
THE ROLE OF INTRA-PARTY PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN ZAMBIA'S DEMOCRACY: LESSONS FROM ZAMBEZI WEST CONSTITUENCY

O PAPEL DAS ELEIÇÕES PRIMÁRIAS INTRAPARTIDÁRIAS NA DEMOCRACIA DA ZÂMBIA: LIÇÕES DO CÍRCULO ELEITORAL ZAMBEZI OCIDENTAL

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Abstract: Elections are one sure way people at the grassroots express their choice of who should lead them and discard those they feel do not serve them well. However, elections lose their meaning once a few individuals in the name of political party representatives usurp the power of the people to elect credible leaders. This was a qualitative study conducted to describe the factors that affect the credibility of primary elections using one case of Zambezi West Constituency. Participant observation was a method of collecting data from eleven key informants. An observation and interview guide were used to collect data. Data was recorded on Mp3 sonny recorder, iphone camera and notebooks. Transcriptions were done and themes identified during analysis. Findings show that generally the primary elections did not reflect the will of the people as the final outcomes were affected by natural and artificial factors. Most importantly, the elections were characterised by lack of transparency, fathergodism, corruption, lack of planning for different terrains and vested interests by party officials in preferred candidates. It is recommended that community party members should be the ones allowed to vote for their candidates and not party representatives at ward, constituency, district and provincial levels. Primary elections should be well planned in order to gain credence in the electoral process.

Keywords: Elections. Primary elections. Voters. Zambia. Zambezi West. Constituency.

Resumo: As eleições são uma forma segura de as pessoas na base expressarem a sua escolha de quem as deve liderar e descartar aqueles que sentem que não as servem bem. No entanto, as eleições perdem o seu significado quando alguns indivíduos em nome de representantes de partidos políticos usurpam o poder do povo para eleger líderes credíveis. Este foi um estudo qualitativo realizado para descrever os factores que afectam a credibilidade das eleições primárias utilizando um caso do círculo eleitoral do Zambeze Ocidental. A observação dos participantes foi um método de recolha de dados de onze informadores-chave. Foi utilizado um guia de observação e entrevista para a recolha de dados. Os dados foram registados em gravador sonny Mp3, câmara fotográfica de iphone e cadernos de notas. Foram feitas transcrições e identificados temas durante a análise. Os resultados mostram que geralmente as eleições primárias não refletiam a vontade do povo, uma vez que os resultados finais foram afectados por factores naturais e artificiais. Mais importante ainda, as eleições caracterizaram-se por falta de transparência, paternalismo, corrupção, falta de planeamento para os diferentes terrenos e interesses instalados por funcionários do partido em candidatos preferidos. Recomenda-se que os membros dos

partidos comunitários sejam os autorizados a votar nos seus candidatos e não os representantes dos partidos a nível de ala, circunscrição eleitoral, distrito e província. As eleições primárias devem ser bem planejadas a fim de ganharem credibilidade no processo eleitoral.

Palavras-chave: Eleições. Eleições primárias. Eleitores. Zâmbia. Zâmbia Ocidental. Eleições primárias.

1. BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Elections are one sure way of demonstrating that a nation practices democracy. Thus, elections should be free and fair and provide for confidence in the electorates that the majority will is respected in the selection of leaders. Zambia, a Southern African Country got independence from British Rule in 1964. The country since then has been ruled by indigenous leaders in the likes of first president Dr Kenneth Kaunda from 1964 - 1991, Frederick Titus Chiluba from 1991 - 2001, Levy Partick Mwanawasa from 2001 - 2008, Rupiah Banda from 2008 - 2011, Micheal Chilufya Sata from 2011 - 2014 and Edgar Chaagwa Lungu from 2015 - 2021. Before independence, there existed parties such as African National Congress - ANC formed in 1948, Zambia African National Congress - ZANC in 1958 and later the United Independence Party - UNIP in 1959 which led Zambia to independence (FODEP, 2003). Dr Kenneth Kaunda was the first president of Zambia. It can be said Zambia was a multiparty state at independence with Kaunda's UNIP as a ruling party. The African National Congress - ANC was the main opposition party up to 1972. Other parties that came on board were the United Party (UP) and the United Progressive Party (UPP). However, in 1973 a constitutional declaration was made that UNIP should be the only party in Zambia. This lengthened Kaunda's rule for 27 years. In 1990, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) was conceived at Garden House in Lusaka by a group of individuals, senior workers in the UNIP Government and trade union members. The political organisation was registered in 1991 (Momba & Madimutsa, 2009). The coming in of MMD saw the birth of other political parties namely the Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC) and the Agenda for Zambia (AZ) formed in 1995 and 1996 respectively (FODEP, 2003). Later in 1998, Anderson Mazoka formed the United Party for National Development which is currently the main opposition party in Zambia under Hakainde Hichilema. Currently, there are over twenty (20) political parties in Zambia, a symbol of a growing democracy which needs to be well harnessed. Some of the current political parties are the ruling party Patriotic Front (PF), the United Party for

National Development (UPND), Rainbow Party (RP), Forum for Democracy (FDD), Heritage Party (HP), United Nations Independence Party (UNIP), Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), Green Party (GP), Poor People's Party (PPP), Alliance for Democracy (ADD), the Socialist Party (SP), the Democratic Party (DP) and many other newly formed parties. The 2021 elections attracted about 20 presidential candidates. Lusaka times (2021) reports that sixteen (16) presidential candidates successfully filed in their nomination papers for the 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections.

