 2021). Robert Mugabe was re-elected as

president, but the election had allegations of violence and intimidation by state security forces and the international observers stated that the process was undemocratic.

2.3.2. The 1990 elections

In 1990 there was another election which was between ZANU-PF party and the main opposition party MDC which was boycotted in the previous election. The ZANU-PF government used violence and irregularities to win the election and as a result the election was considered not free and fair which increased tension between the two parties (Raftopolous, 2018). This election government`s policies and a number of people were living in poverty (Saunders, 2016). There was a disputed presidential election in 2002 which is believed that the voters results were rigged and the Mugabe`s party began a campaign of violence and intimidation against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (Pigou, 2019). MDC members were beaten, imprisoned and faced other forms of harassment. In 2007, the Mugabe further consolidated his power as he introduced a new constitution which gave the president excessive power (Raftopolous, 2017).

2.3.3. The 1995 elections

There was an election in 1995 which was driven by the increased authoritarian ruling of ZANU-PF party and the introduction of new laws that affected civil liberties (Saunders, 2016). The new laws along with the rising inflation and unemployment created a sense of desperation among the population which made the MDC party respond to the growing dissatisfaction with the government and it sought to challenge ZANU-PF`s dominance (Raftopolous, 2018). During this election the MDC made important gains with potential to overthrow ZANU-PF, but it was not enough to unseat the ruling party (Tendi, 2019). Again, like other previous elections, the 1995 election was not free and fair as it was marred by violence and fraud (Chan, 2019).

2.3.4. The 2000 elections

In 2000 there was a parliamentary election were the MDC party was seen as a significant opposition party, but the ZANU-PF rigged the election to remain in power (Chan, 2016). The MDC members disputed the results of the election which led to widespread of violence and intimidation. The ZANU-PF government was accused of committing a number of human rights abuses in the run-up of the election and these acts includes intimidation of supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), beatings and torture.

2.3.5. The 2005 elections

Another election was done in 2005 and the ZANU-PF party population decreased, but it still maintained control of the government (Kogelmann, 2019). On this election the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which was the main opposition political party had split into two. There was the MDC which was led by Morgan Tsvangirai and another led by Arthur Mutambara and this led to a number of irregularities being done. After the election results were announced, the MDC and other opposition parties claimed that the election was fraudulent as the international community claimed there were irregularities and violence.

2.3.6. The 2008 elections

The 2008 election was a turning point in Zimbabwe`s political history. The MDC party gained a significant ground against the ZANU-PF which made the incumbent party engage in violence and intimidation. These acts started as the MDC disputed the results of the election, claiming that they had been rigged. This violence resulted in many civilians killed and some injured. This led to the formation of a unity government with both the ZANU-PF and MDC

sharing power. In this election the youths enacted political violence during the presidential run-off election. It is believed that all the youths who were involved in creating violence were doing this for their personal gains or interest (Mwonzora & Helliker, 2020).

2.3.7. The 2013 elections

There was held an election again in 2013 and the ZANU-PF party had gained its majority in Parliament, with President Robert Mugabe being re-elected (Chibuwe, 2020). Robert Mugabe won 62% and Morgan Tsvangirai had 34%, so the ZANU-PF party dominated the election as it won with 196 seats. The results of the election were once again disputed by the MDC as they were arguing that the election had been rigged.

2.3.8. The 2018 elections

In 2018 there was an election and the opposition MDC Alliance made significant gains. During this election the electoral commission delayed to release the election results and this led to allegations that they tampered with the votes (Magaisa, 2018). According to the results which was published the ZANU-PF party won the election but, the election was boycotted by the MDC Alliance claiming that they had been rigged. This led to a period of intense political tensions and violence which has continued to the present day.

2.3.9. The 2023 elections

Another election was held in 2023 and it was marred with allegations of a number of irregularities such as media bias which was in favour of the ruling party, violence and voter intimidation (Mare, 2023). Some of the voters did not see their names in the voters` roll and ballot papers were insufficient which made people who had not voted to voter the following day

as this leads to finding biased information. The electoral commission was also accused of not being transparent in counting and reporting the results. The outcome of the election was that Emmerson Mnangagwa of the ZANU-PF party was re-elected as the President of Zimbabwe with 50.8% while Nelson Chamisa the leader of the Coalition for Change (CCC) had 44.3% of the votes.

2.4 The structure and composition of the Zimbabwean political system

The Zimbabwe`s political system is based on a presidential republic with the president as the head of the state and government. The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and is eligible for re-election. The country has a legislature known as the Parliament of Zimbabwe which consist of the Senate and the National Assembly. The Senate has 80 members, were 60 are elected by proportional representation and 20 are appointed by the president. The National Assembly has 270 members, were 210 are directly elected and 60 are women who are chosen by proportional representation from party lists. Zimbabwe is divided into 10 provinces and each province has a governor appointed by the president. There are a number of districts within each province which are headed by a district administrator. These districts are further divided into wards which are led by councillors who are elected by people. In addition, there are also a number of informal systems of governance namely traditional chiefs and village heads. These traditional leaders are important as they perform the role of resolving conflicts and local decision-making (Tendi, 2018).

2.5 The nature of opposition parties, strategies and tactics

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is the main opposition party in Zimbabwe and was formed in 1999 as a coalition of several groups (Kagwanja, 2017). It`s platform focuses

on human rights, democracy, economic development and good governance. This party has faced many challenges in efforts to gain power and the problems includes lack of access to state media, state repression and electoral fraud. The MDC party has been criticized for international divisions and lack of coherence in its policies. The MDC has remained the major force in Zimbabwean politics despite the challenges it faced and it also has great support from the population.

2.6 The impact of international factors

International factors have played an important role in shaping the political landscape in Zimbabwe. In 2002, the Unites States and European Union imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe as a form of punishment for human rights abuses and violations of democratic principles (Makumbe, 2020). The sanctions which were imposed have a significant impact on the economy and have been criticized by the Zimbabwean government for being unfair and punitive. These sanctions made many donors to reduce their support to Zimbabwe as they were concerned about mismanagement and corruption. This affected the help people got especially on the provision of basic services such as health and education.

2.7 The influence of the media and social media on the electoral process

The media and social media played an important role in shaping public opinion and influencing electoral outcomes in Zimbabwe (Mutsaka, 2019). The government use state owned media to promote its agenda and defame or attack the opposition, while independent media faced censorship and intimidation. The social media has become an important platform for passing information and organizing protests, despite the efforts which the government put to restrict access. The social media however, has been used to spread hate speech and disinformation which

has led to concerns about its impact on the electoral process. The media and the social media have provided a platform for civic engagement and the free exchange of ideas.

2.7 Measures taken during the 2023 harmonized elections

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) had a number of measures to ensure that the election was free and fair. The measures consist of the biometric voter registration (BVR) system, which was used to create a new voter roll. Some of the biometric data which was used in the BVR system included facial recognition and fingerprints to verify the identity of voters. The ZEC also implemented a new ZIMCODES system which assigned a unique alphanumeric code to each registered voter. This code was used to prevent duplicate or fraudulent registrations. The ZEC established a complaints mechanism to address any irregularities (Matyszak, 2024). ZEC introduced the publication of a comprehensive voters` roll which allowed voters to verify their registration and make corrections. It established a code of conduct for political parties and candidates and deployed monitors to observe the electoral process. Another measure done by ZEC was the introduction of new election materials such as indelible ink to prevent ballot stuffing and fraud. The ZEC also used technology such as the electronic results transmission system (ERTS) to transmit results from polling stations to the national collation centre.

