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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

**INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF UNFULFILLED POLITICAL
PROMISES ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR: A CASE OF CHAWAMA
CONSTITUENCY**

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to The School of Technology and Social Sciences in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Science
Degree in Politics and International Relations.**

BY

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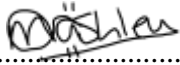
2025

Author's Declaration

I, Mwangelwa Mutemwa, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other university or institution of higher learning for the award of a degree or any other qualification. All sources of information used have been duly acknowledged through appropriate referencing.


This dissertation is submitted to the University of Lusaka in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a degree.

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of unfulfilled political promises on voting behavior in Chawama Constituency, Lusaka, focusing on how unmet commitments influence voter trust, participation, and political decision-making. The research was motivated by increasing public concern that recurring cycles of broken promises undermine democratic legitimacy and weaken confidence in leaders. Guided by Rational Choice Theory and Political Trust Theory, the study examined the extent to which political leaders in Chawama have failed to deliver on their commitments, how these failures shaped voter behavior, and what strategies could strengthen accountability. A qualitative research design was adopted, targeting 1,000 registered voters from the 2021 Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) register, from which 100 respondents were purposively selected to ensure diversity in age, gender, education, and socio-economic background. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, and thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns, supported by simple descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics. Findings showed that unfulfilled promises eroded political trust and contributed to apathy, though many respondents chose protest voting or shifted allegiance to opposition parties instead of disengaging completely. Economic-related pledges, particularly on job creation, cost of living, and service delivery, were found to be the most influential in shaping electoral choices, with unmet commitments in these areas generating the highest levels of frustration. Youth were especially critical of unkept promises, often expressing their dissatisfaction through disengagement or opposition support. The study concludes that repeated cycles of broken commitments not only damage trust in individual leaders but also threaten the legitimacy of Zambia's democratic process by discouraging civic participation. It recommends that political parties develop realistic and implementable manifestos, improve communication with communities, and adopt transparent mechanisms for reporting progress on pledges. Civil society and electoral bodies are also urged to monitor and publicize promise delivery to enhance accountability. By situating Chawama voters' experiences within wider debates on political trust and electoral accountability, this study underscores the urgent need for credible, issue-based campaigns and calls for further research into the role of social media in shaping perceptions of political promises.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving parents, whose unwavering love, sacrifices, and encouragement have been the foundation of my strength and determination. Your resilience and belief in my potential have guided me through every step of this academic journey. To my dear friends, thank you for your continuous support, for standing by me during the challenging moments, and for being a constant source of motivation. I also extend this dedication to my entire family for their prayers, patience, and moral support. This work is a reflection of the love, guidance, and community that have surrounded me—this achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the foundation of the study by introducing the research problem and situating it within the broader political and social context. It provides the background to the study, outlining how unfulfilled political promises have shaped democratic participation globally, regionally, and locally, with particular attention to Zambia. The chapter then states the problem under investigation and the research objectives that guided the study. It further explains the significance of the research, its delimitations, and limitations, as well as the definitions of key terms used throughout the work. The chapter establishes the basis upon which the subsequent review of literature and methodological approaches are built, ultimately framing the focus on Chawama Constituency as a case study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Political promises remain central to democratic politics as they form the cornerstone of electoral competition and voter expectations. Around the world, politicians present manifestos and pledges to persuade electorates that they are capable of addressing pressing national concerns. In well-established democracies, campaign promises often influence voters' choices and trust in government, with their fulfillment serving as a measure of credibility and accountability (Naurin, 2014). When leaders fail to deliver, disillusionment sets in, often resulting in voter apathy, protest voting, or declining approval ratings (Thomson, 2011). Studies conducted in Europe and North America have consistently shown that unmet promises weaken public confidence in institutions and diminish the perceived legitimacy of democratic systems (Elinder, Erixson & Vernby, 2015). The global evidence underscores that political promises are not merely campaign tools but critical factors in sustaining democratic trust and participation.

Across Africa, the issue of unfulfilled political promises has proven to be even more consequential due to fragile democratic institutions and high citizen expectations. Many African governments face persistent challenges in service delivery, unemployment, and inequality, yet political campaigns are often filled with ambitious pledges that fail to materialize after elections. In Ghana, for instance, Gyampo (2017) observed that repeated failure to implement campaign

commitments has led to growing youth apathy and a perception that elections offer little real change. In Nigeria, unmet promises around electricity provision, security, and job creation have created widespread voter skepticism, with many citizens either withdrawing from elections or engaging in protest voting (Ojo, 2019). In Kenya, politicians' failure to deliver has been linked to deepening ethnic-based politics, as voters shift from issue-based to identity-based voting due to a lack of faith in leaders' promises (Cheeseman, 2015). These regional experiences highlight how unmet promises erode democratic legitimacy and contribute to a cycle of mistrust between leaders and citizens.

Zambia has not been immune to this pattern. Since the advent of multiparty democracy in 1991, successive governments have campaigned on promises of economic growth, poverty reduction, job creation, and improved service delivery, yet many of these commitments have remained unfulfilled. For example, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) pledged massive employment opportunities in the 1990s, yet youth unemployment remained stubbornly high throughout its tenure (Ndulo, 2016). Later, the Patriotic Front (PF) gained substantial urban support by promising infrastructure development and lower costs of living. While some infrastructure projects were delivered, many high-profile pledges—especially in housing and employment—remained unmet, contributing to declining support in subsequent elections (Mulenga, 2018). More recently, the United Party for National Development (UPND) ascended to power in 2021 with strong promises of economic recovery and affordable living conditions. However, rising costs of essential commodities and limited visible progress have already generated frustration among sections of the urban electorate (Sishuwa, 2020). These dynamics illustrate the recurring cycle of unmet expectations and eroding public trust in political leadership.

The case of Chawama Constituency is particularly instructive. Chawama, a densely populated urban constituency in Lusaka, has long been a stronghold of electoral activity where candidates from major political parties actively campaign with promises of improved infrastructure, jobs, and basic services. Despite these pledges, residents continue to face inadequate sanitation, unemployment, poor road networks, and erratic water supply (Chikulo, 2019). Local observations suggest that community members are increasingly skeptical of politicians, perceiving promises as rhetorical strategies with little follow-through. Mulenga and Mpfu

(2021) argue that such disillusionment has significantly shaped electoral behavior, with voters either shifting allegiance to opposition parties or abstaining from elections altogether. In some cases, frustration has manifested in protest voting, where residents deliberately support alternative candidates as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with unfulfilled promises. This makes Chawama an ideal case for examining the link between campaign rhetoric and actual voter decisions.

The implications of this issue extend beyond voter dissatisfaction. Unfulfilled political promises undermine trust not only in individual politicians but also in democratic processes more broadly. When citizens repeatedly witness leaders failing to honor commitments, they begin to question the value of elections as mechanisms for accountability and change. This has serious consequences for Zambia's young democracy, as voter apathy and disengagement weaken civic participation and threaten democratic consolidation (Bwalya, 2016; Kuss & Gerstenberg, 2023). Moreover, urban constituencies such as Chawama are particularly vulnerable to these trends because residents often face daily socioeconomic hardships that intensify the disappointment associated with unmet promises. Understanding how these dynamics affect voter behavior is therefore critical for strengthening accountability, improving political communication, and sustaining democratic legitimacy in Zambia.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Zambia, the problem has been particularly evident in recent election cycles. Successive governments have campaigned on ambitious platforms centred on economic growth, job creation, and improved service delivery, yet many of these pledges have remained unfulfilled after elections (Ndulo, 2016; Mulenga, 2018). Urban constituencies such as Lusaka have increasingly reflected voter dissatisfaction with unmet expectations. For example, the Patriotic Front initially secured strong urban support through promises of affordable living costs and infrastructure development, but declining delivery contributed to noticeable shifts in voter allegiance during the 2021 general elections (Siachiwena & Wahman, 2024). Similarly, sections of the electorate have expressed growing dissatisfaction with the United Party for National Development's promises of rapid economic recovery and reduced cost of living, citing limited

tangible improvements (Sishuwa, 2020). These patterns suggest a recurring cycle in which electoral support rises during campaigns but weakens as promised outcomes fail to materialise.

Chawama Constituency presents a particularly suitable case for examining this phenomenon. As a densely populated, urban constituency within Lusaka, Chawama has consistently experienced intense electoral competition and visible shifts in political support across successive elections. Historical voting patterns indicate that the constituency has alternated support between ruling and opposition parties, reflecting voter responsiveness to campaign promises and perceived performance rather than fixed party loyalty (Chikulo, 2019; Mulenga & Mpofu, 2021). Campaigns in Chawama frequently emphasise commitments related to sanitation, road infrastructure, employment, and housing, yet residents continue to experience persistent service delivery challenges and high unemployment. This disconnect between campaign rhetoric and lived realities has contributed to voter apathy, declining turnout in some electoral cycles, and protest voting in others, where voters shift support away from incumbents in response to perceived non-performance.

Despite these observable trends, there is limited constituency-level research that systematically examines how repeated unfulfilled political promises influence voting behaviour in Chawama specifically. Much of the existing literature focuses on national-level outcomes, leaving a gap in understanding how urban voters interpret unmet commitments and translate dissatisfaction into electoral choices at the local level. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the effects of unfulfilled political promises on voting behaviour in Chawama Constituency, with the aim of generating insights that can strengthen political accountability and rebuild public trust in democratic leadership.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the effects of unfulfilled political promises on voting behavior, with a particular focus on Chawama Constituency in Lusaka.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess voters' perceptions of the extent to which political leaders in Chawama Constituency have fulfilled or failed to fulfill their campaign promises.
- ii. To examine how unfulfilled political promises have influenced voting behavior among residents of Chawama Constituency.
- iii. To identify and propose strategies that can enhance political accountability and improve the fulfillment of campaign promises in Chawama Constituency.

1.3.3 Research Questions

From the objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are voters' perceptions of the extent to which political leaders in Chawama Constituency have fulfilled or failed to fulfill their campaign promises?
- ii. How have unfulfilled political promises influenced voting behavior among residents of Chawama Constituency?
- iii. What strategies can be implemented to enhance political accountability and improve the fulfillment of campaign promises in Chawama Constituency?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to a deeper understanding of how unfulfilled political promises shape voting behavior in an urban Zambian context. Much of the existing literature on electoral dynamics in Zambia has focused on ethnicity, poverty, and party loyalty as the dominant determinants of voter decisions (Gondwe, 2018; Mususa, 2015). By specifically

investigating the role of broken campaign commitments, this study addresses an underexplored area and expands academic discourse on electoral accountability. The findings add to the theoretical and empirical body of knowledge on political behavior, particularly by applying Rational Choice Theory and Political Trust Theory to the Zambian experience.

From a practical perspective, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, political parties, and electoral management bodies. By highlighting the consequences of unmet promises on voter participation, the research underscores the need for leaders to align campaign rhetoric with realistic and achievable policy goals. Electoral bodies such as the Electoral Commission of Zambia can also draw on these findings to design interventions that strengthen accountability mechanisms and improve voter confidence in the democratic process. For civil society organizations, the results offer evidence that can support advocacy campaigns aimed at promoting transparency and responsible leadership.

The study further holds societal relevance by focusing on Chawama Constituency, an area that reflects the challenges of many urban communities in Zambia. Residents of Chawama continue to grapple with issues such as unemployment, poor infrastructure, and inadequate service delivery, despite repeated campaign promises. By capturing the lived experiences and perceptions of voters in this context, the study gives voice to citizens who are directly affected by unfulfilled commitments. Ultimately, the research highlights the importance of restoring public trust in politics, encouraging active civic engagement, and strengthening Zambia's democratic consolidation.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This study was confined to Chawama Constituency in Lusaka District, focusing on the perceptions and experiences of registered voters regarding unfulfilled political promises and their influence on voting behavior. The research was limited to urban residents within this constituency who had participated in at least one electoral process, thereby excluding rural communities and other constituencies in Zambia. In addition, the study concentrated on recent election cycles, particularly between 2016 and 2021, as these provided the most relevant and

current context for assessing the effects of broken promises on voter attitudes and electoral participation.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study faced several limitations that should be acknowledged. Time and financial constraints restricted the breadth of data collection, limiting the sample size to a manageable number of respondents within Chawama Constituency. In addition, some participants were hesitant to share their views openly due to the political sensitivity of the topic, which may have influenced the depth of responses. The reliance on self-reported data also carried the risk of bias, as some respondents may have provided answers they considered socially acceptable rather than their true opinions. Lastly, because the study focused solely on Chawama, the findings cannot be generalized to all constituencies in Zambia, though they provide important insights into the dynamics of urban voting behavior.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

For clarity and consistency, the following terms are defined as they are used in this study:

Political Promises

These are commitments made by politicians or political parties during election campaigns with the aim of attracting voter support. They usually focus on key areas such as employment, education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Unfulfilled Promises

This refers to campaign commitments that remain undelivered after leaders are elected into office. In this study, the term captures the gap between political rhetoric and the lived realities of citizens in Chawama.

Voting Behaviour

Voting behaviour describes the choices citizens make during elections, including whether they participate, abstain, spoil their ballots, or change party allegiance. It reflects how voters respond to political performance.

Voter Apathy

Voter apathy is the lack of interest or refusal to take part in elections. It often arises when citizens feel that their votes cannot influence political outcomes, especially after repeated unfulfilled promises.

Protest Voting

This is when citizens deliberately vote for opposition candidates or spoil their ballots as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with incumbent leaders. It is a form of resistance used to signal discontent.

Political Accountability

Political accountability refers to the duty of elected leaders to honour their promises and to be answerable to the public for their actions and decisions. It is a cornerstone of democratic governance.

Rational Choice Theory

This theory explains voter behaviour as the result of rational calculations, where individuals weigh the costs and benefits of voting before making electoral decisions. It helps interpret why citizens may abstain or switch parties when promises remain unmet.

Political Trust

Political trust is the confidence citizens have in leaders, institutions, and the political system to act in their best interests. Trust is strengthened when promises are fulfilled and eroded when they are ignored.

Community Monitoring

Community monitoring involves local citizens actively following up on government projects and political pledges to ensure leaders deliver what they promised during campaigns.

Democratic Participation

Democratic participation is the active engagement of citizens in political processes, most visibly through voting but also through other means such as attending public meetings, engaging in civic discussions, and monitoring leadership performance.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on the relationship between unfulfilled political promises and voting behavior. The purpose of the review is to locate the study within broader academic debates and to identify gaps that justify the research. It begins with an overview of the topic, followed by an empirical review of global, regional, and local perspectives. The chapter then discusses the theoretical framework that guides the study, drawing on Rational Choice Theory and Political Trust Theory. Finally, a conceptual framework is presented, illustrating the assumed links between campaign promises, trust, and voter behavior. The review does not merely summarize previous studies but critically analyses, compares, and discusses them to highlight both convergences and contradictions in existing knowledge.

