

# Political Tolerance Challenges and Strategies in Multiparty Societies' in Sadc: The Case of Zimbabwe (2017-2023)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the challenges and strategies to political tolerance within multiparty societies, with a specific focus on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and the case of Zimbabwe from 2017 to 2023. The study aims to understand the significance of political tolerance in fostering democratic practices, social harmony, and sustainable development in the context of a diverse and politically dynamic society.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. It draws on primary data collected through interviews, surveys, and google online questionnaires. The analysis examines various factors that influence political tolerance, including socio-cultural, historical, economic, and political dynamics.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on political tolerance, providing insights into its importance in promoting peaceful coexistence and democratic governance. The research highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by multiparty societies in the SADC region, particularly in Zimbabwe, and offers recommendations for enhancing political tolerance and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for diverse political ideologies.

**Keywords:** political tolerance, multiparty societies, SADC, Zimbabwe.

## INTRODUCTION

Political intolerance is a challenge the world over. The need for tolerance in politics is critical for peace and development in countries. Political intolerance occurs when political leadership fails to accommodate opposition parties and different views from their members. Rather, there is a need for political tolerance which means respecting and accepting the rights and civil liberties of other people who may possess different opinions. Practicing political tolerance is the responsibility of all citizens including political leaders and is a key principle in democratic societies. Given the challenges to political tolerance in Zimbabwe, this paper focuses on the challenges and strategies that can be used in dealing with political intolerance and achieving tolerance.

## Background

In democratic societies, political tolerance is a fundamental principle. It is associated with accepting and respecting the rights of different individuals and groups of people especially those who possess different political views (Stoeckel and Ceka, 2023). In African countries, political environments are often characterized by differences in ethnicity, colonial experiences and socioeconomic situations which complicates achieving political tolerance. Political intolerance occurs when other political affiliations refuse to accommodate those with different views including opposition political parties. The rejection of different political views is a common feature in African societies.

Democracy makes it critical for every member of the society to be equal. Tolerance is one of the major principles associated with functional democracies (Trudinger and Ziller, 2023). Accepting and respecting others with different views is one of the key components to a democratic life. There is often a need to accommodate and respect the plurality of views as a means of preventing and managing political conflict (Bjanesoy, 2021). Political intolerance is associated with restricting the rights of others based on differences in political views and ideologies (Ziemes, 2024). Intolerance is it threat to democracy since it is associated with the silencing and discrimination

of certain individuals all groups of people within a population. Political intolerance leads to the formation of a conformist culture and a society in which citizens fuse suppressed.

As political tolerance is a key principle to democratic functioning, a country's political system should prioritise inclusiveness, safeguarding individual rights and foster a culture of open dialogue to ensure the resilient existence of democracy. However, the achievement of political tolerance is a key challenge since people are often predisposed to suppress the views of others. Among the effects of political intolerance the exclusion of others from collective decision making and political participation (Boch, 2020). Tolerance is one of the key values in a democratic society and is necessary for political systems to exist and evolve. Political tolerance is therefore a key issue that has received greater attention in the recent years (Jones and Bejan, 2019; Bjanesoy, 2021).

Researchers demonstrate that political tolerance should be fostered within political systems as a way of achieving political stability and development while political intolerance undermines the functioning of democracies (Hu and Lee, 2018; Marom, 2024). While the knowledge of associations between political tolerance and the functioning of democracies is vast, there are limitations on the factors that influence or undermine political tolerance and the strategies that countries can make use of to achieve it (Jones and Bejan, 2019). Understanding how to foster political tolerance is a critical issue of concern among practitioners, researchers and policymakers.

The multi-party system that exists now in the political sphere of the world is mostly characterized by people making compromises in order to coexist. A society with more than two political parties actively vying for power, either alone or in partnership, is known as a multi-party system. Southern Africa is home to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional intergovernmental organization. Its 16 members are spread out over the southern part of the African continent. Geographically speaking, SADC is located in southern Africa and is bordered to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the west by the Indian Ocean. Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are the members of the SADC.

The SADC nations are strategically located in the southern region, sharing borders with both neighbouring nations and one another. The proximity of the states' large populations allows for strong political, economic, social, and cultural collaboration (Jones and Bejan, 2019). The SADC region is distinguished by a society with a system that calls for tolerance, which includes: SADC countries have diverse political systems, ideologies, and parties; vast ethnic and cultural diversity is also a characteristic of the SADC region; socioeconomic disparities that form part of the SADC region are also a cause of concern that require an assessment to understand the essence of political tolerance.

### **SADC Principles and Rules for Electoral Democracy.**

SADC seeks to guarantee free, fair, and transparent elections within member nations through the application of these principles. Promoting political tolerance, observance of human rights, and equal opportunity are some of these things. States must take all appropriate steps to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in a climate of tolerance and mutual respect among political parties, candidates, and their supporters, according to Section 4.1. Additionally, Section 4.3 states that "States shall take efforts to prevent and resolve any acts of intimidation, harassment, or violence during the electoral process, and shall encourage a culture of political tolerance, non-violence, and peaceful resolution of issues. Additional components of the principle are sections 3.1, 3.2, and 5.6, all of which will advance political tolerance.

Political tolerance is important in the effort to live in harmony because it promotes respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. Political tolerance is also important because it promotes political gender equality, which is essential for peaceful coexistence. Since the SADC region is grappling with serious migration and refugee difficulties, it is crucial to comprehend the value of tolerance in attempting to deal with these concerns. The relevance of studying tolerance is deserving of notice because it is another essential component of maintaining stability and security in the SADC area. In many multiparty societies, political tolerance has remained a challenge as each party, individual, society is not ready to get rid or sacrifice some of its principles

and beliefs in order to embrace other cultures or diverse ethnicity.

As a democratic nation and a case study, Zimbabwe promotes political tolerance through a number of legislative provisions. It is not necessary to make a special point about the value or position of tolerance in Zimbabwean politics. Kokera (2016) hinted that without some measure of tolerance for people who are different, peace and stability would not be feasible given the diversity of ethnic, religious, political, and social origins in Zimbabwe. The nation has writhed under intolerance, according to Afro Barometer. According to Chigwata (2021), Zimbabwe approved a new constitution in 2013, and among other things, the constitutions helped multiparty democracies gain more legitimacy. According to Chigwata, the constitutions necessitate many levels of government elections, improve the position of independent electoral commissions, and enshrine a wide range of political rights and freedoms. Mwonzora (2023) added to the argument of multi-party which he termed has become the lodestar of democracy in the contemporary world.

