

The role of civic education in fighting electoral violence: A case study of Chadiza Constituency, Zambia (2011–2021)

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand the role of civic education in fighting electoral violence in Chadiza Constituency between 2011 and 2021. It was guided by three objectives: to explore how civic education shapes voters' attitudes toward peaceful participation in elections; to identify civic education initiatives in the community that may help to mitigate electoral violence; and to understand how civic education prevents electoral violence. The study was informed by greedy and grievance theory to interpret how material incentives and perceived injustices interact with knowledge gained through civic learning. A qualitative case study design, grounded in constructivist philosophical assumptions, was employed to capture lived experiences and shared meanings. From a target population of 44,750 registered voters, 15 participants were purposively selected, with the final sample determined by data saturation. Data were generated through interviews, focus group discussion, and document review, which were later analyzed thematically. Findings indicate that provision of sustained civic education by Electoral Management Bodies and stakeholders would lead to increased awareness of rights, reduced suspicions and intimidation, strengthened community mediation, and promoted tolerance. However, limited scholarly attention was identified as a knowledge gap among some youth and party supporters. The study concludes that civic education can help mitigate electoral violence when combined with local community partnerships and law enforcement agencies' coordination.

Keywords: Civic Education, Constructivism, Chadiza Constituency, Experience, Perception, Zambia

I. INTRODUCTION

In this study, civic education is the main explanatory (independent) variable. It refers to structured and informal efforts that build citizens' knowledge, values, and skills for democratic participation. This includes voter education campaigns, community meetings, school-based civic learning, and messages from civil society or electoral bodies. Analytically, civic education can be unpacked into dimensions such as: Civic knowledge brings understanding of rights, laws, and procedures, Civic values exposes tolerance, respect for divergent views, non-violence while Civic skills emphasizes dialogue, critical evaluation of political messages, peaceful participation (Muleya, 2018, p.27). These dimensions matter because they shape how citizens interpret political competition and how they respond to mobilization by elites. A stronger civic foundation is theorized to reduce unwanted behaviour and misinformation, thereby lowering the likelihood of violent engagement.

The dependent side captures the outcomes civic education is expected to influence. Here, electoral violence is not only physical conflict but also threats, intimidation, and hostile political behavior. The study also treats voter attitudes and mindsets as outcomes, since these are precursors to behavior (Birch, 2020, p.31). Key aspects include: Acceptance of violence as political strategy, Perceptions of elections as zero-sum contests, Willingness to engage peacefully despite disagreement, Trust in electoral processes and institutions. Within a qualitative case study, these variables are explored through perceptions and lived experiences rather than numeric measurement. Participants' narratives reveal whether exposure to civic education corresponds with greater restraint, dialogue, and peaceful participation. In short, the study assumes that when civic education is meaningful and well handled, it can reshape norms and expectations around elections, which in turn reduces tolerance for violence and supports more peaceful democratic engagement.

Electoral violence remains a persistent challenge in many emerging democracies, often undermining political participation, public trust, and the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. In contexts where political competition is intense and institutions are still consolidating, elections can become flash points for conflict rather than channels for peaceful leadership transition (Birch, 2020). In Zambia, experiences of electoral tension at constituency level between 2011 and 2021 have raised concerns about the social and political costs of violence, including fear among voters, reduced turnout, and strained community relations. These patterns highlight the need for non-coercive strategies that address

attitudes, knowledge, and norms surrounding elections. Civic education has increasingly been recognized as one such strategy. By equipping citizens with knowledge about rights, responsibilities, electoral procedures, and peaceful political engagement, civic education can strengthen democratic culture and resilience against manipulation and misinformation (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-[UNESCO], 2019). Scholars argue that when voters understand the value of tolerance, rule of law, and issue-based politics, they are less likely to support or engage in electoral aggression (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Moreover, community-based civic learning can create shared norms that discourage violence and encourage dialogue.