2.8 The root causes of the challenges faced by opposition parties during 2023 elections

Lack of media access for opposition parties is one of the root causes of the challenges faced by opposition parties during the 2023 harmonized elections and this makes it difficult for them to get their message out to voters (Cilliers, 2019). The electoral process is also a perpetrator

as it faced allegation of voter intimidation and manipulation, which makes it difficult for voters to express their true preferences. There are often issues with the electoral roll such as missing names and duplicates which leads to problems on the day of an election. In the electoral system, there is lack of trust which makes it difficult for opposition parties to accept the results.

There is also lack of funding, difficulty in recruiting candidates and lack of resources to campaign effectively (Moyo, 2020). There are limited resources which makes opposition parties struggle to reach out to voters, running effective campaigns and conduct voter education. Opposition parties are not given assistance from international donors as they viewed less likely to win the election. Lack of funding has significant impact on opposition political parties as they will not fit to compete with the ruling party which will be given financial assistance from the government and also international donors. This lack of funding is an advantage to the ruling party as they have access to government resources.

The imbalances in resource allocation makes it difficult for opposition parties to compete on the same level with the incumbent party, but the opposition parties continue to participate in elections despite these challenges as they hope to make positive change in the country (Mutumba, 2019).

2.9. Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 focused on the resource mobilization theory which has an impact on the challenges faced by opposition political parties. It highlighted the history of elections held in Zimbabwe, the structure and composition of the Zimbabwean system. In this chapter the nature, tactics and strategies of opposition political parties are discussed. There is also the influence of

the media and social media on the electoral process, the measures taken during the elections and the root causes of the challenges faced by opposition political parties.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focused on research designs, data collection methods, sampling techniques and other data presentation methods that were used in the study. This chapter described and explained how research information and data are were gathered in order to understand the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The chapter also examines and defined the research design, population sample, sampling methods, data collection techniques, research philosophy, research instrument, ethical considerations, data analysis and presentation. These are important as they were used in the collection of data which is significant to the subject under study.

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3.2. Research philosophy

Research philosophy is the fundamental assumptions that guide the way in which a research is conducted (Grant, 2022). This study used interpretivism. Interpretivism is a research paradigm that focuses on understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals. This research used interpretivism as a research philosophy because it asserts that reality is socially constructed, subjective and that knowledge is gained through understanding the perspectives and meanings of individuals (Burawoy, 2018). It also emphasized that it is important to understand the perspective of people who are being studied rather than from an objective scientific perspective.

3.3. Research methodology

It is the overall approach and procedures used in conducting research and it includes the choice of research design, data collection methods, data analysis methods and the interpretation of findings. This study used qualitative research method as it allows researchers to explore topics in depth and gain nuanced understanding of a social phenomena. Research methods are important because they ensure that the research is comprehensive, credible and unbiased. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the subjective experiences, perspectives and meanings of social phenomena. It also involves interviews, observations and focus groups. Qualitative research contrast quantitative research as it can be used to explore sensitive or personal topics that may be difficult to measure in numbers.

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3.4. Research Design

A research design is a plan or strategy for conducting a research project (Creswell, 2018). A case study research design is a quantitative research design that is used in this study as it examines specific phenomenon, group, individual or situation. A case study research design is important as they encompass the description of a case being studied including key people involved, context and setting. They also provide ethical considerations to take note throughout the research process, it outlines the ways that will be used to collect and analyse data and provides case(s) that will be used in the study. The main importance of a case study research design is that they provide insights into real world problems and situations, can be used to test theories and hypothesis and they allow for a detailed examination of a specific phenomenon (Gregory, 2016). Case study research designs are used in different fields including education, psychology and sociology and also used in marketing research and in businesses.

There are four typical elements of a case study research design and these elements are interconnected. The first element is the phenomenon that is being studied (Brinkerhoff, 2016). This is a step which sets the stage for the whole research as this will determine the methods and approach that are going to be used in the research.

The second element is the environment in which the case is situated (Brydon-Miller, 2018). In this stage the researcher will be setting for the case study or context. This may be done on a physical place, an event, an organisation or a social group. Understanding the environment is important as it provides more flesh to the research and is also essential for a complete understanding of the phenomenon which is going to be studied.

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Data collection methods is the third element which includes document analysis, interviews and observations (Maringira, 2017). The data collection methods can be used combined to gain a strong and clear understanding of the case. The fourth element is the analysis which involves drawing conclusions and making sense of the data (Muchemwa, 2019). This last element involves interpreting, examining data and answering the research questions.

3.5. Population and Sampling

The term population is defined as the entire set of people to whom the results of a research study apply (Kurebwa, 2015). He further explains population as general concept that can apply to a wide range of research studies including surveys, case studies and interviews. This study collected data from academic, opposition party members, councillors, leaders of opposition parties and researchers of the Chitungwiza community. Some of the Chitungwiza residents were also included in the study to have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized election.

3.6. Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals or cases from a population for inclusion in a study (Gorringe, 2017). It is believed that it is not possible to research everyone in the population, so some members are selected as a representative sample in line to the research being done (Saunders, 2018). A sample design is a process of selecting cases from a population to ensure that a study`s findings will be representative of the population from which the cases were drawn (Rambaldi, 2019).

3.7. Simple random sampling

Simple random sampling is a method of selecting a sample from a population in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being chosen (Vickers, 2018). In the study of challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonised election, simple random sampling was used to choose participants for the research. The participants that were interviewed using simple random sampling consist of opposition party leaders, councillors, residents and opposition party members who have knowledge on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonised elections. The research dealt with the above participants as they revolved in issues of elections and also faced challenges.

3.8. Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is defined as a strategy used for selecting participants needed in a research based on their ability to provide relevant and rich data (Casey, 2018). The importance of purposive sampling in the study was that it provides first hand- information directly from people who are facing challenges during elections. It provides rich information which may not be found in other sources. Another importance was that its helps to find information from people who are directly affected by the challenges rather than second information which comes from people who hear what happened, but have not experienced it.

3.9. Data collection methods

Data collection methods are various approaches and techniques that researchers use to collect data for their studies (Burns, 2017). There are various data collection procedures which includes mail, letter appointments with study participants, fax and scheduling phone. There are a

number of data collection methods which were used in gathering data from key informant interviews and documentary research about the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The importance of data collection methods is that it determines the reliability of a research study.

3.10. Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews are a type of qualitative research methods that involves in-depth, one on one interviews with people who have unique and in-depth knowledge of a topic (Mutongwizo, 2019). The selection of key informant participant is based on position, experience and knowledge. It is important to include a variety of different perspectives when selecting key informants as they represent a range of perspectives.

Key informant interviews provided important information on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonised elections. Members of the opposition party, councillors, researchers and opposition party leaders provided in-depth information on strategies which needs to be used by opposition parties to overcome the challenges they are facing and highlighted were they need support. Some of the challenges faced as part of research included lack of media coverage, limited access to resources and government interferences.

3.11. Documentary Research

Documentary research is a research method that involves the analysis of documents to gather data (Kurebwa, 2018). They involve official reports such as newspapers, online sources, government reports, books and other documents. This study used Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) reports. Documentary research is important in social science researches as it

understand future trends, historical events and current issues. It can be used also on providing data collected from other research methods such as interviews. In addition, it provides objective records of events, detailed and trends is one of the strengths of documentary research.