2.1 Overview of the Topic

Political promises are widely regarded as the cornerstone of electoral competition because they provide a basis for citizens to judge candidates and their parties. According to Naurin (2014), campaign commitments function as a “contract” between voters and politicians, meaning that failure to deliver often results in declining trust. Thomson (2011) supports this view, noting that in established democracies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, broken promises directly reduce voter confidence and, in many cases, lead to electoral punishment. However, Elinder, Erixson and Vernby (2015) present a more complex picture, suggesting that not all broken promises have the same effect: voters sometimes forgive leaders if they believe failures are caused by external factors such as economic crises. The difference in these findings highlights that voter reactions are not uniform but are shaped by context, expectations, and the credibility of the leaders involved.

The broader debate also contrasts experiences in developed and developing democracies. Plescia and Eberl (2021) argue that in Europe, unfulfilled promises tend to result in gradual but long-term erosion of institutional trust, which manifests in declining turnout and the rise of populist movements. In contrast, Gyampo (2017) observed in Ghana that unmet pledges produce more immediate responses, particularly among youth voters who often withdraw from electoral

participation entirely. The difference lies in institutional maturity: in European democracies, citizens express disappointment within existing systems of accountability, while in Africa, where institutions are weaker, unmet promises fuel frustration and apathy more directly. This suggests that the same phenomenon—unfulfilled promises—can have different impacts depending on political and institutional contexts.

In Zambia, the effects of broken promises are equally contested. Mulenga (2018) found that during the Patriotic Front’s time in power, unfulfilled campaign commitments in Lusaka contributed to voter shifts toward opposition parties, suggesting that Zambian voters sometimes act rationally by punishing leaders who fail to deliver. Yet Mususa (2015) offers a different interpretation, arguing that despite unmet promises, many voters still support parties along ethnic or partisan lines, indicating that other factors dilute the impact of accountability. More recently, Siachiwena and Wahman (2024) have shown that party switching in urban constituencies is often linked not only to disappointment with unfulfilled promises but also to broader economic dissatisfaction. These differences in findings raise a critical question: to what extent are Zambian voters motivated by rational assessments of campaign delivery, and to what extent do structural and identity-based factors shape their choices? This unresolved debate provides the basis for examining the Chawama context in greater depth.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical studies on political promises and voting behavior have produced mixed findings, reflecting differences in context, methodology, and theoretical orientation. For instance, scholars working in developed democracies often emphasize the accountability function of elections, where citizens assess politicians based on the delivery of campaign pledges. According to Thomson (2011), unmet promises in the United States and Europe frequently result in electoral punishment, as voters switch support to alternative candidates. This view is reinforced by Naurin (2014), who regards campaign commitments as a “contract” between politicians and citizens. However, Elinder, Erixson and Vernby (2015) caution against assuming uniform voter responses, noting that in some cases, leaders are excused when failures are attributed to external constraints such as economic downturns. These contrasting findings suggest that while the principle of accountability is widely acknowledged, its practical application varies depending on

voters' expectations and the perceived credibility of leaders. The lesson from these contexts is that promises matter, but their impact on voter behavior is not automatic—it depends on how citizens interpret failures.

2.2.1 Global Perspective

Scholarly debates in advanced democracies often frame unfulfilled political promises as a fundamental test of electoral accountability. According to Thomson (2011), elections provide an opportunity for citizens to evaluate whether leaders have delivered on their commitments, with unmet promises frequently resulting in a loss of support. This argument is reinforced by Naurin (2014), who highlights that voters in Europe tend to view campaign pledges as binding agreements. However, Elinder, Erixson and Vernby (2015) complicate this picture by showing that while some voters punish incumbents for unfulfilled promises, others excuse failures when they are attributed to factors outside the control of political leaders, such as international financial crises or opposition resistance in parliament. The difference between these studies lies in how accountability is understood: whereas Thomson and Naurin emphasize direct electoral punishment, Elinder et al. highlight conditional forgiveness.

In the United States, the role of political promises has been particularly visible during presidential campaigns. Studies have shown that American voters pay close attention to key pledges, especially in areas such as taxation, healthcare, and immigration (Thomson, 2011). For example, the unfulfilled promise to introduce comprehensive immigration reform during the Obama administration contributed to disillusionment among sections of the electorate, while Donald Trump's partial fulfillment of promises on immigration policy resonated strongly with his support base. Yet, as Plescia and Eberl (2021) argue, the U.S. experience also reveals that voters may tolerate broken promises if they perceive leaders as having made progress toward their stated goals. This suggests that voter reactions are not based on binary outcomes—fulfilled or unfulfilled but rather on how citizens judge effort, intent, and external obstacles.

European democracies have also provided significant insights into the effects of unfulfilled promises. Naurin (2014), studying Sweden, found that the systematic tracking of party pledges revealed mixed results: while many promises were partially implemented, those that remained unfulfilled contributed to voter cynicism. Plescia and Eberl (2021) add that in countries such as

Austria and Germany, unfulfilled promises have played a role in the rise of populist parties, which often capitalize on citizens' frustration with mainstream parties. This view contrasts with Elinder et al. (2015), who argue that in some cases, disillusioned voters do not necessarily shift support to alternative parties but instead disengage from electoral politics altogether. The variation reflects differences in political culture: in some contexts, unmet promises drive protest voting, while in others they fuel apathy.

In the United Kingdom, the Brexit referendum highlighted the complexity of campaign promises and their effects on political trust. Politicians who campaigned for leaving the European Union made ambitious pledges about redirecting financial resources to the National Health Service and strengthening national sovereignty. However, post-referendum analyses revealed that many of these promises were either exaggerated or impossible to fulfill (Curtice, 2017). According to Jennings and Stoker (2016), the perceived betrayal of campaign promises contributed to heightened cynicism and polarization in British politics. Yet, Hobolt (2016) argues that for sections of the electorate, the symbolic fulfillment of "taking back control" mattered more than the specific pledges. This demonstrates that in some cases, the symbolic power of promises may outweigh their practical implementation in shaping voter attitudes.

Studies in Canada have similarly revealed nuanced outcomes. Elinder et al. (2015) showed that unfulfilled promises on healthcare reforms and taxation undermined trust in political leaders and institutions, with some voters turning to fringe parties as a form of protest. However, Clarke et al. (2019) suggest that while broken promises reduce satisfaction with democracy, they do not always translate into shifts in electoral support, as partisan loyalty often moderates voter reactions. The Canadian case therefore highlights the tension between short-term dissatisfaction and long-term party loyalty, which complicates straightforward theories of electoral punishment.

In Australia, researchers have noted that unmet campaign commitments undermine democratic engagement, especially among young voters. Plescia and Eberl (2021) argue that when politicians fail to deliver on promises regarding employment and education, young people develop a long-term skepticism toward the political process. This view is consistent with McAllister (2011), who found that voter turnout among Australians under 30 has declined partly because of disillusionment with unfulfilled promises. However, Bean and Denmark (2007)

caution that turnout decline is influenced by multiple factors, including generational change and the weakening of partisan attachments. This suggests that while unfulfilled promises contribute to apathy, they are part of a broader set of forces shaping democratic participation.

East Asian democracies such as Japan and South Korea provide further lessons on how voters respond to unfulfilled promises. In Japan, studies have shown that citizens tend to punish incumbents when key economic or social promises are left unfulfilled, leading to frequent changes in government (Stockwin, 2021). In South Korea, voters have been particularly sensitive to broken promises related to corruption and transparency, often withdrawing support from parties perceived as untrustworthy (Shin, 2015). These findings contrast with Western cases where partisan loyalty can mitigate the effects of unfulfilled promises, showing that in contexts with strong traditions of issue-based voting, broken promises have more direct electoral consequences.

In developing democracies, including African states, empirical evidence points to even more complex dynamics. Gyampo (2017) observed that in Ghana, unmet campaign pledges contribute directly to youth apathy, with many young citizens withdrawing from the electoral process altogether. By contrast, Omotola (2010) in Nigeria found that while broken promises reduce trust in political elites, they often lead to protest voting rather than disengagement. Cheeseman (2015) adds another dimension by arguing that in Kenya, persistent failure to fulfill campaign promises pushes citizens to fall back on ethnic-based voting, as trust in policy commitments diminishes. These studies illustrate that unfulfilled promises in Africa rarely operate in isolation; they interact with broader social, economic, and institutional factors. For Zambia, this implies that while broken pledges may influence voter behavior in constituencies like Chawama, the outcomes could differ—ranging from apathy and abstention to shifts in allegiance or reinforcement of party loyalties. The knowledge gap, therefore, lies in understanding how this phenomenon plays out in specific local contexts, where the lived realities of voters may not align neatly with global or regional trends.

Another dimension of global research focuses on the role of media in shaping citizens' perceptions of broken promises. Iyengar and Kinder (2010) observed in the United States that media coverage amplifies the visibility of unmet commitments, particularly in high-profile areas

like healthcare and foreign policy. This resonates with the work of Van Aelst et al. (2017), who argue that media framing often determines whether voters interpret unfulfilled promises as deliberate failures or as the outcome of unavoidable constraints. The implication is that the consequences of broken promises are not only a matter of political performance but also of how information is communicated and received by the electorate.

Scholars have also paid attention to the institutional context in which promises are made. In parliamentary systems such as those in Germany and the Netherlands, coalition governments often struggle to deliver fully on campaign pledges due to compromises made during coalition negotiations (Rose, 2019). According to Thomson et al. (2017), voters in these contexts are generally aware of the limitations of coalition politics and are more forgiving of partial delivery. By contrast, in presidential systems such as the United States, the expectation of strong executive authority means voters are less tolerant of unfulfilled promises. These comparisons highlight that institutional design shapes both the feasibility of delivering promises and the way citizens interpret political outcomes.

Trust in institutions has emerged as another crucial factor. Dalton (2017) shows that in Scandinavian countries, high levels of institutional trust reduce the negative impact of broken promises, as citizens continue to believe in the integrity of the broader system. In contrast, studies in Southern Europe, particularly in Greece and Italy, reveal that low institutional trust magnifies the effects of unmet pledges, often leading to mass protests and political instability (Morlino & Raniolo, 2017). These contrasting findings suggest that the degree of resilience in democratic institutions mediates the relationship between unfulfilled promises and voter behavior.

Longitudinal studies have also shed light on how the effects of broken promises evolve over time. Jennings and Wlezien (2016) examined British elections over several decades and found that while individual promises may fade from public memory, repeated cycles of unfulfilled commitments accumulate to create long-term political cynicism. Similarly, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2013) found in their study of European electorates that economic promises left unfulfilled have enduring effects on party reputations, influencing voting decisions across

multiple election cycles. These findings underline that the problem of unfulfilled promises is not confined to single elections but has lasting implications for democratic legitimacy.

Generational differences in how citizens respond to unmet promises have also been widely documented. Dalton (2016) notes that younger voters in Western democracies are less tolerant of broken commitments compared to older generations, as they enter politics with higher expectations of transparency and accountability. By contrast, older voters often display stronger partisan loyalty, which tempers their reactions to political disappointment. Franklin (2004) adds that generational shifts in expectations partly explain declining voter turnout in many Western countries, as disillusioned younger citizens increasingly question the value of electoral participation. These findings raise questions about how sustained exposure to unmet promises might shape the political culture of future generations.

Comparative research has further highlighted the policy domains in which broken promises matter most. Mansergh and Thomson (2007) argue that voters are especially sensitive to unfulfilled promises related to taxation, employment, and social welfare, as these directly affect their livelihoods. In contrast, promises on foreign policy or less immediate issues tend to carry less electoral weight. This distinction is supported by Pétry and Collette (2009), who found in their study of Canadian voters that tangible, everyday policy areas shape perceptions of trust more strongly than abstract pledges. The lesson here is that the salience of unfulfilled promises varies, and politicians who fail on bread-and-butter issues risk greater voter backlash than those who fall short on less visible commitments.

Scholars have debated whether broken promises lead primarily to disengagement or to alternative forms of political participation. Norris (2011) contends that unmet commitments often push citizens away from formal participation, contributing to lower voter turnout. However, Dalton, Van Sickle and Weldon (2010) argue that some disillusioned citizens redirect their energy toward non-electoral forms of engagement, such as protests or activism. This suggests that the response to broken promises is not simply withdrawal but can also involve new, and sometimes disruptive, forms of political expression. The global lesson is that while unmet promises undermine trust, they may simultaneously fuel alternative avenues of civic participation, thereby reshaping democratic engagement in unexpected ways.

2.2.2 Regional Perspective

Scholars examining electoral politics in Africa often highlight the centrality of political promises in shaping voter expectations, but they also reveal complex patterns in how citizens respond when these promises remain unfulfilled. According to Gyampo (2017), in Ghana, young voters are particularly sensitive to broken commitments on employment and education. His findings suggest that unmet promises discourage participation, leading to widespread abstention among youth. However, this view contrasts with Omotola (2010), who studied Nigeria and found that disillusioned voters often redirect their frustrations through protest voting rather than withdrawing completely. The difference between these cases lies in the nature of political competition: in Ghana, youth perceive few credible alternatives and disengage, while in Nigeria, the presence of multiple competitive parties encourages voters to punish incumbents through protest choices.

Kenya presents another example where unfulfilled promises have had deep political consequences. Cheeseman (2015) argues that successive governments have repeatedly failed to deliver on pledges concerning jobs, infrastructure, and corruption reduction, which has led citizens to place greater emphasis on ethnic identities rather than policy performance. Kanyinga (2014) supports this interpretation, noting that in contexts where promises are consistently broken, voters lose faith in issue-based politics and instead revert to identity-based loyalties. This contrasts with studies in Ghana and Nigeria, where citizens still base at least some of their choices on performance. The Kenyan case thus demonstrates how persistent unfulfilled promises can shift the very basis of electoral politics, undermining policy competition altogether.

South Africa offers another instructive case. Lodge (2014) observes that despite numerous promises to reduce unemployment and improve service delivery, successive governments have struggled to meet expectations. The result has been widespread protests, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, where residents demand accountability. Booysen (2011) adds that unmet promises have weakened the legitimacy of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), though not always translating into immediate electoral defeat due to the party's historical dominance. This highlights an important nuance: broken promises may generate frustration and protest without necessarily producing large-scale shifts in voter allegiance. The South African case

shows that structural dominance of a party can moderate the electoral consequences of unfulfilled commitments.

Liberia also illustrates how unmet promises contribute to fragile democratic consolidation. Johnson (2019) reports that pledges to improve infrastructure, healthcare, and education often remain unfulfilled, fueling voter cynicism and sporadic turnout. Sesay (2017) goes further, arguing that repeated cycles of broken promises erode the foundations of democratic legitimacy, as citizens begin to perceive elections as symbolic rituals rather than meaningful opportunities for change. In contrast to South Africa, where citizens often protest but continue voting, the Liberian context shows that citizens may simply abandon electoral participation altogether. This underscores that the effects of unmet promises are not uniform across Africa but vary with institutional stability and historical context.