This article examines the role of civic education in fighting electoral violence in Chadiza constituency from 2011 to 2021. It is guided by three objectives: to explore how civic education shapes voter attitudes, to understand community perceptions of civic education, and to analyze how civic education can prevent electoral violence and transform mindsets. Using a qualitative case study design, the study draws on in-depth narratives and lived experiences to capture how citizens interpret and apply civic messages in real electoral contexts. A qualitative approach is suitable because it allows attention to meanings, perceptions, and social interactions that quantitative indicators may miss. By focusing on local experiences, this study contributes to a grounded understanding of how civic education operates at grassroots level and how it can be refined to promote peaceful elections. Insights from this case speak to broader debates on democratic consolidation and violence prevention, particularly in societies where electoral competition intersects with social and economic grievances (International Institute for Democracy Electoral Assistance-IDEA, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Elections are meant to be peaceful and help smooth transition of authority from one person to the other. However, elections in Zambia of late has been marred by violence (Kawila et al., 2023, p.3), recurring incidents of electoral violence continue to challenge the legitimacy and credibility of its electoral processes, particularly in rural constituencies (Sishuwa, 2022, p.28) such as Chadiza. Between 2011 and 2021, the area witnessed persistent political tension, voter intimidation, and violent clashes (Electoral Commission of Zambia -ECZ, 2021, p.9), reflecting deeper socio-political undercurrents that remain poorly understood. The problem is that there are minimal or limited number of literature documentation to capture experiences and perspectives of voters in Chadiza constituency to localize contextual dynamics of such violence impedes effective policy interventions. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the role civic education play in fighting underlying elements that promotes electoral violence in Chadiza Constituency to inform conflict-resolution electoral governance strategies.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. Explore how civic education shapes voters' attitudes toward peaceful participation in elections;
- ii. Identify civic education initiatives in the community that may help to mitigate electoral violence;
- iii. Understand how civic education prevents electoral violence.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Greed and Grievance Theory

A robust theoretical framework is essential in analyzing the complex phenomenon of electoral violence. In this article, the Greed and Grievance theory offers a compelling lens through which the causes, motivations, and manifestations of electoral violence can be explored, particularly within the context of Chadiza Constituency between 2011 and 2021. Originally developed by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) in the study of civil wars, the theory has since been adapted to other forms of conflict, including electoral violence in democratic and semi-democratic states. This section looks at the foundational ideas of the theory, its critiques, and its application to the context of electoral violence in Zambia, with specific reference to Chadiza.

2.1.2 Origins of the Greed and Grievance Theory

The Greed and Grievance theory was first introduced to explain the causes of civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa. In their research, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) posited that rebellion and armed conflict are often driven less by political ideology or historical injustices (grievances) and more by economic motivations and the opportunity to profit (greed). This argument was both controversial and innovative, challenging the dominant narrative that conflicts arise primarily from social or political marginalization. The theory suggests that individuals or groups weigh the costs and benefits of violent engagement. When the perceived rewards such as access to resources, political power, or control over lucrative territories outweigh the risks, conflict becomes more likely. Greed-driven violence is thus rational and strategic, occurring in environments where state control is weak, resources are exploitable, and opportunities for gain exist. In contrast, the grievance component of the theory emphasizes socio-political and economic inequalities. .

2.1.3 Electoral Violence through the Lens of Greed Grievance

Applying the concept of “greed” to electoral violence involves understanding the political and economic incentives that compel individuals or groups to use violence to influence electoral outcomes. Politicians in fragile democracies often see access to state power as a direct route to personal enrichment or patronage networks. This is particularly evident in systems where public resources are not managed transparently and where political office becomes a means to accumulate wealth (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In Chadiza, political competition for parliamentary seats is intense, not merely for ideological representation but because elected officials gain influence over resource allocation, public contracts, and development projects. The possibility of securing these benefits can motivate candidates and their supporters to use coercive tactics such as intimidating rivals, bribing electoral officers, or inciting violence among youth to secure victory. Cheeseman (2019) show that in many African democracies, young people engage in electoral violence as a form of political entrepreneurship, seeking short-term economic gains in exchange for loyalty to powerful figures.

The grievance dimension of the theory is equally relevant in understanding electoral violence in Chadiza. Many communities in the constituency face structural inequalities such as lack of infrastructure, limited access to education, unemployment, and perceptions of ethnic or regional marginalization. These conditions breed resentment and distrust of political elites. When communities feel excluded from meaningful participation in governance or believe that the electoral system is manipulated in favor of certain candidates or regions, violence may be seen as a legitimate response—grievance-based violence.