3.12. Validity and Reliability

Validity is a concept in research that refers to the extent to which a measure or methods accurately reflects the phenomenon it is intended to measure (Fiske, 2018). It is also defined as the degree which shows how accurate a research is supposed to be measured, while reliability is the degree which a research study would produce the same results, if it was conducted again under the same conditions (Russell, 2020).

There are a number of ways to ensure that this study is valid and one of the strategies is to construct validity. This is obtained by making sure that the measures used to assess the challenges faced by opposition political parties and was done by validated measures and piloting the measures with a sample of respondents. Secondly, internal validity was done to ensure that the study has a strong design and this includes randomization and control of confounding variables. Thirdly there is external validity which was used to ensure that the study has different and representative sample of participants.

3.13. Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which a research study produce same results after it has been done under the same conditions and have produced the same results (Smith, 2021). The importance reliability is that it helps the researchers to find high quality information and trust their findings. It also provides the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

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The reliability of research is seen in various ways and one of the ways is having a detailed protocol for the study which has all the process, data analysis methods and measures. Another strategy is to have a standard questionnaire that involve all the participants who have knowledge or victims of the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The third step is to reduce measurement errors which include piloting the questionnaire or training the researchers.

3.14. Data presentation and Analysis

Data presentation and analysis is the process of organizing and interpreting the data collected during a research study (Pearson, 2017). It involves using charts, graphs and other visual aids to help make sense of the information. The data is presented using statistical methods to find patterns and draw conclusions. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis within qualitative research (Zaytseva, 2019). It emphasizes on analysing, identifying and interpreting patterns which is useful on the study of challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

One of the important of thematic analysis on the challenges faced by opposition political parties as it is a useful tool for analysing qualitative data which includes focus groups or interviews and is helpful in studying complex or multi-faceted topics like this study. Secondly, thematic analysis give room for researchers to identify and analyse the main research themes or more information that emerge from the data patterns which can assist to uncover important insights and generate new ideas. Another importance of thematic analysis is its adaptability and flexibility. It is different from other methods as it does not require a priori set of codes or categories which allows for more open and inductive approach. Its flexibility is useful when

studying difficult or complex topics such as the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections as it give the researcher permission to allow data found guide the analysis (Braun, 2016).

3.15. Ethical Considerations

According to the American Sociological Association`s Code of Ethics (2020) ethical considerations are the moral and professional principles that guide researchers in their interactions with research participants, the scientific community and the public. The ethics that were considered on this study are making sure that the participants are aware of the purpose of the study and the risks of the research. The participants were supposed to know that the information they had given the researcher is confidential and stored privately as names were not used in the research. The most important ethic in this study was asking consent of the participants to promote social good and minimize harm. This research also respected the rights and dignity of the participants.

3.16. Chapter Summary

This chapter contains all the research tools and methods which were used to find the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The aspects which are highlighted in this chapter includes data collection methods, research methodology, sampling, ethical considerations, targeted population, research philosophy, documentary research, validity and reliability and data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will be dealing with data presentation, analysis and the discussion of findings which the researcher collected in Chitungwiza on the challenges faced by opposition political parties. The data was acquired through questionnaire surveys and interviews in Chitungwiza. Graphs and tables are going to be used to present the findings. The participants interviewed were categorised into three namely the councillors, residents and people who had contested.

4.2. Section A: Biographical data of participants

1.Gender

Figure.4.1 Gender
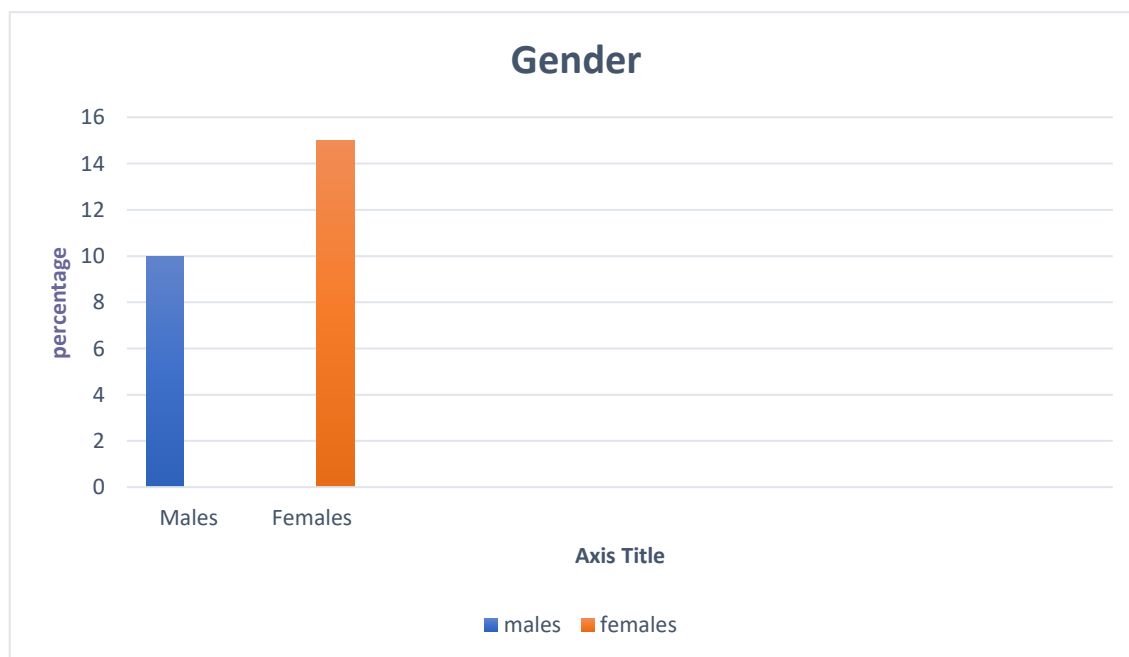
The research results showed that females had the highest number of participants as it had

60% while males got 40%, which indicated that this study found more males than females.

