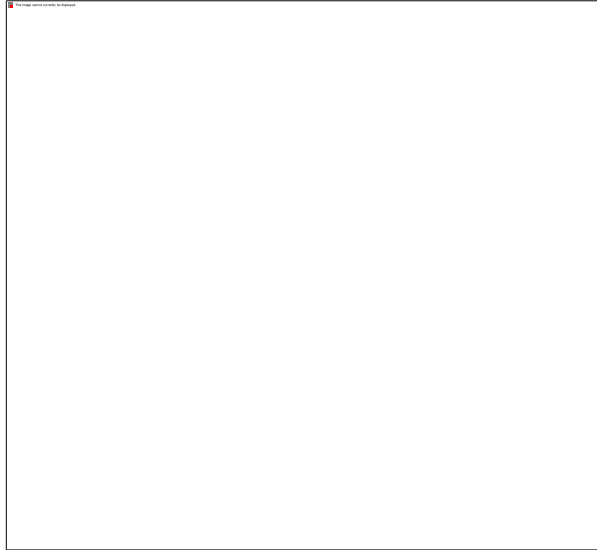**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE**

The importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe. A case study of Mabvuku/Tafara

BY

Agnes Chikoto

REGISTRATION NUMBER  B200761B

SUPERVISOR: Dr C  Muchemwa

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN  PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONOURS DEGREE IN PEACE AND GOVERNANCE OF BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

2024

**Abstract**

*This study explores the reasons for low voter turnout among young people in Mabvuku/Tafara district of Zimbabwe. Using qualitative case study research design, the study employed random and systematic sampling techniques to collect data through interviews with young residents of Mabvuku/Tafara. The findings indicate that youth participation in voting and other political processes in Mabvuku/Tafara is relatively low compared to older age groups, pointing to a significant gap in political engagement among the younger generation. Several factors contributed to this, including a perceived lack of responsiveness from political leaders to the concerns of youth, doubts about the integrity of the electoral process, and a general sense of political apathy and disillusionment among young people. These findings have important implications for the health of Zimbabwe's democracy, which relies on broad-based civic engagement, especially from the country's large youth population. The study includes recommendations for relevant stakeholders, such as political parties, electoral authorities, and civil society organizations to develop targeted strategies to increase youth voter registration, education, and turnout. Addressing the root causes of low youth political participation is crucial to ensuring a more inclusive and representative democratic process in Zimbabwe.*

**Keywords**

- *Youth voter turnout*
- *Civic education*
- *Voter registration*
- *Democratic engagement*
- *Voter apathy*
- *Political participation*
- *Electoral engagement*
- *Mabvuku/ Tafara*
- *Zimbabwean politics*

**DECLARATION**

I, Chikoto Agnes declare that **The importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe. A case study of Mabvuku/Tafara** is my original work that has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted here have been indicated and acknowledged.

Signed: ……………………..  Date: ……………………………………

**Approval form**

The undersigned certify that they have supervised, have read and recommend to the University for acceptance and examination a research project titled **The importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe. A case study of Mabvuku/Tafara** submitted by Agnes Chikoto in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Peace and Governance.

Supervisor: ……………………………………..

Signature: …………………………………...

Date: ………………………………………..

## Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my family. To my dear mother and beloved father Mr. and Mrs. Chikoto whose unconditional love, patience and sacrifices have paved the way for my successes. Your nurturing spirit and unwavering faith in me have been a constant source of strength throughout my journey. To my siblings who have been my closest companions and greatest cheerleaders, your camaraderie and laughter have made this endeavor all the more meaning.

**Acknowledgements**

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

IDEA   - Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IFES   - International Foundation for Electoral Systems

ZEC   - Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZESN   - Zimbabwe Election Support Network

**Table of Contents**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

**CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

**List of tables**

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Youths have generally been at the forefront of calling for change in the political, socio-economic arenas that influence their survival. In the present world a quite number of notable youths have taken bold action to protect their rights and shape a better future. Most political movements started as youth organizations that aimed to gain recognition as well as participate in the exercising of their constitutional rights which includes voting in elections, contacting political representatives and or involvement in collective action. The wide spread advancement of democracy and equality has enabled the young generation to explore democratic principles more extensively amidst rapid government democratization. The international Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) tracks data on voting trends and youth participation in over 190 countries and according to their research, youth turnout in voting is usually lower than overall turnout in most countries, the gap between youth and overall turnout ranges from 1% to 36% according to International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in 2016. This means that young people are less likely to participate in elections than older people hence limiting their opportunities for their voices to be heard and their decisions to be implemented as well.

According to Pew Research Center, in the 2016 United States of America presidential election, the voting rate among people aged 18 to 29 was low while the voting rate among people aged thirty and older was high, that which is very significant and showing that the youth are not well informed about the importance of their engagement in the voting activity. This trend of low youth turnout on voting day is also similar to that of German, according to European Commission's Youth Participation in Politics report (2021), the turnout rate among young people was just under fifty percent, while the rate among older people was just over seventy percent having a point gap even higher than in the United States. Although these European powers have heavily democratized their government youth participation in the voting process is still amiss.

Many African countries are making progress in practicing democracy through separation of power and inclusive governance. However, significant challenges persist, particularly regarding youth leadership and participation. The low level of engagement among young people in decision-making processes and their constitutional rights is concerning. Africa faces ongoing struggles with autocratic leadership and coup d'états, hindering democratic advancements. In the 2019 elections in South Africa, the youth turnout was remarkably

low compared to an overall turnout creating a point gap. Proving beyond reasonable that young people do not prioritize the issues of voting. This was actually a low record for youth turnout in South Africa, but still significantly lower than the overall turnout. Although a notable example of youth sacrifice for their rights is the Soweto uprising in 1976 in South Africa where the youth wanted their voices to be heard as well securing their future.

In Nigeria's 2019 elections, youth turnout was dismally low compared to the overall turnout creating a huge point-gap this also was lower than in previous elections, suggesting that youth participation in the voting process is decreasing (INEC, 2019). Research by the International Republican Institute, one of the main reasons for low youth turnout in Nigeria is elections is a lack of trust in the electoral process (IRI, 2019). Young people often feel that their vote won't make a difference or that the system is not fair or transparent. There is also a lack of education and information about how the electoral process work, and a feeling that young people are not represented by the political parties.

In Zimbabwe, youth engagement in the voting process faces significant barriers that includes a limited political knowledge and understanding. Research by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2013), suggest that young people are less likely to be politically informed than older people. According to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and Southern African Development Community in 2013 the youth voter turnout was low, but in 2018 it slightly dropped whilst the 2023 latest election youth voter turnout was higher. Janine Ibrahim (2015), is of the view that the political knowledge gap among youth in Africa is wide.  It is also important to note that the overall voter turnout in Zimbabwe has been declining over years with the lowest turnout in 2018. Voting in Zimbabwe is mostly linked with violence for example the 2008 and 2018 elections this therefore instills fear in the youth and they end up not exercising their constitutional rights.

Over the years in Zimbabwe, youth engagement in voting has been low because of disillusionment with the political process young people may feel that the political process is corrupt or ineffective so they choose not to participate and remain idle. The 2018 election according to Masunungure (2018), is a good example of the disillusionment with the political process, they election was marred by allegations of voter fraud, intimidation, and political violence. Many people also feel that their votes would not make a difference hence a low voter turnout among young people.

There has been a persistent lack of perceived efficacy over the past years, young people feel that their votes does not effect change .High levels of apathy prevailed among young people, stemming from perceptions that there would not make a difference this disillusionment resulted from various factors including the lack of political representation for young people, the perceived corruption of the political system and the fact that many young felt their concerns were not being heard by the government. Tendi (2012), argues that the history of youth political and civic participation is deeply intertwined with the country's past and colonial institutions. In the past elections there have been number of barriers to registration, such as lack of information about the process, the need for identification documents, and the difficulty of travelling to registration centers. These barriers can make it particular difficult for young people to register to vote especially those who live in rural areas.

