

UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA

SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN
PROMOTING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY IN LUSAKA DISTRICT (2020–2025)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

BY

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A Dissertation submitted to The School of Education, Social Sciences and Technology, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Science in Politics and International Relations

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DECLARATION


I, Kathy Towela Kumwembe, declare that this dissertation titled “An Assessment of the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Promoting Peaceful Assembly in Lusaka District (2020–2025)” is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree or diploma at any other institution. All sources used have been acknowledged

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025. While Zambia's Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, the practical exercise of this right has continued to face legal, political, and institutional challenges, particularly within urban contexts. The study therefore sought to examine the activities undertaken by CSOs, stakeholder perceptions of their contributions, and the challenges that affect their operations.

Guided by Resource Mobilization Theory, the study adopted a case study design and employed a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected from twenty (20) purposively selected respondents comprising CSO representatives, government officials, and community members in Lusaka District. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and document review, while analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

The findings indicate that CSOs such as Chapter One Foundation, Caritas Zambia, SACCORD, and YALI play a supportive role in promoting peaceful assembly through civic education, legal advocacy, media engagement, and community training. Respondents reported that these activities have contributed to increased public awareness of peaceful assembly rights, enhanced citizen engagement, and improved dialogue between CSOs and state institutions. However, the study also found that CSO operations are constrained by restrictive legislation, particularly the Public Order Act, political interference, inadequate and unstable funding, and security-related concerns.

The study concludes that CSOs contribute meaningfully to the promotion of peaceful assembly in Lusaka District, primarily through advocacy and facilitation, rather than through measurable policy or legal reform within the study period. The study recommends strengthened state civil society engagement, improved implementation of existing laws governing public assemblies, and enhanced resource mobilization for CSOs. These conclusions are drawn strictly from the evidence generated by the study.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Civil society organizations are central to democratic governance, safeguarding rights such as peaceful assembly. In Zambia, CSOs have notably advanced the protection and promotion of civil and political rights, with particular emphasis on the right to peaceful assembly, a cornerstone of democracy. Nonetheless, these organizations often face limitations due to legal, political, and institutional obstacles (Fombad, 2021). This study aims to assess the role of CSOs in supporting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District from 2020 to 2025.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The right to peaceful assembly is a fundamental component of democratic societies, protected under numerous international human rights instruments such as Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (United Nations, 1998). These legal provisions affirm individuals' rights to assemble publicly or privately to voice opinions, show solidarity, or protest against injustices inflicted by the state or society. In Zambia, this right is similarly guaranteed under Article 21 of the 2016 Republican Constitution. Despite these constitutional safeguards, citizens often encounter considerable barriers when exercising this right, particularly due to legal and administrative frameworks like the Public Order Act, which has been criticized for enabling excessive police authority over assembly regulation (Kaunda, 2022).

Globally, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in protecting the right to peaceful assembly, a cornerstone of democratic participation. According to the United Nations Human Rights Council (2019), CSOs bridge the gap between citizens and the state by advocating for legal reforms, promoting accountability, and documenting human rights violations. In democratic contexts such as Germany and Sweden, CSOs collaborate with governments to establish frameworks that ensure citizens can assemble peacefully without state interference (Carothers and Brechenmacher, 2014). Conversely, in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes, CSOs often face repression, restrictive laws, and harassment, yet remain critical actors

in sustaining civic activism (Dupuy, Ron and Prakash, 2016; CIVICUS, 2021). The global context therefore illustrates the indispensable role of CSOs in maintaining civic space and protecting freedoms fundamental to democracy.

Regionally, across Africa, CSOs continue to be pivotal in defending assembly rights under often restrictive political conditions. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR, 2017) underscores that while the right to assembly is enshrined in the African Charter, its realization remains uneven across the continent. In countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda, CSOs have spearheaded public campaigns and legal challenges against state repression of protests (Amnesty International, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021). Despite shrinking civic spaces, African CSOs have demonstrated resilience through regional networks and advocacy coalitions that champion accountability and policy reform. These regional dynamics highlight both the shared challenges and innovative strategies of African CSOs, offering valuable insights for understanding Zambia's experience.

Since the early 2000s, Zambia has experienced heightened civic participation through protests, marches, and public discourses, especially within urban centers such as Lusaka. This trend has gained momentum during election periods, economic crises, and moments of perceived government overreach. During such times, civil society organizations (CSOs) have become vital in advocating for civic freedoms, including the right to peaceful assembly. Important CSOs such as the Chapter One Foundation, SACCORD, and the YALI have led efforts to reform restrictive laws, provide legal assistance, monitor government conduct, and educate citizens on their constitutional rights (Fombad, 2021).

Nevertheless, the political climate in which these organizations operate remains difficult. CSOs advocating for increased civic space are sometimes labeled as anti-government, face bureaucratic obstacles, and are subjected to threats against their security and operational capacity.

The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated matters; public health measures were sometimes employed to curtail gatherings and restrict civil liberties without adequate legal backing (Amnesty International, 2021). Additionally, CSOs are often constrained by limited funding,

poor coordination, and operational risks, which undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of their actions.

The period from 2020 to 2025 presents a critical timeframe for analysis, coinciding with the 2021 general elections marked by heightened political tension and civil mobilization. It also includes shifts in political leadership and governance, providing a unique context to Assess whether CSOs effectively influenced reforms and advanced civil and political rights, especially concerning peaceful assembly.

Against this background, this study aims to assess the role of CSOs in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District, examining their strategies, activities, and the obstacles they face in an evolving socio-political environment. This research holds significance for students of politics and international relations, as it explores the intersection of civil activism, public policy, and democratic governance in Zambia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Zambia, the constitutional and international frameworks safeguard the right to peaceful assembly, a vital element of democratic participation. Nonetheless, citizens in urban areas such as Lusaka continue to face numerous obstacles when attempting to exercise this right. Although the Public Order Act formally requires organizers to notify the police of intended public gatherings for purposes of information and preparedness, its implementation in practice has often involved restrictive administrative measures that limit the ability of individuals and groups to hold protests or demonstrations. These practices have been widely criticized for curbing dissent and impeding democratic engagement (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Chapter One Foundation, 2021).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a crucial role in defending and advocating for the right to peaceful assembly through legal support, public education, civic mobilization, and policy advocacy. However, their efforts are often hindered by political resistance, inadequate resources, and threats to their security and operational capacity (Amnesty International, 2021; Zambian

Governance Foundation, 2021). Despite the significant contributions of CSOs, there remains limited research on their actual impact and effectiveness in promoting and protecting peaceful assembly within Lusaka's urban context during the period from 2020 to 2025 (Caritas Zambia, 2021; Chapter One Foundation, 2022).

While existing studies have explored Zambia's legal environment regarding peaceful assembly, there is a notable gap in understanding the specific strategies, challenges, and successes of CSOs in this arena, especially in Lusaka. Additionally, the recent political changes and renewed emphasis on democratic governance make it essential to investigate the extent to which CSOs' advocacy has translated into meaningful policy shifts or enhanced civic space (Fombad, 2021; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014).

This study, therefore, aims to address two key issues: firstly, to explore the roles and strategies employed by CSOs in promoting peaceful assembly; and secondly, to evaluate the challenges they encounter and their influence on policy and practice related to civic freedoms in Lusaka. The findings intend to contribute valuable insights for both academic discourse and policy formulation on safeguarding civil and political rights in Zambia.

1.2.1 RESEARCH GAPS

Although a growing body of literature has examined civic space and democratic governance in Zambia, existing studies reveal notable limitations. For instance, Fombad (2021) focuses broadly on the role of human rights defenders in Africa, with limited empirical attention to localized CSO strategies in urban Zambia. Similarly, reports by Amnesty International (2021) and Human Rights watch (2021) document violations of assembly rights, but they do not assess how civil society organizations practically respond to these violations at the community level.

Local studies by Kaunda (2022) and the Zambian Governance Foundation (2021) largely emphasize legal and institutional frameworks, particularly the Public Order Act, without examining how CSOs mobilize resources, form coalitions, or exploit political opportunities to promote peaceful assembly. Furthermore, most existing research predates or only partially

covers the post-2021 political transition, leaving a gap in understanding CSO engagement during the 2020–2025 period.

This study addresses these gaps by empirically examining the strategies, challenges, and perceived impact of CSOs in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District, thereby contributing context-specific evidence to Zambia’s democratic governance literature.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research consists of both general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

To assess the role of civil society organizations in promoting the right to peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025.