2. Age

Figure 4.2. Age

CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTION: A CASE OF CHITUNGWIZA
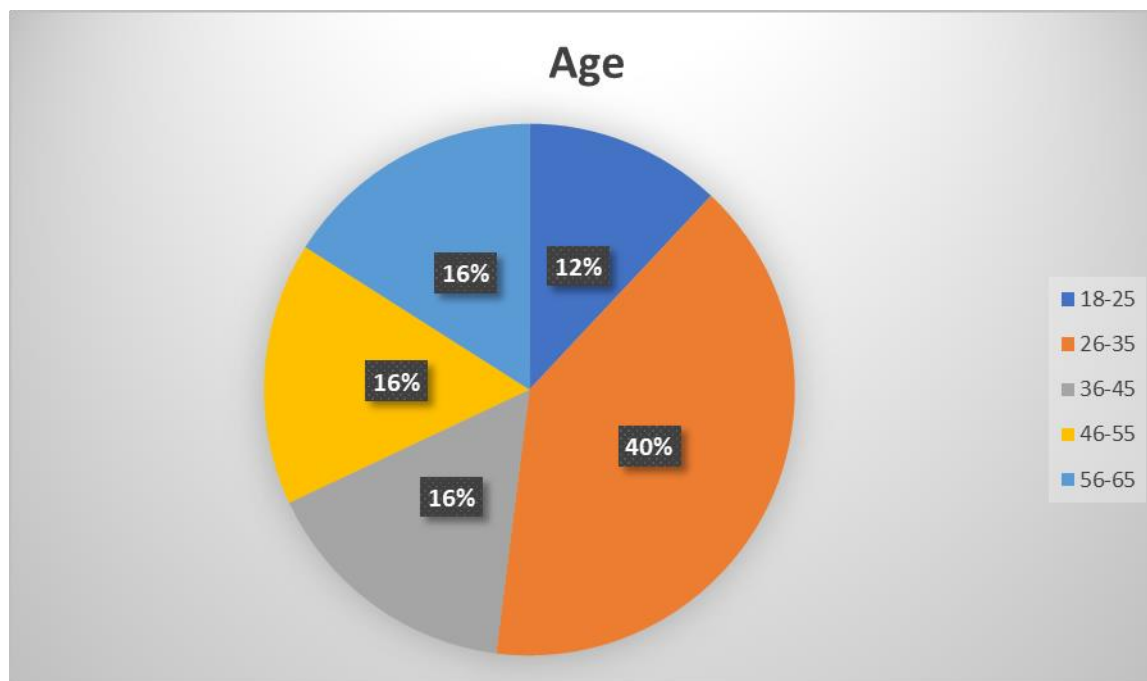
The highest number of participants was 40%, ranging between 26 and 35 years of age, followed by 16%, ranging between 36 and 45, 46 and 55, 56 and 65 years of age all obtained the same percentage accordingly. The lowest number of participants was 12%, ranging from 18-25 years of age.

3. Marital status

Figure 4.3: Marital status

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STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
SINGLE	7	28%
MARRIED	14	56%
DIVORCED	2	8%
WIDOWED	2	8%
TOTAL	25	100%

There were 56% married participants, 28% single participants, 8% divorced participants and 8% widowed participants.

4. Level of education

Figure 4.4: Level of education

Level of education	No of participants	Percentage
Non-schooling	0	0%
Primary	2	8%
Secondary	19	76%
Tertiary	4	16%
Total	25	100%

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The majority of the participants have completed their secondary education. 76% went to secondary school, 16% went to tertiary, whereas 8% ended in primary education and 0% showed that among all the participants, there was no one who did not attend school.

4.3. Section B: Understanding the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

Figure 4.5: Level of understanding

CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTION: A CASE OF CHITUNGWIZA
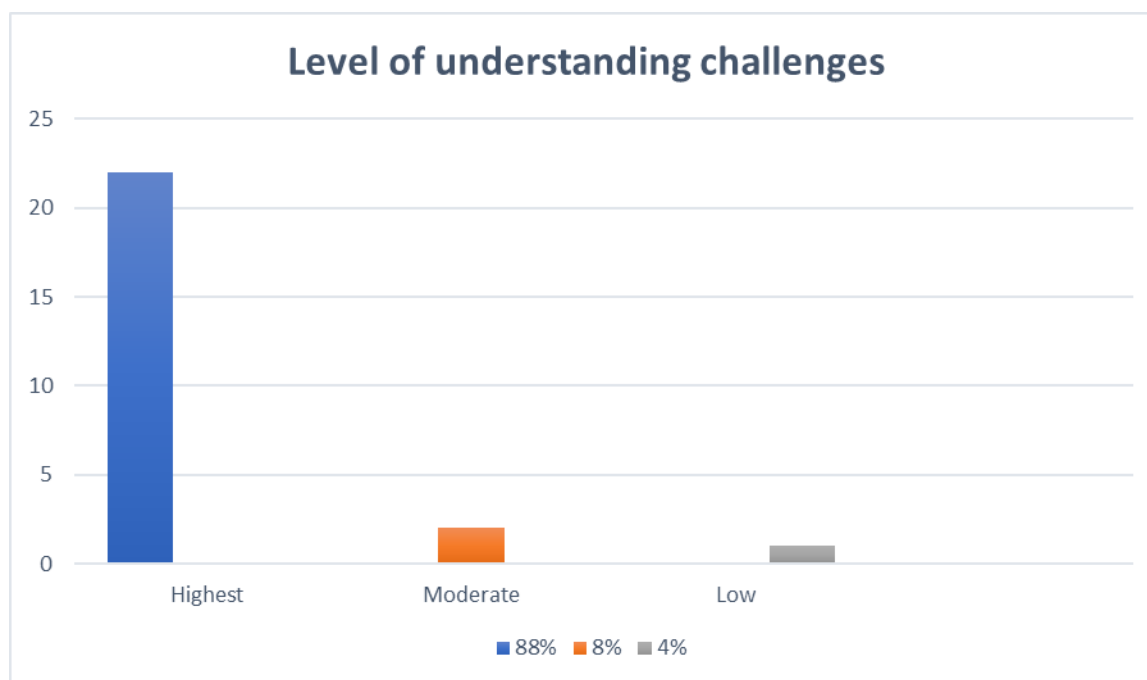
88% of the participants showed that they understood the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. 8% of the participants showed a moderate understanding of the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections and 4% of the participants showed a low understanding of the challenges faced by opposition political parties.

One of the participants stated that,

Lack of transparency is one of the challenges which opposition political parties faced during the 2023 harmonized elections and for Zimbabwe to have free and fair elections the constitution should be aligned, used practically and not just to be there on paper.

The study wanted to learn from the participants their understanding of the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The participants pointed out that the opposition political parties faced challenges during the 2023 harmonized elections due to incompetence and corruption from the ruling party Zanu-Pf. This was the main

challenge which the participants stated and also suggested that for elections to be conducted

fairly in Zimbabwe the ruling party should dissolve its excessive use of power. However, both

the ruling and opposition political parties should have a good relationship with each other were

the opposition parties respect the party in power expecting to receive the same when their time

comes to also rule or lead the country as alluded to by Ziblatt (2018).

4.4. Section C: Understanding the challenges faced by opposition political

party councillors during the 2023 harmonized elections.

Figure 4.6. The Participant`s experiences on the challenges they faced

councillors.

Challenges identified	Frequency	Percentage
Central government`s inference in council businesses	10	40%
Ruling party members use council properties without paying revenue	3	12%
Limited opportunities for advancement	2	8%
Harassment and	5	20%

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intimidation		
Lack of support from local government	2	8%
Limited resources	3	12%
Total	25	100%

40% of the participants indicated central government`s interference in council businesses as a challenge faced by councillors; 20% showed harassment and intimidation; 12% indicated ruling party members using council properties without paying revenue; 12% also identified limited resources; 8% indicated lack of support from local government; and 8% indicated limited access for advancement as a challenge faced by councillors.

Participants identified a number of challenges faced by opposition party councillors which hindered effective service delivery, development and revenue collection in their wards.

One of the councillors asserted that;

Corruption and favouritism is a challenge which opposition political party councillors faced which resulted in central government`s interference in council businesses leading to limited access to advancement.

Another participant indicated;

Harassment and intimidation and how it affected developmental issues in some wards which had councillors from opposition political parties in Chitungwiza.

One of the major challenges faced by councillors of the opposition party during the 2023 harmonized elections is limited resources from the government. Limited resources and

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intimidation affected or hindered the chances of opposition party councillors to win the by-elections free and peacefully, as the resources were given to Zanu-Pf councillors who were contesting to win the elections.