Between 2013 and 2019, in Mabvuku/Tafara youth engagement in voting has been low and only the elderly are seen at polling stations whilst the youths are nowhere to be found. Masunungure (2018) argues that there is always low turnout in urban and rural areas, this problem of low youth voter turnout is marked by low registration. Reports from Zimbabwe Electoral Commission 2018, rural areas saw lower turnout compared to urban areas, citing factors such as limited access to polling stations, lack of awareness about the electoral process and disconnection from the political process.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Low voter turnout among young people in Mabvuku/Tafara and across Zimbabwe. Despite the importance of voting in a democracy, voter turnout among young people in Mabvuku/Tafara and Zimbabwe at large is consistently low. Data from ZEC (2018), shows voter turnout among 18-to 29-year-olds was below 40% in the 2018 elections. Norris (2019) argues that, low levels of youth engagement can have serious consequences for democracy, including political instability, lack of representation and decreased accountability. The lack of youth voter turnout is a serious issue that threatens the health of democracy, without the voices of young people, our government will be less representative and less responsive to the needs of the youths. This problem can have far-reaching consequences for the society. Low voter turnout among youth is affecting the entire population of young people in Zimbabwe, as well as the electoral process and the ability of the country to have a fully representative democracy. Kawashima-Ginsberg (2018) argues that low youth turnout is a problem because it limits the ability of young people to participate in decision-making and have a voice in the issues that affect them and that low voter turnout can lead to a lack of trust in government and democracy. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network in 2018, found out that one of the main reasons young people didn't

vote in the 2018 elections was that they didn't feel they had enough information about the candidates and issues, thus it is a problem because young Zimbabweans are less likely to vote than older citizens.

## 1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the reasons for low voter turnout among young people in Mabvuku/Tafara.

## 1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

(i)To examine the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku**.**

(ii) To analyse the factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku

(iii) To identify the solutions that can be implemented to improve the level of youth engagement in voting in Mabvuku.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(i) What are the factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara?

(ii) What solutions can be implemented to improve the level of youth engagement in voting in Mabvuku/Tafara?

(iii)How can the identified solutions be implemented and evaluated for effectiveness in improving youth engagement in voting in Mabvuku/Tafara?

## 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the factors influencing youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara, aiming to inform strategies that boost civic engagement and democratic participation among young people. By exploring these dynamics, the research seeks to address the persistent issue of low youth voter turnout, ultimately contributing to a more representative and inclusive electoral process. The findings will provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders to enhance youth voter registration, election laws, and community engagement. This study's outcomes will have implications for Zimbabwe's democratic development, potentially inspiring similar initiatives nationwide. Effective youth voter engagement is crucial for fostering a vibrant democracy, and this research endeavors to make a meaningful impact. Ultimately, the study's goal is to empower young people to become active participants in shaping their country's future.

## 1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is delimited to Mabvuku/Tafara. The study will focus on the factors that affect youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara in the 2018 election and the age range of 18-35 and it will not explore other forms of political participation such as volunteering and community organizing.

## 1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study was limited by several factors that includes the sample size was restricted to 20 participants due to time and resource constraints, potentially affecting the generalizability of findings to other regions. Data quality was compromised by the scarcity and inconsistency of reliable information on youth turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara. My own biases and worldview influenced the interpretation of findings, which was mitigated through peer review and triangulation of data sources. Despite these limitations t this study is important because it can help to improve understanding of the factors that affect youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara. This understanding can be used to develop strategies to increase voter turnout among young people.

## 1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**Youth voter turnout** refers to the percentage of eligible voters who are aged 18-35 who actually vote (Flinders, 2012). The definition emphasizes the importance of looking at voter turnout in relation to the overall population of eligible voters. Voter turnout is important because it is a key indicator of political engagement and democracy. It indicates that people are interested and invested in the political process, and that they feel their vote makes a difference. High voter turnout can lead to more representative governments as it increase the chances that diverse voices and perspectives to be heard. On the other hand, low voter turnout can lead to less representative governments and can make it harder to enact change.

**Voter apathy** is a lack of interest in or disengagement from the political process (Dalton, 2002). This focuses on the psychological and emotional factors that can lead to people feeling disconnected from politics. Voter apathy is important to consider because it can have negative consequences for democracy. When people do not feel motivated to vote, it can result in disengagement from the political process, which can lead to less responsive governments and lack of trust in the system. Voter apathy can lead to lower levels of civic engagement.

**Youth empowerment** is a process of developing the capacity of young people to take control of their lives and communities. (Sherif, 2011). This focuses on the agency, power and capacity of young people to create

positive change. Youth empowerment is important because it can lead to a range of positive for young people, their communities and society as a large. It contributes to social and economic development. Youth empowerment might lead to a just and equitable society, as it can reduce poverty and promote social inclusion.

**Youth participation** refers to the process by which young people are actively involved in decision making that affects their lives. (Osgood, 2005). This shows the importance of young people having a voice and being able to make decisions that impact their lives. Youth participation is important as it gives young people a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. When young people are involved in decision-making they can have a say in the policies and programs that affect them, and they can help to make sure that their needs and perspectives are taken into account.

## 1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The outline consists of five chapters: Chapter 1 introduces the topic, providing background, statement of the problem, research objectives, questions, assumptions, significance, delimitations, limitations, and definitions. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature and theoretical frameworks underlying youth political participation. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology, detailing data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings through graphical and tabular data, followed by analysis and discussion. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the research, offering conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research based on the study's findings.

# CHAPTER TWO:  LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature on youth voter turnout and political participation guided by the study's objectives. In accordance with Cooper (2006), literature review is a critical analysis of the existing research on a particular topic, it involves identifying, analysing and synthesizing the key themes and findings from the existing literature. The main theme that was used for this chapter's study is the Theory of Political Participation and decision making among youth and this theory brings out ideas about a person's political knowledge, attitudes and skills. This theory can help in clearly bringing out the barriers that prevent youth from engaging in voting and politics as well, and it can help identify strategies to increase youth engagement.

## 2.2   CONCEPTUAL   FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework, according to Yin, (1994), proposed that a theoretical framework should be based on a small number of key interrelated concepts. A theory aids in giving the research's findings a contextual explanation and comprehension Moore, (2012). The study used the Political Participation and Decision Making among Youth Framework by Verba, (1972) which brings out four main factors that affect a person's political participation and these are resources, political knowledge and interest, psychological engagement and social engagement. Each of these factors can either promote or disrupt youth's political participation.

This theory can help in understanding factors that influence youth's decision to engage in politics and voting in Zimbabwe and these factors may be negative or positive. Strategies to be used to increase political participation can be identified through this theory for example, if political knowledge is a key factor needed in participation then educational programs can be designed to increase political and voting knowledge among young people. The political participation and decision making among youth framework also contributes in clearly highlighting the specific barriers to political participation faced by young people in Zimbabwe, these barriers may include lack of education, lack of access to resources and social norms that discourages youth from participating in voting.

The main idea of the theory is that a person's political participation is influenced by resources which are time, money and other resources needed to participate in voting and politics, political knowledge which is a person's knowledge of the political system and structure. Psychological engagement includes a person's willing interest in politics and a mentality that their involvement can bring change and the social engagement that refers to the networks of people that a person is connected to. These factors can either shape or build a person's participation in voting and politics as a whole.

## 2.3 CONCEPT OF EVERYDAY POLITICS

The concept of everyday politics highlights the intricate relationship between individuals' daily lives and broader political structures, influencing youth participation in voting and politics in Zimbabwe. Chiroro, (2017) addresses the issue of the extent of youth participation, the study examines the barriers to youth participation in local governance, he further suggests that lack of youth participation is due to a number of factors including lack of information about local government, lack of capacity to participate and lack of confidence in the ability of young people to make a difference. The results of Chiroro's survey alludes that young people have low level of knowledge about local government and voting processes and this is one of the main barriers to youth participation and engagement in voting. Chiroro's work focuses on the lack of opportunities for youth in both urban and rural areas, he further included that there are no structures or platforms for youth participation and this in turn influence low voter turnout among youths since they have no influence in decision making. In his work Chiroro suggests that the creation of youth advisory councils and other structures to allow for meaningful youth participation. This is further supported by Mutambara, (2006) who argues that youth participation in politics and governance is low in Zimbabwe and this due to a number of factors which include lack of political will to include youth in decision making. Mutambara in his study further recommends great focus on youth training and capacity building so that young people have knowledge and skills to effectively participate in governance and voting.

There is lack of opportunities for youth in Zimbabwe is a result of the country's history of conflict and authoritarian rule (Raftopoulos, 2010). In his study Raftopoulos argues that youth should be actively involved in these process as they are the future of Africa, he believes that voting is just one of the core aspects of youth participation and youth should be directly involved in decision making processes at all levels. He argues that, youth should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns and that their input should be taken into consideration. This further supported by Mutambara (2006) who points out the voting age in Zimbabwe

is 18, and young people are not well informed about the electoral process. Mutambara recommends that there should be more efforts to educate young people about the electoral process and make the process more accessible them. Voter education should be conducted in schools and universities, so that people are introduced to the electoral process at an early stage, Mutambara further concludes. From the above analysis therefore it seems lack of opportunities for youth to directly or indirectly participate in governance is because of lack of knowledge and hence proper educational campaigns are needed in order to increase youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara and Zimbabwe at large.

