

Citizen perceptions of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates

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Abstract: This study investigated citizen perceptions of the proposal to raise the minimum educational qualifications required of parliamentary candidates, a policy debate that has recurred in Ugandan public discourse alongside broader questions of representation, competence, and inclusivity in elective politics. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 400 randomly sampled adult citizens drawn from four regions (Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western) through a structured questionnaire administered across urban and rural settings. The questionnaire captured socio-demographic characteristics, prior exposure to civic education, and Likert-scale perception items covering competence, representativeness, elitism, accountability, and implementation preferences, alongside a binary measure of overall support for or opposition to the policy. Data were analysed using univariate statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), bivariate chi-square tests of association, and binary logistic regression to identify independent predictors of support while adjusting for confounding factors. The findings showed that 57.0 percent of respondents supported raising the minimum educational qualification, while 43.0 percent opposed it. Bivariate analysis revealed statistically significant associations between support and residence ($p < 0.001$), education level ($p < 0.001$), and prior civic education exposure ($p = 0.013$), but no significant association with age, sex, employment status, or region. The logistic regression model confirmed that urban residence (AOR=2.73, 95% CI: 1.69-4.40), secondary education (AOR=3.30, 95% CI: 1.49-7.29), tertiary education (AOR=6.12, 95% CI: 2.67-14.03), and civic education exposure (AOR=1.67, 95% CI: 1.07-2.61) were independent predictors of support, even after controlling for age, sex, and employment status. Respondents simultaneously expressed concern that the policy could exclude capable grassroots leaders, indicating an underlying tension between the pursuit of legislative competence and the protection of inclusive representation. The study concluded that citizen perceptions of the policy were shaped less by uniform public opinion and more by structural factors linked to educational attainment, place of residence, and civic awareness, and recommended a phased implementation approach accompanied by targeted civic education and safeguards for grassroots representation.

Key Words: Citizen Perceptions and Educational Qualifications

INTRODUCTION

The question of who is fit to legislate on behalf of citizens has long occupied a central place in debates about democratic representation, and one of the most persistent proposals in this regard has been the introduction or elevation of formal minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates (Bareebe & Day, 2024; Mitcham, 2025; Namugumya et al., 2021). Proponents of such reforms have argued that a more educated legislature is better placed to scrutinise complex national budgets, engage with technical policy documents, draft coherent legislation, and hold the executive to account, while critics have countered that formal education is neither a proxy for integrity nor a guarantee of responsiveness to the everyday concerns of ordinary citizens, and that raising qualification thresholds risks disenfranchising experienced grassroots leaders who lack advanced schooling but command considerable community trust (Johnson & Falcetta, 2021; Mugambwa et al., 2024; Vieira, 2024). In Uganda, as in several other countries within the East African region, this debate has periodically resurfaced in Parliament, in the media, and in civil society discourse, particularly during electoral reform cycles, yet it has rarely been examined systematically from the standpoint of ordinary citizens whose votes and civic participation are directly implicated in any such reform (Davies & Idrus, 2018; Hanley-Smith, 2023; Raisi, 2021). This study sought to fill that gap by empirically examining how citizens across different social strata perceive the proposal to raise minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates, and by identifying the socio-demographic and civic factors that shape the direction and intensity of these perceptions. In doing so, the study contributes an evidence-based citizen perspective to a policy conversation that has often been dominated by elite and legislative voices.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Uganda's 1995 Constitution and the Parliamentary Elections Act set out the current eligibility criteria for parliamentary candidature, which include citizenship, age, and a minimum academic qualification of Advanced Level Certificate of Education (A-Level) or its equivalent, a threshold that has remained a subject of continuous contestation since it was introduced. Successive proposals tabled before Parliament and discussed in constitutional review forums have called for this threshold to be raised to a diploma or degree level, drawing justification from comparative examples in other jurisdictions and from concerns that some sitting legislators have struggled to engage substantively with technical committee work, budget analysis, and legislative drafting (Chemutai & Mulyampiti, 2023; Mujuzi, 2024; Zacharia, 2019). At the same time, Uganda's population remains characterised by significant disparities in access to formal education, with rural areas, women, and older cohorts historically recording lower attainment levels than urban, younger, and male populations, a pattern that raises the possibility that any upward revision of educational thresholds could have