It is health to have many political parties, a symbol that democracy is an accepted manner of choosing leaders in the country. However, what happens inside parties in the selection of leaders that should represent them in national elections leaves a lot to be desired. Every party is by the Zambian constitution required to elect its candidates to contest elections on party tickets. Thus, parties are required to elect a presidential candidate, members of parliament in each constituency, mayors, council chairpersons and councillors that would contest the main elections. The Zambian constitution amendment No 2 of 2016 provides for primary elections within political parties in order to promote and practice democracy through regular, free and fair elections within the part (Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2016). A political party should provide a national character by disseminating its national ideology; sponsor its candidates for nomination to a state office through conducting primary elections to select candidates. Hirano & Snyder (2013) posit that primary elections help in selecting high quality leaders and punishing poor performing ones. In Zambia, primary elections are an initial stage in identifying representatives for constitutional offices at various levels. Constitutional offices include Presidency, Member of Parliament, Mayoral Officers, Council Chairpersons, and Councillors inclusive. These are basically elective offices. There are other constitutional offices are earned through appointments. However, many complaints usually characterise the adoption process, with grassroots mostly complaining that their voice is never respected because their preferred candidates are not adopted by the higher party structures. One quote below says:

I HAVE FOR THE SECOND TIME NOT BEEN ADOPTED.

Politics by its nature is a gamble. When I decided to take this path in 2011, one thing I was not so sure about was how I would handle dissatisfaction and disappointments associated with all nature of gambling. In 2016 I was left out of the UPND adoption process despite

being one of the favourites on the ground. I have once more been left out of the adoption process today despite being a front runner..... Politics can at times be very solitary and alienating and is very expensive

Primary elections are a strong symbol for internal democracy, thus a test for parties' readiness to practice democracy when they take over Government. Kwasau (2021) describes a credible primary election as a constitutional democracy, open, regular and competitive in electoral politics in which the processes are transparent and honestly conducted to reflect the choice, views and opinions of the electorate. According to Kwasau (2021), in a credible election, people have equal rights and liberties to decide who should lead them and the will of the majority of voters prevails. Candidates who do not win election should not be imposed on voters. Studies in Africa, where most democracies are young experience a lot of malpractices in the conduct of elections. Olawole, Adewunmi, Oluwole, (2013) examined the various malpractices in African elections. Their postulation is that electoral malpractice in Africa is closely related to the type and forms of historical system practiced by each society, coupled with the class structure, social stratification, aestheticism and religious difference advising that electorates needed to be given the space to make the choice of their own leaders (Olawole et al, 2013). Olawole, et al (2013) further point out that poverty is a very serious threat to the conduct of elections in Africa because electoral officers are usually easily bought by godfathers who own a lot of money in order for them to win elections. Kabemba (2004) says,

the Zambian democratisation process is increasingly confirming the assertion that democracy does not flourish in a poverty-ridden society. Poverty unfortunately seems to be dictating the behaviour of political actors. The weakness of political parties is firstly caused by lack of finances. Parties in Zambia rely on party members' contributions. (p. 58).

Elections appear to be more monetized now than ever in most African elections giving credence to a constitutional office not because of one's intellectual capacity and leadership qualities but because one is able to bribe voters, playing down leadership to be equated to one's ability to give material things. Jensen and Justesen, (2014) notes that vote buying is characteristic of elections especially in Sub Saharan Africa mainly influenced by high rates of poverty. Multilevel regressions analysis of vote buying in sub Saharan Africa in a study by Jensen and Justesen (2014) showed that poor voters are significantly more likely to be targets of

vote buying than wealthier voters. Vote buying or whatever name it is called amounts to fraud in the electoral system. Lehoucq, (2003) says electoral fraud is practiced in a wide range from violation of precedural violations of electoral law to the outright use of violence to intimidate voters and poll watchers. Even when elections are not competitive, ballot rigging robs elections of credibility and therefore prevents the consolidation of democratic institutions (Lehoucq, (2003). However, political parties have a big stake in promoting internal democracy and ensure that they avoid features of vote buying and using monetary resources to influence votes. This has more to do with the promotion of good virtues. It is a duty of political parties to avoid imposing candidates, godfatherism and the excessive monetization of the election processes and intra-party conflict (Isma'ila & Othman, 2016).

Political violence is quite characteristic of many African states, although it may not be the focus for this study. While political violence is a known hinderance to democratic practice in many countries as it is in Nigeria (Isma'ila & Othman, 2016), we should no longer ignore that money and corruption as it were is taking the toll in undermining people's will to elect the leaders they want. According to Isma'ila & Othman, (2016), when the legislature, political parties and elections body are so weak, they can not manage to protect and promote democracy in any country. Abuses of the electoral code of conduct during elections are also historic in Zambia. For instance, O'Donovan, (2004) reports the 2001 elections being in breach of the electoral code of conduct by the ruling party where state resources, intimidation and threats against opposition party supporters, vices that the Election Body ECZ did not punish. Ultimately, elections that are characterised by violence and other forms of deviance from the electoral code of conduct are supposed to be nullified and fresh elections called to ensure parties adhere to the electoral code of conduct and elect leaders based on national virtues and ideals that promote good governance. Leting deviance go unchecked leads to growing resistance and distrust in the electoral system, which may lead nations to eventual instability. Party leaders that do not aim to curb none democratic practices during intraparty primary elections may not be worthy entrusting with the responsibility of respecting the constitution (Hofisi, 2018).

