



Lighthouse

The Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Law, Economics and Public Policy

ISSN 2957-8842 (Print)
ISSN 3007-2182 (Online)



Vol. 4 (Issues 1&2), 2025

©ZEGU Press 2025

Published by the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Press
Stand No. 1901 Barrassie Road,
Off Shamva Road
P.O. Box 350
Bindura, Zimbabwe

All rights reserved.

DISCLAIMER: The views and opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of funding partners

Typeset by Divine Graphics

Printed by Divine Graphics

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr Ellen Sithole, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Zimbabwe

MANAGING EDITOR

Dr Noah Maringe, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Zimbabwe

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr Sithabile Manyevere, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
Dr Tinotenda Chidawu, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
Dr Prolific Mataruse, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
Dr Carren Pindiriri, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
Dr Kiriana Magaya-Dube, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

SUBSCRIPTION AND RATES

Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Press Office
Stand No. 1901 Barrassie Rd,
Off Shamva Road
P.O. Box 350
Bindura, Zimbabwe
Telephone: ++263 8 677 006 136 | +263 779 279 912
E-mail: zegupress@zegu.ac.zw
<http://www.zegu.ac.zw/press>

About the Journal

JOURNAL PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Lighthouse: The Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Law, Economics and Public Policy Journal* is to provide a forum for urban solutions based on a systems approach and thinking as the bedrock of intervention.

CONTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

Lawyers, criminologists, economists, public policy experts, bureaucrats, students, researchers and many other experts located in both the private and public spheres.

JOURNAL SPECIFICATIONS

Lighthouse: The Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Law, Economics and Public Policy

ISSN 2957-884 2(Print)

ISSN 3007-2182 (Electronic)

SCOPE AND FOCUS

The journal is a forum for the discussion of ideas, scholarly opinions and case studies on law and policy, statutes, constitutions, general rules of the game (institutional mechanisms) and policy pronouncements or declared positions that are put to scrutiny, weighed, interpreted and evaluated. In all these matters, the intention and context usually define the outcomes and impact. The journal is produced bi-annually.

Guidelines for Authors for the *Lighthouse Journal*

Articles must be original contributions, not previously published and should not be under consideration for publishing elsewhere.

Manuscript Submission: Articles submitted to *Lighthouse: The Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Law, Economics and Public Policy* are reviewed using the double-blind peer review system. The name(s) of author(s) must not be included in the main text or running heads and footers.

Total number of words: 5000-7000 words and set in 12-point font size with 1.5 line spacing.

Language: British/UK English

Title: must capture the gist and scope of the article and must be succinct

Names of authors: beginning with the first name and ending with the surname

Affiliation of authors: must be footnoted, showing the department and institution or organisation.

Abstract: must be 200 words

Keywords: must be five or six containing words that are not in the title

Body: Where the authors are more than three, use *et al.*

Italicise *et al.*, *ibid.* and all words that are not English, not names of people or organisations, etc. When you use several authors confirming the same point, state the point and put them in one bracket in ascending order of dates and alphabetically, separated by semi-colon e.g. (Falkenmark, 1989, 1990; Reddy (2002; Dagdeviren and Robertson, 2011; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2012).

Referencing Style: Please follow the Harvard referencing style in that:

- In-text, citations should state the author, date and sometimes the page numbers.
- The reference list, entered alphabetically, must include all the works cited in the article.

In the reference list, use the following guidelines, religiously:

Source from a Journal

Anim, D.O. and Ofori-Asenso, R (2020). Water Scarcity and COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa. *The Journal of Infection*, 81(2), 108-09.

Banana, E, Chitekwe-Biti, B. and Walnycki, A. (2015). Co-Producing Inclusive City-Wide Sanitation Strategies: Lessons from Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe. *Environment and Urbanisation*, 27(1), 35-54.

Neal, M.J. (2020). COVID-19 and Water Resources Management: Reframing our Priorities as a Water Sector. *Water International*, 45(5), 435-440.

Source from an Online Link

Armitage, N., Fisher-Jeffes, L., Carden, K., Winter, K. (2014). Water Research Commission: Water-sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) for South Africa: Framework and Guidelines. Available online: <https://www.greencape.co.za/assets/Water-Sector-Desk-Content/WRC-Water-sensitive-urban-design-WSUD-for-South-Africa-framework-and-guidelines-2014.pdf>. Accessed on 23 July 2020.

Source from a Published Book

Max-Neef, M. (1991). *Human Scale Development: Concepts, Applications and Further Reflections*, London: Apex Press.

Source from a Government Department (Reports or Plans)

National Water Commission (2004). Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Water Initiative. Commonwealth of Australia and the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Available online: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/water-reform/national-water-initiative-agreement-2004.pdf>. Accessed on 27 June 2020.

The Source being an Online Newspaper Article

The Herald (2020). Harare City Could Have Used Lockdown to Clean Mbare Market. *The Herald*, 14 April 2020. Available online: <https://www.herald.co.zw/harare-city-could-have-used-lockdown-to-clean-mbare-market/>. Accessed on 24 June 2020.

