OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK IN ZIMBABWE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. It sought to determine the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe, assess opportunities and challenges for political social work practice and examine strategies that can be used to improve political social work practice. The structural social work theory was used to explain and inform the study. The researcher used a mixed methods approach where quantitative and qualitative approaches were triangulated. Census was used to sample all active members of NASWZ to participate in a survey and purposive sampling was used to select key informants. The study found out that the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe is very low. The study also identified a number of opportunities for political social work practice in Zimbabwe such as professional recognition and relevance, employment opportunities for social workers, ethical politics and increased democracy. It was also noted that challenges for political social work include ideological dilemma, professional stigmatization, prohibition at work and lack of political social work skills. The study has also identified strategies to improve political social work in Zimbabwe which include reviewing social work curriculum to include political social work modules, uniting social workers and creating a strong NASWZ, embarking on benchmarking tours to countries that practice political social work, running for political office and participating in political and social activism. Based on these findings, the study has espoused recommendations which include political social work skills workshops and conferences, creation of social work networks, lobbying, and training of doctoral level students by schools of social work in Zimbabwe.

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DEDICATION

*I dedicate this work to the two women in my life; my mother **Emelitha Manzipa Njangi Mushayamunda**; and **Nyembezi waMubhudha Mushayamunda** the lady capturer of my heart. You both remain at the centre of my life, for it is really about you in this life. Love you both so very much.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

to study. I will always cherish being part of a great team, flexible, sensitive and supportive. May God bless us all.

ACCRONYMS

NASW-National Association of Social Workers

NASWZ-National Association of Social Workers-Zimbabwe

SPSS-Statistical Package for Social Scientist

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0. INRODUCTION

This chapter is going to focus on background of political social work practice, statement of the problem, justification for political social work practice in Zimbabwe, study aim and objectives. The chapter will conclude by defining terms for this research.

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

While the subject of political social work is often discussed and to some extent practiced in other parts of the world, especially the first world (Rome and Hoeschstetter, 2010: Mathews, 1982), the same cannot be said of Africa, and Zimbabwe in particular. According to Muchanyerei (2017), the silence by the majority of Zimbabwean social workers in the wake of socio-political challenges troubling the country is worrying. There seems to be ambivalence among social workers when it comes to political social work practice (Darroch, 2015). The passiveness on the subject of political social work practice is exacerbated by the long standing belief in social work circles that the profession is apolitical and that it should remain ideologically neutral (Mathews, 1982). Some founders of the profession like Mary Richmond and other Charity Organization Society leaders did not seek to make structural changes to address critical social problems. They held that social workers should achieve social change through casework and often disregarded the method of correcting structural challenges that causes social difficulties to people (Weismiller and Rome, 1995). In line with this position, Muchacha (2016) argues that social work profession is not well positioned to address structural injustices because it has for a long

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time relied on casework as a method of solving peoples' problems. It is in reflection of this position and background that this study seeks to advance to bring the subject of political social work into the general social work discourse and practice, so as to arrive at opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe.

Pritzker and Lane (2013) define political social work as social work practice, research, and theory involving explicit attention to power dynamics in policy-making and political mechanisms for eliciting social change. Political social work practice includes expanding political participation of vulnerable groups in communities, influencing policy agendas, and policy decisions, expanding representation of underrepresented communities in important forums, organizing communities into coalitions, volunteering in community groups, working on campaigns and holding or working in elected offices, among other activities (Lane and Pritzer, 2018). Political social work is therefore a form of practice as well as a related research and theory through which social workers fulfill their ethical responsibility to engage in political action for social justice and human rights. Lane and Pritzer (2018) note that political social work is the framework to effect change in the political process, and further argue that the method is effective in impacting the context within which policies are made thereby shaping the content of policies. Social workers see and understand the challenges that vulnerable groups in society face, and they also understand how larger structures contribute to these challenges and are therefore the right people to navigate power dynamics and political mechanism in order to bring about social justice and social change. Given this professional mandate and calling social workers must demonstrate their concern over the need and vulnerable groups by speaking out for groups that otherwise may not be able to speak for themselves safely (Kosseff, 2017). Social workers need to

utilize opportunities in political social work practice and overcome associated challenges for practice.

Rome and Hoeschstetter (2010) note that social workers have got an ethical responsibility to participate in civic life by advocating for compassionate leaders and constructive polices. Political social work practice therefore stems from ethical code of ethics for the profession of social work. This responsibility has found expression section six of NASW-Zimbabwe Code of Ethics (1999), under "Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society," which forms a strong foundation for political social work. Section 6.04 (a) especially addresses this area of practice that social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. The American Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017) further expounds that social workers are required to engage in social and political action, to expand choice and opportunity and promote policies and practices that safeguard the rights of equity, equality and social justice for all people. Social workers should therefore be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice. Swank (2012) posits that social workers should attempt change within institutional causes of poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, sexual violence, healthcare and other social ills by entering the political process that creates and implements detrimental policies for society. This line of argument poses both opportunities and challenges for social work practice in Zimbabwe considering the background of the profession itself, and the socio-political environment within which the profession must be practiced.

According to Stackhouse-Powe (2014:1), "Social work literature supports the notion of the need for social workers to be politically active". For a long time, social workers have been a part of the research process of identifying social problems that are in need of change, but not often included in the process of identifying the interventions that are needed to positively affect the outcomes (Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy, 2013). This creates a situation where the profession is used to identify social problems, then removed from decisions and political methods of correcting such problem, yet engaged again to implement policy decisions they were not part of. Maraffey (1987) quoted in Lane and Pritzer (2018) analysed and reject a position where social workers should only be involved in problem identification and supplying of information to legislator and then go no further to make policy decisions. It is argued that political social work is the quintessential macro practice that allows social workers to do more than identifying problems but be involved in making policy agendas and making policy decisions that are responsive to their clients (Muchinyerei, 2017). Political social work therefore allows the profession to navigate power dynamics; struggles and other macro-political variants which influence the provision of rights based social services to its clientele.

By its very definition, Social Work is a political profession and the history of the profession serves to confirm the same. According to the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW, 2015) General Assembly of July 2014, social work is defined as the practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

Political buzz words that are the building blocks of the social work definition are a testament to the fact that the profession is naturally political and fits well within power dynamics and political mechanisms that bring social change and social justice. These include such phrases as structural sources of oppression, emancipatory practices/praxis of empowerment and liberation of people, social justice and human rights. The definition has undertones and overtones of change and challenging existing structures that incubate social problems for humanity (Lavallette, 2013). As long as human beings are finding it difficult to interact with their environments, it is the calling of the social work profession to challenge the status quo and call responsible structures to order.

IASSW (2015) also further submits that social work profession embraces first, second and third generation rights which include civil and political rights such as free speech and conscience and freedom from torture and arbitrary detention; socio and economic rights that includes right to reasonable level of education, healthcare, and housing and minority language rights; and the natural world rights and rights to specie biodiversity and intergenerational equity. One can therefore logically deduce from this political tone that failure to embrace the politics in social work is not only unethical but also pernicious. Mathews (1982:616) has in the past lamented that the belief that social workers are for the most part apolitical is long standing and pervasive. Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013) described the consequences of the absence of the social work profession within the political discourse as "the price of professional silence"

Political social work takes various forms that includes influencing candidates or legislators, writing letters to authorities, working on campaigns, expanding political participation, working in full-time political positions, organizing people against unacceptable policy decision, coalescing for human rights issues, social action for or against certain issues, speaking publicly against issues of discontent, confronting authorities for structural change, and even holding

elected office (Stackhouse-Powe, 2014; Lane and Pritzer, 2018). Since the beginning of the profession, social workers have played important roles in political struggles for social justice (Meyer, 2013). They have criticized, designed, and implemented an array of social policies and have increasingly campaigned for and held political office. Political social work practice has its roots in the origins of the profession. Jane Addams is credited with establishing Hull House, one of the first settlement houses in the United States, in Chicago in 1889. Many of the settlement house workers had progressive ideals and helped form unions, created work projects for recently unemployed men and women, led strikes over work hours and poor working conditions, spearheaded child labor legislation, and initiated housing reform (Addams, 1910). Some of these early social workers recognized the imperative to influence government to create new policies and private services to meet individual and group needs. This involvement in the political sphere resulted in an awareness of the importance of using power to influence governmental processes (Weismiller and Rome, 1995).

As cited in Lasch (1965: 348), in her support for political social work, Jane Addams is credited for saying, "When the ideas and measures we have long been advocating for become part of a political campaign, would we not be the victims of a curious self-consciousness if we failed to follow them there?" Given this argument on the need for social workers to practice political social work, Mmatli (2008) observed that the social work profession is not actively fighting against human rights violations and other social injustices in Africa due to lack of voice and power to influence the political space. A study therefore on the subject of political social work is a move towards the good direction for the profession that thrives to help people in need of the restoration of their self functionings.

While the above argument is true in the western societies, the same argument can hardly be sustained in Zimbabwe. There is scant literature and no evidence of political social work practice in Zimbabwe, resulting in Mutetwa and Muchacha (2013)'s penning of the prize for professional silence bemoaning the consequences of the absence of the social work profession in the face of human rights abuses in the political context of Zimbabwe despite the active involvement of other professions as Law, Economics, and Journalism. However, the relationship between the social work and politics is worth noting in the history of Zimbabwe. There are phenomenal politician who have enriched the politics of Zimbabwe and were social workers by profession. The first Vice president of the Republic of Zimbabwe Dr. Joshua Mquabuko Nyongolo Nkomo attended Jan Hofmayr School of Social Work in South Africa and was awarded with a B.A. Degree in Social Sciences in 1952. Another Zimbabwean social worker who was active in politics is Sikhanyiso Ndlovu who during his political career became the Deputy Minister of Education, and also the Minister of Information and broadcasting Services. He had attained his diploma in Social Work from the University of Natal, South Africa in 1961.

Efforts by Musodzi Chibhanga Ayema (Mai Misodzi), a female feminist social worker to advocate for the rights of impoverished women in the 1950s in Rhodesia also constitutes what can be referred to as political social work (Newsday, 10 August 2017). Her efforts were clearly what constitute political social work today despite the fact that the momentum was not maintained and her activist legacy was left to wither. This history however resonates well with the call from Chogugudza (2011) for social workers to also join the ranks in politics and make influence from that platform. While this may not per se result in a desired outcome for social services provision, social justice and human rights quest, the political context gives social workers an opportunity to also participate in policy decisions that benefit their clients who often

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are vulnerable and find it a daunting task to navigate structures that are mandated to meet their right based needs. The political arena becomes an environment within which political social work practice can be realized with impact. It is along this line of argument that this study seeks to investigate on opportunities and challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe, focusing on implications for practice.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept of political social work is not widely discussed in Zimbabwe as compared to other societies, especially the western world. As a result, the concept is not well known within social work circles and consequently a rare part of practice. Despite the progress made within social work practice to embrace the concepts of indigenization of social work and the developmental approach, the progress has not gone as far to capture the subject of political social work. For that reason, opportunities and challenges that can be presented and posed by political social work practice in Zimbabwe remain unknown and untested. Political social work as a concept of practice is a missing link within the general social work discourse and practice. The subject remains veiled, and the area, an uncharted zone for academics and practitioners in Zimbabwe yet for the benefit the profession and its clients, no form of practice must be left out. Opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe must be arrived at.

1.3. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Social work as a profession deals with people who are interacting with their environment so as to provide professional interventions and allow for social functioning and wellbeing. To this end the profession deals more with people who are vulnerable and facing challenges that emanate from their inability to live their lives normally and decently as human beings. Given that most of

the challenges that affect people's wellbeing today are structural, social work profession must therefore add to its repertoire to political social work practice that allows an examination and questioning of social and political structures for the betterment of human life. This study is justified on the basis that it is meant to investigate on the subject that is very critical to social work practice currently. Using information drawn from literature and the real practice issues raised by social workers in Zimbabwe, the study becomes a comprehensive work to inform practice of social work in Zimbabwe.

The study is worth researching because it is the first academic work to investigate opportunities and threats for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. While there are some internet articles calling for social workers to participate in politics for the recognition of the profession there has not been any academic study done to investigate the issue of political social worker in Zimbabwe. Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013) wrote a paper on the subject of political social work with focus on the role of social workers in promoting human rights. More recently Muchanyerei (2017) wrote a commentary on the role of social workers in Zimbabwe's political discourse. Building on these previous studies, the research will focus on opportunities and threats for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. The study begins by examining the level of political social work practice by practicing social workers in Zimbabwe, before exploring its opportunities and challenges and identifying strategies to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe. The study is therefore justified because it amounts to a comprehensive work on the subject of political social work in Zimbabwe and deals with areas that were never looked into by previous scholars.

The study also stands as a wake-up call since it creates professional collective consciousness with regard to the profession's level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Findings of

this study will be converted into action points where established opportunities will be utilized by practicing social workers as they devise strategies to overcome identified challenges and/or convert them into opportunities for the benefit of service users. The research is also meant to influence adjustment in the education of social work in Zimbabwe to also include political social work in its curriculum. The researcher strongly believes that social work education must consider giving their students skills for structural social work practice, prepare students for public offices and for participation in civic engagement. More so, the study is worth pursuing as it will inspire more debates, discussions, and researches on a subject that the profession was previously silent about.

In Zimbabwe, there is silence on the subject of social work practice that involves explicit attention to power dynamics in policy making and the political mechanism for eliciting change. The consequence of this apparent professional silence is that social work falls short of its core values of social justice and human rights and in the process trembles on its ethical obligation to practice political social work. While the profession is ambivalent on political social work practice, social policies fail to benefit vulnerable people on critical social welfare services such as health, education, social security, basic freedoms, human rights and social justice for lack of social work proficiency and configuration in power dynamics and the political mechanisms thereof. From its origin, social work is known for utilizing political struggles for social justice that includes organizing campaigns against conditions considered inhuman and advocating for policy decisions that rightfully benefit clients. That being as it may, no academic study has focused on investigating opportunities and challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe and neither has the profession been visible in power and political dynamics for social justice at macro

level. This study therefore seeks to fill in the knowledge gap on opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe and its consequent implications for practice.

1.4. AIM OF THE STUDY

To examine opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe and its consequent implications for practice.

1.5. STUDY OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the level of political social work practice among social workers in Zimbabwe.

2. To assess opportunities for political social work practice in Zimbabwe.

3. To assess challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe.

4. To examine the strategies that can be utilized to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe.

1.6. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Political social work-** social work practice, research, and theory involving explicit attention to power dynamics in policy-making and political mechanisms for eliciting social change.

- **Advocacy campaign**- the act of targeting elected officials or other people with power and ask them to support or oppose an issue.

- **Social work macro practice**- the work of promoting social justice and change through empowering individuals and groups within communities and organizations. Such

functions include securing funding, developing programs, management and administration, community organizing, political advocacy, and research.

1.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter has focused on background of the study, statement of the problem, justification of the study, study aim and objectives, and lastly the definition of key terms. The next chapter is going to focus on literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is going to focus on the structural social work theory as a theoretical framework that influences this study. After properly laying out the theory and how it guides the study, the chapter examines available literature on the subject of political social work practice globally, regionally and locally. Literature is structured according to research objectives, thus the level of political social work practice, opportunities and challenges for political social work practice, and strategies that can be used to improve political social work practice.