2.1.4 Intersection of Greed and Grievance

Importantly, many scholars argue that greed and grievance are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they often interact and reinforce each other. In electoral settings, political actors may manipulate legitimate grievances for personal gain mobilizing ethnic or regional sentiments to incite violence that benefits their campaign (Ugwonna et al., 2025). This hybrid approach is particularly relevant in Zambia, where politics is deeply interwoven with ethnic affiliations and regional loyalties. In Chadiza, candidates have occasionally used rhetoric that plays on historical grievances or socioeconomic frustration to galvanize support while simultaneously offering material incentives to cadres. Thus, violence is both emotionally and materially motivated a blend of outrage and opportunism. Birch, (2020) emphasizes that understanding electoral violence requires a dual lens: acknowledging how systemic inequalities and historical injustices provide the fuel, while political opportunism provides the spark. In this context, the Greed and Grievance framework allows for an integrated understanding of both structural and agency-based explanations of violence.

However no matter how good an idea may be it goes through purification of critiques. While influential, the Greed and Grievance theory is not without its criticisms. One of the main critiques is its oversimplification of complex conflicts into binary categories (Nathan, 2011). Critics argue that the theory underestimates the ideological, cultural, and psychological dimensions of violence, focusing instead on rational calculations of cost and benefit.

Despite these critiques, the Greed and Grievance framework remains valuable for this study due to its flexibility and explanatory power. It provides a structured way to analyze both individual and collective motivations for violence, while allowing room for contextual interpretation. In Chadiza, the framework helps unpack why youth may be drawn to violent political mobilization (greed), and why communities may tolerate or even support such violence when they feel politically or economically marginalized (grievance). The theory also provides a bridge between micro-level experiences and macro-level structures aligning well with the case study design and qualitative methodology of this research. By situating the analysis within the Greed and Grievance framework, this study seeks to move beyond deterministic explanations of electoral violence, offering a nuanced, empirically grounded understanding of the phenomena as it plays out in rural Zambia.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Civic Education in Shaping Voters’ Attitudes toward Peaceful Participation in Elections

Empirical literature posit that civic education have a great function in forming voter attitudes and promoting peaceful electoral processes. Within the framework of the Greed and Grievance Theory, electoral violence is often explained as a result of material incentives (greed) and perceived injustices or marginalization (grievances). Civic education interventions therefore seek to confront these drivers by promoting democratic values, tolerance, and awareness of electoral rights and responsibilities.

Empirical studies show that civic education plays a critical role in shaping voters’ attitudes toward peaceful political engagement. Donbavand and Hoskins (2021), in their systematic review of controlled trials on citizenship education, found that civic education programmes significantly increase citizens’ political knowledge, democratic values, and tolerance for opposing political views. These competencies coerce citizens to participate responsibly in political processes. This aims to mitigate the likelihood of resorting to violence during elections. The study concludes

that civic education fosters respect for democratic procedures and strengthens citizens' commitment to peaceful electoral participation.

Similarly, Chivunda and Mupeta (2023) demonstrate that civic education in Zambia, particularly when delivered through the framework of global citizenship education, promotes responsible citizenship and awareness of democratic rights and obligations. Their findings indicate that civic learning enhances critical thinking and encourages voters to resolve political differences through dialogue rather than confrontation. As a result, civic education contributes to shaping positive voter attitudes that support peaceful electoral conduct.

Past research allude that civic education helps shape voters' behaviour towards peaceful elections by improving political awareness and encouraging democratic participation. According to Bratton (2019), voter education programs that emphasise democratic norms, respect for political diversity, and peaceful dispute resolution significantly reduce the likelihood of electoral conflicts. Similarly, research in Zambia by Sishuwa Sishuwa found that civic education campaigns conducted by civil society organizations helped voters understand electoral procedures and discouraged participation in politically motivated violence (Sishuwa, 2022). These initiatives help voters interpret electoral competition as a democratic process rather than a struggle for survival, thereby weakening grievance-based mobilization.