The councillors were also asked to give their opinions about the challenges faced by the opposition political party during the 2023 harmonized elections. According to Mlilo (2023) opposition political parties faced challenges such as voter suppression tactics, unequal media coverage favouring the ruling party, limited funding compared to the ruling party, lack of access to state resources, intimidation and violence against opposition supporters and lack of transparency in the electoral process. These challenges are hindering effective participation of opposition parties in state politics which resulted in Zimbabwe being viewed as undemocratic and one-party state (Biti, 2023).

Some of the councillors indicated that they faced government`s interference in council businesses. This challenge reduced the effectiveness of local councils in service delivery to the residents in their wards. It also created an atmosphere of intimidation and fear among local councillors and staff. Furthermore, it led to the resident`s mistrust to their councillors as there will be improper or poor service deliveries for instance the absence of garbage collectors, streetlights, water supply and sewer pipes not being repaired due to lack of funds which they might need the government`s approve to use the revenue they had collected in the respective councils.

The councillors also indicated that the challenge they have faced is that the ruling party supporters use council properties without paying revenue. This will affect the provision of goods and services within communities as the council has no enough funds to perform their duties. The

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problem would have emanated from indiscipline and political tolerance of the ruling party more than other political parties.

4.5. Section D: Understanding the relations between the ruling and opposition party

Figure 4.7: Level of understanding the relations
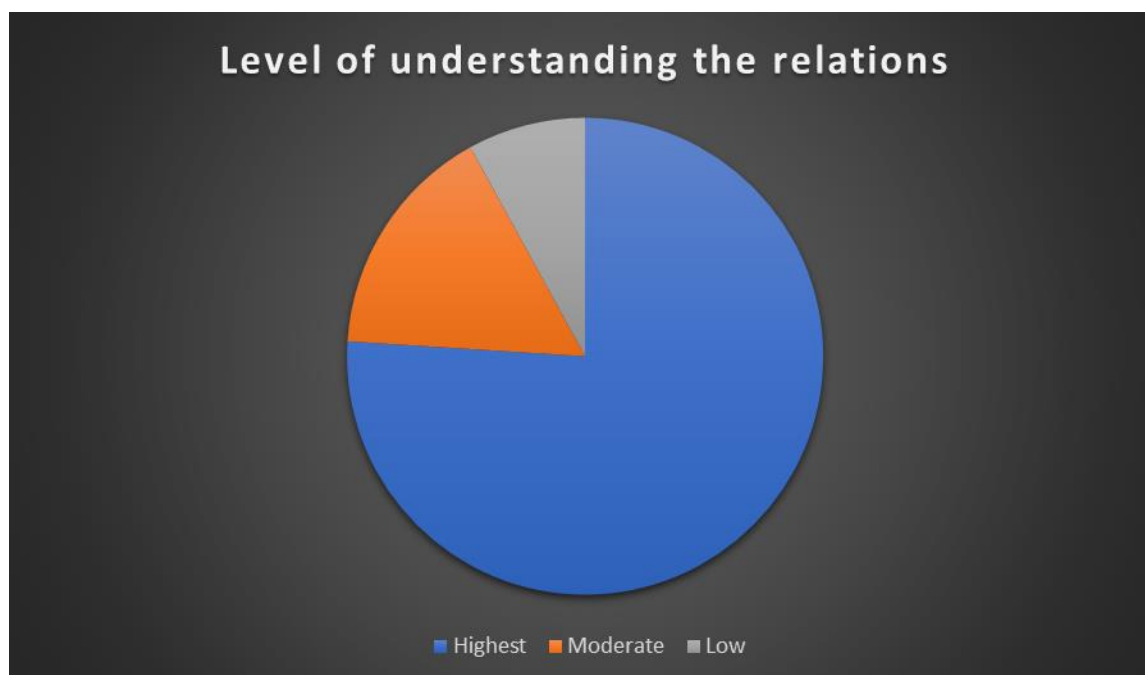
From the findings obtained, 76% of the participants indicated the highest level of understanding the opposition-ruling party relations. 16% of the participants highlighted a moderate understanding of the relations between the ruling and opposition political party, while % showed a low understanding of the relations.

A resident stated that;

The relationship between the ruling party and opposition parties is hostile. They are always competing with each other as ruling party will be viewing themselves as the one party who has the legal right to rule whilst the opposition parties, will be striving to acquire that power through contests and campaigns during the election period.

One of the Chitungwiza councillors indicated that,

The accusations of repression is a major issue that affected the relations of the ruling and opposition political parties. The opposition has accused the ZANU-PF government of cracking down dissent and opposition voices through the arrests of opposition leaders and activists, as well as restrictions on public gathering and media freedom. All the above mentioned repressions are the most method important methods which the opposition parties should use to attain power, but the ruling party is depriving them of that right.

The study attempted to understand the participant`s apprehension of the relationship between the ruling and opposition parties. The study`s findings showed that there is very little constructive engagement or cooperation between the ruling and opposition parties on issues of national importance. This will result in erosion of democratic norms and increased polarization (Bermeo, 2022). The breakdown of cooperation between political rivals causes confrontational attitudes and this gradually erode democratic norms and institutions over time. The adversarial relationship between the ruling party and opposition fosters greater political polarization in society and this makes it difficult to find common ground and build national unity (Fukuyama, 2018).

4.7. The role of ZEC to exercise fairness in processing the election results

Figure 4.8: Roles of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)

CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTION: A CASE OF CHITUNGWIZA
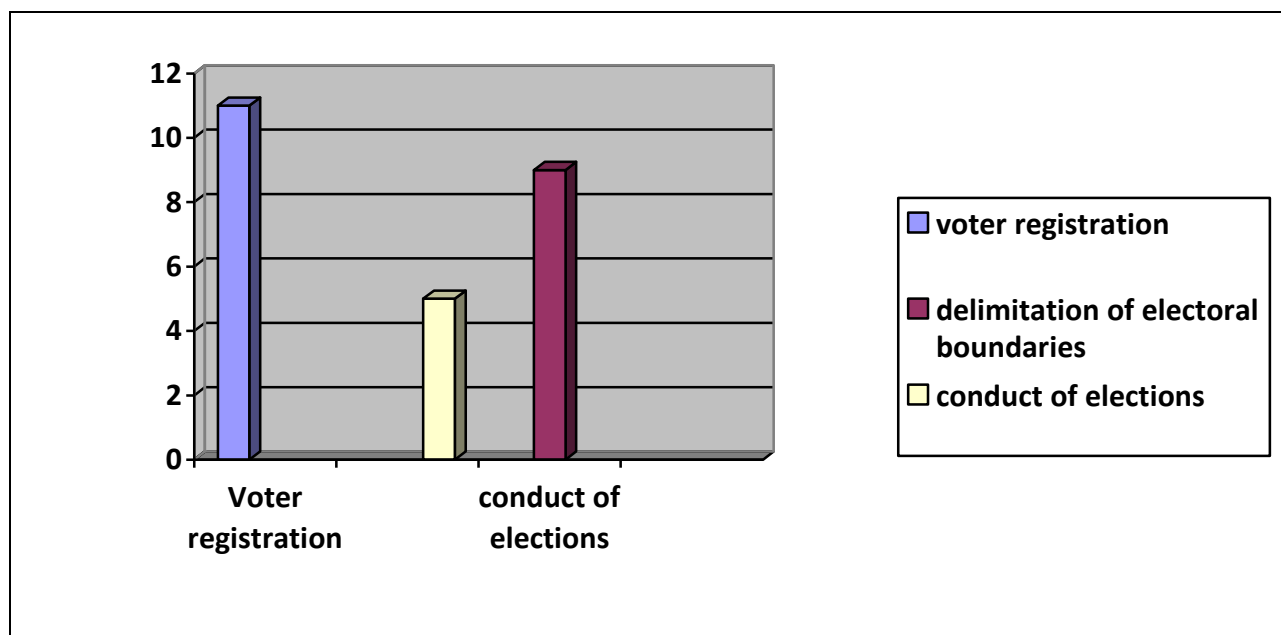
44% of the participants indicated that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has a role of voter registration. 36% of the participants highlighted that ZEC has a role to conduct elections in Zimbabwe. The participants indicated that delimitation of electoral boundaries is also role which the Zimbabwe Election Commission has during elections.