### **Problem statement**

Zimbabwe is one of the countries that struggles with political intolerance. The country has had cases of political intolerance with limited freedom of expression among its citizens. Political parties continue to exercise control over individuals and citizens in the country and there is an emphasis on supporting the “party line”. They have in control on the views of individuals and groups of people in the country, the democratic processes in the country are undermined. In addition, the high political intolerance in the country contributes to human rights abuses which is a particular issue of concern in functional democracies.

Zimbabwe has had intra-party political violence, and this is mostly because political tolerance is extremely low for a variety of reasons. Hwami (2012) highlighted that Zimbabwe has had intra-conflicts; as a result, it is crucial that the state take concrete steps to indicate a break with the past and create a future based on respect for human rights. The need for political reconciliation as a means of ensuring human security, which has proven elusive for many years, was also mentioned by Mutanda (2023). Therefore the study focus on analysing the place of political tolerance in a multiparty society in the SADC region and Zimbabwe being the case study.

Even though studies have focused on predictors of political tolerance, they are limited views on the determinants of intolerance and strategies to achieve tolerance. The relationship between political tolerance and multiparty society pushed for this research, the need to identify challenges and barriers to political tolerance in SADC region and Zimbabwe being a case study and the need to proffer solutions justifies the significance of this research work.

### **Research Objectives**

The study aimed to achieve the following;

1. To identify the challenges and barriers to political tolerance in Zimbabwe, learning from the global perspective.
2. To ascertain the strategies for promoting political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in multiparty societies in SADC.
3. To make recommendations for adoption by stakeholders in order to improve Zimbabwe’s current politics.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions led to the research;

1. What are the challenges and barriers to political tolerance in multiparty societies like Zimbabwe, learning from the global perspective?
2. Which strategies can be used to promote political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in multiparty societies in SADC?
3. What recommendations can stakeholders adopt in order to improve Zimbabwe’s current politics?

## Significance

It is impossible to overstate how important this study is because it will help all parties involved understand the role of political tolerance in multiparty societies. The researcher's motivation for conducting this outstanding study was the necessity to investigate the role of tolerance in a multiparty democracy. In light of this, the researcher believe that tolerance of political differences promote peaceful cohabitation in a multiparty system. The absence of peaceful cohabitation has been a problem in many areas of societal political health. Unquestionable advantages of political tolerance include peaceful cohabitation, democratic government, social cohesiveness, and economic progress, preservation of human rights, goodwill abroad, and dispute resolution, among others.

## Research assumptions

The research assumes that political tolerance exists as a concept and can be measured or observed. It assumes that individual within multiparty societies can hold differing political beliefs and still coexist peacefully, respecting others' rights to their own opinions. Connolly (1993) emphasized the need for democratic societies to accommodate diverse beliefs and perspectives. Connolly went further to note that tolerance is not simply a passive acceptance of differences, but an active engagement with diverse ideas and values.

## Delimitation

The research was designed to the place of political tolerance in a multiparty society in the SADC region and Zimbabwe was used as a case study. Zimbabwe is a landlocked country located in southern Africa and covers an area approximately 390 757 square kilometres sharing borders with South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique. It is a member of the SADC regional group. The study focuses on the period between 2017 and 2023 in which the Zimbabwe second republic was in charge of national affairs under the leadership of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and understandably excluded other periods.

## Limitations

Several limitations were encountered in this study. Biased information could have been given during the research as participants were mostly supporting their political orientation at the expense of objective contribution. Added to that, some of the targeted participants including politicians and general citizenly lack the basic information that could have contributed towards this research. Some legal provisions in Zimbabwe limited the effectiveness of the research as well. This included the existence of the Patriotic Bill which limited deliberations with participants especially since it put restrictions to freedom of expression, the rights to peaceful assembly and association.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The concept of political tolerance

The current idea of tolerance, which emphasizes embracing difference as a common good, evolved in the Enlightenment in the wake of centuries of religious warfare, claims Lacorne (2021). Before religious tolerance and the separation of church and state became popular in Europe and America, Lacorne believes that philosophers like John Locke and Voltaire were the first to elaborate on the concept. In a political society with a wide range of political orientations, this was a significant step forward for political tolerance. According to Laborie (2017), tolerance was a Christian idea that was primarily propagated by those who needed it the most during the early Enlightenment.

Political tolerance can be understood as the willingness of individuals or groups to accept and respect the rights, opinions and beliefs of others, even if they differ from their own.

### Political tolerance challenges in multiparty societies

In analysis of literature on challenges in achieving political tolerance reveals several issues. Some of the key

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challenges shown within the literature on the legacy of colonialism, social economic inequalities, political challenges and social and cultural issues. These challenges are discussed to depth in the following subheadings.

### **Legacy of colonialism**

Studies on political tolerance in African countries like Zimbabwe have pointed to the impact of colonial histories. It is particularly demonstrated that African countries were divided in colonial times which created artificial boundaries (Wu, 2024; Andreasson, 2010). The divisions arising from colonialism contributed to the current lack of national unity among African countries. Even though the majority of African countries became independent to what they are in modern terms, the legacy of colonialism continues in the form of authoritarian governance structures which were inherited from colonial times. The literature reveals that the legacy of colonialism has persisted even among modern African countries (Young, 2012).

The political tolerance within African countries has also been affected by the political fragmentation which was promoted through colonialism. Most of Africans current political parties are structured around ethnic and cultural lines which is often associated with greater political intolerance (Austin, 2010). Political opponents consider themselves as a name or means to represent the interests of a certain grouping thereby intensifying intolerance amongst political players.

In addition to the ethnic-based exclusion, African political systems and the institutions are weak as a result of colonialism. Political institutions including electoral bodies, the judiciary and law enforcement often lack independence and this contributes to the existence of political intolerance. Studies show that if African countries are to have strong institutions, the some benefits that could be achieved including the lack of violence, repression and fair political competition (Lynch and Crawford, 2011; Jansen, 2023).