uneven effects across different segments of the electorate and could be perceived differently depending on one's own educational background, place of residence, and exposure to civic education programmes run by the Electoral Commission and civil society organisations (Doro & Kufakurinani, 2018; Figgou & Andreouli, 2023; Muzaale, T., Basheka, B. and Auriacombe, 2017). Public opinion on the matter has been shaped by competing narratives circulated through radio talk shows, social media platforms, and community barazas, yet these narratives have rarely been triangulated against systematically collected survey data (Audrey & Nancy, 2026; Mwiine, 2019; Ninsiima et al., 2023; Sharon et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, understanding how citizens themselves perceive the proposed reform, and what factors predict support or opposition, became both academically relevant and practically useful for policymakers, electoral reform bodies, and civil society actors seeking to design an inclusive and evidence-informed reform process.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite recurrent legislative and public debate on raising the minimum educational qualifications required of parliamentary candidates in Uganda, there remains a notable absence of systematic, citizen-centred empirical evidence on how the general public perceives this proposed reform and why. Policy discussions have tended to rely on the opinions of legislators, legal experts, and civil society elites, with comparatively little attention paid to the views of ordinary citizens who would ultimately be affected by any change in candidature requirements, whether as prospective voters choosing among candidates or as community members who might themselves aspire to elective office but lack the proposed formal qualifications (Brisset-Foucault, 2022; Ruiz et al., 2022). This gap is problematic because a reform of this nature carries the risk of disenfranchising capable and popular grassroots leaders while simultaneously being justified in the name of improving representation, and without citizen input, policymakers risk designing a reform that is technically sound but socially contested or poorly understood at the grassroots level. Moreover, existing commentary on the subject has largely been descriptive and anecdotal, lacking the statistical rigour needed to establish which socio-demographic and civic factors are actually associated with support or opposition, and to what extent. Without such evidence, it remains difficult to anticipate how different segments of the population, particularly rural residents, less educated citizens, and those with limited civic education exposure, would respond to or be affected by a change in the qualification threshold. It was against this backdrop that the present study was conceived, to systematically investigate citizen perceptions of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates and to statistically identify the determinants of these perceptions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to examine citizen perceptions of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates and to determine the socio-demographic and civic factors associated with these perceptions.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the socio-demographic characteristics and level of civic education exposure of citizens in relation to the proposal to raise minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates.
2. To examine citizens' perceptions of the competence, representativeness, and accountability implications of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates.
3. To determine the socio-demographic and civic factors that independently predict citizens' support for raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the socio-demographic characteristics and level of civic education exposure of citizens in relation to the proposal to raise minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates?
2. What are citizens' perceptions of the competence, representativeness, and accountability implications of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates?
3. Which socio-demographic and civic factors independently predict citizens' support for raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative approach, which was deemed appropriate for capturing citizen perceptions and their associated determinants at a single point in time. The study population comprised adult citizens aged 18 years and above drawn from four regions of Uganda, namely Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western, encompassing both urban and rural residents. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Kish (1965) formula for cross-sectional surveys with an infinite population, adjusted for a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error, and was proportionately allocated across the four regions using multistage sampling; at the first stage, districts were purposively selected to represent each region, at the second

