

Political abuse of older people in rural and urban Zambia: A focus on perpetrators and suggested solution

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Abstract. This paper is aimed at raising awareness at a global level about political abuse of older people, in rural and urban Zambia, through the experiences of community leaders. On the basis of qualitative research undertaken in rural and urban Zambia on elder abuse, this paper argues that from the experiences of the participants, political abuse of some older people is a common problem which takes place during local government, parliamentary and presidential elections. It is determined by four categories - politicians, political cadres, older people's family members and election polling officers. The older people who are usually abused are those with poor eye sight, the illiterates and those living in monetary poverty. Because political abuse of some older people is very sophisticated and has huge negative consequences on the governance of Zambia, the participants recommend exemption of some older people from voting as the viable solution that could end political abuse of some older people in Zambia. The paper concludes that findings of this study have significant implications on scientific knowledge on elder abuse in both the global South and North. The findings further suggest new ways of thinking about elder abuse as well as directions for future research.

Keywords: *political abuse; older people; rural and urban Zambia; qualitative study*

Introduction

Research gaps exist in scientific knowledge on the typologies of elder abuse in both the global North and South. International scientific knowledge identifies five categories of elder abuse namely physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, material abuse and neglect (Wolf, 2000); World Health Organization (WHO), 2002; HelpAge International, 2012; WHO, 2015). In the study undertaken in Zambia between 2014 and 2018, it is evident that one typology of elder abuse should be added to the above list. This is 'political abuse' of older people. Thus, this paper shall focus on perpetrators of political abuse in rural and urban Zambia and the suggested solution on how to address the vice.

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Elder abuse is commonly defined in world reports as a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or stress to an older person (WHO, 2012:1).

This is a challenge faced across the globe (WHO, 2008; Kabelenga, 2014). For example, the United Nations (2013) has reported that globally, the number of cases of elder maltreatment is projected to increase as many countries face rapidly increasing ageing populations. Phelan (2013) estimate that of the total 868 000 000 older people [that is, people aged 60 years and above] globally, between 2 percent and 10 percent suffer abuse. In absolute numbers, this means that between 17, 360, 000 to 86, 868, 000 older people suffer abuse globally. This global statistical information shows how widespread elder abuse is globally. In international literature, political abuse of older people is rarely talked about when talking about abuse of older people. Dominant literature leaves out this type of elder abuse, which is reported in this study undertaken with community leaders in Zambia between 2014 and 2018. Thus, if this typology is added to the above five categories which constitutes elder abuse, it is estimated that global statistics on elder abuse would be higher. Because political abuse of older people is rarely talked about in global literature, scientific literature on political abuse of older people is also scanty.

Notwithstanding the above, when talking about violation of elderly people's rights in Zambia, Kamwengo (2004) briefly talked about the phenomenon of political abuse. For instance, Kamwengo reports that between 1994 and 1997, the first republican president, Kenneth Kaunda, was stripped-off his Zambian nationality by the high court which made Kaunda stateless. This was politically instigated. However, the Supreme Court reversed the decision. Between 1994 and 1996, some politicians in the Movement for Multi Party Democracy (MMD) and United National Independence Party (UNIP), called on former president Kaunda to retire from politics because, as they argued he was too old to continue participating in politics. Although this enlightened literature, two limitations were noted in Kamwengo's account. First, Kamwengo focused only on former president Kaunda. Thus, it is difficult to understand how widespread the problem of political abuse of older people in Zambia is. Given the fact that Kaunda was a political figure as he was at the helm of Zambian politics as republican president for 27 years (Chiluba, 1999; Lewanika, 2003; Phiri, 2006), it is difficult to generalize Kaunda's experiences to other older people in Zambia. Second, it is also difficult to tell whether Kaunda's political life suffered due to political abuse of older people or whether it was due to political persecution by his political opponents who wanted to prevent him from re- contesting presidential elections in 1996 (Human Rights Watch, 1996; Rakner, 2006; Phiri, 2006).

Scientific papers written by Kabelenga (2014; 2015b & 2018) seem to bring out detailed information about political abuse of older people in Zambia. Focusing on one rural district of Zambia, local community leaders who included former election officials described political abuse of older people in Zambia as a widespread problem which was common during local government, parliamentary and presidential elections. By community leaders, it meant influential people who on everyday basis managed affairs of their geographical localities. As such they knew all major happenings in their geographical localities. The community leaders

highlight the following as being the main causes of political abuse of older people in their district:

Old age. Community leaders reported that old age itself was one of the main causes of the political abuse of some older people. It was reported that as the person grew older, they reached a certain stage where their mental faculties became weak and for some their eye sights became frail. These changes created fertile ground for political abuse as they were not able, for example, to distinguish between different political parties and also to notice names of political candidates on ballot papers when voting (Kabelenga, 2015b; 2018).