One of the councillors indicated that;

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission should not engage in corruption and discrimination when conducting voter registration.

Another participant indicated that;

The ruling party should not interfere into ZEC`s duties and operations as the opposition political parties have alleged that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was heavily influenced by the ruling which shows lack of independence and impartiality in managing the electoral process.

A resident also indicated that;

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The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission`s role is the delimitation of electoral boundaries. It is their duty to divide the country`s geographical area into electoral districts, constituencies and wards during elections, but this division is done unfairly due to significant implications for political power and representation in the country.

ZEC is responsible for the delimitation of electoral boundaries which involves the division of the country into constituencies and wards for the purposes of elections. This process has a significant impact on the distribution of political power (Gomez, 2022). The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission should be neutral when delimiting electoral boundaries to solve the issue of gerrymandering. Opposition parties have alleged that the ZEC`s boundary delimitation was manipulated to favour the ruling ZANU-PF party. They claimed that the boundaries were drawn in a way that diluted the votes of opposition supporters.

4.8. Why there were challenges faced by opposition political parties during 2023 harmonized elections
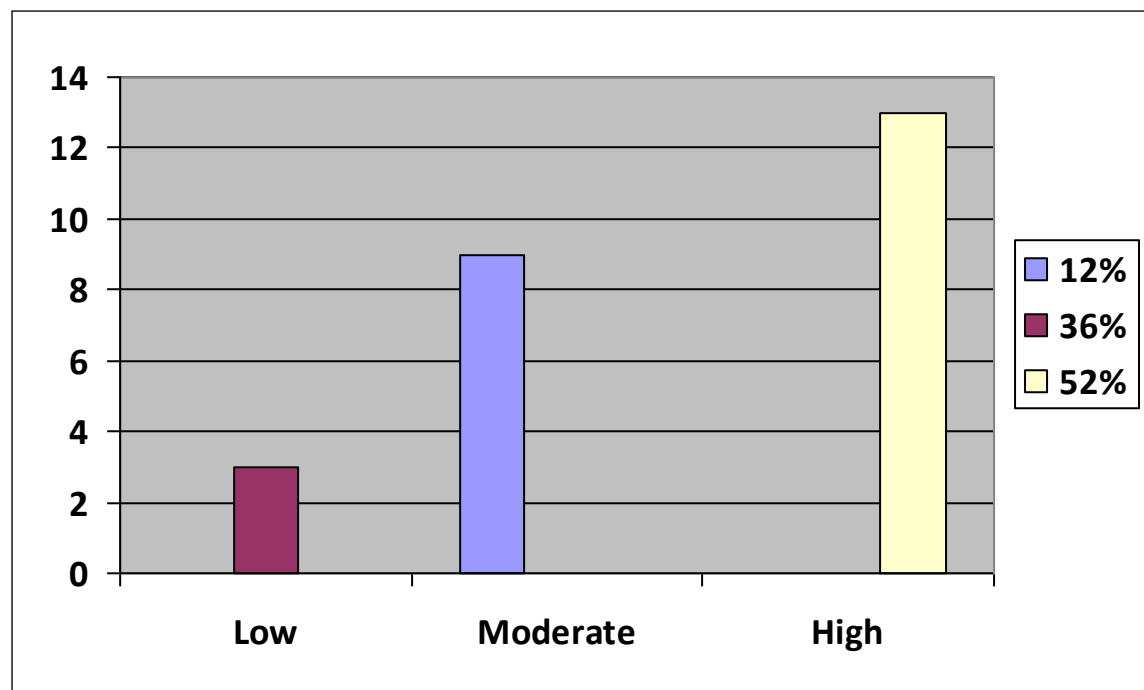
Figure 4.9: Level of intimidation and Corruption

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The findings indicated that 52% of the participants said the prevalence of corruption and intimidation in Chitungwiza during the 2023 elections was high, 36% indicated that the prevalence of corruption and intimidation in Chitungwiza during the 2023 elections was moderate, and 12% indicated that the prevalence of corruption and intimidation during the 2023 elections was extremely low.

A participant indicated that;

There was corruption and intimidation during the 2023 elections in Chitungwiza as there was lack of transparency in the electoral process and abuse of power by political leaders and this political polarisation created an environment which was not conducive for good governance.

The study also tried to understand from the participants why there was much manipulation of electoral laws and use of state resources for political gain during the 2023 general elections. According to data, most locals characterized an election as a process that is often marred by corruption and intimidation, were there will be heightened political tension and fear due to the history of electoral fraud and human rights abuses. According to Sibanda (2021) corruption is the misuse of power, position, resources to manipulate the electoral process and influence the outcome of the elections in favour of a particular political party or candidate.

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4.9. The impacts of the legal framework on elections in local communities.

Figure 4.10: Participant`s perception of the impact of the legal frame work on elections in local communities.

The participant`s perception of the impact of the legal framework on elections in local communities
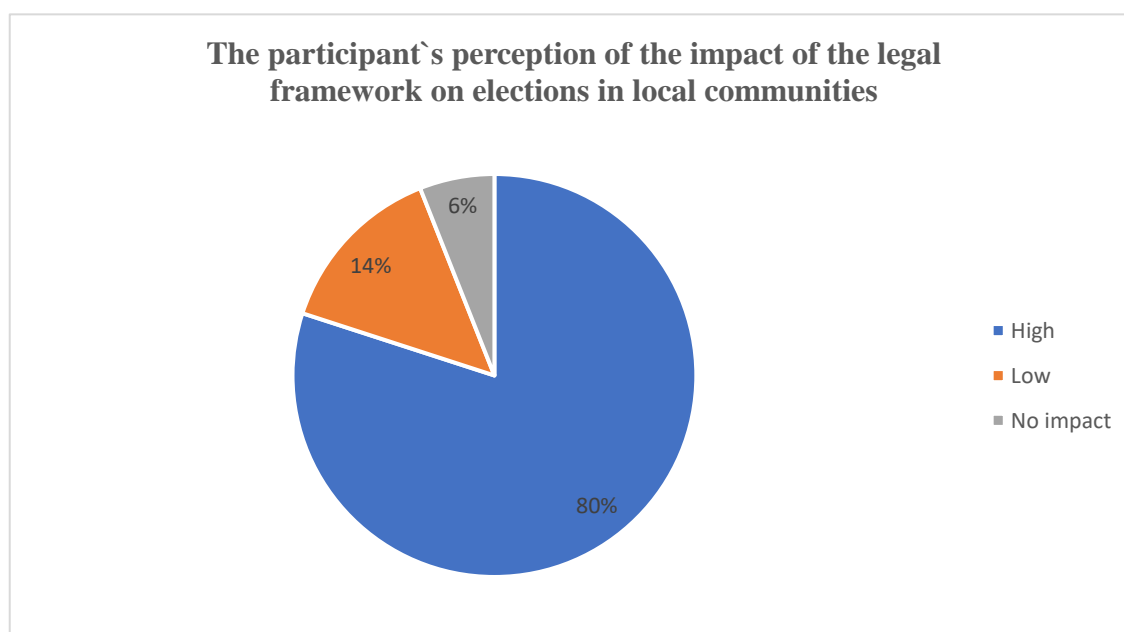
- High
- Low
- No impact