2.2.2 Civic Education Initiatives in the Community Assisting in Mitigation of Electoral Violence

Empirical studies also highlight several civic education initiatives that contribute to mitigating electoral violence. Civic forums, community dialogues, radio programmes, and voter awareness campaigns have been widely used in African democracies to disseminate information about peaceful participation. The African Union (2021) reports that civic education initiatives implemented before elections, including community peace campaigns and youth engagement programs, have proven effective in reducing tensions in politically contested areas. Likewise, the Electoral Commission of Zambia has collaborated with civil society organizations to conduct voter sensitization campaigns that emphasize peaceful conduct during elections (Bratton, 2019). Such initiatives help counter greed-driven manipulation by political elites who mobilize supporters for violent political gains.

Empirical literature also highlights the role of community-based civic education initiatives in reducing electoral tensions and violence. Chivunda and Mupeta (2023) note that civic education programmes implemented by schools, civil society organizations, and community institutions in Zambia focus on voter awareness, peaceful coexistence, and the importance of democratic participation. These initiatives create platforms for dialogue and political tolerance within communities, helping to counter misinformation and political manipulation that often trigger electoral violence.

In the same length, recent studies on citizenship education suggest that sustained community engagement through civic education strengthens democratic culture at the grassroots level. Cheeseman (2019) highlighted that civic education programmes that involve community participation and interactive learning methods are particularly effective in promoting peaceful political engagement. Such initiatives build trust among citizens and encourage collective responsibility for maintaining peace during electoral periods.

2.2.3 Civic Education in Prevent Electoral Violence

Empirical evidence further hints that civic education serves as a preventive factor against electoral violence. This works through empowering citizens with democratic competencies and promoting inclusive political participation. Weinberg (2022) avails evidence that civic education reduces inequalities in political participation by equipping individuals—especially marginalized groups—with the knowledge and confidence needed to engage meaningfully in political processes. This empowerment reduces vulnerability to political incitement and manipulation that can escalate into electoral conflict.

Moreover, civic education encourages citizens to understand electoral rules, democratic institutions, and the importance of peaceful dispute resolution. In the opinion of Birch (2020), situations whereby individuals possess strong civic knowledge and democratic values, they are more likely to reject violence as a political strategy. Therefore, civic education not only enhances democratic participation but also contributes to long-term conflict prevention by fostering informed, tolerant, and responsible citizens.

To this end, civic education contributes to preventing electoral violence by empowering citizens with knowledge about democratic institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms. Research by Sarah Birch argues that informed citizens are less susceptible to political manipulation and more likely to resolve electoral disputes through institutional channels rather than violence (Birch, 2020). As such, handling grievances related to exclusion, misinformation, and mistrust in electoral institutions, civic education strengthens democratic culture and promotes tolerance among competing political groups.

Overall, empirical evidence suggests that civic education functions as a preventive mechanism against electoral violence by shaping peaceful voter attitudes, supporting community-based initiatives, and addressing the structural drivers of conflict explained by the greed and grievance framework.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative methodology grounded in the constructivist paradigm, which assumes that social reality is co-created through interaction and interpretation. A case study design was used to enable an in-depth exploration of how voters understand and experience electoral processes and related tensions within Chadiza Constituency. The target population comprised 44,750 registered voters. From this population, a purposive sample of 30 participants was selected based on their knowledge, experiences, and willingness to share perspectives on elections and civic life. Sample size was guided by the principle of data saturation, whereby recruitment stopped when no substantially new insights were emerging. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document review of electoral reports and civic education materials. Interviews were conducted in familiar community settings to encourage open reflection. All conversations were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. Coding followed an inductive process that allowed categories to emerge from participants' meanings. To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability strategies, including member checking, thick description, and an audit trail. Ethical principles included voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants at all times. The Greedy and Grievance theory played a vital role in guiding the study whose sample was determined by data saturation point.