Illiteracy. Given that some older people are not able to read and write in Zambia, community leaders disclosed that during elections some election presiding officers deliberately made some older people to vote for the candidates who were not of their own choice (Kabelenga, 2015b; 2018).

Income/material poverty. Community leaders saw income/material poverty as another factor that made some older people to be vulnerable to political abuse. That is, because many older people in their district were living in income/material poverty, they were easily manipulated by politicians by giving them trivial things like little food, beer, clothes and small amounts of money in turn for their votes (Kabelenga, 2015b; 2018).

Perceived benefits of political abuse. Community leaders also disclosed that the perceived benefits of winning an election on the side of the abusers were causing political abuse of some older people. The perceived benefits included the monetary gains and the social status that accrue from being in political power (Kabelenga, 2015b; 2018).

Multiparty democracy. Community leaders also saw the emergence of many political parties in Zambia in the name of democracy as another factor that was fueling political abuse. Their views were that multiparty democracy had brought about stiff political competition on how to win an election as political parties always competed for votes from the electorates. As a result, some politicians had resorted to using socially unaccepted ways of winning elections which included manipulation of vulnerable people such as some older people to cast their votes on political candidates who were not of older people's choice (Kabelenga, 2015b; 2018).

Flaws in the Zambian electoral system. Weaknesses in the Zambian electoral system was also brought out to be another cause of political abuse. Examples of the weaknesses included allowing only the presiding officer or any family member to assist some old people with special needs when voting in the election's booth. Community leaders reported that presiding officers and/or family members always had their own preferred political candidates during elections and when helping some old people to vote in election booth, some presiding officers or family members guided some older people to vote for the presiding officer's or that respective family member's preferred candidate (Kabelenga, 2015b; 2018).

Although Kabelenga's publication seems to shed more light on political abuse of some older people in Zambia, a critical look at Kabelenga's work brings out two limitations. First,

Kabelenga has not provided any detailed information about the perpetrators of political abuse. Second, because the publication was just on one rural district of Zambia, it is not clear whether the political abuse of older people was more of a rural Zambia than urban Zambia. This article addresses both of these gaps with focus on the following two specific objectives: (1) to establish the perpetrators of political abuse of some older people in rural and urban Zambia (2) to establish the views of the informants on what needs to be done to address political abuse of older people in rural and urban Zambia.

Methodology

Data and methods

To achieve the above objectives, qualitative data was collected. This included three (3) focus group discussions (FGDs) and eleven (11) one-on-one interviews with 16 participants (10 from one rural district of Zambia and 6 from one urban district of Zambia). In total fourteen (14) in-depth interviews were conducted. From a qualitative research point of view, this sample size (participants composed of community leaders was considered reasonable to enable new insights and better understanding about perpetrators of political abuse of older people, and the way forward in addressing the vice. Creswell (2009) and Yin (2003) advice that even if there is no agreed upon sample size in qualitative research, it is recommended to have a small sample size preferably not exceeding 30 informants. This is to allow the researcher to go in-depth of a phenomenon being studied. Thus, the sample size would allow for in-depth information to be collected by allowing probing and re-probing of every aspect of political abuse of older people.

The main research questions asked during the study was: *how widespread is the problem of political abuse of older people in this community and the whole district?; Who are the perpetrators of political abuse of older people in this community and the whole district?; What are effects of this form of abuse on the abused older people and the whole Zambian society?; What recommendations can you make to the Zambian government and other stakeholders on what should be done to address political abuse of older people?* The interviews were recorded using two audio tapes. This was meant to act as back-up in case one recorder developed a fault and did not record the interviews. Before recording the interviews, the purpose for the study was explained to all the participants. Participants were also assured that their names would not be mentioned when reporting the findings of the study. Only those who were willing to participate in the study participated in the study. All participants signed a consent form and encouraged to contact the researcher after the interview if needed (Erlingsson, Saveman & Berg, 2005).

The participants

The participants for this study were community leaders who had participated in addressing elder abuse. All the participants had the first-hand encounters with political abuse of older people in their districts. Participants were identified through previous generic research which was carried out on elder abuse recorded in one rural district and one urban district of Zambia, where some participants reported political abuse as one of the types of elder abuse recorded. Interestingly to note, was that some of the participants had actively participated in Zambian

elections either as presiding or polling officers. Some also openly reported that they had either suffered political abuse before or they had witnessed it first-hand taking place during elections in both urban and rural Zambia.