Constituency Delimitation and the Voter Apathy Problematique in Zimbabwe, 1980-2023

OSCAR MATONGO¹

Abstract

The article is based on a study that investigated the impact of delimitation on voter apathy in Zimbabwe from 1980 to the present. It intends to address the following objectives: to explore the delimitation patterns in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 2023; to assess the nature and pattern of voter apathy in Zimbabwe and to investigate the impact of delimitation on voter apathy in Zimbabwe. The study utilises a qualitative approach and phenomenology as a research design. Unstructured interviews are used and sample selected through convenience strategy, coupled with snowball, whereby referrals were made to connect other voters. The study establishes that delimitation that creates, configures and collapses constituencies as a result of motivated political play of gerrymandering, generates voter apathy through citizens' withdrawal from the electoral process. Boundary mapping process proves not to be immune from gerrymandering and it creates some irregularities that affect the electorate, resulting in their deliberate withdrawal from casting a ballot. The study concludes that there has been a strong relationship between delimitation and voter apathy in Zimbabwe's electoral politics right from 1980. Going forward, delimitation process ought to be conducted free from gerrymandering, cognisant key issues such as geography and people; distance and tradition which, for so long, shaped people's common interests and preferences.

¹ Department of Governance and Public Management, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4518-2634>

Keywords: electoral politics; gerrymandering; citizen apathy; election, futures

INTRODUCTION

Delimitation (mapping of electoral boundaries) has been a contentious issue since 1980. The pattern of criticised, condemned and unsatisfactory delimitation exercise has the potential to cause deliberate withdrawal of the electorate from voting. Although the development of the worrisome trend of voter apathy in Zimbabwe is attributable to various reasons that cut across legal, constitutional and statutory instrument pitfalls, delimitation also causes a significant dent. From 1985 to the early 2000s, the delimitation exercise was criticised for failing to be an impartial process (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000:51). The same applies to the beleaguered delimitation process and conduct of 2007/8 (Team Pachedu, 2023) The 2022 delimitation exercise received the same criticisms on issues around abrupt changes and the failure to use a census survey effectively for quality boundary mapping results (Carter Center, 2023). Generally, the delimitation pattern in Zimbabwe seems to fall short of people's and stakeholders' expectations, hence it has the possibility of affecting voter turnout which generally results in voter apathy. Delimitation and voter apathy, as disciplines, are exhausted, researched and discussed by various scholars (Chiroro, 2005; Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000; Team Pachedu, 2023) and this investigation intends to examine the relationship between delimitation and increasing voter apathy in Zimbabwe, tracing from 1980 up to the present.

STUDY OVERVIEW

Constituency delimitation is a fundamental aspect of electoral politics and governance. Wu and Combos (2019) conceptualise delimitation as the process of redistricting of constituencies for elections. The process divides the country into constituencies and wards for elections of individuals to constituency seats in the

National Assembly and of councillors to local authorities (ZESN, 2019). In Zimbabwe, the process is carried out in sections 160 and 161 of the Constitution (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). Generally, delimitation refers to mapping and re-mapping of the constituencies and wards in relation to the current population patterns.

The delimitation exercise is important to re-map voting areas according to population changes at a particular time. Spatial demographic changes which result in some voting areas losing voters and other areas gain more voters are a central issue behind delimitation. In short, the process caters for population redistribution, awarding equal or relatively equal voters to constituencies and wards. The delimitation process is presumed to follow the well-established legal and constitutional frameworks. In Zimbabwe, there are legal and constitutional landmarks that guide the conduct and exercise of delimitation as a scientific and practical process. The first one can be derived from the section on the conduct of the electoral system enshrined in section 155 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which, in its ultimate motive, the delimitation conduct and process must promote or ensure universal adult suffrage and equality of votes (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). The second constitutional purview for delimitation is enshrined in section 161 of the constitution, spelling out the timeline for the conduct of the delimitation exercise. The challenge with delimitation, as ZESN (2017) puts, is the possibility of the manipulation of the delimitation exercise to influence or shape the electoral outcome under the banner of gerrymandering.

Delimitation patterns and exercises can be traced from 1980 up to the present. In the past, the delimitation exercise was conducted by the Delimitation Commission appointed by the President every five years (Lington 2000; Makumbe, 2006; Team Pachudu, 2023). This was spelled out in section 60 (1) of the old constitution (Makumbe, 2006). The Delimitation Commission had a duty to determine the

limits of constituencies (Lington, 2000). Delimitation exercises in 1985, 2000, 2005 and 2007/8 were conducted by this commission (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000; Lington, 2000, Team Pachedu, 2023). A cursory analysis of delimitation patterns and exercises from 1980 up to the present denotes that the process failed to amass consensual and popular support from stakeholders. It is important to note that since the 1985 delimitation exercise, the process was not immune from a damning allegations of gerrymandering. The 2007/8 delimitation exercise appeared to be a largely attacked and condemned process based on alleged gerrymandering and its weakness of unsatisfactory stakeholder consultations. Team Pachedu (2023:1) describe the 2007/8 delimitation exercise as "ill-implemented, fast-tracked and marred with widespread condemnation on the allegations of gerrymandering and poor stakeholder consultations".