### **Political violence**

Another factor which significantly contributes to political intolerance in African countries like Zimbabwe is that of political violence. While political processes like elections are supposed to be peaceful, they are often violent within African settings. Studies review that political violence erodes political confidence and trust while perpetuating distrust and fear, which is common among SADC member states (Macheka, 2022; Mugari and Obioha, 2018). In addition, electoral or political violence undermines the functioning of democracies.

### **Political repression and authoritarianism**

Another factor that is suggested to contribute to political intolerance in African countries like Zimbabwe is that of political repression and authoritarianism. In most African countries, political leaders use repression as a way of maintaining their power. Political repression includes such tactics as arrests, harassment and assassination which are often targeted against political opponents. The result of authoritarianism and political repression in SADC states includes political intolerance (Mugari and Obioha, 2018). There is the stifling of political pluralism and citizens are afraid of expressing different views or opinions on politics or governance. Scholars suggest that it is because of put repression and authoritarianism that political tolerance in Africa is limited (Cheeseman, 2015; Mutanda, 2019).

Associated with the issue of political violence is that of patronage politics. This is defined as the exchanging of material benefits in return for political support (Misago and Landau, 2023). Studies show that most African political systems categorized by the achievement of loyalty with political supporters being rewarded for through access to state resources (Mutanda, 2019). The implication is that political competition will be a means of obtaining livelihoods instead of being a democratic process. Instead just review that political intolerance is aggravated by patronage politics since it contributes to divisions end to the lack of democratic practices.

### **Strategies to manage political tolerance challenges**

The literature shows that there are several strategies that countries can use in order to promote political Tolerance. Some of the common strategies cited within the literature include the promotion of inclusivity, having

stronger democratic institutions, public awareness and civic education combat media reforms and everything as strong as civil society. Some of these strategies are discussed in the following subheadings.

### **Public awareness**

One of the commonly cited strategies to enhance political tolerance is teaching the public. Studies reveal that civic education can be any effective method through which to promote a culture of tolerance among citizens (de Oliveira and Verhoeven, 2018; Akinola and Makombe, 2024). Civic education campaigns can be effected through public awareness programs which settle on such aspects as human rights, political diversity, the need for behavioral changes and adhering to democratic principles. The means through which to achieve civic education and public awareness include making use of social media schools and the involvement of civil society. Studies show that public awareness programs are an effective way through which to promote political tolerance (Adman and Stromblad, 2018).

### **Stronger democratic institutions**

Another strategy that has been suggested within the literature is useful in cultivating political tolerance in Africa is the strengthening of democratic institutions. This strategy involves measures to assure independence, fairness and transparency among such institutions such as the judiciary, electoral bodies and law enforcers. The literature demonstrates that the strengthening of these institutions his key in creating an enabling environment for fair political competition and the respect of human rights (Jordan, 2018; Adman and Stromblad, 2018).

Associated with the strategy of strong institutions is that of inclusiveness in governance. This strategy relates to including all social groups including minorities within political processes. Some of the means through which inclusiveness can be promoted is through good and effective decentralization, power sharing and affirmative action. The literature shows that inclusive governance can promote political tolerance by reducing the exclusion of some political voices (Linger and Stuart, 2013).

### **Media reforms**

Another commonly sighted strategy within the literature he is using media reforms. The basis of media reforms as a strategy for political tolerance lies in the fact that it can influence various political voices. Some of the methods through which the media can contribute to political tolerance uh providing balanced reporting, being independent, and supporting developmental agenda. The media can also desist from unfair or biased reporting which could lead to political intolerance. Norris (2010) explains that media reforms are critical to ensure that communities have a culture of tolerance and democracy.

### **Theoretical framework: Robert Dahl (1971) and David Truman (1951) liberal pluralism A**

A political ideology known as liberal pluralism emphasizes the importance of various competing groups and interests in a democratic society. Major lessons drawn from the interaction between David Truman and Robert Dahl are as follows: According to Quizlet, Dahl has some criteria for democracy in any society and these include equality in voting, participation, enlightened understanding, citizen control of the agenda and inclusion. According to Lloyd-Thomas (2014), Dahl proposed polyarchy as genuine democratic government and founded the pluralist view of democracy, according to which political outcomes are implemented through rival, if unequal, interest groups.

Dahl (1998) also submitted that a five criteria for evaluating democracy that would ensure liberal pluralism. These principles include effective participation, voting equality, enlightenment understanding, control of the agenda and the inclusion of adults. Dahl, according to Lloyd-Thomas (2014), paid a lot of attention to how decisions are made in genuine institutions. Dahl and Truman, for example, claimed that power was distributed across numerous interest groups, which tended to balance their relative negotiating position, according to Yumatle (2015). The benefits of liberal pluralism according to Dahl (1967) as quoted by Czada (2020) are fourfold: i) diversity in public governance reduces the workload of national governments and makes democracy more manageable. ii) it prevents conflicts accumulating at the national level and thus makes democracy more viable, iii) providing numerous semi-autonomous centers of power reinforces the principle of balanced authority

and political pluralism, and 4) facilitating self-government at the local level of administration creates opportunities for learning and practicing democracy. Czada was referring to Dahl's 'polyarchy' which he referred to as meaning rule of the many. Richards (2016) also interpreted that the point Dahl (1973) makes with his notion of polyarchy is that whilst democratic political systems may be imperfect, different interests have voice and are able to influence political outcomes.

The liberal pluralism theory put forth by Truman (1951) and Dahl (1956), according to Cunningham (2014), asserts that any society is a constellation of groups of people with shared interests who are typically at odds with one another and each using whatever power they have to advance their own interests. Even if the limits of tolerance are open for debate, Ceka (2023) argued that the extent to which people accept others who are different from them is generally viewed as a sign of a healthy and functional liberal democracy. Ceka (2023) also said that liberal democracies require their citizens to be tolerant of those they disagree with since pluralism cannot flourish if different points of view cannot compete on an even playing field. Because participation is a requirement for achieving democratic practices, liberal pluralism. Supporting the topic of participation, Ceka (2023) said that tolerance requires ongoing public discussions about the opinions, groups, and people that must be tolerated as well as the limits of tolerance.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research philosophy

The researcher employed interpretivism and social construction to better comprehend the complexity of tolerance in a multiparty system by fusing interpretivism and social constructivism. The subjective experiences, interpretations, and meanings that various actors have assigned to tolerance can be explored, as well as the larger societal and environmental elements that influence these interpretations.