2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by the structural social work theory. Structural social work is part of a critical, progressive tradition that has been concerned with the broad socio-economic and political dimensions of society, especially the effects of capitalism, and the impact of these influences in creating unequal relations amongst individuals (Lundy, 2004; Mullaly, 2007; Payne, 2005; Wood and Tully, 2006). The theory was developed by Maurice Moreau in the mid 1970, and he continued to develop it into the 1990s. Its primary goals have been to reduce social inequality through the transformation of societies and the emancipation of those who have been oppressed. The theory suggests that all forms of oppression and inequality operate simultaneously hence structural social work is meant to challenge the oppressive system not to help people adjust and adapt to it (Moreau, 1990). According to Mullaly (2007) structural social work as a theory amounts to an understanding that oppression and marginalization may be a

global occurrence, but people experience it differently based on their social, economic, and political status. It is therefore imperative for social workers as professional to understand the different social, political, and economic status of themselves and of their clients to be able to represent them, organize them and fight with them for equality and participation, in an environment that exudes social justice. More so, structural social work does not only focus on addressing macro issues but can be used on a micro and meso levels. The central concern of this theory is power, and connecting the personal and the political, which can be accomplished by encouraging social work clients to subdue the forces that dominate them (Carniol, 1995; Moreau, 1990). This however can only be realized if social workers themselves as professional begin to practice political social work for they cannot make their clients do what themselves do not do.

The lens of this theoretical approach has been focused on the interplay between the agency of individuals and structures, particularly the broad structural barriers which influence and limit the material circumstances of service users (Weinberg, 2008). It is suggested that institutions are structured in such a way as to discriminate against some people on the basis of class, power, resources, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, religion, and so forth. A function of the profession of social work should therefore be on eliminating these disparities but only if the vehicle of political social work is employed. To eliminate problems created by power and politics, there is need to first understand the dynamics and mechanisms thereof, which allows for confrontation which in itself is acting politically to harness the same power but for the benefit of the powerless and the vulnerable who make a bigger portion of the social work clientele base. Structural theory argues that the arrangements in society today serve those in power, allowing them to maintain their power and privileges at the expense of others hence the need for a kind of practice that pays explicit attention to power dynamics and the political mechanism that allows

for change and social justice. Issues of political participation, political activism, policy advocacy, community organization, and choosing the right people into public office therefore comes into play within the professional mandate of political social work practitioners.

Mullaly (2007) posits that structural social work is based on a socialist ideology within radical social work, grounded in critical theory of Karl Marx, and views society as something that can be changed. The theory contends that social problems and inequality stem from structural systems and not from individual failings; encompass class, gender, race, and other relations; exclude marginalized and oppressed groups from meaningful participation in society; and are self-perpetuating. For this reason micro and macro social workers should adopt structural social work theory into practice because the structural context influences their clients daily but this begins when social workers start acting politically. Economic and social inequities are inextricably intertwined, and the distributions of income and wealth, the extent of poverty and privilege, have their effects on living standards, life chances, and opportunities. Moreover, inequalities in wealth have political implications, providing the wealthiest individuals with access to economic, social, and sometimes political power. For this reason, inequalities can become self-perpetuating, having an influence on the institutions that reinforce the class structure (Mullaly, 2007). It can therefore be argued that a profession that calls its practitioners to represent victims of the above synchronized oppressions is literally calling for such practitioners to practice political social work.

The theory regards society as composed of groups with conflicting interests who compete for resources, power, and the imposition of their own ideological views of the world. In this perspective, social problems are more the result of "defective rules" which pathologise those who are marginalized (Mullaly, 1997:120) and the consequence of institutional arrangements

which maintain social hierarchies, rather than faulty socialization of individuals. Determining the levels of political participation by social workers in this context determines the levels of vulnerabilities that people face. It can only be through political social work that social workers can apply professional values, ethics, and principles to address inequality, defective policies, oppression of the vulnerable and abuse of human rights for the purposes of creating a just society. The theory allows for the realization of opportunities and challenges for political social work and its implications for practice.

In structural theory, there are four main tactics that practitioners use to address problems facing clients (Payne, 2005). These tasks are; connecting people to needed resources, changing social structures, where feasible, helping service users negotiate problematic situations, and deconstructing sociopolitical discourse to reveal the relationship with individual struggles (Wood and Tully, 2006: 21). Payne (2005) also suggested as an additional strategy providing clients with insider information. This task therefore demands a confrontation with power, and structures that are naturally political hence the need for social workers to be up to the task. The theory allows the practice of political social work in Zimbabwe by giving the framework that practitioners can use in fighting for a just society. This will mark the introduction of a subject that was formally avoided and practically stigmatized against. More so the theory will inform practitioners of the challenges associated with political social work, methods to surmount them and strategies to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe through outlining a framework of engagement, and ideological standing and positioning of the true causes of social problems that must be addressed at macro level.

2.2. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Political social work practice is a concept naturally derived from the activities in which social workers undertake in their quest to remove social injustice (Flynn, 1997; Wood, 1997). Weinberg (2010) notes that although rarely acknowledged, social work's ethical imperative to pursue social justice and the application of this principle to practice and advocacy reflect clear political positions based upon different conceptions and applications of power. Gray et al (2002) further mentions that social work is intrinsically political by virtue of the fact that it is concerned with social change and a quest for social justice. Given this scholarly position, the concept of political social work is undoubted, and the need for political social work goes without saying. The International Federation of Social Workers (2000: 5) defines social work as a profession that 'promotes social change and the empowerment and liberation of people'. It regards 'principles of human rights and social justice' as being 'fundamental to social work'. Many scholars have concurred on the question of the need for social workers to play a more proactive role in the political realm thus in practicing what is referred to as political social work (Muchanyerei, 2017; Gray, 1996; Mazibuko, 1996; Ntusi, 1998). Hui and Wong (1992) held that social workers should not only immerse themselves in professionalization and extension of service provision, but should also be actively involved in promoting grassroots participation in politics to allow for structural redress of issues of interest. In this vein, Kwok (1992: 39) postulated that 'community workers could not avoid being more political'.

Reisch and Jani (2012) examine the meaning of politics within the context of social work. Politics in social work practice is therefore not defined in the narrow sense of participation in electoral campaigns or social movements, but in terms that reflect a synthesis of modern and postmodern ideas. A modernist conception analyses how power determines viable alternatives,

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defines the relationship between government and the economy, and thereby influences all aspects of practice. In this perspective, politics signifies 'not only the desire to achieve predefined ends but the struggle to redefine the ends by exposing . . . injustices . . . and by posing alternatives' (Parenti, 2002:4). This definition of politics focuses on how power shapes the allocation of rights, access, opportunities, status and resources including issues of workers' time, skills and information.

Weinberg (2010) argues that political social work emphasises how power influences intra-organisational dynamics and the assumptions underlying and rationalizing agencies' definitions of need, selection of helping strategies and evaluation of interventions. It assesses how power constrains the behaviour of social workers who must often prioritise the interests of outsiders with no direct relationship to the service transaction. Political social work practice demands that its practitioners take up the roles of advocates, activists, lobbyist, and organizers (Lane, 2011). Gray (1996) describes political social work as action taken by social workers to effect social change, which is in the best interests of, or in keeping with, the expressed needs of the clients or constituencies being served. In this broad sense, political action involves all activities relating to social change, including advocacy, mediation, consciousness-raising, empowerment and cooperative development, to social control and to the legislative processes that have an influence on people's lives. This involves a range of activities varying from voting in an election to reading policy documents, commenting on them, responding to them, and involvement in structures making, changing and implementing policy; activities that Mary (2001) describes as means to secure a place at the table of decision making by social workers and their clients.

An understanding of the way in which 'social workers can and do participate in the politics of social welfare policy is integral to advancing the profession's philosophy and goals' (Dietz

Domanski, 1998: 156). Social workers have always been urged to assume a key role in social welfare policy formulation. This call gained momentum with the rise of the radical movement where everything social workers did was construed as political and engagement in the political process was seen as an integral part of the social work task (Galper, 1980). Making meaningful contact with the political process was seen as the duty of all social workers and social work was said to be 'better placed than any other agency or institution to act as advocate for the dispossessed and to empower the powerless in society' (Daniel and Wheeler, 1989: 21). For radical social workers, all social work activities involved consciousness-raising, empowerment, social action and policy analysis and the ultimate aim of social work was social transformation (Mullaly, 1993). In the recent past, several South African writers have drawn attention to the importance of social work's involvement in political processes as an essential part of the developmental social work approach (Mazibuko, 1996; Ntusi, 1998). Developmental social work, like anti-oppressive practice, and structural and empowerment approaches, calls on social workers to engage in political action, which can take many forms. In the case of Zimbabwe however, the same sentiments with regard to the relationship between social work and politics cannot be sustained. Moyo (2018) argues that social work practice is Zimbabwe is focused on psychosocial problems of clients, and it is remedial in nature which prompts a further submission that the profession must be reconfigured to focus on broader structural issues such as social justice, human rights and corruption.

Gaha (1999) notes that in the recent past, the political aspect of social work practice has been expressed in human rights discourse. Here human rights are placed at the core of social work's understanding of social justice and are seen as basic to social work practice, forming the foundation of social work codes of ethics and models of practice (Ife, 1997). Within this

discourse, the central question is how social workers, both individually and socially, should respond to human rights abuses and contribute to the promotion and realisation of human rights and social justice. In its practice, it strives to promote social change, empowerment and human liberation by integrating data-driven research and analysis with 'principles of human rights and social justice' (International Federation of Social Workers, 2000). Social workers have been most successful in achieving these goals when they have used social science to illuminate the extent and causes of social problems like poverty and challenged institutions and a reluctant public to translate democratic rhetoric into practice. Stern and Axinm (2012) notes that these modest approaches of political social work have had a significant impact on Western societies during the past century if one considers reflecting on the civil rights movement and the fight for equality and social justice in America, and Europe.

According to Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013), the fact that social workers advocate for human dignity and worthy means that they uphold the inherent dignity and worth of every person and the human rights as expressed Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, in spite of this clear mandate for social workers to play a central role in the promoting human rights, Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013) bemoan the absence of the profession in the active fight for human rights. Ideally social workers must be at a position to castigate human rights abuses publicly and mobilize people against abuses and coalesce with other interested players around issues of policy change and or adjustments in line with standard practice of human rights and social justice.

Political social work also finds expression in broader social policies which impact on our work with clients, such as policy relating to education, housing, social security, social welfare, unemployment, development and the like (Gray et al, 2002). The policy discourse in social work therefore refers to social workers being aware of, and learning to engage with policy processes in

society because social workers implement policy. Their level of involvement in policy implementation will differ depending on the context in which they are working. For example, those working for government agencies might be more directly involved in policy implementation than those working in grassroots community organisations. Social workers also engage in policy-making processes and attempt to change unjust policies. Policy and politics go together because engagement with policy-making processes, whether at implementation, making or attempting to change policy, that amount to involved in politics, in the way in which existing policy serves to maintain the system and achieve compliance with social norms.

Politicians are elected on the basis of their policies and in a democracy they gain power because the majority agrees with their policies. This does not necessarily make their policies just. It simply means that they reflect the majority view. Since social workers often work with marginalised groups in society, it is highly likely that they will encounter policies which are unjust and which discriminate against minorities in society. The process they engage in to remove social injustice is political. This is the broadest sense of social work's political involvement. In a narrower sense, social workers can be involved in party politics and work to promote particular interests. They can canvass for a particular politician or political party and they might even stand for election. This is possibly the conventional sense in which politics is understood (Gray et al, 2002). This is the broadest sense of social work's political involvement. In a narrower sense, social workers can be involved in party politics and work to promote particular interests. They can canvass for a particular politician or political party and they might even stand for election. This is possibly the conventional sense in which politics is understood.

2.3. LEVEL OF POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

There is a historically significant political social work practice that can be factually identified in the maiden days of social work as a profession. Since the profession's beginning, social workers have engaged in political advocacy in efforts to achieve social justice for the poor and disenfranchised in society. Some of the most politically active social workers were the settlement workers during the late 1800s and early 1900s. In their efforts to improve living conditions for the poor, they engaged in a number of political activities such as working to defeat corrupt ward bosses, campaigning for reform mayors, and influencing state and national legislation by collecting statistics and testifying before legislative committees. During the Great Depression social workers lobbied elected officials to adopt more humane policies for the millions thrown into poverty, and during the 1960s many social workers engaged in community organizing and worked to support the developing fight for welfare rights and civil rights (Ritter, 2007).

There is however an argument that despite social work's history of political advocacy and the language that is included in the most important documents of the social work profession, that this commitment to social and political action is not carried out in practice (Shamai and Boehm, 2001; Harding, 2004). Instead of keeping up the historical momentum, social work profession is said to have engaged in an ambivalent love-hate relationship with politics hence the unanimous call by the scholarly community for political social work practice (Muchanyerei, 2017; Moyo, 2018).

Literature that comes closer to measuring political social work practice world over revolves around political participation of social workers. Notwithstanding, Ritter (2007) argues that research on social workers' political participation is sparse, which may be an indication of the

profession's neglect of this domain of practice. However, Mary (2001) has noted a contradictory trend by observing that since the 1980s the political involvement of social work practitioners evolved, and interest in studying this increased. What has been debatable in this argument is what constitutes political participation which is here translated to mean political social work practice. If one chooses to look at political participation in a narrower sense of voting, and attending political meetings, there is a general unanimity of agreement among scholars that social workers like other professionals and even better than some, are politically active (Gray et al, 2002).

Despite the position above, scholars have again noted a gap in what is actually referred to as political social work which involves action by professional social workers that questions the status quo, that calls for accountability from legislators, that review social policy, that coalesces with other groups for or against certain policy, that publicly and academically renounces, analyses and evaluates policy issues, and that advocates on behalf of clients. There is consistence in the call for social workers to pay attention to power and political mechanisms that results in structural redress of issues that creates social problems for the people they represent. This is the kind of political social work that is guided by the structural social work theory as espoused by Lundy (2004), Mullaly (2007) and Payne (2005).

Rome and Hoechstetter (2010) observe that most research examining the political participation of social workers has sought to identify whether or not social workers are politically active, what characteristics distinguish those who are highly active from those who are not, and how social workers express their political involvement. Several studies have concluded that social workers, as a group, are more politically active than the general population (Parker and Sherraden, 1991; Ritter, 2007; Wolk, 1981). A number have categorized respondents into those who are inactive,

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active, and highly active. Replicating an earlier study by Wolk (1981), Ezell (1993) found that the proportion of politically active social workers had increased by nearly 20% over the course of a decade, from 66% to 85.7%. In a more recent study using a different measurement scale, Ritter (2007) found only 46% of her national sample of social workers to be active or very active in political affairs. These statistics are however reflective of American social workers and cannot be generalized to other societies. The same cannot be said of other societies where there has been an outcry as a result of the withdrawn stance of social workers when it comes to issues that are political in nature, for instance Zimbabwe (Muchanyerei, 2017; Mtetwa and Muchacha, 2013).

According to Gray et al (2002), participation/level of political social work is high in New Zealand, reason being that political analysis is viewed as intrinsic to good social work, involves examining a number of layers of influence on social work education and practice. It might be argued that social work education and practice in New Zealand operated somewhat as a haven and reservoir of ideologies, that while diverse perspectives were held by educators, all tended to recognise individual difficulties as sited in larger structural issues. In turn such ideologies have now become definitive of what constitutes good practice. Indicative of the centrality of such an ideology is the first paragraph of the philosophy of the Bachelor Social Practice UNITEC Programme Philosophy 1996 which says that society is structured in a way which causes inequalities and these inequalities have a limiting effect on people's lives. To be effective social practitioners students need to understand the social context, social pressures and inequalities people live within. It can therefore be argued that political social work is an ideology in New Zealand which is inculcated into student such that when they become practitioners, they understand the structural issues and how they contribute to the creation of social problems and in

the same manner how structures can be corrected to ameliorate social challenges. In this instance, it can be noted that social work in New Zealand is ideologically a political undertaking.