In this paper, the term 'community leaders' also called 'local leaders' refers to influential members of the two districts of Zambia. These are the people who have institutional powers to influence the affairs of their communities on daily basis. They included traditional leaders such as the chiefs, village headmen, village court judges, community crime prevention units, leaders of various social groupings such as leaders for the churches, youth groups, women's groups, elderly people, area development committees, political parties, senior government workers such as ward councillors, head teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, conventional court judges, community development workers and leaders of civil society organizations. Because of the powers which they had, they always intervened in social problems that affected their districts as well as problems faced by individual community members such as elder abuse. A number of these participants especially civil servants and leaders of civil society organizations worked in different parts of Zambia. Thus, they had experiential knowledge about political abuse of older people not only in the two districts of Zambia where this study took place but in different parts of Zambia where they had worked before as election officials (Kabelenga, 2018).

Since data was collected from different categories of participants, this approach allowed for triangulation of data from different categories of the community leaders in the two districts. In doing so, the common grounds and divergences about perpetrators of political abuse and suggested ways of addressing the vice were established.

The participants were aged between 27 and 72 years. Of the 16 participants, 10 were from rural district and 6 were from urban district and the majority were males (12 males) and 4 females. In terms of educational attainments, 1 participant had primary school education, 10 had college [vocational] education and 5 were university graduates with maximum qualification of a masters degree. The disparity in the number of participants was due to the fact that there were more participants who were willing to participate in the study from the rural district than the urban. Disparities in gender of participants could be explained by the cultural constructions of the Zambian society where there are more males than females who are community leaders in both rural and urban Zambia (Zambia National Gender Policy, 2002).

Data analysis

The analysis of data was content oriented. Analysis involved several steps. First, through listening to the audio interviews and reading the transcribed transcripts several times. This enabled the researcher to get a sense of the issues raised by the participants. Second, by means of coding the accounts in the transcribed interview material. This involved marking different perpetrators and suggesting ways on how to address political abuse of older people. Third, was to categorize the codes under four themes about perpetrators from the data. These were: politicians, political cadres, presiding officers and family members. Fourth, search the data for

suggested ways by the participants on how to address political abuse of older people. The main theme was the exemption of some older people from voting during elections. Fifth, in order to enhance credibility of this paper, the researcher searched for representative statements from the interviews to support the above themes. Erlingsson, Saveman & Berg, (2005) advise that the foundation for credibility of qualitative data lies also within the examples of statements from the original texts offered in the findings section. Sixth, the examining of the interplay of themes reflectively (Nikupeteri & Laitinen, 2015). The researcher's reflections upon the data in relation to available literature on elder abuse, politics and political violence served as background that helped to elicit more detailed accounts of the data. Seventh, was the search for concepts from the data and literature to use to interpret the data. The concepts of relationships, power and ageism were established as analytical tools to interpret the data. These concepts were chosen after attentive reflections upon the data. That is, all the issues that the participants disclosed seem to revolve around the above three scientific concepts. Furthermore, in the quotations, the participants' names have been anonymized to protect their identity.

Results and discussion

Widespread of political abuse of older people in rural and urban Zambia

Political abuse of older people was described by all the participants to be widespread in their districts during times of local government, parliamentary and presidential elections. Political abuse is defined by the participants as any intentional act that hurts the political life of the older person with or without their knowledge. Examples mentioned by the participants included forcing, threatening or to trick the older person to vote for a certain political candidate which was not of the particular older person's choice. For example, during the first FGD, one participant who participated in an election as a presiding officer disclosed the following:

Political abuse is common here. They use the grandchildren to direct the grandfathers on who they should vote for. It is even worse when the grandfather doesn't know how to write because he will be escorted just as a procedure to say - put your finger here for example on the MMD² name, the grandchild may just make him hold the palm there and tick and we have seen this [laughs participants] and that is the worst abuse you can see which I saw when I was the presiding officer - someone holding the pen for the older man and going direct on the...[laughs participants] and asks him to tick there. At some point I tend to think that senior citizens should be exempted from voting. (FGD.1, Rural Zambia)

In urban Zambia, similar position to that held by participants in rural Zambia was provided. The following dialogue held with Executive Director for a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), serving in promoting the well-being of all older people throughout Zambia, disclosed the following:

² Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) is the former ruling political party in Zambia. It was in power from 1991 – 2011.

Researcher: Now mum we talked briefly about political abuse in the first interview. I would like us in this second interview to go into details about political abuse of older people in Zambia where some people are taking advantage of older people to support certain political party or certain candidates to win elections. So, when is this type of abuse common?

Participant: At election time they abuse and so on. And as soon as they [politicians] have their positions that's it until the next election time. So, the people who abuse older people are the politicians...

Researcher: But what types of older people are abused?

Participant: It's the ones who are not educated mainly. And again, it is vulnerability.

Researcher: But let me ask the question mum. I would like to find out mum if someone is vulnerable and they are 60 years of age and above, why is it that they can easily be prone to political abuse?