Chiroro, (2018), in his study argues that the youths use social media to engage in political debate and activism. In his study he believes that young people use music and other forms of popular culture to express their views and engage in political issues, thus social media can be used as a tool to educate young people about the importance of their active participation in voting. Another important aspect of his study is that youth are often frustrated by the lack of opportunities for meaningful participation in formal political processes and many young people are not represented in traditional political institutions and this can lead to apathy and disillusionment. However, Runji (2019) shares different views of youth participation, Runji argues that youth are often excluded from political processes, but they are active participants in their own communities. Runji argues that youth participation focuses much on traditional forms of politics but there are other important ways that youth can participate in such as cultural activities and protest movements. This is further supported by Mngoma, (2016) who argues that youth participation should be seen as a broader concept that include variety of activities, not just voting and party politics. Therefore, from the above analysis Runji and Mngoma both draw on the concept of everyday politics to understand the ways that youth participate in their communities.

## 2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN SHAPING POLITICAL PARTCIPATION

There are a number of factors that can influence the low turnout of youth voters in Mabvuku/Tafara and they can be divided into two. Individual-level factors that include age, gender, education level and socio-economic status while the structural-level factors include education system, the media, socioeconomic context.

### 2.4.1 INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL FACTORS

Individual level factors are essentially personal characteristics and experiences that influence an individual's likelihood of participating in voting. Krook, (2006), argues that age is a key factor in one's participation hence explaining why young people are less likely to participate in politics. Young people are less likely to register to vote, to have a political party affiliation, or to have any experience with the political process. Krook in her study notes that younger people are less likely to be exposed to the political culture of their country and therefore less likely to be invested in the political system. Norris, (2003) argues in support of Krook that young people often feel that they do not have the skills or knowledge necessary to participate in politics. Norris in her study believes that youths are less likely to have an interest in politics because they feel that it is not relevant to their lives and suggests that this is because politics is often seen as something that is abstract and distant from everyday life. However, Dalton (2000), while he generally agrees with Krook and Norris that individual-level factors are important he also emphasizes on the role of socialization and institutions. Dalton in his study argues that young people are more likely to be socialized into political behaviour by their families and peer groups and that the political institutions in a country can also have a significant impact on whether or not young people participate. From the above analysis therefore one can conclude that the major reason why young are less likely to participate in voting is because individual factors like age that limits the extent of someone's participation.

## 2.4.2 STRUCTURAL-LEVEL FACTORS

Verba, (1969) in his study argues that socio-economic context is one of the most important factors in determining whether or not young people participate in politics voting to be precise. In his study he suggest that there are a number of socioeconomic factors that can influence political participation such as income, education and employment. For example, Verba suggests that young people who come from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to participate in politics, as they have the resources and opportunities to do so. He further alludes that the education system can encourage or discourage political participation, depending on the values and attitudes instilled in young people the same way the media is a key factor in shaping political participation, as it can either encourage or discourage young people from engaging. Pateman, (1970), argues that young people face number of barriers in political participation, including lack of trust in institutions and she believes that many young people feel disconnected from the political system and they do not believe that they can make a difference. Clemens, (2002) argues that political participation is not solely determined by socioeconomic or demographic factors but rather by an individual position within social networks and the type

of network one is connected to can also affect their political participation. From the above analysis one can conclude that structures can fully contribute to whether young people participate in politics or not.

## 2.5   THE IMPORTANCE  PARTCIPATION

There are some potential solutions to improve youth participation in voting. Leighley, (1995) suggested that lowering the voting age to 16 would help increase youth participation because it would allow more young people to vote and would also normalize voting as a part of the transition to adulthood. Leighley further suggests that implementing compulsory voting could also help to increase youth participation. Compulsory voting is a system where all eligible citizens are required by law to vote and those who do not vote are penalized. She also argues that providing more civic education in schools could help to increase youth participation in voting. Building on Leighley's ideas, Putnam (2000) stresses the importance of civic education and civic engagement in increasing political participation and he further claims that it is essential to reinvigorate civic life in order to foster democracy and civic education is essential for building social capital and fostering political participation.

Kitaoka, (2003) is of the same view with Leighley and Putnam argues that civic education is essential for building social capital. He further argues that there is a significant gap in the levels of participation between young people and older generations, he suggests that this is due to a lack of civic education in schools and he further proposes that civic education should be introduced at an early stage and that schools should focus on teaching students about the importance of participation in society. Levine, (2007) is of the view that civic education is important but it is not enough to simply teach young people about democracy he suggests the need to create a culture of democratic engagement that encourages young people to participate in politics. Allen, (2007) is of the same view with Leighley, in her study she emphasizes the importance of creating meaningful opportunities for young people to participate. Allen takes a more radical approach suggesting that the voting age be lowered to 16 and that young people should be given the right to vote in local elections. She argues that schools should be transformed into hubs of civic engagement where young people can learn about democracy and participate in decision making. She further suggests that this could be done through initiatives such as school councils, which could give students a voice in decision about their school, youth advisory board, which would give students a voice in decisions about their communities. From the above analysis therefore it seems that one of the most important solutions to youth participation is civic education and educating people

at a young age about the importance of having their voices speak for them and the benefits that comes with active participation in voting.


## 2.6  CHAPTER SUMMARY


This chapter analysed the study's supporting literature and provided an explanation of the study's theoretical foundation. This chapter was propounded by the Theory of Political Participation and Decision-Making among Youths and the following themes emerged as part of the literature review concept of everyday politics, the importance of social networks in shaping political participation as well as the importance of meaningful and authentic participation these themes were in relation to the research objectives of the stud.  Key themes emerged Everyday Politics (Krook, 2006; Norris, 2003) Social Networks (Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2000) and Meaningful Participation (Leighley, 2001; Mutambara, 2006). These themes, informed by prominent scholars, guide the study's exploration of factors influencing youth voting decisions and strategies for increased participation. The theory of political participation and decision making among youths helped in understanding the factors that influence a young person's decision to engage in voting as well as to highlight strategies that can be used to increase political participation among youths.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's primary goal is to investigate the importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe. This chapter includes the research philosophy that guides the researchers approach to gathering information, research methodology that is qualitative research method, a case study was used as the research design, population and sample size are also included in this chapter, data gathering techniques such as interviews and questionnaires were made use of, ethical considerations and the protection of participants were taken into considerations and validity and reliability. This chapter focuses on collecting data for this intended study.

## 3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The views, presumptions, and guiding principles that inform a researcher's approach to gathering information and doing study are referred to as their research philosophy. According to Onwuegbuzie (2010), research philosophy is a system of beliefs and assumptions about the world that guides the way we conduct research. It expresses the viewpoint of the researcher and guides their selection of study methodologies, strategies for gathering data, and protocols for analysing that data. A framework for comprehending the nature of knowledge, the function of the researcher, and the interaction between the researcher and the study's subjects or participants is provided by research philosophy. For this study interpretivism was used it emphasizes the subjective nature of human experience and the importance of understanding the meanings and interpretations that individuals attach to their experiences. With interpretivism qualitative methods such as interviews are used. This research philosophy would focus on understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of the youth in Mabvuku/Tafara regarding voting. It would involve qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups to explore the meanings and interpretations that young people attach to voting, their motivations, barriers and aspirations. Interpretivism allows for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context including factors such as historical, political and economic influences on youth engagement. In this study an interpretive approach would involve exploring the lived experiences, attitudes and perceptions of young people

towards voting. The advantages of interpretivism is that it recognizes the importance of understanding the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals attach to their actions and allowing young people to express their views on why voting is important (or not), and how they perceive their role in the political system. This approach provides rich understanding of the social and cultural factors that shape youth participation in voting in Mabvuku.

## 3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A methodology is the strategies, techniques and procedures for conducting a research project (Maxwell, 2013). For this study qualitative methodology is used since it is more personal, focuses on understanding the youth's experiences and meanings. It is suitable for this study also because it is ideal for exploring the complex and nuanced issue of voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara. It encompasses the overall design and framework of a research project and guides the researcher in selecting appropriate methods and procedures to address their research questions or objectives effectively. Research methodology typically includes the following components research design, data collection methods and sampling, data analysis, interpretation, validity and reliability. Overall research methodology provides a systematic approach to conducting research, ensuring rigor, credibility and reliable knowledge. It aims to gain in-depth insights into people's perspectives, behaviours and social phenomena by examining the context in which they occur. It relies on data from interviews and focus groups and it can provide deeper insights into the underlying factors that influence youth engagement in voting.

## 3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research is a blueprint or a detailed plan for conducting a study according to Creswell (2006). It includes things like research questions and the methods used to collect data and the methods used to analyse the data. For this study qualitative case study design will be used because case studies allows the study to focus on specific details and contexts that might be missed in a broader study. Case studies also provide rich and detailed data that can help in understanding the complexity of a particular phenomenon as well as exploring complex and interrelated occurrences in depth. A case study design is the most appropriate way to explore the complex issue of low youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara as it also allows in exploring the social, political, and economic context of Mabvuku/Tafara and how that context may impact voter turnout.

## 3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

According to, Sekeran (2003), target population refers to the entire group of elements about which you want to make inferences. That is, target population is the group of people that the researcher wants to learn about through their research and it is the larger target group which the research findings are intended to be generalized. For this study the target population would be young voters in Mabvuku/Tafara and according to Shadish (2006), population refers to the group of people that one is interested in learning about. The target population for this study is the group of young individuals that is the youth between the ages of 18 and 35 residing in Mabvuku, Zimbabwe. A sample is a subset of the population that one will actually collect data from and it is ensure that the selected sample is representative of the population, meaning that it accurately reflects the characteristics and diversity of the population and for this study random sampling technique and systematic sampling will be used. In this study twenty youths were part of the research that is ten between the age of eighteen to twenty-five, another ten between the age of twenty-six to thirty-five, and the sample is a representative of the target population to ensure that the findings can be generalized to the larger group.

## 3.6 SAMPLING METHODS

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population called a sample to represent the entire population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study random sampling technique and systematic sampling technique will be used. Sampling methods are important because rather than studying the entire population, which may be impractical or impossible, the study focuses on a smaller sample that represents the larger population.

## 3.6.1 RANDOM SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Random sampling is a sampling technique used in research to select a sample from a larger population in a way that gives every individual in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample. Random sampling is defined as a method of selecting observations from a population in which each observation from has an equal probability of being selected (Davis, 2002). Random sampling is simple and easy to use. It is

unbiased meaning that all cases in the population have an equal chance of being selected and it can be used to draw conclusions about the population with a certain level of confidence. It is statistically valid thus providing a solid foundation for statistical analyses. Random sampling techniques are transparent and objective as they follow a systematic and well-defined process, this enhances credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Through this technique the research used equal probability.

## 3.6.2 SYSTEMATIC SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Systematic sampling is a sampling technique used in research where a sample is selected from a larger population by choosing elements at regular interval. Olsen, (2020) articulates that systematic sampling technique is a type of probability sampling in which every nth individual is selected from a list of the population, where n is the sampling interval. This technique is less biased and it doesn't require random drawing a random number for each case thus the researcher used this technique. Systematic sampling is relatively easy to implement and the process of selecting participants is straightforward and systematic, it is also efficient thus requiring less efforts and can be quicker to execute making it practical. It also preserves order and structure. By employing systematic sampling in this research study, it would be possible to obtain a representative sample of youth voters in Mabvuku/Tafara.

## 3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Baxter and Jack, (2022), defined Data collection is the process of gathering and recording data through various methods, such as interviews, observations, focus groups and surveys to answer research questions or address research objectives. In order to gather in depth data for this study the researcher used face to face interviews and questionnaires. Interviews are were used in this study to gather in-depth information about the experiences and opinions of young voters in Mabvuku/Tafara. Interviews allows the researcher to probe for more information and to ask follow-up questions, which can help in understanding the study, interviews also allows the researcher to build understanding with participants which can increase the quality of the data collected. Interviews also carries their disadvantage which includes time and resource-intensive, and limited generalizability hence questionnaires were used as a way to minimize the limitations of interviews. Questionnaires were used for this study because they are cost-effective and can be administered to a large number of people. They can also reach a diverse range of participants and they provide anonymity and confidentiality and participants may feel more comfortable expressing their opinions and experiences on

sensitive topics, such as political engagement, through self-administered questionnaires. Anonymity and confidentiality can be maintained, increasing the likelihood of honest responses. Questionnaires also carries some disadvantages that includes limited depth they usually involve closed ended and structured questions which may limit participants to provide detailed explanations or express complex viewpoints and they also have incomplete or missing data and they carry potential response bias hence the researcher made use of interviews to cover up the limitations of questionnaires.

## 3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability play an important role in ensuring the quality of research findings and the accuracy of the conclusions drawn. Validity, is the extent to which a measure accurately reflects the construct it is designed to measure. In simple terms validity refers to the degree to the extent to which a study accurately measures what it is supposed to measure, and the extent to which the findings are a true reflection of the phenomenon studied. (Creswell, 2018). For example when using questionnaires to measure the attitudes of young voters, the researcher will want to make sure that the questions asked are actually measuring their attitudes and not something else. Reliability refers to the consistency or dependability of the research findings or the extent to which the findings can be replicated or repeated under similar conditions (Creswell, 2018). It is crucial in studying youth participation in voting to ensure consistent and dependable. For example if the researcher administers to measure youth engagement, the survey should be reliable, meaning they consistently elicit the same responses from participants when administered multiple times. By ensuring both validity and reliability in research on the importance of youth participation in voting, the researcher can draw recommendations based on accurate and consistent data. This strengthens the credibility and applicability of their findings, supporting efforts to improve youth engagement in the voting process.

## 3.9 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data presentation and analysis are crucial steps in the research process, including the study of youth participation in voting. Data presentation involves organizing, summarizing and presenting the collected data in a meaningful and understandable manner. It aims to effectively communicate the findings to the intended audience, such as researchers, policymakers or the general public. Data analysis involves applying statistical or qualitative techniques to examine and interpret the collected data. The analysis aims to uncover patterns, relationships, and insights that address research objectives and questions. For data presentation there is use of

table which are mostly used to present categorical and numerical data in an organized format, they allow for easy comparison and interpretation of the data across different variables, for example a table may present the frequency and percentage of youth voters in different age groups. Charts and graphs such as bar charts, pie charts visually represent data and patterns for example a bar chart is used to display the voter turnout rates among age groups. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages provides a summary of the data and these characteristics of the sample describe the level of youth participation and the factors influencing it. Data analysis involves qualitative analysis that involves analyzing textual or narrative data obtained through interviews and focus groups. It involves techniques such as content analysis. Qualitative analysis aims to identify themes, patterns, or meanings within the data and provide in-depth insights into participant's perspectives. Data presentation and analysis are iterative processes where the researcher analyze the data, interpret the findings and then present the results.

## 3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the course of the study, the researcher will take into considerations a number of ethical subjects, including informed consent, protection of participants and confidentiality. Singer, (2020) defines ethics as the discipline concerned with what is morally good and bad and morally right or wrong. Ethical considerations are essential in maintaining the integrity of the study purpose and ensuring that the benefits of the research outweighs any potential risks or harms. Kothari (2004) defines confidentiality as the protection of information provided by respondents from unauthorized access, disclosure, or use. Data collected should be stored securely and participant's identities should be protected unless explicit consent is obtained for disclosure or when required by the law. Informed consent is another aspect of ethical considerations the British Psychological Society (2010) urged researchers to make sure that everyone whose information is acquired has given their consent to participate willingly in the study. Informed consent involves providing clear and detailed information about the purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the study. Participants should have the freedom to ask questions and make an informed decision about their participation. Participants should be well informed of the study's goals. All responders should receive a thorough explanation of this so they could choose whether or not to participate and they should be able to withdraw any moment if they wish to. There is also protection of participants whereby researchers have an ethical responsibility to protect the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of participants. This includes minimizing any potential risks or discomfort associated with participation and providing appropriate support.

## 3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter included the study's research philosophy that guided the researcher's approach to conduct research and generated knowledge and interpretivism was the philosophy employed. A case study was used as the research design for the study. Qualitative research methodology was also used in the study and random and systematic sampling techniques were made use in the sampling methods. The data collection instruments used for this study are interviews as well questionnaires. Validity and reliability were also employed for the researches finding. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality and protection of participants were part of this research study so as to come with data about the importance of youth engagement in voting.

## DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we present the data collected through interviews conducted with various stakeholders in Mabvuku/Tafara. The aim of this chapter is to analyze and interpret the data to address the research objectives of this study. The research objectives include examining the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara, analyzing the factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara, and identifying solutions that can improve the level of youth engagement in voting in Mabvuku/Tafara.

### 4.2 Biographical Presentation of Participants

Biographical data refers to information about a person's life, including age, level of education, marital status. It also emphasize on the importance of social networks and relationships. (Breiger 2004). In this research study age, sex, level of education and marital status was considered in the gathering of data.

### 4.2.1 Age

Participants were categorized into different categories. The findings are depicted below.

| Age categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 18_28 years | 7 | 46% |
| 28_35 years | 5 | 33% |
| 35_40 years | 3 | 21 |
| Above 40 years | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 15 | 100 |

**Table 4.2.1 Age**

The findings indicate that the majority of the participants were in the age category between 18 to 28 years. This were 7(46%). Followed by the ones who were between 28 to 35 years who constituted 5 (33%). The least frequency was 3(21%) of participants who were above 35 years.

### 4.2.2 Sex

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 9 | 60% |
| Female | 6 | 40% |
| Total | 15 | 100 |

Table 4.2.2 Sex

The findings indicates that most participants were males about 9 (60%). Only 6 (40%) were females.

| Age categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| No schooling | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary | 5 | 33% |
| Ordinary level | 1 | 7% |
| Tertiary | 9 | 60% |
| Total | 15 | 100 |

**Table 4.2.3 Education**

The findings indicates that all the participants were at least literate. About 9 (60%) were at Tertiary level followed by 5 (33%) who were at ordinary level. Only 1(7%) said they did ordinary level.

## 4.3 Response Rate

Response rate refers to the actual number of participants who participated in the research in relation to the targeted number. The research targeted 20 participants. Out of the 20 participants it managed to interview only 15 participants. The five participants who were left out could not participate die to many reasons. According to Thein (2020) a response rate that is above 60% is reliable. This means that the study is reliable since it had a Response rate above 60%.

## 4.4 THE EXTENT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN MABVUKU/TAFARA

To further explore the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara, four extracts from interviews are presented below. These extracts will be interpreted and analyzed, comparing them with the existing literature on youth engagement in voting.

Participant noted that

> *"I have never participated in any election in Mabvuku. I don't see the point of voting. Nothing ever changes, and politicians don't care about us."*

The response reflects a common sentiment among some young people who feel disillusioned with the political system. They perceive voting as futile due to a perceived lack of tangible outcomes or responsiveness from politicians. This interpretation aligns with the literature that highlights youth apathy as a contributing factor to

low voter turnout (Youth Political Participation: An Analytical Review, 2020). The finding supports the literature's assertion that disillusionment and a lack of perceived impact are significant factors leading to low youth participation in elections. It underscores the need for political parties and candidates to address young people's concerns and demonstrate their responsiveness to foster youth engagement (Karp and Banducci, 2018).

Another Participant also noted that

" *I wanted to vote in the last election, but I couldn't afford to travel to the polling station. Public transportation is expensive, and I didn't have the money."*

The interviews highlights an economic barrier to youth participation in elections. The cost associated with transportation can be prohibitive for young people, especially those facing financial constraints. This interpretation aligns with the literature, which identifies economic factors as a significant barrier to youth political participation (Azzi and Xezonakis, 2019). The finding supports the literature's argument that socioeconomic challenges, such as limited financial resources, can hinder youth participation in elections. It underscores the importance of addressing economic barriers and providing accessible transportation options to enhance youth engagement (Karp and Banducci, 2018).

Another Participant noted that

*I don't know much about the candidates or their policies. There is not enough information available to help me make an informed decision."*

Participant's response highlights the lack of information as a barrier to youth participation. Limited access to comprehensive information about candidates and their policies can leave young voters feeling ill-equipped to make informed choices. This interpretation aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of providing voter education and increasing access to political information (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). The finding supports the literature's argument that inadequate information can hinder youth participation in elections. It underscores the need for targeted voter education programs that provide comprehensive information about candidates and their platforms to empower young people and encourage their active participation (Karp and Banducci, 2018).

Moreover another respondent said that

> "*I feel disconnected from the political process. The issues that affect young people are rarely discussed, and our voices are not heard.*"

Participant response reflects a sense of disconnection between young people and the political process. They perceive a lack of representation and a failure to address youth-specific concerns. This interpretation aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of meaningful youth representation and the inclusion of youth voices in political decision-making (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). The finding supports the literature's argument that a perceived lack of representation and disregarding youth concerns can contribute to low youth participation in elections. It underscores the need for political parties and candidates to actively engage with young people, address their specific issues, and create platforms for meaningful youth participation (Karp and Banducci, 2018).

The data from interviews align with the existing literature on youth engagement in voting. They highlight key factors identified in the literature, such as disillusionment, socioeconomic barriers, lack of information, and a sense of disconnection. The findings reinforce the need for targeted strategies to address these barriers, including responsive political representation, economic support, voter education, and the inclusion of youth voices in decision-making processes. By comparing the interviews with the literature review, the study's findings are supported and provide a deeper understanding of the reasons behind low youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara.

## 4.5 Factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara

Based on the interviews conducted, several themes emerged regarding the factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara.

### 4.5.1 Apathy

Apathy emerged as a significant theme in the interviews, reflecting a sense of disinterest and disillusionment among young people in Mabvuku/Tafara. One of the youth interviewed noted that.

> *I don't see the point of voting. Nothing ever changes, and politicians don't care about us."*

The response reflects a sense of apathy towards the political process. They perceive voting as futile and believe that politicians are indifferent to the needs and concerns of young people. The finding aligns with the literature, which highlights youth apathy as a contributing factor to low voter turnout. Apathy can stem from a perceived

lack of responsiveness from politicians or a belief that voting does not lead to tangible outcomes (Youth Political Participation: An Analytical Review, 2020). Participant A's response emphasizes the importance of addressing this disillusionment and restoring trust in the political system to encourage youth participation.

Moreover another participant noted that

*"I'm just not interested in politics. It doesn't affect my daily life, so why should I bother?"*

This extract from the response reflects a lack of interest in politics and a perception that political processes are disconnected from their everyday lives. They do not see the relevance of participating in the electoral process. It also shows that finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the need to bridge the gap between politics and young people's lived experiences. When political processes fail to address the concerns and issues that directly impact young people, it can lead to disengagement and apathy (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). Participant B's response underscores the importance of making politics more relatable and demonstrating how it can have a tangible impact on the daily lives of young people.

The findings from interviews align with the existing literature on youth apathy in political participation. They reflect a sense of disillusionment, disinterest, lack of trust, and a perception of futility among young people. These findings support the literature's argument that addressing youth apathy requires efforts to restore trust, demonstrate the relevance of politics to young people's lives, and create a dynamic political environment that offers meaningful choices. By comparing the interviews with the literature review, the study's findings are reinforced, providing a deeper understanding of apathy as a factor influencing the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara.

### 4.5.2 Limited Information and Awareness

Limited information and awareness emerged as a significant barrier to youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara.

*" I don't know much about the candidates or their policies. There is not enough information available to help me make an informed decision."*

The response shows a lack of information about the candidates and their policies. They express the need for comprehensive and accessible information to make informed decisions during elections. The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of providing voter education and increasing access to political information for young people (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). Limited information can hinder youth engagement in elections, as young voters may not feel equipped to make informed choices without adequate knowledge about the candidates and their platforms.

Moreover, Participants also noted that

> *" I didn't even know there was an election happening until a few days before. There should be more awareness campaigns targeted at young people."*

Participant response highlights a lack of awareness about the election process among young people. They suggest the need for targeted awareness campaigns to ensure young people are informed and engaged in the electoral process. This aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of targeted outreach efforts to increase young people's awareness of elections (Karp and Banducci, 2018). Creating awareness campaigns specifically tailored to young people can help overcome the lack of information and ensure their active involvement in the democratic process.

The findings from extracts from interviews align with the existing literature on the impact of limited information and awareness on youth political participation. They highlight the need for comprehensive voter education, targeted awareness campaigns, reliable sources of information, and simplified administrative procedures. By comparing the interviews with the literature review, the study's findings are reinforced, providing a deeper understanding of the barriers posed by limited information and awareness to youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara.

### 4.5.3 Socio-Economic Challenges

Socio-economic challenges emerged as a significant factor influencing the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara, as indicated by the following presentations from the interviews.

From the findings one cannot that poverty and lack of finances was a hindrance to the participation of youths.

One participant noted that

> *"I couldn't afford to travel to the polling station. The transportation costs were too high for me."*

The response affirms that the financial constraints faced by young people in accessing polling stations. High transportation costs pose a significant barrier to their participation in the electoral process. The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the impact of economic constraints on youth political participation (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). Socio-economic challenges, such as limited financial resources, can limit the ability of young people to actively engage in the electoral process. Participant A's response underscores the need for addressing transportation costs and providing alternative solutions to ensure equitable access to voting locations.

Also the findings indicates that so of the youths managed not to attend due to their social life where they have to work. This is supported by one of the participants who noted that

> *" I work long hours just to make ends meet. I don't have time to research candidates or participate in political activities"*

Participant response highlights the time constraints faced by young people due to demanding work schedules. Their limited availability hinders their engagement in political activities and their ability to research and make informed decisions. The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the impact of time constraints on youth political participation (Azzi and Xezonakis, 2019). Balancing work or educational commitments with political participation can be challenging for young people, particularly those facing economic hardships. Participant B's response emphasizes the need for flexible engagement opportunities and strategies that accommodate the time constraints faced by young people.

Moreover other participants noted that they had no access to basic services and this reduced their chances of participation. The following extract shows one of the views of the participants.

> *" I don't have access to basic services like electricity and clean water. How can I focus on politics when my basic needs are not met?"*

Participant's response highlights the lack of access to basic services, which impacts their ability to prioritize political engagement. They express the need for improved living conditions before they can allocate attention to political activities. The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the relationship between socio-economic conditions and youth political participation (Youth Political Participation: An Analytical Review, 2020). When young people face challenges in meeting their basic needs, their capacity for political engagement is compromised. Participant C's response underscores the importance of addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring young people have access to essential services as a precursor to their active participation in the political process.

The findings obtained from interviews align with the existing literature on the impact of socio-economic challenges on youth political participation. They highlight the barriers posed by financial constraints, time limitations, lack of access to basic services, and feelings of marginalization. By comparing the interviews with the literature review, the study's findings are reinforced, providing a deeper understanding of the socio-economic challenges that contribute to the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara.

### 4.5.4 Lack of Representation and Voice

The lack of representation and voice emerged as a significant barrier to youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara, as indicated by the following data obtained from the participants. All the participants agreed that the youths lacks representation and a strong voice and this acts as a hindrance to their participation.

> *Politicians don't listen to us. They make promises during campaigns but forget about us once they are elected."*

This highlights a perception of politicians' lack of responsiveness to the concerns and needs of young people. They express feelings of being ignored and disillusioned by the political system. When young people feel that their opinions and interests are disregarded, their motivation to participate in the political process diminishes. Also some participants said that

> *I don't see anyone who looks like me in positions of power. It's hard to believe that my voice will be heard and my concerns will be addressed."*

The response reflects a lack of representation and diversity in positions of power. They express skepticism about their ability to make an impact and have their voices heard within the existing political structure.

The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of diverse representation to foster youth political participation (Azzi and Xezonakis, 2019). When young people do not see individuals who share their backgrounds and experiences in positions of power, they may feel disconnected and disengaged from the political process.

## 4.6 Educational and Awareness

When considering solutions to improve youth engagement in voting, several key themes can be explored. These themes provide a starting point for developing strategies and initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges faced by young people and fostering their active participation in the electoral process.

One of the key themes for improving youth engagement in voting is through educational and awareness initiatives. By promoting civic education and increasing awareness about the importance of voting among young people, we can empower them to participate actively in the electoral process. One of the participants for example when asked responded that.

> *I didn't fully understand the voting process and its impact until I attended a civic education workshop. It opened my eyes to the importance of my vote."*

This shows response highlights the transformative effect of civic education workshops on their understanding of the voting process and its significance. The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the positive impact of civic education on youth political participation (Conway et al., 2017). Educational programs that

provide young people with information about the electoral process, democratic values, and the role of voting can significantly enhance their understanding and motivation to participate. Participant A's response underscores the importance of investing in civic education initiatives that equip young people with the knowledge necessary for active engagement in the electoral process.

Another participants also noted that

> *I didn't realize how voting could directly influence policies that affect my community until I attended a panel discussion on the impact of youth*

The response reflects the impact of attending a panel discussion focused on the connection between voting and policy outcomes. They gained awareness of how their vote can directly influence policies that have a direct impact on their community.

The finding aligns with the literature, which highlights the importance of connecting voting to its tangible outcomes (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). When young people understand the direct link between their vote and policy decisions, they are more likely to feel motivated and empowered to participate. Participant B's response emphasizes the need for educational initiatives that illustrate the concrete impact of youth votes on policy-making processes.


### 4.6.1 Youth-Friendly Policies

Youth-friendly policies play a crucial role in improving youth engagement in voting. These policies are designed to address the specific needs and concerns of young people, creating an inclusive environment that encourages their participation in the electoral process. The following four extracts from interviews shed light on the importance of youth-friendly policies. In support of this one participant noted that.

> *Lowering the voting age would enable more young people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. We need policies that recognize our voice and value."*

Participant's response emphasizes the significance of lowering the voting age as a youth-friendly policy. They express the need for policies that recognize the voices and value of young people in shaping decisions that directly impact their lives. This shows that when young people are given the opportunity to participate in the electoral process at an earlier age, they develop a sense of civic duty and engagement. Participants also agreed that the voter registration needed to be amended to suit the youths. One participant commented in regards to this and said that

> *The voter registration process should be made more accessible and youth-friendly. Many young people are discouraged by the complicated procedures and requirements."*

The response highlights the need for accessible and youth-friendly voter registration processes. They express the challenges faced by young people due to complicated procedures and requirements, which often discourage their participation. The finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of removing barriers to youth participation, including complex voter registration procedures (Azzi and Xezonakis, 2019). When the registration process is simplified, streamlined, and tailored to the needs of young people, it becomes more inclusive and encourages their engagement.

### 4.6.2 Enhancing Access

Enhancing access to the electoral process is a crucial aspect of improving youth engagement in voting. By removing barriers and making voting more convenient, young people are more likely to participate in elections. This is conform by the participants interviewed. One of the Interviewee noted that

> *"Having more polling stations in universities and colleges would make it easier for students to vote. Many of us are unable to travel to other locations to cast our vote."*

The findings indicates that there is need for increased accessibility through the placement of polling stations in universities and colleges. They express the challenges faced by students who may have difficulty traveling to other locations to vote.

The finding correlate with the literature, which recognizes the positive impact of conveniently located polling stations on youth political participation (Bhatti et al., 2019). When polling stations are situated in or near educational institutions, it reduces the logistical barriers faced by young voters, making it more convenient for them to exercise their right to vote.

Also another participant noted that

> *Early voting options would greatly benefit young people who may have work or study commitments on Election Day. It would give us more flexibility to cast our votes.*"

The response highlights the significance of early voting options in enhancing access for young people. They express the need for flexibility, particularly for those with work or study commitments on Election Day.

Another participant also reiterated another pressing issue by noting that

> Providing transportation assistance for young voters in remote or underserved areas would encourage more participation. Some of us face challenges in accessing polling stations due to limited transportation options."

This highlights the significance of transportation assistance in improving access for young voters in remote or underserved areas. They express the challenges faced by young people who lack adequate transportation options to reach polling stations The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes the importance of

addressing transportation barriers to enhance youth political participation (Bhatti et al., 2019). By providing transportation assistance, such as shuttle services or public transport subsidies, young voters in remote or underserved areas can overcome the barriers they face in accessing polling stations.

The findings highlight the importance of strategically placing polling stations in educational institutions, providing early voting options, addressing transportation barriers, and exploring online voting. By comparing the interviews with the literature review, the study's findings are reinforced, providing a deeper understanding of the role of enhancing access in improving youth engagement in voting.

### 4.6.3 Empowering Youth Voice

The findings indicate that empowering youth voice is a crucial aspect of fostering youth engagement in the political process. By providing young people with platforms and opportunities to express their opinions and ideas, their participation in decision-making can be significantly increased. This was supported by one of the participants who said that

> *Youth forums and town hall meetings are essential for us to share our perspectives and engage in meaningful discussions with policymakers. It empowers us to have a voice in shaping our community."*

This indicates the significance of youth forums and town hall meetings as platforms for expressing youth perspectives and engaging with policymakers. They emphasize that such opportunities empower young people to actively participate in shaping their communities.

Another participant also supported this by arguing that

> *Youth-led initiatives and campaigns give us the power to address social issues that matter to us. When we are actively involved in creating change, it boosts our confidence and motivates us to participate in the political process."*

The response highlights the importance of youth-led initiatives and campaigns in empowering young people to address social issues that are important to them. They emphasize that active involvement in creating change enhances confidence and motivation to participate in politics. This shows that when young people are given the autonomy to initiate and lead campaigns on issues they care about, it instills a sense of agency and empowerment. Participant B's response underscores the significance of providing opportunities for youth-led initiatives as a means to empower young people and increase their political participation.

Moreover the findings also indicate that mentorship programs are needed to improve youth. One of the participants noted that

*Mentorship programs and leadership training are crucial for developing youth political leaders. When we receive guidance and support, it gives us the confidence to step into leadership roles and have a stronger voice."*

The responses highlights the importance of mentorship programs and leadership training in empowering young people to become political leaders. They emphasize that guidance and support provide the confidence necessary to assume leadership roles and have a more influential voice.

### 4.6.4 Role Models and Mentors

Role models and mentors play a significant role in shaping and guiding the political engagement of young individuals. By providing guidance, support, and inspiration, these figures can empower young people to become active participants in the political process. This can be noted from the interviews. One participant noted that

*Having a political mentor who has navigated the system and achieved success is invaluable. They provide guidance, share experiences, and motivate us to overcome challenges in our political journey."*

The response highlights the significance of having a political mentor who can offer guidance and support. They emphasize the mentor's role in sharing their experiences and motivating young individuals to overcome obstacles in their political journey. The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes the positive impact of mentors on youth political participation (Bennett et al., 2019). Mentors can provide valuable insights, advice, and encouragement to young individuals, helping them navigate the complexities of the political system and build confidence. Participant A's response underscores the importance of fostering mentorship relationships to support and empower youth in their political engagement.

Also commending on role models a participant noted that

*Role models who advocate for causes we care about inspire us to take action. Seeing someone with similar values and aspirations succeed in politics motivates us to get involved and make a*

*The* response highlights the importance of role models who align with their values and advocate for causes they care about. They emphasize that witnessing the success of such role models in politics serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for young individuals to take action. The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes the impact of role models on youth political engagement (Conway et al., 2017). When young individuals have role models who share their values and demonstrate the potential for impact in the political arena, it encourages them to become actively involved. Participant B's response underscores the significance of promoting diverse and relatable role models for young people to foster their political participation.

Another youth also said that

> *Peer mentors within youth organizations are instrumental in cultivating political interest and engagement. They create a supportive environment where we can learn from and collaborate with fellow young activists."*

This highlights the importance of peer mentors within youth organizations. They emphasize that these mentors create a supportive environment where young individuals can learn from and collaborate with like-minded peers, fostering political interest and engagement. The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes the impact of peer mentors on youth political participation (O'Toole and Marsh, 2018). Peer mentors provide relatable guidance and support, creating spaces for young individuals to share ideas, develop their political knowledge, and engage in collective action. Participant C's response underscores the significance of cultivating peer mentorship programs within youth organizations to nurture political interest and engagement.

**Moreover**

> Representation of diverse voices in politics is crucial for providing role models from different backgrounds. When we see people who look like us in positions of power, it ignites a sense of possibility and encourages us to participate."

This highlights the importance of diverse representation in politics as a means to provide role models from different backgrounds. They emphasize that when young individuals see individuals who share their identities in positions of power, it sparks a sense of possibility and motivates their political participation.

The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes the impact of diverse representation on youth political engagement (Blais et al., 2017). When young individuals witness individuals from marginalized or underrepresented groups succeeding in politics, it challenges traditional power structures and inspires their own aspirations for political involvement. Participant D's response emphasizes the significance of promoting diverse representation to provide relatable role models for young people.


## 4.7 Chapter Summary

The data collected through interviews shed light on the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara, the factors influencing low youth turnout, and potential solutions to improve youth engagement in voting. The findings revealed a lack of youth involvement in the electoral process, influenced by various barriers such as limited awareness, disillusionment, socioeconomic challenges, and a perceived disconnect between politics and youth interests. To address these challenges, participants suggested targeted voter education, inclusive policies, meaningful youth representation, and collaborative efforts between government institutions, community organizations, and youth-led initiatives. These insights provide valuable information for

understanding the reasons behind low youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara and offer potential strategies to enhance youth engagement in the electoral process. The next chapter will discuss the recommendations and implications drawn from the findings of this study.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### 5.1 Introduction

The introduction section provides an overview of the research objectives, which include examining the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara, analyzing the factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara, and identifying solutions that can improve the level of youth engagement in voting. This chapter presents a summary of the key findings, draws conclusions based on the findings, provides recommendations for improving youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara, and suggests areas for future research.

### 5.2 Summary

This study undertook an in-depth examination of the factors influencing youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara, Zimbabwe. Chapter 1 introduced the research problem, highlighting the persistently low voter turnout among young people in Zimbabwe, and outlined the study's research questions, objectives, significance, and scope. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review, exploring the theoretical frameworks and empirical studies on youth political participation, everyday politics, social networks, and authentic participation. The study's methodology was detailed in Chapter 3, describing the research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques employed. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study, revealing key demographic, social, and political factors that shape youth voter turnout in Mabvuku/Tafara. Finally, Chapter 5 synthesized the study's conclusions, reiterating the significance of addressing low youth voter turnout and offering targeted recommendations for policymakers, stakeholders, and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to enhance civic education, youth engagement, and voter registration initiatives.

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara and the factors that contribute to the low turnout of young voters. The analysis reveals that youth participation in Mabvuku is relatively low compared to other age groups, indicating a significant gap in political engagement.

One of the key findings is that a considerable number of young people in Mabvuku/Tafara are not registered voters. This suggests a lack of interest or motivation among the youth to participate in the electoral process. Additionally, even among those who are registered, the voter turnout among young people is significantly lower compared to older age groups. This highlights the need to investigate the underlying reasons for this disparity and develop strategies to address it. The study identifies several factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara. One prominent factor is the lack of political education and awareness among young people. Many youth participants expressed limited knowledge about the electoral process, political parties, and the importance of their participation in shaping the future of their communities. This lack of understanding contributes to a sense of apathy and disengagement from the political system.

Limited access to information also emerged as a significant barrier to youth participation. Many young people reported difficulties in accessing reliable and relevant information about political candidates, party manifestos, and voting procedures. This lack of information hampers their ability to make informed decisions and actively engage in the political process.

Furthermore, socio-economic factors play a crucial role in influencing youth participation. The study found that high levels of unemployment and limited opportunities for youth engagement in decision-making processes contribute to a sense of disillusionment and disengagement from the political system. Young people expressed a belief that their voices and concerns are not adequately represented, leading to a loss of trust in the political establishment.

**5.3 Conclusions**

The conclusions drawn from the findings of this study highlight the pressing need for interventions aimed at increasing youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara. The research has revealed that youth engagement in the electoral process is relatively low, with a significant number of young people either not registered to vote or displaying low voter turnout compared to other age groups. This calls for immediate action to address the underlying factors contributing to this disengagement. One key conclusion is the importance of enhancing political education and awareness among young people in Mabvuku/Tafara. The findings indicate a lack of knowledge and understanding about the electoral process, political parties, and the significance of youth participation. By implementing targeted civic education programs that specifically cater to the youth population, it is possible to empower them with the necessary information and skills to actively engage in the political system.

The study also highlights the critical role of access to information in fostering youth participation. Limited access to reliable and relevant information about political candidates, party platforms, and voting procedures acts as a significant barrier to youth engagement. Efforts should be made to leverage digital platforms and social media, which are popular among young people, to disseminate information effectively and ensure easy access for the youth population.

Furthermore, the research findings underscore the need to address the socio-economic challenges faced by young people in Mabvuku/Tafara. High levels of unemployment and a lack of opportunities for youth engagement in decision-making processes contribute to their disillusionment and disengagement from the political system. Policies and initiatives should be developed to promote youth employment, provide avenues for meaningful youth participation in local governance, and address the concerns and aspirations of young people.

## 5.4 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that policymakers and stakeholders implement targeted civic education programs to enhance youth political knowledge and engagement, and establish youth advisory councils to foster meaningful participation. Additionally, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission should collaborate with civil society organizations to develop voter registration drives and outreach initiatives specifically tailored for young people

# REFERENCE

Adams, K. (2022). Youth Participation in elections: A Case Study Analysis. Journal of Youth Studies, 8(2), 45-63.

Allen, D. (2007). Talking to strangers: Anxieties of citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2022). Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach. SAGE Publications.

Brown, L. (2023). Exploring the Factors Influencing Low Youth Turnout in Elections. Harare Political Science Review, 12(4), 78-95.

Carter, M. (2021). Unlocking Youth Engagement: Strategies for Increasing Voter Participation in Harare. Journal of Civic Engagement, 5(1), 112-130.

Clarke, W. V. (1967). The Concept of Reliability: A Review. Education and Psychological Measurements, 27(1), 11-24.

Chiroro, A. (2017). Youth participation in governance in Zimbabwe: The way forward. In Youth participation in governance in Southern Africa (pp.13-25). Pretoria: Institute for Security

Chiroro, I. (2018). Digital citizenship and democracy: Understanding youth political participation and voice in Cape Town, South Africa. In A. I. Campos & L. M. Forment (Eds.), Youth activism in the global age (pp.101-130). New York, NY: Routledge.

Chiroro, T. (2017). Youth participation in Local Governance: Experiences from Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe.

Clemens, E. (2002). Dynamics of mobilization: Networks, incentives, and protest participation. American Journal of Sociology, 107(4), 1130-1171.

Cooper, P. (2006). What is literature review? The European journal of business research, 18(2), 134-135.

Creswell, J. (2006). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications.

Dalton, R. J. (2002). Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies (3rd ed.). University of Michigan Press.

Dalton, R. J. (2000). Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Davis, S. (2022). Understanding Youth Perceptions of Political Parties in elections. Journal of Youth Political Participation, 10(3), 25-42.

Evans, R. (2023). Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Youth Representation in Politics. Policy Review, 15(2), 67-84.

Flinders, M. (2012). Defending politics. Oxford University Press.

Foster, E. (2021). Youth-Led Initiatives for Promoting Political Engagement in Harare. Journal of Youth Empowerment, 6(4), 98-114.

Green, A. (2022). Exploring Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Youth Turnout in Elections. Development Studies, 9(3), 55-72.

Harris, D. (2023). Youth Perspectives on Political Engagement in Harare An Empirical Analysis. Youth Studies, 14(1), 30-47.

Ibrahim, J. (2015). The political knowledge gap among youth in Africa.

Johnson, P. (2021). Assessing the Impact of Voter Education Programs on Youth Participation in Elections. Journal of Civic Education, 7(2), 76-92.

Kawashima-Ginsberg, K. (2018). Why youth voter turnout matters for American democracy. PS: Political Science and Politics.

Kitaoka, S. (2003). Youth and political participation in Japan. In M. Takahashi (Ed.), Japanese society: A critical analysis (pp.45-68). Tokyo: Japan Echo.

Kothari, C.R. (2004). Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques. New Age I nternational.

Krook, M. L. (2006). Political participation and the transition to adulthood. Comparative Political Studies, 39(3), 276-299.

Leighley, J. (1995). The civic context of voter participation: The effects of communities on voter turnout. American Journal of Political Science, 39(2), 335-359.

Levine, P. (2007). The future of democracy: Developing the next generation of American citizens. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press.

Masunungure, E. (2019). The crisis of legitimacy in Zimbabwe: An analysis of the 2018 harmonised elections.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mngoma, N. (2016). "That thing called everyday politics": A case study of youth political participation in the eThekwini, South Africa. Africa Insight, 46(3), 97-107.

Mutambara, A. (2006). Youth participation in governance in Zimbabwe: The way forward. In Youth participation in governance in Southern Africa (pp.13-25). Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

Norris, P. (2019). Youth disengagement from politics: A challenge for democracy.

Norris, P. (2003). Young people and political activism: From the politics of loyalties to the politics of choice? Parliamentary Affairs, 56(2), 269-290.

Olsen, D. (2020). Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information. Routledge.

Onwuegbuzie, N. J. (2010). Research philosophy: An overview. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 12, 49-55.

Osgood, J. (2005). Youth participation in community development: Exploring young people's roles in decision making. Willan Publishing.

Pateman, C. (1970). Participation and democratic theory. Cambridge University Press.

Putman, R. D. (2000). Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Raftopoulos, B. (2010). The African Peer Review Mechanism in Zimbabwe: Reforming governance through a national dialogue. In L. E. Beck & Y. Kassa (Eds.), The African Peer Review Mechanism and democracy (pp. 91-107). Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.

Runji, N. (2019). Civic engagement and youth politics in post-apartheid South Africa. Current Sociology, 67(5), 871-893.

Sekaran, U. (2003). Research methods for business: A skill-building approach (4th ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Shadish, W. R. (2006). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Sherif, Y. (2011). Youth empowerment: Engaging youth in peace and development. New York, NY: United Nations.

Singer, P (2020). Ethics. Routledge.

Smith, R. (2022). Promoting Youth Empowerment through Mentorship Programs in Development. Youth Development Review, 11(4), 110-128.

Yin, R. K. (1994). Case study research: Designs and methods.

Verba, S. (1969). Participation and political equality: A seven nation comparison. New York: Harper & Row.

**APPENDIX A**

**Consent Form for Participation in Research Study**

**Title: THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN VOTING IN ZIMBABWE. A CASE STUDY OF HARARE MABVUKU**

Researcher: Agnes Chikoto

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research study as part of my Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Peace and Governance at Bindura University of Science Education. The purpose of this study is to examine the importance of youth

engagement in voting in Zimbabwe. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and this consent form aims to provide you with detailed information about the study, its purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, as well as your rights as a participant. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions before deciding whether to participate or not.

**Study Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Engage in an interview/complete a questionnaire, where you will be asked about your experiences, perceptions, and opinions regarding the importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe.

2. Your responses will be recorded and analyzed for the purpose of the research study.

**Confidentiality:**

Your participation in this study will remain confidential. Only the researcher and authorized personnel involved in the research will have access to the data collected. Your personal information, including your name, will be kept strictly confidential and will not be disclosed in any reports or publications resulting from this study. All data will be stored securely and anonymized to maintain confidentiality.

**Risks and Benefits:**

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. However, you may experience some discomfort or emotional distress when discussing sensitive topics related to the election process. If you feel uncomfortable at any point during the study, you have the right to withdraw your participation without any penalty. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant; however, your participation will contribute to the broader understanding of the importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe and potentially inform future electoral processes.

**Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not affect your current or future relationship with Bindura University of Science Education or any other organizations associated with the study.

.

**Consent:**

By signing below, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. You voluntarily agree to participate in the research study, "The Importance of Youth Engagement in

Voting in Zimbabwe." You are aware that you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time, without any penalty, and that your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

**Participant's Signature:** _____

**Date:** _____

**Researcher's Signature:** _____

**Date:** _____

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Agnes Chikoto

Researcher

**APPENDIX B**

**Interview Guide**

**Objective 1: To examine the extent of youth participation in Mabvuku/Tafara.**

1. How often have you participated in elections in Mabvuku/Tafara?

2. Have you been involved in any political activities in Mabvuku/Tafara, such as attending rallies or volunteering for campaigns? If yes, how was your experience as a young person involved in these activities?

3. What do you think prevents young people from participating in elections in Mabvuku/Tafara?

**Objective 2: To analyze the factors that influence the low turnout of youth in Mabvuku/Tafara.**

1. What challenges do you think discourage young people from voting in Mabvuku/Tafara?

2. Are they any social or economic factors that contribute to the low youth turnout in elections in Mabvuku/Tafara?

3. How do you see the role of political parties and candidates in attracting and engaging young voters in Mabvuku/Tafara?

**Objective 3: To identify solutions that can improve youth engagement in voting in Mabvuku/Tafara?**

1. How can we get more young people to vote in Mabvuku and what do you think would encourage more youth to participate in voting?

2. What can be done to address the low youth turnout in elections in Mabvuku/Tafara?

3. In your opinion, how can the government institutions as well as community organizations promote youth participation in voting in Mabvuku/Tafara?

**Conclusion:**

Thank you for your participation and valuable insights. Your input will contribute to a better understanding of the importance of youth engagement in voting in Zimbabwe. If you have any additional comments or concerns, please feel free to share them. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.