1.3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- i. To identify key civil society organizations involved in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka.
- ii. To describe the key activities and approaches used by CSOs in promoting peaceful assembly.
- iii. To examine stakeholder perceptions of CSOs’ contributions to peaceful assembly.
- iv. To identify challenges faced by CSOs in carrying out these roles.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To tackle the research objectives, this study honed in on the following questions:

- i. Which civil society organizations have been most active in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka between 2020 and 2025?

- ii. What strategies have these organizations used to advocate for the right to peaceful assembly?
- iii. What impact have these efforts had on the practice and perception of peaceful assembly?
- iv. What challenges hinder the effectiveness of CSOs in promoting this right?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study also contributes to wider African debates on civic space and the protection of political freedoms. Academically, it fills a gap in literature on the practical role of CSOs in defending civic rights, especially in the Zambian context. For policy makers and human rights defenders, the research provides data that can guide reforms and strategies to safeguard civic freedoms. Civil society actors may use the findings to improve advocacy, coordination, and resilience in the face of shrinking civic space.

1.5 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The research will examine the contribution of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in fostering peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025. It includes both grassroots and nationally recognized organizations involved in human rights advocacy, civic education, and the defense of protests. The research is confined to civil society organizations and does not include political parties or strictly faith-based institutions unless they are actively engaged in civil rights advocacy. Additionally, it excludes rural districts, concentrating exclusively on urban Lusaka due to its strategic importance. Lusaka is chosen as the focal area due to its political significance and the high occurrence of public gatherings and interactions between the state and citizens.

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Non-governmental, non-profit entities that advocate for political change and social justice (ZCSD, 2020).

Peaceful Assembly: The right to organize and participate in public gatherings and protests for political purposes (Zambian Constitution, Art. 21).

Civic Space: The space in which civil society organizations and HRDs operate without government repression or legal restrictions (Amnesty International, 2021).

Advocacy: Organized efforts by individuals or groups to influence public policy, law enforcement, or social norms in support of a cause.

Public Order Act: Zambian law requiring police permission for public gatherings, often criticized as restrictive to the right to peaceful assembly.

Political environment: refers to the factors that influence government and society

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The literature review is a critical element of any academic research, providing an overview of existing studies, discussions, and theoretical frameworks pertinent to the investigation. This chapter critically analyzes the literature on civil society organizations (CSOs) and their role in facilitating peaceful assembly to establish the context and justification for the research. It incorporates global, regional, and local viewpoints to demonstrate how CSOs operate within various political and legal contexts, especially concerning civic space and fundamental freedoms.

The right to peaceful assembly is protected by numerous international legal instruments, including Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which mandates that states uphold and ensure individuals' rights to assemble peacefully (United Nations, 1966). CSOs often play a crucial role in realizing this right by advocating for supportive legislation, monitoring human rights abuses, and aiding citizen mobilization (CIVICUS, 2021). However, their effectiveness varies widely across different regions and political systems, heavily influenced by factors such as governmental responsiveness, legal frameworks, and resource availability (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014).

In Africa, and specifically in Zambia, civil society has historically been instrumental in influencing democratic governance and encouraging citizen engagement (Moyo, 2016). Despite constitutional protections for peaceful assembly, legal frameworks like Zambia's Public Order Act have often faced criticism for being utilized to stifle dissent and curtail civil liberties (Chapter One Foundation, 2021). Within this framework, CSOs in Lusaka District have undertaken various advocacy efforts, legal actions, and civic education initiatives to foster a more favorable environment for peaceful assembly.

This chapter is organized into three primary sections. First, the empirical review presents findings from global, regional, and local research on CSOs and peaceful assembly. Second, the theoretical review introduces essential academic theories that inform the study. Third, the conceptual framework synthesizes key concepts and their interconnections, laying the groundwork for subsequent analysis. By structuring the literature review in this manner, the chapter seeks to identify gaps in current knowledge and underscore the significance of the present study.

2.1 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This section reviews empirical studies on the role of civil society organizations in promoting peaceful assembly and protecting civic space. The review is structured into global, regional, and local perspectives to demonstrate how CSOs operate under varying political and legal conditions and to identify gaps relevant to the Zambian context. In this section, we explore studies conducted by various authors that provide insights from a global, regional, and local perspective. These studies shed light on how political power dynamics impact the effectiveness and functionality of council members.

2.1.1 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play an essential role worldwide in advocating for and protecting the right to peaceful assembly, particularly in situations where governmental institutions may be ineffective, authoritarian, or unresponsive. The United Nations Human Rights Council (2019) highlights that CSOs are pivotal in safeguarding civil liberties by fostering communication between citizens and authorities, documenting infringements on assembly rights, and advocating for legal reforms that enhance civic space. Through these functions, they aid in the advancement of democratic governance and the fortification of human rights frameworks.

In democratic nations like Canada, Germany, and Sweden, CSOs have effectively lobbied for policies that safeguard protestors' rights and mitigate the excessive use of force by law enforcement during public protests (Bennett et al., 2017). For instance, in Germany, organizations such as Amnesty International and the German Institute for Human Rights have

collaborated with governmental bodies to create explicit legal protections for protestors and to promote accountability mechanisms in instances of rights violations. These initiatives have led to the formation of independent oversight bodies and training programs for law enforcement on human rights standards concerning assemblies (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014).

In the United States, entities like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have been instrumental in contesting unconstitutional limitations on assembly through strategic litigation and public advocacy. For example, during the Black Lives Matter protests, the ACLU provided legal support to protestors, contested curfews and protest prohibitions, and initiated lawsuits against law enforcement for the deployment of tear gas and excessive force (ACLU, 2020). These actions have reinforced legal protections for peaceful protest and highlighted systemic issues in policing and civic participation.

Conversely, in numerous regions, especially under authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes, CSOs function under oppressive conditions. Reports indicate that repressive laws, arbitrary detentions, and the closure of organizations are common tactics employed by governments to weaken civil society (CIVICUS, 2021). For instance, in countries like Russia, China, and Egypt, CSOs focused on human rights and civil liberties face stringent regulations, including mandates to register as “foreign agents” or risk forced dissolution (Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash, 2016).

Despite these obstacles, global civil society has shown resilience by adapting to diminishing civic space through digital tools and transnational networks. Online platforms have empowered CSOs to rally support, disseminate information, and engage with broader international human rights frameworks. Digital activism, legal advocacy, and coalition-building have emerged as vital strategies to counter repression and promote peaceful assembly in restrictive settings (Howard and Hussain, 2013).

In conclusion, the global perspective reveals that while the operational landscape for CSOs varies widely across regions and regime types, their dedication to upholding the right to peaceful assembly remains unwavering. In environments where supportive conditions exist, CSOs flourish and contribute to democratic accountability. In more oppressive contexts, their resilience and strategic adaptability are crucial for maintaining civic space and ensuring that the right to assemble peacefully is preserved.

2.1.2 REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Across Africa, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in defending the right to peaceful assembly, often in challenging political and legal environments. Although Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) guarantees this right, enforcement is frequently inconsistent, creating space for CSOs to step in as advocates and watchdogs (ACHPR, 2017). In Nigeria, CSOs such as Spaces for Change and Budget have used community forums and digital tools to raise awareness about assembly rights and track state actions. During the 2020 #EndSARS protests, these organizations offered legal aid, documented abuses, and engaged international actors to pressure the government (Amnesty International, 2021; Oduwo, 2020).

In Kenya, organizations like the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) and IMLU have monitored police actions during protests and pursued strategic litigation, particularly around election periods (Wairuri, 2018). Their efforts have promoted legal accountability and non-violent civic engagement. Meanwhile, Uganda's restrictive Public Order Management Act has limited assembly rights. Nonetheless, groups like Chapter Four Uganda continue to challenge unlawful state actions and collaborate with international human rights institutions (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Regionally, the ACHPR's 2017 Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly provide a human rights-based framework for managing assemblies. These guidelines, developed in consultation with CSOs, seek to align national laws with international standards (ACHPR, 2017). Despite such frameworks, CSOs across Africa face growing restrictions—ranging from

foreign funding bans to criminalization of protests (Dupuy, Ron and Prakash, 2016; CIVICUS, 2021). Even so, many have adapted through digital activism, strategic litigation, and forming networks like Civic Space Network

2.1.3 LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In Zambia, civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a crucial role in advocating for the right to peaceful assembly, particularly in urban centers like Lusaka. Although the Zambian Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly under Article 21, the practical exercise of this right is often restricted by public order laws, police interference, and political pressure (Constitution of Zambia, 1991). As a result, CSOs have become central actors in pushing for legal reform, protecting citizens' rights, and conducting civic education.