The 2013 Constitution gives birth to a new way of delimitation exercises under the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). Unlike in the past, whereby elections were conducted by three electoral machineries comprising the Delimitation Commission, the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Election Directorate (Lington, 2000; Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000; Makumbe, 2006;), now only ZEC is responsible for everything, including mapping of electoral boundaries. Section 239 (f) outlines the function of ZEC as delimiting constituencies, wards and other electoral boundaries (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). Undeniably, the trends of delimitation patterns in Zimbabwe receive massive criticism based on perceived loopholes and skewed political play which have a damaging impact on the ability and possibility of citizen engagement in the electoral process.

It is the desire of the state and requisite for democracy to have inclusivity through massive people's participation in electoral and governance activities. In line with this, civil society, political parties and government develop innovative ways to mobilise people to

participate in electoral activities. However, the participation of citizens in the electoral process remains an area of concern due to the presence of a growing trend of voter or citizen apathy. Kubatana (2022:2) underscores that apathy shows “a lack of feeling of personal responsibility, a passivity and indifference for political affairs”. Voter apathy means people not casting a ballot in an election because of the feeling that their participation will change nothing. In addition, voter apathy, as Chiroro (2005: 9) posits, depicts the “deliberate withdrawal of citizen participation in an electoral process”.

Voter apathy is a serious aspect in electoral conduct and electoral politics that requires due cognisance. Chikumbu and Chikwaza (2021:1) describe voter apathy in Zimbabwe as “increasingly becoming a worrisome trend”. Numerous reasons have been cited for the unsatisfactory voter turnout in Zimbabwe, characterising the negative trend of voter apathy. Some of the reasons include distortions in electoral management, restrictions and imbroglio issues around vote counting and voter education (Chikwaza, 2021). Voter apathy cannot be measured only by the voter turnout at every election, but can be traced from the voter registration pattern - a process that can reflect the probable or definite withdrawal of citizens from the electoral process.

Voter turnout in Zimbabwe elections denotes the growing trend of voter apathy that demands due attention. From 1996 up to the recent harmonised elections of August 2023, voter turnout was generally low, below the expected standard (Human Rights Watch, 2008; Citizens in Action Southern Africa, 2022; Carter Center, 2023). This existing voter apathy manifesting through citizens' disengagement and withdrawal from the electoral process by not voting, can be linked to the manner and fashion through which the delimitation exercise was conducted in Zimbabwe. This makes one conclude that how the delimitation process was conducted in Zimbabwe from 1980, had the potential to influence the electoral

outcome which, in effect, affects people's preferences and their voting patterns, resulting in the voter apathy.

The literature that surrounds voter apathy in Zimbabwe denotes that it is indeed a worrisome issue that needs positive efforts for a positive outcome. Despite the ebbing trend of voter turnout and the willingness of the electorate to vote, skewed delimitation exercises which time and again usher in gross new developments in the constituencies and ward mapping, appear to be another jab that dents voting in Zimbabwe. From this, lines of adverse correlation can be drawn between delimitation and voter apathy in Zimbabwe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Rational Theory presupposes that voters do a cost-benefit calculus of their presumed actions. In this regard, the electorate will turn out to cast their ballots when there is clear assurance that the benefits will outweigh the cost. It is, therefore, worth scrutinising the changes brought about by the delimitation exercise. The delimitation process is closely associated with changes and gerrymandering (if one political party has undue influence on the process). Do the changes increase costs and lower the benefits, which the voter is likely to incur? Are there any changes made by the delimitation exercise and how do these changes affect the cost or benefit of the concerned voter? These are fundamental questions that make the Rational Choice Theory pertinent in this discussion of the impact of delimitation on voter apathy in Zimbabwe.

The Rational Choice Theory explanations presuppose individual preferences, beliefs and constraints (Wittek, 2013). Preferences denote the positive or negative evaluations individuals attach to possible outcomes of their actions. Beliefs are the underlying dispositions which individuals have towards something. This influences or determines one's choice to take a particular action. Constraints are potential limitations that have higher chances of

