

ELECTION IN LESOTHO: VOTING PATTERNS AND VOTER APATHY OF BASOTHO FROM 1998-2007

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Abstract

In recent years, developing countries have increasingly experienced declining voters' participation in democratic elections. This factor has challenged government's legitimacy, more so, governments that have been elected by fewer voters. Since 1998 election in Lesotho, voters' participation in elections appears to have dropped tremendously. This decline was also similar in both the 2002 and 2007 elections. However, the 2007 snap election stood out to be the worst election affected by this apparent voter apathy. The objective of this paper is to establish the factors that motivated this apathy among Basotho electorates. The paper argues that political parties should not only be seen to be democratic but must practice democracy within their parties in order to motivate people to take active part in politics. They must play a major role in motivating people to take part in politics in order to have a vibrant democracy.

Key Words: Lesotho, Elections, Voting apathy, Intra-party democracy, Political arrogance.

Introduction

It is common knowledge that people should be interested in public affairs and political debates. They should vote for their own sake as well as society's. Nevertheless, the recent trend of declining voters' participation is unlikely to reverse. In Lesotho for instance, out of the population of 2.2 million, 916230 people had registered to cast their votes (IEC, 2006). However, less than half of the registered voters, 442,963, managed to cast their ballots in 2552 polling stations around the country for 2007 general elections (IEC, 2006). The 2007 election will be remembered for its lowest turnout in Lesotho political history so far. Since 1998 election, voter turnout has been declining steadily. This voter apathy has been of great concern to political analysts in Lesotho. People did not only refuse to participate in general elections alone, some political parties have refused to contest by-elections as well. In fact, in by-elections, the pattern of non-participation has persisted. This kind of apathy has been a major concern, particularly in Lesotho, where in almost three successive elections (1998, 2002 and 2007) voters' participation appears to be at all time low.

In many countries, governments face a major form of challenge to their legitimacy as a result of the increased unwillingness of voters to participate in political processes. This situation has been prevalent in Lesotho, especially since the 2002 elections. Lesotho went to the polls on February 17, 2007 with 19 political parties contesting both for Constituency and Party Votes. The Constituency Votes were held in 79 electoral constituencies.

Several reasons were suspected to be the rationale behind this worrying trend. These include but not limited to the following: first, lack of intra-party democracy as most parties continue to preach democracy while not adhering to democratic principles within their

parties. Second, since 1998, various governments appear to be practising politics of arrogance instead of following good governance principles. They created a perception that politics is about accumulation of personal wealth not the upliftment of people’s lives. Third, Members of Parliament (MPs) are said to be frequently betraying the electoral mandate by regularly crossing the floor and forming new parties without consulting voters. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was alleged to have poorly managed this election. This accusation stemmed from the fact that some voters’ names did not appear in the voters list even though they have registered. This factor was claimed to have motivated many people to stay away from the polls.

Methodology

According to Babbie and Mouton (2002), social scientific research aims to explain things. They argued that “reporting the voting intentions of an electorate is a descriptive activity, but reporting why some people plan to vote for Candidate ‘A’ and others for Candidate ‘B’ is an explanatory activity”(Babbie, 2002: 81). Therefore, reporting why some people did not vote in an election while others did involves an explanation. It is in this context that this study aims to explain and indicate causality between variable (voting) and event (election). This analysis is based on data that was collected from four of the urban constituencies in Maseru. Therefore, the study is confined to people who were more assertive and hence very educated urban elite, with access to telephones. These data excluded rural, uneducated and poor people who do not have access to telephones. People were requested to participate in this study by phoning the local radio station, ‘Harvest FM’. Twenty people phoned the station.

Data and Discussion

To establish the causes of political apathy among the voters of 18 years and above, a question was asked, “Why did you not vote on the 17th February 2007 general election”? Nevertheless, the study cannot confirm that people who actually phoned were over 18 years or whether they were male or female. The following responses in five broad categories were recorded:

Table 1: People Responses Why They Did Not Vote in 2007 General Election’?

Category of Responses	Percentage Responses %
Lack of intra-party democracy	30 .0
Political Arrogance among politicians in power	30.0
Betrayal of Electoral mandate by political parties in parliament	30.0
Election management	10.0
Total	100.0

These developments in Table 1 above have made people to view government with suspicion and consequently hold it in low regard. It is these factors that the paper claims to have impacted negatively on voter participation in Lesotho’s infant democracy. These factors

and others appear to have contributed to national political inactivity. Low turnout creates a vicious cycle, because it fuels more disgust and less voting. The decline in voter participation is expected to continue with fewer than half of the voters taking part in the next election.

