

Gukurahundi, the Forgotten Tragedy: Examining Print Media as a Vehicle for Peace Education in the Matabeleland Region after Ethnic Violence

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Abstract: The research analysed the role of print media in peace education in the post-Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe (2018 – 2020) focusing mainly on the media coverage of the work of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC). The NPRC is a constitutionally set up body meant to deal with the country's past conflicts with the aim of achieving peace in the country. The objectives were to investigate the roles of print media in peace education in Zimbabwe in the post-Gukurahundi era, explore the factors that influence print media reportage in peace education in the post-Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe, analyse the implications of print media reportage on peace education in post Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe, and recommending measures that can be enacted to ensure positive, educative and peace building media reportage. Located in a triangulation of media theories, including the concept of the public sphere, and theories drawn from peace studies, the research used descriptive qualitative methodology through a combination of in-depth interviews with journalists, peace activists, chiefs, and NPRC officials, focus group discussions and an analysis of newspaper stories around the activities of the NPRC to gather and analyse data. It was established that the media experienced a number of challenges in playing its peace education role including issues related to ownership and control, especially by the government. There were other challenges related to sourcing and source bias. The research recommended that there is a need for the media to pursue victim-centred journalism that puts the voice of the victims at the centre of the Gukurahundi narratives; there is a need for journalists to be independent and consciously refuse to be controlled by owners of publications; and that, there is a need for the media to build trust with the victims of the atrocities.

Keywords: Media, peace, education, Gukurahundi, violence.

INTRODUCTION

History has shown that the media can incite people toward violence. Hitler was in favour to use the media to create an entire world view of hatred for Jews, homosexuals, and other minority groups. Rwanda's radio RTLM urged listeners to pick up machetes and take to the streets to kill what they called 'the cockroaches.' (Paluck, 2009). The media have always played an important role in peace education in Zimbabwe, which has been characterised by conflict and violence. In a sense the media have also been characterised by conflicts. Zimbabwe is known for a host of violent episodes which span the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. A tradition of violent responses to conflicts has been established and must be broken if the country is to have sustainable peace.

The print media has always played a big role in peace building and in exacerbating the conflict in Matabeleland region. Santos, (2011) asserts that *The Chronicle* newspaper performed a collaborative role in its reportage of the Gukurahundi conflict in Zimbabwe. Santos, (2011) concludes that, in performing the collaborative role, state owned/controlled media assumed characteristics of war/violence journalism. Santos further argues that *The Chronicle* developed practices consistent with peace journalism when it both espoused the facilitative role and journalistic objectivity. Some of his arguments undermine the

conventional view among proponents of peace journalism that in times of conflict, the news media should be interventionist in favour of peace and that they should abandon the journalistic norm of objectivity which they argue, promotes war/violence journalism. As a result, the bitter memories of Gukurahundi have heightened Ndebele ethnic nationalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Lindgren, 2005). Ndlovu, (2019) argues that the Unity Accord should have addressed issues such as the compensation of Gukurahundi victims, the prosecution of the perpetrators of these crimes and the promotion of peace education and reconciliation as done by Rwanda after the 1994 genocide of which the media played a pivotal role.

The media has been seen as playing a double role in political process that include issues of peace and reconciliation. It has been argued that it plays both positive and negative roles. However, Held emphasises that "the media should contribute to decreasing political violence through better coverage of arguments for and against political dissidents' views, and especially through more and better treatment of nonviolent means of influencing political processes" (1996: 187). She offers a textured analysis of how the media contribute to political processes of peace, violence and reconciliation noting that "each of the narrower cultural contexts that may more directly and closely shape the beliefs of those who engage

in political violence is itself embedded in a wider cultural context of which the media are not only an important, but an increasingly overwhelming part” (Held, 1996: 191).

One of the major responsibilities of the media, in reporting about political violence with the aim of arriving at peace, is “deciding what descriptions to use of the act itself” (Held, 1996: 192). Schlesinger, Murdock, and Elliott, (1986) note that there always emerge questions on when the description of actors in violence raise a question of accuracy. Held notes that “governments apply such labels to suit their foreign policy and other interests, as when the Reagan administration called the Contras in Nicaragua “freedom fighters” while accepting the Israeli government’s descriptions of comparable Palestinian efforts as “terrorist”” (1996: 192).

Writing on the Rwandese genocide, James, (2008) posits that in terms of the media and political violence, there is a need to grapple with questions such as “to what degree did the media contribute to the Rwandan genocide and what might have been done about it?” (2008: 89). He, however, warns that in answering these questions, the role of the media must not be over-exaggerated and overstated (James, 2008: 89). This is because “while it is commonly believed that hate media was a major cause of the genocide, instead it was a part of a larger social process. The use of violent discourse was at least as important as, for example, the availability of weapons in carrying out the genocide. Put another way, violent discourse was necessary but not sufficient by itself to cause the genocide of 1994” (James, 2008: 89). Straus, (2007) concurs and notes that in the study of the Rwandese genocide “the importance of hate radio pervades commentary on the Rwandan genocide, and Rwanda has become a paradigmatic case of media sparking extreme violence” (2007:609). He however argues that “there exists little social scientific analysis of radio’s impact on the onset of genocide and the mobilization of genocide participants” (Straus, 2007: 609). He argues that through an analysis of exposure, timing, and content as well as interviews with perpetrators, it is not true to argue that “broadcasts from the notorious radio station RTLM were a primary determinant of genocide. Instead, [there is] evidence of conditional media effects, which take on significance only when situated in a broader context of violence” (Straus, 2007: 609).

The initiative to bring peace through peace education originates after incidents of conflict and based on this study the conflict it is dealing with is Gukurahundi. The term *gukurahundi* is derived from a Shona language expression that means ‘the storm of the summer that sweeps away the chaff’ (Sithole and Makumbe, 1997:133). *Gukurahundi* in post-independence Zimbabwean history remains a hotly contested and complex phenomenon involving heightened emotionality on the affected and afflicted sections of the people in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands. *Gukurahundi* is defined as: “a strategy of annihilating all those opposed to the chimurenga ideology and to ZANU-PF hegemony. As Ndlovu, (2013) argues, ZANU-PF sought to inscribe a nationalist monologic history in Zimbabwe to prop up its claim to be the progenitor and guardian of the postcolonial nation. State-initiated atrocities in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands provinces which began in 1982 against alleged dissidents and their supporters of Ndebele affinity remain fresh in the memories of the afflicted and affected families.

Furthermore, the view that persists in some circles is that the *gukurahundi* killings despite being horrific and regrettable, were a response to a complex array of existential threats to the state (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 11 August 2017). The government of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe remained defensive and adopted a cautious domestic policy because of a multitude of foes [such as white Rhodesians and ZAPU] who remained strong after the Lancaster House Agreement (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 11 August 2017). The total cost for the *gukurahundi* damages is estimated at 68 million Zimbabwe dollars of the time (Chatham House, 2007). The ‘moment of madness’ as Mugabe refers to the *gukurahundi* disturbances which saw about 20,000 deaths (Murambadoro, 2015:37; CCJPZ, 1997:34) at the hands of the Korean trained Fifth Brigade that was predominantly Shona-speaking, was viewed as ZANU-PF’s attempt to exterminate the Ndebele people under the guise of bringing the dissident menace to an end. The debacle legitimised ZANU-PF’s authority over Matabeleland and Midlands (Masilela and Rankin, 2012) by giving Mugabe an excuse to dismiss Nkomo and other PF-ZAPU ministers from the Cabinet in 1982 (Bratton and Masunungure, 2011).