Comparisons between Nigeria and Kenya further enrich the debate. While both countries face challenges with unfulfilled pledges, their voter responses diverge. Omotola (2010) found that Nigerian voters frequently use elections as opportunities to punish leaders, especially when promises on electricity and security remain unmet. By contrast, Cheeseman (2015) argues that in Kenya, the repetition of broken promises over decades has normalized distrust, leading citizens to rely more on ethnic identities than on leaders' credibility. These divergent outcomes highlight the importance of political culture: in one case, broken promises sustain protest voting, while in another, they undermine the very logic of electoral accountability.

Another dimension emerges when examining how civil society shapes voter responses to unfulfilled commitments. Bofo-Arthur (2014) in Ghana observed that non-governmental organizations and watchdog groups amplify awareness of broken promises, influencing citizens' expectations and increasing pressure on politicians. In contrast, contexts with weaker civil society, such as Liberia, show limited public accountability because information about promises and delivery is not systematically tracked (Johnson, 2019). This indicates that the impact of unfulfilled promises depends not only on politicians and voters but also on the broader accountability ecosystem that informs public debate.

Regional studies consistently suggest that urban voters are more responsive to unfulfilled promises than rural voters. Mulenga and Mpofu (2021), studying Zambia's urban constituencies, found that unmet commitments regarding roads, sanitation, and jobs had a stronger effect in cities than in rural areas, where voters often remain tied to patronage networks and traditional loyalties. This pattern resonates with findings from Ghana (Gyampo, 2017) and South Africa (Booyesen, 2011), where urban residents, facing visible daily hardships, expressed sharper discontent when campaign pledges went unfulfilled. For the case of Chawama, this suggests that the urban setting may amplify the consequences of broken promises, making voter responses more direct and visible.

The credibility of campaign promises in Africa is often mediated by economic realities. When governments pledge ambitious reforms but fail to address everyday issues like inflation, job creation, or service delivery, citizens quickly become disillusioned. Gyimah-Boadi (2019) argues that this disconnect between promises and lived realities erodes confidence in democratic institutions across the region. In support, Cheeseman and Larmer (2021) show that African voters are often highly aware of the gap between rhetoric and delivery, particularly in urban constituencies where economic hardship is more visible. This suggests that the strength of electoral accountability depends on whether promises align with citizens' immediate material concerns.

Another recurring theme in the literature is the role of political parties as vehicles of promise-making and delivery. Rakner and Van de Walle (2009) contend that weak programmatic structures mean many African parties campaign on broad, populist promises that are difficult to fulfill. As a result, when delivery falls short, disillusionment sets in more quickly compared to systems where parties have strong ideological or programmatic anchors. A contrasting perspective comes from Resnick (2014), who finds that in some African contexts, especially among youth voters, even populist promises can mobilize support in the short term, though disappointment is inevitable when outcomes fall short. These contrasting findings reveal that the institutional strength of parties shapes how voters interpret broken pledges.

The availability of credible information also influences how citizens respond to unfulfilled commitments. Afrobarometer surveys across multiple African countries consistently show that citizens who are more politically informed express stronger dissatisfaction when campaign promises remain unmet (Logan & Gyimah-Boadi, 2020). This aligns with Boafo-Arthur's (2014) findings in Ghana, where civil society organizations that track government pledges enhance accountability by making citizens more critical of unmet commitments. By contrast, where media freedom is restricted or civil society is weak, voters may lack the tools to distinguish between deliberate failures and unavoidable constraints, muting the political impact of broken promises.

Ethnic and identity-based politics further complicate the impact of unfulfilled pledges. According to Ferree (2011), voters in some African states continue to support parties along ethnic lines even when promises remain unmet, because identity politics can override policy disappointment. However, Wahman and Willén (2019) argue that this effect is not uniform: in urban, multi-ethnic constituencies, citizens are more likely to shift support when campaign promises fail, as cross-cutting cleavages reduce the dominance of identity-based voting. This suggests that in diverse areas like Lusaka, the effects of unfulfilled promises may be amplified by the weaker hold of ethnicity as the sole determinant of loyalty.

Generational differences also shape how promises are interpreted. Young voters in Africa are increasingly demanding results-oriented politics. According to Resnick and Thurlow (2015), youth are less tolerant of repeated cycles of unfulfilled promises, particularly regarding jobs and education, leading either to disengagement or to protest voting. By contrast, older voters often maintain loyalty to ruling parties due to historical attachments or patronage benefits. The generational divide therefore introduces variation into how unfulfilled promises shape voter behavior, with youth emerging as a particularly critical constituency.

Institutional constraints provide yet another angle. Lindberg (2010) emphasizes that even well-intentioned leaders in Africa often struggle to deliver on promises due to weak institutions, limited state capacity, or donor dependency. Voters, however, do not always differentiate between systemic constraints and deliberate failures, often blaming incumbents directly. This contrasts with findings in Western democracies (Elinder et al., 2015), where voters sometimes

excuse broken promises if external factors are evident. The African experience shows a harsher judgment of incumbents, reflecting frustration with chronic underperformance and weak state capacity.

The long-term effects of unmet promises cannot be overlooked. Rakner (2017) shows that repeated cycles of broken pledges erode trust not only in ruling parties but in the democratic process itself, fueling apathy and skepticism. This is echoed by Gyimah-Boadi (2019), who warns that such disillusionment poses risks to democratic consolidation, as citizens begin to see elections as hollow exercises. Yet, other scholars such as Logan (2020) note that despite disillusionment, many Africans continue to value elections as the only legitimate path to change, suggesting a paradox: trust in leaders may decline, but trust in the democratic ideal persists.

The link between broken promises and political trust is one of the most studied issues in African electoral politics. Logan (2020) shows that trust in political leaders across sub-Saharan Africa is often fragile, with unmet campaign commitments acting as a major driver of declining confidence. Yet, as Cheeseman and Larmer (2021) argue, distrust of leaders does not always equate to distrust in democracy itself. Instead, many citizens maintain faith in the idea of democracy but doubt the sincerity of those who govern. This duality is important because it means that unfulfilled promises may erode leader legitimacy without necessarily delegitimizing the democratic system as a whole.

Service delivery failures are also central to understanding the impact of unmet pledges. Bratton (2013) found that citizens in urban centers judge leaders heavily on tangible outputs such as electricity supply, sanitation, and road infrastructure. When promises in these areas remain unmet, frustration translates into either voter apathy or a shift in electoral allegiance. In contrast, in rural areas where expectations are lower, broken promises may not trigger the same degree of discontent. This rural–urban divide is echoed in more recent work by Siachiwena and Wahman (2024), who demonstrate that Zambian urban constituencies are particularly responsive to perceived government underperformance. For Chawama, an urban constituency, this suggests that unmet promises are likely to have stronger and more visible political effects.

Another factor that influences responses to broken commitments is the role of opposition parties. Resnick (2013) shows that where opposition parties are credible and organized, voters are more likely to punish incumbents for unfulfilled pledges. By contrast, in contexts where opposition is fragmented or lacks trust, citizens often feel trapped, leading to disillusionment without meaningful change. This dynamic helps explain variations across African democracies, where the same pattern of broken promises can either produce vigorous electoral turnover or sustained incumbency despite popular frustration.

The psychological impact of repeated political disappointment is also gaining scholarly attention. According to Harris (2018), constant exposure to unmet promises fosters what he calls “learned political helplessness,” where citizens expect failure as the norm and reduce their levels of engagement. This finding contrasts with Gyampo (2017), who emphasizes active disengagement among youth in Ghana, suggesting that some citizens respond by withdrawing entirely while others lower their expectations and participate cynically. Both perspectives highlight the danger of normalizing political failure, which risks entrenching apathy and weakening the accountability function of elections.

Civil society and grassroots movements play a moderating role in how unfulfilled promises are processed. Gyimah-Boadi (2019) argues that in countries where watchdog groups actively monitor and publicize campaign performance, citizens are more empowered to hold leaders accountable. For example, tracking platforms and scorecards in Ghana and Nigeria have made the gap between rhetoric and delivery more visible, increasing electoral consequences for incumbents. By contrast, in contexts where civil society is weak or co-opted, citizens may lack the information and channels needed to challenge political failures. This means that the strength of civic institutions is an important variable mediating the effects of broken promises.

The regional literature also reveals that voter reactions to unmet commitments differ depending on the type of promise. Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) noted that pledges on economic growth and job creation carry greater weight than those on institutional reforms, because citizens are primarily concerned with material welfare. More recent studies, such as Resnick and Thurlow (2015), confirm that promises directly linked to livelihoods (employment, education, health services) generate sharper political consequences when unfulfilled. For Chawama, where

economic hardships and service delivery challenges are pressing, this suggests that the credibility of promises in these domains is critical to shaping voter attitudes.

Finally, the long-term trajectory of African democracies underscores the cumulative effect of repeated cycles of unfulfilled promises. Rakner (2017) warns that persistent failure to deliver risks weakening democratic consolidation, as citizens become increasingly skeptical of political elites. However, Gyimah-Boadi and Logan (2020) offer a more optimistic perspective, noting that even in the face of disappointment, Africans continue to demand accountability and often mobilize through protests or civic activism. This indicates that unmet promises do not necessarily end political engagement but may redirect it into new forms of participation. The implication for Zambia, and specifically Chawama, is that while unfulfilled commitments can damage trust in leaders, they may also fuel alternative avenues of civic expression beyond the ballot box.

2.2.3 Local Perspective

The discussion on political promises in Zambia reveals that while campaign rhetoric has been central to mobilization, the extent to which these commitments are honored remains a persistent challenge. According to Sishuwa (2021), Zambian politics is characterized by ambitious manifestos that often raise expectations beyond what governments can realistically deliver. When these expectations are unmet, frustration emerges, particularly in urban constituencies where citizens experience the daily reality of unemployment, poor housing, and rising costs of living. The result is that citizens in areas like Chawama increasingly judge leaders not on their words but on visible delivery.

Economic pledges remain the most powerful tool of political campaigns in Zambia, yet they are also the most likely to generate disappointment when not delivered. The Patriotic Front, for instance, promised massive job creation during its campaigns, but by the 2021 elections, many urban youths expressed anger over high unemployment and casualization of labor (Mulenga, 2021). This discontent contributed to the PF's electoral defeat in Lusaka. In Chawama, where poverty and unemployment are pressing, citizens are particularly sensitive to economic promises that affect household survival. When unmet, these commitments easily translate into voter discontent and political shifts.

Unfulfilled service delivery promises further deepen mistrust. Successive governments have pledged to improve sanitation, housing, and road infrastructure in Lusaka's high-density areas. However, as documented by Chirwa (2020), many of these projects stall or remain incomplete, leaving communities with the visible scars of broken commitments. In Chawama, residents still grapple with poor drainage, uncollected waste, and inadequate health services, despite repeated campaign pledges. These unkept promises not only frustrate voters but also serve as daily reminders of political failure.

Media and civil society play a crucial role in shaping how citizens interpret these failures. According to Phiri (2019), local radio stations and community-based organizations have increasingly exposed gaps between political pledges and actual outcomes. This has heightened citizen awareness, particularly in Lusaka, where access to information is higher than in rural areas. In Chawama, political talk shows and online platforms frequently highlight issues of unfulfilled promises, reinforcing skepticism about political elites. Such exposure strengthens accountability pressures and reduces the ability of leaders to escape responsibility.

Generational dynamics are another important lens. Zambian youth, who form the majority of voters, often expect quick results on promises related to jobs, education, and empowerment. According to Nyambe (2021), younger citizens in urban constituencies are less tolerant of political failure and more likely to disengage or vote against incumbents when promises remain unmet. In Chawama, where many young people are unemployed or underemployed, the credibility of campaign commitments is directly tied to whether leaders can demonstrate concrete action.

Ethnic and partisan loyalties, though historically significant in Zambian politics, appear to be weakening in urban constituencies when unmet promises accumulate. Mususa (2015) observed that while voters may retain ethnic attachments, poor performance and broken pledges increasingly override such loyalties in cities. This was evident in the 2021 elections, when Lusaka voters shifted away from the PF despite its strong regional base. For Chawama, this means that while party identity matters, it is no longer sufficient to shield leaders from the consequences of unfulfilled commitments.

The long-term implications of unmet promises for democratic trust are increasingly visible. As Banda (2022) notes, repeated cycles of political disappointment risk entrenching cynicism among citizens, who begin to doubt whether elections can produce meaningful change. Yet surveys such as Afrobarometer (2023) show that Zambians still overwhelmingly support democracy as the best form of government, even while criticizing the failure of politicians to deliver. This tension reflects a paradox in Chawama: people may lose faith in individual leaders but continue to participate in elections, driven by the hope that future leaders will honor their promises.

The role of campaign promises in shaping voter expectations in Zambia has become more visible in recent elections, where citizens increasingly demand accountability. Hinfelaar and Sichone (2022) argue that Zambians are no longer content with vague rhetoric but expect specific, measurable commitments. Yet, as Sishuwa (2021) points out, political elites often recycle promises from previous campaigns without addressing why earlier pledges were not fulfilled. This recycling fuels voter skepticism, particularly in urban areas like Chawama, where residents can easily recall unkept commitments. The growing demand for credible promises indicates that citizens are learning to scrutinize political speech more critically.

Urbanization further amplifies dissatisfaction with unfulfilled promises. In Lusaka, the rapid growth of informal settlements has exposed residents to the daily consequences of poor infrastructure and limited service delivery. Chirwa (2020) highlights that uncollected waste, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to safe water dominate public concerns in these areas. Political promises to address such issues often raise hope, but when delivery fails, anger is particularly intense. In Chawama, the lived reality of poor roads and inadequate housing makes residents highly attuned to whether campaign pledges translate into visible change.

The failure of successive governments to meet expectations in education and health services is another recurring theme. Mwansa (2019) noted that promises of free education and expanded healthcare facilities often fall short due to resource constraints or weak implementation. For many Zambians, these are not abstract concerns but daily struggles that determine household survival. In Chawama, where schools are overcrowded and clinics underfunded, broken promises in these sectors are especially damaging to trust in leaders. When governments fail in such

visible areas, it reinforces the perception that promises are tools for winning votes rather than commitments to genuine change.

Economic management continues to dominate political discourse in Zambia, and the inability of governments to fulfill economic promises is closely linked to voter frustration. Mulenga (2021) observed that high inflation, currency instability, and unemployment undermine confidence in political leadership, regardless of campaign rhetoric. In Chawama, where families live on tight household budgets, the failure to stabilize food prices and create decent jobs resonates strongly. This confirms that economic pledges carry the greatest weight in urban constituencies and that failure in this domain often overshadows other achievements.