1.1. Background of Zambezi West Constituency

Zambezi West Constituency is one of the remotest and underdeveloped constituencies found in Zambezi District of North Western Province - Zambia. It was formerly called Balovale West at the time Zambezi district was called Balovale district. The figure below locates Zambezi West Constituency in North Western Province of Zambia and specifically in Zambezi District.

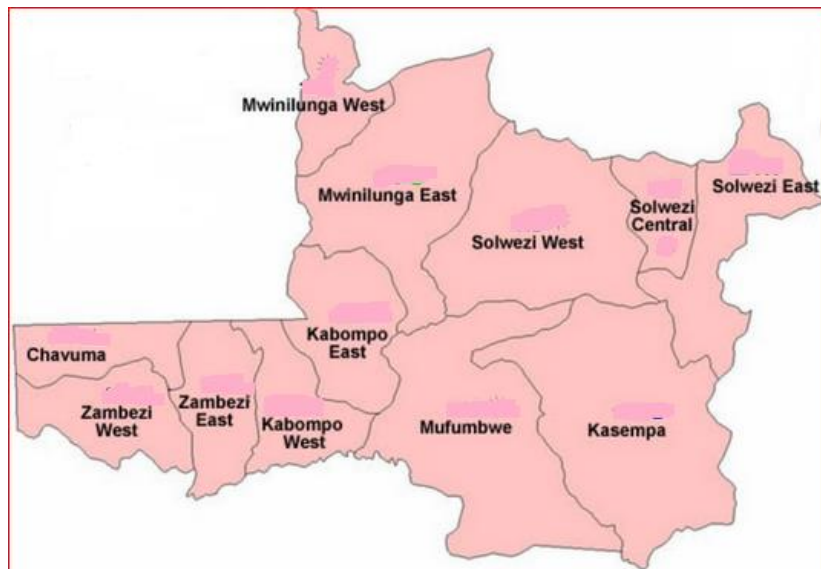


Figure 1: Constituencies in North Western Province; Source: Google Maps -Adapted

From independence in 1964 Zambezi West constituency has been represented in parliament by seven (7) members of parliament; the likes of Samuel Mbilishi, Rogers Sakuhuka, Roy Saviye, David Saviye, Charles Kakoma, Christabel Ngimbu and Priscah Kucheka. The longest serving MPs were Rogers Sakuhuka who served 4 terms and Charles Kakoma who served three terms only to be petitioned in 2014 by Christabel Ngimbu. Table 1 shows the MPs that have served in Zambezi West Constituency, the years in which they served and the political parties they represented:

Table 1: MPs that have served in Zambezi West

	NAME OF MP	YEAR	PARTY REPRESENTED BY MP
1	Samuel Mbilishi	1968	United National Independence Party

2	Rodger Sakuhuka	1973	United National Independence Party
3	Rodger Sakuhuka	1978	United National Independence Party
4	Rodger Sakuhuka	1983	United National Independence Party
5	Rodger Sakuhuka	1988	United National Independence Party
6	Roy Saviye	1991	United National Independence Party
7	David Saviye	1996	Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
8	Charles Kakoma	2001	United Party for National Development
9	Charles Kakoma	2006	United Democratic Alliance
10	Charles Kakoma	2011	United Party for National Development
11	Christabel Ngimbu	2014 by election	Patriotic Front
12	Priscah Kucheka	2016	United Party for National Development

Data obtained from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambezi_West (28/05/2021)

The constituency has 6 wards, with places far apart from each other namely Mapachi - Chinyingi, Muyembe - Kangulunga, Kashona - Likungu, Mwanje - Nyawanda, Muswiza - Liyovu and Matondo - Nyachikayi. During the primary elections for Political Party ppx (ppx is a Pseudonym) , it came to light that the party had structures at National, Provincial, District, and Constituency levels. Each ward is headed by a chairperson and deputised by a vice chairperson. A secretary for each ward and a treasurer keep monetary resources for the party at ward level. There are other organs such as youth wing, women's wing and security wing within the ward level structures. The total number of membership at ward level is 34 but the number rises to 39 when the women's' wing is added. The ward level structure constitutes the very grassroots level representation of the people in each constituency. From the ward level, the constituency also has a chairperson, vice chairperson and the secretary who are the top three yet other member from the security, women and youths make a total of 34 members as well. From the constituency, the district also has a membership of 34 representatives. At district level, the chairperson heads the district and is deputised by the vice chairperson. There is also a secretary and a treasurer besides other supportive wing structures.