The above views can be demonstrated by reflecting back into the developmental trajectories of New Zealand. Political social work was explicitly counter-ideological to that espoused by both its Labour and National Governments through the 1980s and the 1990s. The free-market economy and its accompanying social revolution were fully embraced by both governments. Social work practitioners and educators became sites of resistance to the new ideology. According to Grey et al (2002) in the last sixteen years New Zealand has undergone a process of social and economic restructuring that, other than the Eastern Bloc, is arguably more extensive than that experienced by almost any other country. From a highly regulated and protected economy with a comprehensive welfare state in the late 1970s, New Zealand has become a market-driven deregulated economy, fully exposed to the shifting and fitful winds of international trade and finance. There is a well-documented and still growing gap between the rich and the poor, with the current welfare system now best described as residual. Government has divested much social service provision to NGO organizations that are leanly funded to provide very tightly defined services with an accent on fiscally efficient service delivery. Child protection, health and justice stand as the remaining bastions of statutory social work. All three areas are widely regarded as seriously under resourced. It is therefore against this background that political social work practice has taken root in New Zealand with social work practitioners resisting the economic structure that does not protect the poor, that benefits the rich at the expense of the underclass, and that widens the gap between the rich and the poor, doing all the fighting for an egalitarian and just society. Gray et al (2002) notes that asking the structural

questions was the heart of their practice and this began to influence social workers' perceptions of themselves.

In South Africa, Gray et al (2002) studied the level of political social work to which they came to a conclusion that independence from the apartheid government resulted in greater participation of social workers. After a long history of political oppression, since the transition to democracy in South Africa in 1994, opportunities for political participation have abounded (Gray et al, 2002). Social workers have, more than ever before, had the opportunity to participate in politics and policy making in relation to numerous policy-making processes, among them, the White Paper on Social Welfare and Social Welfare Action Plan (SWAP); National Interim Consultative Committee (NICC); Inter-ministerial Committee for Youth at Risk (IMC); Transformation of South African Interim Council for Social Work (SAICSW); Higher Education Policy; National Drug Plan; Policy for the Aged; and new Child Care legislation. It is therefore clear that social workers in South Africa have the political power, and are exposed to participate in shaping structural infrastructure on issues of South African social welfare. These are the issues that are dangerous to leave to explicit politics of partisanship that is all based on the extent to which democracy of majority can reach. However, whether this is reflective of the whole of South Africa is a question of further research since Gray et al (2002)'s conclusions are as a result of KwaZulu Natal province only.

In Zimbabwe, it is without doubt there are challenges to political social work practice. The academia has since made insinuations to the subject but on the most parts addressing specific issues of power, politics and structural challenges with regard to their mandate to attend and work for the welfare of the people as guided by their ethical code. Such specific areas addressed include social work and human rights (Mtetwa and Muchacha, 2013), corruption and social work

(Moyo, 2018), the role of social workers in Zimbabwe's political discourse (Muchanyerei, 2017), over and above internet articles calling for social workers to join the rank and file in politics (Chogugudza, 2017). The great Zimbabwean social worker Kaseke in 1998 belaboured to articulate the concept of social development in a manner that seemed to address the issue of political social work. However, the articulation reflected the profession's negation of its ethical obligation to participate in political issues that affect vulnerable groups. Kaseke reflected to the political and socio economic situation that have the same resemblance of the earlier on articulated situation of New Zealand where World Bank and IMF polices were prescribed as panacea for economic development at the expense of social welfare issues as employment, and social assistance of any type, a development that saw a transition from socialism to capitalism marked by phenomenal cuts in social expenditure.

Unlike New Zealand social workers who resisted, and unlike social workers in South Africa who navigated the political structures to safeguard the area of social policy as their own domain, Zimbabwean social workers watched, did nothing to represent the affected masses from adverse policies. As reflected by his very academic work, Kaseke (1991) resorted to a role of a commentator of the developments without going forward to call for fellow social workers to advocate for policies that would permit for social justice and protection of the underclass. In his call for social development as opposed to casework, the great social worker never included the concept of political social work into his discourse. There is therefore consensus as derived from the limited literature available (Muchanyarei, 2017; Moyo, 2018) that political social work in Zimbabwe is either non-existent, or is veiled, hence the task of this study to arrive at some substantive position with regard to the level of political social work practice.

2.4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Oxford dictionary of words defined opportunity as referring to a chance for advancement, progress or profit, or circumstances/situation that makes it possible to do something. It is within this general description that this study seeks to articulate the concept of opportunity for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. According to Lane and Pritzer (2018) there are vast opportunities for political social work practice. Social workers and those who set the foundations of the social work profession have since navigated power dynamics to engage with and challenge the political system in a bid to promote social justice, equality, and self participation. The call for social work profession to improve society, advocate for social justice and fight for equality remains constant. Fisher and Johnson (2015) note that political social work offers practitioners the opportunity to serve people in need on a day to day basis, through their offices as political or public officers or through policies they craft in favour of vulnerable classes in society. In her felt expression for social workers to enter the explicit political arena, an American social worker Barbara Mikulski argued that she ran for political office because it was better that spending her time knocking on the doors of political offices on behalf of clients, and that she would rather be in the office opening doors for the clients to enter (Lane and Pritzer, 2018).

The greatest opportunity for political social work practice is that the practice offers the framework for social workers to effect changes in the political process. Lane and Pritzer (2018) note that if social workers want to influence content of policies that impact on their clients, they must also influence those who possess power to make police decision or they seek to find a place at the table of decision making as well. It is therefore through social work practice that social policies can reflect social justice, inherent dignity and worthy of human being, and self determination, and the whole gamut of values, ethics and principles that forms the epicenter of

the social work profession. It is with no doubt that social problems are manufactured by the political system of a society as espoused by the structural social work theory (Mullaly, 2007). It is also given that correction or solutions to such politically created problems can be solved by an understanding and navigation of the same political process which is why political social work becomes mandatory standard practice. Lane (2011) recommends the translation of social work ethics, values, and principles into social policy through political social work practice.

Political social work practice also brings about the expanded participation of both social workers and vulnerable populations with whom they work for (Lane and Pritzer, 2018). Smith (2013) observes that when policy making bodies are representative of diverse gender, racial classes, and ethnic groups, policy priorities differ from the status quo to reflect the change and inclusiveness that is the mission of the social work profession. Using political social work as a framework, social workers can be involved in a variety of activities that allows for participation of vulnerable groups for instance Vladeck (2017) suggests that social workers can volunteer to observe election, or mobilize poor voters, and other groups that may be marginalized in terms of participation for instance female or disabled voters. The American Code of Ethics, NASW (2017) champions the participation of vulnerable populations arguing that direct grassroots participation within communities promotes relationship building and connect communities with political resources and access to the political process which is the right of every human being.

Mary (2001) also alludes to the opportunities that political social work practice presents into the political fray for the benefit of represented groups. Politics is generally the process of representation of the people in decision making such that the majority entrust or give up their decision making power to elected official for the practicality of democracy and administration. Mary (2001) notes that the direct involvement of social workers as politicians or their influence

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to the politicians and the general political processes brings about critical social work skills. Social work politicians have identified the people skills most necessary for success thus listening, responding, caring; linking, advocacy and brokering; posing alternative solutions and seeking consensus around them; negotiation and mediation (NASW, 1997). These skills are best practiced in the domain of social work practice in community work practice hence their migration to the political arena denotes change in the political outlook of outmaneuvering, populism, and contenting whose casualties have always been the underclass and the minority. Chui and Gray (2004) proposed a gradual mutation of social workers from community workers to politicians

In Zimbabwe, Muchanyarei (2017) makes insinuations that political social work will change the fortunes of the profession in the country in terms of recognition. The same sentiments concur with arguments raised by Chogugudza (2015) about the insignificant status of the social work profession in Zimbabwe. Due to the brain drain experienced by the country as a result of economic hardships, social workers left the country for greener pastures, leaving none social workers to fill in their positions. Since then the profession's status deteriorated and the population and politicians are out of touch with what social work profession can do. Muchanyerei (2017) notes that politicians think that the role of social workers is to distribute food handouts. This has resulted in the profession being undermined in the country even by some senior government officials who ignorantly believe that a social worker's work can be done by anybody. It is critical, therefore, that social workers themselves take the initiative to make people aware of the services they provide, and the best way to do this is through political social work in their professional capacity and in the their individual capacity. Makwanya (2015) stated that the dormant status of the profession has resulted in potential service users being deprived key social

work services. Political social work will therefore allow practitioners to rise up to the vilification of politicians and square up with them in the policy comprehension and crafting, in social justice and promotion of equality.

2.5. CHALLENGES FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

According to Ritter (2007) there are many reasons why social workers may feel ambivalent about being involved in the political process. Ezell (1993) believes social workers avoid politics for two reasons which are, that politics has to do with the pursuit and use of power, while social workers value equality, and social workers believe politics is a dirty business and they want nothing to do with the process, or the people involved in it. Some social work leaders believe that the profession should remain above the political fray. Others argue that the social work profession cannot avoid working with the political system since all social work is intrinsically political by virtue of the fact that it is concerned with social change and a quest for social justice. Harding (2004) discusses the global consequences of social workers' absence from the political process. It can therefore be argued that the debate around ideological neutrality tend to confuse practitioners on their role in the political realm. In Hong Kong, Wong and Yeung (1986) and Au (1986) cited in Chui and Gray (2004) expressed their reservations about the potential for role ambiguity or even role conflict experienced by social workers participating in formal politics by standing for elections. However, if one considers the fact that political participation/political social work is an ethical obligation, one begins to understand the fact that social work is inherently a profession that cannot avoid power and political mechanism.

In some instances, political social work becomes very difficult to practice especially where funding comes from the state. Politician understand the influence that social workers have over the people they represent and work with and they therefore use funding as a control mechanism

to whip social workers out of the political process of the country. Gray et al (2002) notes that agencies desiring to shift away from purely funder-mandated outcomes toward research or policy development have, over the last sixteen years, found little encouragement from the state and funding bodies. Also donors who fund agencies that employ social workers may also perceive political social work as having nothing to do with what they seek to achieve. One example is the New Zealand Central Council of Social Services (NZCCSS), whose funding was cut because their role as policy analysts and social commentators was seen as irrelevant and counterproductive in a funding climate dominated by a focus on individual outcomes. Individual social workers are often in the dilemma of being tooled up to have a good policy analysis, with little encouragement to articulate or develop it. There is often no access to research funding to legitimate concerns. Perhaps as a consequence, policy development has become centralised and squeezed up the line (Gray et al, 2002). In such circumstances political social work becomes difficult to practice. Lane and Pritzer (2018) reflected on the same challenges when they alluded to the activities of early social workers who sought structural changes by noting that some of them suffered banishment from professional groups and outright condemnation for encroaching into the domain of politicians.

In societies like Zimbabwe where politics is polarized, it is almost impossible for social workers working for Non-Governmental Organisations to engage in political social work. NGOs in Zimbabwe are seen as an expression or representatives of the western agenda for regime change (Herald, 11 November 2013). More so, social workers also join with other activist groups to protest and to speak against what they feel as repressive policies. Consequences however include the cracking down of such activist groups by governments. On 14 February 2012, the then governor of Masvingo, Titus Maluleke banned 29 NGOs operating in the province, accusing

them of working to unseat the then President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe (New Zimbabwe.net, News day 15 February 2012). Mary (2001) concurs that with respect to lobbying, one of the respondents mentioned the perceived dangers, particularly in a conservative environment. However, it must be noted that other professions except for social workers were seen to be actively involves in social action through various lobby groups such as Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisations and Progressinve Teachers Unions (Mutetwa and Muchacha, 2013).

2.6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Reisch and Jani (2012) note that social workers have been increasingly reluctant to confront the political dimensions of practice or challenge those forces whose values and goals run counter to their expressed mission (McNutt, 2008; Finn and Jacobson, 2009). In today's dramatically different political-economic and ideological context, this depoliticisation of social work has significant consequences for service users and practitioners alike because 'no professional practice can be apolitical' (Lewis, 2003: 143). It is therefore against this background that there is need for strategies to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe. In the wake of repressive laws against political social work practice, social workers working for the respective client groups Australia and New Zealand, affected by these various social policies, began to mobilise and organise their clients over issues of common concern. Thus social workers, while particularly active in social policy issues in the 1970s, were forced to resort to informal channels of political participation because of the relative inadequacy and unresponsiveness of formal channels (Gray et al, 2002). Similar patterns were evident in South Africa in the struggle against apartheid during the 1980s (Gray and Collett van Rooyen, 1999). Literature contents that political social work nomatter how it may face challenges in its initial stages, it will yield results

in the long run as governments cannot avoid the potential threat of social-work activism at the grassroots level (King, 1975: 424).

There is also unanimity amongst scholars in prescribing a strong insertion of political social work practice in the curriculm of social work education (Lane, 2011; Hammilton and Fauri, 2001; Muchanyerei, 2018). Providing an intensive political social work curriculum on political efficacy and planned political engagement and the model has proved to increase internal, external, and overall political efficacy and political engagement among social work students and practitioners (Ostrander et al, 2017). It is believed that political social work education can also encourage membership in professional associations and help students to develop political skills such as writing and delivering testimony, meeting with government officials, and working in political campaigns. These skills are useful in case advocacy, working on behalf of one's own clients, and cause advocacy, advocacy that changes legislation or policy that affects a large group. Hamilton and Fauri (2001) theorize that practicing these activities within the academic environment can help students reduce their anxiety and be more likely to participate in such activities post graduation. Such political skill development in social work classrooms has been reported in small doses, with positive results (Saulnier, 2000). Witherspoon and Phillips (1987) suggest raising political awareness among social work students as a first step toward political activity. Mary (2001) weighs in to support the same strategy by noting that two most common suggestions were to increase graduate education in the political arena and to create peer support for political opportunities.

In an article to encourage social workers to participate in politics, Muchanyerei (2017) alludes to strategies for political social work. The first strategies include advocating for a voice in the

political space through political activism to attain political power and influence political processes (Matli, 2008). There is no evidence which suggest that the social work profession is actively involved in Zimbabwe's political discourse. Social workers continue to be outshined by other professionals such as lawyers and medical doctors regarding political activism in general, and issues such as rebuking human rights violations in particular (Makwanya, 2015; Muchacha, 2016). Social workers therefore need to be visible by vehemently and publicly denouncing and condemning social injustices with neither neither fear nor favour, no matter who might be the perpetrators. Another strategy is to mobilizing the masses to defend their rights and fight against all forms of repression and social injustices. Rather than applying casework as a dominant method of social work, social workers need to explore other techniques such as advocacy and lobbying in order to influence political processes. Also there is need to conducting research on the impediments to social workers' involvement in political activism in Zimbabwe. Such research should involve as many practicing and student social workers as possible. Findings will be used to address social workers' concerns and challenges. It is suggested that such research need to be conducted by social workers themselves, as it is only them who can bring real change and genuine solutions to their challenges (Muchanyarei, 2017). This last strategy is however part of this study which will be seeking to ascertain challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe.