Participant: there is no social security. They have no social protection and they suffer political abuse. Sometimes even the older people who are educated they suffer political abuse. They suffer political abuse. You will be surprised because even them want to survive - maybe we are going to get some grants or we are going to get some loans if this politician wins the election. So, let me do all I can [politically abuse an older person] to put him in power. (Thirteenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Urban Zambia)

Similar revelations were made by the retired civil servant who once participated in elections as an election supervisor and at the time of this study worked for one Civil Society Organization that fought for the rights of the older people in Zambia:

To me, that is just one dimension of the abuse where the very old, unable to write are abused. I remember when I was very young, I got involved in these polling elections especially when it came to supervision and if you are not careful you would find yourself being abused by politicians. Definitely polling assistant or a polling officer is given the mandate to help a blind person, a person who cannot read and write, a person who is too old to go in the booth and say; who is the candidate of your choice? Now, depending on the calibre or the values, the principles of this polling officer, there is a tendency that, that's where [political] abuse takes place where the voter would whisper to you to say my preferred candidate is this one but you having an interest as a polling officer will now use that to mark on somebody else and so to me, it is not being sincere, it's being dishonest. And so, that's one form of abuse. (Fourteenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Urban Zambia)

From the above self-confessed episodes, it is clear that participants hold experiential knowledge that political abuse of some older people took place in both rural and urban Zambia. The episodes imply that political abuse of some older people in rural and urban Zambia is seasonal. This is because from the above data, a straight forward analysis means that some older people suffer political abuse during times of local government, parliamentary and presidential elections. After that, it is put to a halt. The overall-data can be interpreted using the concept of political power. That is, the data imply that, it is the struggle for political power that leads to political abuse of some older people. Because it is difficult to win an election, political contestants try to manipulate other members of society so that they can get political support from the voters with or without their consent.

Perpetrators of political abuse of older people. In light of the above revelations, the next question asked was: *who are the perpetrators of political abuse of older people in this district?* Four categories of perpetrators emerged from the data collected from both rural and urban districts. These are: politicians, political cadres, older people's family members and polling officers. From the data collected, it was clear that politicians, political cadres and older people's family members always work hand in hand when abusing some older persons. Thus, these categories of perpetrators are presented together.

Politicians, political cadres and older people's family members

Participants disclosed that the people who perpetrated political abuse of older persons in their districts were the politicians and political cadres. Interestingly, the data revealed that, it was evident that politicians found it easier to manipulate older persons using their own family members. Family members had a strong influential control due to having daily contacts with their older family member, from election campaign up to the actual date of elections. For example, during the first FGD, the participants exposed the perpetrators in this way:

The same young people who take care of them are the ones who demand on them to support a particular candidate because these young people are the ones who are able to discuss, hold conversations with these political party leaders and they are the ones who are persuaded by the political parties leaders to support them and hence they are the ones the political parties leaders use to go and entice their grandparents to vote for them so that things would be better for them while in actual sense things may not be. (FGD.1, Rural Zambia)

Similar disclosures were made by court judges during the second focus group discussion which were held in the court room:

You find that these politicians, you only see them going to rural setups when it is time to vote but in town they don't normally go there because they know the people are up to date. And in most cases it is the youths that go to these old people to tell them something that is wrong for example maybe if they have a candidate of their choice so they go to them and feed them that wrong information just because this candidate has bought them beer and they can go and interact with these old people because they are conversant with the language that is spoken there. (FGD.2, Rural Zambia)

Interestingly, even the chairperson for one of the older people's organizations that fights for the rights of the older people throughout Zambia and globally agreed with the other participants:

The people who abuse older people are the politicians because they can put a stop to it. They use youngsters. They intimidate the neighbourhoods. And these kids are given some pocket money and some food stuffs and alcohol and you know to them they are employed during the duration of the campaigns. (Thirteenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Urban Zambia)

From the above finding, it can be deduced that the perpetrators of political abuse are a heterogeneous group. However, politicians seem to be at the center stage of every form of political abuse. This is because politicians are the ones who mobilize the youths and family members of older persons to manipulate older people. Thus, this result challenges literature that always associate abuse of older people with the youth (see WHO, 2002; WHO, 2008; WHO, 2015). From the data, it is evident that besides the youths, adults and fellow older people also participate in political abuse of older people. This is because since the national independence of 1964 to date, the majority of political party leaders in Zambia were adults with some classified under the category of older people (Human Rights Watch, 1996; Constitutional of Zambia, 2016). This means that this paper has broadened the equation on perpetrators of elder abuse. Taken together, the data can be interpreted using the concept of political power. That is, the data connote that participants hold experiential knowledge in desire to acquire political power that in is leading to the political abuse of some older people in rural and urban Zambia.