This research was guided by the interpretivism and social constructivism as philosophies. According to Banghart (2017) Interpretive methods include social theories and viewpoints that support the idea that reality is socially produced or given meaning by how actors interpret occurrences. Therefore, the phrase "interpretive approach" refers to a particular perspective on organizational reality that holds that reality is socially constructed or given meaning by actors' perceptions of the world (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Van de Walt (2020) stated that Constructivism is closely related to interpretivism. Constructivism is based on the premise that reality and human behavior are characterized by constant fluctuations, adjustments, and transformations that operate simultaneously at multiple sites and that they provide a nuanced picture of how facts emerge and how "truths" are shaped.

The need to combine these philosophies is justified by Van de Walt (2020) when stated that as a research methodology, interpretivism-constructivism encompasses three sets of more fundamental or underlying concerns: first, a number of pre-theoretical (pre-scientific) concerns that the user of the method should keep in mind; second, it is rooted in a variety of theories; and third, it is rooted in a number of older philosophical traditions. I'll focus on the first group in this section—the fundamental pre-theoretical issues—and talk about the other two in upcoming sections.

### Research approach

This research was guided by deductive research approach. Coccia (2028) stated that to deduce means "to draw a conclusion from," whereas deduction can indicate "to lead from, to draw from." Both words describe logical structures meant to offer solutions to issues. According to Collaborators (2023) in a deductive approach, a theory, hypothesis, or generalization is the starting point for deductive inquiry, which is subsequently tested by observations and data gathering. It employs a top-down approach where the researcher begins with a broad hypothesis and then tests it using detailed observations. Deductive analysis is frequently used to verify a theory or evaluate an accepted notion. The researcher has opted for deductive is at results are more accurate in the matter under study as alluded by Coccia (2018) when he said deduction is less dangerous than induction because the latter can result in dubious results. Csula (2021) also added that exploratory qualitative research is frequently criticized for lacking methodological rigor and tentative outcomes when compared to quantitative studies that

use deductive confirmatory procedures

Research approaches are strategies and protocols that cover everything from general hypotheses to specific techniques for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data (Grover, 2015). There are basically three research approaches which are inductive, deductive and abductive. The abductive approach is a combination of both the inductive and the deductive approaches. Deductive approach is commonly used in quantitative studies, where one starts with a theory or hypothesis and test it through data analysis. Inductive approach is often used in qualitative studies, where you observe patterns in data and generate theories or themes from the pattern.

### **Research design**

This research combined the Case study and Ethnographic study as research design in orders achieve objectives of the study. According to Inaganti, studying people and their cultures through a method known as "design ethnography" helps us better grasp what people need from design. In order to develop better designs, it's a method of comprehending how individuals interact with their surroundings and the objects nearby. In the social and behavioral sciences, ethnography is a qualitative data collection technique that is frequently employed. In order to develop conclusions about how societies and individuals work, data was collected through interviews.

### **Population**

According to Wikiwand, Zimbabwe has a total of 31 active political parties with only two that is ZANU-PF and the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) having parliamentary representation. According to the Parliament of Zimbabwe website, Zimbabwe has a parliament comprising of 270 members and the senate comprised 80 senators. Political leaders from different political parties at different level, national, provincial and local levels.

### **Sampling**

The researcher purposively chose Zimbabwe as the case study among the 16 SADC members. A case study was the intended method of the researchers. The researchers used a non-probability sampling method and purposefully selected Zimbabwe as a case study. Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique that does not provide a basis for any assessment of the likelihood that any particular universe-wide constituent will have a chance of being included in the research sample, stated Bala (2018). According to Alvi (2016) non-probability is also known as judgmental or non-random sampling. Alvi (2016) noted that the investigator's subjective judgment is used to determine which sample to use. By the researcher's convenient door, Bala (2018 submitted, the sample is chosen meaning objects to be sampled must be carefully chosen by the researcher. The researcher opted for the non-probability technique of its flexibility in terms of population. Alvi alluded that both the population that falls under the too-general category and the population that falls under the specifically specified category can be studied using these strategies.

During this research the combination of typical case sampling and extreme or deviant case sampling was employed in order to identify the case under study. Typical case sampling was chosen as Alkasim et al (2016) that it aids in establishing the standard or "typical" and that candidates are typically selected based on their propensity to behave similarly to everyone else.

Extreme/deviant case sampling was also used in this study because, as alluded by Alkasim et al (2016) method of sampling is more frequently employed by academics who are creating "best practice" guidelines or investigating "what not to do."

### **Participants/Respondents sampling**

The researcher opted to employ a combination of cluster and stratifies techniques in order to identify respondents. In contrast to cluster sampling, which divides the population into clusters, stratified sampling employs prior knowledge about the entire population to make the sample operation more effective and reduce sampling error, (Gao 2016). Both techniques can guarantee that your sample is representative of the target population in this way.



1. Political leadership: the researcher contacted current and former key political leaders from different parties in the country. Political leadership was drawn from ZANU-PF, CCC, MDC, LEAD, and National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).
2. Academia and political analysts: Academics and political analysts in the field Politics, Public Management/Administration, Diplomacy, International, Law and Policy were of target. Their essence is based on the basis that they have the expertise and knowledge of the subject matter, they often carry research and analysis, they also have influence and advocacy influence, and analysts have diverse perspectives and viewpoints on political matters.
3. Civic society: Targeted civic organisations in Zimbabwe to be targeted are those that specialize in promoting political tolerance and peaceful coexistence and to be specific that deal with human rights issues, democracy or conflict resolution.
4. Youth organisations: The researcher targeted different youth organisations and ascertained their attitudes towards political tolerance.
5. Religious institutions: Some religious denominations were selected and analyze their teachings and actions related to political tolerance. Churches council were included as a key player.

Table 1. Sample targets.