3.1 Demographics

The study demography comprised of mixed age group, occupation, duration of residence in Chadiza Constituency, qualifications and level of participation in elections conducted by Electoral Commission of Zambia as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

Feature	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender (Participants n=30)	Men	12	40
	Women	18	60
Age (Participants n=30)	18-24	03	10
	25-34	02	07
	35-44	08	27
	45-54	11	36
	55-64	04	13
	65 and above	02	07
Occupation (Participants n=30)	Civic education teachers	05	17
	Politicians	07	22
	Traditional leaders	02	07
	Civic leaders	03	10
	Civil Society Organization	04	13
	Taxi drivers	05	17
	Health personnel	02	07
	Police officers	02	07
Duration of Residence in Chadiza (years) (Participants n=30)	5-14	01	03
	15-24	06	20
	25-34	04	13
	35-44	12	40
	45-54	03	10
	55-64	02	07
Highest Academic Qualification (Participants n=30)	Junior Secondary	02	07
	Senior Secondary	28	93
Professional Qualification (Participants n=30)	Trade School	03	10
	College level	20	68
	University level	07	22
Level of Participation in Elections (Participants n=30)	Voter only	19	63
	Aspiring Candidate and Voter	11	37

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

Thirty (30) participants contributed to generation of study data which was later thematically analysed. Ages were widely distributed to avoid bias, with 20% of the participants in the senior citizens age group who were above 55 or older which accounted for one third of people with massive experience in Political system in Zambia. A group of interest for this project were youth represented by five of thirty (17%), who helped to understand reasons for high prevalence levels of violence during elections. The project thus did well in attracting participants from a wide range within Chadiza Constituency, leading to better understanding and achieving the principle of triangulation. Reaching such people is important in the context of low general population knowledge, and high percentages of illiteracy in the constituency that hosted the study. The researchers emphasised on knowledgeable sample.

The findings show a clear causal pathway: as the intensity and quality of civic education increased, reported tolerance, patience with electoral procedures, and trust in institutions also increased, while acceptance of violence declined. Participants noted that learning about conflict resolution and democratic values encouraged them to view elections as competitive but peaceful processes. This supports the argument that informed citizens are less likely to engage in or justify violence because they better understand the long-term costs of instability and the legitimacy of legal remedies. These results align with social learning perspectives, which suggest that people adopt peaceful behaviors when they are modeled and reinforced through education (Bandura, 1977) as classic information. They also echo institutional arguments that voter education strengthens electoral integrity and reduces conflict (International IDEA, 2021). Similarly, UNESCO emphasizes that civic education builds critical thinking and participation norms that discourage violence.

Overall, the research demonstrates that civic education is not merely informative but transformative. By improving political literacy and promoting democratic norms, it reduces the likelihood of electoral violence and fosters peaceful participation. Strengthening continuous, locally grounded civic education programs can therefore be an effective strategy for violence prevention before, during, and after elections. In Chadiza, evidence suggests that communities with consistent civic education showed better knowledge of procedures and greater resistance to manipulation by political elites (Sishuwa, 2022). Chadiza has hosted civic education programmes by the ECZ, through clubs in selected local secondary schools, NGOs such as FODEP, and faith-based groups. These actors rely on methods like public meetings, radio discussions, and posters in local languages. A local headman observed during an interview:

“When ECZ officers came to our area, people understood better. They explained how to vote step by step. This reduced suspicion that someone would steal our votes.” (Participant 4, Interview, Chadiza, 02.08.2025).

Similarly, teachers integrated civic messages into student clubs:

“We taught pupils not only about voting but also about peace. They carried this message to their families.” (Participant 11, Teacher, FGD, 07.08.2025).

Faith-based organisations were also critical:

“As a church, we preach peace during elections. We remind people that violence is not Christian and it destroys our community.” (Participant 6, Church Leader, Chadiza, 01.08.2025).

These testimonies illustrate how civic education penetrated different layers of the community, shaping attitudes beyond election day.

4.2 Mechanisms Through Which Civic Education Mitigates Electoral Violence

4.2.1 Improved Procedural Knowledge

Lack of information about eligibility, registration, and vote counting often generates suspicion. Rumours that results are manipulated can provoke clashes. Civic education that clarifies electoral procedures reduces misinformation and voter frustration (The Carter Center, 2021, p.87). In Chadiza, participants who attended ECZ workshops expressed confidence in the voting process and hesitant to join confrontations.