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From the findings obtained, 80% of the participants indicated that the legal framework has a high impact on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. 14% of the participants also indicated that the legal framework for elections in local communities has little impact on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. 6% of the participants indicated that the legal framework for elections in local communities has no impact on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

Municipality officials highlighted that;

The legal framework speaks about the independence and impartiality of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and the right to a free and fair election, but we do not see that on the ground and in our operations. Everything is controlled, centralized and favours the ruling party. How then can elections in local communities be done effectively, if they are restricted from their freedom to vote freely?

Another participant indicated that;

Unequal distribution of campaign finances to parties and biasness in election dispute resolutions have affected the smooth run of elections in local communities in Zimbabwe. These continued discrimination and corruption among political parties will bear no fruits in achieving a democratic state as the country is already viewed as a one -part state and, if this is not solved the country will continue to be referenced as a corrupt state.

A councillor indicated that;

Election rules are suppressive and an uneven playing field which hinder their growth efforts.

The research also wanted to learn from participants the consequences of the existing legislative framework on local governments, with a special emphasis on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The participants in this regard were concerned on whether the legal frameworks were to serve the interests of opposition political parties or the ruling party. They argued that the rules and laws are less preferable to

opposition political parties and more favourable to the ruling party as they are made to suit their needs to promote autonomy in the state. According to Chitiyo (2024), the legal and policy framework of elections in local communities in Zimbabwe indicates that local communities have the right to vote, campaign and support any political party freely without the supervision of anyone, however there is too much supervision to opposition political parties movements which jeopardize the opposition parties freedom and ability to be successful during elections.

10. Solutions to improve the ways in which elections are held in Zimbabwe.

The participants suggested that to improve the ways in which elections are held in Zimbabwe there is need to foster an environment free from violence and intimidation. This can be achieved through the government, political parties and other stakeholders by working together to prevent and address incidents of violence, harassment and intimidation. One participant indicated that;

The government should give equal financial support to all the political parties which they will be using for campaigns. This will produce fair and more objective results as all parties will be contesting at the same level playing field. This method will give power to the Zimbabwean government to preach that they are a democracy state as they would have managed to bring equality among the political parties.

To add on, the participants also recommended that the government should improve transparency and accountability of the electoral process. This can be achieved by making key information about elections such as the polling station lists and the voter`s role to be readily available to interested parties. This will promote transparency and confidence of the public in the electoral process. Furthermore, the Zimbabwean government should provide an even ground for all political parties. This can be attained by providing equal access to campaigning resources, media and opportunities to interact with voters (Zamchiya, 2022). Furthermore, the government

should create a neutral board which will be responsible for sharing the resources necessary for the smooth run of campaigns to get free and fair election results. In addition, participants recommended that the government should implement a well-functioning and independent board that will be responsible for solving disputes which occur in the election period to solve people`s grievances in a timely and unbiased manner. In addition, implementing these solutions will provide more inclusive, credible and transparent elections in Zimbabwe which strengthens the democratic institutions of the country and promote trust of the public in the electoral process.

4.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented, examined and discussed the study`s findings which were primarily obtained and communicated through discourse and analytical methods. Key findings include understanding the challenges faced by opposition political parties, challenges faced by opposition party councillors, the relationship between the ruling and opposition party, the role of ZEC to exercise fairness in processing the election results, understanding the level of corruption and intimidation, the impact of the legal framework on elections in local communities and the solutions to improve the way elections are held in Zimbabwe.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings, makes recommendations about the research topic and draws conclusions. The important findings of the study are also presented.

5.2. Summary

The study was divided into five chapters:

The first chapter of the study was the introduction, which provided important information required by the study and highlighted the challenges faced by opposition political parties during elections in the globe. It gave the problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions, purpose of the study and the importance of the study. There have been an unending debate in Zimbabwe since 1985 to 2023 on why it is a one-party state, as Zanu-Pf has been the only party which won elections after every five years in Zimbabwe. Hence, the study sought to analyse the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

Chapter two provided a comprehensive review of the literature, texts and relevant materials regarding the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. It examined the resource mobilization theory and its respective critiques were much concentrated. The resource mobilization theory was given much emphasis due to its crucial role in shedding light on the importance of resources in determining the success of

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political parties. Based on the resource mobilization theory, the political parties with more resources such as money, staff and media support are more likely to succeed than those with fewer resources. The chapter also explored the influence of the media and social media on the electoral process. It has been observed that the media and social media favours the incumbent party suppressing the rights and freedoms of the opposition political parties. The chapter also highlighted the measures taken during the 2023 harmonized election and the root causes of the challenges faced by opposition political parties

Chapter three concentrated on methodology of the study and research strategy. The finding were analysed by using qualitative technique in the research. The research design was a case study of Chitungwiza and the study employed qualitative research methodologies. The participants were chosen using simple random sampling from the Chitungwiza community, while the key informants were chosen using a selective sampling approach. A sample of twenty-five participants was used. Key informant and semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data. A pilot study was also used in the study.

The forth chapter focused on the findings and evaluates important results. The findings showed that there is a chaotic relationship between the ruling party and opposition political parties. The chapter highlighted that opposition political parties face excessive corruption and intimidation which is evidenced by being denied their right to vote and campaign freely during the election period. The chapter also demonstrated that opposition political parties face challenges such as corruption, intimidation, harassment, lack of support from local government and favouritism. The chapter indicated the effects of the legislative framework on Zimbabwe`s elections, the findings showed that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is not being

independence and partial to all political parties on issues such as equal access to media, the accuracy and accessibility of the voter`s roll and the distribution of campaign resources.

The recommendations, findings, opportunities for more investigation and summary were the concentration of Chapter 5. The analysis finalized that the ruling party is the major cause of the challenges faced by opposition political parties. The study suggested that the government should apply the Resource mobilisation theory and confine the authority of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The government should diversify revenue sources, enhancing monetary transparency, solidifying partnerships and encouraging economic growth to improve their financial situations during elections. The area where there was need for further discussion is the conflict between opposition political party and the ruling party.

5.3. Conclusions

The research objectives arrived at the following conclusions which are based on the research objectives.

