

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

*BASIC ASPECTS OF
RESEARCH PROPOSAL
FOR UNDERGRADUATE*



DEAN ABOUT

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to conduct pilot study on voter apathy among university students in South Africa. This study will firstly begin by formulating a research problem statement or main issue of the study and two research questions will be provided. The study will also review work already done on the voter apathy by means of literature review by identifying key areas or themes that discourage young people from voter participation. This study will also highlight the solutions to deal with those discouraging themes identified. The study will also provide theoretical discussion by defining concepts of voter apathy, elections, and democracy. Finally, the study will also explain how the research is going to be conducted, this means research methods will be given in details.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT/MAIN ISSUE

A qualitative-quantitative survey study to evaluate the voter apathy amongst youth Unisa students living in South Africa: cross-sectional study.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the reasons for youth to decide not to vote or participate in elections?

What can be done to encourage youth participate in voting?

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several studies that have been done investigating voter apathy. Previous studies show that there are different reasons youth give on why they are not voting. One of the reasons that make youth not to vote is lack of service delivery and basic needs of youth not being met (Oyedemi & Mahlatji 2016:316). According to Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:316), youth do not vote because there is lack of service delivery by ruling party and the government have neglected their needs. Chauke (2020:37), suggest that youth do not vote because youth feel like they are not represented in the system. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:317), suggest that some of the youth state that due to being unemployed, there see no reason to vote and the unemployment leads to crime. The reasons are not only limited to lack of service delivery and unemployment. Chauke (2020:38), some of youth state that ethnic separation, lack of leadership among leaders, parties conflicting, leaders prioritising their relatives and votes being miscalculated make the youth to be sceptical in voting in electoral democracy. Study by Oyedemi and Mahlatji in 2016 further found that youth are not registering to vote because of disappointment and unhappiness about politics and not having proper identity document and administration issues (Oyedemi & Mahlatji 2016:313).

Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:317), suggest that some youth lack knowing the importance and outcome of voting, mainly because they do not see the value of voting. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:317), the youth of today do not looking at politically equality and fighting against racist policies but rather looking at the issues of poverty and unemployment. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:318), suggest that some youth lost interest

in electoral process because they do not trust political parties and their leaders who do not have their (youth) interests at heart. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:318), further state that youth decide to refute empty promises by the politicians and face the realities that riddling youth such as poverty, unemployment and inequality, these issues make youth to decide not to vote as they see no reason to vote. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:319), state that some youth feel like some of the political parties like the ruling party the ANC, who in 2014 general presented outdated manifesto and it is associated with corruption Nkandla scandal may have made youth lose interest in electoral process. Chauke (2020:39), states that some youth face a reality that when they vote in South Africa, they do not choose their preferred candidate but vote for the party in which they cannot hold responsible in case things go wrong. Also, the lack of accountability at local government where elected individuals fail to deliver has led to youth reluctant in voting in South Africa (Chauke 2020:39).

The voter apathy is not limited to various issues highlighted above, also, the electoral body dealing with election has also added fuel in leading to youth reluctant in participation in electoral process. As South Africa is dealing with high rate of joblessness among youth, the electoral body, Electoral Commission of SA adds to unemployment woes by employing educators during elections (Chauke 2020:39). The hiring of educators as election officials during election make unemployed youth think that Electoral Commission of SA deem them invisible which lead to youth boycott elections (Chauke 2020:40). Chauke (2020:40), further states that some youth believe that Electoral Commission of SA workers are corrupt and accept money from ruling party so that they manipulate votes, thereby making ruling party a winner. Chauke (2020:42), explains where he conducted the study, Collins Chabane Municipality youth indicate that lack of trust, recruitment process that is biased, old individuals and less youth involved in political matters, lack of literacy and economic excluding make them to shy away from voting. The biased recruitment process by Electoral Commission of SA has made youth to lose interest in voting because the commission does not interact unemployed youth during elections as election individuals (Chauke 2020:43).

Although youth boycott electoral activities, there are matters that youth engage in. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:313) state that although youth show lack of interest in

politics in the South African context, however the youth get involve in activism and protesting the lack of service deliveries in their communities. Oyedemi & Mahlatji (2016:313) emphasises that the youth boycotting elections and youth participation is not limited to South African context, elsewhere the youth is likely to get involve in non-political activities such as volunteering, signing of petitions, attending demonstrations, the interest of social justice and approaching government affairs directly. There are things that may help to change youth's behaviour towards the elections and political process. Chauke (2020:48) states that of the things that can be done is the amendment of Sections 47(1) and 106(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to help on equality in respect of skills, age, qualifications and gender for one to be eligible for membership national and provincial legislature. The Electoral Commission of SA should work with National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) to help in educating and promoting about voting in schools and youth community throughout the year not only during elections (Chauke 2020:48). Government should come up with specific programme to promote civic education and review age limit when comes to politics so that youth can hold positions often hold by older people as government officials (Chauke 2020:49).