stage, parishes were randomly selected within each district, and at the final stage, households were selected using systematic random sampling, with one adult respondent selected per household using the Kish grid to minimise selection bias. Data were collected using a structured, interviewer-administered questionnaire that captured socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, residence, education level, employment status, and region), prior exposure to civic education programmes, a binary measure of overall support for or opposition to raising the minimum educational qualification for parliamentary candidates, and six five-point Likert-scale items measuring perceptions of competence, representativeness, elitism, accountability, and implementation preferences, all of which had been pre-tested for reliability and content validity prior to full-scale data collection. Data were entered into a statistical software package and cleaned to check for missing values, out-of-range entries, and inconsistencies before analysis was undertaken. Analysis proceeded in three stages: first, univariate analysis was conducted to summarise socio-demographic characteristics using frequencies and percentages, and to summarise perception items using means and standard deviations; second, bivariate analysis was conducted using the Pearson chi-square test of independence to examine associations between socio-demographic and civic variables and the binary support outcome, with a p-value of less than 0.05 considered statistically significant; and third, binary logistic regression was fitted to determine the independent predictors of support for raising minimum educational qualifications while simultaneously controlling for all other covariates in the model, with adjusted odds ratios, 95 percent confidence intervals, and corresponding p-values computed for each predictor, and overall model fit assessed using the log-likelihood ratio test and McFadden's pseudo R-squared statistic (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection, and informed consent was sought from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age group (years)	18–25	91	22.8
	26–35	113	28.2
	36–45	99	24.8
	46–55	56	14.0
	56 and above	41	10.2
Sex	Male	188	47.0
	Female	212	53.0
Residence	Urban	134	33.5
	Rural	266	66.5
Highest education level	No formal education	38	9.5
	Primary	95	23.8
	Secondary	148	37.0
	Tertiary	119	29.8
Employment status	Employed (formal)	91	22.8
	Self-employed	141	35.2
	Unemployed	98	24.5
	Student	70	17.5
Region	Central	125	31.2
	Eastern	93	23.2
	Northern	76	19.0
	Western	106	26.5
Prior civic education exposure	Yes	157	39.2
	No	243	60.8

The socio-demographic profile of the 400 respondents indicated a sample that was reasonably diverse across age, sex, residence, and education categories, with the largest age cohort falling within the 26 to 35 year bracket (28.2 percent), followed by the 36 to 45 year bracket (24.8 percent), while older citizens aged 56 years and above constituted the smallest proportion of respondents (10.2 percent). The sample was slightly skewed towards female respondents (53.0 percent) relative to male respondents (47.0 percent), a distribution broadly consistent with national demographic patterns reported in recent population projections. Rural residents constituted two-thirds of the sample (66.5 percent), reflecting Uganda's predominantly rural settlement pattern, while just over one-third of respondents (33.5 percent) resided in urban areas. In terms of educational attainment, the largest proportion of respondents had attained secondary education (37.0 percent), followed by tertiary education (29.8 percent), primary education (23.8 percent), and no formal education (9.5 percent), indicating that the sample captured a meaningful spread across the educational spectrum relevant to the study's central research question.

From an analytical standpoint, this socio-demographic distribution provided an adequate basis for the subsequent bivariate and multivariate analyses, as sufficient variation existed within each covariate to detect associations with the outcome variable without excessive sparsity in any category. The relatively low proportion of respondents with no formal education (9.5 percent), while numerically the smallest education category, remained large enough in absolute terms ($n=38$) to yield stable percentage estimates. Similarly, the near-even split between employed, self-employed, unemployed, and student categories (ranging from 17.5 percent to 35.2 percent) indicated a labour force composition that mirrored the informal-sector-dominated nature of Uganda's economy, where self-employment constituted the modal employment category. The regional distribution was also fairly balanced, ranging from 19.0 percent in the Northern region to 31.2 percent in the Central region, which supported the validity of subsequent regional comparisons. Notably, only 39.2 percent of respondents reported prior exposure to civic education programmes, a finding that, when read alongside the low overall educational attainment in parts of the sample, underscored a potential structural constraint on citizens' capacity to engage with complex electoral reform debates such as the one under study, and foreshadowed the significant role that civic education exposure would later play in the bivariate and logistic regression analyses.