1.2. Statement of a Problem

Zambezi West Constituency has in the last two elections experienced petitions, a sign of dissatisfaction among those who contest the Seat. In 2013, Christabel Ngimbi petitioned Charles Kakoma Wahuna's election citing corrupt and bribery practices in the 2011 election, a petition that the Supreme Court granted and nullified the Zambezi West Constituency seat

(Sichikwenkwe, 2014; *Zambian Eye*, 2013). A call for another election was made and Christabel Ngimbu won and became the first PF Member of Parliament for Zambezi West. In 2015 elections, Prisca Chisengo Kucheka won the Zambezi West seat on the UPND ticket and was later petitioned by Christabel Ngimbu in 2017 in petition case No A -047 (Judiciary of Zambia, 2017; Diggers, 2018). Christabel Ngimbu lost the petition. Problems of failure to believe in the electoral process emerge when candidates demonstrate lack of trust in the system. There has been no study documenting the activities that led to dissatisfaction with the electoral process in Zambezi West Constituency in recent years and specifically at primary elections. This paper is written to document the happenings in a selected party's primary elections and the activities that threaten the credibility of democracy in Zambia. For ethical reasons, the party and individuals involved in this study have been withheld. With the scarcity of literature specifically on the conduct of primary elections, this paper seeks to make a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge and scholarly debate on democratisation.

1.3. Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To identify factors affecting the credibility of primary elections in Zambezi West Constituency.
- To describe the nature of factors affecting the credibility of primary elections in Zambezi West Constituency.
- To explain the extent to which identified factors affect the credibility of primary elections in Zambezi West Constituency.

2. METHODOLOGY

Participatory interpretive paradigm was the measure of reality for this study in order to experience the conduct of primary elections and the frustrations that go on during primary elections. Participatory research helps to gain a deeper insight into the contextual structuredness of meaning and the dynamism inherent in social action (Bergold, & Thomas, 2012). The study adopted a qualitative participant observation method to collect data from the natural setting while actively taking part as is required in participatory research. Participant

observation involves an active use of the person's five senses to be able to collect the needed rich data. Thus, while interviews were conducted, field notes, cameras and audio recordings were used particularly in this study as data collection instruments. Sometimes also called ethnography (Kawulich, 2005), this method was only applied during the period of primary elections to learn what really goes on, thus divorcing it from pure ethnography that requires very long periods of stay in the field. Eleven Key informants were targeted. The key informants included three (3) aspiring candidates out of the five that took part, three (3) ward officials and five (5) community members captured from their own contributions during meetings. For ethical reasons, names and other identifying particulars have been withheld. Data were collected over a period of two months between March and April 2021. Audio recorded data were transcribed and coded while observation data organised according to the identified themes from the in-depth audio recorded data. Analysis was thematic, characterised by identification of emerging themes. Although considered subjective, this method of data collection helped the researcher to immerse himself into the world of others 'living in others' shoes', for some time to be able to understand what they go through.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study established that there were several factors that affect the credibility of primary intra party elections in Zambezi West Constituency. The factors include the election process, differences in terrains, vested interests by party officials, lack of transparency, and corruption among others.

3.1. The Process Leading to Primary Elections

An advert was mooted calling for applicants for positions of Members of Parliament, Council Chairpersons and Councillors in the constituencies. Members of Parliament were required to pay an adoption fee and process a verification certificate of the basic required qualification of Grade 12 certificate, which was centrally done either Lusaka or in provincial centres. The verification process gobbled huge amounts of money as applicants spent weeks in alien places renting to process their papers for adoption. Applications for Members of

Parliament were to be submitted to the constituency but unwritten intraparty laws required that applicants submitted copies of the applications to the district, provincial and national levels. This meant an increase in the cost of application which was already at K5000 but the dropping of copies of applications meant that applicants needed to travel to Lusaka via the district and the province to deliver the copies in person for surety purposes.

The process was further made tedious by failure of the national party structure to plan well ahead of the activities that led to the primary elections. The first date that was set for the beginning of the adoption process was 3rd April 2021 when elections were expected at ward level and recommendations made by the constituency and district levels to the province and later to the National Management Committee. The three top ranked names were supposed to be recommended to the National Management Committee by 5th April 2021 for final adoptions. First, the dates were so squeezed because different provinces had different terrains that practically made it impossible to conduct the primary elections in wards between 3rd April and 4th April 2021, in order to have the names recommended through the constituency via the district to the provincial structures by the 5th April 2021. There appeared to be lack of knowledge of the different terrains in Zambia, failing to acknowledge the different distances and difficulties in transport system to take people to different wards to conduct the elections. Even then, some places such as Zambezi West do not have network in every ward and so information could not have reached the different places where ward elections were held. Even though the date was extended to the 12th April 2021, the process remained a challenge for Zambezi West Constituency to conduct credible primary elections. There were no proper mechanisms put in place to conduct and monitor the primary elections in every ward and the party did not fund the process, which led to lower structures to charge aspiring candidates a K3000.00 for Members of Parliament and K250.00 for Councillors while Council Chairpersons paid K500.00. This confirms what Kabemba, (2004) reported. This further increased the adoption cost for aspiring candidates but filthily appeared as though it was an exhortation scheme by the party. There were no clear instructions and no meetings held with candidates to explain how the elections were to be conducted. Candidates had challenges reaching out to different wards in the constituency within the short time to sell themselves. Some of the wards are 90 KM away from Zambezi district and the elections were held in flood times.