increasing the cost and lowering the benefits in the face of a particular aspect. In this regard, the theory's explanations help to figure out and amplify the impact of delimitation on voter apathy in Zimbabwe and unpack the extent to which delimitation affects voters' preferences, beliefs and constraints. The individual action or decision to participate in an election through voting is inclined to rational thoughts enshrouded in preferences, beliefs and constraints. Therefore, the study utilised the Rational Choice Theory explanations to examine the impact of delimitation on voter apathy among Zimbabweans from 1980 to 2023. Findings are presented in subsequent paragraphs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Wu and Combs (2019) define delimitation as the process of political re-districting for elections. The process map constituencies and ward boundaries for elections of individuals into parliamentary seats and councillors for the wards (ZESN, 2017). Delimitation exercises for elections in Zimbabwe can be traced back to 1985 (Team Pachedu, 2023). In the past, the delimitation exercise or process was conducted by the Delimitation Commission appointed by the president (Makumbe, 2006; Lington, 2000; ZESN 2017;). For instance, in 2000, the delimitation process was facilitated by a commission appointed by the President. However, the process is alleged to have fallen short of delimitation credibility and unanimous support from stakeholders (ZESN, 2017). From Sachikonye's (2003) conception, the 2000 delimitation exercise culminated in the creation of 120 constituencies and was attacked and alleged to have fallen short of the litmus test of transparency and legitimacy. The same applies to the 2005 delimitation exercise, whereby the Delimitation Commission was criticised for manipulating electoral boundaries (Crisis Coalition, 2005; Ndoro, 2005).

The 2007/8 delimitation process not an exception as it was criticised for its inadequacy of consultation and people's participation (Rights

Watch, 2008; ZESN, 2017, Human; Team Pachedu, 2023). This delimitation exercise was supposed to be the last process guided by the old constitution. Several pitfalls were raised, including the creation of new constituencies not known to the voters and the failure of ZEC to run an effective educative campaign about the new changes and adjustments (ZESN, 2017). Despite all the pitfalls, the 2013 elections were held using the 2007/8 boundaries, resulting in the negative impact on voter turnout which signified undesirable voter apathy among the electorate.

The 2013 Constitution brought some changes on the way delimitation was conducted in terms of management and time frame. The delimitation exercise as per the 2013 Constitution can be conducted once every 10 years. This is important to map voting areas using current population patterns. Population distribution is not static but dynamic and it changes from time to time. Delimitation, therefore, is there to map and remap voting areas according to population changes (*ibid.*). It is now an established practice to conduct a delimitation process in Zimbabwe once every 10 years after a nationwide census survey (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013; ZSN, 2017). The essence of delimiting wards, constituencies and polling districts is to map the geographical area of registered voters and population distribution patterns and changes (ZESN, 2023). In conducting the mapping process, several factors must be considered, including population changes, lines of communication within a certain geographical area and the distribution pattern of registered voters. Wu and Combo (2019) and ZESN (2023) aver that the main objective of delimitation is to give current boundary mapping for an election.

A cursory analysis of the delimitation process and exercise in Zimbabwe indicates that the process used attracted massive condemnations and attacks and it rarely received praise and support (Lington, 2000; Makumbe, 2006; ZESN, 2017; Team Pachedu, 2023). This makes it an important factor that affects voter apathy - the

deliberate withdrawal of citizens from the electoral process either absolutely by not registering at all, or probably to get registered but not vote. Generally, Zimbabweans are pro-democracy and seriously engage in electoral and governance issues but the total number of registered voters and the voter turnout in elections depict a sense of growing voter apathy. This trend is very attributable to how the delimitation exercise is administered.

Taking voter turnout as an indicator of voter apathy in Zimbabwe, the records denote a noticeable level of citizens' withdrawal from the electoral process, especially from voting. In the 1979 elections, a low voter turnout was recorded at 1 852 772 out of an estimated voting population of 2.9 million, roughly 62% (Sithole and Makumbe, 1997). In 1996, a 31.7% voter turnout was recorded (Citizens in Action Southern Africa, 2022). After the condemned delimitation exercise by the Delimitation Commission, the voter turnout in 2005 was 47%. Following the questionable and criticised delimitation exercise of 2007/8, voter turnout was pegged at 42.7% in 2008 (Human Rights Watch, 2008). The 2013 elections were conducted using the delimitation pattern and results of 2007/8 and the voter turnout was below the expected standard. In the recent elections following the 2022 delimitation exercise, voter turnout was recorded to be 68.9% (The Cater Center, 2023). Voter turnout in Zimbabwe elections denotes voter apathy, typifying citizens' withdrawal from the electoral process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach is pertinent in this investigation of the impact of delimitation on voter apathy in Zimbabwe. This approach intends to answer the questions How and Why (Cresswell, 2019) the delimitation exercise has shown a negative correlation and impact on the already worrisome trend of voter apathy in Zimbabwe. To exhaustively respond to the How and Why questions, the study employs unstructured interviews, coupled with secondary data

analysis as the ways of gathering data. The investigation is a product of a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology deals with extracting a lived or encountered experience from the participants (Lester, 1999). In that respect, the article is an end-product of the conscious recording of the experiences of the voters or electorate from general elections to harmonised elections in Zimbabwe. The central idea was to gather data from eligible voters through phenomenology data collection means like interviews and storytelling. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants. A snowball sampling method, whereby the selected participants connect to other eligible participants, is used as a complementary sampling method. This is because the study focuses on the electorate and all eligible voters, investigating the impact of delimitation on their voting ways. The study prioritises eligible voters who failed to cast their ballot owing to the shift or changes brought about by the delimitation process in election times. Unstructured interviews are used to gather data from the participants. The study initiated an engaging conversation with the voters to get their experiences on elections rooted in the delimitation and shifting of polling stations and constituency boundaries and how they affect their voting patterns from the time that they become eligible voters up to 2023. Secondary data are used as complementary data to understand the impact of delimitation on voter apathy. The existing data are reassessed through desk re-examination to deduce the impact of delimitation on voter apathy. The study makes use of existing data including delimitation reports, audits and reviews of these by diverse stakeholders, journals and articles.