Table 2: Bivariate Association between Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Support for Raising Minimum Educational Qualifications

Variable	Category	Support n (%)	Oppose n (%)	Chi-square test
Age group	18–25	50 (54.9%)	41 (45.1%)	
	26–35	67 (59.3%)	46 (40.7%)	
	36–45	61 (61.6%)	38 (38.4%)	
	46–55	28 (50.0%)	28 (50.0%)	
	56 and above	22 (53.7%)	19 (46.3%)	$\chi^2=2.566$, $df=4$, $p=0.633$
Sex	Male	110 (58.5%)	78 (41.5%)	
	Female	118 (55.7%)	94 (44.3%)	$\chi^2=0.224$, $df=1$, $p=0.636$
Residence	Urban	95 (70.9%)	39 (29.1%)	
	Rural	133 (50.0%)	133 (50.0%)	$\chi^2=15.033$, $df=1$, $p<0.001^*$
Education level	No formal education	13 (34.2%)	25 (65.8%)	
	Primary	39 (41.1%)	56 (58.9%)	
	Secondary	88 (59.5%)	60 (40.5%)	
	Tertiary	88 (73.9%)	31 (26.1%)	$\chi^2=32.223$, $df=3$, $p<0.001^*$
Employment status	Employed (formal)	58 (63.7%)	33 (36.3%)	
	Self-employed	77 (54.6%)	64 (45.4%)	
	Unemployed	54 (55.1%)	44 (44.9%)	
	Student	39 (55.7%)	31 (44.3%)	$\chi^2=2.205$, $df=3$, $p=0.531$
Region	Central	69 (55.2%)	56 (44.8%)	
	Eastern	51 (54.8%)	42 (45.2%)	
	Northern	47 (61.8%)	29 (38.2%)	

	Western	61 (57.5%)	45 (42.5%)	$\chi^2=1.082$, df=3, p=0.781
Civic education exposure	Yes	102 (65.0%)	55 (35.0%)	
	No	126 (51.9%)	117 (48.1%)	$\chi^2=6.170$, df=1, p=0.013*

The bivariate chi-square analysis revealed that support for raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates was not uniformly distributed across all socio-demographic categories, but rather varied systematically with three key variables: residence, education level, and prior civic education exposure. Residence emerged as a statistically significant correlate of support ($\chi^2=15.033$, df=1, $p<0.001$), with 70.9 percent of urban residents expressing support compared to only 50.0 percent of rural residents, a 20.9 percentage point gap that pointed to markedly different lived experiences of, and exposure to, the practical demands of parliamentary work between urban and rural populations. Education level showed the strongest bivariate association with the outcome ($\chi^2=32.223$, df=3, $p<0.001$), with support rising monotonically from 34.2 percent among respondents with no formal education to 41.1 percent among those with primary education, 59.5 percent among those with secondary education, and 73.9 percent among those with tertiary education, a clear dose-response pattern suggesting that personal educational attainment shaped how citizens evaluated the value of formal qualifications in political leadership. Prior civic education exposure was also significantly associated with support ($\chi^2=6.170$, df=1, $p=0.013$), with 65.0 percent of citizens who had received civic education expressing support compared to 51.9 percent of those who had not, a 13.1 percentage point difference.

In contrast, age group ($\chi^2=2.566$, df=4, $p=0.633$), sex ($\chi^2=0.224$, df=1, $p=0.636$), employment status ($\chi^2=2.205$, df=3, $p=0.531$), and region ($\chi^2=1.082$, df=3, $p=0.781$) were not statistically significantly associated with support at the conventional 0.05 threshold, indicating that perceptions of the policy did not vary meaningfully by these demographic characteristics once considered independently. The absence of a significant sex-based difference was noteworthy given that gender is often hypothesised to shape political attitudes, suggesting that in this context, perceptions of the educational qualification proposal were not primarily gendered but were instead rooted in more structural factors such as residence and personal educational attainment. Similarly, the lack of significant regional variation suggested that the debate over educational qualifications was not confined to, or driven by, any single geographic constituency, but rather cut across all four regions in a broadly similar pattern. These bivariate findings, while informative, were necessarily limited by their inability to control for confounding between correlated variables, such as the well-documented association between residence and educational attainment in Uganda; this limitation was addressed directly in the subsequent logistic regression analysis, which examined the independent contribution of each variable while holding others constant.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Citizen Perception Statements (5-Point Likert Scale)