2.7. SUMMARY

This chapter has articulated on the theoretical framework that influences this study. The study used structural social work theory developed by Maurice Moreau from the mid 1970s into the 1990s. The chapter has also reviewed literatures guided by the study objective of the study thus level of political participation, opportunities and challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe, and strategies to improve social work practice in Zimbabwe. Literature that was

reviewed included global, regional and local. The next chapter is going to present the methodology used for this study which is the mixed methods design.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked at the structural social work theory that influenced this study and reviewed literature on the subject of political social work practice globally, regionally and locally guided according to the structure of the study objectives. The purpose of this chapter is to deliberate on the rationale behind the mixed methods design used in this study and to explain in detail the way the study was conducted step by step. The chapter will therefore show how the sampling of participants was done as well articulating on the data gathering methods and tools employed. Such methods include a structured survey questionnaire and key informant interview. The chapter will then look at how data was analysed, how ethical considerations were observed, the feasibility, and limitations of the study. All these issues will be scrutinised so as to come out with findings on opportunities and challenges of political social work practice in Zimbabwe.

3.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach refers to a plan that is applied during the research investigation for the purpose of answering the research objectives and it ensures that the answers given are correct (Terrell, 2012; Williams, 2011). The approach for this study was the mixed methods approach which used both quantitative and qualitative data (Williams, 2011). Mixed methods research has been defined as a pragmatically underpinned model of inquiry combining qualitative and quantitative models of research so that evidence may be mixed and knowledge is increased in a more meaningful manner than either model could achieve alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Whereas the main goal of quantitative research is to test existing theories and understand

connections among particular variables through a deductive research process, primary goals of qualitative research include comprehending multifaceted worlds of study participants and associated subjective meanings and processes using an inductive research process (Rubin and Babbie, 2008). The goal of mixed methods research is to "draw on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both types of research" (Connelly, 2009: 31). The specific design under the mixed approach used was the concurrent triangulation strategy which allows the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, using a single tool (Cameron, 2015). Ideally, the weighting for both qualitative and quantitative data when using concurrent triangulation strategy should be equal but Creswell (2008) notes that in practice priority can be given to either method. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) when used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for more complete analysis. This method allows for valid and well substantiated conclusions about political social work practice as a phenomenon under study.

Hopson and Steiker (2008) support the use of mixed methodology in social work research as the profession advances its understanding of complex social problems such as child abuse, poverty, and substance abuse, and structural or political causes of social problems. Mixed methods research will allow exploration of generalisable findings on specific measurable outcomes while capturing the influence of external contexts and subjective processes in a single study (Chaumba, 2013). In quantitative research, an investigator relies on numerical data (Charles and Mertler, 2002). A researcher isolates variables and relates them to determine the magnitude and frequency of relationships. In addition, a researcher himself/herself determines which variables to investigate and chooses instruments, which will yield highly reliable and valid scores. This will be applicable in determining the levels of political social work practice, opportunities and

challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Alternatively, qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding where the researcher develops a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2008). In this approach, the researcher makes knowledge claims based on the constructivist methods (Maxwell and Loomis, 2003). In qualitative research, data is collected from those immersed in everyday life of the setting in which the study is framed and in this case it was practicing social workers. Data analysis is based on the values that these participants perceive and understand political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Ultimately, it "produces an understanding of the subject based on multiple contextual factors" (Miller, 2000).

The philosophical rationale that compels mixing of qualitative and quantitative models of research into a single study is pragmatism which refers to the belief in doing what works best to achieve the desired result. As an underlying philosophy for inquiry, pragmatism supports researchers in choosing between different models of inquiry as research questions being addressed intrinsically determine which methods are best suited (Morgan, 2007). According to Maxcy (2003) knowledge on pragmatic grounds asserts that truth is what works. Approaches, as well as variables and units of analysis are chosen on the basis that they are the most appropriate for finding an answer to their research question (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). A major tenet of pragmatism is that quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible. Thus, both numerical and interview data collected sequentially or concurrently, can help better understand the research problem. For this study it was observed that certain research objectives were best addressed using qualitative analysis while others were best addressed using quantitative methods. The pragmatic philosophy undergirding this study will therefore allow for a systematic application of appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods to address each specific objective.

3.2. STUDY SETTING

The setting for this study included five cities in Zimbabwe which are Mutare, Gweru, Bulawayo, Masvingo, and Harare. To come up with these sites, the researcher got contacts of social workers who had attended the 2017 Annual General Elective meeting of the National Association of Social Workers in Zimbabwe. After getting the names and contacts, the researcher made follow ups to locate them as respondents. From that exercise, it was found out that 25 participants were in Harare, 6 were in Bulawayo, 8 were in Gweru, 12 were in Mutare, and 12 were in Masvingo. Urban areas are characterized by convergence of people from different backgrounds and different experiences. Most social workers and social work organizations are situated in urban areas where even those who work with rural people operate from. For this reason, the results of the study on political social work practice can somehow be generalized to represent experiences of the rest of social workers in Zimbabwe.

3.3. TARGET POPULATION

Target population is "the entire aggregation of respondents that meet the designated set of criteria" (Burns and Grove 1997:236). The target population in this study constituted all social workers registered under National Association of Social Workers of Zimbabwe (NASWZ). The target population for this study is informed by ethical obligation that social workers should participate in politics to ensure social justice (which in itself constitutes political social work practice) (Lane and Pritzer, 2018). According to NASWZ register updated in April 2017, membership was at 315. However, statistics of NASWZ are difficult to rely on because the association is voluntary. Membership as a NASWZ member does not necessarily mean the person is in the country especially that most social workers in Zimbabwe are of no fixed aboard.

The inclusion criteria for the study therefore included active members of NASWZ as defined by the attendance on the last annual and elective general meeting of NASW in September 2017. According to NASWZ register the meeting was attended by 65 qualified social workers with a minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree in Social Work. Of these 65, 10 had since left the country and 5 could not be contacted. This made the population frame to be 50 social workers. Inclusion in the study was based on possessing a Degree in Social Work, and being active membership of NASWZ. The researcher left out students who attended the meeting because they were not yet considered as full members of the association and were not practicing social workers.

3.4. SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

Sample size for this study was 50 participants who participated in a survey questionnaire. For the survey respondents the researcher used the identical sampling relationship for both qualitative and quantitative data. According to Onwuegbuze and Collins (2007) an identical relationship indicates that exactly the same sample members participate in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study thus administering a survey that contains both closed and open ended questions and data is collected simultaneously. By collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time frame from the same sample members, the researchers used a concurrent, identical sampling design.

Census sampling was used to select the identical sample that included all the 50 social workers who attended the 2017 Annual General Meeting who were contacted and confirmed their addresses and willingness to participate. Census was preferred and seen as feasible because the population was small and it was therefore reasonable to include the entire population

(Parasuraman, 1991). According to Kulshreshtha (2013) a census sample has the advantages of covering the whole population and reducing non-sampling errors. The census sample partipated in answering a survey questionnaire that comprised of a set of closed questions and a n open ended question on each of the first three objectives.

The researcher also further sampled 6 more participants as key informants based on their experience as social workers or based on their interaction with social workers in the following categories: one member of parliament (to find out how politicians regard political social work), one senior social work lecturer (PhD) (to get the academic view of political social work), one social worker activist (to get practical experience of political social work), 2 directors from the department of social welfare services and from a Not for Profit Organisation (to get experiences of social welfare organisations leaders), and one representative from the Human Rights Group (to get information on the contributions of social workers to activism). The sampling method to select these key informants was judgemental sampling. According to Engel and Schutt (2013) in purposive/judgmental sampling, each respondent is chosen for its unique characteristics which are of interest to the study. These key informants were chosen after considering the richness of their contribution to political social work practice in Zimbabwe due to their proximity to social workers.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

Data collection refers to "a systemic way of gathering information, which is relevant to the research purpose or questions" (Burns and Grove 1997:383). According to Johnson and Christensen (2007) mixed methods research emphasises the collection of multiple forms of data, such as both numbers and words or images. The study employed a structured survey, and key

informant interviews to collect data. The strategy for the study was the concurrent triangulation which will allow quantitative and qualitative data collection to be done at the same time (Chaumba, 2013). In concurrently gathering both forms of data at the same time, the researcher seeks to compare both forms of data to search for congruent findings (for instance how the themes identified in the qualitative data collection compare with the statistical results in the quantitative analysis (Creswell et al, 2003:217-218).

For the purposes of practically executing this strategy, the researcher employed 5 research assistants to administer the survey questionnaires. These were responsible for emailing and following up on participants, contact persons for assistance should any participant require any clarity, and collecting all data from respondents to the researcher. The research assistants were inducted first to orient them on the research itself and on how to administer the questionnaire. Key informant interviews were done by the researcher on his own and 6 were done face to face with respondents while the remaining 4 were done through phone calls. Social workers who participated as key informants were not part of the survey questionnaire respondents.

3.5.1. Survey

Using a survey questionnaire, the study collected quantitative and qualitative data from 50 active members of NASW. Due to limited time the researcher did not want to go into the field on separate trips for qualitative and qualitative data. Each of the first three research objective had specific set of closed questions followed by at least an open ended question for each or a set of and the fourth objective was qualitative. The closed questions were asking on how often respondents participate in the said political activity, how they regard the said activity as opportunities and as challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. The statements

representing political activities were derived from other studies and literature on what constitutes political social work practice. On the first objective the researcher used variables 'Never', 'Sometimes', and 'Always' to measure level of political participation where respondents signal their participation. On the second and third objectives, the researcher used variables 'Yes' and 'No'. These response variables were coded for the purposes of analysis using SPSS. These sets of quantitative questions were marked by an unlimited comment field to allow for in-depth expression of the respondent on the each objective. The fourth objective was wholly qualitative where respondents were asked to give strategies they thought would improve political social work practice.

According to Driscoll et al (2007), concurrent mixed method is intuitive and can allow for participants to augment their responses with extensive comments. The survey therefore gathered both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently from the same sample. Zohrabi (2013) notes that it is better that any questionnaire includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions to complement each other. Using a team of 5 research assistants, the researcher emailed the questionnaires to the sampled respondents and made phone calls to confirm whether the respondents had seen the questionnaire. Harare had 2 research assistants, Bulawayo 1, Masvingo 1, Grweru 1, and the researcher was in Mutare. In cases where some of the selected respondents had challenges with emails, the research assistants assisted them with hard copies of the questionnaires. This was done in light of the challenges associated with emailed questionnaires where Zohrabi (2013) highlighted low response rate.

3.5.2. Key informant interviews

Using the key informant interview guide, the researcher conducted interviews with 6 key informants (3 in Mutare and 3 in Harare). The researcher pre-arranged meetings with the participants at their convenient times. The interviews took between 15 and 20 minutes (per session) to be completed. Of these 6 key informants, 4 interviews were done face to face while the other 2 were done through phone. Securing these interviews with key informants was very challenging. The researcher had to insist and be willing to change schedules since some of the key informants were very busy persons with a lot of other appointments. The researcher also had to answer a lot of questions as some of the respondents wanted to understand if the interviews were not meant to investigate their political persuasions and activities.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Data analysis refers to "the systematic organisation and synthesis of the research data and the testing of research hypotheses, using those data" (Polit and Hungler 1999:639). It also entails "categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising the data and describing them in meaningful terms" (Brink 1996:178). The researcher collected all the 50 questionnaires and started entering data responses on the 'variable view' and 'data view' windows of the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 23. Concurrently, the researcher also immersed himself into qualitative data to draw common issues that were expressed on open ended questions for each objective. Since the survey questions were grouped according to research objectives, the tables and frequencies generated using SPSS were analysed together with qualitative data gathered under that same objectives for comparison to find congruency or convergent findings. Findings were therefore presented in that same order where after

presentation of statistical tables, themes generated from qualitative data followed so that presentation, discussion and analysis of findings happened concurrently. Excerpts from respondents were quoted verbatim and presented in italics. The findings were also juxtaposed against views of key informants whose expert knowledge and critical positions would enable them to shed more light in understanding and interpretation of findings. Analysis was done through relating findings to literature and the structural social work theory which influenced the study.

3.7. FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

Feasibility refers to the assessment conducted prior to the study to determine the probability of its success taking into account the practical aspects of its management. The researcher got permission from the National Association of Social Workers of Zimbabwe (NASWZ) to conduct the research. The researcher also verified the availability of respondents through contact details from NASWZ and pre-sought permission to send questionnaires from respondents themselves. The researcher has also structured the questionnaire in a simple clear and precise manner so that respondents can easily understand and respond to the question. A team of 5 research assistants was also engaged to be of assistance should any of the respondents face any challenge with the questionnaire. The researcher has also put aside a budget for transport cost, and for data and calling time for easy of communication during data collection. With these conditions in place the researcher did ensure the feasibility of the study.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rubin and Babbie (2011) note that ethics are a set of moral principles or norms and should be used to guide moral choices of behavior and relationships with others. Fouka and Mantzorou

(2011) note that ethics is the branch of philosophy which deals with the dynamics of decision making concerning what is right and wrong. Ethics relate to two groups of people thus those conducting research who should be aware of their obligations and responsibilities, and the "researched upon" who have basic rights that should be protected. This study was conducted with fairness and justice by eliminating all potential risks. The respondents were notified of their rights. Ethical issues observed in this study included informed consent, right to anonymity and confidentiality, right to privacy, liberty of withdrawal from participation, and respect for persons.

3.8.1. Permission to conduct the study

The researcher was granted the permission to conduct the study by the president of NASW-Zimbabwe. The letter was communicated to employers of the social workers involved in the study, and to the participants themselves. Refer to **Annexure D** for a copy of the letter of permission.

3.8.2. Respect for persons as autonomous individual

Respect for persons is a basic human right. Respondents as autonomous individuals have the right to choose to either participate or not, in the research. Collins English Dictionary (1991:286) defines choice as "the act or an instance of choosing or selecting; the opportunity or power of choosing". The decision must to be made without coercion. Risks and benefits were highlighted. The respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw should they so wish. The respondents were assured that neither participation, withdrawal from, nor refusal to participate would affect their professional standing as social workers. Prior to signing the consent form, there was a period of question time to ensure that the participants fully understood the explanations.

3.8.3. Avoiding harm

Avoiding harm is another basic human right to be considered when conducting research on human beings. According to Burnard and Chapman (2005) risks that may be encountered in research include physical, psychological, emotional, social and financial ones. In this study, psychological harm was likely to affect participants since the research has political issues that others would be afraid to discuss about. The researcher avoided explicit partisan politics question to minimize the skepticism and fear. Maintaining privacy, confidentiality and anonymity during the interview also prevented psychological harm. The information collected avoided in very strict ways to point to any links with individual respondents.

3.8.4. Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality is a basic ethical principle while anonymity is one way in which confidentiality is maintained. To ensure anonymity, steps were taken to protect the identity of the individual by neither giving their name when presenting research results, nor including identifying details which may reveal their identity such as work place, personal characteristics and occupation (Rubin and Babbie, 2011). Fouka and Mantazorou (2011) suggest that whenever subjects refuse to report personal information as they regard it an invasion of privacy, the researcher ought to respect their views. In this study, anonymity was achieved by not putting names on the questionnaire. The researcher at the end was not able to link any information to any participant. The interview was conducted in a private where no third person could hear the conversation.

3.8.5. Informed consent

Informed consent is a legal requirement before one can participate in a study. According to Fouka and Matazorou (2011) informed and voluntary consent must be obtained from the subjects of research and researchers must make sure that that participants have fully understood what has been proposed, which means that they are aware of potential risks or discomforts. They were allowed to ask questions for clarity and the researcher clarified all their concerns. In this study it was ensured that respondents gave their consent to participate in the study. Prior to the respondents' giving consent, the purpose of the study was fully explained to them in the language they were well conversant with. At the end of the explanations, the respondents were asked to sign a written consent (see **Annexure C** for the consent form).