From the findings, the process became exorbitant for aspiring candidates. Candidates' movement from Zambezi to Solwezi, over 500 kms to process papers for elections was highly costly, just going to Lusaka to drop papers at the national secretariat, over 1000kms away demonstrates a centralised means of conducting elections. There seems to be a trend in the development of democracy in Zambia that there may be no funding for political parties from the state (Momba & Madimutsa, 2009; Kabemba, 2004). For instance, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) political party needed to source their own campaign funds through holding dinner dances, luncheons and other activities (Momba & Madimutsa, 2009). This trend could be a contributing factor to the experience in current days where the named political party clearly failed to demonstrate that it had the financial capacity to fund primary elections in Zambezi constituency. Parties, especially in the opposition in Zambia may be finding it difficult to mobilise resources to support campaigns. This could be one of the major reasons that opposition parties face leading to failure to easily take over government through democratic means.

Democracy, defined as the rule of the people by the people is perhaps more than what it really means in practice. Democracy should be inclusive to enable everyone's participation (Muzata & Mahlo, 2021). It is actually a process, which in any case even a country like Zambia may not have yet reached. Ihonvbere (1996) defines democracy or democratisation as a process that involves a steady and systematic empowerment of the people, their organization, and communities in a direction which empowers them to dictate, influence, and determine the content and context of politics. In a democratised society, people incorporate their interests in the institutions and structures of the state, and this makes it possible for public policy to reflect the interests and aspirations of the people (Ihonvbere, 1996). With the activities that led to the primary elections, we are left to wonder whether Zambia is anywhere near a democracy or not. If representatives are allowed to select leaders on peoples' behalf instead of the people themselves, then this is not true democracy because the representatives at ward, constituency, district and provincial levels are the ones deciding on behalf of the people. This renders intra party primary elections meaningless in a democracy. For instance, there have been complaints from the grassroots that the people they wanted are not adopted on the party tickets, where to certain extents even person that never attended primary elections were adopted to contest on some party tickets.

3.2. The Zambezi West Terrain

Zambezi West Constituency is located on the West bank of the Zambezi River West of Zambezi District Township. It's located on the lower plains of the Zambezi River with most of its land flooded from January to May (Kandimba, 2021). The road network is very poor, compounded by excessive floods during the rainy season and sandy terrain requiring a four wheel drive vehicle to drive through, movement is usually restricted in many ways. With many streams and small rivers and without bridges on all road outlets to various points in the constituency, Zambezi West Constituency poses a serious challenges for political contestants who have to risk moving through flood areas either on a motor bike or one has to wait until floods subside. The Zambezi West Constituency terrain restricted even the delivery of election materials and campaigns for the primary elections because contestants could not manage to reach all the wards most of which are far away from the Zambezi township. For instance, a contestant from Mize capital would have to cross the Kashiji River, Mwange Lake, Lungevungu River to reach the furthest ward called Matondo - Nyachikayi. Kashiji at the time was flooded, yet the Muyembe - Kangulunga ward lies along the Kashiji Ward and the distance between Kashiji and Mwange is usually highly flooded to June but even then, one has to cross Lake Mwange to reach Mwange Nyawanda Ward, a widely spaced ward. The Lungevungu River is a high current river and usually not only flooded but highly infested with crocodiles and hippos. Although phone network towers have been mounted in some areas of the constituency, network is not reliable as phones can only be reached at selected hours early in the morning and late in the evening in some places. The researcher only managed to reach Muyembe - Kangulunga Ward, Kuckeka - Liyovu Ward, Mapachi - Chinyingi Ward and Kashona - Likungu Ward with difficulties using a motor bike. The researcher's experience using the motor bike was horrible as roads were hardly existent and there were floods in all paths used. Stumps and shrubs whipped the researcher while squatting on a motor bike through the bushes of Zambezi West Constituency getting through places called Samajiko, Chiseji, Kakoto, Lukolwe and others. But still, the researcher did not manage to reach Mwange, Matondo, Nyachikayi, Nyawanda, Chikota, Samwanji, Pungu, Muswiza to name some of the places. Below is a figure showing the Zambezi West Terrain:

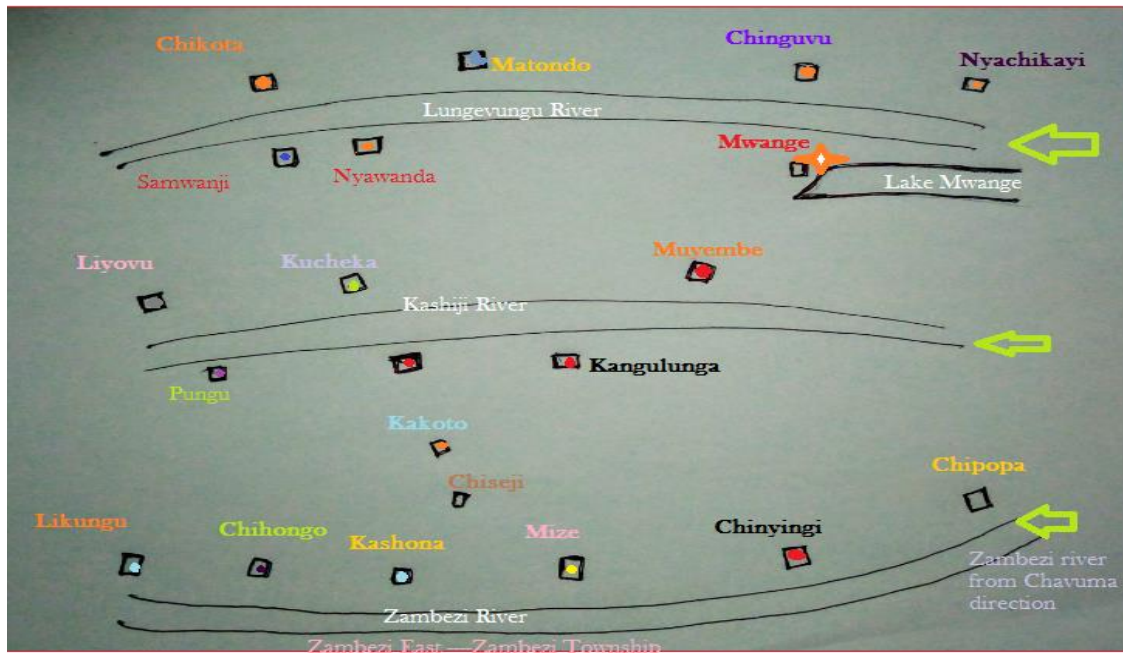


Figure 2: Spaced areas in Zambezi West Constituency

Author: 01.06.2021

With such a sparsely populated terrain characterised by poor road and phone network, poor transport system and a lengthened flood season, elections should be well planned to ensure higher levels of transparency. Lack of transparency in the conduct of elections will likely and or always breed petitions, a sign of collapsed confidence in an electoral system.

3.3. Vested Interests in Candidates by some Part Officials

Officials in party structures showed vested interests in support of some candidates. Vested interests by district party hierarchy in candidates that vividly appeared to support some candidates affected the planning for the elections and to a large extent influenced the initial results of the primary elections. Some senior officials openly campaigned for their preferred candidates. Thus, for instance, a day before the election, a named official constituted a private meeting for Mapachi – Chinyingi Ward at night to influence the vote in favour of one named candidate. Money was reported to have been disbursed to voters on the eve of the vote. There were reports of mid night meetings where some district party officials campaigned for their preferred candidates during primary elections. The party officials did not constitute meetings

to update contestants on how the elections were to be conducted. One man decisions were noted where some constituency officials who had affiliations with the incumbent member of parliament and those associated to the favoured candidate who had the money were sent to some places in name of conducting the elections to far flung areas that other candidates did not have representations. This is similar to the Kwasau (2021) study in Kaduna state in Nigeria where ‘god-father’ and the law of incumbency was reported as having an ugly face on primary elections. At one primary election station in Mize capital, aspiring candidates were not allowed to enter the polling house. But when the incumbent Member of Parliament visited the place, she went straight into the voting house, an act that prompted a protest from a lone aspiring candidate:

I have seen an aspiring candidate enter the house, let the member come out. It is not fair to deny others entry and allow another in. We should not be treated in any special way at a time of primary elections, (Aspiring candidate).

The problem of vested interests from party officials was also attested by community members that attended one of the meetings. This is what he said:

As you have come, you are now five candidates. How many will be selected – only one. What we know is that when elections come, each of the party officials has their own candidates already. So when you don’t go through, do not say Kakoto people don’t like me. It’s those party officials who are already affiliated to different candidates. We in Kakoto love you but the problem is with the party officials because people have already made groups (Community member during ward meeting).

Another community member says:

My point is on primary elections. I find one mistake. We get surprised, Ward representatives choose someone else they want like us we want you but we find that at constituency they choose another person. This is a problem. You find things change; these things frustrate us because if provincial level changes our decisions, then why do they involve us in elections at ward level? The person we choose should be the one people have chosen not someone imposed by the province (Community member during ward meeting).

Ordinarily, party officials were supposed to only recommend three names out of the total votes from wards. However, constituency, district and provincial levels also voted, in many

cases turning upside down the vote at primary level election. This trend was rather induced and perhaps reactive because of corruption reports during primary elections.

Another version was given by a community member narrating what transpired in the primary elections of another competing political party where someone who did not take part in primary elections was actually adopted to contest on the named party ticket. He said:

You see, the elections here disappoint us. Sometimes we feel like we should just be leaving the voting to the provincial level who change our vote here at the grassroots. This issue happened in another party where three people contested the primary elections, a nephew and aunt with another man but after the fighting to be adopted, the party hierarchy adopted someone who did not even take part in primary elections (Community member during ward meeting).

From the verbatim excerpts, community members appeared to know very well what goes on and expressed disappointment with the manner leaders are chosen and sometimes imposed on the people as their final candidates for general elections. Once community members start to lose interest in the electoral process, elections will not yield the democratic virtue it is intended to provide. People will lose faith and trust in the system and mistrust the leadership. Eventually, they get discouraged from participating in future elections.

3.4. Communicating Primary Election Results From Wards and Absence of Agents

The manner in which the results were communicated to Mize officials from the various far flung wards was not transparent because aspiring candidates did not know who was communicating the results and what the results actually were from the source. This raised a lot of suspicions on the credibility of the primary elections because they lacked transparency, a threat to democracy that was also recorded in the 2016 elections when the Patriotic Front and United Party for National Development subjected candidates to a nomination process through none transparent committee-based interviews at the constituency, district, and provincial level (Goldring & Wahman, 2016). The numbers did not tally with electoral registers with some wards producing figures more than the Electoral College (see table 2). Since there was no prior arrangement to have agents for all aspiring candidates in all wards, the results did not reflect a true picture of the votes that came from the six wards in the constituency.