The role of opposition parties in exposing broken promises has also shaped Zambia's political landscape. According to Phiri (2019), opposition leaders frequently capitalize on ruling party failures by highlighting unfulfilled pledges, especially in parliament and through media platforms. This strategy proved effective in 2021, when the United Party for National Development (UPND) built its campaign around the PF's unkept commitments. In Chawama, opposition candidates frequently remind voters of undelivered infrastructure projects or employment programs, shaping perceptions of credibility. This dynamic shows that unfulfilled promises not only weaken incumbents but also provide opportunities for opposition parties to frame themselves as alternatives.

Youth perspectives deserve further emphasis, given their demographic weight. Nyambe (2021) observed that Zambian youths are both the most mobilized by campaign promises and the quickest to lose faith when delivery falls short. This volatility was evident in 2021, when young voters in Lusaka turned out in large numbers to vote for change after years of frustration. In Chawama, where many young people face unemployment and limited opportunities, unmet promises risk deepening political apathy. However, when mobilized effectively, youth frustrations can also drive electoral change, making them a decisive bloc in constituencies where unkept commitments are most visible.

Finally, the cumulative impact of unfulfilled promises in Zambia has implications for the legitimacy of the democratic process. Banda (2022) argues that repeated cycles of unmet commitments risk eroding the perceived value of elections, as citizens begin to doubt whether

leadership change translates into real improvements. Yet, Afrobarometer (2023) reports that despite frustrations, most Zambians still believe in democracy as the best form of governance. This paradox is particularly relevant for Chawama, where voters may criticize politicians sharply yet continue to participate in elections in the hope of finding leaders who will honor their pledges. The endurance of democratic ideals, even amid broken promises, highlights both the resilience and fragility of Zambia's political culture.

2.3 Research Gap

Despite extensive global scholarship on the impact of unfulfilled political promises, there is still no consensus on how citizens react when leaders fail to deliver. Studies in advanced democracies have produced conflicting findings: while some suggest that voters punish incumbents for broken commitments (Thomson, 2011; Naurin, 2014), others argue that citizens sometimes excuse failures if they perceive them as beyond leaders' control (Elinder et al., 2015). These contradictions highlight that voter responses are not uniform and are shaped by institutional design, political culture, and the salience of promises. However, most of these studies are based on Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how such dynamics unfold in emerging democracies, where institutions are weaker and citizens face more immediate economic and social pressures.

At the regional level, African scholars have documented how broken promises affect voter trust and participation, but the findings remain fragmented. Research in Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya shows that unfulfilled pledges can either drive disengagement, protest voting, or the entrenchment of ethnic politics (Gyampo, 2017; Omotola, 2010; Cheeseman, 2015). While these studies provide valuable insights, they often focus on national-level dynamics and lack the granularity to show how citizens in specific constituencies experience and respond to broken commitments in their everyday lives. This leaves a gap in understanding how context-specific factors, such as urban poverty, service delivery challenges, and youth frustrations, mediate voter reactions within particular localities.

In Zambia, existing research has highlighted the centrality of campaign promises in shaping electoral competition, but the focus has largely been on national outcomes rather than constituency-level dynamics. Sishuwa (2021) noted the erosion of incumbency advantage in the

2021 elections, attributing it partly to unmet expectations, while Siachiwena and Wahman (2024) showed that urban voters punished the PF for economic underperformance. While these studies are important, they do not adequately capture how broken promises are perceived and interpreted in specific constituencies like Chawama, where the daily reality of poverty and inadequate services directly intersects with political rhetoric. This constituency-level gap remains underexplored.

Another missing element in the Zambian literature is the role of generational and demographic differences in shaping responses to broken promises. Studies have noted that youth frustrations contributed to the PF's electoral defeat, but there is little systematic exploration of how young people in high-density urban areas, such as Chawama, translate unmet promises into either disengagement or active political change (Nyambe, 2021). Similarly, while some work has been done on urban–rural divides (Chirwa, 2020), little is known about how variations within urban constituencies themselves—between employed and unemployed, educated and less educated, male and female voters—shape the way unfulfilled promises are experienced. This lack of disaggregated analysis represents a significant gap.

Furthermore, while civil society and media have been acknowledged as important in amplifying awareness of broken commitments (Phiri, 2019), little empirical work has been done to examine how citizens in specific constituencies access, interpret, and act upon such information. In Chawama, where radio programs, community meetings, and social media platforms are central to political communication, there is limited research on how these channels shape perceptions of credibility and accountability. This oversight weakens our understanding of the mechanisms through which citizens form judgments about political promises at the grassroots level.

Finally, the long-term consequences of repeated cycles of unmet promises in Zambia remain underexplored. While Afrobarometer (2023) shows that Zambians continue to prefer democracy despite frustrations with leaders, there is little analysis of how repeated disappointments affect trust in the electoral process at constituency level. The case of Chawama offers a unique opportunity to explore whether unmet promises result in apathy, protest voting, or alternative forms of civic engagement. By focusing on this constituency, the present study addresses a critical gap: it investigates how citizens in a densely populated, urban, high-demand area

experience and react to the persistent failure of leaders to deliver on promises, thereby contributing both to local knowledge and to broader debates on electoral accountability in Africa.

2.4 Theoretical Review

Theoretical frameworks provide the intellectual foundation for understanding how unfulfilled political promises shape voting behavior. They guide the interpretation of findings and help situate the study within broader scholarly debates. For this research, two theories are particularly relevant: the Rational Choice Theory and the Political Trust Theory. Both provide useful but distinct perspectives on how citizens interpret and respond to broken promises, and together they form a comprehensive lens for examining voter behavior in Chawama Constituency.

2.4.1 Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory, first advanced by Downs (1957), assumes that individuals act as utility maximizers, making political decisions based on a calculation of costs and benefits. Applied to elections, the theory suggests that voters will reward leaders who fulfill promises and punish those who fail to deliver. In the Zambian context, this would mean that residents of Chawama weigh campaign commitments—such as jobs, affordable food, and improved housing—against actual delivery. If the costs of unmet promises outweigh the benefits of continued loyalty, rational choice theory predicts that voters will either switch allegiance or abstain from voting.

However, this theory has limitations. Scholars such as Green and Shapiro (1994) argue that it oversimplifies voter behavior by ignoring the roles of identity, emotion, and social networks. In Zambia, ethnicity, party loyalty, and patronage can mediate voter choices, meaning that not all citizens act strictly on rational calculations. Nonetheless, the theory remains useful for this study because it helps explain why, in the 2021 elections, many urban voters punished the Patriotic Front for failing to fulfill economic and service delivery promises (Sishuwa, 2021). In this sense, Rational Choice Theory provides a framework for examining whether Chawama residents act as rational actors who hold leaders accountable for unkept pledges.

2.4.2 Political Trust Theory

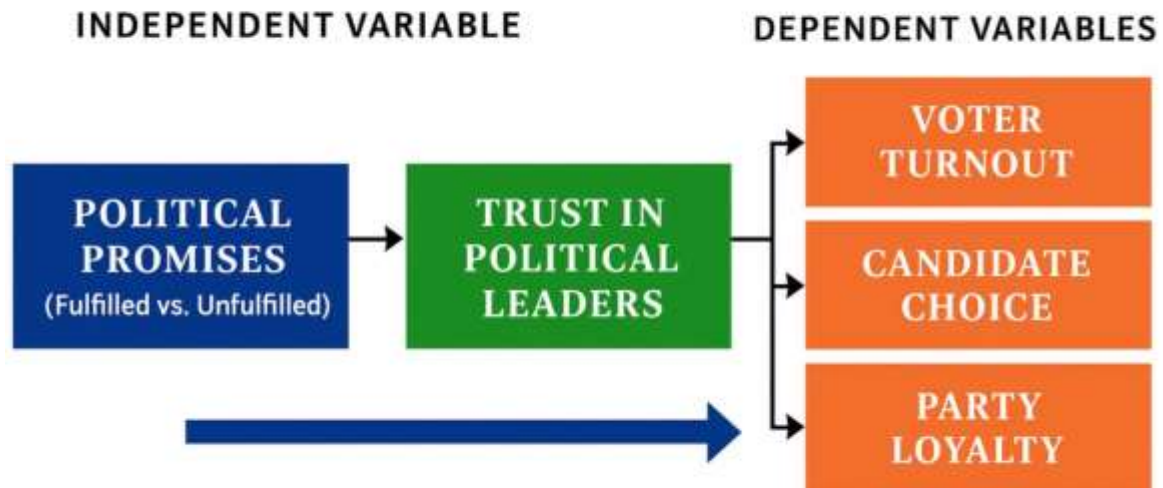
Political Trust Theory offers a different but complementary perspective by emphasizing the relational dimension of politics. Levi and Stoker (2000) define political trust as citizens' confidence that leaders will act in the public interest and honor their commitments. When promises are unfulfilled, trust declines, shaping not only electoral behavior but also broader attitudes toward governance. In Zambia, Afrobarometer (2023) shows that while citizens value democracy, trust in politicians remains fragile due to repeated cycles of unmet commitments. For Chawama, where residents live with visible signs of unkept promises such as poor sanitation, unemployment, and uncompleted projects, political trust theory provides insight into how disappointment translates into skepticism toward leaders.

The theory also highlights longer-term implications. As Banda (2022) observes, declining trust can lead to voter apathy, cynicism, or alternative forms of political engagement such as protests. Unlike Rational Choice Theory, which focuses on immediate electoral outcomes, Political Trust Theory accounts for the erosion of legitimacy that follows repeated failures to deliver. In this way, it captures dimensions of citizen response that are less visible at the ballot box but equally significant for democratic consolidation.

Taken together, the two theories provide a balanced framework for analyzing voter behavior in Chawama. Rational Choice Theory explains the instrumental logic of punishing or rewarding leaders based on delivery, while Political Trust Theory captures the deeper relational consequences of broken promises. By combining these perspectives, the study can assess both the immediate electoral effects and the longer-term implications for trust and legitimacy. This dual-theory approach ensures that findings are not reduced to simplistic models of voter rationality but instead reflect the complex realities of urban constituencies in Zambia.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON POLITICAL PROMISES AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR



The conceptual framework demonstrates how unfulfilled political promises influence voting behaviour in Chawama Constituency, with trust in political leaders acting as a crucial mediating factor. Political promises, whether delivered or not, are the starting point of this relationship. In communities such as Chawama, where developmental challenges like poor road networks, high unemployment, and inadequate service delivery persist, campaign promises are not merely rhetorical but are understood as commitments that can transform daily life. When politicians fail to honour these pledges, the community perceives this as a breach of accountability, which in turn weakens confidence in leadership and shapes how people vote in subsequent elections (Siachiwena, 2022).

Trust in political leaders plays a central mediating role between promises and voting behaviour. Trust determines whether citizens maintain loyalty to a political figure or withdraw their support. Recent scholarship shows that unfulfilled promises erode public trust, while the fulfilment of

pledges can strengthen it (Wrtil and Strobl, 2024). In Chawama, residents often rely on the government for basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and housing improvements. When such promises remain unfulfilled, voters feel neglected and may perceive leaders as dishonest or self-serving. This erosion of trust directly influences their willingness to participate in elections or remain loyal to the same political party (Newton, 2018).

The dependent variable, voting behaviour, reflects how citizens respond at the ballot box. This includes whether they turn out to vote, which candidate they support, and whether they continue to remain loyal to a particular party. Studies show that young people in Zambia, for example, are increasingly critical of leaders who do not deliver, and their voting behaviour is significantly influenced by their evaluation of unfulfilled promises (Thandi and Mwansa, 2023). For Chawama, this means that political leaders risk losing electoral support when they fail to deliver development projects, while candidates who are perceived as more trustworthy and responsive stand a better chance of attracting votes. Ultimately, the framework captures how promises, trust, and behaviour are interlinked in shaping political accountability and democratic outcomes in Zambia (Cheeseman, 2019).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was employed to examine the effects of unfulfilled political promises on voting behavior in Chawama Constituency. The chapter outlines the research design, target population, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, validity and reliability measures, data analysis techniques, limitations of the methodology, and ethical considerations. Each methodological choice is justified in relation to the study objectives, with the aim of ensuring that the findings generated are credible, reliable, and contextually relevant.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which was appropriate because the focus was on exploring the lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of voters regarding unfulfilled political promises. Qualitative design is particularly suitable for studies that seek to understand phenomena in depth, through the meanings and interpretations that participants attach to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative approaches that emphasize numerical generalizations, qualitative research prioritizes context, depth, and complexity, making it relevant for this study.

The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to collect rich, descriptive data through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. This design made it possible to capture the narratives of voters, community leaders, and political stakeholders in Chawama, thereby providing insight into how unfulfilled political promises shape voter trust, electoral choices, and political participation. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) argue, qualitative research is interpretive and flexible, allowing themes to emerge organically from the voices of participants. This made it well-suited for investigating the nuanced and context-specific ways in which political promises influence voter behavior in Chawama Constituency.

3.2 Target Population

A target population refers to the complete set of individuals or elements that possess characteristics relevant to a particular study and from which the sample is drawn (Kothari, 2014). For this research, the target population consisted of all registered voters in Chawama Constituency as per the 2021 Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) voter register, which was the most recent official record at the time of data collection. According to ECZ (2021), the constituency had approximately 100,000 registered voters during the 2021 general elections.

This population was considered appropriate because registered voters are the direct participants in elections and therefore the most affected by unfulfilled political promises. The population was diverse in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, and socio-economic background, which provided a wide range of perspectives. By focusing on this group, the study captured both the measurable trends in voter behavior and the deeper attitudes that shape political decision-making in Chawama.

3.2 Target Population

A target population refers to the specific group of individuals from which a researcher intends to draw data relevant to the study (Kothari, 2014). According to the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ, 2021), Chawama Constituency had approximately 100,000 registered voters during the 2021 general elections. However, given the time, financial, and logistical constraints of this study, a manageable working target population of 1,000 registered voters was adopted for the research. This sub-population was carefully considered to remain representative of the broader constituency while ensuring feasibility of data collection.

The choice of 1,000 voters as the working target population was justified on the basis that qualitative research emphasizes depth of understanding rather than exhaustive coverage (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on this reduced population, the study was able to capture a wide range of perspectives across age, gender, education, and socio-economic backgrounds without compromising quality or depth. In addition, narrowing the scope improved accessibility

and made it possible to generate reliable insights within the available resources and timeframe, while still reflecting the lived experiences of voters in Chawama.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population in order to draw conclusions about the entire group (Kombo & Tromp, 2013). The target population for this study comprised approximately 1,000 registered voters in Chawama Constituency. From this population, a sample size of 100 respondents, representing 10 percent of the target population, was selected for participation in the study. This sample size was considered adequate to generate reliable findings while remaining manageable within the available time and resource constraints.

The study employed a simple random sampling technique, a probability sampling method in which each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Kothari, 2004). A list of registered voters obtained from local electoral records and community registers served as the sampling frame. Each voter was assigned a unique number, after which random selection was conducted using a random number table to identify the 100 respondents. This approach reduced selection bias and enhanced the representativeness of the sample, making it suitable for examining voters' perceptions and voting behaviour in Chawama Constituency.