FINDINGS

Data in Table 1 show that there is a nexus between constituency delimitation and voter apathy problematique in Zimbabwe. Constituency delimitation is not insulated from other practices which negatively affect potential voters. As indicated in Table 1, constituency delimitation was persistently conducted in a way that

draws vicious and serious attacks from various sectors and inflicting a damage on voters, resulting in deliberate withdrawal and, therefore, worrisome voter apathy. For instance, the 1985 delimitation exercise was attacked for gerrymandering in Ndebele-Shona mix areas. The 1996 went the same route and condemned for lack of transparency and legitimacy. The nexus between the two are incisively discussed in the forthcoming paragraphs.

The results from the investigation of the constituency delimitation and the voter apathy problematique are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Constituency delimitation and voter apathy from 1980-2023 ((Author, 2024)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Constituency Delimitation Process and Results</i>	<i>Impact on Voter Apathy</i>
1980-2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delimitation exercise was conducted for the elections of 1985, 1996 and 2000. - In 1985, concerns about gerrymandering were recorded which allegedly led to the loss of ZAPU parliamentary seats in Ndebele-Shona mix areas. - The 2000 delimitation exercise was vehemently attacked due to an alleged lack of transparency and legitimacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1985 elections reflected a promising voter turnout. - 1996 elections recorded serious downtick in voter turnout put at 31.7%.
2001-2013	<p>The 2007/8 delimitation exercise was criticised for several reasons, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gerrymandering which favours the incumbent party strongholds. - Creation of new and unknown constituencies. - Failure to run an educative campaign about new developments. - 2013 election was conducted using the 2007/8 boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voter turnout in 2005 was 47%. - In 2008, voter turnout was 42.7%. - 2013 voter turnout was below the expected standard.

2014-2023	<div> <div>The 2022 delimitation exercise and process were attacked for:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to meet stakeholder expectations. - Creation, reconfiguration and collapse of constituencies followed by ineffective educative campaigns. - Alleged gerrymandering. </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant number of voters were affected by abrupt changes in re-districting. - Voter turnout to 68.9%, below the expected standard. </div>
-----------	--

The boundary mapping process since 1985 allegedly sets long distances for voters to some polling stations as a result of gerrymandering. Distance is a key factor in the voter’s decision-making process, after they weigh the cost and benefit of the action. This means that the decision of the voter to vote is a product of rational choice, reached after calculation of the cost and benefit incurred. The delimitation of 2000 allegedly created more constituencies in the ruling party strongholds, whereas in other areas, few constituencies were created (Makumbe, 2006). The 2007/8 delimitation process was the same and also allegedly failed to run educative campaigns. As a result, voter turnout was low at 47.2 % in the first phase of the elections and even precipitously low in the re-run phase. The recent delimitation conduct sets long distances between the voters and their polling stations. A polling station allocated to voters 50 kilometres away from the voters in Mutoko is a case in point (ZEC, 2022). This possibly was done in violation of section 22A (2) of the Electoral Act which states that, “ZEC shall consult all interested parties when determining the location of polling stations and their areas.” The disparity between registered voters and the voter turnout in Mutoko can be attributed to the distance. Generally, Zimbabwe is accustomed to a series of gerrymandering in the boundary mapping process which, in the end, generates irregularities in the face of the electorate. Distance affects the rational choice of the voters and, as such, the longer the distance to and from the polling site, the lower the chances of voters to take action and the opposite is equally true. This means that delimitation,

like other factors, adversely affecting people's interest in electoral politics, especially in voting.

It is important to note that there is a strong correlation between distance and disinterest (voter apathy) in the matrix of voter's calculus. By awarding long distances between polling stations and voters, the delimitation exercise generates disinterest among the voters typified by unexpected a low voter turnout. In other words, a long distance generates disinterest from a rational choice perspective and the delimitation exercise by inconsistently setting long distances between the voters and polling stations in the play of gerrymandering stands to be a factor in the growing trend of voter apathy in Zimbabwe.