3.9. LIMITATIONS

According to Simmon (2011) limitations are potential weaknesses in your study and are out of your control. The study respondents were members of NASW. Although the association draws the largest body of social workers, it is only a fraction of social workers practicing in Zimbabwe, given that many are too reluctant to affiliate with NASW whose membership is voluntary. As a result the finding from this study may not represent the whole spectrum of social workers in Zimbabwe and therefore cannot be confidently generalized.

Also, the subject of political social work was regarded as too sensitive and poses challenges during data collection. Any subject that involves political issues in Zimbabwe is a cause of suspicion because of political polarization of the national politics. There was suspicion over the researcher which caused some minimal challenges especially on key informant interviews. To

this end the researcher will included the definition of political social work on the questionnaire and on the key informant interview guide for suspecting participants to get clarity. Also the researcher ensured that research aim and objectives were clear and unquestionable to avoid being suspected to be referring to explicit partisan politics. Another limitation is that the study was conducted over a short period of time. This made the study expensive and demanding hence proffer limited justice to time for both the researcher and respondents. Limited time for study like exposed the researcher to pressure.

3.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the research design that had been followed in this study, addressing the population, sampling procedure, data collection instrument and data collection procedure. Measures were adhered to in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the research results. Ethical concerns which could have impacted on the survey were attended to. The following chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from conducting a survey questionnaire to census sample of 50 participants, and interviews conducted on 6 key informants.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on presenting, interpreting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. Presentation was structured according to research objectives which are: (1) the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe; (2) opportunities for political social work practice in Zimbabwe; (3) challenges for political social work practice e in Zimbabwe; and (4) strategies to improve political social work practice. The purpose of analyzing data is to come up with usable and useful information. Kalpesh (2013) notes that data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and remodeling data for the purposes of reaching certain conclusion for a given situation.

4.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF REPONDENTS/DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Table 1: Demographic profile of study respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	23	46
Female	27	54
Age range		
25-30 years	20	40
31-40 years	18	36
41-50 years	8	16
51 years +	4	8
Experience in practice		
1-10 years	24	48
11-20 years	18	36

21 years and above	8	16
Educational qualification		
Bachelor of Social Work	36	72
Master of Social Work	12	24
PhD	2	4
Employer of respondents		
Government	20	40
Not for profit organisations/NGO	19	38
Private profit organizations	4	8
Tertiary institutions	7	14

Of the 50 respondents who participated in the survey questionnaire, 54% (27) were females while the remaining 46% (23) were males. The modal length of social work practice for the respondents was 1-10 years at 48% (24), followed by 11-20 years at 36% (18), while the most experienced of the profession, the 21 years and above constitutes only 16% (8). The largest age concentration was between the ages 25-30 years at 44% (22), followed closely by the ages range 31-40 years at 40% (20).

As indicated on table 1 above, 40% (20) of the 50 respondents who participated in the survey questionnaire works for government, 38% (19) works for not for profit organizations, 8% (4) works for private profit organizations, and the remaining 14% (7) works for tertiary institutions as lecturers and teaching assistants. In terms of educational qualifications, 72% (36) of the survey questionnaire respondents poses an Honors Degree in Social Work as the only qualification in the field, 24% (12) included those with Masters Degrees in Social Work as well as students of Master of Social Work, and the remaining 4% (2) are PhD holders. Using assumptional analysis, it can be argued that the deficiency in of social workers with 'masters' and doctoral level education can be correlated to the level of political social work in Zimbabwe

where policy analysis issues are better argued by such highly educated persons. Social workers can therefore be easily relegated from important policy level issues because of their low level of education considering that only a few poses doctoral level qualification.

Table 2: Sex * Educational Qualification * Employer Cross tabulation

Employer			Educational Qualification			Total
			Honors Social Work Only	Master of Social Work	PhD SW	
Government (DSS)	Sex	Male	6	2	1	9
		Female	10	1	0	11
	Total		**16**	**3**	**1**	**20**
Not for profit organisation/NGO	Sex	Male	2	5		7
		Female	11	1		12
	Total		**13**	**6**		**19**
Private voluntary organisations	Sex	Male	1		1	2
		Female	2		0	2
	Total		**3**		**1**	**4**
Tertiary institutions	Sex	Male	2	3		5
		Female	2	0		2
	Total		**4**	**3**		**7**
Total	Sex	Male	11	10	2	23
		Female	25	2	0	27
	Total		**36**	**12**	**2**	**50**

As presented on the table above, social work is primarily dominated by females. For social workers working for government 11 are females while 9 are male, in NGOs females are 12 and males are 7; and in private profit organization there is a balance of 2 females and 2 males. Males however dominate tertiary education institutions with 5 males against 2 females. The dominance of males in tertiary education is also reflective of the educational levels of males which are higher that their female counterparts despite the fact that females dominate the profession of social work in Zimbabwe. In the category of Honors Degree in Social Work only females are 25

and males are 11, at Masters level males are 10 and females are only 2; and at PhD level there are only 2 males. This situation is reflective of gender differences especially where women are faced with multiple roles especially after their first degree to concentrate on child bearing, work and family.

4.2. LEVEL OF POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN ZIMBABWE

The researcher used a three point continuum Likert scale which included 'Never' 'Sometimes' and 'Always', noting variable frequencies with which respondents engaged in the stated political social work activity. See table below.

Table 3: Frequencies for political social work practice in specific activities.

Political social work activity	N (Valid responses)	Never N (%)	Sometimes N (%)	Always N (%)
I vote on election day	50	0	2 (4)	48 (94)
As a social worker I organize and encourage vulnerable groups to vote	50	37 (74)	13 (26)	0
I voice my concern and opinion on policy decisions that I find to be negatively affecting clients.	50	42 (84)	6 (12)	2 (4)
I engage legislators/political representative with regard to any social policy issue of concern.	50	48 (96)	0	2 (4)
I participate in the local issues that affect people (eg engaging authorities on housing, water supply, sewer maintenance, schools welfare etc)	50	4 (8)	10 (20)	36 (72)
As a professional 1 help people organize for peaceful and legal demonstration/social action.	50	50 (100)	0	0
I raise issues of concern to the profession and its clients that need to be addressed through my professional association (NASW)	50	30 (60)	8 (16)	12 (24)
I raise my voice against partisan politics in issues of social welfare as a professional	50	29 (58)	9 (18)	12 (24)
I follow up parliamentary debates on policy and legislative issues that concern the welfare of my	50	28 (56)	14 (28)	8 (16)

clients as a social worker				
I provide my professional advice on social policy as a professional to parliamentary committees and to media outlets	50	40 (80)	6 (12)	4 (8)
I participate in pressure groups that seeks to influence policy	50	28 (56)	15 (30)	7 (14)
I feel I must run for a political office (as councilor, Member of Parliament, Senate, and President)	50	27 (54)	3 (6)	20 (40)
Totals (Responses)	**600**	**363 (61)**	**86 (14)**	**151 (25)**

The above statistical table shows that of the 600 valid responses received from respondents on the question of their level of political participation 61% (365 responses) was 'Never' category, 14% (86 responses) was 'Sometimes' category, and 25% (151 responses) was 'Always' category. This means that the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe is low as rated by 25%. This is also demonstrated by the pie chart below.

Figure 1: Distribution of responses to political social work activities
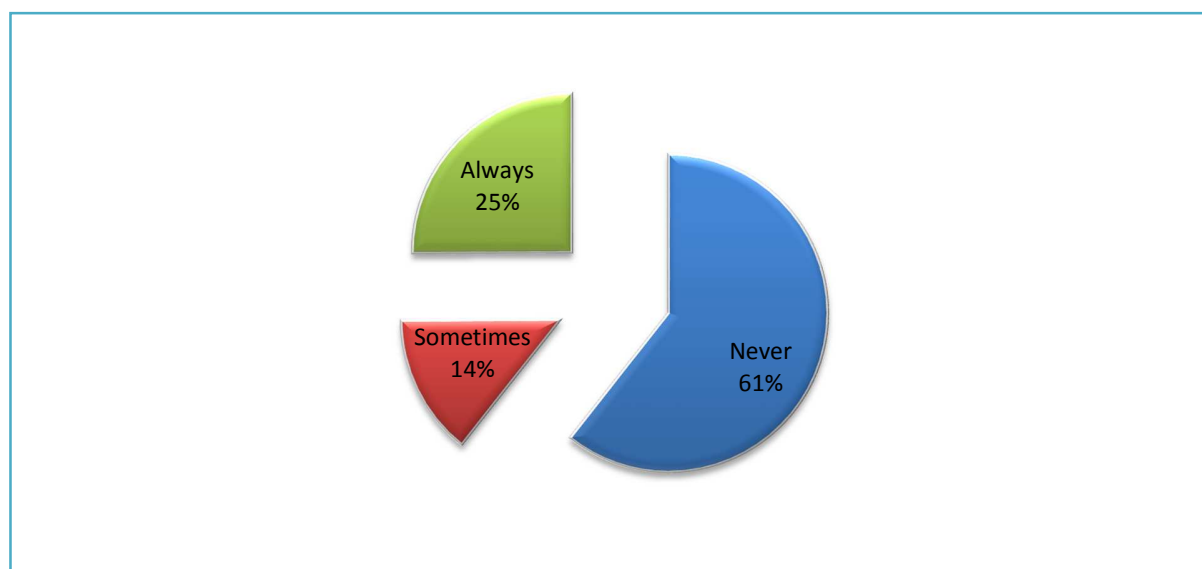
The level at which political social work is not practiced is 61% while with the remaining 14% being the rating of those ambivalent on political social work. Qualitative data also confirm the same sentiments as can be reflected in one of the respondents' view that:

> *Political social work in Zimbabwe is non-existent. This area of practice still needs a lot of groundwork especially to begin with research on the subject. The polarization of politics in Zimbabwe and the conflicts that sometimes come with taking a political stance has put political social work in limbo.*

One of the key informants also concurred saying:

> *The level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe is very low because there is no room for open discussion on policy and political power. Opinions from professionals do not carry a lot of weight. As a result social workers have accepted their docile status and are content with their roles in the background.*

The excerpts above are a clear indication of the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Both quantitative and qualitative data concur that social workers do not participate in political social work due to fear of being regarded as interfering in politics. This level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe is reflective of the call in literature for social workers to participate in political social work practice for relevance, and for the good of the profession (Chogugudza, 2011, Muchinyerei, 2017). By taking this position, it is clear from the findings that whilst social workers seek to advance its mission for social justice, it must achieve this end without involving itself into the political issues thereof. This positions however contradicts with Lewis (2003: 143) who argues that in today's dramatically different political-economic and ideological context, this depoliticisation of social work has significant consequences for service users and practitioners alike because 'no professional practice can be apolitical'. According to

McNutt (2008) American social workers were found to be reluctant to confront the political dimensions of practice or challenge those forces whose values and goals run counter to their expressed mission. While this is the same conclusion that the findings of this study points to, social workers in Zimbabwe expressed the reason being fear to be seen to be politically active which has consequences. According Mmatli (2008), Zimbabwe is mentioned amongst countries where political participation can be risky as a result of lack of democracy. Consequences can range from loss of employment, physical harm or loss of life. However, taking the structural social work theory, such are the issues that require a radical stance, a confrontation of the status quo, and the dismantling of the structure in order to bring about a desired change (Payne, 2005).

4.2.1. Voting, organizing and encouraging clients to vote, and running for public office

Social workers have proved to be actively engaged in voting. The study indicated that 94% of the respondents vote always. This however applies to social workers demonstrating their personal mandate to participate in choosing their leaders like any other professionals or ordinary people. However, when it comes to professional responsibility of social workers to ensure participation of vulnerable groups in voting none of the respondents indicated that they always organize and encourage their clients to vote. The study revealed that 74% of the respondents never organize and encourage their clients to vote. One of the respondents said,

> *I do not have any problem going to vote myself, but being seen to be organizing and encouraging others is inviting trouble because that can be misread to mean something...*

The rate at which social workers vote (94%) is indicative of their political consciousness which is also reflected in 40% of the respondent willing to run for public office as councilors, members of parliament and senators. According to the American National Association of Social Workers

(2003), profession encourages social workers to run for office in order to ensure that elected officials represent the values and ethics of social work, a call which the same professional body in Zimbabwe has never made. The study has therefore revealed that the responsibility of social workers is not only to vote on part of their persons, but to ensure people are accorded this same right especially the vulnerable groups, and to also run for political office. Other scholars like Hardina (2008) are of the view that social workers have the responsibility to uphold the peoples' right to vote especially the vulnerable groups. In Zimbabwe the right to vote is enshrined in Section three of the Electoral Act [Chapter 2: 13] which states that every citizen has the right "to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives, and is entitled, without distinction". Special groups as prisoners have not been accorded the right to vote in Zimbabwe (Newsday, 20 August 2017), and these maybe a pointer to other special groups whose rights to participate are violated.

4.2.2. Participation in local issues and engaging legislators on policy issues

One of the political social work activities that social workers scored highly at 72% was on the question of whether they participate in local issues that affect people. This participation includes engaging authorities on housing issues, water challenges, sewer maintenance, and child welfare issues among others. This 72% however, despite being a pointer to a profession that is on watch for issues that affect people; their participation is questionable if one considers other related ratings. 84% of respondents indicated that they never voice their concerns and opinions on policy decisions that are negative. 96% of respondents also indicated that they never engage legislators with regard to policy issues of concern. It therefore become questionable when social workers indicate participation and the conclusion can only be that such purported participation is limited

to frivolous issues of symptom redressing instead of dealing with the root causes of problems. One responded was quoted saying,

> *We know local authority workers to approach if we have challenges, but we do not have any links with legislators. We hardly see them around...*

One of the key informants also said:

> *I am a legislator myself but have not seen any social worker coming to my office, calling me, writing me or anything. I really know how important are social workers in society but they are not just as visible, and I don't know why?*

This clearly reflects that social workers in Zimbabwe are not active in voicing their opinions on policy decisions that affect clients. More so social workers who are experts in diagnosing social problems and effects of policy decisions on people, they do not engage legislators to educate them or bring issues to their attention. There is therefore a lack of professional input in social problems which is the reason why in Zimbabwe, real issues do not make it into parliament for discussion. According to Mathews (1986) in a study done amongst American social workers, it was found that they engage legislators twice as much as legislators do, but the overall assessment of the study was that social workers needed to improve in taking the initiative to bring issues to the attention of legislators. According to Lane and Pritzer (2018) a critical part of political social work involves influencing policy agendas of candidates, elected officials and government agencies. Social workers are therefore encouraged to forge relationships with politicians early through helping crafting their manifestos, endorsements, and campaigning as this can lay groundwork for long standing policy support when candidates become law makers.