A major concern in Zambia has been the Public Order Act (POA), which grants the police broad discretionary powers to approve or deny public gatherings. Civil society groups have consistently criticized the POA for being used as a tool to suppress opposition demonstrations and limit freedom of expression, especially during election periods (YALI, 2020). Organizations such as the Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD) and Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) have been vocal in advocating for reforms to ensure that the Act aligns with democratic principles and the constitutional right to assembly (ZCSD, 2021; YALI, 2020).

In the period following the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 general elections, CSOs in Lusaka closely monitored the violation of assembly rights. Many raised concerns about the uneven enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions, with opposition gatherings and youth protests being disproportionately targeted while pro-government events were often allowed to proceed unchecked. This led to calls for more impartial policing and legal accountability, with CSOs pushing for a fairer application of the law (ZCSD, 2021).

In addition to legal advocacy, Zambian CSOs have been active in civic education and promoting non-violent mobilization. Organizations such as Chapter One Foundation and Caritas Zambia have led initiatives that involve workshops, social media campaigns, and community outreach to inform the public, especially youth, about their rights to peaceful assembly and ways to engage in non-violent activism (Chapter One Foundation, 2022; Caritas Zambia, 2021). These initiatives have significantly increased public awareness and strengthened calls for the lawful treatment of protestors.

Furthermore, Zambian CSOs have collaborated with international human rights organizations to highlight the shrinking civic space in the country. They have used platforms such as the United Nations and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to hold the government accountable and advocate for adherence to international human rights standards, particularly concerning the right to peaceful assembly (ZCSD, 2021).

Despite these efforts, CSOs in Zambia continue to face numerous challenges, including bureaucratic delays in registration, restrictions on foreign funding, and accusations of political partisanship (YALI, 2020). Nevertheless, they remain essential in defending the right to peaceful assembly, especially in Lusaka, where political protests and tensions are most concentrated. In conclusion, while Zambia's constitution recognizes the right to peaceful assembly, its practical enforcement is inconsistent. CSOs in Lusaka play a pivotal role in pushing for legal reforms, educating the public, and monitoring state actions to ensure that citizens can exercise their constitutional rights, particularly during politically sensitive periods.

2.2 SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF EXISTING RESEARCH AND IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS

Global review gaps:

While global studies have explored CSO activism broadly, few examine their long-term effectiveness in hybrid or transitional regimes, particularly regarding how advocacy adapts to repression. This gap highlights the need to investigate how Zambian CSOs sustain activism under changing political environments.

Regional review gaps:

At the regional level, research on African CSOs often focuses on countries with overt authoritarianism, leaving limited understanding of how CSOs operate in semi-democratic contexts like Zambia. This underscores the need to examine how CSOs in Southern Africa maintain engagement and policy influence amidst fluctuating political space.

Local review gaps:

Locally, there is insufficient empirical research on the tangible impact of CSO advocacy on law reform and public awareness in Zambia. This study addresses this gap by assessing the strategies, effectiveness, and challenges of CSOs in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District.

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

A theoretical framework provides a structured explanation of the concepts and relationships that guide a research study. It helps the researcher to interpret findings, justify methodological choices, and maintain consistency between the research problem, objectives, and analysis. This study is primarily grounded in Resource Mobilization Theory, which offers the most suitable explanation for the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource Mobilization Theory was developed by McCarthy and Zald (1977) and argues that the effectiveness of social movements and advocacy organizations depends largely on their ability to acquire, manage, and deploy resources. These resources include financial support, skilled human capital, organizational structures, legal expertise, media access, and networks. The theory shifts focus away from ideology alone and instead emphasizes the practical capacity of organizations to act.

This theory is most applicable to the present study because the research assesses the role of CSOs, rather than measuring political change or regime transition. The study examines how CSOs in Lusaka District promote peaceful assembly through activities such as legal advocacy, civic education, media engagement, coalition building, and community mobilization. All these activities are directly dependent on the availability and effective utilization of organizational resources.

Findings from the study reveal that CSOs such as Chapter One Foundation, Caritas Zambia, SACCORD, and YALI rely heavily on donor funding, professional expertise, and media platforms to carry out their advocacy work. At the same time, the study identifies resource related constraints, including inadequate funding, donor dependency, limited institutional support, and operational risks. These challenges significantly affect the sustainability and reach of CSO interventions. Resource Mobilization Theory therefore provides a clear and coherent explanation for both the capabilities and limitations of CSOs in promoting peaceful assembly within Lusaka District.

Position of Political Opportunity Theory

Political Opportunity Theory explains how changes in political environments, such as regime transitions or electoral cycles, create opportunities or constraints for collective action. While this perspective is useful for understanding broader state society relations, it is not adopted as the primary theoretical framework for this study. The period under review (2020–2025) experienced only one major political transition, namely the 2021 general elections, which limits the applicability of Political Opportunity Theory for sustained analysis.

Given the study's focus on assessing CSO roles rather than evaluating political change over multiple cycles, Political Opportunity Theory is treated only as a supporting contextual lens, not as the main theoretical foundation.

Theoretical Justification

In summary, Resource Mobilization Theory is the most appropriate and dominant theory for this study because it directly explains how CSOs operate, the strategies they employ, and the

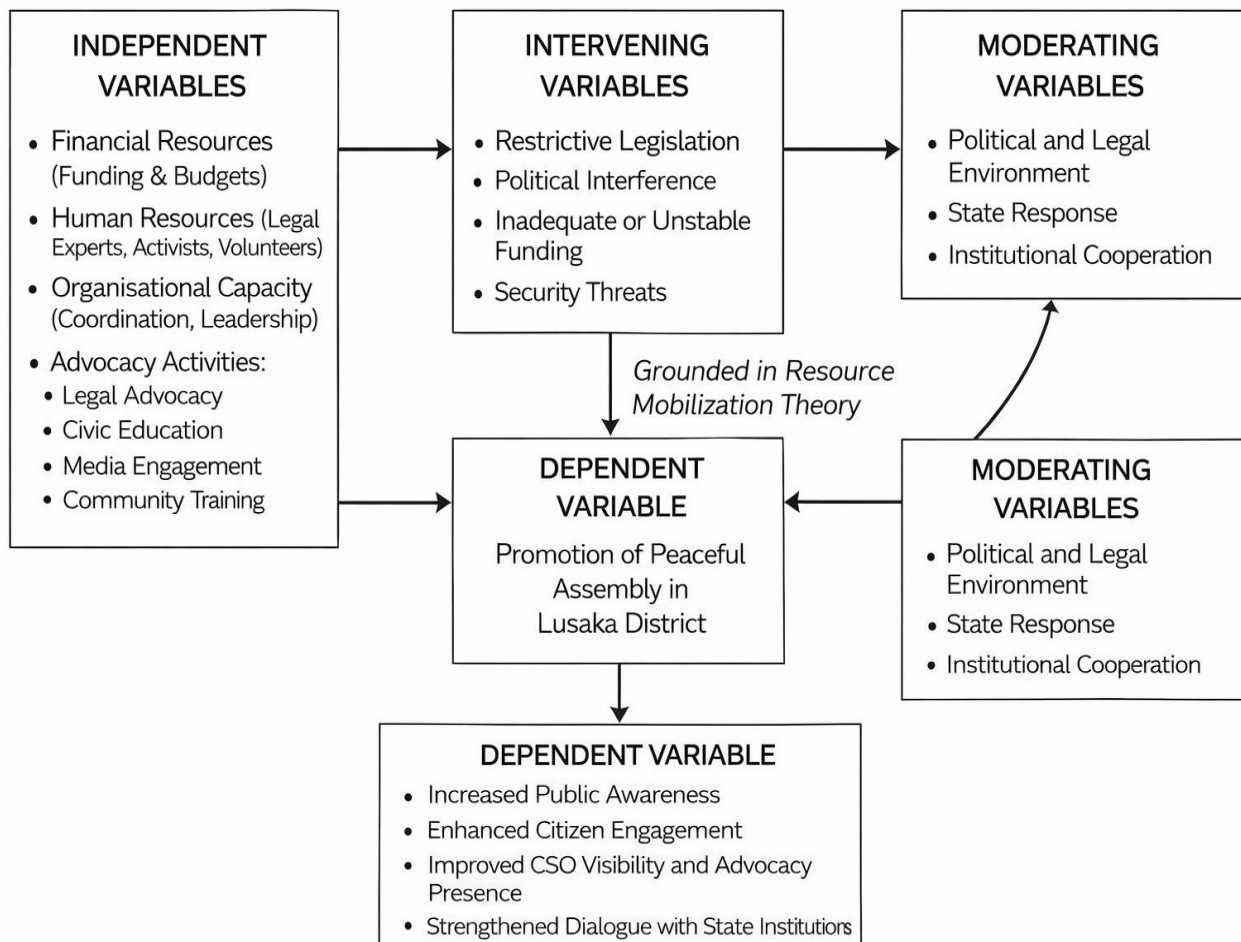
constraints they face in promoting peaceful assembly. Anchoring the study in this theory strengthens conceptual clarity, aligns the theoretical framework with the research objectives, and responds directly to the examiner's concern regarding theoretical relevance and justification.