Target population	Sampling size	Types of sampling
Political Leaders and Youths	5	Purposive and snowball
Academics/ Analysts	3	Purposive and snowball
Civil societies leaders	3	Purposive and snowball
Religious Leaders	3	Purposive and Snowball

Source: field data

### Data collection instruments

The instruments that were used were key interviews. This comprised speaking with a certain number of individuals who have been picked for their expertise and experience in a given field. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) The interviews are in-depth, qualitative, and semi-structured. Key informant interviews make use of topical or open-ended interview guides. In order to obtain facts, opinions, and experiences from the informant, the interviewer gently prods them. In order to obtain understanding of the role of political tolerance in a multiparty country like Zimbabwe, the researcher disseminated these to chosen people representing the government, private sector, development partners, civil society, academia, research organizations, and student groups.

### Trustworthiness

A feasibility study or pilot study is a small-scale preparatory research project carried out before the primary research to assess feasibility or enhance the research concept. Before beginning a large-scale research endeavor, pilot studies can be highly helpful in developing the research methodology and methods (Simkus 2020). In other words, the pilot study is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and quality of the main study. Before implementation of data collection tool on a larger scale, a pilot testing conducted to ensure objectivity in the research. The pilot testing helped in identifying any potential issues with the instruments that might require amendments.

Peer reviewing was also done in the study. Peer review is defined as "to subject to, or evaluate by, peer review";

to referee (a paper)" in the Oxford English Dictionary (2019). Simply put, an article has undergone peer review if it has been read and evaluated by experts or other researchers in the field before being published. Consider it to be publication and research quality control. Before implementation of a full research, the researcher carried out a peer review in order to test the effectiveness of the research instruments. Peers were identified from the field of political science and broadly social science research. This went long way in identifying any flaws or weakness in the research design and data collection methods and techniques.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher collected data individually from the respondents. All data gathered was recorded for later use. Methods of recording used included manually and audio and video recording. The recording served a lot of purpose as alluded by, Bhandari (2023) here are some excellent practices to make sure that good quality data is recorded methodically: As soon as you receive data, make sure to note all pertinent details, check manual data entry twice for mistakes and if one gathers quantitative data, you may evaluate its validity and dependability to determine the level of data quality. Research records are generally any type of records or materials that serve as a record of your research endeavor. These can be electronic or hard copy, such as different types of logs, notebooks, emails, movies, computer databases, audio or digital records, or even the actual results of tests.

### **Data analysis and presentation**

The researcher also used narrative analysis, which is a qualitative research technique. According to Bye et al (2019) narrative analysis can help understand how people interpret their lives in relation to social, cultural and historical settings and can shed light on the complexity of the human experience. This study will benefit greatly from narrative analysis since it enables the exploration of personal narrative and experiences related to political tolerance. In order to obtain insight into respondents' perspectives, attitude and experiences linked to political tolerance, the researcher used narrative analysis to study the stories, testimonies or narratives offered by respondents. The collection of narratives took place through interviews and even written accounts. A fuller knowledge of how respondents experience and negotiate political tolerance in a multiparty democracy were attained through narrative analysis.

### **Research ethics**

Ethical issues were mainstreamed throughout the research period. Prior to gathering data during the fieldwork with the respondents, the researcher obtained their permission. Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for intellectual property were all mainstreamed and upheld during the study process. During the data collection process and while producing this thesis, the researcher also adhered to the ideals and principles of objectivity. The researcher did not misbehave, intimidate, or make the research subjects feel uncomfortable at any point during the study. Plagiarism, which is the unlawful appropriation and publication of the words, ideas, or expressions of another author, has been avoided.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Response rate analysis**

The information being presented was gathered in Zimbabwe through interviews. The response rates obtained are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Response rate.

<b>RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	<b>RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Political Leaders and the Youths	5	4	80
Academics/ Analysts	3	2	67
Civil societies leaders	3	3	100

Religious Leaders	3	3	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>85.7</b>

Source: Field data

The findings show a response rate of 80% among the political leaders and youths. There were also response rates of 67% and 100% for academics or analysts and leaders of civil society organizations, respectively. The overall response rate was 85.7% which was significant ly high and revealed high levels of participant responses. The selection of respondents was conducted in such a way that in depth knowledge is obtained from a wider representation of key players.

### Participants’ demographic profiles

The demographic details of participants were determined. Findings made on the distribution of participants’ gender, age and highest academic levels are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of participants’ gender, age and highest academic levels.

Demographic characteristic	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	8	67.0
	Female	4	33.0
	Other	0	0
Age group	18-27	1	8.0
	28-37	4	33.0
	38-49	6	51.0
	Above 50	1	8
Highest academic level	None	1	8.0
	Certificate	2	17.0
	Diploma	2	17.0
	Bachelors’ degree	4	33.0
	Masters’ degree	3	25.0
	Doctoral degree	0	0%

For gender, 79% participants were males compared to 21% for females, which represents 27 and 10, respectively. Male visibility in the political arena is very high and this had an impact on the number of female respondents who took part. However, the contribution of the few female participants cannot be under estimated. The political terrain in Zimbabwe has been heavily male concentrated and this has resulted in the rare presence of women whenever the need arise. Many researches end up being male dominated despite females being the majority in the country. Even the academia is male infested as well as far as the political issues are concerned.

The research was quite successful in getting balanced response on the age issue from the targeted demographic. Eight percent of the respondents were young people (18–27), who make up the majority of the country's population, twenty nine percent were people in their middle years (28–37) and fifty five percent were those in the 38–49 age group. The elderly—defined as those who are 50 years of age and older—contributed 8 % of the research, and their involvement was crucial since they had had a lot of life experiences that were helpful in achieving the research's goals. The representation according to age showed that all age groups are now interested in matters to do with their political life. Almost all age groups were equally represented.

## Challenges and barriers to political tolerance in Zimbabwe

The study ascertained the challenges and barriers that are faced in achieving political tolerance in Zimbabwe. Among the major themes emerging from the study were that there is a lack of understanding of political tolerance, taking political life as a source of employment, the lack of political will and the doctrines of political parties. An overview of the dominance of these themes in terms of their coding references is presented in Figure 1.