The choice of simple random sampling was appropriate for this study because the research sought to capture general voter perceptions rather than opinions of a specific subgroup. Unlike purposive sampling, which is more suitable for exploratory qualitative studies, probability sampling ensured that findings could reasonably reflect patterns within the wider voting population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a sample size of between 10–30 percent of the target population is adequate for social science research where the population is relatively homogeneous, as is the case with registered voters within a single constituency.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

- Individuals who were registered voters in Chawama Constituency
- Individuals aged 18 years and above
- Residents who had participated in at least one previous general election
- Respondents who were willing to provide informed consent

Exclusion criteria included:

- Individuals who were not registered voters in Chawama Constituency
- Residents below the age of 18 years
- Individuals who had recently moved into the constituency and had not participated in any election there
- Respondents who declined to participate or were unavailable during data collection

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are the tools used to obtain information from respondents in order to answer the research questions (Kothari, 2014). For this study, two primary instruments were employed: a semi-structured interview guide and an open-ended questionnaire.

The interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from key informants such as community leaders, political stakeholders, and selected voters. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe further into issues that emerged during the discussions. According to Gill et al. (2008), semi-structured interviews are particularly valuable in qualitative studies because they provide depth and allow respondents to express their views in their own words. This made them suitable for exploring sensitive issues such as political trust, perceptions of unmet promises, and voter decision-making.

The questionnaire consisted mainly of open-ended questions and was administered to a broader group of voters within the sample. While structured questionnaires are common in quantitative studies, open-ended questionnaires are equally useful in qualitative research because they give respondents space to explain their views in detail (Bryman, 2016). The instrument was designed to capture demographic information, voter experiences, and perceptions of political promises.

Both instruments were developed based on insights from existing literature and theories of voting behavior to ensure that they were relevant to the research objectives. Using two instruments also provided a degree of methodological triangulation, which enhanced the credibility of the findings by allowing the researcher to compare data from different sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study titled “Investigating the Effects of Unfulfilled Political Promises on Voting Behavior: A Case of Chawama Constituency.” The data was collected using qualitative methods, specifically interviews and focus group discussions, to capture in-depth views and experiences of participants. The findings are organized into two main sections: (1) the demographic characteristics of participants, and (2) key thematic areas emerging from the research objectives, including the extent of unfulfilled promises, their effects on voting behavior, and strategies for enhancing political accountability. The results are presented through descriptive narratives supported by direct quotations from participants, and the discussion is linked to existing literature and theoretical frameworks outlined in earlier chapters.

The chapter further links the findings directly to the study objectives, providing an evidence-based understanding of how unfulfilled political promises influence voter attitudes, trust, and participation in Chawama Constituency.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The study involved a total of 100 participants, representing registered voters and key informants from various social and economic backgrounds in Chawama Constituency. These participants were purposively selected to ensure diversity in age, gender, education, and occupation, thereby capturing a broad spectrum of community perspectives. This diversity enriched the data by highlighting how unfulfilled political promises are experienced differently across demographic groups. While younger participants often emphasized frustration with unemployment and lack of opportunities, older respondents focused more on issues related to service delivery, infrastructure, and healthcare. The demographic profile, therefore, provides an essential context for interpreting the study’s main findings.

4.1.1 Age of Respondents

Understanding the age distribution of respondents was important in this study because age often influences how individuals perceive and respond to political promises. Younger voters may be

more concerned with opportunities for employment and empowerment, while older voters may prioritize long-term issues such as infrastructure and access to healthcare. Capturing the voices of different age groups, therefore, helped the study to reflect a balanced perspective on how unfulfilled political promises affect voting behavior in Chawama Constituency.

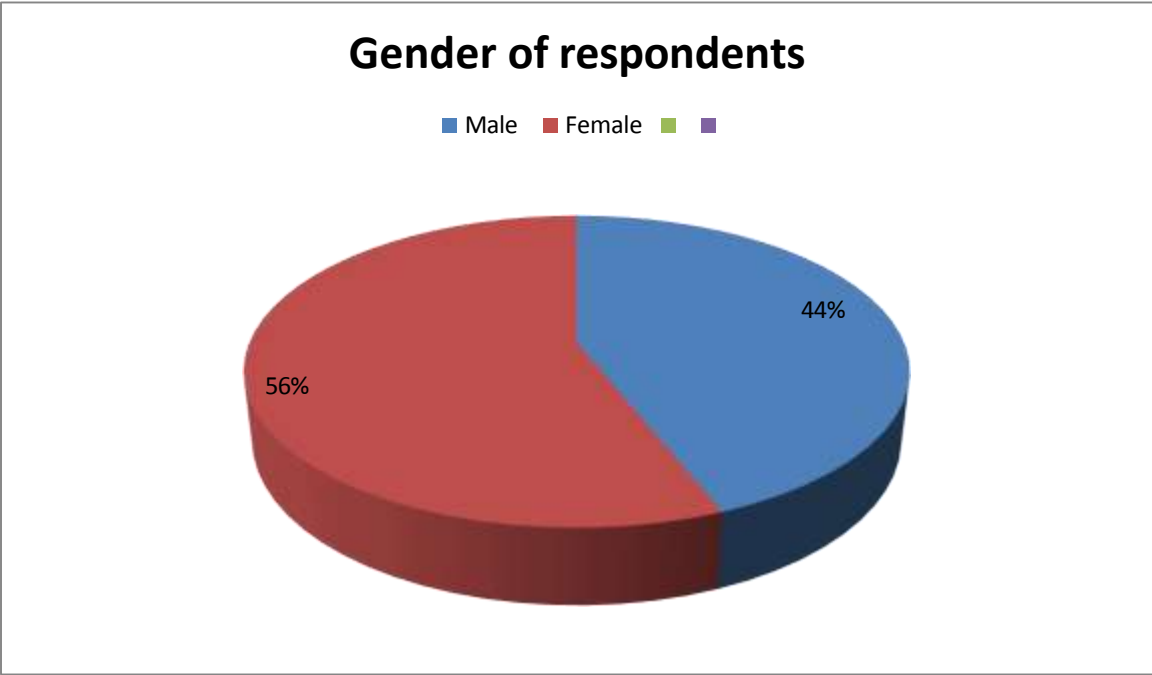
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage(%)
18-25	38	38%
26-35	32	32%
36-45	18	18%
46 and above	12	12%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings indicate that the largest group of respondents (38%) were between the ages of 18 and 25, followed by those aged 26–35 (32%). Together, these two categories account for 70% of the sample, showing that the study predominantly captured the views of youth and young adults. This is significant because younger participants are more directly affected by unfulfilled promises related to job creation, entrepreneurship, and education opportunities. Meanwhile, the 18% of respondents aged 36–45 and 12% aged 46 and above represent the older population, who are more likely to be concerned with service delivery and long-term infrastructural development. The dominance of youth voices in the data highlights the central role that unfulfilled employment and empowerment promises play in shaping electoral behavior in Chawama Constituency.

4.1.2 Gender of Respondents

Gender was an important variable in this study because men and women often experience political promises differently based on their roles and responsibilities in society. For instance, women may prioritize campaign pledges related to healthcare, education, and social protection, while men may be more concerned with employment, business opportunities, and infrastructure. Understanding the gender composition of the respondents, therefore, helped in identifying how unfulfilled promises are perceived and how these perceptions influence voting behavior in Chawama Constituency.



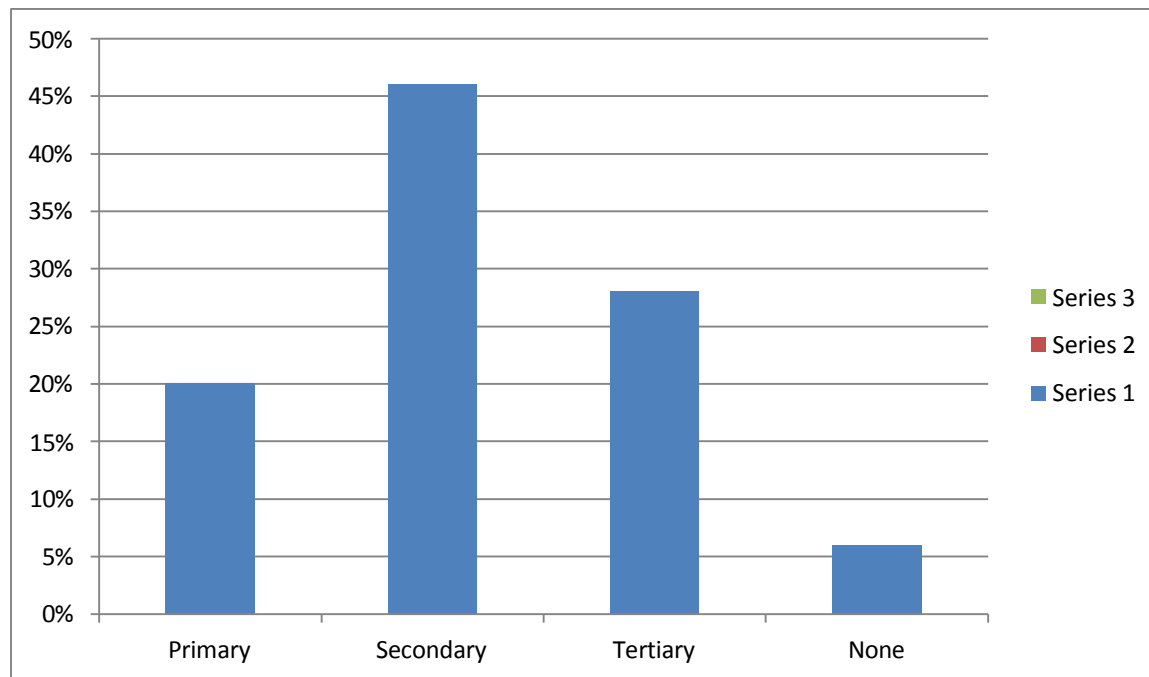
Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings reveal that a slightly higher proportion of respondents were female (56%) compared to male participants (44%). This gender balance is significant because it shows that women’s perspectives are strongly represented in the study. Given that women in urban communities like Chawama often face challenges linked to healthcare services, children’s education, and household welfare, their responses shed light on how unfulfilled promises in these areas influence trust and participation in elections. At the same time, the male respondents contributed perspectives on employment and infrastructure-related pledges, making the overall findings more comprehensive. The slightly larger share of women respondents emphasizes the importance of addressing social service promises if political leaders are to regain trust and ensure inclusive voter participation in Chawama Constituency.

4.1.3 Educational Level of Respondents

Education plays a key role in shaping how voters interpret and respond to political promises. Individuals with higher levels of education may critically evaluate campaign pledges and hold leaders accountable, while those with limited education may focus more on immediate needs such as food security, health, and basic infrastructure. Understanding the education profile of

respondents therefore provides useful insights into how unfulfilled political promises influence different groups within Chawama Constituency.



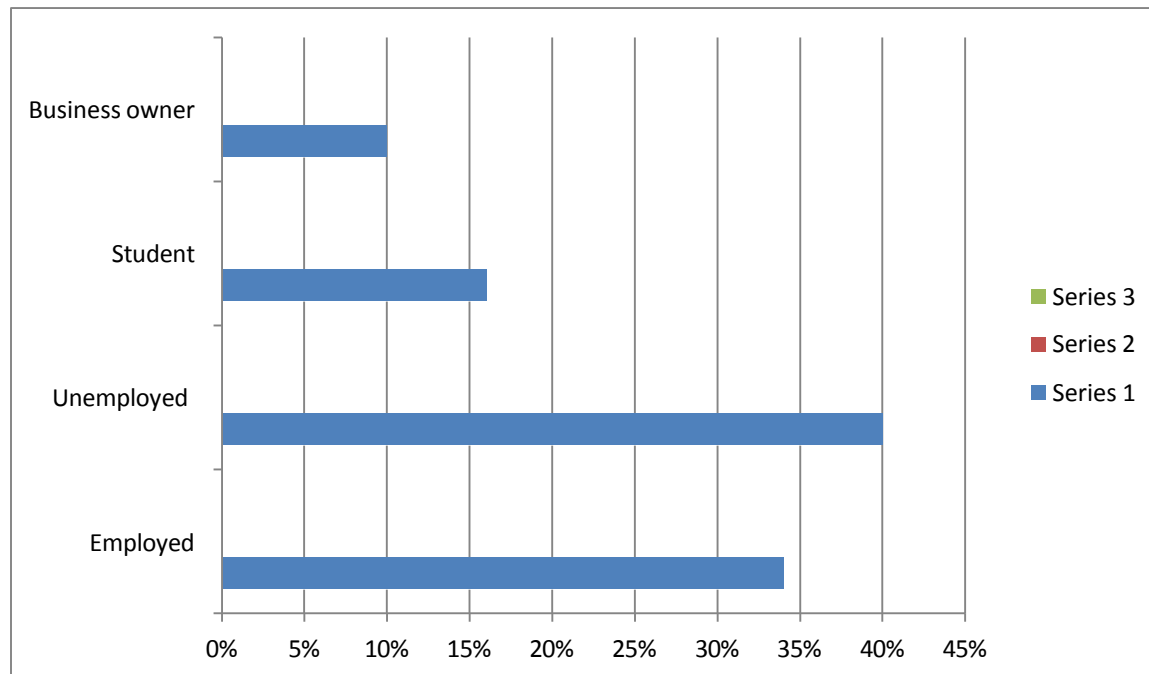
Source: Field Data (2025)

The results indicate that the largest proportion of respondents had attained secondary education (46%), followed by those with tertiary education (28%). This suggests that a significant number of participants were reasonably educated and therefore in a better position to analyze the extent to which campaign promises were fulfilled or broken. About 20% of respondents had only primary education, while 6% reported having no formal education at all. The presence of less-educated participants highlights how broken promises around basic social services such as water, sanitation, and primary healthcare resonate more strongly with this group. On the other hand, the relatively high share of tertiary-educated respondents means issues such as employment creation, entrepreneurship, and governance reforms carry particular weight. These findings demonstrate that unfulfilled promises affect all education groups, though in different ways, shaping overall voter trust and electoral participation in Chawama Constituency.

4.1.4 Employment Status of Respondents

Employment status is a crucial factor in understanding how unfulfilled political promises influence voter behavior. Citizens who are unemployed or underemployed may be more sensitive to unkept promises on job creation and empowerment, while those who are employed or running businesses may place greater emphasis on infrastructure development, taxation policies, and

service delivery. Examining the employment distribution of respondents therefore helps to reveal which groups are most affected by unmet campaign pledges in Chawama Constituency.



Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings show that the largest group of respondents were unemployed (40%), followed by those in formal employment (34%). This highlights that unemployment remains a pressing concern in Chawama, making unfulfilled promises on job creation and youth empowerment highly influential in shaping voting patterns. Students accounted for 16% of the respondents, a group that often looks to political leaders for commitments on education, training, and future opportunities. Meanwhile, 10% of respondents were business owners, whose perspectives centered on issues such as infrastructure, taxation, and access to markets. The dominance of unemployed respondents underscores the deep frustration with political promises that remain unmet, suggesting that employment-related pledges are a critical determinant of voter trust and participation in Chawama Constituency.

In summary, the demographic profile of the respondents reveals that the study captured a wide range of voices within Chawama Constituency. The dominance of young and unemployed participants highlights the socioeconomic challenges that make employment-related promises

especially salient in shaping political perceptions. Meanwhile, the inclusion of both male and female respondents, along with varying educational and occupational backgrounds, provides a balanced foundation for understanding how unfulfilled political promises affect different segments of the community. Collectively, these demographics underscore the diversity of experiences that inform voter attitudes, trust, and participation in Chawama Constituency.

4.2 Presentation of Findings by Themes

Beyond the demographic profile of respondents, this section presents the main findings of the study organized around the research objectives. The themes capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and voices of community members in Chawama, reflecting how unfulfilled political promises shape their day-to-day realities and influence their choices during elections. To bring out the richness of these perspectives, the findings are discussed under three key thematic areas: the extent to which political leaders have failed to fulfill their campaign promises, the effects of these unfulfilled promises on voting behavior, and the strategies that participants believe could enhance political accountability. Direct quotations from participants are included to give authenticity to their views and to ensure that the findings remain grounded in the real-life experiences of the community.

The demographic profile presented in Section 4.1 provides important context for understanding the themes that follow. The age, gender, education, and employment characteristics of respondents help explain why certain issues such as unemployment, infrastructure, and trust in leadership emerged strongly during data collection.

Building on this demographic foundation, this section presents the main findings of the study organized around the research objectives.

4.2.1 Extent to Which Leaders Have Failed to Fulfil Campaign Promises

Table 4.2.2: Reported Effects on Voting Behaviour

Category of fulfillment	Frequency	Percentage(100%)
Most promises fulfilled	10	10%

Some promises fulfilled	24	24%
Few promises fulfilled	40	40%
No promises fulfilled	26	26%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Field Data (2025)*, collected from 100 purposively selected participants through interviews and open-ended questionnaires representing diverse gender, age, and socioeconomic backgrounds in Chawama Constituency.

Table 4.2.1: Perceived Extent of Promise Fulfilment

The results reveal a general pattern of widespread dissatisfaction with how political leaders in Chawama Constituency have honoured their campaign commitments. The largest proportion of respondents (40%) stated that *few* promises were fulfilled, while another 26% believed that *no* promises were met. Combined, these figures indicate that two-thirds of residents perceive very limited progress after elections despite numerous campaign pledges. A further 24% felt that *some* promises were fulfilled, and only a small minority (10%) said that *most* had been achieved. This small satisfied group may reflect variations in political loyalty or access to patronage, where individuals or communities benefiting from targeted projects interpret leadership performance more favourably. Such differences illustrate how selective service delivery and political affiliation can influence perceptions of fulfilment.

The areas most frequently cited as suffering from unfulfilled promises included employment creation, infrastructure development, and access to social services such as healthcare and education. Young people particularly emphasised the lack of job opportunities, noting that campaign commitments on youth empowerment and skills training had not translated into meaningful employment. Many respondents also mentioned deteriorating roads, poor drainage, unreliable water supply, and under-resourced health facilities as visible evidence of broken promises. Education featured prominently, with participants expressing disappointment in the slow improvement of school facilities and the continued inaccessibility of affordable learning opportunities.

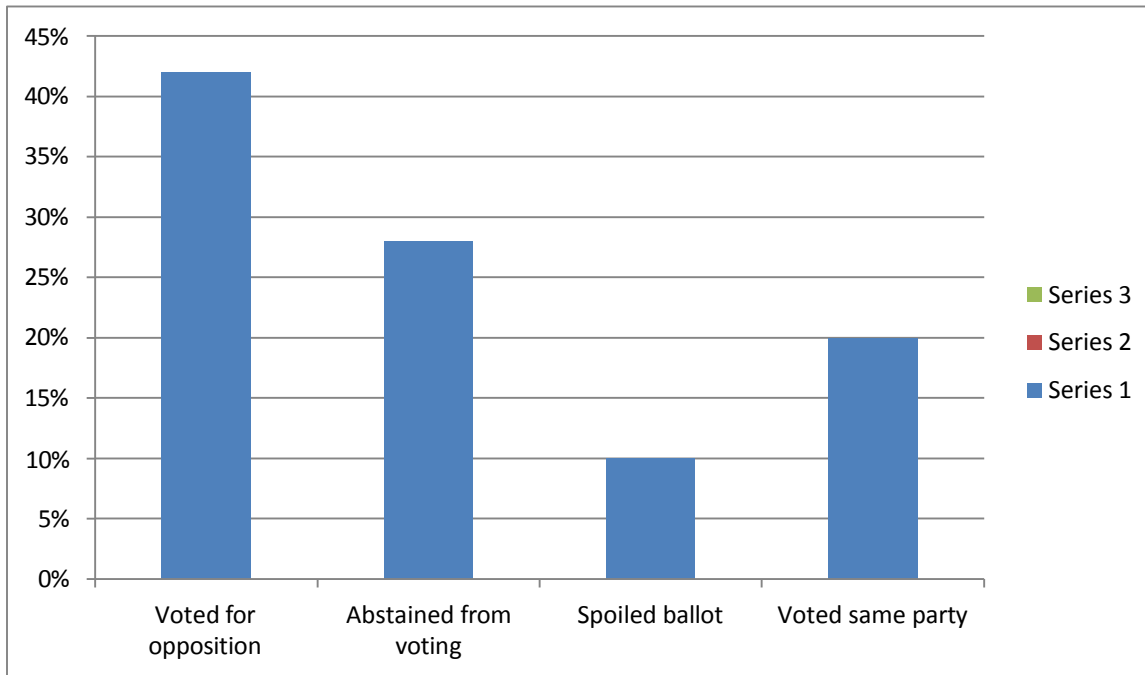
Participants’ voices reflected this strong sense of neglect. One respondent remarked, “*Every election we are told that jobs will come and our youths will be empowered, but nothing has*

changed. Our young people still roam the streets without hope.” Another added, *“They promised us good roads and better drainage, but when it rains, our homes flood. Nothing has been done.”* These experiences capture the frustration and disillusionment that many residents associate with unkept campaign pledges.

Repeated failure to deliver has profoundly shaped community perceptions. Many participants viewed promises as vote-winning tools rather than genuine development commitments. This has bred cynicism and a feeling of betrayal, prompting some to withdraw from political participation while others have shifted allegiance in protest. As one participant expressed, *“We are tired of being used. They remember us during campaigns but forget us as soon as they enter office.”*

In summary, the findings demonstrate that unfulfilled political promises in Chawama are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of weak accountability and eroding trust between citizens and leaders. The few residents who perceive promises as fulfilled likely do so because of partisan ties or direct benefits from selective interventions, underscoring inequality in service delivery. These results align with wider studies that link persistent unkept promises to declining political trust and voter confidence in democratic institutions (Gyampo, 2017; Resnick, 2017; Banda, 2019).

4.2.2 Influence of Unfulfilled Promises on Voting Behaviour



Source: *Field Data (2025)*, collected from 100 purposively selected participants through interviews and open-ended questionnaires representing diverse gender, age, and socioeconomic backgrounds in Chawama Constituency.

Figure 4.2.2: Reported Effects on Voting Behaviour

The findings show that the most common reaction to unfulfilled political promises was voting for the opposition, reported by 42% of respondents. This suggests that many residents of Chawama have shifted their political allegiance as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the ruling party’s performance. At the same time, 28% reported abstaining from voting altogether, indicating growing voter apathy. Only 20% of respondents said they continued to support the same party, while 10% admitted to spoiling their ballots as a symbolic protest.

These results are drawn from a purposively selected sample of 100 participants that reflected a mix of ages, genders, education levels, and occupations. This diversity ensured that the findings represented the views of both young and older voters, those employed and unemployed, and individuals with varying levels of political engagement. The variety of voices captured through

interviews and focus group discussions provides a credible reflection of how residents in Chawama perceive and respond to unfulfilled promises.

Patterns emerging from these results show that broken promises not only weaken loyalty to political parties but also discourage active participation in elections. Many participants expressed that shifting their vote to the opposition was a deliberate act of protest. One respondent explained, *“I voted for the opposition because the leaders I supported before never kept their word. I decided it was time to give someone else a chance.”* This experience illustrates a conscious attempt by citizens to use the ballot as a tool for accountability—a behaviour consistent with Rational Choice Theory (Downs, 1957), which suggests that voters evaluate options based on expected performance and perceived benefits.

For some participants, abstaining from elections reflected deep frustration and loss of faith in the political process. As one shared, *“Why waste my time standing in line when nothing changes after we vote? They promise us jobs and development, but we see nothing.”* This sense of disillusionment aligns with Political Trust Theory (Levi & Stoker, 2000), which argues that repeated failures to deliver erode citizens’ confidence in political institutions. Similar patterns have been documented by Afrobarometer (2023), which found that urban voters across several African countries, including Zambia, increasingly withdraw from elections when promises are repeatedly unmet.

Some respondents admitted that even though they were disappointed, they continued supporting the same political party. One participant noted, *“I still vote for the same people because I have always done so, even when I am not happy.”* This behaviour reflects emotional or identity-based loyalty that often persists despite dissatisfaction, echoing findings by Cheeseman (2015), who observed that strong partisan identities in African democracies can override rational evaluation of performance. Such loyalty demonstrates how political identity can anchor voter behaviour even amid widespread frustration.

Others chose to express their anger symbolically through protest voting. One respondent remarked, *“I wanted to show my anger, so I spoiled my vote. At least that way they know I am not happy.”* This act of intentional ballot spoiling suggests a subtle yet significant form of

dissent, where citizens reject available choices but still seek to signal dissatisfaction. According to Resnick (2017), such symbolic protests represent a shift toward issue-based political engagement, even if they result in lower overall voter turnout.

The broader implications of these findings reveal that unfulfilled promises contribute to declining trust and a weakening of democratic participation in Chawama. When citizens disengage or vote in protest, electoral legitimacy and political stability are undermined. This trend has also been noted by Gyampo (2017) in Ghana and Banda (2019) in Zambia, where disillusionment with leadership led to unpredictable voting patterns and shrinking voter confidence. To mitigate these challenges, political leaders must prioritise honesty and transparency in campaign messaging, establish clear progress-reporting mechanisms, and involve citizens in post-election monitoring. Civic education programmes led by the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) and civil society organisations could also help rebuild public trust and encourage informed participation.

In conclusion, the evidence from Chawama demonstrates that unfulfilled political promises directly shape how citizens engage with democracy. The rise in opposition support, voter apathy, and protest voting underscores the erosion of trust between leaders and citizens. However, these patterns also reflect an evolving electorate one that is more willing to demand accountability through strategic choices or symbolic acts. The findings highlight the urgent need for responsive leadership and more transparent governance systems in Zambia. This analysis provides a foundation for the next chapter, which explores practical recommendations for strengthening accountability and restoring public confidence in the country's political process.

4.2.3 Strategies for Enhancing Political Accountability



Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 4.2.3: Suggested Strategies by Participants

The most frequently suggested strategy by respondents was the introduction of stronger laws (30%) to compel political leaders to fulfill their campaign promises. Participants believed that without clear legal frameworks, politicians can continue making empty pledges without consequence. Many felt that accountability should move from being a moral expectation to a legal obligation, where leaders are formally bound by their commitments once in office. However, enforcing such laws in Zambia’s current political climate may prove difficult due to weak institutional independence, limited parliamentary oversight, and the dominance of ruling party interests. As Bovens (2010) argues, accountability mechanisms require both *answerability* and *enforceability* two conditions that remain fragile within many developing democracies.

Another widely supported strategy was the promotion of public meetings and community forums (25%) as direct channels for citizen engagement. Respondents emphasised that open dialogue between leaders and residents would create opportunities to review progress, question unfulfilled promises, and suggest solutions collectively. These interactions were viewed as crucial for rebuilding trust in leaders who are often perceived as distant after elections. Yet, such forums can be difficult to sustain, particularly where funding is limited and leaders may avoid criticism.

Their effectiveness therefore depends on political openness, civic awareness, and the willingness of both sides to maintain constructive engagement.

Penalties for leaders who fail to honour campaign commitments (20%) also featured prominently among respondents' proposals. Participants expressed frustration over repeated cycles of political deception and felt that clear sanctions could deter dishonesty in future elections. One participant stated, *"If they know there will be punishment for lying to the people, maybe they will think twice before making promises they cannot keep"* (Respondent 1, Interview). Suggested penalties included fines, suspension from office, or public censure. While such measures could enhance integrity, their implementation would require strong legal backing and impartial institutions capable of enforcing consequences without political interference.

Community monitoring (25%) emerged as another key recommendation. Respondents argued that citizens, community leaders, and civil society organisations should actively track development projects and demand regular progress updates from elected officials. As one participant explained, *"We, the people, must follow up on the promises. Civil society and community leaders can help us make sure politicians don't just disappear after elections"* (Respondent 2, Interview). Community monitoring empowers citizens to verify results on the ground and keeps pressure on leaders between election cycles. However, challenges such as low civic literacy, lack of resources, and fear of reprisals may limit its sustainability. To overcome these barriers, participants suggested partnerships between communities, NGOs, and local government structures to institutionalise citizen oversight.

Although community monitoring and public forums both rely on citizen participation, respondents viewed them as complementary rather than duplicative. Monitoring provides ongoing scrutiny of projects, while forums offer a structured space for public dialogue and feedback. Together, they can reinforce participatory accountability by combining continuous oversight with open communication a concept echoed by Fox (2015), who argues that "accountability politics" thrives when citizen action is paired with institutional responsiveness.

Overall, these strategies reveal a strong desire among residents of Chawama for practical mechanisms that combine legal enforcement, transparency, and citizen participation. The

emphasis on enforceable laws and civic engagement reflects Brinkerhoff's (2013) view that lasting accountability depends on both institutional strength and active citizen involvement. While each approach presents challenges, their collective adoption could significantly enhance political accountability and rebuild public trust in Zambia's democratic processes.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the majority of political promises made in Chawama Constituency remain unfulfilled, particularly in critical areas such as employment creation, infrastructure development, healthcare, and education. Residents consistently described a cycle of disappointment in which campaign pledges are made during elections but rarely materialize once leaders assume office. This persistent pattern has fostered deep skepticism among citizens, eroding trust in political leaders and weakening the perceived value of campaign promises.