The delimitation exercise has a tendency of creating new constituencies, wards and polling stations. The 2007/8 delimitation process did create new patterns and ZEC allegedly failed to run effective educative campaigns. In 2022, delimitation introduced several changes, for instance, two new constituencies, Churu and Hunyani, were created in Harare South while the Kambuzuma and Warren Park constituencies collapsed (ZEC, 2022). These changes move some voters from their traditional polling stations to the new ones. Some of these changes are abrupt and usher in a new experience. Changes in boundary mapping which result in the creation of new wards or polling stations resulting in bringing in affected people's preferences generally, leading to disinterest - a manifestation of voter apathy. Delimitation processes that adjust or reconfigure wards and constituencies, ought to retain traditional patterns which, on average, make polling stations accessible, convenient and flexible for the voters.

Naturally, people live by the form of social connection which creates a sense of social box defining a common society. People's aspirations, choices and preferences are inseparable from the social

boxes. This is directly intertwined with the common and basic form of *Ubuntu/Hunhu*. Delimitation through creating new wards, polling stations and boundaries attempts to disintegrate this socially built relation sanctified by the common and similar behaviour, especially towards a certain aspect. For instance, in the 2022 delimitation process, the reconfiguration of the Budiriro Constituency into two distinct constituencies, that is, Budiriro North and Budiriro South (ZEC, 2023) and voters were moved from their usual traditional places, breaking social ties associated with their voting behaviour, into new constituencies. This has an adverse impact on voter turnout. Disinterest comes as a result of the change of voting area - it prompts voters not to vote because they feel socially affected, separated, with the change of preferences which comes with new faces. This denotes that delimitation, if conducted in a way that affects historical social ties among the voters, can affect the interest of the electorate to cast their ballots, overall reflecting a high sense of voter apathy.

The delimitation processes in Zimbabwe since 1980 seem to follow the political art of creating loyal constituencies to the ruling party. Lington (2000), as cited in Makumbe (2006: 52) argues that in the past, the Delimitation Commission had been accused of being used by ZANU-PF to ensure that the Zezuru-dominated provinces would always have more seats in Parliament than the Karanga-, Manyika- and Ndebele-dominated ones. This political ploy of creating loyal constituencies was again cited in the 2007/8 elections (ZESN, 2017). The creation of loyal constituencies one way or the other disadvantaged the electorate. As pointed out by Rational Choice thinkers, the electorate is theoretical human beings and their actions are largely determined by the cost-benefit calculus for the sake of maximising utility. The intersection of loyalty and disloyalty in the mapping of boundaries affects voter turnout directly and indirectly, hence the result is the deliberate withdrawal of the electorate from voting as evidenced by the low turnout in past elections.

There is glaring mistrust that new cities and expansion of urban into peri-urban zones nowadays are motivated by the quest and thirst of authorities to develop new loyal zones that are partly urban, resonating with the rural and farms set-up. A typical example is the recent delimitation exercise added three new constituencies to the old one Epworth Constituency, which are Epworth North, Epworth South and Hunyani (ZEC, 2022). Such instances of creating loyal constituencies through gerrymandering increase voter apathy. To create loyal constituencies, some areas are forged into the accumulation zones, thereby creating long distances for the voters to reach the polling stations. Due to disloyalty, other people or areas are separated into a distinct zone.

The creation of loyal constituencies by the ruling party presupposes the expansion of rurality and the decrease in urbanity. In this case, the redistricting pattern favours the expansion and encroachment of the urban boundary lines into rural areas and farms under the banner of new cities (Muqayi, 2023). This intentionally worsens voter apathy by suppressing urban votes and offering leeway for rural or new cities' participation. In the recent harmonised elections, this scenario was exacerbated by the election day jams and challenges. The intersection of the loyal and the disloyal areas in the constituency and ward mapping present the faces of a coin, no matter what side, the intersection generates a sense of disinterest among the voters.

As already pointed out in the above sections, the delimitation exercise intends to map new boundaries that can speak to the current population for an election. In this respect, the delimitation conduct should grant equal opportunity for everyone to cast a ballot in line with the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 1980/2013). The process allocates an appropriate number of voters to a particular polling pool such that every citizen has the chance to vote. In the matrix of creating, configuring and collapsing constituencies. Since 1980, several writers, commentators and

opposition political parties have accused the delimitation governing bodies and the ruling party of this practice.

Opposition political parties have also accused the Delimitation Commission of gerrymandering in the drawing up of some urban constituencies (Makumbe and Compagnon 2000; Makumbe, 2006:52). Makumbe (2006) further argues that this practice was most pronounced during the 2000 parliamentary elections after the ruling party had noticed that most urban voters had become hostile to it, while the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) commanded strong support in such areas. In the 2007/8 delimitation process, the Delimitation Commission was criticised for creating polling stations that were not known to the electorate and failure to run an effective education and awareness programme for the voters (ZESN, 2017). This has been a skewed mechanism of disenfranchising other voters, especially the urban voters, while making easier for the rural people. The creation of unknown polling sites and constituencies, coupled with the absence of effective voter education, amounts to marginalising voters. The delimitation process ought to be conducted in a double-blind manner so that no single party can have undue influence on the process.