Presiding officers

Presiding officers were also exposed by the participants to be another category of perpetrators. Participants reported that because of the weaknesses of the Zambian electoral system which allows the presiding officer to assist certain voters with special needs such as the illiterates and the blind among others, some presiding officers took advantage of some older people with special needs by deliberately making them to vote for candidates who were not of the older people's choice. Participants gave testimonies of what they had seen for themselves during elections as follows:

...I remember an incident somewhere where this candidate is fond of putting on a jacket so they even nicknamed him, jacket man. So, an old woman comes and says, who is your preferred candidate? This woman just says the jacket man but when you look at the ballot paper, so many candidates there have jackets so that woman since she has mentioned of the jacket, even when I point at my preferred candidate as a youth [election presiding officer] who is very interested in that candidate, she will go for it. So, you find that in the rural setup it is very common. (Court judge during FGD. 3, Rural Zambia)

The head teacher who served on several occasions as election observer shared the followings experiential knowledge:

Political abuse of older people is common in the sense that you know these ballot papers are written in English and the majority of the voters in most cases they can be old people who don't know how to read and so these electoral officers during that time they take advantage of misleading them. Instead of telling them the right candidate of their choice they can probably take advantage over that and give them one which they favour most and when they are writing in booth, the old person may say that I want this person with this picture and because she/he can't see properly and interpret that picture she/he will be made to tick on a wrong candidate and so those are some of the things and it means that those old people haven't chosen their own candidate of their choice. (Tenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Rural Zambia)

One retired civil servant who served during his civil service work as an election supervisor and now worked as Executive Director for one Civil Society Organization that fought for the rights of the older people in Zambia also agreed with his counterparts from rural Zambia:

...Definitely polling assistant or a polling officer is given the mandate to help a blind person, a person who cannot read and write, a person who is too old to go in the booth and say; who is the candidate of your choice? Now, depending on the calibre or the values, the principles of this polling officer, there is a tendency that, that's where an abuse takes place where the voter would whisper to you to say my preferred candidate is this one but you having an interest as a polling officer will now use that to mark on somebody else.....
(Fourteenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Urban Zambia)

The above episodes suggest that participants hold experiential knowledge that political abuse of some older people in rural and urban Zambia takes place in very sophisticated manner. This is because at times it takes place without the knowledge of the abused older people. The data further implies that participants hold experiential knowledge that political abuse of some elder people in Zambia is directly linked to the weak political relationships that exist between some older people and some election officers.

Some of the fertile grounds that bleed political abuse of some older people which was stated by the participants is also clearly stipulated in the Zambia Electoral Act. For example, the Zambia Electoral Act (2006: 43) on Assistance to Certain Voters states that:

the presiding officer or another election officer, at the request of a voter who is unable to read or due to physical disability, shall assist that voter in voting in the presence of – (a) a person appointed by or as an accredited observer or monitor, if available or (b) two election agents of different candidates, if available or (2) A person may assist a voter in voting if – (a) the voter requires assistance due to a physical disability (b) the voter has requested to be assisted by that person and that person has attained 18 years; (3) The secrecy of voting as stipulated in the constitution shall be preserved in the application of this section.

However, the pertinent questions that arise are: (1) if other election officers or observers are not available, can't the presiding officer abuse the voter who wants assistance? (2) Given all the electoral powers vested in the presiding officer, can't presiding officer connive with the family member of the assisted older person to guide the voter in the booth so that he/she can vote for presiding officer and family members preferred candidate? And (3) can't the presiding officer deliberately prevent other election officers from observing how the assisted voter is casting a vote in the booth under the pretext that the family member will assist such a voter and yet the presiding officer wants the family member to manipulate the voter in the booth? Unfortunately, these questions were not asked during the study. This is because they were not on the list of interview guide used. Thus, it is recommended that future studies to address them.

When linked to available literature, the data is in agreement with other global studies done on democratic elections. For example, in the global studies on democracy and voting, Butler and Ranney (1994), Lijphart (1997) and Lever (2009) have established that insincere voting is

possible in democracy. They have argued that strategic or insincere voting is not uncommon when a group knows the redistribution of potential votes in advance. They have established that many political actors ask for preference schedule of everything. This is to arrive at the final group rank ordering of all the contestants that best express the desires of the electorates. Because of this, voters can be made to vote insincerely by changing the order of the preference schedule (Lever, 2009). This means that what the participants disclosed have also been established in other parts of world.