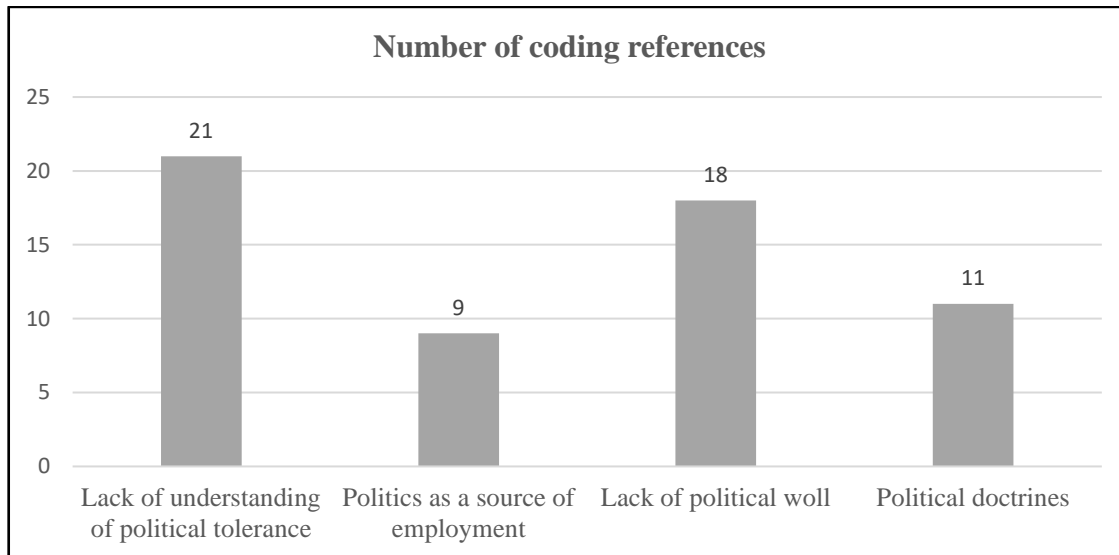


Figure 1. Comparison of themes on challenges and barriers to political tolerance in Zimbabwe.

As the findings show, the most dominant theme in the discussions was that there is a lack of understanding that political tolerance is a key tenant of democracy. The notion that political tolerance is limited by a lack of political will was the second most dominant theme in the study. The issue of the doctrines of political parties contributing to the lack of tolerance was the third most common theme. A fourth theme in the study was that of taking political life as a source of employment. Below, findings on each of these thematic areas is discussed to depth.

### Lack of understanding of political tolerance

Participants in the study revealed that one of the major challenges faced in the pursuit of political tolerance in Zimbabwe is the lack of knowledge on the concept and its importance. This was the basis of the following response made in the study;

“Most people hardly know what political tolerance is. It’s almost like the idea does not exist.”

The above suggestion was supported in the response that;

“I think people are deliberately blind to the concept of political tolerance, otherwise they would be practicing it.”

These findings highlighted how some of the people in Zimbabwe do not comprehend the concept of political tolerance. This means there will be in a compromised state in terms of practicing it within their communities and societies, which accounts for the low tolerance in the country (Adeyeni and Falade, 2015).

### Lack of political will impedes tolerance

Another major finding in the study was that there is a lack of will to tolerate others in politics. This finding was evidenced by responses from some participants, including one who stated that;

“Even when people know it (political tolerance), they are largely unwilling to practice it because of their underlying political inclinations and beliefs.”

Speaking on the lack of political will to tolerate others' views, another participant in the study suggested that;

“It is actually related: the lack of political tolerance and the lack of willpower to accommodate others' views.”

These findings therefore showed that there is a lack of will to tolerate the views of other people from different political persuasions. This lack of will leads to the deliberate ignoring of other people's views in ways that often leads to conflicts. One of the most effective means through which to achieve political tolerance is by putting in place strong and effective public institutions which happens to be a critical challenge in African countries like those in SADC, Zimbabwe included (Freitage, 2011).

### **Politics as a source of employment**

Some of the participants in the study pointed out that the desire and tendency of some politicians to engage in the practice solely as a means of survival or livelihoods is among the causes of the failure to tolerate divergent political views. This was as stated by one of the study participants who said that;

“I think the real problem lies in one's political intentions. We currently have a lot of people who do not put the interest of the public or the nation at heart because they are simply motivated by the need to amass wealth for themselves.”

This response was supported by another remark obtained in the study, which was as follows;

“Career politicians do not care about tolerating other people's views. To them, it is all about themselves even when it (lack of political tolerance) causes harm to everyone else.”

The above views provided a strong basis for concluding that being in politics for financial gain is among the challenges to political tolerance in Zimbabwe. The findings largely revealed that career politicians are inconsiderate of the common good as promulgated through the doctrine of political tolerance. In fact, there was a blurred line between this theme of career politics and the following one on political doctrines. These findings match those from studies which suggest how the issue of identity politics constrains the achievement of political tolerance in SADC countries like Zimbabwe (Gumbo, 2020; Harris and Hove, 2015).

### **Political doctrines as a challenge to tolerance**

The findings of this study also established political indoctrination as one of the key themes and challenges against the attainment of tolerance in Zimbabwe's politics. Participants in the study revealed that current political teachings among the major political parties in Zimbabwe are skewed against other views in ways that promote a culture of animosity, aggression and violence. This was the gist of the response that;

“The kind of training and messages within the political party can be dangerous. Some people are trained to hate the other party and this can lead to violence.”

A more specific response was provided by one of the youths included in the study. In his response, this participant said;

“Some parties have doctrines that consider people from other affiliations as enemies. This makes it difficult for the followers of that party to tolerate others because their guiding philosophies will be promoting hatred.”

Accordingly, the study established that the nature of the political doctrine within a party is among the determining factors for tolerance. In parties characterized by hate speech, there are less chances of being tolerant for people of opposing political views. One of the challenges to political tolerance in Zimbabwe is the failure of important state institutions to uphold the rule of law and this presents another difficulty in combating intolerance in Zimbabwe. According to Human Rights Watch, security forces continued to arbitrarily detain, assault, kidnap, torture, and inflict other abuses upon opposition politicians, dissidents, and activists. The arrest is one notable example of Zimbabwean authorities' intolerance. Takudzwa Ngadzire, the leader of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), was attacked, beaten, and kidnapped on September 18 while speaking at a press

conference to denounce the torture of Muchehiwa. Police later detained him on suspicion of inciting civil unrest.