Political Apathy

In this paper, apathy is defined as a psychological term for a state of indifference where an individual is unresponsive or "indifferent" to the political process. It is a condition of mind where an individual places low premium on the outcome of the political process. He or she lacks interest in political matters such as voting for a political party. In fact, in most modern societies with widespread education, universal suffrage and democratic system, political apathy remains large. There are various reasons for this kind of behaviour. In these societies, people are "less likely to be involved in politics if they place low value on the rewards expected from political involvement relative to the rewards they expect from other kinds of activities" (Dahl, 1991: 98). It is the task of this paper to unravel why Basotho displayed such a low interest in voting yet they appeared so interested in politics during election campaigns.

The general elections of 2002 and 2007 had the worst turnout. For instance, a total of 829, 633 voters registered for the 2002 elections, some 69 percent of Lesotho's estimated voting age population. Conversely, on the day of election, day a total of 68.1 percent voters cast their votes (IEC, 2002). In 2007, 916,230 voters registered to cast their votes, only 40 percent of them were able to cast their votes on the voting day. These voters were not disfranchised, but appeared to have disfranchised themselves. The major question of this paper is what led to this apathy. This means that for 2007 parliamentary elections, only 40 percent of the population made decisions for the majority of citizens. This is a major challenge for democracy in Lesotho.

It has become a common cause that in a democracy, majority of citizens participate in order to make democracy more meaningful. In Lesotho, this appears to have been the contrary since minority appears to be in control of political power. This raises question as to the kind of democracy where minority decides for the majority? The Chairman of Lesotho IEC indicated that there was a very low voter turnout when compared with the robust and aggressive campaigning that took place before the election. He challenged both the IEC and other stakeholders, especially the political parties, to take heed of the factors influencing political apathy seriously (Thoahlane, 2007).

There are various sources of voter apathy. Voter's apathy could be attributed to the failure of politicians to inspire trust in voters, to communicate clear policy platforms and to reach out to habitual non-voters. What seems to be happening is a fall in political parties' capacity to mobilise those least interested in politics to vote. Table 2 below shows that turnout fell from 582740 of the voting population in 1998 to 554386 in 2002 and 442,963 in 2007(IEC, 2006).

Table2: The 1998-2007 Voter Apathy in Lesotho General Elections

Year	Main Parties	No. of Votes	% of Votes	No of Seats
1998	LCD	355,049	60.7	79
	BNP	143,073	24.5	1
	BCP	61,793	10.5	0
	MFP	7,460	1.3	0
Total		582,740	100.0	80
2002	LCD	304,316	54.8	77
	BNP	124,234	22.4	21
	LPC	32,046	5.8	5
	NIP	30,346	5.5	5
	BAC	16,095	2.9	3
	BCP	14,584	2.7	3
	LWP	7,788	1.4	1
	MFP	6,890	1.2	1
	PFD	6,330	1.1	1
	NPP	3,985	0.7	1
	Total		554,386	100.0
2007	LCD/NIP	229,602	68.9	82
	ABC/LWP	107,463	22.7	27
	BNP	29,965	2.5	3
	ACP	20,263	1.7	2
	PFD	15,477	0.8	1
	BCP	9,823	0.8	1
	MFP	9,129	0.8	1
	BDNP	8,783	0.8	1
	BBDP	8,474	0.8	1
	NLFP	3,984	0.0	0
Total		442,963	100%	119

Source: IEC.

The above table reflects a worrying picture of Basotho refusing to participate in general elections. The situation becomes even more severe when compared with that of the bye-elections in Table 3 below. Judging from several bye-elections held since 2002 and the recent 2007 elections, voters' participation has drastically declined. Another factor that appeared to have motivated voter apathy is Lesotho's undemocratic political leadership which, in most cases, has failed to inspire people to accept democratic values and principles. The leaders appear to have refused to acknowledge defeat even when they were aware that they could not have won elections because they did not mount aggressive campaigns. It has been this inability to accept electoral defeat that has made voters to view parties differently and presumably refused to vote. This has created high levels of apathy in bye-elections (Likoti, 2005). Opposition parties, like voters, appeared to have boycotted ten (10) bye-

elections as reflected in Table 3 below, which also indicates the scale of voter apathy in previous bye-elections.