4.2.3. Social action and participation in pressure groups (political activism)

Findings have also shown that 100% of the respondents never help people organize for peaceful demonstration in what amounts to be social action. This is despite the fact of the social work curriculum in Zimbabwe touches on social action as one of community work skills every social worker requires. On a matter of participating in pressure groups that seeks to influence and or change social policy, 56% of respondents indicated that that they never participate, 30% said they sometimes participate, and 14% indicated that they always participate. In light of this, the claim by social workers to be voices of the voiceless and to champion the plight of the vulnerable groups is indeed an empty rhetoric. Majority of the social workers never confront power and political structures for the welfare of their clients. Social workers are comfortable with politicians dictating for them despite violation of values, ethics, and principles of the profession. One of the respondents alluded that,

> *Honestly organizing for social action and joining pressure groups as participants brings you to spotlight which is dangerous....politics in Zimbabwe is polarized, but besides, it takes a lot of political acumen and skill to do this.*

A key informant commended that:

> *Social workers are a professional group that is good at playing it safe. But for the sake of their mission and purpose, they must fight it out no matter what, the power they lack lies right in activism.*

In an article that traced the history of social action by branch of Australian National Association of Social Workers, it was found out that actual action on the ground does not match the rhetoric about social action (Mendes, 2003). In this same article, the problematic nature of social action is

attributed to a number of factors including deficits in skills, resources, and education which is quite reflective of the situation in Zimbabwe. Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013) make reference to the absence of social workers in the public denunciation of perilous policies, bad governance and human rights abuses where other professions like lawyers, economist, journalist, and teachers are visible. Mmatli (2008) notes that the need for social workers to participate in political activism is not a strange expectation considering that literature is rich with evidence of political activism by social workers. There is amble evidence in literature that social workers in United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand have long been involved in social and political activism (Reisch, 200; Mendes, 2003; and Gray et al, 2003).

However, despite the fact that scholars concur on the low levels of political social work practice, no sufficient academic attention has been put to the effects of the complex political situations, particularly in Zimbabwe as espoused by respondents in this study. The above scholarly findings have only given the situation on political activism without defining the contextual political environment within which such activism is practiced. In a related study Molutsi et al (2005) accurately analysed the relationship between political environment and political social work activism by submitting that political activism is possible in countries where democratic governments have taken root. In reflection of this Mmatli (2008: 305) states that in countries where popular democracy skipped (such countries mentioned being Swaziland, Somalia, Sierra Lione, and lately Zimbabwe), social and political activism can be risky, 'social workers may face lose of livelihood, or physical harm, or loss of lives'. In such situations, literature supports that social workers focus their efforts on helping establish democratic principles, structures and good governance as a matter of priority, suggestions that are clearly reflective of the structural social work theory that speaks to critical analysis of the structural infrastructure and recommends even

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radical means for the sake of change (Weinberg, 2008). Presumably, such complexities make one to believe that the synergy between politics and human services profession like social work remains inconclusive.

4.2.4 Relationship between respondents' characteristics and political social work practice in Zimbabwe

Comparing overall rates of political social work practice and respondents characteristics yields interesting finding although with limited differences. On a question of voting all the 23 males indicated that they vote always while 2 out of 27 females indicated that sometimes they vote while 27 vote always. The 100% score on males however is indicative of how males are likely to be more interested in politics than females. Interestingly the study has found out that when it comes to running for political office, of the 20 respondents who feel they must run for public office, 14 are females and only 6 are males. On another related political social work activity of participating in pressure groups that seeks to influence policy, of the 7 respondents who answered 'Always', 5 are males and 2 are females. 15 females and 13 males also answered 'Never'. This shows that men are likely to be courageous than women to participate in social action than women.

Females have however demonstrated that they are more inclined to run for political office than men showing their disposition towards representation although in a more dignified and less and peaceful way. Female political social workers can make a lot of difference for the vulnerable groups as can be demonstrated by Mikulski and her friend in the United States of America congress. In her felt expression for social workers to enter the explicit political arena, Barbara Mikulski argued that she ran for political office because it was better that spending her time

knocking on the doors of political offices on behalf of clients, and that she would rather be in the office opening doors for the clients to enter (Lane and Pritzer, 2018). This is however more interesting when considering the analysis that political social work in Zimbabwe is very low because the profession is dominated by females who by nature and by way of history are not politically active. Gilligan (2016) notes that females occupy only a quarter (23%) while males occupy three quarters (77%) of the world's parliamentary seats. This therefore follows 'assuptional' analysis to say political social work in Zimbabwe is very low because the profession is dominated by females who by nature are not politically active.

There is no noted relationship between the respondents experience with their level of political social work practice. Generally all social work indicated low levels of political social work practice in many areas except for voting and participating in local issues of concern. It is however worth noting that despite the overall low political social work practice, those between 1-10 years and 11-20 years are better inclined than the 21 years and above. For example 5 respondents in the experience category of 1-10 years indicated that they always raise their voice against partisan politics in issues of social welfare, and 4 in the category 11-20 years also said the same. 8 respondents of between 1-10 years and 5 of between 11-20 years indicated that they sometimes follow parliamentary debates. This shows that the trend is likely that the new generation social workers are going on the right direction in showing interest in politics and power issues which lays ground work for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. This is in contrast with other finding where age and experience correlated positively with political participations (Rome and Hoechstetter, 2010). Social workers must get informed by the structural social work theory which calls against social workers and their clients adapting to the

status call but changing the status quo to suit human welfare, and standard practices (Weignberg, 2008).

The findings have also demonstrated a positive relationship between employer and political social work practice. Those working for government and NGOs are equally weak when it comes to political social work practice. Besides higher percentiles in voting they score very low in confronting the status quo. The study revealed that 20 respondents working for government and 19 working for NGOs never organize people for a demonstration. NGOs workers engage more with NASWZ than employees from other employers. The conclusion is therefore that there is generally little room to practice political social work without fear of victimization in both government and not for profit organizations. Mmatli (2008) notes that most of the social workers in Africa are government employees and direct political participation is highly restricted thereby limiting the number of practitioners who can practice political social work. This reflected what one of the respondents who said that:

> *I have so far worked for government, NGOs and the private profit sectors. Prohibitions from political oriented social work are sometimes clear, and sometimes not so overt. I have signed some contracts which clearly stipulated that political participation was prohibited.*

4.3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK IN ZIMBABWE

The researcher sought to determine whether respondents regard certain activities as opportunities for political social work in Zimbabwe. To determine this, two variables were created 'Yes' to confirm if the activity is an opportunity and 'No' to reject the activity as opportunity for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Variables were coded for the purposes of analysis using

SPSS. Table below shows frequencies of responses and their corresponding percentile value in brackets.

Table 3: Frequencies for political social work opportunities

Opportunity for political social work practice	N (valid responses)	Yes N (%)	No N (%)
Fair and equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable communities/groups	50	30 (60)	20 (40)
Professional recognition and respect in Zimbabwe	50	50 (100)	0
Professional power and relevance	50	49 (98)	1(2)
Enhanced opportunities for social workers (employment creation)	50	35 (70)	15 (30)
Political/legislative power to make/influence policy	50	26 (52)	24 (48)
Enhanced empowerment and participation of underprivileged groups (children, women, minority, disabled etc)	50	42 (84)	8 (16)
Increased democratic environment through public policy debates	50	29 (58)	21 (42)
Ethical politics (influences of social work values, ethics and principles)	50	48 (96)	2 (4)
Enhanced relationship between social work profession and political representatives/legislators	50	6 (12)	44 (88)
Increased respect for human rights	50	38 (76)	12 (24)
Totals (Responses)	**500**	**353 (71)**	**147 (29)**

Of the 500 valid responses obtained on opportunities for political social work, 353 respondents (71%) indicated 'Yes' and 147 respondents (29%) indicated 'No'. This means that respondents have indicated that to a greater extent, most of the activities noted above are opportunities for political social work practice in Zimbabwe should the profession consider embracing political social work as a method of practice. Below pie chart represents responses on opportunities for political social work practice after which the represented statistics will be discussed concurrently with qualitative responses under themes extracted from data.

Figure 2: Distribution of responses on opportunities for political social work
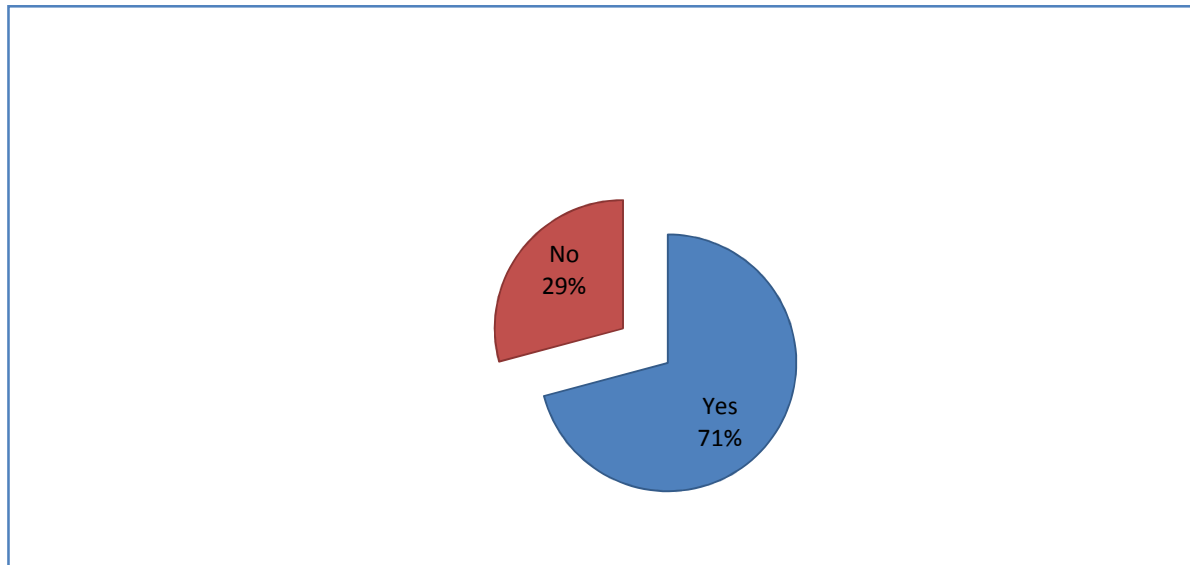
4.3.1. Professional recognition, power and relevance

The study indicated that 100% of the respondents concurred that professional recognition is an opportunity for political social work practices in Zimbabwe. Related to that, 98% of the respondents have also indicated that professional power and relevance can be an opportunity for political social work practice in Zimbabwe as well. This means that respondents are in agreement with the fact that the profession of social work is not well recognized in Zimbabwe with many social workers operating in the background. One of the respondents said that:

> *Practicing political social work as l know it is the only way to place the social work profession at its rightful place in society. There is just no way can social injustice be tackled from behind the scenes.*

Another responded also said that:

> *There is no silent advocacy, we must make noise and be a force to reckon in social policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Once we begin to practice political social work, everyone will know what social work stands for in society.*

The above sentiments concur with literature. According to Lane (2018) politics is social work with power. The mission of the social work profession consistently include mandates to advocate for human rights, participate in social action, and speak for those who are disempowered. The structural political social work theory as advocated by Moreau seeks to eliminate vices in society (Payne, 2005) and by so doing the profession will in no doubt get recognition. In Zimbabwe, Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013) note that the continued shrinkage in provision of basic social services, the widespread poverty, and human rights abuses have since left people wondering on what is the role of social work profession in society. This therefore means that should social workers practice political social work, there is no way they can remain unknown to society as to what they stand for. According to Mathews (1982), in a study done in Western Michigan America, where legislators were asked whether social workers were politically active or not, one of the findings posed an ironic question saying if social workers were politically active, why was the profession not influential? This therefore points to the fact that political participation in Zimbabwe can bring about the recognition of the profession as it becomes influential by gaining its political space like other professions as lawyers, economists and political scientist.

4.3.2. Employment opportunities for social workers

The study has indicated that 70% of respondents (35/50) are of the view that political social work will create employment opportunities for social workers. Qualitative data indicated that like in

developed countries political social work practice open new avenues in public offices where social workers can also run for political office, work for legislators, run for local boards and in these areas they can make impact. The statistics can also be corroborated by one of the key informants' view who said,

> *Right now public offices are run without social workers, entities like Office of President and Cabinet which specializes on policy do not have social workers, the same with public schools and public hospitals. Ideally each and every community must have resident social worker to deal with critical social issues.....*

However, 30% however dissented this view arguing that once social workers embrace political skills in practice, they will get corrupted by power and cease to be social workers. One of the respondents said that:

> *Its either you are a social worker or you are a politician. You cannot embed the other into another. All social workers who choose the political social work route cease to be the former and become the later.*

The difference in view is however reflective of the ideological contradictions on whether social workers must or must not participate in politics (Mendes, 2003). From the origin of the profession there have been debates with the likes of Mary Richmond and camp opposing macro practice while Jane Addams and camp championed workers rights, housing issues and other social problems through social action (Weismiller and Rome, 1995). Reisch (2000) actually notes that some social workers believe electoral politics as inherently corrupt and that politics falls outside of the professional mandate. The dissenting view is however focused more on explicit politics without considering political social work as in focusing on power dynamics and political mechanisms thereof. An open view of political social work focuses on the process of

policy formulation, resource allocation, protection of human rights among other issues which makes social work inherently political. According to Reisch and Jani (2012) 'politics' in political social work is not narrowly defined as it focuses on how power shapes the allocation of rights, access, opportunities, status and resources, including workers' time, skills and information. This definition is in line with the dictates of the structural social work theory which posits that how power influences intra-organisational dynamics and the assumptions underlying and rationalizing agencies' definitions of need, selection of helping strategies and evaluation of interventions (Weinberg, 2010). This perspective will clearly create opportunities for social workers as political social work practice will likely open new entities that are currently without social workers.

4.3.3. Ethical politics, increased democratic environment and increased respect for human rights

Another interesting finding is that 96% (48 respondents) agree that ethical politics is another critical opportunity for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. The view is also related to the opportunity of increased democratic environment which 58% (29 respondents) agree on as well. Also, 76% (38 respondents) indicated that respect for human rights is also an opportunity that can be ushered in by political social work practice. This means that social workers understand the importance of social work values, ethics and principles, not only to guide professionals of social work but as the moral and guiding compass for society at large. One of the key informants gave an analysis on the importance of social work values, ethics and principles saying:

Social work values, ethics and principles will bring a lot of value into the political space in Zimbabwe. They are actually the missing link within the political context and the defacto panacea to the challenges that society faces today.

One of the respondents also said that:

Imagine politics that tolerates rule of law, follows due process, respect human rights, worthy and dignity of people, politics with ubuntu, corruption free, honesty politics that strives for the welfare of the people and not selfish enrichment.

Social work values, ethics and principles primarily seek to promote an egalitarian society where social functioning of human beings is enhanced. Lane (2011) also made the same observation that there is need for the translation of social work values, ethics, and principles into social policy. Political social work practice is therefore the means through which social work can impact on society as a whole and influence change at macro-level. In outright attack on corruption, Moyo (2018) implores social workers to invoke moral outrage and participate in political activism in the fight against corruption. According to Viswanathan (2012) social workers must deal with corruption in the form of abused power by mostly public officials in the form of bribery, nepotism, extortion, negligence of duty, cronyism, embezzlement and fraud activities that resultantly affect social work clients who are vulnerable. It is therefore worthy noting that political social work practice can bring about a moral code into the political space wherein both professional and politicians are driven by their convictions to serve, to value human dignity, collective good of humanity, and peace and harmony. The practice of political social work can allow social work profession to contribute significantly to the creation of an idealized society of good people.