This election is a sham. I just wasted my money. Why didn't they inform us in advance that we would need agents to guard our votes in the various wards? I have now seen what goes on. This is why we are not having good leaders. You know with the floods, we could not go all wards to campaign and then they deny us agents. Who knows maybe even your name was not added to the ballot in some wards (Aspiring candidate).

3.5. The Electoral College Registers for Wards

The Electoral College registers were not availed to the aspiring candidates and thus it was not clear whether the voters were genuine members of the wards or not. Prior to the primary elections, reports were received that constituency officials were trying to constitute new ward membership to vote for their preferred candidates. That the aspiring members of parliament were not in all the wards to witness the elections worsened the problem. We were not aware of the total number of people that voted in each ward to be able to make clear additions and determine whether the Electoral College in each ward was well constituted. All candidates were told were the votes that each one got, thus questioning the transparency of the primary polls. Apart from Mize where the rejected votes were explained the results from other wards did not have such details. The gravity of this matter left aspirants with doubts how the disparities in the Electoral College results occurred where Likungu – Kashona Ward scored the total of 45 ward electorates and Mwange Nyawanda had 44 yet the Electoral College is supposed to comprise 34 members plus 5 from the womens' league giving a total of 39 but Mapachi and Muyembe appeared to have only relied on the main committee (34). The table below shows disparities in the voting at primary elections:

Table 2: Primary election results, a faulty reflection

		CANDIDATE 1	CANDIDATE 2	CANDIDATE 3	CANDIDATE 4	CANDIDATE 5	TOTALS
1	MUYEMBE	0	5	20	4	5	34
2	KUCHEKA	0	21	13	7	2	43
3	MWANGE	4	17	11	6	6	44
4	MATONDO		22	18			40
5	LIKUNGU	1	13	22	2	7	45
6	MAPACHI	1	6	14	13	0	34

It was clear from the table that there was a deliberate practice of inflating the Electoral College numbers. Inflation of electoral registers is one form of malpractices used in African elections (Olawole et al, 2013). Consequently, these practices, among others do not help to reflect the will of the people because a few party representatives manipulate the results.

Similarly, like was established in this study, there seems to be a practice where those with more money are accorded more respect during elections than those with less. Kwasau (2021) reported that there was no internal democracy in Kaduna state in Nigeria's Peoples Democratic Party between 1999-2015 as a result of some major challenges identified that included god-fatherism, money politics, influence of powerful elite, incumbency factor, neglecting rank-and-file members in most decisions affecting party primaries, the application of federal character principles, rural-cosmopolitan politics and ethno-religious factor. Although some of factors may not apply to Zambia, the money factor, godfather syndrome and the incumbency factor appeared strongly to affect internal democracy in Zambian politics. For instance, at the polling station during the primary elections in Mize, voters for the incumbent Member of Parliament were dressed in party regalia labelled her names and those of the party president. The members were driven to the voting centre. Election officials did not stop members that were in party regalia to be at the venue. This further demonstrates the incumbency syndrome affecting the credibility of primary elections.



Figure 3: Blurred caption of supporters for incumbent MP

The fathergodrism factor appeared to have more influence on the primary elections. Reports indicated that a candidate did not possess the minimum grade twelve (12) certificate, which is a requirement in the Zambian electoral system to contest parliamentary elections. Officials at all levels were informed but the member was left to go through the process. Ordinarily, application papers should have been scrutinised at constituency level and those without grade twelve (12) certificates blocked from participating in the elections. However, despite presenting the issue to officials, the member was allowed to go through the process up to the end. Although the candidate was not adopted, she disadvantaged other applicants who could have wooed votes from the wards. The grade 12 certificate requirement is a constitutional issue that needed to be respected in order for contestants to have confidence in the intra-party election process. All applications should be transparently declared valid before the elections are conducted so that electorates cultivate a sense of trust in the system.

3.6. Monetary Extortion

There were reports of monetary extortions from party officials at all party level structures. Officials from time to time requested for money from aspiring candidates. Further, aspiring candidates were charged K3000 to help conduct the elections in the constituency, a cost that should have been born by the party. This aside, as aspiring candidates who spent money to help the party run the elections, a fair monitoring and transparent conduct of the primary elections and communication of the results would have helped caution the loss that was suffered and believe in the credibility of an electoral system. The activities that led to this election therefore did not reflect the will of the people and has the propensity to undermine democracy. Knowing how underdeveloped Zambezi West constituency is, the nature of

activities in the conduct of the primary elections leaves the people robbed of credible leadership. Money extortions were in different forms. Some were direct, others indirect.

One of candidates reports that he was called to a drinking place and tutored on how to approach the elections. He narrates what he was told below:

Mwata (Big man), let's face the facts; I wouldn't want to hide from you. Things have changed. This time is no longer like the time of Sakuhukas and Saviyes where people would just vote because it is a civic responsibility. Nowadays, you just have to make sure that you give something to the people. Your hand should just be free to give if you are to get a vote (Provincial Official).

During a phone talk with one of the officials, he said it was easy to make a person win the primary elections because they simply select people they want to vote for a particular candidate.