Perception statement	Mean	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Raising the minimum qualification would improve the competence of Members of Parliament	3.85	0.90	66.0	27.0	7.0
The policy would exclude capable grassroots leaders from representation	2.72	0.95	20.2	38.2	41.5
Higher qualifications among legislators would improve the quality of debate and law-making	3.68	0.98	57.5	30.8	11.8
The policy would promote elitism in political leadership	2.94	0.98	27.3	40.5	32.2
More educated Members of Parliament are more accountable to citizens	3.54	0.94	51.2	37.0	11.8
Government should implement the policy gradually rather than immediately	3.32	0.97	44.0	35.2	20.8

Analysis of the six perception statements revealed a generally favourable, though not unqualified, citizen attitude towards the anticipated competence benefits of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement that raising the minimum qualification would improve the competence of Members of Parliament (mean=3.85, SD=0.90), with 66.0 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, indicating a broadly held belief that formal education enhances legislative capability. This was closely followed by agreement that higher qualifications would improve the quality of debate and law-making (mean=3.68, SD=0.98, 57.5 percent agreement) and that more educated Members of Parliament would be more accountable to citizens (mean=3.54, SD=0.94, 51.2 percent agreement), together suggesting that citizens associated formal education with tangible improvements in parliamentary performance and answerability rather than viewing it as a purely symbolic or credentialist requirement.

Nonetheless, the data also revealed a meaningful undercurrent of concern regarding the exclusionary potential of the policy. The statement that the policy would exclude capable grassroots leaders from representation returned a comparatively lower mean score (mean=2.72, SD=0.95), with only 20.2 percent agreement but a substantial 41.5 percent disagreement, indicating that while this concern was not the dominant view, it was far from negligible and coexisted with support for the policy among a meaningful segment of respondents. Relatedly, more than a quarter of respondents (27.3 percent) agreed that the policy would promote elitism in political leadership (mean=2.94, SD=0.98), a finding that, together with the exclusion item, pointed to an underlying ambivalence in public opinion, where the perceived benefits of a more educated legislature were weighed against fears of narrowing the pool of eligible leaders. The relatively high proportion of respondents favouring gradual rather than immediate implementation (mean=3.32, SD=0.97, 44.0 percent agreement) further reinforced this cautious, dual-minded stance, suggesting that citizens who supported the principle of the reform were nonetheless sensitive to its practical and transitional implications, a nuance that a simple binary support/oppose measure alone would not have captured.

Table 4: Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Citizen Support for Raising Minimum Educational Qualifications for Parliamentary Candidates

Predictor variable	B (log-odds)	Adjusted OR	95% CI	p-value
Constant	-1.485	0.23	0.09–0.58	0.002*
Age 26–35 (ref: 18–25)	0.011	1.01	0.55–1.85	0.972
Age 36–45 (ref: 18–25)	0.257	1.29	0.69–2.42	0.421
Age 46–55 (ref: 18–25)	-0.158	0.85	0.41–1.78	0.673
Age 56+ (ref: 18–25)	-0.245	0.78	0.35–1.74	0.548
Male (ref: Female)	0.072	1.07	0.70–1.66	0.747
Urban residence (ref: Rural)	1.003	2.73	1.69–4.40	<0.001*
Primary education (ref: None)	0.466	1.59	0.69–3.67	0.273
Secondary education (ref: None)	1.194	3.30	1.49–7.29	0.003*
Tertiary education (ref: None)	1.811	6.12	2.67–14.03	<0.001*
Formally employed (ref: Unemployed)	0.372	1.45	0.77–2.74	0.251
Self-employed (ref: Unemployed)	0.051	1.05	0.60–1.85	0.859
Student (ref: Unemployed)	0.171	1.19	0.60–2.34	0.622
Civic education exposure (ref: No)	0.515	1.67	1.07–2.61	0.023*

*Model summary: -2 Log-Likelihood = 487.33; Likelihood Ratio χ^2 $p < 0.001$; McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.109$. * $p < 0.05$.*