In response to these repeated failures, voting behavior in Chawama has shifted significantly. Many residents now engage in protest voting by supporting opposition candidates, while others express their frustration by abstaining from elections or deliberately spoiling their ballots. This growing apathy and disillusionment demonstrate how unkept promises undermine electoral participation and democratic legitimacy. At the same time, the community strongly expressed a desire for greater accountability, suggesting strategies such as stronger laws to bind politicians to their commitments, regular public meetings for dialogue, penalties for non-performance, and citizen-led monitoring mechanisms. Collectively, these findings highlight that for trust and participation to be restored, political accountability must move beyond campaign rhetoric to tangible action and transparent engagement with the electorate.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the three specific objectives and the theoretical frameworks that guided the research. The results revealed that a majority of residents in Chawama believed few or no campaign promises had been fulfilled, showing a widespread perception of political neglect. Voters responded to these unkept promises in different ways: 42% shifted allegiance to opposition candidates as a form of protest, 28% abstained from voting, 20% remained loyal to the ruling party, and 10% spoiled their ballots as an expression of anger

and frustration. In terms of solutions, participants proposed stronger legal frameworks, enforcement of penalties, community monitoring, and public forums to enhance accountability. These findings highlight not only dissatisfaction with the delivery of promises but also a desire for structural change in how political leaders are held responsible.

Rational Choice Theory and Political Trust Theory provide valuable lenses for interpreting these outcomes. Rational Choice Theory explains why many voters in Chawama recalibrated their choices switching to opposition parties or spoiling ballots as a rational response to unmet expectations, using their votes as instruments of accountability. Political Trust Theory, on the other hand, helps to understand the rising apathy among voters who have lost faith in political institutions due to repeated unfulfilled commitments. This erosion of trust mirrors broader trends observed in African democracies, where citizens increasingly withdraw from participation when promises are not met (Gyampo, 2017; Resnick, 2017; Banda, 2019). The strategies proposed by participants reflect a dual demand for enforceable laws and participatory oversight, indicating that citizens want both top-down and bottom-up mechanisms of accountability. Overall, the findings reinforce that restoring voter confidence in Zambia requires credible leadership, consistent delivery, and transparent communication to bridge the widening gap between campaign promises and lived realities.

4.4.1 Extent to Which Leaders Have Failed to Fulfil Campaign Promises

The findings in Section 4.2 revealed that many residents of Chawama believe campaign promises particularly those concerning employment, infrastructure, and healthcare remain largely unfulfilled. Most participants observed that leaders' pledges during elections rarely translate into concrete development after they assume office. Respondents repeatedly cited unemployment, poor road networks, and limited access to health services as visible signs of political neglect. This persistent failure has generated widespread frustration and reinforced the perception that promises serve mainly as campaign tools rather than genuine commitments. One participant remarked, "They come with big speeches about jobs and clinics, but after voting we never see them again." Another echoed this sentiment, noting, "Even small things like fixing roads or providing medicine in clinics never happen." These lived experiences illustrate a deep sense of betrayal and fatigue toward political leadership in Chawama.

Globally, similar patterns have been documented in democratic systems where unfulfilled promises erode political legitimacy. Naurin (2014) observed that in established democracies, citizens use campaign pledges as benchmarks for evaluating performance, and failure to deliver leads to declining trust. Likewise, Plescia and Eberl (2021) found across Europe that voters grow disillusioned when promises related to economic welfare remain unmet. However, the Zambian case adds nuance: while disappointment in advanced democracies often relates to policy complexity or partisan compromise, in developing contexts the effects are more immediate and severe because unfulfilled promises directly touch on basic survival needs such as jobs, roads, and healthcare. The intensity of disillusionment in Chawama therefore stems from socioeconomic vulnerability—broken promises are not merely political failures but threats to livelihoods. This contrast underscores that while the psychological response of distrust is universal, its social and economic consequences are far more pronounced in low-income democracies.

Within Southern Africa, similar dynamics are evident but shaped by shared structural constraints. In Malawi, Chinsinga (2018) reported that chronic resource shortages and clientelism limit leaders' ability to fulfil campaign pledges, while in South Africa, Booysen (2019) highlighted that bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption blunt service delivery, leading to protests in urban settlements. These studies help position Zambia's experience within a regional pattern of institutional weakness, where patronage politics and inadequate fiscal decentralisation impede accountability. Nonetheless, the Chawama case reveals a distinctive feature: citizens' frustration focuses less on ideological failure and more on tangible, everyday hardships. The combination of economic precarity, youth unemployment, and fragile local governance makes disappointment more personal and urgent than in wealthier or more institutionally robust neighbours.

At the national level, the present findings complement but also deepen earlier Zambian research. Mulenga and Mpofu (2021) showed that urban voters frequently switch allegiance when promises remain unmet, while Sishuwa (2020) linked economic hardship during the 2021 elections to growing voter apathy. The voices from Chawama reinforce these conclusions yet extend them by showing that disappointment is now accompanied by active resentment toward

the repetitive nature of political deception. Respondents suggested that unmet expectations are worsening rather than improving across election cycles, as each new administration inherits—and often repeats—the same undelivered pledges. This cumulative frustration is gradually transforming campaign periods into moments of skepticism rather than hope.

Rational Choice Theory offers a useful lens to interpret these behavioural shifts. Voters in Chawama appeared to weigh the costs and benefits of continued support and acted strategically when expected returns diminished. For example, a respondent stated, “I voted for the opposition this time because I gained nothing last time.” Such reasoning exemplifies rational voter behaviour, similar to findings in Kenyan and Ghanaian studies (Cheeseman 2015; Gyampo 2017), where citizens re-evaluate support when leaders fail to deliver material benefits. Yet Rational Choice in this context extends beyond individual calculation—it is also collective, as communities coordinate discontent through shared experiences of unfulfilled promises. The theory thus explains not only electoral switching but the broader pattern of community-wide disengagement that follows unmet expectations.

Political Trust Theory further explains how repeated disappointment corrodes both interpersonal and institutional trust. Participants described feeling “used and forgotten” by politicians, reflecting declining faith in the sincerity of leadership. This interpersonal mistrust extends to institutions such as Parliament, local councils, and the Electoral Commission, which citizens view as complicit or ineffective in ensuring accountability. Mishler and Rose (2001) argue that trust operates as a feedback loop: once citizens lose confidence in institutional integrity, they are less likely to participate, which in turn weakens democratic legitimacy. The same cycle is evident in Chawama, where voters’ withdrawal threatens long-term civic engagement and could erode social cohesion if left unaddressed. Strengthening institutional trust through transparent reporting, independent media oversight, and civil-society monitoring emerges as a critical step toward rebuilding credibility in the political system.

In conclusion, the case of Chawama both confirms and extends global and regional research on the consequences of unfulfilled political promises. It demonstrates that while disappointment and distrust are common across democracies, their intensity in developing contexts is amplified by structural inequalities and fragile institutions. The Chawama findings reveal that the erosion of

trust is not confined to personal relationships with leaders but extends to confidence in the entire accountability framework. Over time, this distrust risks entrenching voter apathy and weakening democratic participation. However, the persistence of civic awareness and citizens' calls for stronger enforcement and community oversight also suggest potential for renewal if institutional reforms and responsive governance are prioritised.

4.4.2 Influence of Unfulfilled Promises on Voting Behaviour

The qualitative evidence presented in Section 4.2 indicates that unfulfilled campaign promises have produced a range of concrete voting responses in Chawama: many respondents reported moving toward opposition candidates, a substantial number admitted to abstaining from recent elections, some deliberately spoiled their ballots as a form of protest, and a minority continued to support the same party out of loyalty or material ties. These reactions were described not as fleeting emotions but as considered responses that reflect accumulated experience with non-delivery. Young people spoke most passionately about lost employment opportunities, parents about failing clinics and schools, and commuters about roads that remain impassable. Importantly, participants framed these choices as deliberate strategies for signalling dissatisfaction or conserving scarce resources (time, money, social capital) rather than as purely sentimental acts. That mix of protest (switching or spoiling ballots), withdrawal (abstention), and residual support shows that voting behaviour in Chawama has become instrumental and nuanced: citizens weigh past performance when deciding whether to reward, punish, or disengage from political actors. The patterns are therefore less about a single type of reaction and more about a repertoire of responses that the electorate uses to cope with chronic unfulfilled promises. This complexity provides the empirical basis for interpreting local electoral shifts as responses to both policy non-delivery and the social constraints that shape voting choices.

These findings correspond closely with global scholarship on the electoral effects of broken promises. Dalton (2017) argues that when citizens routinely experience a gap between political rhetoric and results, they are likely to lose faith in the utility of voting, which can depress turnout; Elinder et al. (2015) similarly show that voters often resort to strategic punishment of incumbents who fail to deliver, thereby shifting vote shares or producing protest votes. The Chawama data resonate with these insights: many respondents described their decision to vote

opposition or to abstain in explicitly instrumental terms—voting is evaluated as an investment that must deliver returns. On the other hand, unlike some higher-income settings where voters may excuse short-term non-delivery because of governance complexity, Chawama respondents were less willing to tolerate repeated failures on basic services and livelihood promises. This suggests that while the global mechanisms—reduced turnout, punishment of incumbents, strategic vote switching—are in play, their intensity and form are shaped by the immediacy of material deprivation: where livelihoods hang in the balance, tolerance for non-delivery is thinner and behavioural responses are sharper.

At the regional level, the Chawama experience echoes patterns identified in African studies but also refines them in important ways. Cheeseman (2015) documents how service delivery failures in urban African contexts often spur protest voting and opposition mobilisation; Gyampo (2020) finds that youth disillusionment in Ghana stems largely from unfulfilled promises about jobs and education. Chawama’s respondents articulate a comparable interplay between service failure and behavioural change, particularly among younger cohorts who see voting as a transactional relationship: when promised gains do not materialise, they withdraw support. Yet Chawama also highlights a subtle shift visible in some urban African constituencies—an erosion of traditional patronage cushions. In other words, while ethnic and clientelist ties continue to mediate political choices in parts of the continent, Chawama’s urban electorate increasingly prioritises delivery on concrete livelihood needs, suggesting a gradual move toward issue-based accountability in the day-to-day politics of cities.

Zambian evidence provides a complementary backdrop that helps situate the Chawama findings within national trends. The ECZ turnout figures for the 2021 cycle (as referenced earlier in this study) show lower participation in urban districts, a pattern that the Chawama narratives explain through lived experience: abstention is not merely disengagement but often an expression of the perception that voting has not produced improvements. Banda (2022) highlights rising political disengagement among Zambian youth, driven by unemployment and diminishing faith in electoral remedies, and the Chawama data give these statistics a human face young respondents described feelings of betrayal and a calculation that their scarce time and resources are better spent on survival than on what they see as ritualised voting. At the same time, Chawama shows heterogeneity in responses: some residents channel dissatisfaction into opposition votes rather

than withdrawal, which means declining turnout at the aggregate level coexists with active protest in specific voter segments. That differentiation matters for understanding electoral outcomes: aggregate turnout trends mask the directional shifts that occur when disaffected voters concentrate their protest in particular wards or demographic groups.

Generational differences also emerged strongly from the data, revealing that younger voters were particularly prone to abstention and protest voting. Many youths expressed a deeper sense of disillusionment with traditional campaign promises, viewing politics as an untrustworthy arena dominated by repetitive rhetoric and limited economic returns. They associated voting with little personal benefit and often opted for opposition or disengagement as a rational form of protest. In contrast, older voters, while equally frustrated, tended to maintain party loyalty due to long-standing political identities, social networks, or reliance on ruling-party patronage. This generational divide highlights how age and experience shape electoral responses: while older voters often prioritise continuity, younger cohorts emphasise accountability and tangible outcomes.

Rational Choice Theory helps to make sense of why these behavioural shifts occur. From this viewpoint, voters are pragmatic actors who weigh the expected benefits of casting a ballot for a particular party against the costs of doing so. In Chawama, repeated experience of non-delivery reduces the expected payoff of supporting incumbents: if promised jobs, roads, or health services do not materialise, the instrumental rationale for voting for the same leaders weakens. Respondents described their decisions to abstain or to transfer support as cost-benefit calculations—if voting yields no material improvement, then the perceived cost of participation (time, transport, opportunity cost) outweighs the expected benefit. Yet Rational Choice also explains why a base of loyal supporters persists: for some, the expected non-electoral benefits (patronage, social ties, perceived risk of change) still outweigh potential gains from switching. Thus, the Chawama case reveals that rational calculations are contextually bounded: economic precarity amplifies the incentive to punish non-performance, while social embeddedness tempers the willingness to sever political ties.

Political Trust Theory adds a complementary, affective dimension by explaining how the erosion of confidence changes both attitudes and behaviours. Repeated unfulfilled promises do not

merely alter calculations about votes; they corrode the moral and normative basis for political engagement. In Chawama, respondents often spoke in moral terms—feeling “used” or “taken for granted” which signals that distrust has penetrated beyond instrumental reasoning into the realm of legitimacy. Once trust is undermined, citizens become less disposed to engage in the civic practices that sustain democracy: they are less likely to participate in public meetings, less likely to believe that oversight mechanisms will work, and more likely to treat political messages as performative. This affective shift explains why some responses—such as spoiled ballots—are expressive acts of moral condemnation rather than purely strategic choices. Political Trust Theory therefore clarifies why restoring turnout requires both policy delivery and a longer process of rebuilding credibility: material fixes without demonstrable ethical commitment may not be sufficient to repair eroded trust.

4.4.3 Strategies for Enhancing Political Accountability

The findings presented in Section 4.2 show that residents of Chawama did not merely describe the failures of their political leaders but also articulated a range of strategies that could enhance accountability and improve the fulfilment of promises. Participants repeatedly pointed to the need for stronger legal frameworks to bind politicians to their campaign commitments, the introduction of penalties for leaders who fail to deliver, greater use of community monitoring structures, and more frequent public meetings where leaders are required to explain progress. These strategies reflect both frustration with the current cycle of unmet promises and a proactive desire to reshape how politics operates in the constituency. Importantly, the suggestions were not abstract but grounded in the daily struggles of residents: poor roads, unreliable services, and unemployment provided the practical context for their demand that leaders be held to account in tangible and enforceable ways. Together, these citizen-driven proposals highlight an urgent policy implication—the necessity for institutional reforms that convert electoral accountability from a moral expectation into an enforceable democratic standard, ensuring that political promises carry both legal weight and measurable performance obligations.

Globally, similar calls for stronger accountability mechanisms have been documented. Fox (2015) argues that citizen-led accountability, when backed by institutional support, is among the most effective ways of ensuring that leaders move from rhetoric to delivery. Likewise, Gaventa

(2020) emphasizes that accountability frameworks which combine state enforcement with grassroots monitoring are more likely to restore legitimacy in democratic systems facing a crisis of trust. The strategies voiced by Chawama residents closely mirror these global arguments, particularly the emphasis on combining legal measures with active citizen engagement. However, the Chawama findings also add a distinctive emphasis on basic livelihood issues, suggesting that global models of accountability must be adapted to the immediate priorities of communities where unmet promises are not abstract but tied directly to survival and dignity.