Table3: Lesotho Parliamentary Bye-elections from February 2003 to February 2005

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Election Date</i>	<i>Parties Participatedⁱ</i>	<i>Registered voters</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Voter Turnout</i>	<i>Winner</i>
<i>Motete</i>	<i>15-Feb-2003</i>	<i>MFP, PFD, LCD, BAC, INDEPENDENT.</i>	<i>11,768</i>	<i>3,945</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Qhoali</i>	<i>23-Aug-2003</i>	<i>LPC, LCD, PFD, MFP.</i>	<i>10,929</i>	<i>3,516</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Khafung</i>	<i>23-Aug-2003</i>	<i>PFD, LCD, LPC, NIP, LWP, BCP, MFP.</i>	<i>11,391</i>	<i>4,280</i>	<i>38%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Thaba-Putsoa</i>	<i>24-Jan-2004</i>	<i>MFP, LCD, PFD, LWP, UP.</i>	<i>13,319</i>	<i>3,353</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Motimposo</i>	<i>24-Apr-2004</i>	<i>NIP, BCP, PFD, LCD, NLFP, MFP, LWP.</i>	<i>13,125</i>	<i>1,712</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Mohobollo</i>	<i>5-Jun-2004</i>	<i>PFD, MFP, LCD, NIP, INDEPENDENT.</i>	<i>9,999</i>	<i>1,690</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Qomoqomong</i>	<i>16-Oct-2004</i>	<i>BCP, LCD.</i>	<i>11,820</i>	<i>3,155</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>Koro-Koro</i>	<i>12-Feb-2005</i>	<i>LCD, NIP, PFD.</i>	<i>9,186</i>	<i>2,542</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>QALO</i>	<i>04-OCT-2005</i>	<i>LCD, PFD, NIP INDEPENDENT*4</i>	<i>7,291</i>	<i>856</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>LCD</i>
<i>LEBAKENG</i>	<i>22-APR-2006</i>	<i>LCD</i>	<i>3,867</i>	<i>unopposed</i>	<i>unopposed</i>	<i>LCD</i>

Source Independent Electoral Commission.

It is on record that the leadership of major parties like the Basotho National Party (BNP) refused to accept electoral results (Likoti, 2007). This party also refused to participate in bye-elections throughout the country. For instance, on the 25th April 2005, a member of the ruling LCD for Lebakeng constituency was sworn in as a new MP. What was significant about the swearing in of Mr. Semano Sekatle was that he got into parliament unopposed (Likoti, 2007). While these bye-elections were won by the ruling LCD, it was nevertheless with a very low margin as indicated below. Most opposition parties decided to stay-away from the contest. This also means that it is not only the voters who boycotted the elections but political parties as well. The LCD victory in these bye-elections as indicated in Table 3 above

has made people think that their participation will make no meaningful difference. Judging from the above the main factor responsible for voter apathy, among others, has been the issue of democratic deficit among political parties.

Lack of Intra-Party Democracy

Among the democratic values is the voters' participation in elections. The consequences of a lack of intra-party democracy are many and varied. For instance, Table 1 above indicated that 30 percent of respondents' opined that they did not vote in the election because political parties were undemocratic, they cannot expect undemocratic parties to practice democracy. Lack of intra-party democracy within major parties in Lesotho had produced undesirable consequences for the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD a splinter from BCP) and the BNP (Pule, 1999; Likoti, 2005). The insidious infighting for positions within these major parties has had a considerable impact on voter apathy in Lesotho. They (voters) believed that these parties lacked internal democratic mechanisms to deal with their differences, hence the reason why they spend most of their time fighting.

Weisfelder (1999) argued that, in Lesotho, two political parties have dominated the political debate since independence in 1966. These parties, the BCP and the BNP have both been in power at different periods and faced different challenges. One of the major challenges faced by these parties has been the lack of intra-party democracy, which led to party factionalization and fragmentation. While democratic deficit pervaded these parties since their inception in the late 1950s, this aspect became more pronounced from 1993 to 2007. The BCP experienced a crippling crisis that included fragmentation in 1998 into LCD. On 3 May 1996, the Prime Minister, Ntsu Mokhehle, removed members of the pressure group from the Cabinet, after a protracted infighting with his faction, "Majelathoko" (Matlosa; 1998, Pule, 1999). This faction was opposed to the perceived undemocratic nature of the party in dealing with the election of office bearers. Most voters (30 percent) argued that it was as a result of incidences of this nature, which have become prolific among political parties, that have made them to loose interest in politics.