4.3.4. Relationship between social workers and politicians

The study has also indicated that enhanced relationship between social workers and politicians is not an opportunity for political social work practice. It revealed that 88% of respondents think

political social work practice will not improve relations between social workers and legislators. Qualitative data established that respondents are of the view that political social work will create tension rather than cooperation between social workers and politicians. One of the key informants expressed that:

> *Most politicians are very protective of the political space. They do craft polices to exclude professional from political participation and sometimes victimize those interested. It will take time for the type of politicians we have today to understand the noble calling of social workers to practice political social work.*

In a study done in Western Michigan (Mathews, 1982), Republican legislators were not in good relations with social workers because the profession as a collective aligned itself with Democrats. It was found out that legislators of all persuasions are most influenced by the most active sections of their constituency, regardless of ideological fit. These findings may therefore be explanatory to the root cause of conflict between social workers and politician although the study has not indicated that social workers in Zimbabwe are inclined to support one political party against another. It shows that political social work practice is not about being partisan but it is primarily about working for good policies, social welfare and social justice. It should be more about the values that are basically human rights issues and these cuts across the political divide as they are issues of common humanity (Mmatli, 2008).

4.4. CHALLENGES FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK

The researcher presented a list of challenges drawn from literature and from his own experience and presented them to respondents so that they can judge if they are (or are not) challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe. The researcher used variables 'Yes' and 'No' which were

coded 1 and 2 for the purposes of analysis using SPSS. The results of responses are presented in the table below.

Table 8: Frequency table for challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe

Challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe	N (valid responses)	Yes N (%)	No N (%)
Ideological debate on whether social workers should participate or not participate in politics	50	28 (56)	22 (44)
Professional stigmatization by politicians	50	50 (100)	0
Lack of political social work skills	50	40 (80)	10 (20)
Repressive political system	50	50 (100)	0
Prohibitions at work (restriction from questioning the status quo)	50	47 (94)	3 (6)
Lack of resources (political and material)	50	20 (40)	30 (60)
A weak professional association	50	48 (96)	2 (4)
Unavailability of social workers in parliament as elected members	50	33 (66)	17 (34)
Totals (Responses)	**400 (100)**	**316 (79)**	**84 (21)**

Out of 400 valid responses received, 79% (316 responses) confirmed the raised issues in the table as challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Only 21% (84 responses) did not see some of the raised issues as challenges for political social work practice. Below is a pie chart representing overall distribution of responses.

Figure 3: Distribution of overall responses on challenges for political social work
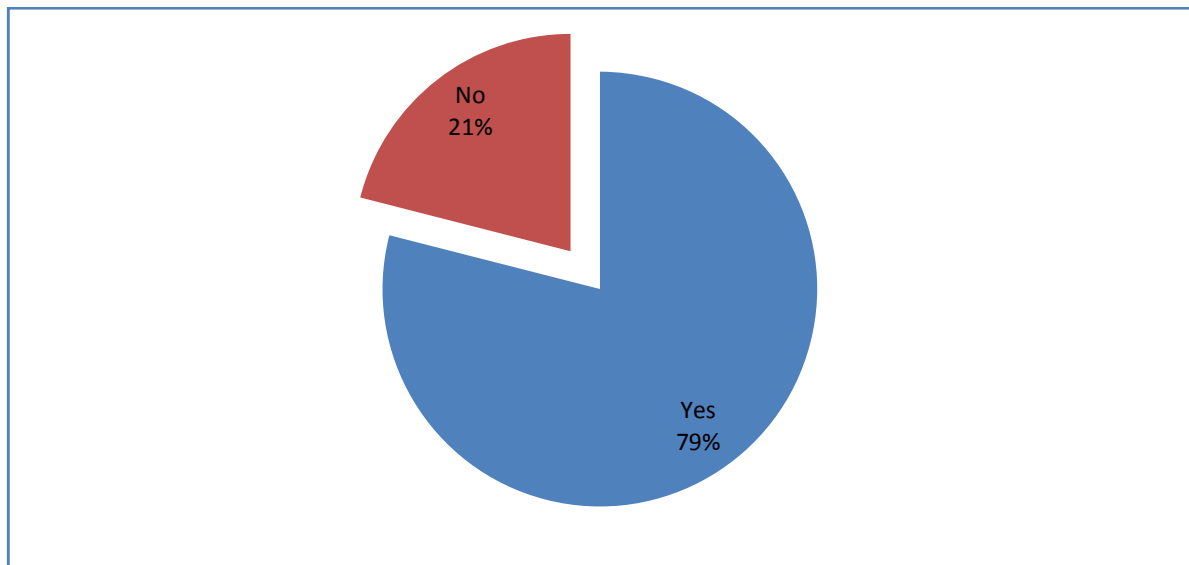
4.4.1. Ideological dilemma and stigimatisation of the profession

The study indicated that 56% of the respondents regarded ideological debate on whether social workers should be political as a challenge with 44% disagreeing. However, such debate can be traced back into the founding members of the profession, Mary Richmond and Jane Addams who also had different views. 100% (50 respondents) confirmed stigmatization as a challenge for professional social work practice in Zimbabwe. Related to that is also repressive political system which 100% of the respondents also rated as a challenge for political social work profession. One of the qualitative responses summarized these challenges saying:

> *Most social workers feel that they can do much to champion social justice but the system is not one to be challenged... it is difficult to participate in social action especially if you work for government. You invite trouble.*

Although political violence and victimization is well known in Zimbabwe, there is nowhere where it was explicitly indicated or reported that social workers fell victims. It is however clear that social workers like any other profession operate in a political environment that controls their behaviour and conduct. The same political situation that the respondents alluded to as a challenge was once experienced in Brazil in 1965 when the government was under a dictator that suffocated the profession of social work (Mioto and Nogueira, 2013). In Zimbabwe, social workers that are employed by the government are part of the civil servants who are often asked to first resign if they want to be in politics. Recently the media was awash with the ruling party's resolution that any civil servant who wishes to join politics must resign from work (Chronicle, 6 April 2018). Clearly this is part of the effort by the political system to keep professionals from questioning the status quo. Any action that is radical can be considered political and the reason for which one should lose his or her job. This therefore is a challenge for political social work practice in Zimbabwe.

4.4.2. Prohibitions at work

Prohibition at work was also cited as a challenge to political social work practice in Zimbabwe with a score of 94% (47 respondents). Results from cross tabulating employer and prohibitions at work did not yield any significant differences between employers. Of the 3 respondents who did not see prohibitions at work as a problem, 2 were employed by government while 1 was employed by a tertiary institution. This shows that while there are some glimpses of hope with government and tertiary education, the same cannot be said of NGOs which are closely monitored in Zimbabwe. The position of private profit organizations could not be inferred because the sample included only 4 respondents from that entity. One of the respondents said that:

Some of us are not employed by government and we are one of the few organization that are exposing the rot in the country in a manner that qualifies to be called political social work. We actually expose structural poverty and failed policies in the country despite the operational challenges that we face.

Contrary to the quantitative data findings, qualitative data has also indicated that there are some social workers especially those not employed by government who are questioning the structural power. This is part of the reason why Not for Profit/ NGOs are usually under government watch in Zimbabwe so as to subdue political social work practice. According to Chogugudza (2009) because of some social workers working for NGOs and practice radical social work, government launched a ban on NGOs in 2007 and set a special approval to resume operations. Given this situation, most organizations employing social workers may therefore ban them from political social work practice.

4.4.3. Lack of political social work skills and weak professional bodies

The findings have shown that 80% of the respondents lack of political social work skills as a challenge to political social work practice. This lack of political social work skills is also felt in a weak NASWZ which 96% of the respondents cited also as a challenge to political social work practice. When skills lack, it points to the effectiveness of the education system that produces social workers. Findings from qualitative data touched on the issue of curriculum for social work education saying:

The profession expects its practitioners to wake up doing what it did not teach them to do. The curriculum only makes reference to political social work but never gets deep to train students on the concept. It can be noted even from this kind of questions

interrogated by this research that the area is relevant but one that the profession is silent about.

Another respondent said that:

There is scathing political skills deficiency. The curriculum should encourage policy debates, public speaking, and structural analysis of political power as well as its relationship with social problem.

Literature supports the need for the education system to equip learners with relevant skills so that they do not become ambivalent of what must be done in practice. According to Lane (2011) political social work practice requires people skills, political skills, advocacy skills and mediation skills. Developed states like United States of America have since established specialist institute where political social work is pursued as an area of specialization which is not the case in Zimbabwe. The structural social work theory understands the complexity of social problem and how they are connected to the political and structural system (Weinberg, 2008). It is only logical that for social workers to disentangle the complexity of social problems, there is need for specialized training to be equipped with requisite skills.

4.5. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE POLITICAL SOCIAL PRACTICE IN ZIMBABWE

Objective 4 of the study sought to seek strategies to enhance political social work practice in Zimbabwe. The survey questionnaire on this part sought qualitative responses which were analysed using thematic content analysis. The following are the strategies as proposed by respondents.

4.5.1. Review of the social work curriculum to include political social work practice

There is a general consensus between respondents that the political content of the social work profession as it is right now is inadequate. The only time in the curriculum when students get closer to political social work practice is when the curriculum makes casual reference to social action without further elucidating on the skills and practical steps to engage in social action. The curriculum also looks on the theoretical issues on policy without practical steps and skills to influencing policy. This is not enough to prepare practitioners for political social work practice. One of the respondents said:

> *…it is such a pity that social work education focuses on teaching issues like history of social work and casework instead of this relevant method of practice. There is urgent need to review our curriculum and come up with a module for political social work practice, a domain where issues of social policy and political participations are studied at lengthy and in depth.*

One of the key informants also made reference to the curriculum of social work education saying that:

> *The first step towards improving political social work practice is a revisit of the curriculum to seriously include political social work as a course and an area of specialization. Political social work is standard for practice in today's world … Issues of agenda setting, advocacy coalitions, pressure groups, policy coordination among others are quite critical.*

Sentiments from respondents have confirmed literature as noted in observations made in other societies. According to Haynes and Mickelson (2006) many scholars have argued that social workers should be trained in political activity, lobbying, and/or advocacy yet it is not clear if

schools of social work are currently preparing their graduates for these tasks. Lane (2011) also notes that political social work education encourages membership in professional associations and help students to develop political skills such as writing and delivering testimony, meeting with government officials, and working in political campaigns. These skills are useful in case advocacy, working on behalf of one's own clients, and cause advocacy, advocacy that changes legislation or policy that affects a large group. Developed countries as United States of America invest so much in political social work education as can be expressed in institutions of specialization such as University of Connecticut School of Social Work Institute for the Advancement of Political Social Work Practice. In the case of Zimbabwe, this study is not the first to come out with the finding that social work curriculum needs to be reviewed. In a study on greening social work, it was found out that 'curriculum review to improve social work education and training and interventions is necessary' (Muzingili 2017: 36). Mendes (2003) actually advocates for a detailed introduction to political sciences if social work students are to grasp government policy making. What this therefore means is that there is need to politicize the classroom first and also create such opportunities for fieldwork practice.

4.5.2. Bringing social workers together and creating a strong National Association of Social Workers in Zimbabwe

Political social work practice can be enhanced in Zimbabwe only by the coming together of social workers to form a strong and vibrant association. Political social work practice is not an individualistic field of practice. It requires the advantage and comfort of numbers, mutual support and coalescing for a common cause. It calls for drawing attention. The current situation in Zimbabwe is that social workers are scattered all over with a significant number of experienced social workers outside the country seeking for greener pastures. There is need for a

professional consensus to creating a strong and vibrant association led by political social workers who have the skills, the charisma and the acumen to lead, organize, speak, advocate and confront structures for change. According to Reisch (2000) social workers do not have the numerical strength to make representation on issues that confront society. One of the key informants said that:

> *The first strategy towards political social workers is by finding a platform where all social workers can find each other. When we are one voice, no ear can miss our message for a better society.*

Another respondent also stated that:

> *Membership in professional association should be mandatory and not voluntary. Without unity the profession suffers from multiple voices which is dangerous for political social work practice. Political social work thrives on addressing issues of concern from one voice, dealing with one issue at a time. When united, even systems cannot stop you. You actually change systems.*

The strategy of a united professionals and a strong association is reflective of one of the challenges indicated earlier in the study. A weak NASWZ was indicated as one of the challenges to political social work practice in Zimbabwe with 96% of the respondents concurring. The need for a strong association was also found in a tudy done in Western Michagan on legislator's views on social workers' political participation, it was found out that it is important for social workers to actively support and participate in the activities of NASW, its state chapters and local geographical units (Mathews, 1982). The study further argues that NASW is the only aggregate voice the profession posses hence the need for such an association to be strong and viable. Whilst it is difficult to mobilize social workers to join professional associations in a country like

Zimbabwe, there is need to invoke the ethical software crafted within social workers. The structural social work theory subtly supports the idea of winning advocates through invoking the moral spot of social workers (Weinberg, 2008). This means that the message from NASW must throw social workers into ethical conundrums, where in failure to join the association creates a psychological ethical predicament.

4.5.3. Benchmarking tours

Another thematic strategy extracted from data gathered is that of social workers in Zimbabwe also going for benchmarking tours to countries that are already advanced in terms of political social work practice. Such a strategy is useful to individuals that are passionate about political social work practice and also to social work associations like Council of Social Workers and National Association of Social Workers. Respondents stated that benchmarking tours are important in giving practical steps to practice as touring members can learn the system which they can come and implement back home. One of the key informants said:

> *Going out to learn from others will put us on the right pedal to go forward in political participation. Our low levels of political social work practice are reflective of the technical know-how deficiency. There is need to go and analyse other countries systems on how political social work practice co exists with national politics.*

Such sentiments sync well in literature as Mary (2001) concurs that practitioners can model political social work behaviours of others who are proficient in the practice. In the case of Zimbabwe, and many other African countries, social work is a profession that came with colonialism. It therefore follows that there is need to continue to keep pace with developing trends in practice hence the need to model developed countries. Countries like America are

outstanding in political social work practice hence social work practice in Zimbabwe can gain a lot from modeling such practices. This however involves rational to contextualize political social work practice in Zimbabwe considering the difference in levels of democracy and political tolerance.

4.5.4. Social workers must run for political office and or work for politicians

Another sure strategy to enhance political social work practice is for social workers to run for political office or work for politicians. When one is elected into political office they become well placed to influence policy and implement issues they felt needed to be implemented. Instead of knocking on politicians' doors on behalf of clients the other option is to occupy the political office and open the door for clients (Lane and Pritzer, 2018). Having social workers as members of parliament enhances the relevance, status and recognition of the profession. It brings power to the profession. One of the respondents said:

> The easiest way for social workers to influence the kind of society they want and the kind of policies they think will help their clients is to also run for office. It is quite sad that despite how critical social work is, that there is not a single social worker in parliament.

A key informant said that:

> If you are a social worker, and you are working for me, that is lobbying. It means you influence my politics and policy perspectives. It means we can debate on issues and as politicians we get the social dimension that reflects social work. It all begins with a relationship.

In comparison to a study contacted in United States of America, Lane and Humphrey (2011) found out there were 416 social workers who were running for local, state, and federal positions. This is different from the situation in Zimbabwe where 54% of social workers only showed interest to run for public office but are not actually doing so. This was breaking from the past where professions like law, business, and higher education used to dominate. Mmatli (2008) notes that majority of social work clients lack access to basic human rights employment, health services, education, clean water, and food hence what these people need is political representation. It therefore means that political social work practice becomes easy ig social workers themselves run for political positions such as councilors, members of parliament, senators, among other positions of influence in society.