How to address political abuse in rural and urban Zambia

A much unexpected recommendation on how to address political abuse of some older people in rural and urban Zambia came out from all the participants, and that was in exemption of some older people from voting. Below are the details:

Exemption of elder people from voting. Given the sophisticated nature of political abuse of older people and its grave consequences on the governance of Zambia, all the participants suggested exemption of some elder people from voting as the main solution that could be used to address the problem of political abuse of older people in their districts and Zambia in general. Participants justified this proposal using different perspectives. For instance, some used the experiential perspective and argued that some older people such as those who are too old or with dementia could be stopped from voting because it was not possible to sensitize them on political abuse, arguing that even if they were sensitized, most of them did not remember the sensitization messages given to them. Using the human rights perspective, some argued that some older people's political rights were being stolen from them and the only way that could be stopped is to exempt them from voting. Others used the pragmatic approach and argued that in human life there was always time for retirement and that should be considered in Zambian politics with regard to the right to vote among the older people. Participants felt that if some older people were stopped from voting, automatically their political abuse would be stopped as politicians and other perpetrators of political abuse will have nothing to do with the older people. This is further highlighted in the below dialogue with the participants:

Researcher: So, what do you think should be done to address this form of elder abuse?

Participant.1: If we are to fight this type of abuse, we need to exempt certain old people from voting. Like those with mental disorders, who are too old who cannot even think, those older people are not supposed to be allowed to vote. Because even if you go and sensitize those people, they do not have the mental capacity really to follow what you are telling them to say that maybe there is some corruption taking place or maybe some electoral malpractices.

Researcher: But won't that be an infringement on their rights if we say we exclude them? I don't know, what do you think? Is not disfranchising them if we say that maybe because he cannot see, he's tired and then we say that maybe they don't vote. What do you think could be the likely implications with regard to their political rights - the right to vote, the right to choose their own political candidate?

Respondent.1: I think that would not be a problem. I think that would be better because for sure some of these [older] people cause even wrong people [politicians] to go in office. They do not know the repercussions

Respondent.2: totally, there is time for everything. There is time for retirement. Even in churches you find that this was a church elder and the like and he will reach a point to say that I am tired and I can no longer lead this ministry and so for now let us give it to younger ones.

Respondent.1: In fact, most older people just vote for the ruling party

Researcher: Always ruling party?

Respondent.2: The ruling party. The one usually on top

Respondent.2: and when you explain for example to say this is MMD and they say that same one and that cuts your continuation and for the rest she will just be agreeing through and you wonder to say is it yes everywhere but where exactly? It's a dilemma, you see and if you have actually very much gone into these things you will see the flaws which can cause abuse. (FGD.1, Rural Zambia)

Surprising even court judges who served as election officials on several occasions made similar recommendation during FGD.2: *They should be exempted because their right [political rights] is stolen. It is being abused by someone else. So, it is better for those people with mental disorders to just stay away from voting.* (FGD.2, Rural Zambia).

The Executive Director for one of the older people's organizations also provided similar thoughts:

Let them [human rights formulators] go and be debated at the UN [United Nations] to say this [political right to vote for some older people] is not workable. Let it be amended in this manner so that it corresponds with what is happening on the ground. The arguments between you and me are that when somebody is very old, definitely there are disadvantages, they are disadvantaged. After all I don't think there is participation, they wouldn't even be able to walk to the [election voting] booth. (Fourteenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Urban Zambia)

Similar phraseology is received from the Board chairperson for the NGO that promotes the rights of the older people in Zambia and globally: *I think it could be a good idea just to put an age limit to voting. Like what they do at the Vatican. Nobody who is 80 years and above can vote at the Vatican. Anyone who is 80 and above can't vote for the Pope.* (Sixteenth One-on-one in-depth interview, Urban Zambia)

The above data can be interpreted using the concepts of political ageism and political relationships. That is, the data imply that participants are suggesting that solutions for addressing political abuse of some older people lies in addressing political ageism against older people and improving political relationships among political actors, and between political actors and older people. From the above episodes, it is evident that all the participants in Rural and Urban Districts of Zambia share the view that if political ageism against older people is addressed, political influence of the politicians and their cadres on the older people will be reduced. This in turn may result into bringing about positive political relationships among politicians, political cadres and older people which are essential preconditions in the fight against political abuse of older people (Kamwengo, 2004).