The results of the 1984 Chihambakwe Commission set up by the Government of Zimbabwe to investigate the causes of the wholesale slaughter of ordinary citizens in these

parts of the country were never disclosed despite legal attempts to have them published (Nyathi and Killander, 2015). Human Rights groups such as the Zimbabwe Victims of Organised Violence Trust (ZIVOVT) and *Ibhetshu LikaZulu* unavailingly lobbied government to release the findings of the Chihambakwe Commission (Ndou, 2012). This further incensed surviving victims who wanted recourse to justice, objective redress and reconciliation. The Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration set up by the Inclusive Government in 2008 did not produce desired results. It was weakened by ethnic factors which proved too strong for national healing to take place. With Mugabe at the helm of the government, there was no state commitment to bring sanity and finality to the discourses surrounding this ethnicised conflict and admission of guilt remained an impossibility on the part of those with control over the instruments of force and coercion.

Moreover, it is obvious that when there is no peace there is conflict or war and war and peace are two opposing discourses. Thus, in dealing with discourses in conflict situations, there is always existence of representation of either physical war, verbal or communicative war which portrays conflict between certain parties. These conflict situations are identified in the media texts through discourse analysis. Thus, Briggs and Cobley, (2002:14) say the discourse of war is, “recognisable through language and words such as victory, defeat, outflank, skirmish, manoeuvre, massacres and troops. The media has been seen as playing a double role in political process that include issues of peace and reconciliation. It has been argued that it plays both positive and negative roles. The media can play a positive role in bridging the gaps and creating unity, in how it influences and guides. However, the media may also play negative roles by creating new values and guiding the public to adopt them, resulting in cultural conflicts between conservatives and believers in the new concepts. War journalism can be described as violence in which the journalists concentrate on the visible outcomes of conflict. Hanitzsch, (2004:484) argues that violence journalism is “one side wins and the other side loses and this news coverage only begins with the manifestation of violence and concentrates on its visible consequences such as death, casualties and material damage”.

In case of Gukurahundi massacres, the Fifth brigade on behalf of the government stand accused

of killings and displacement of people in the affected provinces there by posing a need for the current studies to establish peace initiatives and education based on the media reportage. This section of the study sought to highlight the print media role in peace education in the post Gukurahundi era. It is either the media escalate the conflict or deescalate it towards peace achievement based on the normative roles highlighted earlier on in this study.

This concurs with Willis, (2010: 15)’s view that “the press plays a mediation role between the government and public and the watchdog function,” the words which were coined by Edmund Burke who spoke of the media’s role as to provide check and balances on the arms of government namely the judiciary, executive and legislature. Thus, the media could have played a collaborative role, monitorial role, facilitative role or radical role in peace education in the post Gukurahundi era.

In assessing the role of the media in peace education, it is necessary to have various contexts in which the local media roles are weighed against what is happening in other countries in Africa and in the world. Thus, Chirunga and Mbwirire, (2020) in their study note that the media are a powerful communication tool that can be used for a lot of good but can also be used to cause a lot of harm. “In volatile political environments, the media are used as a communication tool. How it is used as a communication tool is sometimes left in the hands of media houses. Depending on how volatile and or fragile a community is at the time of conflict, media can fuel conflict. (Chirunga and Mbwirire, (2020:3). Drawing a case study on the Kenyan post-election conflict in 2007/8, Mbeke, (2009) states that the use of local language newspapers during the 2007/8 Kenyan Post -Election Violence (PEV) to report on the issues communicated peace education to the conflicting citizens while some used the media to spread hatred and escalate conflict. These newspapers targeted their local tribesmen and transmitted messages of hatred and disunity that propelled the PEV. This resulted in the eliciting of feelings of animosity and hatred amongst Kenyans countrywide and thus fuelled the PEV (Mbeke, 2009). In the case study given by Mbeke, it is clear that the media was used to spread violence and conflict in Kenya and this role was contrary to the expected role of spreading peace education among citizens to end conflict.

Moreover, in 2009, after the heavily contested elections of 2008, Zimbabwe set up a government of national unity (GNU) between the then ruling Zanu PF and the long-time opposition, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party led by the late Morgan Tsvangirai. The former opposition party that had just suffered heavy state abuse of its supporters in the 2008 ‘long sleeve, short sleeve’ violence brought to the table a number of issues including that of peace and reconciliation. The country went into a new constitution writing exercise where a lot of people demanded the inclusion of a peace and reconciliation commission into the new constitution. (Tshuma, 2019). The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) was therefore constituted in accordance to the new constitution of Zimbabwe adopted in a referendum in 2013. The commission is one of the Chapter 12 independent commissions mandated to support and entrench human rights and democracy; to protect the sovereignty and interests of the people; to promote constitutionalism; to promote transparency and accountability in public institutions; to secure the observance of democratic values and principles by the State and all institutions and agencies of government and government controlled entities; and to ensure that injustices are remedied. In a more direct way, the NPRC is a creature of the National Peace and Reconciliation Act Chapter 10:32 of 2018. It was established following the realisation of the social and political will and aspiration of Zimbabweans to transition from a past riddled with a lot of conflict and violence, including state sponsored violence.

In an interview with Zimbabwe Independent political reporter Nyasha Chingono (Zimbabwe Independent 8th February 2019) the NPRC chairperson Justice Selo Masole Nare laid out some of the commission’s agenda;

“The major goal is to reach out to the people so that they can dialogue. That is, talk to each other about the problems they are encountering, resolve these problems through dialogue, other than being involved in confrontations. Our mandate as the commission, as provided for by section 22 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, is to cause the people to dialogue, so as to prevent situations, conflict situations, from turning into national conflict.”

Justice Nare asserts the importance of the media in peace education;

“This is why we organised that strategic dialogue meeting in order to hear it from the people

themselves, what their opinion is towards strategic dialogue — how we can resolve any issues of conflict in terms of dialogue. As a commission, we are implored to develop procedures and institutions at national level to facilitate dialogue among the political parties, communities, organisations and other groups in order to prevent conflict and disputes arising in the future. People prefer dialogue but we must set the framework of the dialogue, in all this the media should play a pivotal role”. (Zimbabwe Independent, 8th February 2019

Theoretical Framework

Jurgen Habermas’s theory of the public sphere – as that space between the state and society– is valued in both political and media studies. The research combined political (conflict and peace studies) and media studies making the theory of the public sphere valuable for the understanding of the media’s peace education role in Zimbabwe. The public sphere is taken to refer to the space between the state and society which is “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (Habermas, 1964/1974:49). Habermas sees a distinction between the public and the public sphere as the latter assumes concrete form through the participation of people since it is “accessible to every citizen” (Hohendahl, 1974 in Habermas, 1964/1974:49). There is emphasis on the non-involvement of the state in citizens’ affairs in the public sphere except as a guarantor of the freedom of assembly, association and expression. Habermas, (1964/1974:49) makes it clear that he does not see the media as constituting the public sphere *per se*, but as its medium of communication. It has been noted how the concept of the public sphere is generally conflated with the idea of the media (Mckee, 2005:5).

More so, the public sphere is bigger than the media as it is the space where issues are circulated, debated by individuals and institutions, and re-circulated until some kind of consensus is reached. However, for most modern societies, the media have become central to the public sphere as the place where we find out about ‘the public’ – “millions of other people that we share a country with” (Mckee, 2005:5-6). The idealised public sphere is associated with 18th century bourgeois society after the overthrow of the monarchical influence and, therefore, acquires specific meaning from a concrete historical situation (Habermas, 1964/1974:50). Central to the public sphere is

deliberation: that people have to engage as equals. In tracing its transformation, Habermas is perceived as, first, revealing the internal tensions and factors that led to the decline of the bourgeois public sphere; and second, showing the elements of truth and emancipatory potential that it contained despite its contradictions (Calhoun, 1991:2). Emphasising the public sphere as a place “where information, ideas and debate can circulate in society” (Dahlgren, 1995: ix) makes it important in terms of democracy, peace and reconciliation.

Zimbabwe has been in a state of acute political and economic crisis for a long time. Although the causes of the crisis are multifaceted, the predominant view is that there is a breakdown in the rule of law and observance of human rights by the state that is faced with overwhelming pressure from civil society, opposition parties, and the media to embrace democratic reforms (Ranger, 2005). The state and its critics have fought their information and ideological battles through the media which includes print, hence Habermas’ Public Sphere is relevant to the study.

METHODOLOGY

The approach followed in this study is qualitative descriptive research methodology as it enabled the narration and interpretation of nature/role of print media in peace education in post Gukurahundi Zimbabwe as used by NPRC. This approach was appropriate to this study as it enabled to establish the role and even the extent of

peace education and peacebuilding through media reportage. This was through studying the context/setting in which people talk and also the voices of the participants as emotions can be observed through peeped voices to show anger which cannot be heard in quantitative descriptive research methodology, (Creswell, 2014). A total of 71 participants took part in the study. These participants were selected on the basis of their expertise to media reportage and peacebuilding within the constituency of peace education.

In this study the population included all journalists and editors, chiefs, DDCs, churches, peace organizations, focus groups discussions, the National Peace and Reconciliation (NPRC) authorities, newspaper articles and key informants on media and the other one on peace. The interviewees were all selected from the three Matabeleland provinces of Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and Bulawayo. In-depth interviews were conducted after sampling among these groups of stakeholders in peace and reconciliation in the Matabeleland region. The goal in these interviews was to assess the journalists and the civil society players’ attitude towards the print media’s role in peace education in Zimbabwe in the post-Gukurahundi era, the factors that influence print media reportage in peace education in the post-Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe, and the implications of print media reportage on peace education in post Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe.

Table:1 (Heading Missing)

Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Research tools
Journalists	20	6	In-depth interviews
Newspaper articles	20	6	Analysing
Editors	5	2	In-depth interviews
Key informant interviewee	4	2	In-depth interviews
DDCs	20	6	In-depth interviews
Chiefs	20	4	In-depth interviews
Church Leaders	20	6	In-depth interviews
Peace organisation	20	6	In-depth interviews
Focus groups discussion	20	9	In-depth interviews
NPRC	2	1	In-depth interviews

Source primary data (2021)

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The data presented and analysed here was collected through a series of interviews with journalists and editors at *The Chronicle* and the *NewsDay*, chiefs in Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North, District Development

Coordinators (DDCs) from three Matabeleland provinces, church leaders in the three Matabeleland provinces including Bulawayo, peace activists aligned to Peace Organisations in the three provinces and two key informants, one an authority on media and the other an authority on peace. Data was also collected through focus

group discussions in the three provinces. A National Peace and Reconciliation Commission

(NPRC) official was also interviewed. The table below summarises the data sources:

Table 2: Summary of data sources

Participants	Female	Male	TOTAL
Journalists	2	4	6
Editors	0	2	2
Chiefs	0	4	4
DDCs	2	4	6
Church leaders	1	5	6
Peace activists	2	4	6
Key informants	0	2	2
Focus group discussions	30	42	72
Stories	-	-	6
NPRC	0	1	1
TOTAL	37	67	110

Source primary data (2021)

As can be seen from the table above, the research also discussed six stories, three per each of the two newspapers. The stories are mostly around President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s meetings with the Matabeleland Collective, a group of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). While *The Chronicle* focused on what the leaders said and the government promised to do as a solution to the Gukurahundi matter, the *NewsDay* focused on citizens and victims of the atrocities. In a case while *The Chronicle* sought to push a hegemonic

position, the *NewsDay* pushed a counter-hegemonic position.

Gender Distribution of Participants

A challenge still remains in terms of gender. Most of the sources of data were male since these were the people who occupy positions in both government and the private sector such as peace organisations and newspaper. The media still remain male (Mlotshwa 2020). Most of the journalists and their sources were therefore male. The figure below illustrates this;

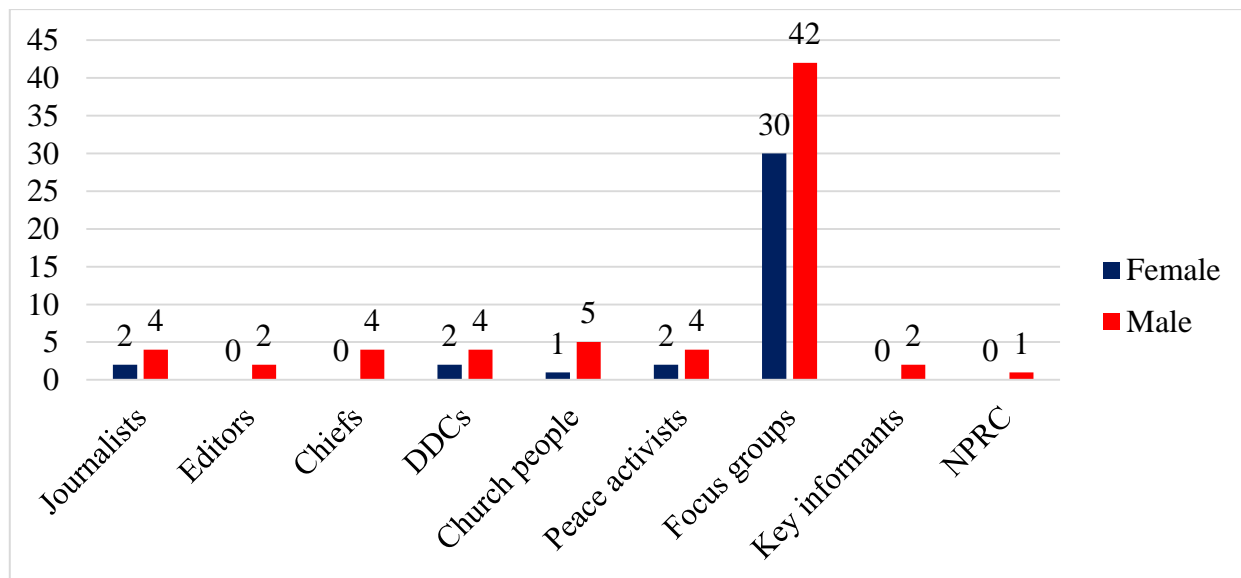


Fig:1 Data sources gender distribution
Source primary data (2021)

The other variable is in terms of geographic distribution. More of the sources are from the rural areas in the two provinces of Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North. This is because

Bulawayo, as an urban province, has no chiefs. The table below represents the sources of data distribution in terms of geographic terms;

Table 3: Sources of data geographic distribution

Sources	Rural		Urban
	Matabeleland North	Matabeleland South	Bulawayo Metropolitan
Journalists	0	0	6
Editors	0	0	2
Chiefs	2	2	0
DDCs	2	2	2
Church people	2	2	2
Peace activists	2	2	2
Key informants	0	0	2
Focus groups	24	24	24
NPRC	0	0	1
TOTAL	32	32	41

Source primary data (2021)

Even though, there are two rural provinces, there is no major difference between the rural and urban divide because there are some sources that are urban, rather than rural, such as the media workers – journalists and the editors. Newspapers are mostly an urban phenomenon and the workers are mostly based in the cities. They have to travel to

rural areas if they are to get news directly from the rural areas. However, most of the time they depend on sources that could be based in the rural areas like chiefs or have access to rural areas like peace activists and church officials like pastors who also work in the field of peace education. The following graph makes this difference clear:

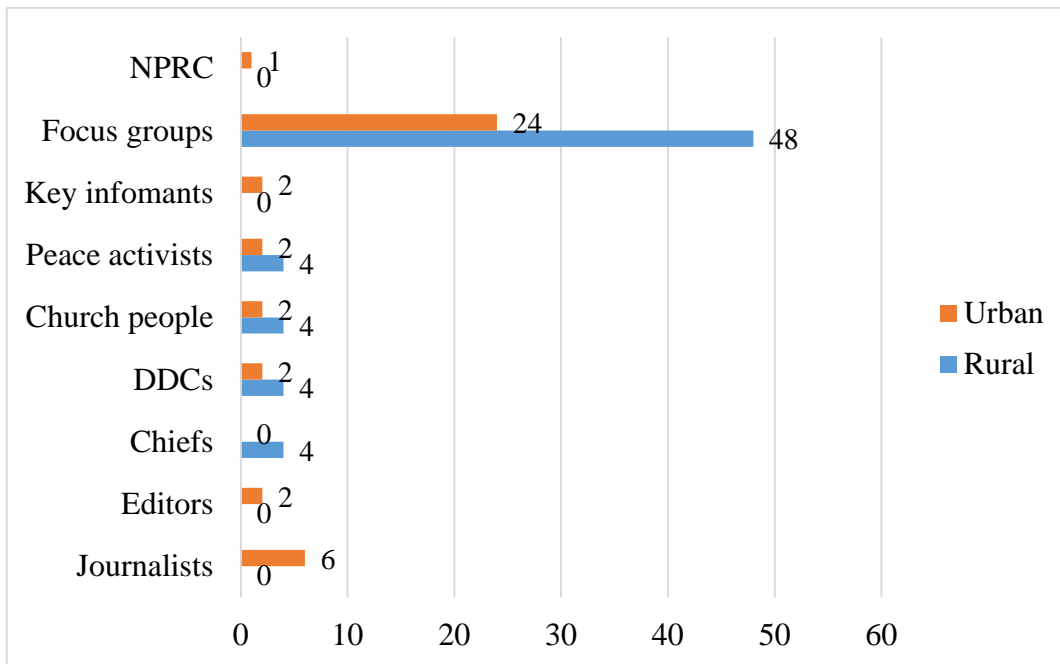


Fig 2: Rural-Urban distribution of data sources
Source primary data (2021)

Chiefs, as traditional leaders, are mostly a rural phenomenon. This is why there are no chiefs for the Bulawayo province. The four chiefs that were interviewed are distributed as two chiefs in Matabeleland South and two in Matabeleland North. Chiefs are central to rural political life and also central to peace education in the post-Gukurahundi period in Zimbabwe, in general, and Matabeleland, in particular.

There is also difference between sources in terms of education levels. Most of the young people who work for peace organisation and in the media are educated, even up to Masters’ level, while some chiefs would have gone up to secondary school. The chart below represents the educational distribution among the interviewees:

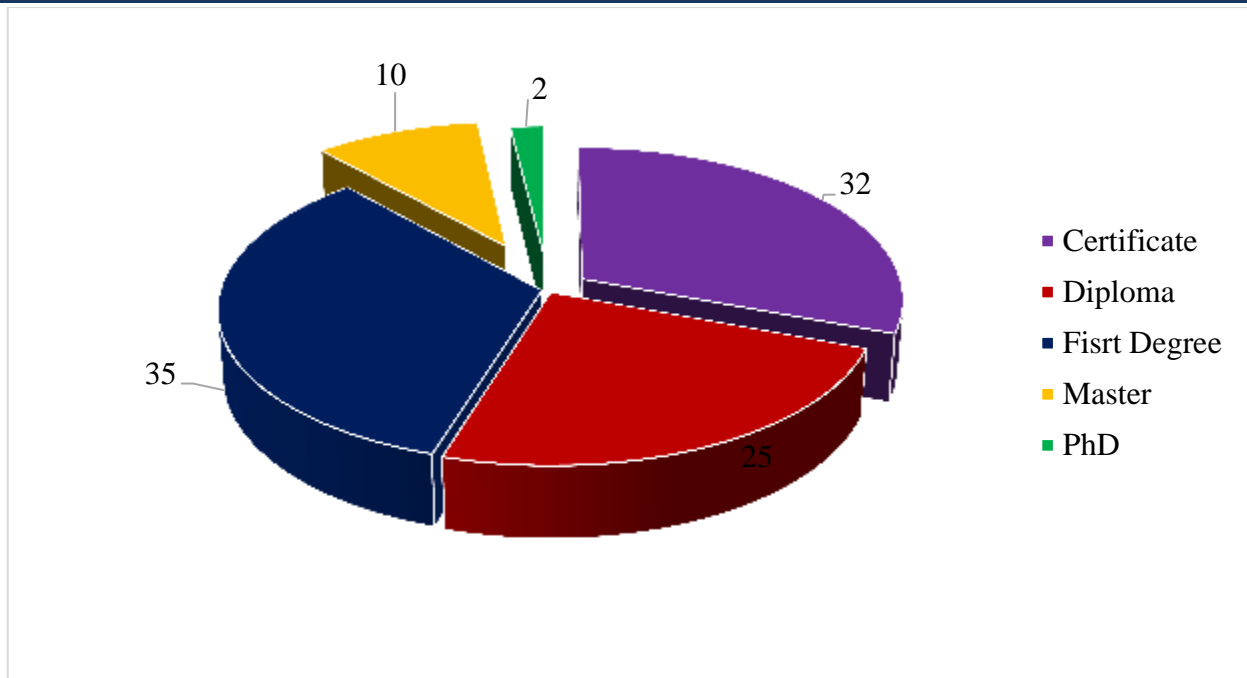


Fig 3: Respondents level of education
Source primary data (2021)

The two PhD holders are the key informants teaching at local universities, the University of Science and Technology (NUST) and Lupane State University (LSU). There is a high number of

people with first degrees and a good number of people with Masters’ qualifications. This is also reflected in age distributions:

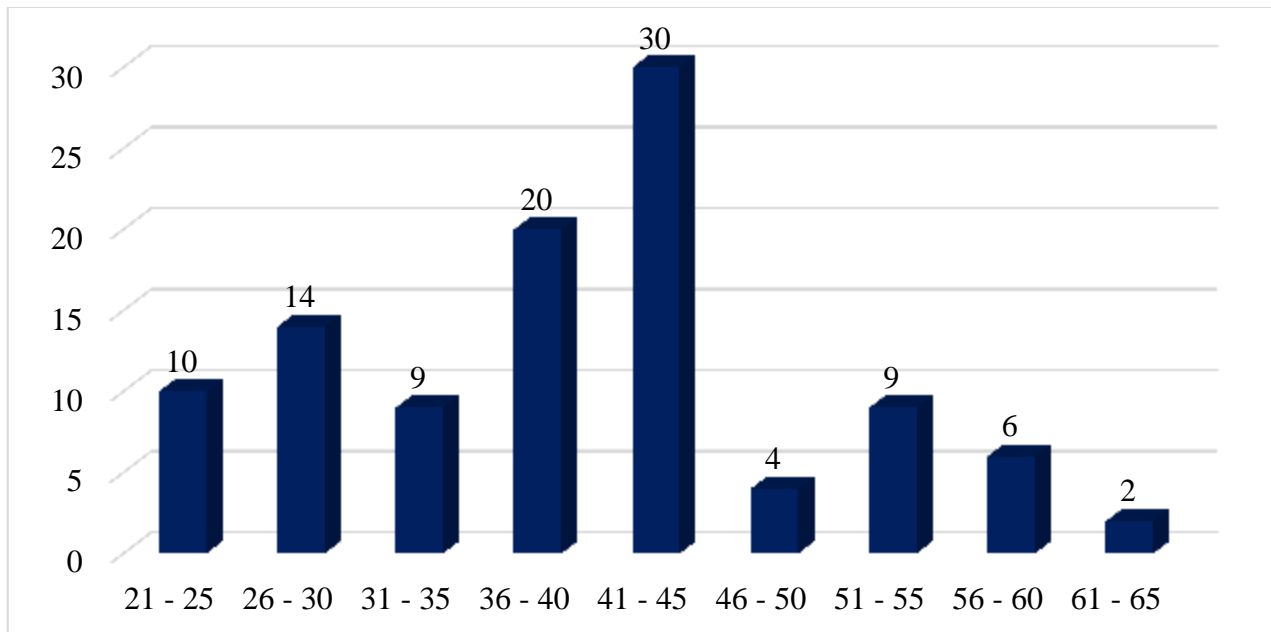


Fig 4: Respondents age distribution
Source primary data (2021)

The other demographic difference is in terms of age. Generally, there are more young people aged between 26 and 45 years of age. These are the people who are more economically active, that is employed in peace organisation and working for

churches and the media and dealing with issues of peace education.

The Roles of Print Media in Peace Education in Zimbabwe in the Post- Gukurahundi Era

The normative roles of the media are to educate, to inform, to offer a platform for discussion and to entertain. The two most important roles here are that of educating and that of informing the public. However, the role of offering a platform for discussion is also important in that members of the public have to engage in discussions on what they think should be the way forward. This normative expectation of the media ties with the idea of the public sphere. This is where members of the public are expected to debate issues until they come to an agreement on the way forward. In this case, they would be expected to debate on what could be the way forward on the Gukurahundi issue until they come to some form of agreement. On the role of informing the public, the media, would in this case, be expected to share information as basic as details of the meetings organised by the commission to discuss the Gukurahundi issue. The media is also expected to carry stories on similar experiences in other countries, like Rwanda and South Africa, and in the process educate the people on the possibilities they can take up in order to negotiate a solution to the festering Gukurahundi issue.

One chief from Matabeleland North noted that, in playing the peace education role, which is linked to the normative role expectations, the media “must be professional and independent” and explains this as linked to the government not interfering with the media in any way. He further notes that this is linked to these expectations is the fact that the relationship between the media and its sources must be healthy and ensure that the media fulfills its role. He emphasises that the sources must also operate above board. Another chief said they expected to get information on the government programmes and its agencies such as the Commission so that they are able to participate in efforts to bring peace in the region.

The church leaders said they expect the media to play a peaceable role before it can be expected to impart peace education in the region and the country as a whole. One of the church leaders in Matabeleland South said, before the media can play a peace education role, it will be expected not to spread hate speech or information likely to antagonize people and communities. A peace activist in Matabeleland North said it was ironic that this peace education role is expected from the media as suspicious as *The Chronicle* that, at the height of the atrocities, was seen as an instigator. In a sense, the media, in playing a peace education role, are expected to change and embrace the good

news approach. This is an approach that rather than puts emphasis on the negative news values – such as conflict – places emphasis on positive news values such as peace. Rather than breaking news with a story of conflict, the media here would be expected to break news with a story of peace. Focus group discussion (FGD1) explained that the role of the media in post Gukurahundi era;

“Amaphephandaba kumele anike ithuba izimuli ezalahlekelwayo labasindayo ukuthi batshele umhlaba okwenzakalayo hatshi amanga e ZANU lephepha labo. Kanti okufihlwayo kuyini? Abantu bakithi kumele bahlale belimukile. Kumele abamaphepha baphe ithuba lokukhulumisana nxa zombili”.

This meant that the print media should afford victims and survivors the opportunity to narrate and share with the world what really happened. The atrocities that were hidden be laid bare. It should conscientise communities that may not have witnessed the atrocities. It should also be a platform for perpetrators to reach out to the families of the victims and vice versa.

An NPRC official asserted that the media should always report in such a way that promotes peace and educate about peace as well. Some of the roles of the media are further discussed in terms of the factors that affect the media in playing its role.

Factors that Influence Print Media Reportage in Peace Education in the Post-Gukurahundi Era in Zimbabwe

The media have been seen as failing to fulfill its role in terms of peace education in the country. A chief in Matabeleland North said, “*The Chronicle* is propagating the Zanu PF’s view of Gukurahundi leaving out the voice of the victims which is then covered by the *NewsDay*.” The chief sees this as located in the polarisation in the media. It has nothing to do with the normative expectations of the media role in society. The chief continues and says that, with the media in general, and *The Chronicle* in particular, “it must be professional and independent, and the government must not interfere with its operations.” In a sense, the chief talk of professionalism with being independent. The chief expects the media, including *The Chronicle*, to be independent of the government. Considering that the government pays the bill and the salaries of *The Chronicle*, that through the ministry of information it appoints editors, pays their perks including buying them cars, it is an ideal to expect *The Chronicle* to be independent of

the government. One of the pastors interviewed in Bulawayo said one of the issues that affect the media such that it ends up not playing an effective peace education role in the post-Gukurahundi era is that it is controlled by the Zimbabwe Mass media Trust (ZMMT), “a government-controlled entity with government having an upper hand in appointment of Senior Editors between (1983 – 1989) who were and still are compliant with the government and party policies” The pastor in Bulawayo said;

“As such the newspapers are pre-occupied with justifying a constructionist understanding of Gukurahundi which in my opinion is at variance with the perspectives of those affected by the conflict. It is from this understanding that the media fails to articulate the real issues. It would seem like there is too much interference from the government on the part of the state media such that it is not able to fulfill its expected roles in peace building. As long as the media are controlled by the same state that is accused of perpetrating violence against a section of its citizenry, there is no way it can play a significant role in peace education. It is also ideal to imagine that the media can be independent”.

A peace official based in Bulawayo concurs with the pastor that issues of ownership and control have affected the media in fulfilling its role in terms of peace education. She posits that;

“The Chronicle is part of the public media portfolio and gets funding from the treasury and therefore it has a mandate to the public. However, because of state capture and control it has abrogated that role to being a puppet of the establishment. They are influenced by a number of issues that include funding, cadre deployment, censorship and state capture. The NewsDay on the other hand is a private player and relies on sales, advertising and partly funding. They may be influenced by the need to be relevant or by funding. The NewsDay is also likely to be influenced by the desire by its journalists to be relevant and to have global respect and recognition”.

The peace official brings an important concept of state capture into the conversation. However, it remains unclear who or what has captured the state. He also mentions cadre deployment and censorship. The issue of censorship is important to discuss at length here. On the part of *The Chronicle*, in that editors or journalists work with a

certain expectation of what the bosses in Harare or at the ministry of information expect of them, they always tread careful when reporting on issues related to the Gukurahundi. On the part of the *NewsDay*, fear for repercussions such as spurious arrests and possible disappearance may compel the newspaper journalists and editors to self-censorship.

The independence of the media as an ideal is contested. There are many factors that affect the media such that even though it might be free or independent from the government, it would still be beholden to its advertisers and some other funders. In the case of *The Chronicle*, the fact that the government is its owner makes it even more difficult. If in the case of the privately owned media like the *NewsDay*, the advertisers might include the government; then in the case of *The Chronicle*, well, it is impossible to be independent of the owner. A pastor aligned to a church in Bulawayo has said the media needs to follow the expectations that are set down by international bodies such as the United Nations (UN). He notes that the United Nations Millennium Declaration stress the need to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role. This essential role is to inform the public and the right of the public to have access to information;

“As such the media in conflict sensitive situations from a religious perspective should come up with (1) strategies to de-escalate conflicts by reporting human rights abuses and threats to persecute journalists who report such abuses (2) reporting on efforts aimed at creating a peace promoting environment and documenting such pressing issues (3) taking a leading role in providing material for educators on media efforts to prevent incitement of violence, conflict mediation, political and security sector reforms and (4) grassroots approaches to make society deal with grievances and build positive peace.”

The pastor further states that the media, in its peace education efforts, should strive to unpack the “constructionist understanding” of Gukurahundi and bring about a balanced view of the issues of concern to the public. Here, the pastor is very technical as he relies on the United Nations Millennium Declaration to speak of the ideal role of the media in peace building. It is worth noting that the pastor does not give any example of where it has ever happened in the world that the media has effectively reported human rights abuses in any conflict. The pastor is right to note that, as

long as the media operates within the hegemonic view of the Gukurahundi, which is the government and at the same time perpetrator's narrative, "those affected by the violence see the problem to be stemming from a political contest between rival parties for the control of political space and the broader issue of establishing a one party system of government." He further posits that

"The Chronicle and the NewsDay, in my view, would be perceived as the mouthpiece of those perpetrating violence as such could not be seen as playing any neutral role. Any coverage of peace initiatives would be fraught with suspicion and would not be effective in coercing people."

A pastor in Matabeleland South said, some of the factors influencing the media's role in peace education included "the desire to maintain the image of the country internationally as a peace loving and investment destination as opposed to the peace education role of bringing peace to those torn apart by strife." Playing the peace education role can be messy and not good enough for national public relations exercises. With *The Chronicle* seeing itself as the national newspaper, it is hard to see it getting involved in the messy task of opening wounds with the task of nursing them to genuine healing. The pastor also notes that, for the victims of Gukurahundi violence, suggesting that the media can play a peace role is part of the ideological strategies of covering up the genocide. He posits that "the victims of violence see the peace education role as a myth that can only come as a dream as they have never enjoyed political freedom since the inception of majority rule under the present political system." This goes back to the point that the people have always seen newspapers such as *The Chronicle* as an extension of the government, which is itself an extension of the party. For *The Chronicle*, and the *News Day*, to an extent, embracing the peace building role effectively means talking openly and honestly about the Gukurahundi, which, according to the pastor, would be seen as "likely to derail such efforts to maintain existing order such as political unity."

On the expectations of what the media should do in peace building, one DDC official has said the media is simply expected to "educate about peace, tell the story of the victim, and expose perpetrators at the same time setting the agenda for a peaceful society" However, the media are not effectively playing their role "especially *The Chronicle* which is pro perpetrators. A lot is expected from the

media. The *NewsDay*, to some extent, is trying to expose the perpetrators although it also comes short in setting the agenda for resolving the Gukurahundi issue." However, in terms of peace, the two newspapers are seen as trying "their level best to report positively which promotes peace." The implications are that the newspapers are reporting about peace without confronting other messy issues such as truth telling. As a result, the DDC official believes that "the newspapers must report without emotions and promote peace."

An official working for a Peace organisation in Matabeleland South said the media has an important role to play around issues of truth-telling and documenting the peace process;

"The media plays a pivotal role in truth telling, investigating the Gukurahundi massacres and giving the affected and the perpetrators the space to speak out and be accountable respective. The media also plays an important role of documenting the post Gukurahundi peace processes as well as informing the public and policy makers/decision makers about international best practices".

It has been argued that journalism's first responsibility is to truth (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). The peace education and healing process demands truth. Truth-telling is said to be the first step towards true peace building. The peacebuilding official from Matabeleland South said, in his individual assessment of each of the newspapers, is that;

The Chronicle is generally pro-establishment and the *NewsDay* is pro-public. In that regard, it can be noted that *The Chronicle* always wants to create an impression that the government is doing the best to address the Gukurahundi issue. However, the *NewsDay* tends to report what the people, especially the victims, tend to see and say. Albeit, both publications have a responsibility to report accurately.

What the peace official emphasises is how the polarisation of the media is affecting the potential of the media in Zimbabwe to fulfill its normative roles including that of peace education. He further notes that; "the education by both media houses is polarising and is not giving a true and complete picture, a reader has to read both papers first in order to access a nearly complete picture." Half the truth is always a lie; it cannot be the truth. If readers are forced into a situation where they have to look for the truth in between.

The peace activist in Matabeleland South said the media's role in peace education remained "insignificant" in that "very few people had access to print media and such print media was always subjective." He further elaborated;

"The print media remains a reserve for urban dwellers, in rural areas very few people have access or interest in reading newspapers. If ever there was such an attempt to educate and stimulate peace it could have been felt by urbanites. Socio-economic factors have a huge impact on the media playing its role in peace education. Rural people don't have formal source of income, they can't afford to buy newspapers and a significant number of them are illiterate. The issue of trust is also important in that people know very well that state-controlled media will always be subjective hence they have no interest in reading biased stories".

The rural-urban divide is of great significance in terms of how the media plays its role in peace education. The newspaper like most media still remains an urban phenomenon. Rural communities have hardly been serviced by a dedicated media platform in Zimbabwe. Efforts to extend media coverage and media distribution in rural areas have been hampered by poor infrastructure such as poor roads, poor telecommunications infrastructure and lack of access to electricity for many rural communities. This is paradoxical in that the communities that were mostly affected by the genocide are the rural villages in Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and parts of rural Midlands that are mostly Ndebele speaking.

Journalists still believe in the ideal responsibilities of the media and hence one journalist said; The media are a key component of democracy hence when it comes to peace building it has a critical role in terms of providing information that will ensure the continued maintenance of peace. Most importantly we are talking about unbiased information or information which brings out just a fraction of the entire news items.

Here, the journalist is articulating peace education to media and democracy. However, the journalist seems to be operating in an idealistic world where he believes there is a way that journalists can access the truth or reality. Another journalist is equally idealistic;

The role of the media in peace education post Gukurahundi is to educate and enlighten the victims and survivors of their rights to push for redress of the phenomenon so as to ensure peace in

future and also educate those who are on the perpetrator side to acknowledge wrong doing and apologise so as to lower tempers of the victims in order to bring peace among the citizens.

To be fair to the journalist, this sounds well thought out. It rhymes with what one of his colleagues believes; "The role of the media is to initiate discussion. It should also play as a mediator between victims and perpetrators." However, the ideas of educating and enlightening are the liberal normative expectations of the media that have been hugely criticised in media studies across the world. The other *NewsDay* journalist believes that the media can play a role of educating "people on the importance of peace education. For instance, they can teach people how they can live in peace and harmony with each other." The simplicity with which this is stated ignores or is oblivious to the challenges. One might be tempted to assume that this journalist believes that people are taught to hate and fight rather than be compelled by political conditions existent at any given time. If it was as simple as merely teaching people to live in peace, then by this time churches would no longer be necessary as they would have preached themselves out of relevance. Arguing for victims and survivors' rights while advocating for perpetrators to acknowledge the wrong they did is an important and just spin to the normative roles of the media. However, the question arises as to the possibility of a journalists telling the president of the country to acknowledge their wrong doing and apologize. This speaks to the power of the media. It also speaks to questions of apologies. It raises the question of the possibility of the journalists initiating any dialogue and being a mediator. In a larger sense, these are views that neglect the possibility that the media might also be a problem. This journalist at the *NewsDay* believes that his newspaper has played a significant role in peace education as it has;

"NewsDay has been very supportive to the victims and those who suffered the brunt of the Gukurahundi, projecting their views and their concerns through bringing in the voice of government and actions to the public domain. The media played a great role in projecting what was transpiring during the CSOs, Chiefs and President Emmerson Mnangagwa meeting on the Gukurahundi issue going on since 2019".

The *NewsDay* as a newspaper that is not under the influence of the government, can focus on victims and try and tell their story. However, there are

limits to doing that. The first is to do with access to victims. The challenges to access are a result of distance between urban and rural areas and also due to the pervading fear in terms of speaking about the genocide. The *NewsDay* journalist further posits that his newspaper is “driven by the gap that remains unfilled by government in addressing the concerns of people in Matabeleland who were affected by Gukurahundi.” In a sense, the newspaper sees itself as positioned to continue with the struggle of the victims to get justice. In the process of reporting the newspaper is coming up with its own news values that do not necessarily have to fit in the hegemonic liberal normative conceptualization of the media. The journalist sees the whole “marginalisation of the region” as “linked to Gukurahundi and becomes a factor for those who raise concern put forward to government in addition to the killings.” This journalist, in a sense, acknowledges that Gukurahundi is alive.

The Implications of Print Media Reportage on Peace Education in Post Gukurahundi Era in Zimbabwe

It is the feeling of the leadership in Matabeleland that the Gukurahundi genocide negatively affected their areas. One chief said, in his area, “many children lost their parents and up to now they don’t have birth certificates and many more failed to go to school and the society looks down upon them.” A District Development Coordinator (DDC) official also concurs noting that “there can be no development if people do not have identification particulars.” The chief feels that the media does not report on such stories or takes them lightly. The implications are that the wounds of Gukurahundi still feaster among a lot of people in the region and what makes it worse is that the media seems to be involved in the cover up.

According to a pastor from Matabeleland North, the “muzzling of the press by state actors accounts for much of the biased and impartial reporting especially on incidents of a political nature.” The implications of muzzling the press, according to the pastor, are negative;

“The truth has never been revealed leading to failure to find solution to the problem. In particular, the fact that the editors are political appointees benefiting in one form or other (land reform, RBZ loans, agricultural mechanization schemes etc.) compounds the suspicions of bias and tone of most reporting as such undermining the public confidence to any meaningful peace

efforts coverage from The Chronicle and Newsday newspapers”.

A peace activist working with a Peace Organisation in Matabeleland South has said although the effects of Gukurahundi were lesser in his province than in Matabeleland North, especially in the Nkayi area, they have lived to see the effects of the genocide;

“Lives and sources of livelihoods were lost as breadwinners were killed or went to exile in neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Swaziland and Botswana, leaving behind orphans or child headed families. These families could not fend for themselves, could not get birth certificates or easily get enrolled at schools. People are still traumatised to date and don't feel comfortable when they see military personnel around”.

The distrust that the people of Matabeleland region carry about the government is extended to any institution seen as part of the ruling bloc and therefore practicing some form of governmentality over the people of the region, including the media. The implication of *The Chronicle* and *NewsDay* reportage on issues around Gukurahundi is that trust is lost between the newspapers and the readers. *The Chronicle*, for example, has always positioned itself as a government mouthpiece and as a result, instead of covering news and events objectively, it has always taken the side of the government. At times, when people ask for services from their government, the newspaper has branded them as the enemies of the state. This lack of trust has implicated negatively on the media/public relations even when it comes to issues of national reconciliation and peace education. The pastor points to another source of mistrust;

“The citizens are not enjoying equal access to basic benefits such as legal representation and access to the media. This renders the distrust of all media coverage; people should have trust in their local institutions such as print media because they are the mouth piece of government on all development inclusive educational programs at schools. In particular, the nations devastated by violence can rely to a large extent on media programs to reconcile their differing opinions. The conciliatory tone cannot exist when the very political reason that prompted the emergence of Gukurahundi is still in place as such there is no solution in sight except for those in power to

concede and accept the political will of the people to prevail”.

In a sense distrust means that the conditions that made Gukurahundi possible between 1983 and 1987 are still there. While peace education is meant to eliminate not only mistrust but also the conditions that caused the genocide, in the first place, the media are here seen as part of the problem keeping the Gukurahundi genocide alive. According to the peace official based in Bulawayo, the implications of the failure by the media to play its role on issues of peace education is “increased polarisation and lack of a common national goal or vision of peace and reconciliation in the country.”

As would be expected, journalists believe that they are doing a good job in relation to peace education; “*The NewsDay impact positively in that the affected come to know what was being deliberated at closed door meetings at statehouse and would also give them platform to criticise or support what was being done”.*

As has been argued elsewhere in this chapter in relation to objective journalism, this journalist believes that the ideal is to give both sides that is, those who criticize and those who support, to argue their points. What is interesting is that the journalist also uses the concept of platform to refer to the media. For the other *NewsDay* reporter, the implications are simply that; “print media that report objectively, promote peace in the country. But print media that promote hate speech and are intolerant, derail the peace education agenda.” Considering his earlier comments, it is clear that his cryptic comments are targeted at the *NewsDay* as reporting objectively and *The Chronicle* as promoting hate speech.

The Chronicle editor has said his newspaper is “managing to reach a wider audience and bring about closure. Previously the state media did not report on such issues.” He sees the efforts of the Second Republic to confront the issue of Gukurahundi as creating good conditions for his newspaper to report on the matter. This differentiates his editorship of the newspaper apart from that of his predecessors. However, the claim that they are reaching a wider audience is problematic at least at two levels. The first one is that he sorts of confuses the readers of his newspaper with the victims or the people who were affected by the genocide. If he can separate the two that would be helpful in assisting to assess the implications of his newspaper’s journalism on

peace education. Second, the editor does not seem to recognise that newspaper readership has gone down such that claiming that they are reaching a wider audience is a lie. The editors who were in charge of *The Chronicle* in the years between 1983 and 1987 reached a wider audience than now. The media expert based in Bulawayo argues that the impact of print media reportage is increased polarisation and lack of a common national goal/vision of peace and reconciliation in the country. The NPRC official posits that the implications of media reportage are that peace would not be given a chance thereby prolonging conflict instead of dowsing it.

DISCUSSION

In the first objectives that focused on the role of print media in peace education in the post-Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe, the research realised that the agreed position was that the role of the media is to educate about Gukurahundi and tell the story of the victim more than that of the perpetrator. On the second objective of factors that influence print media reportage, the research realised that polarisation played a significant role. This polarisation is linked to ownership and control of the media Ndlovu, (2020). Interviewees said they expected the media to be professional and independent, further arguing that the government must not interfere with its operations. Here the interviewees sounded as if they are saying independence and professionalism are linked. In terms of ownership and control, it emerged that the control of the state media, which is seen as owned and controlled by the government through the Zimbabwe Mass media Trust (ZMMT), meant that the government had an upper hand in the appointment of senior editors who were compliant with the government and ruling party policies. *The Chronicle* in this case, was seen as pushing the government’s stance that sought to bury the issue of Gukurahundi under the debris of propaganda rather than pursue proper peace education around the matter. It would seem like there is too much interference from the government on the part of the state media such that it is not able to fulfill its expected roles in peace building. As long as the media are controlled by the same state that is accused of perpetrating violence against a section of its citizenry, there is no way it can play a significant role in peace education Galtung, (2003). It is also ideal to imagine that the media can be independent. The last significant point on the issues affecting the newspapers in playing their role in peace building

is that of access as linked to the rural-urban divide. It was noted that the media's role in peace education remained "insignificant" in that "very few people had access to print media and such print media was always subjective." This was linked to the rural urban divide in that the newspaper, like most media, still remains an urban phenomenon. Rural communities have hardly been serviced by a dedicated media platform in Zimbabwe. Efforts to extend media coverage and media distribution in rural areas have been hampered by poor infrastructure such as poor roads, poor telecommunications infrastructure and lack of access to electricity for many rural communities. This is paradoxical in that the communities that were mostly affected by the genocide are the rural villages in Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and parts of rural Midlands that are mostly Ndebele speaking.

In terms of the third objective focusing on the implications of print media reportage on peace education in post Gukurahundi era in Zimbabwe, it emerged that there was great mistrust between the people of the region and the government, mistrust that extended to the media. In that the wounds of Gukurahundi were still festering in the region, the media was seen as ignoring such stories in what was likely a cover up. This biased and impartial reportage was seen as linked to the "muzzling of the press by state actors" the broader implications of this are that the truth has never been told on the Gukurahundi matter Ndlovu, (2018). The distrust that the people of Matabeleland region carry about the government is extended to any institution seen as part of the ruling bloc and therefore practicing some form of governmentality over the people of the region, including the media. The implication of *The Chronicle* and *News Day* reportage on issues around Gukurahundi is that trust is lost between the newspapers and the readers. *The Chronicle*, for example, has always positioned itself as a government mouthpiece and as a result, instead of covering news and events objectively, it has always taken the side of the government. At times, when people ask for services from their government, the newspaper has branded them as the enemies of the state. This lack of trust has implicated negatively on the media/public relations even when it comes to issues of national reconciliation and peace education. In a sense distrust means that the conditions that made Gukurahundi possible between 1983 and 1987 are still there and the media is seen as playing a role in keeping those conditions alive Mpofo, (2016).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the news making environment in Zimbabwe is riddled with challenges such that it has become difficult for the media to play its role in peace education. The challenges include ownership and control by the government of the state media, its (government) appointment of editors and senior personnel at these newspapers, the control of key sources such as the chiefs by the government and other challenges such as bad infrastructure which makes it hard for the media to reach some of the rural areas where the wounds of the genocide still feaster. These challenges have to be addressed before the media can play a significant role in the peace education process. Furthermore, the research was located in a problematic situation where the media have been seen as playing both positive and negative roles in peace education. On one hand, media have been seen as fostering and nurturing forgiveness and reconciliation, and on the other hand, it has been seen as inciting and furthering violence. In Zimbabwe, besides inciting or furthering violence, the media have been seen as engaging in a cover up of the atrocities that took place between 1983 and 1987.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations that can be made, and they are specific to various stakeholders, including the media, the government and news sources:

Media

There is a need to pursue victim centred journalism. This would be the kind of journalism that puts the voice of the victims at the centre of the Gukurahundi narratives.

There is a need for journalists to be independent and refuse to be controlled by owners of their publications.

Journalists must seek to pursue the truth at all times and therefore should be committed to verification of what their sources, including the government, tells them.

Importantly, there is a need to build trust with the victims of the atrocities.

The government

The government must loosen control of the newspapers that it owns and the media in general through creating a conducive legislative environment.

The government must treat all media houses equally in terms of advertising. The government are the biggest employer and advertiser in the country and should therefore ensure that advertising budgets reach all newspapers, equally.

The government must stop spreading secrecy and fear around the Gukurahundi atrocities so that sources and journalists can speak and write without fear or favour.

News Sources (Chiefs, DDCs)

They must be the voice of the voiceless at all times.

They must be prepared to speak the truth even if it means doing so anonymously.

They must be protected by the government at all times.

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