The binary logistic regression model, which simultaneously adjusted for age, sex, residence, education, employment status, and civic education exposure, confirmed that four variables remained statistically significant independent predictors of citizen support after controlling for all other covariates in the model. Urban residence was associated with 2.73 times higher odds of supporting the policy compared with rural residence (AOR=2.73, 95% CI: 1.69–4.40, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the bivariate association observed in Table 2 was not merely an artefact of confounding with education or other variables, but represented a genuine independent effect of place of residence, plausibly reflecting greater urban exposure to the practical workings of Parliament through media coverage and civic engagement infrastructure concentrated in urban centres. Education level demonstrated the strongest and most consistent effect in the model, with secondary education associated with 3.30 times higher odds of support relative to no formal education (AOR=3.30, 95% CI: 1.49–7.29, $p = 0.003$), and tertiary education associated with 6.12 times higher odds of support (AOR=6.12, 95% CI: 2.67–14.03, $p < 0.001$), a dose-response relationship that persisted robustly even after adjustment, confirming education level as the single most powerful independent driver of support identified in this study. Primary education, by contrast, was not significantly different from no formal education after adjustment (AOR=1.59, 95% CI: 0.69–3.67, $p = 0.273$), suggesting that the effect of education on perceptions became clearly discernible only from the secondary level onward.

Prior civic education exposure remained a significant independent predictor even after adjusting for education level and residence (AOR=1.67, 95% CI: 1.07–2.61, $p = 0.023$), indicating that civic education exerted an effect on citizen perceptions that was at least partly distinct from, rather than merely a proxy for, formal schooling, a finding with direct practical relevance since civic education programmes are more readily scalable and modifiable through policy intervention than formal educational attainment. Age group, sex, and employment status did not emerge as statistically significant predictors in the adjusted model, mirroring their non-significance in the bivariate analysis and providing converging evidence that these characteristics played a negligible role in shaping

citizen perceptions of the policy once residence, education, and civic exposure were accounted for. The overall model fit statistics, including a highly significant likelihood ratio test ($p < 0.001$) and a McFadden's pseudo R-squared of 0.109, indicated that the model provided a statistically meaningful, though moderate, improvement over a null model in explaining variation in support, a level of explanatory power that is broadly typical for social survey data involving complex, multiply-determined attitudinal outcomes, and which suggested that unmeasured factors, such as specific political affiliations, trust in Parliament, or exposure to particular media narratives, likely also contributed to citizen perceptions beyond the variables captured in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine citizen perceptions of raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates and to identify the socio-demographic and civic factors underlying these perceptions, and it found that citizen opinion on this issue was neither monolithic nor randomly distributed but was instead systematically patterned by residence, personal educational attainment, and prior civic education exposure, even as a slim majority of citizens expressed overall support for the proposal. While respondents broadly acknowledged the potential competence, law-making, and accountability benefits of a more educated Parliament, this endorsement was tempered by genuine and non-trivial concerns that such a reform could exclude capable grassroots leaders and entrench elitism within political leadership, revealing a citizenry that was simultaneously receptive to the principle of the reform and cautious about its practical consequences. The logistic regression findings, in particular, demonstrated that urban residents, more educated citizens, and those with prior civic education exposure were significantly more likely to support the policy even after adjusting for other factors, underscoring that any future reform process would need to contend with markedly divergent levels of support and understanding across different segments of the population, particularly between urban and rural citizens and between those with differing levels of formal education. Taken together, these findings suggest that raising minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates is a policy proposal that enjoys conditional rather than unanimous public support, and one whose successful and legitimate implementation would likely depend on how effectively concerns about inclusivity and grassroots representation are addressed alongside the pursuit of legislative competence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Electoral Commission and Parliament should consider a phased or transitional implementation approach to any upward revision of minimum educational qualifications for parliamentary candidates, allowing sitting and prospective candidates without the proposed qualifications a defined grace period, in order to mitigate the exclusion of capable grassroots leaders identified as a genuine citizen concern in this study.

Government and civil society organisations should expand the reach of civic education programmes, particularly in rural areas where exposure was found to be lowest, since such exposure was independently associated with greater support for and presumably better-informed engagement with electoral reform proposals of this nature.

Policymakers should complement any educational qualification reform with parallel measures that safeguard inclusive representation, such as leadership training and mentorship programmes for grassroots candidates, to directly address the elitism and exclusion concerns raised by a meaningful proportion of respondents in this study.

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