I.   To understand the measures taken during the 2023 electoral harmonized elections.

In the study it is established that there were a number of measures taken during the 2023 harmonized elections. Despite the factor that there were measures taken during the 2023 elections such as results transmission, campaign regulations, enhanced voter registration, security measures and election observation but, the opposition political parties highlighted that the elections were rigged (Chitiyo, 2023). The enhancement of voter registration is the first major measure taken by the government during the 2023 harmonized elections. Opposition political parties valued the introduction of a biometric voter registration system but, express

worries regarding its execution. They asserted that the process was not utterly transparent and inclusive, with reports of irregularities and limited access to registration centres in some areas. The second major measure which was taken during the 2023 elections was campaign regulations. Opposition parties acknowledged the importance of fair access to media and resources for all political parties (Masunungure, 2023). However, they claimed that the regularities were not implemented impartially during the elections and issues of media bias and unequal allocation of resources were reported.

The third major measure which was taken during the 2023 harmonized elections was election observation. Opposition political parties welcomed the presence of domestic and international observers, believing that their involvement might contribute to increased transparency and accountability (Moyo, 2023). However, they also raised concerns about the limited number of observers and their access to all stages of the electoral process. In addition, the presence of observers in small numbers brought suspicions and breakdown the trust of opposition political parties during the electoral process. This was due to the fear that limited number of observers also imply a restricted assessment of the electoral process against national and international standards. This would affect the overall evaluation of the fairness, inclusivity of the elections and credibility of the election outcomes (Magaisa, 2024).

II. To analyse the causes of the challenges faced by opposition political parties.

The study observed that there are numerous causes of the challenges faced by opposition political parties. Opposition political parties have been struggling to campaign and advertise their aim, vision and mission during elections due to limited access to state media and unequal

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campaign opportunities (Moyo, 2023). Opposition political parties have often been critical of the limited access to state media, claiming that it is biased towards the ruling party. This has resulted in unequal campaign opportunities, restricting their ability to disseminate their messages and reach a wider audience. This limited access affected opposition parties` visibility, recognition and overall support among the electorate.

The study also discovered that political violence, intimidation and alleged rigging are also the causes of the challenges faced by opposition political parties during elections. Opposition political parties have faced issues of violence, intimidation and alleged rigging by the ruling party (Magaisa, 2024). These practices instilled fear in the opposition candidates and their supporters as it potentially discouraged their active participation leading to voter apathy. Furthermore, allegations of rigging and vote manipulation led to concerns about the credibility and fairness of the electoral process which affected the trust and confidence of opposition parties and their supporter in the elections.

III. To investigate on potential solutions for addressing these challenges in future.

The research also highlighted that to solve the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections there should be strengthening of election monitoring, enhancing transparency and preventing violence. The study also established that to tackle political violence, allegations of electoral fraud and intimidation, it is essential to strengthen the role of independent domestic and international election observers. They would help to monitor the electoral process, report irregularities and ensure that the elections are conducted freely and freely (Zamchiya, 2023). Furthermore, security forces should maintain

neutrality and ensure a peaceful environment during elections. Additionally, electoral institutions such as the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC), should enhance transparency and accountability in the election management process to build trust among all stakeholders.

The study also established that reforming media access and ensuring fair campaign opportunities is another solution to the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 elections in future. The research also discovered that reforms should be implemented to guarantee fair and equal access to media platforms for all political parties (Madhuku, 2023). This will be achieved through the establishment of an independent media regulatory body to monitor and enforce fair media coverage during election periods.

5.4. Recommendations

Drawing from the research findings, it is essential to consider the following recommendations for the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs in Zimbabwe and political parties.

I. The Ministry of Justice.

The government should ensure legal and electoral reforms. It should also review and amend existing electoral laws to align with international best practices and ensure a level playing field for all political parties. This includes addressing issues related to voter registration, candidate eligibility, campaign finances and media access. Aligning electoral laws with international best practices fosters a more transparent, credible and inclusive electoral system. This creates an environment where elections are seen as free and fair and the outcome is widely accepted.

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II.   Political parties

Political parties should enhance internal party democracy and unity to improve the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. The research discovered that political parties should strengthen internal democracy by holding transparent and inclusive primary elections, promoting accountability and fostering a culture of respect for divergent views within the party.

5.5. Areas of further research

The study examines the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections. It is equally important for scholars to investigate the ways to overcome the unfair treatment they get from opposition political parties such as corruption and intimidation.

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Annexures

Questionnaire on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

Dear Chitungwiza residents, I am B200914B, a student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) and is carrying out a research on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections as part of the fulfillment of the Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Peace and Governance. You are kindly requested to contribute to the study by answering the questions on this form. *Please note that the findings will be strictly used for academic and research purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Your participation and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.*

Instruction:

Please tick the response that is most appropriate to you or write in the spaces provided.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. May you please indicate your gender.

FEMALE	MALE

2. What is your age group?

18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65

3. What is your marital status?

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Single	Married

4. Highest level of Education attained

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

SECTION B: Challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections.

5. What were the important measures taken during the 2023 electoral elections?

……………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………..

6. Which outcome can be given as a result of measures taken during the election?

High	Low	Moderate

7. Do you agree that there were measures taken in running the election?

Agree	Disagree	Not sure

SECTION C: Challenges faced by opposition political parties

8. What are the root causes of the challenges faced by opposition political parties?

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9. What is the impact of government officials and the ruling party on these challenges?

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10. Does the mysterious deaths and severe injuries of opposition party members during elections indicate that the political system is corrupt?

Yes	No	Not

11. To what extent does the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) exercise fairness in processing the election results?

To a greater	To a lesser	Not

12. Do you agree that the challenges faced by opposition parties are exacerbated by the ruling party?

Agree	Disagree	Not sure

SECTION D: Solutions taken to address the challenges

CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTION: A CASE OF CHITUNGWIZA

13. What are your thoughts on the relationship between opposition parties and the ruling party?

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………………………………………………………………….

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14. What do you think is causing opposition political parties to face challenges during elections?

……………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………….

15. To what extent can the challenges faced by opposition political parties be solved?

……………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………

16. Any comment or contribution.

………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………….

THANK YOU

CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTION: A CASE OF CHITUNGWIZA

Interview guide: Chitungwiza councillors

I am B200914B, a student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) and is carrying out a research on the challenges faced by opposition political parties during the 2023 harmonized elections as part of the fulfillment of the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Peace and Governance. You are kindly requested to contribute to the study by answering the questions on this form. Please note that the findings will be strictly used for academic and research purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Your participation and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. Which ward do you represent?

2. What is your understanding of elections in Zimbabwe?

3. Why does opposition political parties face challenges during elections?

4. What are the challenges you facing as councilors?

5. What are the problems emerging as a result of the challenges faced by opposition political parties?

Declaration Form

I B200914B, hereby affirm that this dissertation represents my original research and study, with the exception of cited acknowledgements and references indicated within the document. I confirm that no part of this dissertation has been submitted to any other university for the purpose of obtaining a degree.

Bvare

18/09/24

Student's signature

Date

18/09/2024

Supervisor's signature

Date

V. Supu

18/09/2024

Chairperson's Signature

Date

**CHALLENGES FACED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE 2023
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BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date: 29/01/24

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

==

RE: REQUEST TO UNDER TAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR
         ORGANISATION/AREA

This serves to introduce the bearer DZVAIRO ELLEN, Student Registration Number B200914 B who is a HBSc Peace and Governance student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area.

Your usual cooperation and assistance is therefore being sought.

Yours faithfully

D. Makwerere (Dr)
CHAIRPERSON - PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
PEACE & GOVERNANCE
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