Although researchers have created peace frameworks, events in Zimbabwe show that unification, reconciliation, and commissions did not have the anticipated effects. Communities and victims of political violence applauded these proposals and conclusions, but it soon became apparent that the underlying causes of the violence had not been addressed (Macheka 2023).

### Strategies for promoting political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Zimbabwe

Respondents were asked about possible solutions to ensure peaceful coexistence in a multiparty society and proposed several solutions. Among the major strategies suggested to promote political tolerance were legal reforms. The strategies established in this study also include using political leadership to address same political gatherings, avoiding career politicians in the political arena and the development of an educational system that will foster the sense and knowledge of political tolerance and its benefit.

Figure 2 presents a summary of the major themes and the number of their coding references as obtained from the study.

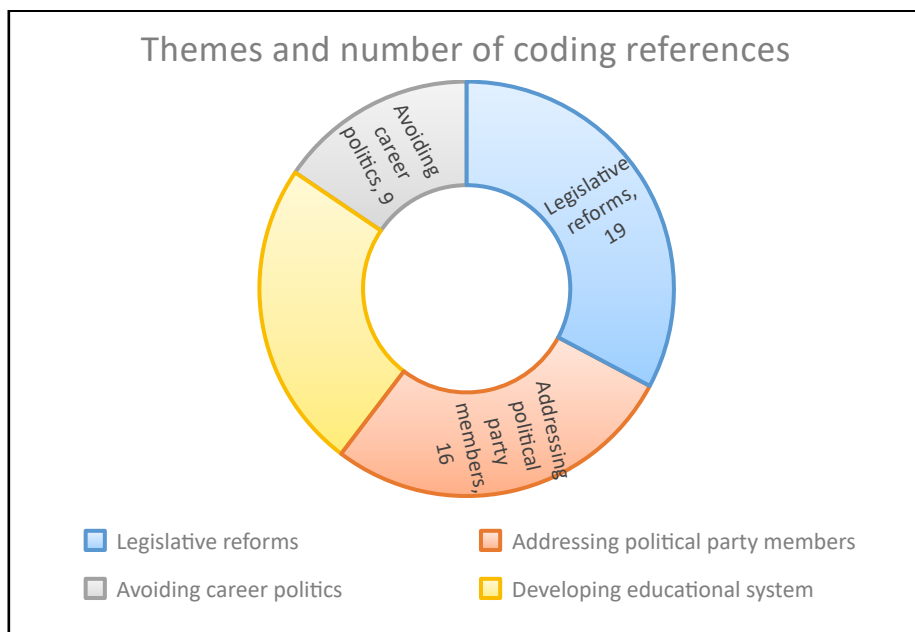


Figure 2. Comparison of themes on strategies to promote political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Zimbabwe.

Each of the above thematic areas relating to strategies to enhance political tolerance in Zimbabwe is discussed in the following subheadings.

#### Legislation reforms

Legislative reform was suggested as one of the ways to deal with the current lack of tolerance in Zimbabwean politics. In particular, participants pointed to the need to amend the country’s Electoral laws as one of the ways to arrest political intolerance This was explained by a participant who opined that;

“The Electoral laws should make it mandatory for everyone, especially politicians, to be tolerant of divergent views. It is also necessary to outlaw hate speech or any actions that promote political intolerance.”

Another participant in the study added that there is a need to amend various other laws, including those relating to the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as gender equality;

“We should revise current laws as a way of promoting tolerance. It is useful to review current gender and political administration laws. I suggest the need to ensure that freedom of political expression is promoted as it is one of

the basic human rights.”

The above findings revealed the importance of addressing political intolerance through legislative reforms in the country. The findings particularly emphasized on the role of reforms to Zimbabwe’s current electoral laws in order to provide for political tolerance. Indeed, Zimbabwe's electoral laws have been questioned in terms of their relevance in providing the proper environment conducive for free and fair elections given the multiparty setting (Chigwata, 2021). The need for inclusion of minority groups through such strategies as greater political tolerance is heightened especially in the sub-Saharan African countries where SADC governs (Bodea and Houle, 2017).

### **Political leadership to address political gatherings**

One of the strategies suggested in this study was the need to deal with the lack of knowledge on political tolerance among the people in Zimbabwe. To this end, participants stated that promotion of political tolerance by leaders of political parties is the most effective way. This issue was the basis of the following response emerging in the study;

“The power to control what people think politically lies with the leaders. If they chose to misinform people then it can lead to violence, as is largely the case currently. But if they educate people on how to tolerate one another, then it can be a good thing.”

Other participants in the study reiterated this view. They even added that the majority of the political leaders are among the reasons for the lack of political tolerance in the country. For instance; the following perspective was shared by a participant who happened to be one among many holding this view;

“Politicians incite the people to turn on one another. This is instead of the norm which would be to assist in uniting the people through teaching how to be tolerant of others’ views.”

The findings attest to the responsibility of political leaders in supporting a culture of political tolerance among their followers. This is one of the critical lessons that countries like Zimbabwe have to learn since there often is a tendency to assume that political tolerance can be achieved among followers themselves without leaders’ influence. The findings confirm what other studies suggest in that political leaders and their behaviours are central to the promotion and practice of tolerance (Ceka and Stoeckel, 2023; Draca and SSchwarz, 2021). In the absence of support from the leaders, followers are bound to consider political tolerance as trivial.

### **Avoid career politicians in the political arena**

Another thematic area emerging from the study was the need for the avoidance of politics as one’s sole career. Proponents of this line of thought considered that the leader or politicians would largely be blind to the influence they possess on their followers since they will be motivated by either or both financial or material gains. This was the gist of the response that;

“As long as our leaders treat politics like a business, they will never achieve its real goals.”

Another participant in the study explained the above statement to depth, stating that;

“Our leaders are mostly in politics as a career and not out of the genuine need to help people. So when they are faced with having to follow democratic principles which are basic in politics, they tend to ignore that because they will have achieved what they wanted (financial gain) anyway. This mindset has to change.”