4.2.2 Norm-Building and Non-Violence

Civic education helps internalize democratic norms such as tolerance of defeat, respect for due process, and acceptance of institutional dispute resolution (Bratton, 2019, p.73). Faith leaders and traditional chiefs in Chadiza played a crucial role in embedding such norms, often mediating disputes by invoking values learned from civic sessions.

4.2.3 Conflict-Resolution and Grievance Channels

Electoral disputes are inevitable, but violence occurs when citizens see no legitimate avenues for redress. Civic education that outlines the complaint process (through ECZ tribunals or courts) reduces the temptation to use

street protests or violence (Electoral Technical Resource Centre- ERTC, 2020, p.104). In Chadiza, awareness of these mechanisms encouraged citizens to pursue formal complaints

4.2.4 Youth Engagement

Zambian elections are often characterized by youth violence, driven by unemployment and party patronage (Sishuwa, 2020, p.35). Civic education targeting youth through schools in recent initiated school clubs such as voter education school club (VESC) an initiative of Electoral Commission of Zambia, football clubs, and youth forums has reduced recruitment into violent party structures. In Chadiza, young people trained as voter education facilitators (VEF) in dissemination of information, leadership and dialogue skills through voter education workshops organized by Electoral Commission of Zambia country wide, acted as peace ambassadors during the 2025 voter education registration campaign.

4.2.5 Media Literacy

In rural constituencies like Chadiza, radio is the main information source. It is for this reason Chadiza district opened its first ever community radio station called Chiyambi radio on 16th December, 2025. Civic education promoting media literacy enables communities to resist misinformation. During the 2021 elections, civic educators in Chadiza encouraged verification of information with trusted authorities, which reduced rumour-driven clashes (Zambia Electoral Analysis Project - ZEAP, 2022, p.45). Civic education clarifies voting procedures, reducing rumours. A young voter explained:

“Before civic education, some of us thought if your candidate loses, the results are changed. But after training, I knew how counting is done, and I accepted the results.” (FP 15, Youth FGD, Chadiza, 05.08.2025).

This confidence reduced the likelihood of violent reactions to perceived manipulation (The Carter Center, 2021, p.55). Norms of peaceful competition were reinforced:

“We were told that elections come and go, but we remain neighbours. That message stayed with us, and we refused to fight even when provoked.” (MP 7, Community Member, Chadiza, 10.08.2025).

Civic education thus functioned as moral persuasion, consistent with findings by Bratton (2019, p.67).

4.3 Conflict-Resolution and Grievance Channels

Electoral disputes often escalate when no redress is available. Training citizens on complaints procedures redirected anger:

“In 2016, I was unhappy that my name was missing on the register. Civic educators advised me to report to ECZ, and they helped. I avoided fighting with officers.” (MP 2, Interview, Chadiza, 2025, p.77).

Such awareness aligns with national findings that civic education reduces street-level protest (ERTC, 2020). Youth are frequently mobilised into violence due to unemployment. Yet, youth-focused civic education shifted perceptions:

“Party officials gave us beer to fight. But after attending a civic dialogue, I refused. I told them violence will not feed my family.” (MP 19, Youth, FGD, Chadiza, 03.08.2025).

This testimony demonstrates how civic education offered alternative identities to political mobilisation (Sishuwa, 2020, p.117).

4.4 Civic Education Empowered Citizens to Resist

The study revealed that, electoral violence was perpetuated by leaders of political parties who instigated cadres to cause violence in order to influence elections result or react to any attack to resist intimidation. However, civic education empowered cadres to resist instigation. One of the participants explains that;

“When we heard rumours that votes were stolen, our facilitator told us to confirm with ECZ. We waited instead of fighting.” (FP 14, Women’s Group, Chadiza, 2025).

This echoes national studies on the value of media literacy (ZEAP, 2022, p.17).

4.5 Challenges Facing Civic Education in Chadiza

Despite successes, several challenges persist in terms of civic education provision:

4.5.1 Resource Limitations

Civic education is often underfunded, with programmes ending after elections. This undermines sustainability and consistency in providing citizens with much needed information (Kawila et al., 2021, p.18). A participant revealed that;

“They only come during elections. After that, we are left on our own.” (FP 5, Farmer, Chadiza, 05.08.2025).