Among the most protracted of these conflicts, which came to the fore and precipitated the birth of the LCD in 1997, was the incessant power struggle over the membership of the BCP's National Executive Committee (NEC) (Likoti, 2005). This infighting culminated in the break-up of the BCP. The LCD broke up into yet another party, the Lesotho Peoples' Congress (LPC) in September 2001. In October 2006, LCD broke into yet another party, All Basotho Convention (ABC) as a result of NEC elections.

Similarly, the BNP broke up into National Progressive Party (NPP) in 1995. The BNP feuds led to the party refusing to participate in bye-elections since 1993 up to 2006 (Likoti, 2007). This lack of intra-party democracy became even more acute when the party began suspending and expelling some of its successive Secretary Generals for defying decisions of their leadership, who in most cases had retained the leadership through undemocratic means. The situation was also similar in the LCD.

This fragmentation of political parties in Lesotho appears to be "generated by leadership personality differences rather than differing ideological stances on fundamental political, policy and economic issues" (Matashane-Marite, 2007: 4). The formations of these

parties reflect a measure of failure of intra-party conflict mechanisms to address internal issues in a democratic manner. This lack of intra-party democracy appears to have motivated political apathy among prospective voters. Many voters claimed that it was better to stay away from the ballot box rather than vote for undemocratic parties.

It is clear that lack of internal democracy within parties has made people apathetic and less interested in politics (Likoti, 2005). Instead of these parties developing programmes that attract diverse support of voters, they have developed strategies that attract narrow sections of the communities and they remained imprisoned more to the past political events than to moving forward and developing measures geared towards democratic consolidation. People jostle for positions of power, often through undemocratic means.

Voters have developed a perception that political parties fight for their own self-interests, not the voters' needs and social development. It was in this context that they perceive their participation as not adding value to the electoral process but rather to enrich a few individuals who will not uplift their lives.

Political Arrogance

Arrogance in politics has been a delicate factor in Lesotho politics since the 1970s (Weisfelder, 1999). It became intoxicating during the regimes of Prime Ministers Leabua Jonathan's, Ntsu Mokhehle's and Pakalitha Mosisili's governments, and the military regimes. Political arrogance is an overbearing pride evidenced by a superior attitude toward inferiors. An especially virulent arrogance lurks within the person/Minister who, through his or her actions is deliberately being economic with the truth and projects his actions as unchallenged and unquestionable.

Basotho are no strangers to arrogance in politics. This pattern of arrogance became apparent when Dr. Leabua Jonathan failed to honour electoral defeat in 1970 (Khaketla, 1970). It became more aggressive during the military regime in 1986 and 1993 elections. From 2002 onwards, under the regime of Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, political arrogance became more pronounced. This factor appeared to have made people to lose hope about politics and consequently motivated them to stay away from the polls. From the beginning of 2006, prospective voters were bombarded with series of arrogant statements. The results in Table 1 reflected this thinking among the callers. Almost 30 percent said that politicians in power were arrogant and this therefore they made them lose interest in politics.

The Betrayal of Electorate Mandate

Since independence in 1966, Lesotho adopted the Westminster system from its colonial master, Great Britain. The system allows individual Members of Parliament (MPs) to cross the floor whenever they wished. Therefore, dissent and cross-party alliances persist under this system (Dunleavy, 1992). MPs always cross the floor and vote with the opposition in parliament and in some cases vote as independent candidates. In fact, on the 10th December 2001, Paul Marsden, Labour MP in Britain, resigned from his party and crossed the floor and joined Liberal Democrats (Norton 1990, Dunleavy, 1992).

What is important here is that an MP crosses the floor to another party, not to form a new party, as has been the case in Lesotho. Such movement of MPs, even though allowed by both the Constitution and parliamentary standing orders, if not well managed can produce

consequences as happened in 1997 in Lesotho (Pule, 1999; Matlosa, 2006). It was this period that the popularly elected Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) government found itself on the opposition benches. In 1997 the party that won the 1993 election fragmented and the breakaway party, the LCD formed the government with 40 MPs who crossed the floor and left the BCP with 25 MPs (Matlosa 1999).