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework helps to explain how various factors, theories, and variables are interconnected to better understand a research problem (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). In this study, the framework highlights the relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables, showing how civil society organizations (CSOs) influence the right to peaceful assembly in Lusaka District. The independent variables consist of the resources and advocacy activities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including financial resources, human resources, organizational capacity, and advocacy actions such as legal advocacy, civic education, media engagement, and community training.

These variables represent the means through which CSOs promote peaceful assembly in Lusaka District. The effectiveness of these activities is influenced by intervening variables such as restrictive legislation, political interference, inadequate or unstable funding, and security threats, which may constrain CSO operations. In addition, moderating variables including the political and legal environment, state response, and institutional cooperation shape the relationship between CSO activities and the promotion of peaceful assembly. The dependent variable is the promotion of peaceful assembly in Lusaka District, reflected through increased public awareness, enhanced citizen engagement, improved CSO visibility, and strengthened dialogue between CSOs and state institutions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methods used to examine the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in supporting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District from 2020 to 2025. It outlines the research approach, design, study location, population sample, sampling technique, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. These methods were selected to ensure that the research objectives are effectively addressed through the collection and interpretation of credible and relevant data.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to assess the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025.

The quantitative component was used to generate descriptive statistical data on levels of awareness, perceived roles, strategies, and challenges faced by CSOs. This component provided measurable patterns and frequencies derived from questionnaire responses.

The qualitative component was used to obtain in-depth explanations, experiences, and contextual insights from key informants, including CSO representatives, government officials, and community members, through semi-structured interviews.

The integration of the two approaches allowed the study to triangulate findings, enhance validity, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a case study design, concentrating on Lusaka District as the unit of analysis. A case study is useful for exploring real-life events in depth and understanding their broader implications (Yin, 2018). This design was appropriate for assessing the influence of CSOs within the specific socio-political environment of Lusaka, where civil engagement is highly active.

3.3 STUDY LOCATION

Research was conducted in Lusaka District, Zambia's capital, known for being the center of civil society operations and political engagement. The district was chosen due to its strategic importance, the presence of numerous active CSOs, and its history of peaceful and non-peaceful public demonstrations. Lusaka offers a meaningful setting for analyzing the role of CSOs in upholding assembly rights.

3.4 STUDY POPULATION

The study population comprised individuals and institutions with direct involvement in, or knowledge of, issues relating to peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025. The population included:

- Registered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) involved in human rights advocacy, civic education, legal aid, and governance;
- Government institutions responsible for public order management, law enforcement, and civic regulation;
- Community members resident in Lusaka District who had participated in, observed, or were affected by public assemblies during the study period.

Based on available records and institutional listings, the estimated study population consisted of:

- Approximately 35 registered CSOs actively operating in Lusaka District with mandates related to civic rights and governance;
- Approximately 15 relevant government departments and units, including the Zambia Police Service (Public Order Unit), Ministry of Home Affairs, local council offices, and human rights–related government agencies;
- An indeterminate but large population of community members resident in Lusaka District with experience of public assemblies.

3.5 SAMPLING FRAME

The sampling frame for this study consisted of a verified list of eligible units drawn from each category of the study population, namely CSOs, government institutions, and community members within Lusaka District.

The sampling frame was derived using documentary and institutional sources, including:

- The Registrar of Societies and NGO Registration records, used to identify registered CSOs operating in Lusaka District with mandates related to human rights, governance, and civic education;
- Official government organizational structures and departmental records, used to identify institutions responsible for public order management, law enforcement, and civic regulation;
- Community networks and local civic engagement records, used to identify community members who had participated in, observed, or were affected by public assemblies between 2020 and 2025.

Only individuals and organizations that met the study’s inclusion criteria namely direct involvement in or experience with peaceful assembly issues during the specified period were included in the sampling frame. This ensured that the frame was relevant, focused, and aligned with the study objectives.

3.6 SAMPLE SIZE

From the established sampling frame, a sample size of 20 participants was selected. The sample size was determined using the principle of information saturation, which is appropriate for qualitative case study research. Saturation was reached when additional data collection no longer produced new themes relevant to the study objectives.

The final sample comprised:

- 10 CSO representatives, drawn from different organizations;
- 5 government officials, drawn from institutions responsible for public order and civic regulation;
- 5 community members, drawn from Lusaka District residents with direct experience of public assemblies.

This distribution ensured triangulation of perspectives while maintaining depth of analysis.

3.7 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Because the study employed a mixed-methods approach, different sampling techniques were applied to the qualitative and quantitative components, as required by standard research methodology.

3.7.1 Sampling Technique for the Quantitative Component

For the quantitative component, the study employed simple random sampling.

This technique was used to select respondents from the established sampling frame of CSO staff, government officials, and community members who met the inclusion criteria. Random sampling ensured that each eligible participant had an equal chance of selection, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the descriptive quantitative data.

The quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires, and the results were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages).

3.7.2 Sampling Technique for the Qualitative Component

For the qualitative component, the study employed purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling was used to deliberately select information rich participants with direct experience and expert knowledge of peaceful assembly issues. These included CSO leaders, senior programmer officers, government officials responsible for public order management, and community members with direct involvement in public assemblies.

Purposive sampling was appropriate for the qualitative component because the objective was not statistical generalization, but depth of understanding, contextual interpretation, and explanation of findings.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews and document review. Interviews allowed for flexible but focused discussions, offering participants the opportunity to share their experiences and views. In addition, documents such as CSO reports, legal texts, and public assembly records were examined to provide context and support for the interview data. All interviews were recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. This method is effective for identifying and analyzing patterns across qualitative data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcription, data from interviews and documents were coded and grouped into relevant themes such as CSO strategies, legal frameworks, and state-civil society interactions. This facilitated the understanding of how CSOs influence peaceful assembly in the Lusaka context.

3.10 ELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity are essential for ensuring the quality of research findings. Reliability refers to the consistency of data collection and results when the same procedures are applied repeatedly (Creswell, 2014, p. 174). To achieve this, the study will use consistent interview guides and document review methods across all participants. Validity refers to how well the research measures what it intends to measure (Patton, 2002, p. 247). This will be ensured by aligning data collection tools with the study's objectives and using multiple sources of data to verify findings.

3.11 LIMITATIONS

This study faced several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 20 participants, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused only on Lusaka District, excluding rural perspectives where civic engagement dynamics may differ. Third, the political sensitivity of peaceful assembly may have influenced participants to moderate their responses. Finally, access to some government officials and confidential documents was limited. Despite these constraints, triangulation of data sources enhanced the reliability of the findings.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research will follow key ethical principles to protect participants and ensure integrity. Informed consent will be obtained from all respondents, who will be made aware of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. Given the political sensitivity of peaceful assembly, special care will be taken to avoid exposing participants to any harm or risk.