At the regional level, evidence from African democracies also reinforces these insights. Johnson (2019) highlights in the Liberian context that without robust accountability structures, campaign promises are repeatedly recycled without meaningful delivery, leading to chronic voter cynicism. Booyesen (2011), studying South Africa, similarly notes that public protests and community-based monitoring have emerged as grassroots mechanisms to compel governments to address service delivery failures. The strategies proposed by Chawama residents therefore echo regional experiences in which formal institutions are often insufficient, and citizens feel compelled to take on monitoring roles themselves. What distinguishes Chawama is the insistence on a balance: residents called not only for stronger community involvement but also for enforceable penalties, suggesting that lived frustration with repeated cycles of neglect has heightened the demand for both top-down and bottom-up solutions.

Within Zambia, there is a growing body of evidence that supports these perspectives. Phiri (2021) highlights that weak accountability mechanisms have allowed leaders to avoid consequences for unfulfilled promises, thereby undermining democratic consolidation. Civil society organisations and NGOs have similarly argued that greater community participation in governance, combined with stronger institutional checks, are vital for restoring trust in the political process. The voices from Chawama fit neatly within this national debate: respondents envisioned accountability as a shared responsibility between citizens, local leaders, and formal institutions. Their proposals for public meetings and community monitoring resonate with civil society's long-standing call for participatory governance, while their demand for stronger laws and penalties reflects recognition that civic pressure alone is insufficient in the absence of binding institutional enforcement.

Political Trust Theory provides a useful lens for understanding why these strategies matter. Trust, once broken, cannot be restored by rhetoric alone; it requires visible and credible mechanisms that reassure citizens that leaders are genuinely answerable for their commitments. In Chawama, participants often described feeling “used” or “forgotten” after elections, a sentiment that can only be countered by sustained accountability measures that demonstrate responsiveness and transparency. The demand for regular public meetings and legal enforcement can therefore be understood as attempts to rebuild the fragile bridge of trust between citizens and leaders. By creating mechanisms that hold leaders visibly responsible, communities hope to reduce cynicism and restore confidence in democratic processes. Political Trust Theory suggests that without such measures, disengagement will deepen, but with them, a gradual process of confidence rebuilding can occur.

Rational Choice Theory further illuminates the logic behind these demands. If voting is understood as a calculation of costs and benefits, then the repeated experience of unfulfilled promises diminishes the expected returns from electoral participation. Introducing visible accountability measures—such as penalties for broken promises or community monitoring—changes this calculus. When citizens believe that leaders face real consequences for neglecting their commitments, the perceived benefit of participating in elections increases. Respondents in Chawama implicitly recognized this dynamic: their proposals suggest that stronger accountability would not only discipline leaders but also give voters greater incentive to engage, knowing that their choices could translate into tangible improvements. Rational Choice Theory thus explains why visible enforcement mechanisms are not just about punishing leaders but also about motivating citizens to remain active participants in the democratic process.

In summary, the Chawama case demonstrates that while residents echo global and regional calls for stronger accountability, their strategies are deeply grounded in local realities shaped by unmet employment promises, poor infrastructure, and inadequate services. Their voices confirm that accountability cannot remain rhetorical but must be both institutionalised through laws and penalties and localised through citizen engagement. The integration of Political Trust and Rational Choice perspectives shows that accountability serves dual purposes: it rebuilds the moral legitimacy of leadership while also reshaping the incentives that drive voter behaviour. Ultimately, the findings illustrate that communities like Chawama are not passive victims of

unfulfilled promises but active agents who envision pathways toward a more accountable and responsive political system.

Taken together, the Chawama findings both mirror global and regional patterns and contribute specific local insights that deepen our understanding of how unfulfilled promises shape electoral behaviour. The constituency's strong youth presence magnifies the political consequences of unmet employment pledges, producing a pronounced generational tilt toward apathy and protest that may have longer-term implications for political socialization. Moreover, the emphasis on immediate livelihood concerns (jobs, roads, clinics) shows that when core needs are at stake, voters' tolerance for non-delivery is markedly low. The combined explanatory power of Rational Choice and Political Trust frameworks instrumental calculations entwined with eroded normative confidence provides a robust account of the behavioural shifts observed.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the main conclusions and practical recommendations arising from the study. It highlights key findings linked to the three research objectives: examining the extent to which leaders in Chawama have failed to fulfil campaign promises, assessing how those unfulfilled promises have influenced voting behaviour, and identifying strategies for strengthening political accountability. The discussion draws on the study's results and relevant literature to demonstrate how the evidence contributes to understanding political behaviour in Chawama. The chapter is organised into three main parts: conclusions based on the study's findings, recommendations for policy and practice, and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Conclusion

The first objective of the study was to examine the extent to which political leaders in Chawama had failed to fulfil their campaign promises. The findings demonstrated that the majority of respondents perceived most pledges particularly those concerning job creation, infrastructure development, and access to quality healthcare as largely unrealised. This persistent pattern led citizens to view campaign commitments as rhetorical tools rather than binding obligations. The conclusion that emerges is that repeated cycles of non-delivery have normalised political distrust, transforming campaign rhetoric into symbols of manipulation rather than accountability. In Chawama, unmet pledges are no longer isolated disappointments but have become embedded in the political culture, eroding faith in leadership over time.

When viewed in the global and regional context, the Chawama experience reflects but also refines broader trends. Studies by Naurin (2014) and Dalton (2017) show that broken promises in established democracies diminish trust and participation, while Gyampo (2017, 2020) and Cheeseman (2015) report similar patterns of disillusionment across Africa. The Zambian case extends this scholarship by demonstrating how unkept commitments on employment and service delivery resonate more sharply in contexts of economic vulnerability. The conclusion drawn is that while disappointment with political performance is universal, its consequences in developing democracies are more immediate and severe because unrealised promises directly affect citizens' daily survival.

The second objective focused on how these unmet commitments influence voting behaviour. The study found that residents respond through several pathways some switch allegiance to opposition parties, others abstain from elections, a few spoil ballots in protest, while others maintain loyalty owing to social or economic ties. These actions reflect deliberate calculations rather than apathy, with young people especially prone to abstention and protest voting due to repeated experiences of neglect. The conclusion here is that voting in Chawama has evolved into a rational and moral negotiation shaped by cumulative disappointment, where political disengagement and protest both function as expressions of eroded trust in the electoral process.

The explanatory power of Rational Choice Theory and Political Trust Theory provided deeper insight into these behaviours. Rational Choice Theory explains abstention and vote switching as logical outcomes when the perceived benefits of participation diminish. Political Trust Theory complements this by showing that repeated betrayal corrodes the moral and emotional foundation of civic engagement. The combined conclusion is that political disengagement in Chawama represents both a rational reaction to poor performance and an emotional withdrawal rooted in long-term disillusionment.

The third objective sought to identify strategies for enhancing political accountability. Respondents proposed stronger laws, clear penalties for non-performance, more active community monitoring, and regular public meetings to track progress. These citizen-driven solutions reveal that residents of Chawama are not passive observers but critical participants who desire institutional reforms that transform electoral accountability from moral expectation into enforceable practice. The conclusion is that while distrust is widespread, there remains civic optimism anchored in the belief that stronger institutions and citizen oversight can restore public confidence in governance.

This study contributes to knowledge by situating the Zambian experience within comparative scholarship and addressing the research gap identified in Chapter One specifically, the limited understanding of how unmet political commitments shape voter attitudes and participation in urban contexts. It fills this gap by providing empirical evidence from Chawama that links unrealised pledges to political disengagement and weakened trust. The overarching conclusion is

that repeated non-fulfilment of promises has normalised distrust, weakened accountability, and redefined how citizens engage with democracy. However, the persistence of civic awareness and demands for reform suggest that political renewal is still possible if leaders move from rhetorical commitment to tangible delivery. In this sense, the lessons from Chawama speak not only to the constituency but to the broader challenge of rebuilding democratic credibility in Zambia and similar emerging democracies.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Government:

The Government of Zambia must institutionalize accountability frameworks for campaign promises by establishing a national office to monitor delivery and publish performance scorecards. This will link political pledges to measurable outcomes and restore public trust.

2. Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ):

The Electoral Commission of Zambia should require political parties to submit annual manifesto progress reports, ensuring that campaign promises remain publicly accessible and transparent beyond election periods.

3. Parliament:

Parliament needs to enact laws compelling elected officials to present periodic progress reports to their constituencies. Legalising this process would promote transparency and reduce political impunity.

4. Political Parties:

Parties must design realistic and budget-aligned manifestos that reflect community needs. This will prevent overpromising and align electoral campaigns with practical deliverables.

5. Civil Society and NGOs:

Civil society should intensify civic education and promote citizen monitoring of development projects to transform public frustration into constructive accountability actions.

6. Community Leaders:

Ward and traditional leaders should hold regular public meetings for citizens to track local projects and engage leaders directly, strengthening grassroots participation.

7. Youth Organisations:

Youth groups must mobilize and train young people to demand job-related accountability through advocacy and watchdog initiatives that track employment promises.

8. Women's Groups:

Women's organization's should advocate for gender-sensitive accountability measures, ensuring that political reporting reflects women's and children's service needs.

9. Media:

The media must strengthen investigative reporting and introduce "promise trackers" to monitor delivery and maintain continuous public scrutiny of leaders.

10. Democratic Reforms:

Government and stakeholders should adopt reforms that embed accountability in governance systems enhancing transparency, citizen participation, and institutional trust to reduce voter apathy and strengthen democracy.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Studies

While this study has provided valuable insights into how unfulfilled political promises influence voter attitudes and participation in Chawama Constituency, there remain several areas that require further exploration. Future research should build upon these findings to provide broader, comparative, and technologically relevant perspectives on political accountability and voter behaviour in Zambia.

A. Comparative and Quantitative Expansion

1. A comparative study on the effects of unfulfilled political promises across different constituencies in Lusaka to identify regional variations in political behaviour.

2. A nationwide quantitative study to measure the statistical relationship between unfulfilled promises and voter turnout, providing empirical evidence to support qualitative insights.
3. A longitudinal study tracking changes in voting behaviour across multiple electoral cycles to assess how patterns of trust and participation evolve over time.
4. A mixed-methods study combining surveys and interviews to deepen understanding of voter trust, apathy, and accountability perceptions.

B. Youth and Gender Focus

5. A focused study on how unfulfilled promises influence first-time voters in urban Zambia, particularly examining the political attitudes of the youth.
6. A gender-based study exploring how unfulfilled political promises differently affect women's participation, trust, and leadership aspirations in politics.
7. Research on the role of youth organizations in holding leaders accountable for campaign promises and promoting civic education among peers.

C. Civic Engagement and Accountability Mechanisms

8. An investigation into the effectiveness of civil society campaigns in strengthening political accountability in Zambia.
9. A study focusing on rural constituencies to compare findings with urban experiences from Chawama and identify contextual differences in political engagement.
10. A study on the role of social media platforms in amplifying citizens' perceptions of unfulfilled promises and influencing voting decisions.
11. A forward-looking study on digital governance and e-accountability, examining how emerging technologies such as online monitoring tools and digital reporting platforms can enhance transparency and rebuild public trust in political institutions.

In summary, these proposed areas of inquiry would expand the scope of understanding by integrating comparative, demographic, and technological perspectives. Such studies would not only validate the findings of this research but also contribute to policy reforms and civic strategies aimed at strengthening democratic accountability in Zambia.

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Appendix one: Questionnaire

Investigating the Effects of Unfulfilled Political Promises on Voting Behavior: A Case Study of Chawama Constituency

This questionnaire is for academic purposes only. Your responses will remain confidential. Please answer honestly by ticking (✓) where appropriate or providing a brief written response where required.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. **Gender:**

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. **Age:**

- 18–25
- 26–35
- 36–45
- 46 and above

3. **Level of Education:**

- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- None

4. **Employment Status:**

- Employed
- Unemployed

- Student
- Business owner

5. Number of times you have voted in national elections:

- Once
- Twice
- More than twice
- Never
- Not eligible to vote at the time

SECTION B: EXPERIENCE WITH POLITICAL PROMISES IN CHAWAMA

6. Have political leaders made campaign promises in your constituency?

- Yes
- No

7. To what extent have these promises been fulfilled?

- Most of them
- Some of them
- Very few
- None

8. Which areas have had the least fulfilled promises? (Tick all that apply)

- Employment creation
- Road infrastructure
- Water and sanitation
- Health services
- Education services

9. How would you rate the performance of elected leaders in fulfilling campaign promises?

- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

10. Do you believe politicians in Chawama are held accountable for unfulfilled promises?

- Yes
- No

SECTION C: EFFECTS OF UNFULFILLED PROMISES ON VOTING BEHAVIOR

11. Have unfulfilled political promises ever influenced your voting decisions?

- Yes
- No

12. How did you respond in the most recent election due to unfulfilled promises?

- Voted for the opposition
- Abstained from voting
- Voted for the same party
- Deliberately spoiled my ballot

13. Unfulfilled promises have decreased my trust in politicians.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. Do you think unfulfilled promises contribute to increased voter apathy in Chawama?

Yes

No

15. Would you be willing to vote in future elections if promises continue not to be fulfilled?

Yes

No

Not sure

SECTION D: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

16. What measures should be taken to improve fulfillment of campaign promises? (*Tick all that apply*)

Stronger legal frameworks

Regular public feedback sessions

Independent performance audits

Public disclosure of development plans

17. Would you support penalties for politicians who fail to honor campaign pledges?

Yes

No

18. What role should community leaders play in ensuring accountability?

Monitoring projects

Organizing public forums

Reporting to oversight bodies

All of the above

19. What would help restore your trust in political leaders?

Fulfilling promised projects

Transparency in government dealings

Regular engagement with the community

Honest leadership

20. Any additional comments or suggestions on voting behavior and political promises in Chawama Constituency?

Appendix two: Interview guide

The Effects of Unfulfilled Political Promises on Voting Behavior in Chawama Constituency

Participation is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. You may skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is your age group?
2. How long have you lived in Chawama Constituency?
3. How many times have you voted in national or local elections?

SECTION B: EXPERIENCE WITH POLITICAL PROMISES

4. During past elections, what kinds of promises did political candidates make in Chawama Constituency?
5. In your opinion, have these promises been fulfilled after the elections? Please explain.
6. Which areas do you feel leaders have most failed to deliver on?
7. How do you personally feel about elected leaders failing to fulfill campaign promises?

SECTION C: EFFECTS ON VOTING BEHAVIOR

8. Has the failure of politicians to fulfill promises ever influenced how you vote? Please explain.
9. Have you observed people in your community changing their voting decisions because of unfulfilled promises?
10. Do you believe voter apathy is increasing in Chawama because of unfulfilled promises? Why or why not?
11. How has trust in politicians changed in Chawama over the years?

Appendix three: Budget

TRANSPORT	2000
NOTEBOOKS	K60
STATIONERY	K30
	TOTAL = K2090