The prerequisite of any vibrant democracy requires the participation of all citizens in the electoral process (Dearlove, 2000). Citizens must participate in those decisions, policies and actions that affect their country, and therefore, they are legally protected. For any country to deliver democracy, it must have facilities (elections) and instruments of participation (voting) that are accessible to every citizen (Read, 1993). This is an inalienable democratic right of all citizens. When government violates this right of individuals to participate in issues, policies and decisions that directly affect them, it is devoid of calling itself democratic (Dearlove, 2000). In all democratic countries, a party that wins general elections forms the government. This means that its electorate has mandated it to do so (Read, 1993). Therefore, no party can form a government without first being elected and having electoral mandate to govern. For a party to be elected into parliament in Lesotho there are a lot of procedures that must first be followed. These include registration of the same party with the IEC. It must compete fairly in an open contest with other parties and ultimately be declared an overall or partial winner of some constituencies by the IEC.

The formation of LCD, by Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle, the then Prime Minister of Lesotho in parliament, sent shocks on the Basotho voters (Sekatle, 1997). It was the manner in which this party was formed that angered voters. This party did not have or, in fact, it lacked the mandate from the electorates. In electing BCP to form government in 1993, voters gave the party the mandate to govern (Pule, 1999). In fact, in any democracy, representation forms the root core of what parliaments are all about. The Voters did not expect the BCP leader to form another party in parliament. The formation of LCD in parliament was not meant to secure benefits for BCP constituents. This was the case with the formation of Lesotho People's Congress (LPC). The LPC broke away in parliament from LCD, following a pattern started by the LCD in 2001 (Matlosa, 2005).

In any democracy, subsequent change in the structure of a governing party must be subjected to electoral test by allowing the voters to consider the new party's programme, in comparisons with other parties, in a fair contest (Dunleavy, 1992; Read, 1993). With LCD, LPC and ABC, it appeared that the voters were denied the opportunity to consider these new parties' programmes in general elections. According to Wessels (1997), these actions grossly violated the principles of constitutionalism.

A Member of Parliament can vote either way in parliament but not to form a political party while in parliament. In fact, there is a clear distinction between voting for parliamentary business and the formation of a political party in parliament. This issue has actually confused a lot of people who perceive that, because an MP can vote either way, therefore, the majority of dissenters can cross the floor and form their own party (Makoa, 1998). They forget that they were MPs because they were elected to represent the voters' interests. They should know very well that the electorate could withdraw or grant them support once in five years. This is a clear case of betrayal of electoral mandate that has been influential in promoting voter apathy in Lesotho since 1998 election. This pattern of illegitimate formation of parties

in Lesotho parliament appears to pose serious challenges for political scientists. For Wessels (1997), the above political events in Lesotho are tantamount to a parliamentary coup d' etat. He argued further that,

in a parliamentary system, only one election takes place - to elect a Legislature. The elected members of the Legislature can "cross the floor" from one party to another. But I have never heard a situation in a parliamentary system where an elected party "crosses the floor" - dissolves and "re-elects" itself without facing the electorate on a programme of principles (The election Manifesto). This is from my point of view not only an undemocratic act, but as near as can be to a coup d' etat (Wessels, 1997: 1).

In fact, in any democratic dispensation, a party governs only on attaining consent of the governed majority. That is, a party is elected by people into parliament under a specific programme of principle (memorandum), which was subjected to test at the general elections. This did not take place in Lesotho in 1997 and 2001. While the courts of law found this formation neither illegal nor unconstitutional, what was certain was that, this formation of a party in parliament left a negative perception ingrained in the public psyche. The ethical and moral aspects of this formation made many voters disenchanted with politics (Matashane-Marite, 2007).

The emphasis is on process not behaviour (Birch, 1993). That is, the MP has to be elected by the electorate in a fair and open electoral contest (Dearlove, 2000). In this case LPC and ABC failed to qualify as elected parties representing the electorate in parliament, just as LCD failed in 1997 parliamentary elections. What is clear is that parliament is not the arena for party formation but a place where national issues are debated, regardless of how much widespread dissention obtains. What is important is that the party leadership must be able to manage members by using parliamentary procedures to control dissention. The actions of these parties appear to have been instrumental in promoting voter apathy in Lesotho. It was for this reason that voters felt disinterested to go to the polls.

Electoral Management

Table 1 above indicated that, 10 percent of respondents mentioned the issue of election management as the main factor that inhibited them from voting. They argued that voters' registration was not sufficiently done and most names did not appear in the voters' list. They claimed that it was for this reason that they could not vote because their names were missing in the register and they were also not given sufficient time to check them. The management of election is critical for free and fair elections. Notwithstanding, it is rational to expect that the institution charged with registering voters should perform its task with equal propriety. For instance, the function of Lesotho IEC, according to the National Assembly Election Act, as amended by the Amendment Acts 2001 and 2002, include among others:

- (d) to promote through media and other appropriate and effective means the civic education of the citizens concerning elections;
- (g) to register as electors the citizens of Lesotho who qualify to be registered as such;

(h) to prepare and maintain a general register of electors.