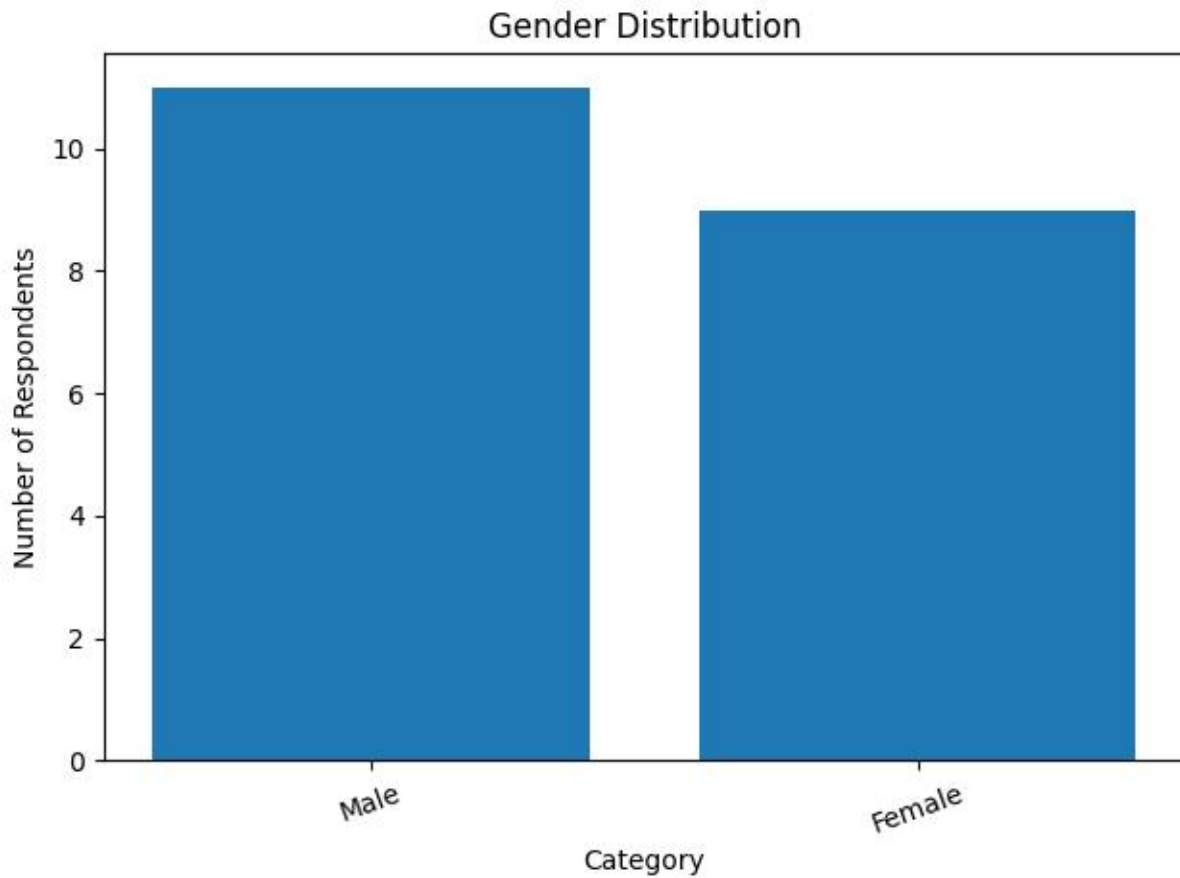
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study based on data collected from civil society organizations, government officials, and community members in Lusaka District. The presentation of findings is structured according to the research objectives, ensuring coherence and alignment with the purpose of the study. The discussion focuses on assessing the role of CSOs, rather than evaluating impact, in line with the study design and scope.

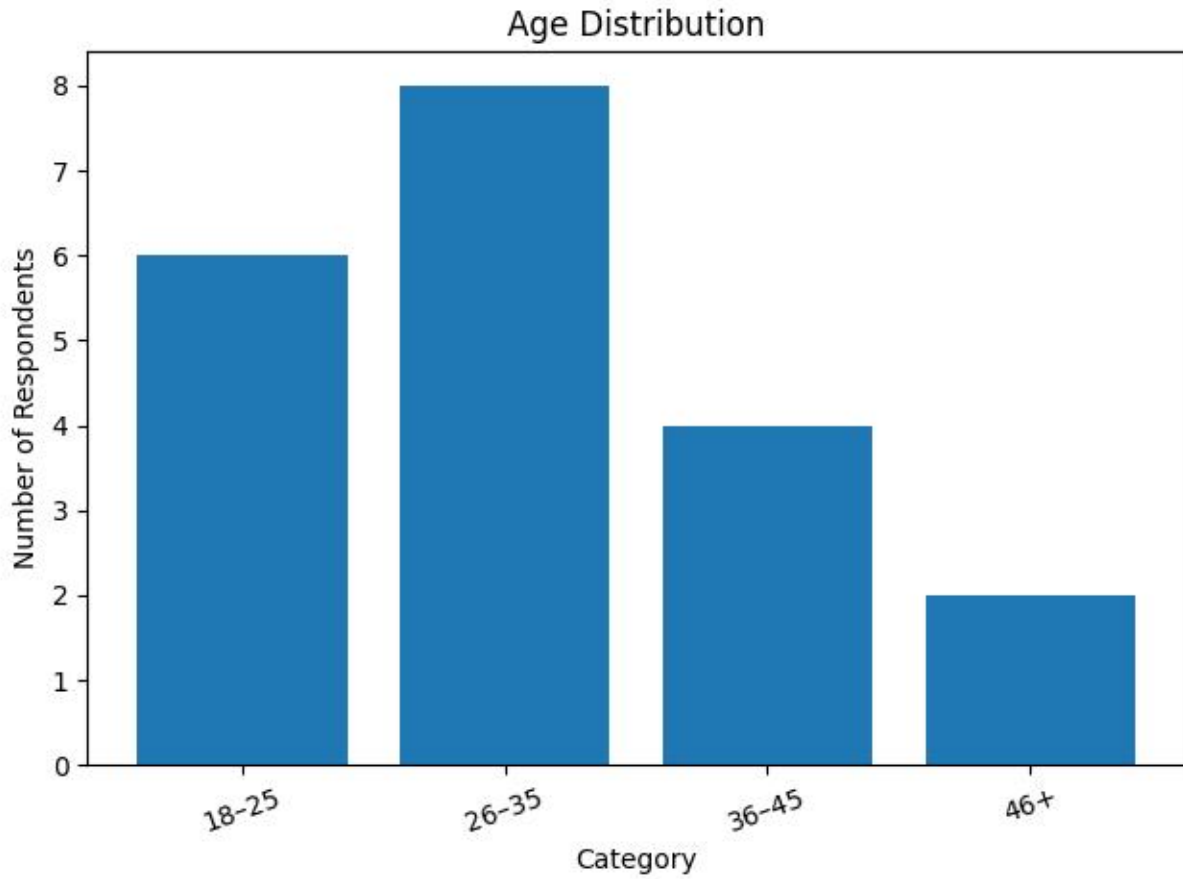
4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

FIGURE 1 GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=20)



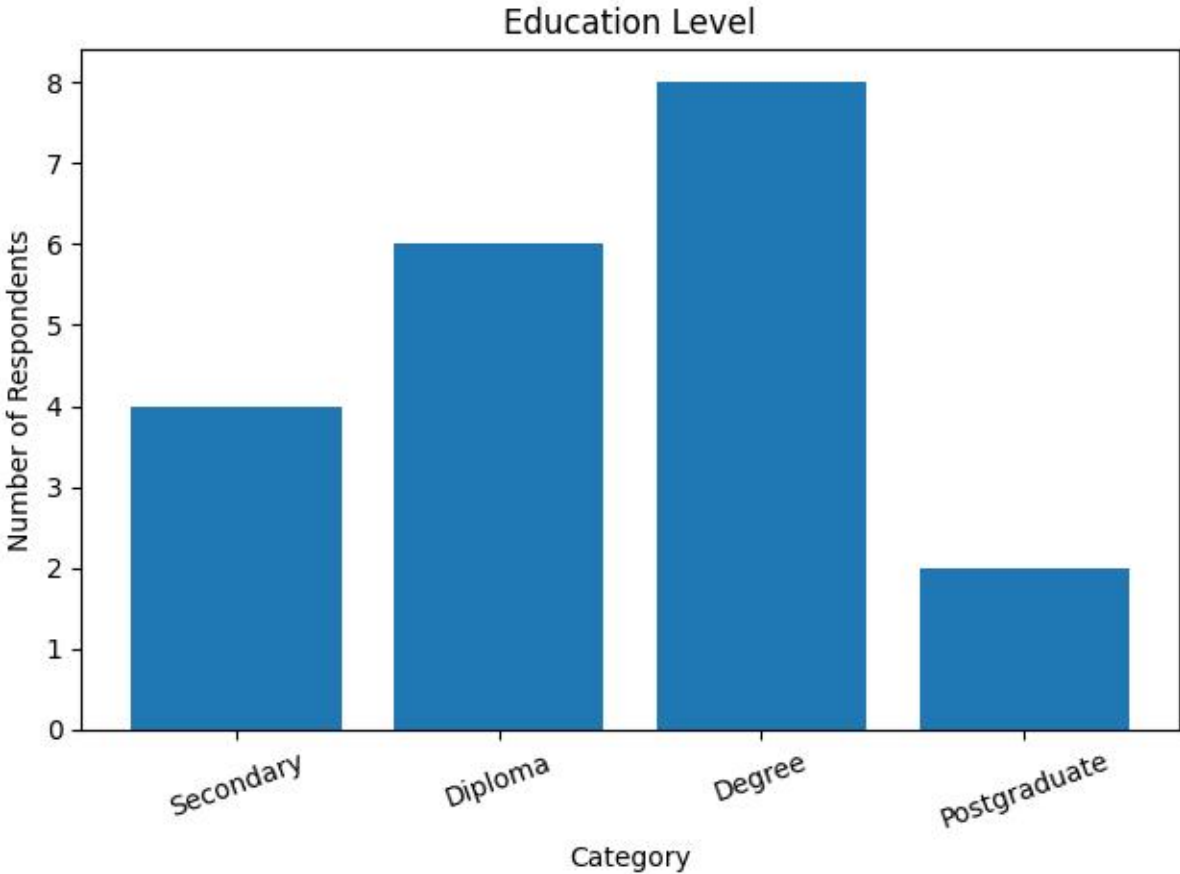
The gender distribution shows that both males and females participated in the study, indicating balanced representation. This diversity ensured that perspectives on peaceful assembly were drawn from different social backgrounds, strengthening the credibility of the findings