The same applies to the delimitation conduct of 2022 for the preparation of the 2023 harmonised elections as ZEC tended to create more barriers for voters to participate in the election process. For the youth, this appeared to be another sharp jab to the already shrinking political space owing to violence, lack of information and other barriers (ZESN, 2019). As evidenced by the delimitation report, during boundary redistricting, some people were moved from their traditional voting areas to new polling stations due to serious changes that resulted in the collapse and reconfiguration of their constituencies and ward boundaries. The most impacting issue was the matter of distance to the polling sites which then appeared to be the fashion of disenfranchising through other means. Youths saw the

distance to polling stations, coupled with the voting jam of 23 August 2023, as serious restriction in the voting pattern. Delimitation exercises which culminate in the creation of new constituencies and polling sites that are too distant from voters can be explained as disenfranchising which causes deliberate withdrawal of voters from voting. This speaks to the direct impact of delimitation on voter apathy in Zimbabwe. In as much as the voters may have a deep desire to vote, the created circumstances and barriers under the banner of redistricting infuse resentment, antipathy and apathy.

DISCUSSION

Zimbabwe has a long history of delimitation exercises, with the recent one conducted in 2022 in preparation for the harmonised elections of August 2023. There are abundant arguments that support the 2022 delimitation exercise, stating that the process was conducted at an appropriate time, denoting superlative timing about the census survey of 2022 which gives a fresh and exact demographic distribution pattern of Zimbabwe. In line with the functions and fundamentals of the delimitation exercise, the 2022 delimitation process was meant to reflect on the current population distribution to produce accurate and reliable wards and constituencies. The challenge, as the article seeks to investigate, arises when the delimitation exercise largely correlates with an increase in voter apathy. This means that the delimitation process is associated with certain practices by default or as a motivated dexterous political tact that generates disinterest among voters to cast their ballot. This can be phenomenologically traced from the delimitation process of 1985 up to the recent one of 2022. In the electoral history of Zimbabwe, the gap between registered voters and voter turnout becomes a worrisome trend not to be ignored. This appears to be an indication of voter apathy which, in simple terms, can be measured by the degree of disinterest among the electorate to vote. The increase of voter apathy among Zimbabweans can now be fairly attributable to the delimitation trends. Boundary mapping and re-districting for

elections turn out to be a practice that ushered in new changes, complicities and new developments in the face of the voters. Therefore, some of the developments, in turn, create disinterest among the registered voters to cast their ballots. This culminates in an unexpected voter apathy. The delimitation processes conducted since 1980, have a tendency to bring new interesting things and maintain old tendencies which taint the process and, thereby, attracting massive attacks and critics. The processes create new constituencies and make changes to wards and polling stations. The whole process is alleged to be not free from political influences and gerrymandering. This renders the process, a process to worsen the worrisome trend of voter apathy in Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the presentation above denotes that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between delimitation and voter apathy in Zimbabwe. The literature that surrounds the delimitation pattern in Zimbabwe presents the process as beleaguered and fails to get civil society and public support time and time again. Since 1985, the delimitation exercise has been subject to criticism and not free from the allegations of gerrymandering. From this perspective, it is then fair to conclude that delimitation and the way it was administered is more of a political tool to influence the electoral outcome. From this line of argument, it is worth presenting delimitation as one of the causes of voter apathy in Zimbabwe. This claim makes sense from the Rational Choice Theory explanations - how delimitation was conducted by making abrupt changes through the creation, configuration and collapsing of constituencies for the sake of loyalty and disloyalty demonstrates the potential to increase the cost and lower the benefit for the voters' action of casting a ballot. The study establishes that delimitation indeed impacted voter apathy in Zimbabwe, through various ways, including distance, disenfranchisement through playing the card of loyalty and disloyalty in the mapping process and adversely impacted preferences through

the play on people and geography. As indicated in all delimitation conducts since 1980, delimitation is another cause of voter apathy in Zimbabwe, making people withdraw from the electoral process.

The study proposes the model and framework for the exercise of delimitation which in its complete manifestation, denotes delimitation as the intersection of tradition, distance and an intricate relationship between people and geography. In this respect, the delimitation exercise and its immediate deliverables, *ipso facto* components. The electoral governing body, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, in future delimitation exercises, should be guided by the key components which should not be altered, extensively changed, or compromised. These components make the cost-benefit calculus matrix of the voters from which they decide whether or not to cast a ballot. Figure shows fundamental factors that need to be considered in delimitation processes.