Reflections upon the above data seem to be in line with the proposals made by some scholars globally on the right to vote. For instance, Mubiana (2015) has recommended that the right to vote in Zambia should be given to persons who have the requisite mental state to make right decisions for Zambia. He also proposes the need to have certain restrictions to the right to vote, among them people who are not able to read and write. This is because they are usually tricked by those who assist them when voting and end up voting for political candidates who are not of their voice. For example, Mubiana argues that most of the voters in this category are literally instructed on how to vote. They are told that if they vote a particular way, they will be provided with alcohol and cigarettes. Some are given as little as K20 (USD 1.33) for them to vote a certain way. In Italy, where political gerontocracy has been going on for about 68 years now, public demands have been made calling on political change to take course in shifting power from the old to the young generation (Albertini, 2008). In the Vatican, the Cardinals who are aged 80 and above are not allowed to vote because of their old age (Glatz, 2015). Thus, it can be argued that what participants proposed are part of the on-going global debates about participation of certain categories of older people in elections. This suggests that the recommendations made by the participants should be taken seriously by all human rights activities. They should be intensively and extensively debated at a national level such as at the Human Rights Commission, Electoral Commission and National Assembly of Zambia, regional bodies such as African Union and global bodies and the UN, so that a common ground is established about the political right to vote among some categories of older people. Experiences of community leaders that participated in this study further highlighted that the political right to vote is not enjoyed by some older people. In re-emphasizing on the need for various human rights activists to take seriously the revelations made during the study, one of the community development workers who was instrumental in addressing elder abuse in rural Zambia stated the following:

It is just an emphasis to the government that some of these things they are coming from deep down here in the community. It is important that they take keen interest as to see what is supposed to be done to improve the lives of the elderly people. The elderly people they need protection, they need some support here and there. Sure. (Eighth One-on-one In-depth Interview, Rural Zambia)

When everything talked about is brought together, it means that all the participants hold the view that there is political violence against older people in some parts of Zambia. In political science, violence is commonly defined as the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of other people in the society (Wolf, 1969; Mahajan, 2003). The end-product of political violence is thuggery. That is, violence is the means through which thugs achieve their aims (Aondowase et al., 2013). This is exactly what this study established. However, globally, political violence is well known to have negative effects on societal well-being. In a society which is so explicitly divided by political violence, it is hardly surprising that tension and inter communal conflict arises. This is evident in Northern Ireland. Such conflicts often occur at working class interface areas where attacks on homes and property take place. Sectarianism functions at many levels in Northern Irish society and its insidious effects are often reflected in everyday thoughts and action which, in turn, creates distrust and fear among members of the same society (Campbell, 2007). Sectarianism is

maintained and reproduced, not just through the explicit use of violence and physical and social separation, but also by negative and discriminatory representations of the other. This leads to repetitive and circular expressions of fear and mistrust and reluctance to cross boundaries, whether these are geographical, social or psychological (Campbell, 2007).

Focusing on Nigeria, Aondowase et al., (2013) report that politicians employ local secret sect to compel innocent people to vote against their wishes. The party agents at the polling booths are openly threatened to compromise, and election officials are forced to do what they would not have done ordinarily. Thus, political violence is servicing as an organized criminal enterprise used for seeking, gaining and retaining power in order to rob public treasury. Because of this, political violence negates peaceful coexistence, law and order. In addition to security concerns, it militates against the consolidation of democracy and social coexistence. This in turn impact negatively on the social and economic wellbeing of the nation and creates imbalances in social relations (Howell, 2004). Political violence brings complex set of events such as poverty, ethnic or religious grievances which affect the social relationship of the people in the society. Aondowase et al., (2013) posit that violence, particularly political violence, represents a disturbance movement to the political equilibrium and peaceful co-existence of the system.

The findings of this research also correspond with Afrobarometer Study (2002-2009). In its study of 46 nationally-representative surveys from 2002-2009 in Sub-Saharan Africa, Afrobarometer reports that despite the marked decrease in the incidence of civil war in Africa, political violence remains pervasive. Much of this political violence is directed (or tacitly allowed) by ruling regimes and their allies, by opposition political parties, and by loosely organized groups of ordinary individuals – both at times of electoral competition but also in patterns of puzzlingly ‘routine’ everyday violence (Garcia-Ponce & Pasquale, 2013). By using Zimbabwe as a case study, Garcia-Ponce & Pasquale (2015), report that in Zimbabwe the effects of repression increase when approaching elections, bolstering the idea that autocrats employ violence in order to win elections. However, this makes civilians to lose confidence in world order which is retardation to socio-economic development.

In light of the revelations made by the participants, this paper has raised a crucial issue which needs special attention not only from the people of Zambia, but throughout the whole world especially at the African Union and UN levels. This is because it is within Zambian, African Union and the UN levels where solutions to the political abuse of some older people can be found. The issue should also be paid urgent attention to at these levels because it is a serious violation of older people’s political rights which ultimately impact negatively on the socio-economic and political development of Zambia and a direct assault on democracy for which many people globally are fighting for (Kabelenga, 2015b).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following are the conclusions: To begin, it is clear that participants confidently talked about the phenomenon of which they knew to have taken place in their districts and other parts of Zambia where they worked before. It is evident that participants hold experiential knowledge that political abuse of some older people is taking place in both rural and urban Zambia. It seems that the problem is common during local government, parliamentary and presidential elections. The older people who are vulnerable to political abuse are those with poor eye sights, illiterate and those living in monetary poverty.

Participants in both districts brought out four (4) categories of perpetrators of political abuse of older people. These are the politicians, political cadres, older people's family members and polling officers. From the findings, politicians, political cadres and older people's family members always work in tandem in abusing some older people. This is motivated by the desire to win the elections. However, the politicians are at the center stage of catalyzing political abuse of some older people.

It is also clear that participants hold experiential knowledge that even if the right to vote is a human right for Zambians aged 18 years and above (Constitution of Zambia, 2015), it is just on paper for some older people in Zambia. Some older people do not enjoy this right when voting. It is within this framework that the participants recommend exemption of some older people from voting.

This study has raised an important issue affecting some older people in some rural and urban Districts of Zambia, and could be happening in other parts of the world. Given the fact that ageing is a normal process of human life which every human being expects to go through and that the world is moving towards population ageing (Kamwengo, 2004; WHO, 2008; Kabelenga, 2015a; 2018), evidence of political abuse of some older people in Zambia should be taken seriously. This reality can happen to any older person provided they have risk factors that participants brought out in this paper. These raise the following implications for frontline workers like social gerontologists and human rights activists who deal with issues of abuse of older people:

To begin with, political abuse of older people should be brought into the mainstream literature on elder abuse especially those published by the Zambian Government, Regional bodies like the African Union, and global bodies like the UN if it is to be addressed. Documents produced by these institutions are 'Buzz Documents'. That is, they speak high volumes which are usually heard and paid particular attention to by influential society members at local, national, regional and global levels, and who can in turn play vital roles in re-construction of human society where no human being is abused by another human being (Rawl, 1999; Conwall & Brock, 2005).

The current categorization of elder abuse into five forms – physical, verbal, sexual, material and neglect that has dominated literature should be broadened to include political abuse

(WHO, 2002; 2008; 2015; United Nations, 2013). This is essential in making political abuse of older people to receive global attention.

In addition, there is need to improve the mechanisms for monitoring of voting among the older people [in Zambia]. Particular attention should be paid to older people who are too old, illiterate, with poor eye-sights and those with mental lapses. This calls for making serious amendments to the current Zambia Electoral Act. For transparency in the way voters [older people] who want assistance when voting to be guaranteed, two amendments should be made to the Zambian Electoral Act and the Zambian constitution in general. One measure could be that it should be made mandatory that when assisting voters such as older people with special needs, the presiding officer should always be accompanied by election agents from all the political parties, and accredited election monitors or observers and a family representative. However, the family representative should not be allowed to guide the particular older person when voting. This means that the aspect of secrecy of voting as stipulated in the Zambian constitution would not be applicable to such voters. The presiding officer and all the election attendees who assisted the voter should write their full names, national registration cards and the organizations they represent against the name of the assisted voter. If the particular older person does not remember the name of the political candidate or party in the election booth, they should not be allowed to vote, and the ballot paper should be classified as spoiled.

There is also need to debate the recommendation made by the participants of exemption of some old people like those with dementia, poor eye sights and who are illiterate from voting. This is because the recommendation may be seen by other segments of society as disfranchising and in itself another form of abuse of some old people. Targeting international and regional organizations like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, African Union, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Government of Zambia, international and local Civil Society Organizations involved in human rights, and electoral issues where political rights of the older people originated from should be prioritized. This is because if the Zambian government decides alone to exempt older people in Zambia from voting, there is danger that Zambia would receive global and regional condemnations and sanctions for violation of international and regional conventions and agreements on the political rights of older people for which Zambia is signatory to.

Notwithstanding all the aforesaid, this paper was written on the basis of qualitative data collected from 16 participants. Although this is not a small sample size from qualitative research point of view (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2003) and the participants were community leaders, the revelations made in this study should be cautiously applied to other parts of Zambia and the whole world. This is because elder abuse is socially constructed and what may be true in one setting may not be true in other settings (Phelan, 2013; Kabelenga, 2014; 2018).

In light of the aforementioned limitation, future research should investigate further how widespread political abuse of the older people in Zambia is. Because elder abuse is a global problem, such studies should be undertaken also in various regions across the world. Future studies should also assess the extent to which people across the world agree with the

recommendation made by participants in Zambia to exempt some older people from voting or simply say, to establish the retirement age from voting. Notwithstanding the limitation of this paper, this study has broadened scientific knowledge on elder abuse by bringing in the global debates political abuse of older people. Thus, it is my hope that this study has put into place one more piece of the puzzle in scientific knowledge that will one day result into showing the global picture of political abuse of older people and result into intense debates in both global North and global South on how to address the vice.

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