FIGURE 2 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=20)



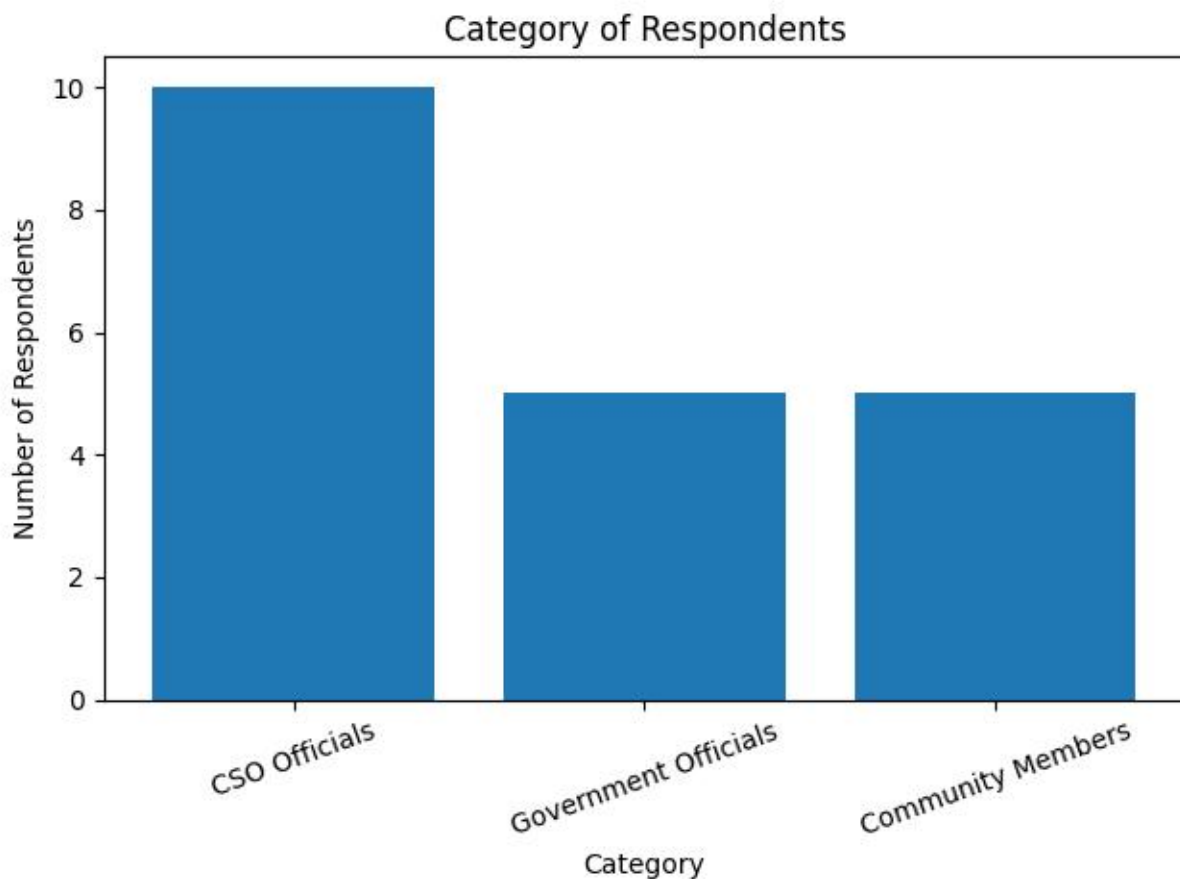
The age distribution indicates that most respondents were within the economically active age group. This is relevant because individuals in this category are more likely to participate in civic activities and interact with CSOs on issues related to peaceful assembly.

FIGURE 3 EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS (N=20)



The majority of respondents possessed tertiary education. This suggests that respondents were knowledgeable and capable of providing informed views on civil society activities and peaceful assembly rights.

FIGURE 4 CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS (N=20)



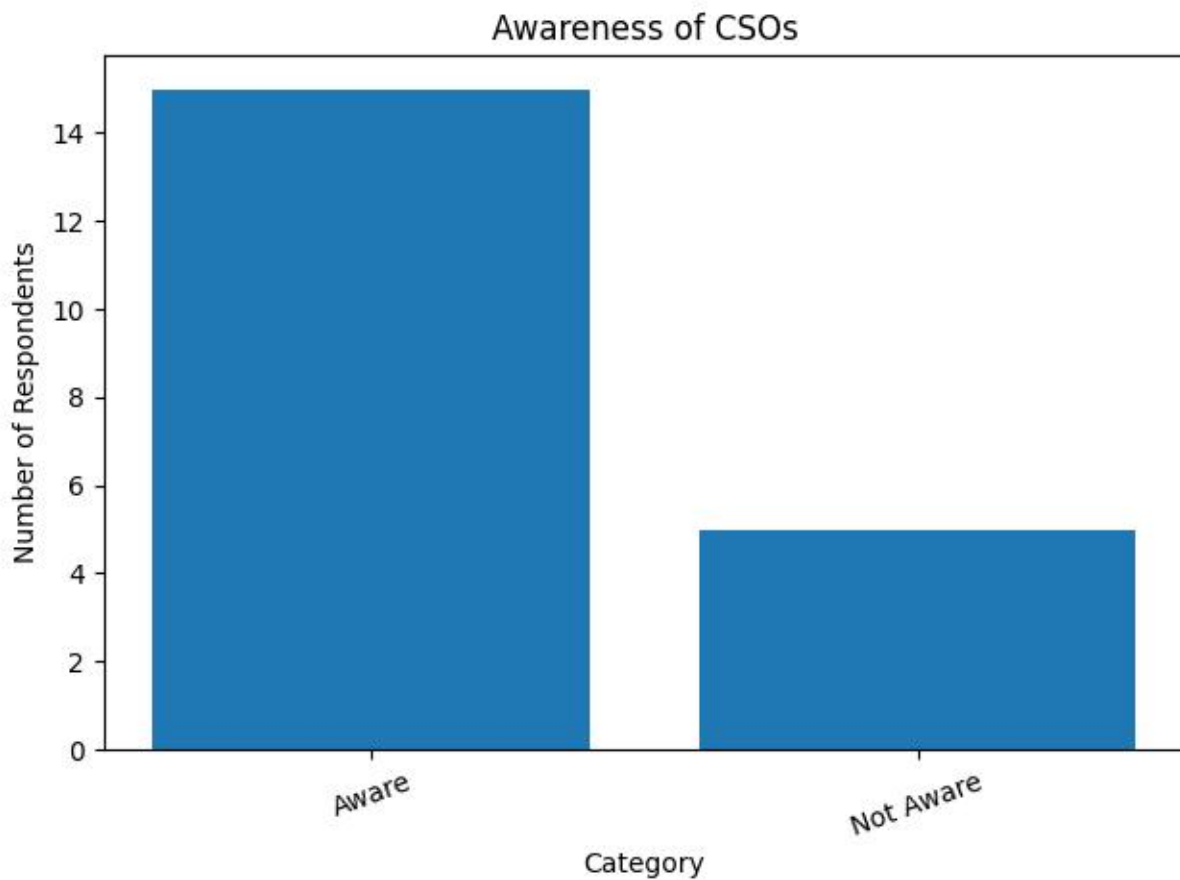
This figure illustrates the representation of CSO officials, government officials, and community members. The inclusion of different categories allowed the study to capture both implementer and beneficiary perspectives.

4.2 AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY RIGHTS

Findings indicate that most respondents demonstrated a basic awareness of the right to peaceful assembly as guaranteed under the Zambian Constitution. Participants noted that CSOs have played a key role in disseminating information on civil rights through workshops, community meetings, and social media platforms. This finding is consistent with earlier studies which highlight civic education as a core function of CSOs in democratic societies (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014).