The IEC has opened offices throughout the country to enable citizens to be registered in order to comply with the above Acts. However, during the 2007 general elections, people appeared not to have been motivated to exercise their right to register their names in preparation for the elections. This became a major concern for IEC when, in September 2006, the institution mounted campaigns to motivate people to register. Unfortunately, only few voters heeded this call until snap election was announced in October 2006 and, accordingly, normal voting stopped.

It must also be acknowledged that snap election is usually motivated by various events beyond the calendar of any institution running the elections. Most voters interviewed argued that their names did not appear in the voters' register and the register itself was not up to scratch. Names of several dead people still appeared on the register and other people appeared dead while still alive. These were some of the challenges that disqualified people from voting.

It was clear that most people eligible to vote did not register because of the above factors. But it is also true that the IEC adhoc staff were also not equally motivated to do their work. For instance, these IEC adhoc staff were found to be incompetent in most areas. Some were not conversant with the electoral laws regarding nominations as well as applications of Electoral Code of Conduct. Enough training was not conducted prior to registration and nomination of candidates on various electoral procedures (Matashane-Marite, 2007). Had the IEC used its own staff, the issue of poor registration could have been different. IEC workers would not have had a problem in working long hours because they were going to be paid overtime. IEC must have its own staff who are efficient, accountable and effective to carry out proper voter registration and education (Matlosa, 2006).

While the IEC is mandated to register prospective voters, it is also the primary responsibility of political parties to ensure that their supporters are registered. It appeared that political parties did not take this responsibility seriously. More often than not, they tended to leave everything to IEC, regardless of whether IEC systems are coping or not. This factor has made, on average, a large number of voters not to feel obliged to support their parties by carrying out their civic responsibilities and getting registered. IEC can provide logistics and facilitate the registration processes. If political parties remain inactive in this process, voters will always lack the requisite motivation to register to vote.

Most of the parties in Lesotho become alive only during the election period. Most of the time, political parties are docile with little activity. They are not even eager to contest bye-elections.

Conclusion

Most developing countries are confronted with declining participation in elections. This lack of participation in politics results in weak, corrupt and parochial government that lacks a vision for development. Democracy in such a state remains meaningless and fragile. The society remains conflictual and the stability of the country usually suffers. While the cause of apathy may be traced to the ruling parties because they failed to deliver promises,

the above four factors appear to have been instrumental in de-motivating people in taking part in politics in Lesotho.

It is recommended that ruling parties change the mindset of voters and make them interested in politics. It is also the responsibilities of ruling parties and opposition parties to ensure that their conduct inspires and motivates voters to register. Political parties are the vital link between the state and civil society, between the institutions of government and the groups and interests that cooperate within society.

Parties are important. Without them, it would be difficult for people to participate in politics. If parties do not perform their mobilising role to ensure peoples' participation in elections, democracy will be empty and there will be no development. Furthermore, government will not be accountable and therefore the national projects will suffer. Political parties must play a major role in motivating people to take part in politics in order to have a vibrant democracy. It has become clear in Lesotho that what happens in both government and legislature matters a lot. This is because the actions of politicians in these structures can either demotivate or motivate prospective voters.

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i Parliament of Lesotho is composed of 10 parties; this was because other smaller parties were left outside parliament. Most of these parties, National progressive party [NPP], Basotho National Party [BNP], Basotholand Congress Party [BCP], Basutoland African Congress [BAC], Marematlou Freedom Party [MFP], Lesotho Congress For Democracy [LCD], Lesotho Workers Party [LWP], Popular Front For Democracy [PFD], Lesotho People's Congress [LPC] and National Independent Party {NIP}, participated in by-elections with remarkable irregularity. Among these parties, the major opposition party, the BNP did not take part in all these by-elections. Two smaller parties outside parliament; Sefate Democratic Congress [SDC], United Party [UP], Social Democratic Party [SDP], Lesotho Education Party [LEP], Kopanang Basotho Party [KBP], New Lesotho Freedom Party [NLFP] and National Democratic Party [NDP], also participated in by-elections on the 21st January and 24th April 2005 respectively. Eight (8) Independent candidates also took part in three (3) by-elections as well.