4.5.2 Politicisation

Civic education is sometimes viewed as partisan, especially when politicians interfere. In Zambia the teaching of civic education at senior secondary school level was banned in 1978. The subject was later reintroduced into senior secondary school curriculum in 2004 due to speciousness that people may raise against government than in power. This weakens trust (Simutanyi, 2021, p.35). One female participant observed that;

“Sometimes, civic meetings are disturbed by cadres who say we are being taught to support another party.” (FP 8, Trader, Chadiza, 09.082024).

4.5.3 Institutional Weakness

Even when citizens are informed, slow or biased complaint resolution mechanisms discourage peaceful redress of conflicts (ERTC, 2020, p.67). A voter lamented that;

“Even if we are told to complain to ECZ, sometimes they delay or ignore. People lose trust.” (MP 13, FGD, Chadiza, 09.08.2025).

4.5.4 Youth Unemployment

People say poverty is a bad vice that makes people do anything in order to survive. High unemployment makes youths susceptible to mobilisation by political actors, despite civic education efforts (Sishuwa, 2022, p.50). A young man admitted that;

“When you have no job, a politician giving you 50 kwacha (\$2) to fight would be tempting.” (MP 17, Youth, Chadiza, 06.08.2025).

These sentiments as well as barriers highlight that civic education must be combined with structural reforms and socio-economic support to enhance its effectiveness. In addition, Information Inequalities may limited access to media in remote villages restricts the reach of civic education campaigns (The Carter Center, 2021, p.81).

4.6 Discussion

The study’s major finding was that, civic education raises voter awareness provides important grounds for discussion in relation to existing literature. Participants indicated that civic education increased their knowledge of electoral procedures, rights, and responsibilities, which in turn shaped more thoughtful and restrained political engagement. This confirms the view that awareness is a foundational step in preventing misunderstanding and reactionary behavior during elections. Increased awareness helped citizens question rumors, resist manipulation, and rely on lawful channels to address grievances. Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG4) advocated for inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning for all by prioritizing access, skills and values. It is encouraging government and schools to integrate civic education that builds knowledge of rights, responsibilities and participation supported by United Nations.

This finding is largely consistent with prior scholarship. For example, UNESCO (2019, p.4) argues that civic education nurtures informed and critical citizens who are better prepared to participate peacefully in democratic processes. Similarly, International IDEA (2021, p.17) links voter education to improved electoral integrity and reduced conflict; noting that informed voters were hesitate to incitement. The present study supports these claims with qualitative evidence from community experiences, showing that awareness translates into behavioral change.

The findings also resonate with the social learning ideas of Bandura (1977, p.41) as classical information, which suggest that people adopt behaviors they observe and learn through social environments such as civic programs. However, the study slightly diverges from some literature that treats awareness as sufficient on its own. Participants noted that awareness is most effective when continuous and locally relevant, implying that one-off interventions may have limited impact. This significantly extends arguments by scholars like Cheeseman (2019, p.107) another information, emphasizing dialogue and contextual learning. Overall, the discussion shows convergence with the literature that civic education promotes awareness and constructive participation, while adding that sustainability and contextualization matter. Thus, civic education should be viewed as an ongoing democratic practice rather than a periodic campaign tool.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the role of civic education in fighting electoral violence in Chadiza constituency by probing how it shapes voter attitudes, influences community perceptions, and contributes to violence prevention. The findings indicate that consistent and inclusive civic education increases political awareness, clarifies electoral procedures, and promotes tolerance among citizens. Participants associated civic learning with reduced misinformation, improved dialogue between rival groups, and greater trust in electoral processes. As a result, communities exposed to regular civic education initiatives reported fewer tensions and a stronger preference for

peaceful participation. These outcomes support the view that knowledge, when widely shared, can moderate fear and manipulation that often trigger electoral conflict.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening community-based civic education before, during, and after election periods. Electoral Commission of Zambia stakeholders should collaborate with schools, civil society, and local leaders to deliver simple, culturally relevant messages on rights and responsibilities. Investing in voter education for youth and first-time voters is especially important. Finally, policies should institutionalize continuous civic education so that peace-building becomes a routine democratic practice rather than a short-term electoral activity.

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