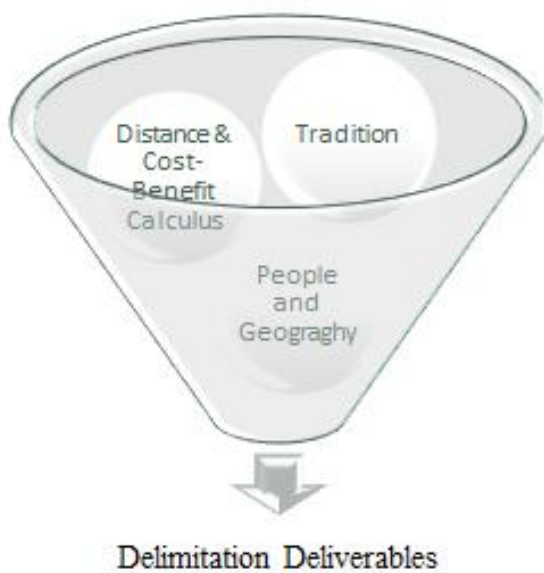


Figure 1: Delimitation Fundamentals (Author, 2024)

The study, is therefore recommending that ZEC, in its exercise of boundary mapping for polling stations, should take into consideration distance. As observed in the discussion above, distance is an important factor in people's rational choices or decisions in their voting patterns. In crafting and mapping polling stations, ZEC should avoid long distances between polling stations and voters. Polling stations ought to be close to the voters such that the cost incurred by the voters to go and vote will be reduced and the benefits will be maximised. In addition, the study recommends that in the event of boundary mapping because of population changes, ZEC should take into consideration historically existing social ties. People live in circles which are social boxes and their views and opinions are largely influenced by these boxes at large. Abrupt changes that potentially disintegrate the boxes adversely affect a shared view towards something or representatives or preferences in this case. New polling stations, wards and constituencies can be created in line with existing social convergences in a bid to gather people's collective interests. People are strongly married to their traditional ways, the same for voters, who are strongly married to their traditional polling stations and areas. Delimitation exercises and pattern need to be conducted in an impartial manner which gives each voter equal access and opportunity to voting. Gerrymandering is a toxic political play that makes not only the system to be flawed, but it also usurps the fundamental right of all citizens to vote.

REFERENCES

- Chikumbu, A and Chikwaza, D. A. (2021). The Truth behind Voter Apathy in Zimbabwe, Vanguard Africa Foundation. Available online: www.vanguardafrica.com
- Chiroro, B. (2005). Apathy, Fatigue or Boycott? An Analysis of the 2005 Zimbabwe Senate Elections, EISA. Available online: <https://www.eisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ocassional-paper-2005->

- Citizens in Action Southern Africa (2022). Understanding Voter Apathy in Zimbabwe. Available online: <https://kubatana.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Understanding-voter-apathy-in-Zimbabwe-1-1.pdf>.
- Crisis Coalition (2005). Burying Blair. The 2005 post-election report. Available online: <http://archive.kubatana.net>
- Human Rights Watch (2008). All Over Again, Human Rights Abuses and Flawed Electoral Conditions in the Coming General Elections 20(2). Available online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/03/19/all-over-again/human-rights-abuses-and-flawed-electoral-conditions-zimbabwes>.
- Kubatana (2022). Understanding Voter Apathy in Zimbabwe, Kubatana.net, 4 April 2022. Available online: <https://kubatana.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Understandingvoter-apathy-in-Zimbabwe-1-1.pdf>
- Lester, S. (1999). 'An introduction to phenomenological research,' Taunton UK, Stan Lester Developments Available online: www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf
- Lington, G. (2000). Zimbabwe. In: Blanpain, R. (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Laws*. London: Kluwer Law International.
- Makumbe, J and Compagnon, D. (2000). *Behind the Smokescreen: The 1995 General Elections in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Makumbe, J. (2006). Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe: Authoritarianism Versus the People. *Africa Development*, XXXI(3), 45-61
- Muquyi, S. (2023). *The Route Towards 2023 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe*, University of Zimbabwe. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Press
- Ndoro, C. (2005). The Politics of the 2005 Parliamentary Elections in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Elections*, 4(2), 74-90.
- Sachikonye, L. (2003). The Electoral System and Democratization in Zimbabwe since 1980. *Journal of African Elections*, 2(1), Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa. Available online: <https://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/>

- Sithole, M and Makumbe, J. (1997). *Elections in Zimbabwe: The ZANU (PF) Hegemony and its Incipient Decline*. Michigan: Michigan State University.
- Team Pachedu (2023). Abridged Audit Report of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's 2022 Preliminary Delimitation Report.
- Witteck, R. (2013). *Rational Choice Theory*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Wu, P. Y., & Combs, A. B. (2019). Geographic information system for and against gerrymandering. In: *Proceedings of the Conference on Information Systems Applied Research ISSN* (Vol. 2167, p. 1508). Available online: <https://www.academia.edu/download/79463041/5218.pdf>.
- Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) (2017). 2018 or 2023: A Summary of the Two Opinions on Delimitation in Zimbabwe.
- Zimbabwe Election Support Network, (2019). Youth Participation in Elections and Governance Processes: The Case for Zimbabwe Available online: <https://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ZESN-Position-Paper-on-Youth-Participation-in-Elections-and-Governance-Processes-in-Zimbabwe.pdf>