However, respondents also reported that awareness levels vary significantly across communities, with urban residents being more informed than those in high-density and informal settlements. This suggests that while CSOs contribute to awareness creation

FIGURE 5 AWARENESS OF CSO'S PROMOTING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY (N=20)



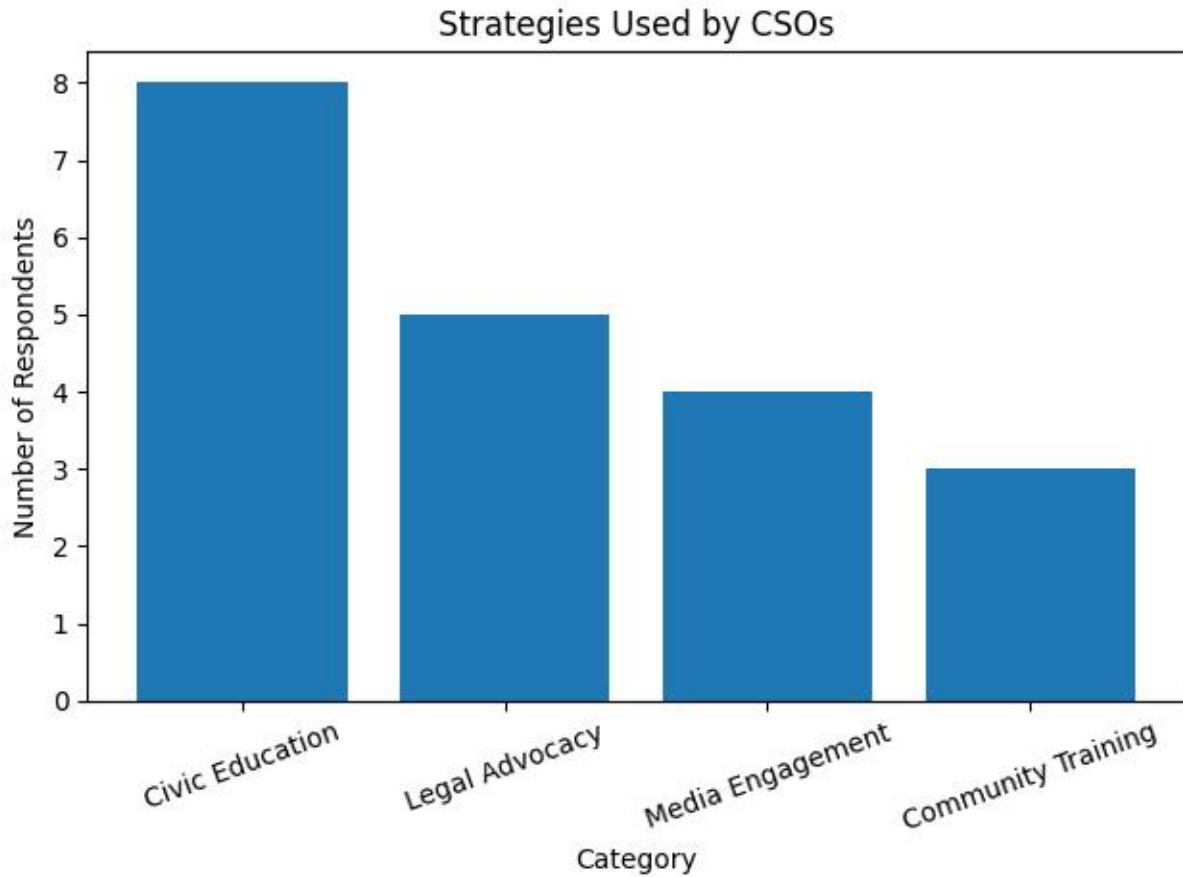
The figure shows that most respondents were aware of CSOs involved in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District. Respondents attributed this awareness to civic education programmes, media campaigns, and public engagements conducted by CSOs. This finding aligns with Carothers and Brechenmacher (2014), who argue that CSOs play a critical role in increasing public awareness of civic rights. However, some respondents indicated limited awareness in certain communities, suggesting uneven outreach.

4.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY CSOS

Respondents identified several challenges that limit CSO effectiveness. These include restrictive legislation, political interference, inadequate funding, and security threats. The Public Order Act was frequently cited as a major constraint, particularly due to inconsistent enforcement by law enforcement agencies.

Funding challenges were also highlighted, with many CSOs relying heavily on donor support, which affects programmer sustainability. These findings are consistent with CIVICUS (2021), which notes that shrinking civic space and funding constraints weaken civil society operations across Africa.

FIGURE 6 COMMON STRATEGIES USED BY CSO'S (N=20)



The diagram illustrates that CSOs employ multiple strategies, including civic education, legal advocacy, media engagement, and community training. Civic education emerged as the most frequently cited strategy, followed by legal support and media engagement.

These findings support Resource Mobilization Theory, which emphasizes that CSOs rely on organizational capacity, skilled personnel, and media access to advance advocacy objectives. Similar strategies have been documented in regional studies on CSO engagement in civic space protection (ACHPR, 2017).

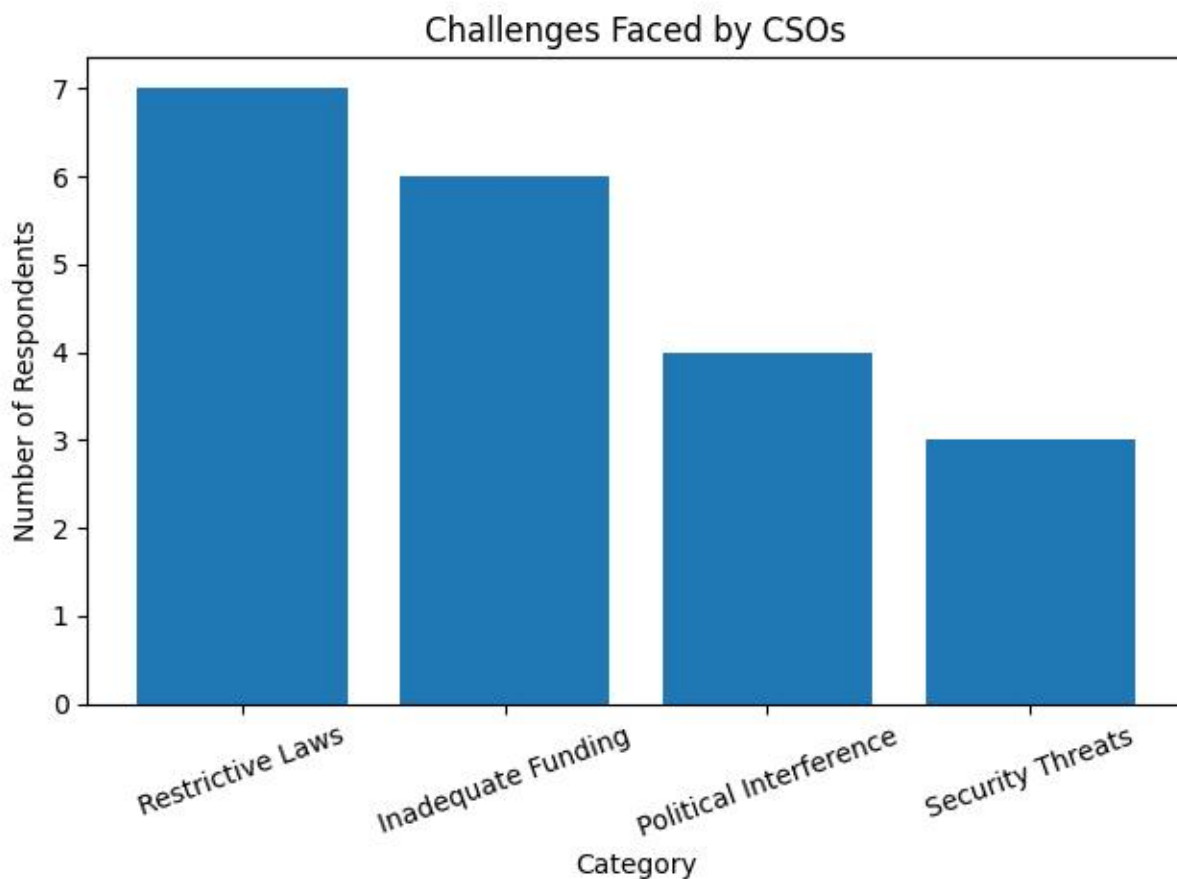
4.4 STRATEGIES USED BY CSOS IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The study found that CSOs employ multiple strategies to promote peaceful assembly. These include legal advocacy, civic education, media engagement, and community training.

Organizations such as Chapter One Foundation and Caritas Zambia were reported to provide legal support to citizens and activists, particularly during politically sensitive periods.