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Voter apathy refers to the matter where people like youth lose or show no interest in voting in general elections and become less care about registering to vote (Chauke 2020:36). Elections involve electoral process where people of members of the public vote to elect politicians as member of state to represent them as an agents of state governance (Chauke 2020:36). A multi-part democracy involves political party systems where many political parties run for local, provincial and national elections to be involved in governmental institutions and this type of democracy serves to accommodate everyone into democracy through a process of elections (Chauke 2020:36).

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD FRAMEWORK

Qualitative design entails a process of distinguishing individuals, group, communities, organisations, events, setting or messages by studying properties, values, needs or

characteristics (du Plooy 2008:88). On qualitative design one will begin by observing and close by describing what was obtained when observing or by continuing formulating the theory that details what was observed or measured (du Plooy 2009:88). If questioning were used instead of observing when collecting data, one would rely on assumptions and end with descriptions (du Plooy 2009:88). Methods used in qualitative design to collect data involve participation observation, qualitative content analysis, open-ended questions in questionnaires or in interview schedules or in focus-group interviews (du Plooy 2009:89). The method used to analyse data received through qualitative design usually involves content analysis written in verbal answers and/or audio-visual materials (du Plooy 2009:89).

Quantitative design is more likely to be used when one wants to count and/or measure variables (du Plooy 2009:86). Here the assumptions are measured using existing scale or instrument such as Likert scale or by designing one (du Plooy 2009:86). The quantitative design known for collecting numerical data by using method such as survey in which self-administered questionnaires are applied, experimental designs and quantitative content analysis (du Plooy 2009:87). On quantitative design the method used to analyse data entail the use of numerical statistical techniques and the first step may use descriptive statistics to describe and organise data and inferential statistic is used to test hypotheses and generalise findings (du Plooy 2009:88).

The research will use both qualitative and quantitative approach because this is a mix method study. In terms of qualitative approach, the research will involve questions where population will express their emotions and feeling when provided with open-ended questions when they may have to expand their responses (du Plooy:89). The reason to use quantitative approach is because numerical data will be needed like emphasis how many people answered the question and other numerical responses like their age as one will remember that quantitative is known for collecting numerical data (du Plooy 2009:87).

The data collection methods for this research will be open-ended questions for qualitative design method in form of questionnaires where accessible population will have a chance to expand their responses. Du Plooy (2009:59) states that respondents formulate their own answers without prompting from the question in open-ended

question. For quantitative design, the data collecting methods for this research will be through self-administered questionnaire with close-ended questions and structure questions by using Linkert scale. Self-administered questionnaires are filled in by respondents without help from anyone (du Plooy 2009:72).

Du Plooy (2009:56), states target population include the entire class to which researcher wants to generalise the findings. The units of analysis that the researchers have access to is called accessible population (du Plooy 2009:51). The target population for this research will be university students in South Africa who are eligible to vote and the accessible population for this research are Unisa students residing in South Africa.

Du Plooy (2009:122) states that when every unit in the target population shows no equal chance of being selected that prompt the non-probability sample. The sampling category for this research will be non-probability sample because the study's target population is university students in South Africa, however the accessible population is Unisa students, this means the target population does not have equal chance of being selected. When the sample is drawn from unit of analysis that are conveniently available that is a convenience sample (du Plooy 2009:123). Sampling type will be a convenience sample because the survey will be conducted on students who are conveniently available at the time and sampling frame is not known.

The sampling size of this research will 10 Unisa students who are eligible to vote and

The units of analysis involve smallest elements that will be investigated (du Plooy 2009:56). And for this research, it will be both gender, young individuals who are student and eligible to vote and are between the ages of 18 and 30.

Descriptive statistics has to do with mathematical way of giving the characteristics of the sampled data (du Plooy 2009:243). The data analysis of this study will involve descriptive statistics which will involve mathematical techniques for quantitative design and thematic presentation of the study findings for qualitative design. Du Plooy (2009:228) states that thematic analysis involves the describing the message in main ideas.

1.7 CONCLUSION

In this study planning document, the research statement that will be used for the research was outlined and two research questions were provided. The document further outlined the literature review on voter apathy from other sources. This document further provided theoretical discussions of voter apathy, elections, and multi-party democracy. The methods that will be used when conducting a study of voter apathy were outlined in this document.

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