What we do is simple. We just constitute a new list of members who would vote as if they were the ward officials. That's it, it's done. That's what we do (Party Official).

You know, what they do is very bad. They make new wards to vote for the person they want. That is how they disadvantaged a named candidate in the 2016 elections. We heard they had a meeting at (a named official's) home last night and they agreed to vote for a certain candidate saying you are late (Ward Official).

Another aspiring candidate confessed as follows:

My friend this is a taboo. I had 15 people that slept in my house yesterday. They are ward officials and they were crossing to vote. In the morning I gave them K500.00 but I am surprised I have gotten zero votes in Mapachi - Chinyingi Ward (Aspiring Candidate).

I lost a K1000 to a ward official who called me to send the money so that he organises people to vote for me. He actually explained that that was the practice that works well for aspiring candidates. He promised that he would ensure that he organises because he in turn needed help for his children who need to be in colleges the time the aspiring candidate becomes a member of parliament (Aspiring Candidate).

Surely money played cards in the primary elections and influenced the vote by ward officials. Early commitments were more critical to the ward officials. Those with more money for the electorates hold the vote. Leal (2003), confirms this that the possession of early money signals political elites that a candidate is credible. Monetising elections is a form of electoral malpractice. Olawole et al (2013) listed a number of malpractices during elections in Africa

saying such practice occur at different levels namely pre-election, middle election and post-election manipulations. Among the malpractices, they point out Monetization of the electoral procedure before selection of candidates at party and electoral commission level as a pre - electoral manipulation of the electoral process. This is destroying democracy in African countries and elsewhere it is practiced.

Ichino, & Nathan, (2018) state as follows:

Vote buying also raises the prospect of intra-elite disputes after the primary. Local elites who expended considerable resources towards winning a nomination but were outbid may see the process as unfair, feel aggrieved, and leave the party, damaging the party's prospects in the general election (Page 7).

Nothing is of departure from what Ichino and Nathan (2018) said above. The candidates that were purported to have bribed electorates heavily were not eventually adopted because higher levels of part structures decided to adopt the other candidates. The failure to adopt the candidates that perceived themselves as popular made them contest the elections as independents and for the first time in the history of Zambezi West constituency, there is a higher number of contestants (6) for the general elections, two of whom are independent aspiring candidates. The same levels of dissatisfaction that have led them to contestants as independents are the same levels, perhaps worse for those who had no money but could have won on ideological principles. Surely, corruption in general has a big potential to destroy democracy and indeed the will of the people to elect good leaders.

4. CONCLUSION

While the role of primary elections cannot be underemphasised, the manner in which the elections were conducted in Zambezi West Constituency questions the credibility of electoral system within political parties. In a highly perceived corrupt and porous electoral system like Zambia, according the responsibility to elect those who should contest general elections in the hands of a few representatives of political parties at lower levels, district and provincial levels does not demonstrate true democracy where the will of the people at the grassroots is respected. This is because those chosen to represent the people are compromised and bought to support candidates of their own choice and not those the people want. This

waters-down the role of primary elections in intra party democracy in Zambia. However, there is hope that this can turn around if the people themselves (Party members) are involved in electing the candidates of their choice during primary elections. The failure to have corpus planning for conducting primary elections within political parties shows that primary elections are not accorded the significance they deserve in the electoral process.

4.1. Lessons for Future Primary Elections

Although qualitative studies do not provide for generalisation outside the case studied (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021; Muzata, 2020), the findings of this study provide lessons for most if not all primary elections in Zambia. The following points can help improve the conduct of future primary elections:

- Primary elections should be a preserve of the electorates themselves and not party structure representatives whose credibility is usually compromised by corruption.
- The Electoral Commission of Zambia should be mandated, under a decentralised system to monitor intra party elections in all political parties. This is only possible in a mature democratic system where the elections body is highly independent and not easily influenced by those in the ruling class.
- Independent election monitoring bodies should be mandated to monitor elections in political parties to help ensure transparency.
- Primary elections should be well planned according to the needs of each constituency's natural terrains. There is need to devise a funding system, decentralised in nature to take care of unique terrains of different places where primary elections are conducted in the country.
- Intensive civic education campaigns need to be conducted prior to elections to educate both party officials and electorates against bad vices that compromise the election of quality leaders. Civic education campaigns prior to primary elections should include explaining the implications of vote buying and other forms of corruption both on the quality of leadership and the general governance.
- Political parties need to follow their own laid down procedures of arriving at a candidate who should be adopted. Ordinarily, only the grass root ward level representatives are required to vote in the primary elections and the upper

structures are required to recommend based on the grass root vote. However, the findings of the study indicate that the upper structures also engaged in voting eventually upsetting the grassroots' vote. This tends to water-down the purpose of primary elections.

4.2. Limitations of the Study

This study was qualitative. The natural demand for qualitative studies is that of not generalising findings to help transform the system. This may downplay the significance of this study in helping improve democratic practice in Zambia. As such a gap for further research is identified calling for large scale studies that would lead to a generalised picture. The other limitation lies in the demand that research calls for high levels of ethics. While this is appreciated based on various reasons, which include endangering participants, the failure to name the political party studied leaves a gap because the party would not know the deficiencies to address. There are also dangers in naming individual parties and individuals due to fear of intimidation of both participants and the researcher. It is such fears that continue to threaten the true existence of democracy.

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