These strategies align with Resource Mobilization Theory, which emphasizes the use of organizational resources and expertise to sustain advocacy efforts. Similar strategies have been documented in regional studies on CSO engagement in civic space protection (ACHPR, 2017).

FIGURE 7 MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED BY CSO'S (N=20)



The figure shows that restrictive legislation, inadequate funding, and political interference were the most commonly reported challenges. The Public Order Act was frequently mentioned as a major constraint affecting the organization of public assemblies.

Funding challenges were also highlighted, with respondents noting heavy dependence on donor support, which affects programmer sustainability. These findings are consistent with CIVICUS

(2021), which notes that shrinking civic space and funding constraints undermine CSO effectiveness.

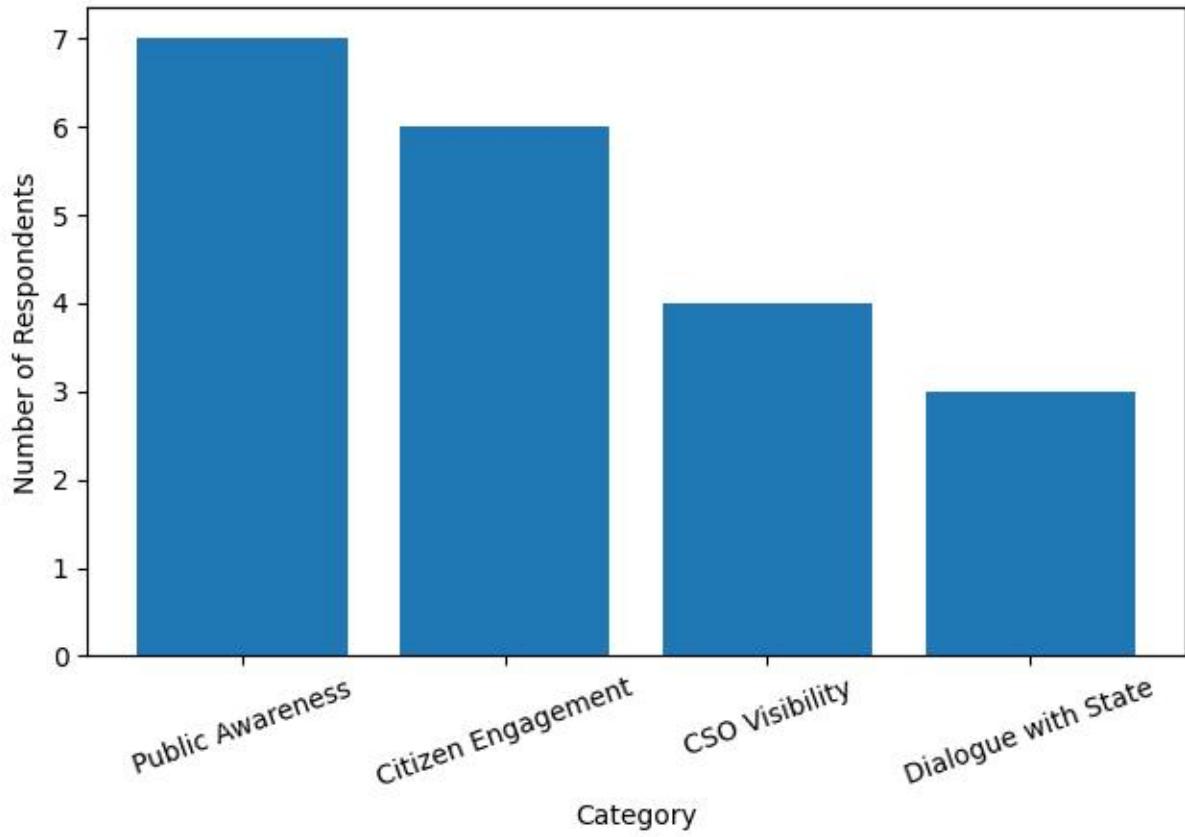
4.5 PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTIONS OF CSOS TO THE PROMOTION OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Rather than measuring impact, the study examined stakeholder perceptions of CSO contributions. Respondents reported that CSOs have contributed to increased public discussion on peaceful assembly, improved legal awareness, and greater engagement between citizens and state institutions.

While respondents acknowledged these contributions, they also emphasized that CSOs operate within significant legal and political constraints, limiting the extent of observable change. This finding reinforces the argument that CSOs play a facilitative and supportive role, rather than serving as direct agents of policy reform within the study period.

FIGURE 8 PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTIONS OF CSO'S ADVOCACY (N=20)

Perceived Contributions



Rather than measuring impact, this figure presents respondents' perception of CSO contributions. The findings indicate that CSOs have contributed to increased public awareness, improved citizen engagement, enhanced visibility of assembly-related issues, and strengthened dialogue between citizens and state institutions.

Respondents emphasized that while CSOs play an important supportive role, their ability to influence policy change remains constrained by legal and political factors. This confirms that CSOs function primarily as facilitators and advocates rather than direct agents of reform within the study period.

4.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, the findings demonstrate that CSOs in Lusaka District play an important role in promoting peaceful assembly through advocacy, education, and legal support. However, their efforts are constrained by restrictive legislation, political dynamics, and limited resources. The study therefore concludes that CSOs contribute to the **promotion**, rather than the measurable impact, of peaceful assembly rights.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study by drawing together the key findings presented in Chapter Four. The conclusions and recommendations in this chapter are based strictly on the evidence generated from the study and are aligned with the research objectives. No claims are made beyond what respondents reported or what was observed within the scope of the study. The chapter also highlights areas for further research arising from the findings.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study assessed the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District between 2020 and 2025. Using a case study design, data were collected from twenty (20) respondents comprising CSO representatives, government officials, and community members. The study focused on identifying active CSOs, examining the strategies they use, understanding stakeholder perceptions of their contributions, and identifying challenges affecting their work.

The study was guided by Resource Mobilization Theory, which provided a framework for understanding how CSOs utilize available resources to carry out advocacy activities within a constrained political and legal environment.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The findings showed that several CSOs, including Chapter One Foundation, Caritas Zambia, SACCORD, and YALI, are actively involved in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District.

The study found that CSOs mainly promote peaceful assembly through civic education, legal advocacy, media engagement, and community training. These strategies were reported by respondents as the most common approaches used to raise awareness and support lawful and non-violent assemblies.

The findings further revealed that CSOs face multiple challenges that limit their operations. These challenges include restrictive legislation, particularly the Public Order Act, political interference, inadequate and unstable funding, and security-related concerns.

In terms of contributions, respondents perceived that CSOs have helped to increase public awareness of peaceful assembly rights, encouraged citizen engagement, and facilitated dialogue between citizens and state institutions. However, respondents also noted that these contributions are constrained by the prevailing legal and political environment.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that Civil Society Organizations play a supportive and facilitative role in promoting peaceful assembly in Lusaka District. Through the use of available financial, human, and organizational resources, CSOs contribute to civic education, legal awareness, and advocacy related to peaceful assembly.

The study also concludes that the effectiveness of CSOs is limited by restrictive laws, political dynamics, and resource constraints. As such, while CSOs contribute to the promotion of peaceful assembly, the study does not establish evidence of direct policy change or measurable impact within the study period. The role of CSOs, as demonstrated by the findings, is therefore best understood as one of advocacy and facilitation rather than enforcement or reform implementation.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Recommendations

1. Since restrictive legislation was identified as a key challenge, the study recommends that relevant authorities review the implementation of the Public Order Act to ensure that it does not unnecessarily limit lawful peaceful assemblies.
2. Given reported tensions between CSOs and law enforcement agencies, the study recommends the strengthening of communication and engagement mechanisms between CSOs and state institutions involved in public order management.

Practice Recommendations

1. As funding constraints were highlighted by respondents, CSOs are encouraged to explore diversified funding options to enhance the sustainability of their activities.
2. Based on findings of uneven public awareness, CSOs should increase outreach activities in communities where awareness of peaceful assembly rights remains limited.
3. Since collaboration was reported as limited, CSOs may consider strengthening coordination and information-sharing among themselves to enhance effectiveness.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study findings indicate the need for further research on the promotion of peaceful assembly in Zambia. Future studies could examine similar CSO activities in rural districts or explore how digital platforms influence civic awareness and mobilization related to peaceful assembly.

5.6 SUMMARY

In summary, this study demonstrates that CSOs in Lusaka District contribute to the promotion of peaceful assembly primarily through advocacy, education, and legal support. However, their work is constrained by legal, political, and resource-related challenges. The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter are firmly grounded in the study findings and reflect the realities observed during the research period.

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