The above findings gave support to the notion that political leaders who engage in politics as a career or to meet financial and material goals will be incapable of promoting tolerance. In fact, the participants revealed that such leaders fan division as it is often one of the ways through which they gain political relevance to achieve their selfish goals. This perspective resonated with the literature which suggests that selfish politics is among the causes for most problems that are faced in African countries, including electoral violence and authoritarianism (Bjorkdahl et al., 2021; Alexander and McGregor, 2013). Dealing with the challenge of political intolerance would therefore mean attending to the motivations of politicians to ensure that they are not inclined to self-

benefit, which often comes at the expense of other collective goals like peace and tolerance.

### **Development of an educational system that will foster the sense and knowledge of political tolerance and its benefit.**

Another thematic area emerging in this study was on developing an educational system to foster a sense of political tolerance among Zimbabweans. Participants highlighted that some of the challenges being faced in establishing and maintaining tolerance in Zimbabwe's politics arise from the lack of knowledge among the citizenry. This was explained by a participant who said;

"We need to make sure people are educated on how to tolerate others in politics. This is a very important issue because currently many people do not even know the relevance of doing so".

To the need for an educational system was also bolstered by the following response made in the study;

"People's knowledge should be increased by educating them. Infusing Civic education emphasizing political tolerance within school curricula is necessary."

These findings suggested that education could go a long way in improving public knowledge and practicing of political tolerance. In addition, the findings revealed that greater knowledge empowers citizens and could influence their attitudes towards others' opposing political views in ways that edifies the country's politics (Adeyini and Falade, 2015). Within SADC countries, there is a need for public education campaigns with the aim to enlighten and promote tolerance as a key practice within politics. In the absence of such education, the public largely remains unaware of the challenges or risks associated with intolerance while the countries lose out on the benefits that come with being politically tolerant.

## **CONCLUSION**

Since the study was also informed by the assumption that really people can have differing political orientation and still leave peacefully, the study identified some challenges to the co-existence and possible solutions. It was indeed significant to try and establish challenges that affect political tolerance in Zimbabwe and SADC at large. Undoubtedly, political tolerance faces significant obstacles due to the deliberate inaction of those in power who fail to acknowledge and address the underlying issues that fuel intolerance, largely because they benefit from the existing state of affairs. Many challenges pointed out at systems of government that have not done enough justice to address the subject matter. Among the major challenges against political tolerance in the country are a lack of understanding of the concept and its importance, taking political life as a source of employment, the lack of political will and the doctrines of political parties.

It was also in the interest of this study to examine the strategies for promoting political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Zimbabwe so that conclusions and recommendations are drawn factually. The majority of Zimbabweans, as found and concluded by the study, have directly experienced instances of political tolerance and this depicts a society that requires healing, forgiveness and drafting a comprehensive way forward that allows for peaceful coexistence. Among the strategies that could be used to promote political tolerance in the country are legal reforms especially in Electoral and Gender laws. Other strategies that the country could implement include political leadership promoting tolerance in their political gatherings, avoiding career politicians and the development of an educational system that will foster the sense and knowledge of political tolerance and its benefit.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have significant empirical and theoretical implications, shedding new light on political tolerance and contributing to a deeper understanding of the concept of tolerance. For theory, the study reviews the role played by some challenges in influencing the level of political tolerance within African countries. Past studies have focused mostly on public perceptions of political tolerance. This study, however, was aimed at identifying challenges that could serve as drawbacks against political tolerance.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is critical to teach the public on the concept and importance of political tolerance in SADC countries like Zimbabwe. This comes on the backdrop of findings that the major challenges against political tolerance in the country include a lack of understanding of the concept and its importance. To this end, political leaders, their parties and other stakeholders are encouraged to educate party members on the importance of practicing political tolerance.

It is also recommended that political leaders should be gainfully employed in other professions apart from politics. This recommendation arrives from findings that some political leaders lack tolerance because of taking political life as a source of employment. In the process, they become blind or oblivious to the need for political tolerance among their followers. Given the high importance of political tolerance since it contributes to peace, unity and stability, it is important for leaders to avoid promoting divisions and intolerance among their followers.

Several strategies can be used to promote political tolerance in Zimbabwe. The first of these is that the educational policy in Zimbabwe needs to be drafted in such a way that orientation towards the importance of political tolerance is understood from school level until people get involved in political matters. Also, there is need for laws that punish political leaders in their personal capacity against the use of hate and derogatory speech.

Zimbabwe should also strengthen its public institutions, especially the judiciary, policymakers (parliament) and law enforcement. In particular, there is a need for the depoliticisation of national institutions and ensuring their independence so that they can have a meaningful role in political tolerance. SADC as a region, should shun its brotherhood stance towards political leaders in the region who have been fueling intolerance. The regional body should play a supportive role in upholding human rights and democratic principles in member states like Zimbabwe.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Interview guide

DEAR:.....

My name is Eneriko Mbofani, Registration Number M227415, I am student at Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) carrying out a study POLITICAL TOLERANCE'S PLACE IN MULTIPARTY SOCIETIES' COEXISTENCE IN SADC: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE (2017-2023), as fulfilment of the Master of science in Public Management and Policy You are kindly being requested to contribute to the study by answering the questions on this form. Confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed. Your participation and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

#### Section A: Biographical Data

1. Please indicate your gender:

Male                       Female                       Other

2. Age category (in years):

18-27                       28-37                       38-47                       50+

3. Highest level of education

PhD  Masters                       Degree  Diploma                       Certificate

Others

#### Section B: Challenges and Barriers to Political Tolerance in Zimbabwe

i. What do you perceive as the main challenges and barriers to political tolerance in Zimbabwe?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

ii. Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of political intolerance in Zimbabwe? If yes please provide examples

YES                     

NO                     

If                      yes                      to                      the                      above                      can                      you                      elaborate  
.....  
.....

iii. Do you think the educational system in Zimbabwe has done enough to promote political tolerance in Zimbabwe?

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.....

iv. What do you say about the laws in Zimbabwe to the realization of political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Zimbabwe?

.....  
.....  
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.....  
.....

A. Political Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence in Sadc

v. From your experience, what strategies do you believe can be effective in promoting political tolerance and peaceful coexistence in multiparty societies in SADC?

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.....  
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vi. Do you have anything to add to the topic of political tolerance in a multiparty society?

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.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you.