4.5.5. Participation in community pressure groups

The study has also found out that another strategy to improve political participation in Zimbabwe is for social workers to also take part in community pressure groups that seeks to influence policy. These platforms allows for social workers to utilize their professional skills in organizing and presenting issues to where they are due. Pressure groups often have charismatic persons but lacks professional guidance and contribution to the content of the message and channels of expression. As professionals, social workers bring about expertise in advocacy coalition models, coordination of issues, intellectual articulation of issues and policy interpretation. More so, pressure groups offer a platform for social workers interested in political social work to learn political engagement skills in practical ways. One of the respondents echoed the same sentiments saying:

> *As professionals and experts in policy issues we bring in a lot of value to pressure groups. Most times pressure groups lack content and ability to articulate issues in a*

meaningful way to the extent that social action turns into violent protest instead of a

peaceful demonstration.

A key informant weighed in saying that:

As professionals social workers must offer their expertise and translate social problems

into policy issues before we take them to the street. Surely there are no authorities that

disband and teargas peaceful protest, where issues are clearly articulated. By so doing

political social work can be enhanced and more often it is the people's concerns that will

set the agenda in policy considerations.

The call for social workers to participate in social action is clear and loud enough for any social worker to miss. Activism is not new to the profession as one can consider Jane Addams, the founder of the settlement houses who during the neophyte years of the profession used activism to organise and form unions, created work projects for recently unemployed men and women, led strikes over work hours and poor working conditions, spearheaded child labour legislation, and initiated housing reform (Addams, 1910). Joining activism is therefore a great way to make impact as social workers and to perfect political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Activism is also in tandem with structural social work theory that draws its inspiration from the socialist ideology within radical social work, grounded in critical theory of Karl Marx, and views society as something that can be changed.

4.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter focused on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed simultaneously/concurrently following the concurrent triangulation design used to gather data. The presentation was done according to the study's four objectives. The next chapter looks into study summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECCOMMENDATIONS

5.0. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented, interpreted, and analysed data findings on opportunities and challenges of political social work practice in Zimbabwe. This chapter presents the study summary, study conclusion, and recommendations.

5.1. SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to examine opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe and the subsequent implication for practice. This aim was pursued using four objectives which were to determine the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe, to assess opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe, and to examine strategies that can be utilized to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe. The sample size for the study was 55 participants who were spread across cities that include Mutare, Gweru, Bulawayo and Mutare, all of which constitute the study setting. The study used the mixed methods approach. The specific design under the mixed approach used was the concurrent triangulation strategy which allowed the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, using a single tool. A structured survey questionnaire was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and a key informant interview guide was used to gather views of key informant on the subject of political social work practice in Zimbabwe. Statistical Package for Social Scientists was used to analyse quantitative data while thematic content analysis was used on qualitative data.

The study established that the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe is very low. From the 600 valid responses on whether respondents participated in political activities raised, only 25% indicated in the affirmative, 14% sometimes participated, and 61% never participated. The findings did commensurate with reviewed literature as it called for social workers to participate in politics. Political social work activities that social workers scored highly were voting and participating in local issues that affect people such as housing, water, sewer among other collective local issues. Social workers have also indicated interest and willingness to run for political office with females scoring higher than males. Social workers showed that they their level of political social work is only practiced within the confinements of what are considered as personal securities. Majority of respondents indicated that they do not go as far with political social work practice to engage power and political structures on behalf of their clients. Activities that social workers indicated that they do not engage in include organizing for a peaceful demonstration (social action), criticize policy decisions that negatively affect clients, engage political representatives with policy issues of concern and providing expert advice or commentary to the public through media.

On opportunities for political social work in Zimbabwe, respondents agreed that opportunities abound. Of the 500 valid responses gathered, 71% concurred that areas of practice raised for their judgment were opportunities for political social work in Zimbabwe. These areas include professional recognition in Zimbabwe, ethical politics (after social work ethic are transferred into society), expanded areas of practice for social workers, empowerment and participation of vulnerable groups, increased respect for human rights, and power to influence policy. Findings also indicated that political social worker practice will create conflicts between the profession and politicians who previously had a view of social work as a profession that was apolitical. The

study has however indicated that relationship between the profession and politician will improve over time as they come to appreciate the impact of that method of practice.

The study findings indicated that political social work practice faces a number of challenges in Zimbabwe. Some of these challenges include professional stigmatization by politician, repressive political system, prohibition at work to practice political social work, lack of political social work skills, a weak professional association, and unavailability of elected social workers in parliament. These are the challenges that must be addressed to allow for political social work practice. The study has however indicated that the process of overcoming these challenges ironically is in essence the practice of political social work practice.

The study also came up with strategies to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe based on the insights gathered from participants. Respondents concurred that if political social work is to be improved in Zimbabwe, there is need to review social work curriculum in Zimbabwe to also include political social work practice in detail and at lengthy. The current curriculum was regarded as inadequate at equipping practitioners that can rise up to the level of political social work society requires today in the face of inequality, corruption, marginalization and social injustice. Another strategy from the findings was that of uniting all social workers in the country by bringing them together to create a strong national association of social workers in the model of a union grouping which will become the face and the voice of social work practice in Zimbabwe. The study also indicated that there is need for benchmarking tours where by social workers in Zimbabwe visits countries that are successfully practicing political social work to lean their model and system of operation. Running for political office was also seen as means to enhance political social work. Finally the study also indicated that another strategy would be for social workers to also participate in pressure groups that seek to influence policy.

5.2. CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe is very low. For this reason, the impact of social work practice in Zimbabwe falls short of the expectation. The profession nurses a very low profile and remains little known in society. The people, especially the vulnerable groups fail to get critical social work services. Social justice remains an unachievable value. The main reason for this state of affairs as far as political social work is concerned is the polarization of the political environment which subject social workers to a level of sensitivity in approach that compromises the demands of the profession. That be as it may, the study has confirmed that there are quite a number of opportunities for political social work in Zimbabwe hence a great need to enable and enhance social work practice. The issues that social work fights for are worth employing all the methods of practice available for which social work practice is one. The study has shown that political social work practice brings power to the profession which is necessary in dealing with power dynamics and the political mechanism for which the welfare of society depends.

The study concludes that there is need for social workers in Zimbabwe to embrace and start practicing political social work in Zimbabwe for the benefit of both the profession and its clients. Social workers must organise themselves, come together and create a powerful professional association to begin with. This will allow social workers to organise as a collective and speak with one voice. It was quite clear from the study findings that the position of social work should always be known on any issue of concern. In the same manner, the study has shown that social work education should be reviewed to also include political social work as a course so that students are given comprehensive skills set for political social work practice. Political social

work should elevate social workers to be integral persons in social policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need for political social work workshops to impart the necessary skills to practicing social workers in Zimbabwe. These can be organized by civil society organizations, schools of social work, and professional boards like NASWZ and Council of Social Workers. It is through these workshops and conferences that professionals can be equipped, share knowledge and experiences for the benefit of the profession and its clients.

2. There is need for social work bodies (Council for Social Workers and the National Association of Social Workers in Zimbabwe) to regroup and refocus their mandates, political social work being one of such mandates. These are the groups from which political social work should be orchestrated from by calling all practicing social workers to be watching and talking of issues of social policy. The bodies must devise means for every social worker to be registered and be a member because the groups represent the collective voice of the profession in the country.

3. The study recommends that social workers must engage legislators through writting letters, making phone calls, face to face meetings and working in their offices as staff. It is understood that all political social work activities are meant to create beneficial policies, promote human dignity and enhance social justice. To achieve this end, social workers must take the initiative to lobby. Lobbying therefore becomes easy when social workers create relationships with politician so that they can be in well positioned to influence policy issues and advance the welfare of the vulnerable groups in society. As

gatekeepers in communities, it is recommended that politicians must feel obliged to get expert information about the community from social workers and seek the support of social workers if they are to represent communities as legislators.

4. There is need to impart political social work skills among social work students and allow for the creation of a political social work theory through research and practice. In the same manner, the study also recommends specialized training in political social work by creating political social work institute where graduates of social work are able to specialize in political social work at 'masters' level.

5. The study recommends that there is need to create professional networks that allow the sharing of practice experiences in political social work in Zimbabwe. Professional networks refer to platforms that allows for active interaction of professionals as they share knowledge and experiences. They act as a resource centre for the profession and they help create opportunities. Professional networks will act as platform for critical social policy discussion among social workers where policy decisions will be reviewed, analysed and judged against the results that obtain in the society. Such networks can be created by social workers themselves especially if there is a group that is interested in a particular type of practice. They coordinate and make use of technology to contact each other and interact. They promote unity and development of the profession.

6. The study also recommends that more social workers must pursue social work education to doctoral level. It was found out in the study that the majority of social workers are bachelor level social workers and a few with masters level qualification, while the doctoral level social workers are scarce. The more social workers have doctoral level qualification, the more they can compete and contribute significantly to social policy in

the country. Considering that the field of public policy is a convergence zone for many professions, social workers are usually disqualified for their low levels of education that for any other political or structural reasons. Schools of Social Work in Zimbabwe must therefore train more doctoral students and focus on political social work practice research.

5.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on the study summary, conclusion and recommendations. It is the last chapter for this study.

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Annexure A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN ZIMBABWE

My name is Maxwell Mushayamunda. I am a student at the University of Zimbabwe. I am carrying out a study entitled: **Opportunities and challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe: Implications for practice.** This research is a requirement and will contribute towards the fulfillment of a Master of Social Work degree. The information provided in this study will be used strictly for academic purposes. It will be conducted with great anonymity and handled with confidentiality.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA (*Indicate answer by writing in the box*)

1. Sex: Male [   ]   Female [   ]
2. Number of years as a social worker (professional experience)

   [   ] 1-10 years

   [   ] 11-20 years

   [   ] 21 and above

3. Age: 25-30 years [   ]   31-40 years [   ]   41-50 years [   ]   51 years and above [   ]

4. Educational qualification

   [   ] Honors Degree

   [   ] Masters Degree

   [   ] PhD Degree

5. Employer: Government [   ]   NGO [   ]   For Profit Organisation [   ]

   Tertiary institutions [   ]

SECTION 2: LEVEL OF POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK (*Write response in the box*)

Political social work indicator	Never	Sometimes	Always
6. I vote on election day			

7. As a social worker I organize and encourage vulnerable groups to vote			
8. I voice my concern and opinion on policy decisions that I find to be negatively affecting clients.			
9. I engage legislators/political representative with regard to any social policy issue of concern.			
10. I participate in the local issues that affect people (eg engaging authorities on housing, water supply, sewer maintenance, schools welfare etc)			
11. As a professional l help people organize for peaceful and legal demonstration/social action.			
12. I raise issues of concern to the profession and its clients that need to be addressed though my professional association (NASW)			
13. I raise my voice against partisan politics in issues of social welfare as a professional			
14. I follow up parliamentary debates on policy and legislative issues that concern the welfare of my clients as a social worker			
15. I am willing to provide my professional advice on social policy as a professional to parliamentary committees and to media outlets			
16. I participate in community groups that seeks to influence policy			
17. I feel I must run for a political office (as councilor, Member of Parliament, Senate, and President)			

18. Give your opinion of the state of political social work practice in Zimbabwe……………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………

SECTION 3: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL WORK (*Write Y for yes and N for no in the box*)

Do you see issues below as opportunities for political social work practice in Zimbabwe?	YES	NO
19. Fair and equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable communities/groups		
20. Professional recognition and respect in Zimbabwe		
21. Professional power and relevance		
22. Enhanced opportunities for social workers (employment creation)		
23. Political/legislative power to make/influence policy		

	YES	NO
24. Enhanced empowerment and participation of underprivileged groups (children, women, minority, disabled etc)		
25. Increased democratic environment through public policy debates		
26. Ethical politics (influences of social work values, ethics and principles)		
27. Enhanced relationship between social work profession and political representatives/legislators		
28. Increased respect for human rights		

29. Add opportunities for political social work in Zimbabwe, and further give your opinion on the possibility of practicing political social work practice in Zimbabwe…………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK (*Write yes or no in the provides boxes*)

Do you perceive the following to be challenges to political social work practice in Zimbabwe?	YES	NO
30. Ideological debate on whether social workers should participate or not participate in politics		
31. Professional stigmatization by politicians		
32. Lack of political social work skills		
33. Repressive political system		
34. Prohibitions at work (restriction from questioning the status quo)		
35. Lack of resources (political and material)		
36. A weak professional association		
37. Unavailability of social workers in parliament as elected members		

38. Indicate any other challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe and give your personal experiences of these challenges as a practicing social worker……………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION 4: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN ZIMBABWE

39. What strategies should be put in place by social workers in Zimbabwe to improve political social work practice in Zimbabwe? [Explain and express yourself reflecting on your experiences in practice]
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………

………
………..

Thank you

Annexure B

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Maxwell Mushayamunda. I am a student at the University of Zimbabwe. I am carrying out a study entitled: **Opportunities and challenges for political social work in Zimbabwe: Implications for practice.** This research is a requirement and will contribute towards the fulfillment of a Master of Social Work degree. The information provided in this study will be used strictly for academic purposes. It will be conducted with great anonymity and handled with confidentiality.

1. What is your opinion on the level of political social work practice in Zimbabwe? Explain your answer

2. Would you say social workers in Zimbabwe are politically active? Explain your opinion.

3. In your view, what constitute political social work practice? Express yourself reflecting on your experience

4. Do you think social workers should run for political office, or to what extent do you think social workers should be involved in politics?

5. How do you see social workers in Zimbabwe making important contribution to social policy should they get the chance?

6. What is your opinion on social workers organizing and or participating in social action as a means to fight for better policies or services?

7. How do you see social work ethic, values, principles and skills benefiting the political space in Zimbabwe?

8. What opportunities for political social work do you see in Zimbabwe?

9. What do you think are the challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe?

10. What strategies can be put in place to promote political social work practice in Zimbabwe?

<div align="center">THANK YOU</div>

Annexure C

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research that seeks to study on **opportunities and challenges for political social work practice in Zimbabwe**: implications for practice. The study consists of a questionnaire with forty-four questions and a consent form.

There are no risks to participants who agree to take part in this research. There are no known personal benefits to participants who agree to take part in this research. However, it is hoped that those who participate in this study will help research in the field of social work education, social work curriculum development, and social work practice in Zimbabwe especially on the subject of political social work practice. All responses to the questionnaire will remain confidential. Participation in this study is voluntary.

If participants have questions about the study, they may contact the principal researcher Maxwell Mushayamunda via email maxwellmushayamunda@gmail.com or on cell phone 0772928271, a student of a Master of Social Work Degree at the University of Zimbabwe, Department of Social Work. If you agree with this request, kindly fulfill consenting requirements contained in the statements below:

My signature below verifies that I have read the statement above and agree to participate in this research project voluntarily. The subject of political social work participation has been explained to me and I know that my participation is purely an academic exercise. I hereby give my consent.

Date……/………/…………/

Names………………….. Signature…………………………

Annexure D

National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe
Makombe Government Complex
Block 3
Room 83 and 99
Harare
Email:nasw.sec@gmail.com
Web: *www.naswzim.org*
Cell: 0736 109 213 or 0772 485 953

A Motivated Social Worker for empowering communities

Dear Maxwell

Following the email you sent requesting to carry your academic study among NASWZ members, the Association is granting you permission to proceed with your study. Please ensure that the dignity and safety of fellow NASWZ need to be guaranteed during data collection. The Association will be not responsible for any ethical breach before, during and after your study.

For betterment of the Association, I will request you to share with us your final document. The Association will be also open for your feedback if you feel to share with us your observations even outside the objectives of your study.

For any clarity, feel free to contact us.

Yours

Taruvinga Muzingili
Secretary General
National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe