



**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ZIMBABWEAN PRINT MEDIA ADHERENCE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF PARTIALITY AND OBJECTIVITY IN ELECTION REPORTING: THE CASE OF THE 2013 ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.**

**BY**

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**Submitted to the School of Arts, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, in fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Arts in Media and Cultural Studies (2017).**

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## Declaration

I, Tigere Paidamoyo Muringa (student number 212556107), thus declare that this dissertation is my own unique work. All references, citations and acquired thoughts have been properly acknowledged. None of the present work has been submitted already for any degree or examination at some other University.

Signature: TPMURINGA      Date: 21/11/17      Place: Durban

## Acknowledgments

I owe an uncommon obligation of appreciation to the Department of Media and Cultural Studies (Howard College), headed now by Professor Jean Philippe Wade. It was the department's commitment to academic excellence that attracted me into the study of media and later into research (a choice despite everything I don't lament). My lecturers (Dr Anusha (and family!), Professor Wade and Miss Luthando Ngema) and all weather friends at Howard College, over a wide span of time, are and have been a vital wellspring of scholarly, empathetic and strategic support. They have by and large empowered me to give something back to the calling I cherish. Thank you to my parents, Judith Mutambara and Denford Muringa.

## Abstract

This study takes an exploratory approach in order to ascertain the extent to which the *Herald* and *Newsday* adhered to the journalistic principles of impartiality, fairness, and objectivity in the period leading to the July 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 presidential elections in Zimbabwe. The study used a qualitative methodology. It utilised a purposive sampling technique to collect news stories, headlines and extracts from the editorial section of the *Herald* and *Newsday*. The data was collected and gathered from the online archives of the two newspapers and then analysed using two content analysis techniques (content summative analysis and content latent analysis). The study argues that with the use of frames and agenda setting techniques (whether consciously or unconsciously) the news media when covering elections stories compromise the journalistic principles of objectivity, fairness, impartiality and truth-telling (that should ensure that they carry out their role in a professional manner). As such, the *Herald* and *Newsday* when reporting news in the period leading to the July 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 presidential elections, reported the election in a biased manner. Reports in the two newspapers were replete with editorial intrusions, reports of unconfirmed sources and clear attacks on other political candidates. Consequently, the two newspapers failed to a great extent to adhere to the principles of fairness, objectivity, impartiality and truth-telling. In this study, it materialised that the 2013 presidential elections exposed the polarisation that shaped the Zimbabwe media landscape even before the country attained its independence. It further revealed that this polarisation led to a manifestation of ideological warfare that was characterised by an array of partisan dichotomies, generating rough division and multifaceted biases. The credibility of print media (*Herald* and *Newsday*) in Zimbabwe is highly questionable as the press seeks to promote certain interests and ideologies while forfeiting its fundamental role as the fourth estate.

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## **Acronyms**

AI Amnesty International

AIPPA Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act

AMI Africa Media Investments

AMB African Media Barometer

ANZ Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe

AU African Union

BSAC British South African Company

CCCS Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

CCJP Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

CHRA Combined Harare Residents Association

CNG Community Newspapers Group

ECF Electoral Commissions Forum

GNU Government of National Unity

GPA Global Political Agreement

HRW Human Rights Watch

IMPI Information and Media Panel of Inquiry

MDC Movement for Democratic Change

MIC Media and Information Commission

MMPZ Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe

LOMA Law and Order Maintenance Act

NCA National Constitutional Assembly

NEPAD New Partnership for African Development

POSA Public Order and Security Act

RPPC Rhodesia Printing and Publishing Company

SABC South African Broadcasting Cooperation

SADC Southern African Development Community

VMCZ Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe

ZAMPS Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey

ZANU PF Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZAPU Zimbabwe African People’s Union

ZBC Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

ZCTU Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

ZESN Zimbabwe Election Support Network

ZIANA Zimbabwe Inter-African News Agency

ZLHR Zimbabwean Lawyers for Human Rights

ZHRC Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

ZMMT Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust

ZUM Zimbabwe Unity Movement



# CHAPTER ONE

## Background of the study

### 1. Introduction

This chapter of the research introduces the areas that form the core of the study. In this section, five main areas are covered. That is, the background of the study is introduced, wherein the origins and development of the Zimbabwean print media are explained. Furthermore, the section also incorporates the rationale and the location of the study. The research questions and objectives also form part of this chapter. Lastly, this chapter provides the structure of the whole dissertation.

#### 1.1 Background

Zimbabwe gained its hard-earned independence in 1980 from a post-colonial, white minority rule. The country has had a single head of state since 1980 who is Robert Mugabe. Scholars like Makumbe (2003) stressed that Mugabe has been the only president that the country has known since 1980. After 1980 the country had conducted a number of elections. The first election was conducted in 1980 followed by other elections after every five years (1985-2013). Southall (2013) indicated that from 2003 ZANU-PF has experienced a series of election defeats. However, because it employed intimidation strategies it has continued to enjoy power regardless of the fact that its popular support is waning away. All these elections have seen the dominance of the incumbent (Robert Mugabe). Makumbe stressed that the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union –Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has in all these years claimed controversial victories. Southall (2013) indicated that from 2003 ZANU-PF has experienced a series of election defeats. However, because it employed intimidation strategies it has continued to enjoy power regardless of the fact that its popular support is waning away. Though a plethora of explanations and accusations of vote rigging and voter intimidation by the militarized state have dominated discourse on Zimbabwean politics, researchers (Moyo 2009, Waldhal 2005 Makumbe 2003, Mapava and Muyengwa 2012) have long disagreed on what has actually sustained the ZANU-PF victory in national elections despite its waning support. However, the party's victory has largely been attributed to the monopoly that the ruling party has in the state apparatus (Mararike 1998). It is reasoned that after Robert Mugabe's victory in the 1980 elections, his party claimed ultimate ownership of the strategic state apparatuses (Waldahl 2005). The ruling party took control of the police, army, central intelligence and most importantly it had unquestioned ownership of all major

communication channels<sup>1</sup> (Waldahl 2005). The ruling party had direct influence over the country's major media channels. It had direct control over the *Herald* - the then single national daily press, the *Chronicles* and weeklies like the *Sunday Mail* (Moyo 2009). Moreover, obliterating the distinction between the state and the government, the ruling party took ownership of the Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) that houses the nation's single television channel Zimbabwe Television (ZTV) and all four national radio stations (*Power FM, Radio Zimbabwe, National FM*) (Waldahl 2005). All this unquestioned acquisition of major communication tools and state apparatuses by the ZANU-PF government helped in controlling the public both by force and coercion and by affecting public opinion. The influence developed by ZANU-PF on all public media channels of communication arguably made it possible for Robert Mugabe and his cabal to have a great stake in shaping the public opinion in the country. This has possibly assisted him to emerge victorious in the country's subsequent presidential elections.

The year 1999 and the subsequent years marked a classic shift in the Zimbabwean political and election history. A new opposition political party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in 1999. Its formation heralded an end to Robert Mugabe's undisputed rule. The emergence of the MDC was accompanied by the establishment of a considerable number of independent newspapers: the *Daily News*, and the *Newsday* which were critical of Robert Mugabe's regime. The independent press that supported the MDC and other opposition parties would mean that Robert Mugabe's monopoly of the media and other state apparatuses was being loosened. This was made possible by the newly formed privately owned newspapers that offered the Zimbabwean population unconventional information other than that propagated by the state controlled media (Moyo 2009). For example, Moyo (2009) claims that media content published by the privately owned media during the 2008 elections was supportive and favoured the ideology of the opposition and it gave much attention to the MDC election manifesto and programs. Moyo (2009) further stressed that 95 percent of the broadcasted content on ZTV were ZANU-PF activities. Drawing from the dynamics that took shape from 1999, it can be seen that, with the turn of the millennium that witnessed the emergence of alternative media, ZANU-PF's control of information was somewhat weakened even if the party still controlled the broadcast media.

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<sup>1</sup> In relation to that, Southhall (2013:107) indicated that, "Although ZANU-PF has perpetually claimed victory and hegemony. It has never enjoyed party dominance in the sense that it has relied upon coercion rather than consent to be re-elected".

However, necessitated by the 2000 referendum loss<sup>2</sup> which according to Makumbe (2000) owes much to the crucial role of the media in increasing the popularity of the opposition parties, the ZANU-PF government further adopted a harsher authoritarian stance on the media and electoral laws. It launched an indiscriminate reform of the media laws and criminal laws, making sure that press, television and radio channels opposed to the government be restricted from propagating information that is contrary to the ideology of the ruling government (Makumbe 2000). Among the most cited media and legal reforms enacted by the government were *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (AIPPA), *Criminal Codification Act* and the *Public Order and Security Act* hereafter referred to as POSA (Madhuku 2005). All these laws were intended to restrict the freedom of expression and publication of all forms. The government made certain that no political party would be able to broadcast their manifesto by giving limited air time on the national broadcasting channel and on radio channels. Further, the government ensured the maximum circulation of state subsidized newspapers which were distributed free of charge to some parts of the country. Therefore, these draconian measures adopted by the government in its effort to stem any chance of election victory of the opposition parties remained to this day and are continuously cited by opposition leaders as the key reasons ensuring an uneven election playing field (Mhlanga 2013).

Consequently, as a result of this background and tense media environment that engulfs Zimbabwe since independence Moyo (2009), Waldhal (2005) and Mhlanga (2013) have invested enormous time seeking a clear understanding of the dynamics that characterize Zimbabwean media in the context of presidential elections. Thorough research by Runyowa (2009), Mapuva (2012), Moyo (2009) and Collen (2015) has been done on the Zimbabwean media and elections. However, it is imperative to mention that research done on media and the principles of journalism had a wide focus (focusing on all forms of mass media). In their research scholars like Runyowa (2009) and Collen (2015) focused on agenda setting and framing of news content in different elections. Mapuva and Muyengwa (2013) share a common theme and this theme played a vital role in limiting their studies to a specific focus. Simply put, the two researchers carried out their research on some forms of mass media and

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<sup>2</sup> A constitutional referendum was held in Zimbabwe on 12–13 February 2000. The proposed new Constitution of Zimbabwe, which had been drafted by a Constitutional Convention the earlier year, was vanquished. The annihilation was sudden and was taken as an individual rebuke for President Robert Mugabe and a political triumph for the recently framed resistance gathering, the Movement for Democratic Change. The new proposed constitution was remarkable for offering power to the ZANU-PF administration to seize farms possessed by white agriculturists, without pay, and exchange them to African homestead proprietors as a component of a plan of land reform (Makumbe 2000).

tried to unveil how ownership and control of media could affect public opinion in the period leading to national elections. Generally, it can be opined that research ( media and elections) revolved around and limited its attention to the analysis of the role of the state and private controlled media channels and how these communication channels have been used to shape public opinion whilst strengthening, perpetuating and maintaining certain ideologies and political interests. Because of that, it stood out that there has had not been extensive work done to unpack and understand the interplay of certain specific media channels, their role in elections and how these are manipulated in the process of encoding messages (by producers) and decoding by the masses. Therefore, this study will fill in the gap in this body of knowledge. The study will examine the both private and state owned media channels in order to come out with the knowledge how the different media channels could be used. The results from this study will be very useful as they will provide highlight the major role played by the print media, the way they manipulate and set the public agenda. It will also, provide evidence from the use of agenda setting and framing of how the print media compromises its code of conduct when reporting on a certain issue.

This study seeks to assess the adherence of the Zimbabwean print to the principles of objectivity, fairness and impartiality in its covering of the 2013 presidential elections. This study aims to provide a holistic scrutiny of both state controlled print media (online and print) channels, and those that are independent from the state, run by private players. The hypothesis of this study is that, print media in covering the elections is expected to be fair, impartial and objective. That is to say, the media is expected to abide by the universal standards of reporting as stipulated by the United Nations standard for ethical journalistic practice and the Zimbabwe national journalistic codes and standards of news reporting (Mapuva and Muyengwa 2013). Furthermore, in the case of Zimbabwe, media conduct in election times is also regulated by Section 160J of the Electoral Act.

## 1.2. Research Objectives

This research has four main objectives that it seeks to address. Firstly, the research aims to unpack the concept of impartiality, objectivity and fairness in the context of elections. Secondly, the research also seeks to identify the election stories covered by print media and the extent to which they complied with the principles of objectivity and impartiality in covering certain issues. The third objective of this study is to analyse how the Zimbabwean print media is composed, and the extent the ownership of media affects the covering, production and distribution of election related content. Finally, the study also seeks to

evaluate the major challenges faced by the Zimbabwean print (private and state owned) media in 2013 and how these affected the reporting and distribution of some election related content.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This study has four main questions that it endeavors to address. The study seeks to address the question, what does the principle of objectivity, fairness and impartiality entail and the extent to which the print media complied with the principles in 2013? It also responds to the question, what were the main election stories covered by print media in the period leading to the election? And what did the media tell the public about the contesting political parties and candidates? The study also seeks to respond to how the Zimbabwean print media is composed, and the extent media ownership affects the covering, production and distribution of election related content. Finally, this study will respond to the question, what were the major challenges faced by the Zimbabwean print media in 2013, and how has this affected the reporting and distribution of some election related content?

### 1.4. Location of the study

This study seeks to assess the adherence of the Zimbabwean print media to the principles of objectivity and impartiality in the 2013 presidential elections. Zimbabwe is a land locked Southern African country that shares borders with countries like South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi (Mapunya and Munyengwa 2012). It has a total population of 15 million people (2012 national census). The country has had many democratic elections over the years. Be that as it may, this study will focus on the 2013 presidential elections because of its unique nature. The 2013 election is fundamental because of the immense exploitation and manipulation of mass media by the incumbent ruling party ZANU-PF and the utilization of private and alternative media by the main opposition party MDCs<sup>3</sup> (Moyo 2005). Among the much used channels were television, radio and the daily and weekly press and various other social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). However, unlike current research (Runyowa 2009, Mapuva 2012, Moyo 2009 and Collen 2015) this study will depart from concentrating on all main mass media channels and have its focus on the print media. This inquiry will specifically focus on print media (*News Day* and *Herald*) because of two main reasons. Firstly, there has been a notable increase in the circulation of newspapers as a main source of

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<sup>3</sup> In the 2013 presidential elections the main opposition party (MDC) had split more than three times. This led to the formation of more than three MDCs that participated in the presidential elections. The main MDC contested the elections with the name MDC-Tsvangirai while the other two had the names of their leader (MDC-Mutambara and MDC-Ncube).

information in Zimbabwe (Moyo 2009). Secondly, the role of newspapers in reporting Zimbabwean elections has not been extensively covered by previous and current research. The period under assessment spans from the 4<sup>th</sup> of June (the day official election campaign started) to the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 (the final day of the elections campaign).

### 1.5. Structure of Dissertation

This study is structured as follows. Firstly, it is composed of six chapters. Chapter one of this study presents the background and the outline of the study. In this chapter the research objectives and purpose are clearly outlined. The chapter clarifies the contribution this study will make to the existing literature. Most importantly, it also highlights the location of the study.

Chapter two of this study focuses on the historical background of the Zimbabwean print media industry and a review of relevant literature. In that case, the chapter will begin by looking at the media in the African context. From there on, the roots of the print media in Zimbabwe are traced from the period when the country was ruled by the Rhodesian government to independence up until 2013. A brief comparison between the colonial media and post-independence media was also highlighted. Ownership structures of the *Newsday* and *Herald* was also discussed. Finally in this chapter, it will be highlighted that there is limited literature in Zimbabwe that has been written in relation to the research topic in this current study.

The third chapter of this study is composed of the theoretical framework. In this chapter, three theories will be discussed. The first theory discussed in this section of the study is the Public Sphere theory by Habermas. It is used in this study as the meta-theory. Following the public sphere theory is the Agenda-Setting Theory. In this case it will be highlighted that the media plays a pivotal role in shaping what people deem as important. Last to be discussed is the Framing Theory. It will be highlighted in this chapter that though Framing and Agenda Setting theories are interrelated, these two theories must always be treated as separate entities.

The fourth chapter of the study explains the methods used to collect data. In this chapter the research design, methods of data collection, sampling tools and methods of data interpretation and analysis were set out and explained. This study is an exploratory research that employs qualitative methodology techniques of data collection and analysis.

In chapter five of this study, the researcher will present and discuss the outcomes of this study. In that regard, the researcher will explain the results of this study undertaken to assess the extent the *Herald* and *Newsday* adhered to fairness, impartiality and objectivity in news reporting. It presents the findings of the study from the reviewed and analysed mass media outlets. This chapter is one of the crucial chapters in this research study because the findings presented make available a conclusion that will answer the main aims and objectives of this research study.

Lastly, the final chapter of this study will highlight the main findings based on the results presented on the previous chapter and the contribution that this study will make to the existing literature. It will also present recommendations of the study.

#### 1.6. Conclusion.

This chapter forms the backbone of this study. It has introduced the main concepts that will inform the study, stating clearly the background of the study. It has introduced and explained the research topic, research questions and research objectives of the study. The location of the study which is Zimbabwe has been indicated. Furthermore, in this section, the structure of the whole dissertation has been outlined, explaining in detail what each chapter of the research entails.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of related literature: History and developments of print media in Zimbabwe

*The truly African revolutionary press does not exist merely for the purpose of enriching its proprietors or entertaining its readers. It is an integral part of our society, with which its purposes are in consonance. Just as in the capitalist countries the press support and carries out the purpose of capitalism, so in revolutionary Africa our revolutionary African press must present and carry forward our revolutionary purpose (President Kwame Nkrumah<sup>4</sup>).*

#### 2. Introduction

This chapter seeks to introduce the major debates that are crucial to the study. It is divided into two sections. As an entry point, the first section of this chapter provides a historical background that describes the African and Zimbabwean media phenomenon. In that regard, the two (colonial and post-colonial) periods will be discussed. It will track how the print media was introduced by the colonial settlers in Rhodesia dating back to 1891. The dynamics of its development before independence are laid bare in this section. That is, the establishment, development and the direct control by the state of the print media in colonial Rhodesia. Further, this particular section will surface the transition that took place when the first African government (ZANU-PF) ascended to power in 1980. The second section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature. In that regard, key terms that inform the study are defined. Moreover, the two newspapers (*Herald and Newsday*) that are the main unit of analysis in this study are introduced. To that end, their origins and ownership structures are presented followed by a brief comment on their ownership structure. The section also incorporates discussions on the Government of National Unity and Global Peace Agreement debate and the role that these two agreements could have played in creating a free and fair media environment before the country went to the election. The reforms are unpacked and analysed. The following paragraph will elucidate definitions and discussions on the major terms that form the core of this study.

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<sup>4</sup> Kwame Nkrumah was Ghana's first president after independence. He led Ghana to independence from the British in 1957 and served as prime minister and later president of the country. He was a strong advocate of Pan-Africanism.

## 2.1. Journalistic Code of Ethics

McQuail (2010:172) states that a journalistic code of ethics alludes to a set of standards of professional demeanor that are accepted and controlled by journalist themselves. This alludes to self-direction of the media. However, it is also important to note that the term ethics has frequently been mistaken for the term morals (Day 2006). In addition, Day (2006) clarifies that moral emerges from the Latin words *moris*, which means lifestyle or conduct. While ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* which means custom, utilization, or “character”. Day includes that ethics is regularly considered as an objective procedure of applying established standards when two moral obligations clash. McQuail (2010) refers to the following as the most recurrently established ethics in news reporting codes:

- Truthfulness of information
- Clarity of information
- Defense of the public’s rights
- Responsibilities in forming public opinion
- Standards of gathering and presenting information
- Respecting the integrity of sources

### 2.1.1 Truth-telling

Truth-telling can be defined as the avoidance of lying, trickiness, and distortion of information when reporting. Kruger (2004:12) notes that truth-telling is vital to journalism and is intertwined with the concepts of accuracy and fairness. Truth-telling has direct consequences to the quality of the content and credibility of any news organization. He notes that the concept of truth has limitations, in that there is no broadcaster or newspaper that does not take its own stand point, “we speak from different angles and we see things differently” (Kruger 2004:77). The notion of perceiving things in a unique way may also refer to opinions of news organization’s proprietorship understood through editorial policy. Downing, McQuail, Schlelinger and Wartella (2004:22) cited in Kruger (2004) note that the press obligation to truth is a standard part of its rhetoric but living up to the ideal is virtually impossible, even for those who idolize it. Truth is closely linked to objectivity, a concept discussed later.

An essential issue of truth-telling in the professional routine of news-casting is that journalists and audiences do not really share a typical and irreducible comprehension of what “truth” implies. However, the question remains, what is producing “truth” in the stories or the reports developed regarding the world? In response to that, Kruger (2004) opined that

gathering and confirming facts is central to proficient reporting and journalists' endeavor to distinguish which facts are appropriate. He further stressed that journalists tend to discuss realities as though they were blocks lying about in a field, set to be found and used to develop the axiomatic cathedral of knowledge. However, to put the matter in an unexpected way, journalistic truths are articulations about the world that a large portion of people take to be valid at a given point in time in a specific group. It therefore can be reasoned that facts are not blocks. As Michael Schudson (in Forde 2012) has clarified so well, actualities are "human explanations about the world," not "parts of the world itself".

### 2.1.2 Post-Truth Era

There has been debate concerning the origins of the term post-truth. Political science scholars (Hochschild 2010, Rowan 2009, Tesich 1992) argue that the notion of post-truth is, and has, been part of political life. This is to say that it is embedded in politics albeit manifesting in different forms. In their study of political cultures in the contemporary world, they argued that post-truth has always been a part of political life. In that regard, they claim that post-truth in politics existed as a political culture in which discussion was framed in part by appeals to individual feelings detached from the logic of policy.

Hochschild (2010) has portrayed the ascent of post-truth as a return to eighteenth and nineteenth century political and media practices in the United States, following after a period in the twentieth century where the media was generally balanced and rhetoric was suppressed. The flyer wars that emerged with the development of printing and proficiency starting in the 1600s have been depicted as an early type of post-truth political culture. Derogatory and vitriolic leaflets were economically printed and generally distributed, and the contradiction that they incited prompted wars and upheavals, for example, the English Civil War and the American War of Independence. To add, scholars (Rowan 2009 and Tesich 1992) claimed that factual discussion and debates were ignored or concealed. Rowan stressed that, while the notion of post-truth has been understood as a contemporary phenomenon, chances are high that it has characterised and has been part of the all political cultures. However, it was less notable before the advent of the Internet. Thus political pundits have identified post-truth politics as ascendant in Russian, Chinese, American, Australian, British, Indian, Japanese and Turkish politics, and in addition in different spheres of social and political engagement, driven by a blend of the 24-hour news cycle, false balance in news reporting, and the expanding pervasiveness of web-based social networking.

The term post-truth as understood today was first coined by Steve Tesich (1992). Tesich argued that after the evident truth revealed about the Watergate scandal and the pacifying coverage of the Iran-Contra scandal and the Gulf War in Persia, journalists and other reporters have constantly gone beyond the truth when telling their stories about the world. He argues that contemporary society has freely chosen to live in some post-truth world. Furthermore, the term post-truth was also used by Eric Alterman when he spoke of a “post political environment” where he analysed the misleading statements that were issued by the Bush regime after the September 11 (2001) attacks. Keyes (2004) took up the term and its full use was evident in his works (*The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Contemporary Life* 2004). Keyes (2004) raised concern over the failure of news media to adhere to the ethics of truth-telling. He claims that the current world has seen an unprecedented increase in the failure of the media to tell the truth. Such failure to tell the truth meant that lies have overtaken the truth. In relation to that, Roberts (2010) argued that this era is one shaped by a “post truth political culture”. In this culture, media narratives and public opinion have been wholly disconnected from policy and logical thinking. Moreover, a defining characteristic of post-truth politics was evident during the 2016 USA presidential elections. It was evident that campaigners continue with their promises and manifestos, even when things said were found to be farfetched and untrue by the media or experts. The above assertion can be explained in light of Keyes’ (2004) explanation of the post-truth society. He argued that we now reached a stage of social evolution that is dishonesty. In that case he stressed that “honesty was on the verge of collapse” (Keyes 2004:12). This is because deception has emerged as the major force determining discourse in different levels of contemporary life. In terms of news reports and lies distributed by news media, Keyes (2004) stressed that, “as evidence of this cultural acceptance of lying”, there has been a noticeable rise in rewording for deception. This is to say, that the news media no longer admit that they lie, but rather what they simply do is that they misspeak, exaggerate and sometimes exercise poor judgement.

For Keyes (2004), though human beings have lied before, the level at which human beings of the current generation are negating truth is such that they have come up to the extent of developing skills and nuances in lying. To add, Keyes stressed that although human beings have always been engaging in acts of lying, the current situation is different. It is different in that previously when one lied, a feeling of hesitation, a dash of anxiety and shame would engulf them. Whereas in the current era news media and individuals have become so clever that they come up with rationales for tampering with truth and such tricks have helped both

news journalists and individuals to invent rationales for tampering with truth so they can act guilt-free. One of the reasons why this tampering with the truth has become so prominent is captured by Deacon (2010). He stressed that inherent in the post-truth era is the notion that facts, though indispensable, are “negative”. That is to say, facts are seen as a drawback because the increased speed in the flow of news and information would not allow for the verification of facts before news is disseminated to the public.

As a consequence, in this situation of post-truth politics, fabricated rumours become main news subjects. For example, amid battling for the British EU referendum campaign, *Vote Leave* repeatedly used the claim that EU membership cost £350 million per every seven days, although it later started to utilize the figure as a net measure of cash sent directly to the EU. This figure, which overlooked the UK refund and different other aspects, was portrayed as "conceivably deceptive" by the UK Statistics Authority, as "not sensible" by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and was dismissed in fact-checks by *Full Fact*. *Vote Leave* however kept on using the figure as a centrepiece of their crusade until the day of voting for the referendum, after which point they downplayed the pledge as having been an "example", bringing up that it was just at any point recommended as a conceivable option and utilization of the net assets sent to the EU.

### 2.1.3 Objectivity

Osorio (2014) defines objectivity as reporting news events and stories without self-imposition of personal opinions on the news being reported. He stressed that the opposite of objectivity is subjectivity. Objectivity is one of the journalistic standards venerated however; it is difficult to achieve particularly considering that journalists are social creatures who are likewise influenced by occasions influencing whatever is left of the general public. Conversely, it is established in the journalism fraternity that “even if objectivity is unattainable, it remains an ideal to strive for” (Kruger, 2004:77). Objectivity addresses issues of predisposition, sentiments, handling and reporting of information. McQuail (2010:200) notes that “objectivity is a particular form of media practice and also a particular attitude to the task of information collection, processing and dissemination”. He further hypothesizes that there is comprehensive universal agreement that standards of truth and objectivity should be principal values of journalism. To add, Forde (2014) asserts that the major prominence nearly everywhere is on principles of objective, independent and informative journalism. In addition to that, Schudson (2001:1) posits that “objectivity is at once a moral ideal, a set of reporting and editing practices, and an observable pattern of news writing”. Simply put he

reasoned that the value of objectivity is upheld precisely against partisan journalism in which newspapers are the self-confessed allies or proxies of political parties and their reporting of news is a component of partisan struggle. For instance, Makumbe (2005) in his research on the 2000 presidential elections revealed that newspapers in Zimbabwe have been at the center of the political struggle. In this case, the *DailyNews* (private press) was known for its opinionated reports that were in blatant opposition to the ruling party. On the other hand, some state controlled press was used tools to advance the opinions and ideologies of the different contending political parties (Mhlanga 2013). The concept of objectivity is meticulously related to fairness, a model to be considered next.

#### 2.1.4 Fairness and Accuracy

Generally, fairness in news coverage implies investigating all sides of an issue and stating the discoveries precisely. Kruger (2004:77), states that fairness means that “journalists covering a story must remember there are usually two sides and often more to most issues, and that those differing viewpoints should be given roughly equal space in any news story”. Similar to that, Retief (2010:83) postulates that “fairness first and foremost has to do with accurate balance and context”. This entails journalists to be neutral or autonomous. Heywood (2002) defines neutrality as the absence of one-sidedness or obligation; a repudiation to “take sides”. Simmons (1978) states that discourse of open matters must be available out in the open, and that every side of those issues is given reasonable attention. Moreover, Day (2006) takes note that fairness is a moral judgment including the conflict of contending standards for the most part emerging in rather untidy circumstances.

#### 2.1.5 Accuracy

Retief (2010:49) perceives that accuracy can be accomplished only if pertinent facts are put into the best possible context. Retief adds that there are quite a number of reasons why erroneous reporting ought to be stayed away from as it can bring about damage, negatively influence cogent decision making, and negatively influences media respectability. Day (2006) takes note that facts ought to be checked, that is, they ought to be founded on strong proof. He additionally noticed that off base, unconfirmed, or uncorroborated information can undermine the believability of any journalistic venture. Day (2006:86) contends that while most journalists hold onto precise reporting as a first guideline of ethical reporting, time and competitiveness once in a while affects the accuracy of news reporting. Retief (2010:50) in support of Day derives that the idea of accuracy is a mind boggling one. To report precisely is in fact much simpler said than done. In spite of difficulties on accurate reporting, Couldry in

(Ward and Wasserman, 2008:67) notes that truth and accuracy are two fundamental qualities that are “non-debatable”. This is to say, in reporting journalists should try by all means to ensure that their facts are accurate and the truth. Failure to uphold the truth by presenting inaccurate information will cause damage to both the news organization and the individuals or entity being reported.

Therefore, the above principles are meant to standardize the day to day activity and conduct of journalists in Zimbabwe. Issues of fairness, impartiality and objectivity are not only provided for by the code of ethics that guides journalist universally. Rather in the case of Zimbabwe these principles are highly regarded and also provide a standard by which journalists’ conduct is assessed. As a consequence, the standards of journalism are therefore incorporated in regulatory frameworks that regulate the media in Zimbabwe. Because Zimbabwe does not have a communication act<sup>5</sup> that provides for the regulation of the media conduct, for the purpose of this study, Section 160J in the Electoral Act of Zimbabwe will be considered. This is because it is very instrumental in keeping a check on news media and it provides guidelines for the news media in the period leading to the elections.

## 2.2. Media Regulation and the Electoral Act Section 160J of Zimbabwe.

Media conduct in Zimbabwe during an election context is regulated by the Electoral Act. The Act has a number of provisions and restrictions. It accommodates certain benchmarks that broadcasters and the print media ought to comply with to guarantee an election is held in a free, reasonable and agreeable way. Section 160J will be of interest for the purpose of this study because the section speaks directly to the conduct of print media. The section records types of news reporting that ought to be abstained from, including language that affects viciousness and incites racial, ethnic, or religious bias. It also discourages hate on account of the inescapability of sexual orientation based, race related hostility. Below are some of the provisions of Section 160J:

Amid an election period broadcasters and print media guarantee the following—

(a) All political parties and candidates are dealt with impartially in the news media, in respect to the degree, timing and unmistakable quality of the coverage given to them;

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<sup>5</sup> Unlike countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe does not have a communication act that specifically guides and regulates communication in a broad sense. Rather it has different acts like the Broadcasting Services Act, Postal and Telecommunication Act and a small section found in other act (Section 160J in Electoral Act) that standardize communication and media conduct.

- (b) Gives an account of the election in their news media that are authentic and accurate, factual and reasonable;
- (c) An unmistakable distinction is made in the news media between factual reporting on the election and editorial remarks on it;
- (d) Errors in reports on the election in the news media are redressed without delay and with due unmistakable quality;
- (e) Political parties and candidates are given a sensible right of answer to any assertions made in the news media by the political parties or candidates thought to be false;
- (f) The news media don't advance political parties or candidates that support viciousness or contempt against any class of people in Zimbabwe;
- (g) The news media avoid language that—
  - (i) Provoke racial, ethnic or religious bias or scorn; or
  - (ii) Supports or affects viciousness; or
  - (iii) Is probably going to prompt undue open disdain towards any political party, candidate or class of individual in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe Electoral Act of 2004).

Has Section 160J been effective? Though there is no thorough research done on the effectiveness of Section 160J, some reports by various election observing organizations (African Union, SADC, European Union, Common Market for East and Southern Africa) have been informative. Although the findings released by these organizations shed light on the merits of section 160J, it is important to note that they were not conclusive on the extent to which it was effective. The election report by MMPZ from the period 2005-2008 has revealed that there has been an unprecedented increase in the breach of the provisions of Section 160J and other media regulating frameworks in the country with the highest record observed in the period leading to 2008 elections (MMPZ 2005, 2008, 2013). In line with that, findings in the report issued by the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC countries (ECF-SADC) revealed that state and private media refuse to acknowledge and uphold the rules in the Electoral Act, specifically those provided by Section 160J. The ECF commission reiterated that while it was happy with the establishment of the Zimbabwe Media Commission (provided by the Electoral Act), intended to guarantee that citizens enjoy impartial and extensive access to information, the media breached most of the rules laid in by the Electoral Act. Rusero quoted by the *Mail & Guardian* (07/08/2013) stressed that the Zimbabwean media continues to neglect to practice what it should. He said,

*The media is a yardstick to assess democracy in any country. Sadly, in Zimbabwe we've got something completely different." The Zimbabwean media started wearing political colors and eventually disobeys best practice after the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 2000, with the public media taking ZANU-PF's side and private media largely sympathizing with the opposition. Mail & Guardian (07/08/2013)*

Thus it can be reasoned that, as perfect as it might be, the Electoral Act Section 160J, has not been adhered to fully by the media organizations. It can be reasoned that their coverage has been heavily influenced by the prevailing socio-political and economic atmosphere that has characterized Zimbabwe for the last 4 decades. Therefore, discussion on the media environment including the socio-political dynamics in Zimbabwe will follow in the next section of this chapter.

### 2.3. African Media Context

One common argument that has repeatedly been raised by most African governments is that, Africa occupies a passive position in the global economic system marred with a burden of colonial bequest and the delicacy of being new on the global scene (Musau 1999). Owing to that, African governments argue that a non-government controlled press in the western arrangement would easily disrupt the ability of government to carry out its responsibilities without unnecessary criticism. Consequently, the post-independence governments advocated for a controlled press which they said will make possible national development and political stability. However, this approach to media would affect the licencing and operation of non-government owned newspapers in most African countries. Ogbondah (2010) argued that the attempt by post-colonial governments to control the private press led to the restriction of freedom of press. In that manner, he stressed that the restriction of freedom of expression could not be a solution to encourage supposed socio-political constancy and national development.

In Africa a number of measures were used to control the press. These measures range from seizure, censorship, suspension of media houses to closure of publications. Other extreme measures were arrest of journalists, beatings, killings, threats and dismissal of journalists (Moyo 2005). For example, in Equatorial Guinea (September 1993), the country's only private newspaper (*La Verdad*) was banned. The shutting down of the newspaper was

announced after the paper carried a report on the military youth group which the ruling government said contained false information. In Nigeria a similar incident was witnessed when the government seized an approximate 100,000 prints of the *Telnn*. This was done after the government claimed that the publication carried false critical comments on the outcome of the 1993 elections. In connection with that, accusation the Nigerian government also ordered that five media organisations be closed (*Abuja Newsday, Nigerian Observer, The Sketch, Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation, and the Concord*). In Cameroon (June 1992) state security seized copies of the *Le Messenger*. The *Le Messenger* was Cameroon's most read private newspaper. The press was closed down on the accusation that it had published a cartoon of the president (Paul Biya). Three of the journalists were arrested and detained (Ogbondah 2010). Two more newspapers (*Nouvelle Expression and Challenge Hebdo*) were also suspended for "having gone on sale without going through the censorship commission" (Ogbondah 2010:16). Therefore, it can be reasoned that press freedom remains a threat to many post-colonial governments. This is because of its concerted effort to expose the ills of the post-colonial governments while to some extent supporting the opposition political parties.

Moreover, in most African countries, governments have a monopoly over key communication channels. Wilcox cited in Musau (1999) stressed that before 1980, media in most African countries were controlled by the government. For example, in 1974 more than 70% of all the newspapers that were distributed in Africa were owned by the government (Musau 1999). Furthermore, in that same year the governments had full control and ownership on all radio stations and television stations. However, the advent of independence saw the emergence of new a socio-political climate and the state monopoly of the mass media in many Sub-Saharan African countries has waned away. Musau (1999) stressed that where there used to be an absolute monopoly and a single or two government controlled newspapers, "there now exist a plethora of privately owned competing newspapers and other publications" (Masau 1999: 32). For example, in Mozambique where they used to have one television station owned and controlled by the government, there now exist several radio and TV stations, most of them owned by private players as commercial broadcasters. The United Nations report (2006:3) revealed that, mainstream, unconventional and new forms of media, such as community and privately owned commercial media have steadily emerged and grown in numbers and diversity of opinion. In relation to that, Karikari (2010) reasoned that the media blast of the late 1980s and mid-1990s, along with the development for democratic

changes in Africa, changed the African media scene for all intents and purposes overnight. This is to say, it finished total government control and restraining infrastructure and introduced a dynamic pluralism. He pointed out that, suddenly, streets of Africa's capitals were inundated with daily papers. The "culture of silence"<sup>6</sup> forced first under colonial governments and afterward by post-colonial military tyrannies and imperious one-party states, was impolitely broken. To that end, this growth is in part or largely as a result of the space made by the change of government in most African countries; transformation from dictatorial regimes to multi-party democracies (Esipisu and Kariithi 2010). Therefore, in this light it is safe to conclude that, mass media in Africa have undergone tremendous changes in the last decade.

### 2.3.1. Independent media boom

From the 1990s to this day, various African governments started to adopt a liberal approach that requires them to liberalise their media space (Karikari 2010). This paradigm shift was in part necessitated by the need to increase the level of communication and ensure the freedom of expression within their national borders. As such, the shift (liberalization) was to be reflected in their policies. Because of that, these governments were tasked (constitutional obligations) with the duty to ensure, implement and expand the democratic establishments erected after the fall of the colonial repressive governments. This however, would mean that a new journey of opening up the communication space was the only trajectory that would make possible the much anticipated democratic transformation. In its purest meaning, liberalization meant that all people should communicate without interference and that there should be many people communicating or at least many different ideas and information being communicated (Musau 1999). Media Landscape (2012) revealed that in the case of South Africa, the ANC government and other African governments shifted their media policy approach to a participatory system. In Kenya, the government domination on communication was neutralized by the freeing of the airwaves which included the breaking of the government control in communication of news, advertisement and sports. These approaches ensured and gave average people a platform to engage and contribute to discussion and debates that would ultimately feed into the decision making process that affect their lives. However, for this somewhat democratic approach to work, it would mean that people obtain information

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<sup>6</sup> "Culture of silence" portrays the conduct of a group of individuals of some size, as extensive as a whole national gathering or little as a gathering of associates, that by implicit consensus does not say, talk about, or recognize a given subject. The practice might be inspired by positive enthusiasm for gathering solidarity or by such negative driving forces as fear of political repercussion or social alienation (Mitchell 2012)

around a collection of subjects, from different viewpoints and opinions. To that end, the media would be the best conduit having a critical role to play in creating and sharing information, for educating and building knowledge among citizens and ultimately for facilitating public debate.

Therefore, the mass media channels like newspapers, television broadcasting and digital media played a central role in providing the platform for the sharing of diverse ideas. Governments across the continent embraced media and appreciated its role in furthering a democratic state with public participation through various media channels as the backbone. In Kenya after 1990, there has been recognizable increase in radio and television. Musau (1999), revealed that, before the political pluralism and media liberalization, there was only one radio station in Kenya that was owned by the government. In South Africa, the ANC government incorporated the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). In South Africa though SABC remains under the direct control of the state, it and other private owned television channels would offer a dais for dissemination of ideas in different languages<sup>7</sup>. Chabane in *Media Landscape* (2012) stressed that, different languages in written and spoken word were given priority on national television channels. This was however a step towards opening up access to a world of information and knowledge needed by citizens to build a democratic country.

Research done across Africa revealed that media is not rooted into societal life in Africa as in Europe (Mhlanga 2013, Masau 1999, AMB 2012 and *Media Landscape* 2012). This is because Africa's media are very small and highly concentrated in some large cities and small towns. Among the top countries characterized with this challenge is Kenya and Zimbabwe. Masau (1999) reasoned that Kenya like most African countries has a pro-urban concentration and bias. For example, in Kenya, most of the newspapers are published in Nairobi, the capital, and the largest percentage is distributed in urban areas. Mhlanga (2013) reasoned that there is an urban bias in the manner newspapers are distributed in most African countries. In that regard, he stressed that circulation of newspapers is in most part restricted to the educated class that resides in the urban settings of the country. The same has also been noticed in Zimbabwe. Africa Media Barometer (2013) revealed that in Zimbabwe, the major newspapers are mainly distributed in urban areas. For example, 75% of the *Herald* daily

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<sup>7</sup> South Africa has a total of eleven official languages. All these languages are to some extent reflected on the nation's three broadcasting channels. In its language policy the SABC affirmed that it has a special duty to broadcast programmes that ensure the development of national identity at the same time buttressing the equal development of languages and cultures.

distribution is sold in the countries major cities (Harare, Mutare, Gweru, Bulawayo and Masvingo). Similarly, the *Newsday* and *Daily News* also have 85% and 79% urban distribution respectively in the urban cities.

#### 2.4. New Media Technologies

*In most African countries the emergence of the new media has led to the stagnation of state-run media. New media channels in Africa emerged and were used as a voice by those who were previously marginalized and isolated societies. (Otieno 2009)*

The advent of new media technologies has been of great concern to traditional journalism. In this case, the development of the Internet has unsettled the mainstream monopoly in news gathering and distribution. Espisu and Kariith (2010) argued that “the rapid development of the digital age has been a hurdle to the definition of journalism”. The challenges, he claims has been constantly pushing the tradition mass media and journalism to face extermination. The new media age has been well credited for bringing in the notion of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism, including the era of news content and investigation by people and independent organization of residents around the world, is a critical measurement of this rising phenomena. The idea of citizen journalism otherwise called "open", "participatory", "democratic", or "road" journalism depends on open subjects assuming a dynamic role during the time spent gathering, announcing, breaking down, and spreading news and information. Radsch (2016) characterised citizen journalism as an investigative and activist type of newsgathering that expose volumes of news outside prevailing press establishments. It is frequently understood as a reaction to weaknesses in the traditional journalistic field. Rosen cited in Otieno (2009) reasoned that citizen journalism can be when the general population once in the past known as the group of onlookers utilize the press apparatuses they currently possess to advise each other.

The emergence of this new media technology and their integration with traditional media has not only been a challenge to the conventional media, rather, it has also led to the rise of policy challenge. In this case, the access to new media technologies and improved Internet structure has enabled ordinary citizens to bypass the obstacles of accessing frequencies and licenses. This they have managed to overcome because they now appropriate digital and video cameras and some audio players that will enable them to publish and stream stories independently online.

The internet's threat to news agencies comes basically from two components: its multimedia capacity and its democratization of information generation, acquisition and dissemination. Fatoyinbo (2000) cited in Esiisu and Kariithi (2000) attests that the monopoly enjoyed by news corporations in the accumulation, preparing and dissemination of news does not exist anymore. To that end, it can be seen that it is currently simple for people or associations to get their information dispersed all through the world by means of the information highway. Information and news can now be presented in words, as well as in sound, pictures and moving pictures. This, Esiisu and Kariithi (2000) proposes, is different from the one-dimensional procedure of information flow in news houses and its single medium method of conveyance. Africa has the world's least utilization of Internet and information technology. However these offer the best hope for the near future. The essential ware of the 21st Century will be data; data converted into information, and information converted to knowledge (Jensen 2003 cited in Esipus and Kariithi 2004).

Wasserman (2003) cited in Eisiuu and Kariithi (2000) contends that the rise and improvement of Information and Communication innovations and particularly the Internet has introduced an expectation of expanded exchange between individuals topographically isolated, dreams of financial success, a new feeling of interconnectedness and the idealistic belief of advancement and change even in the lives of Africans. While the marketing buildup around the purported "new media" has frequently been propelled by neo-liberal belief systems (Lister et al 2003 cited in Eisiuu and Kariithi 2000), excitement for its potential in a scope of different areas like government administration, education and financial improvement has likewise been prevalent. Baber cited in Wasserman (2003) affirms that albeit a great part of the optimism has been tempered by more practical desires of what these new technologies can accomplish, their use in democratic societies is by all accounts expanding.

Not only do new media technologies encourage formal political interest (supposed "e-governance"), they likewise enable civil and political social developments, lobbyist groupings or minority gatherings to connect with these procedures on a worldwide level. As Rheingold (2003) mentioned, new media advances introduced interactive, "many-to-many" communication that have opened doors of opportunities (and challenges) for activists in three major areas: distribution of alternative news; making virtual open spheres; and arranging aggregate political activity. Wasserman (2003) contends that for different reasons, including its capability to alter power balances amongst states and its citizens, to empower nations to "kick start" phases of infrastructural advancement, and the equitable cooperation and

democratic citizen participation that may be catalyzed by its interactivity, new media innovations are regularly thought as a development apparatus for African nations (Lister *et al.*, 2003 cited in Eissui and Kariithi 2000).

The advancement of ICTs on the African landmass played a fundamental role in the planning of the African Union and Nepad. Euisi and Kariithi (2002) state that in 2003 the African Union passed a groundbreaking resolution noticing the significance of the information society for economic, socio-political and social improvement of African nations and an e-Africa Commission was erected. This announcement followed another set of pre-existing different resolutions like the Africa Information Society Initiative propelled by the Organization for African Unity in 1996 and a settlement in Bamako, Mali, in 2002 asking African nations to erase tariffs on ICT equipment (hardware) and programming (software). In the 2003 review of the execution of Nepad's Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan (STAP), emphasis was mentioned of ground covered in regards to the harmonization of broadcast and telecommunication communications and particularly ICT strategy and administrative systems in the region. This procedure was additionally recorded as one of the twenty top priority STAP ventures and as a Nepad leading project (Nepad, 2003).

### 2.5. The print media in Rhodesia<sup>8</sup>

Zimbabwe's media history is one of the oldest on the African continent. As early as 1891 the country had a newspaper called the *Mashonaland and Zambesian Times* that was regarded by journalists of that time as a "crude but readable cyclostyled sheet" (Mararike and Chivaura 1998). Moreover, because of the inevitable political and economic developments that unfolded in Rhodesia, the *Mashonaland Times* was replaced by the *Rhodesian Herald* and this paper later became the main daily press in that country. The paper survives to this day and in the present day it is named the *Herald Zimbabwe*.

The first newspaper is known to have been introduced to the country by the Argus Company of South Africa (Mararike and Chivaura 1998). The same company also introduced another paper called *The Chronicles* in the country's second capital (Bulawayo). It is believed that the newspapers are the oldest press in the country that were used to serve and sustain the British South African Company (BSAC) (Moyes, 2009).

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<sup>8</sup> Rhodesia commonly known from 1970 onwards as the Republic of Rhodesia, was an unrecognised state in southern Africa from 1965 to 1979, equivalent in territorial terms to modern Zimbabwe. With its capital in Salisbury (now Harare), Rhodesia was considered a de facto successor state to the former British colony of Southern Rhodesia (which had achieved responsible government in 1923)

Mararike and Chivaura (1998) opined that just as the media in present day Zimbabwe caters for the needs of the political elite, media in the Rhodesia was lopsided in favour of the needs and interest of the ruling white minority. In that regard, it has been reasoned that most news content that was produced and reported by the two newspapers reflected the ideology of the white ruling government. To substantiate the above, Moyo (2005) stressed that the first introduced paper had a clear vision to further the white interests. To that end, the aims and objectives were a microcosm of the greater interest of the white elite. Gale cited in Mararike and Chivaura (1993:213) highlighted that:

*The aims they (the publishers) will keep steadily in view will be to advance to the fullest of their powers the mining and agricultural interest, to discuss and criticise moderately, but without fear or favour, the topics of the day or hour, and to promote fellowship and unity amongst all classes of sections of the white community.*

Therefore, it is clear from the above quotation that the press during this period was geared towards advancing the interest of the ruling elite. In addition to that, most news reported were about events happening in the metropolitan area like politics and sports, while news and the issues that affected the African population were totally ignored (Mararike and Chivaura 1998). Further, Macheke stressed that the desires, dreams and goals of the African populace were non-existent in that press.

## 2.6. The Print Media in post-colonial Zimbabwe

In 1980, the Zimbabwean government embarked on a journey to effect some changes that were aimed at transforming the media landscape in the country. The Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company were given a new name, the Zimbabwean Newspapers (Zimpapers). This was to duplicate the new name of the country. However, scholars like Chivaura, Mararike, and Nyanhunzvi (2001) cited in Collen (2015) have indicated that a difference between the media environment in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe is problematic to establish. This, they claimed, is because of the nature of the transition process that was carried out soon after the black majority government assumed power. Mararike and Chivaura (1998) reasoned that in 1980 when the country gained its independence there were no major changes in the ideology that was being propagated by the news media simply because most, if not all, top Rhodesian printing and publishing newspapers executives were white including editors and the rest of the staff that work in all the media houses. Moreover, it can be appreciated that by the time of independence, the black leadership inherited the media as it was in the white

colonial era. To clarify the above assertion, Macheke cited in Mararike and Chivaura (1998) articulates that, with the advent of independence most people were expecting to see a change and liberalization of the media. But these hopes did not come to manifest as the nationalist government inherited the institution of the media as given. Simply put, the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company remained under the control and ownership of the Argus Group.

To consolidate its presence and influence in the communication and formation of ideas and opinions, the government formed the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) in January 1981. The trust was given the job to run the news agency. In addition to that, the government bought 43.2 per cent shares in the Zimpapers with a US\$5 million grant that was acquired from the Nigerian government. The acquired shares were placed in the custody of ZMMT. Moreover, Saunders (1999) cited in Collen (2015) stressed that with the progression of time the Zimbabwean government increased its shares to over 50 per cent, and this as a result made the government the largest shareholder in the Zimpapers. The government also set up the Zimbabwe Inter-African News Agency (ZIANA). Macheke cited in Mararike and Chivaura (1998) indicated that ZMMT commands a considerable number of community newspapers through the Community Newspaper Group (CNG).

The erection of the ZMMT was meant to serve certain interests. Waldahl (2004) argued that, in its creation the trust (ZMMT) had a dual purpose, which was to safeguard state interests and to act as a shield that will stop the Ministry of Information from interfering with the Zimpapers. This would however, guarantee independence and impartiality in the production and distribution of news content in the country. To explain the latter, Nyanhunzvi (2001) cited in Collen (2015: 11) stressed that an abstract from a ZMMT brochure indicated that the trust was set up “with the idea of facilitating the development of a media in a free independent manner and of altering its orientation to bring it into line with the democratic political system brought by Zimbabwe’s independence.”

However, reasonable as these might have appeared, these objectives it should be noted, never come to fruition as the state came to interfere in the organisation and editorial policies of the newspapers. Saunders cited in Moyo (2005: 111) stressed that

*In principle, the trust was a unique experience on the continent in the sense that it was supposed to act as buffer between the state and the public media under its ambit. But in*

*practice this independence never materialised, as the state begin to interfere both in the trust and its newspapers.*

Furthermore, ZMMT was weakened by the challenges that were political, financial and managerial in nature. These weaknesses gave the Ministry of Information a chance to get involved in the day to day business of the ZMMT (Saunders 1999). Thus, because of that the government found a reason to influence the editorials of the newspapers like *The Herald*. Ronning and Kupe<sup>9</sup> (2002) stressed that the trust was weakened by the government's role when it was given power to amend the operations of the trust after it extended the donation that was to operationalize the trust.

Therefore, owing to the above involvement of the government in the operations of the trust, it is clear that the government through the Ministry of Information took to the driving seat of the trust where it was determining the direction of the latter. This was done through various appointments that were made by the Minister of Information into the executive body of the trust. Waldahl (2004) opined that the then Minister of Information appointed ZANU-PF leadership into management positions and the appointment of the big wigs was even extended to the publication houses. In light of this, it can be observed that the buffer that was created was later compromised by the Minister of Information and his cabal who were hell-bent on spearheading the ZANU-PF agenda by use of editorials. Owing to all that is mentioned above Collen (2015) claimed that, the unrelenting influence of the government meant that the ZMMT was paralysed and left with no independence and financially crippled and later closed by the Minister of Information in the year 2000. However, it must be emphasised that the closure of ZMMT left government in ultimate control of the Zimpapers (Mazango 2005 cited in Collen 2015).

*The Herald* ownership structure according to Manyuki (2005) can only be understood in light of the ownership structure of the Zimpapers. Thus below is the ownership and control structure of Zimpapers.

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<sup>9</sup> Ronning and Kupe (2002) further reasoned that on a basic level and as an arrangement activity the ZMMT was a commendable "interesting" experiment that would guarantee the making of media personnel, media items and public print media framework that could add to both development and democracy in the transforming country.

Table 2.1: The *Herald* ownership structure (2013-16)

Shareholders	Percentage
ZMMT	51.09%
Old Mutual Life Assurance	23.80%
Intermarket Nominees	3.38%
NSSA	3.10%
Zimpapers Pension Fund	2.28%
EFE Securities Nominees	1.53%
Munich Re	1.04%
Edwards Nominees	11.36%
NNR & FCA	0.91%
Shara Sheperd	0.82%
Glenhazel Investments	0.69%

(source: Collen 2015)

The Zimbabwe Stock exchange lists the ZMMT and Old Mutual Life Assurance as the major shareholders in Zimpapers (Munyuki 2005). Mutsvairo opines that a closer reflection of the ownership in Zimpapers help explain the quality of media content produced by the newspapers under Zimpapers. The *Herald* is majority owned by the Zimpapers that commands 51.0% of the shares. The remaining shares are owned by the Old Mutual and many other private companies (Mutsvairo 2011). Considering the later, it has been reasoned that it not surprising owing to the ownership structure why the *Herald* took the stance it always took. Mutsvairo (2011) reasoned that, “The Herald takes orders from its master”.

Thus it can be argued that from 1980 to 1992 the Zimbabwe newspaper market has been run by a monopoly of the *Herald* and the *Chronicles* with the former publishing in Harare and the latter in Bulawayo. The two newspapers are owned by the Zimbabwe Newspapers commonly known as Zimpapers which falls within the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust. It must also be noted that the professionals who were hired in the ZMMT were drawn from the ruling party (ZANU-PF) and some of them were close associates of the leadership in ZANU-PF. Thus, from the above, a similarity can be drawn and leads one to conclude that the same policy applied by the Rhodesian government of patronage was adopted by the ZANU-PF government in the media.

However, regardless of the hamstrung media space, the Zimbabwe media environment has had a number of active independent media papers. These are *The Zimbabwean Independent*, *The Standard*, *The Mirror* and an innumerable number of monthly magazines. Among the most popular because of their criticism of the Mugabe regime are *The Independent*, *The Financial Gazette* and *the Standard*. However, it should be noted that the greatest challenge these papers faced was that they only appealed to the urban elite and the urban population. This therefore left a vacuum that needed to be filled in the information space. Thus the rise of *The Newsday* was highly inevitable as it was welcomed by all who were excluded from information.

#### 2.6.1. *The Newsday*

The Global Political Agreement saw the formation of the Government of National Unity between ZANU-PF leader Mugabe and his long-time rival the MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai. This led to a number of media reforms being discussed. Some of the reforms paved the way to the formation of the private run print media houses. In 2010 *Newsday* was the first private media operating in Zimbabwe since the closure of the *Daily News* in 2003. It is argued (Moyo 2010) that the public had been waiting eagerly for a private press that would give them a different opinion from that that was propagated by the state-run media for almost a decade. The launching of the *Newsday* daily press is arguably one of the greatest achievements of the Government of National Unity brought on to the fore after discussion of liberating the media from state control in Zimbabwe.

The *Newsday* press is owned by a South African based Zimbabwean journalist and entrepreneur, Trevor Ncube. *The Newsday* is one of the Alpha Media Holdings Company (to be referred hereafter at AMH). AMH is an independent media house free from political ties or outside influence. This media house publishes other newspapers like *The Zimbabwe Independent*, a business weekly published every Friday, *The Standard*, a weekly published every Sunday, and *Newsday*, *Southern Eye* - daily newspapers. Each of these newspapers has an online edition. In addition to that it also has *My Classifieds*, an online classifieds platform. However, the *Herald* (13/09/2013) published a story “Zimbabwe: Donor Fatigue Hits Alpha Media Holdings”. In this case the paper claimed that AMH which was failing to contain competition in the local media industry was partly-owned by the US-based Media Development Investment Fund. Wikileaks also revealed that, the newspaper is owned by a New York registered media investment firm (New Zimbabwe 03/09/2016). Be that as it may,

authentic sources (Alfa Media Holdings Website) revealed that the company is wholly owned by Trevor Ncube.

In its objectives the group stressed that newspapers and online sites are there to offer a canvas for Zimbabweans to showcase their best ideas to help transform the country into a knowledge-based society where citizens are free to express their creativity, ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

Ownership of most media outlets in Zimbabwe is still largely controlled by the state and government under various instruments provided by the law. For example, ownership of the press is regulated by section 65 of AIPPA. The Act provides that any person who is not a subject of Zimbabwe or any corporate in which controlling interest is not held, directly or indirectly, whether through any individual, organization or affiliation or something else, by at least one person who is national of Zimbabwe may not be a media proprietor. More discussion on the ownership and debates on ownership of the media in Zimbabwe is found in Chapter 3.

#### 2.7. Post-2009 Policies

The Government of National Unity (GNU) and Global Political Agreement (GPA) are significant for discussion in this study because they paved a road map that led to the 2013 presidential election. The GNU and GPA made possible the creation of a new Zimbabwean constitution. In that regard, Article 6 of the agreements signed by all parties involved stipulated that, the signatories should ensure that a new constitution is drafted and adopted and aligned to the laws of country. This was supposed to be done before the country goes to the polls. To add, the GPA agreement also stressed the importance of the inclusion of the bill of right and other fundamental freedoms like freedom of expression, freedom of the press and last but not least a repeal of the countries draconian laws such as AIPPA and POSA<sup>10</sup>.

The Government of National Unity (GNU) refers to an occasion where the major political parties in a country come up together to form a single government. Mukuhlanani (2014) stressed that in most instances the GNU are formed as an antidote to political stalemates. In the case of Zimbabwe, the need for a GNU rose after the 2008 parliamentary elections which were tainted with gross violence and gruesome human rights violations. However, the signing of the GPA and formation of the GNU may have eased the tension and resolved the political conflict. It has been observed (Mukuhlanani 2014) that most of the GNU's are flimsy,

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<sup>10</sup> AIPPA refers to Access to Information Privacy Protection Act. POSA refers to Public Order and Security Act.

rancorous, and usually have short term engagements with extraordinary danger of crumbling (Mapuva 2010 cited in Mukuhani 2014). In the case of Zimbabwe Mapuva (2010) and Mukuhani (2014) argued that the GNU was a “marriage of convenience”. This is because the three political parties (ZANU-PF, MDC-T, and MDC) were forced into a coalition because of the prevailing political and economic hustle and bustle. Moreover, in Zimbabwe, the parties came together after the country was rocked by a deadly economic and political crisis. The belief behind the formation of this coalition government was that equal participation will shrink any chances of conflict and increase prospects of national integration, growth and stability. Therefore, the main goal of the GNU and GPA was to “create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally acceptable solutions” to the socio-economic challenges that the country was going through (Mapuva 2010).

The GPA was an agreement signed that made possible the formation of a Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe in 2009. It saw a signing of an agreement to form a government that includes the ZANU-PF led by Robert Mugabe who has been in power for over three decades and the MDC-T led by Morgan Tsvangirai and MDC led by Professor Arthur Mutambara. Raflopulous (2009) cited in Gallagher (2014) stressed that the coalition government was necessitated by the violent 2008 election that took place amidst a severe economic crisis. After the 2008 presidential elections that were conducted under severe repressive laws, ZEC which is the electoral body delayed to release the presidential elections results. The delay in releasing official results pointed out to the victory of the opposition party (MDC-T). The two MDCs garnered a combined total of 109 parliamentary seats as compared to ZANU-PF that had a paltry 97 seats. In the presidential poll Tsvangirai pulled 47, 9% while Mugabe had 43.2 % (Gallagher 2014). However, failure by both runners to gain the majority of 50% inevitably forced them into a run-off election.

In the period leading to the run-off election there was increased violence in many ZANU-PF and MDC-T controlled constituencies. In that regard, though political violence and suppression of freedom of speech was reciprocal, with support of all political parties attacking their opponents, it is alleged that much of it was targeted towards the MDC-T supporters who were regarded as “sell outs”. Sachinyoke cited by Gallagher (2014:24) revealed that, “a campaign of violence was unleashed on MDC strongholds, with accounts of beatings, killings, rapes, amputations and large number of MDC supporters forced to flee” (Sachinyoka 2014:68). Consequently, faced with this situation the MDC leadership withdrew from the run-off elections. This bleak situation pushed the SADC leaders to intervene and

therefore negotiate power. With the negotiations running for more than five months the GNU was formed on the 11 February 2009 out of painstaking mediation by the then South African president Thabo Mbeki (Mukhlani 2014). The GNU realised the signing of the GPA, of which the main concern was to address the challenges that had befallen the nation. In this government Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) assumed the position of prime minister while Arthur Mutambara (MDC) was made the deputy prime minister. Robert Mugabe (ZANU-PF) retained his position as the president of the country.

Of note in the GPA, was the concern raised by the opposition parties on the need to revisit laws that regulate media ownership, broadcast and content distribution and also the freedom of expression. These media reforms were of substantial importance because they were necessary in creating a conducive media landscape indispensable for the 2013 presidential elections. Among the reforms proposed were that the AIPPA, BSC and POSA (detailed discussion in chapter 3). The GNU also proposed the writing of a new constitution in which the Bill of Rights and the individual right to freedom of expression were protected by law without the infringement by the state.

## 2.8. Election Environment

The electoral condition before all elections after the rise of the MDC has been marred by genuine restraint by the state authorities. ZANU–PF utilized the youth and war veterans to unleash violence on the general population. In the run-up to the June 2000 presidential elections brutality and violence caused the death of MDC supporters including Tsvangirai’s election staff Tichaona Chiminya and his partner Talent Mabika (Huddleston, 2005). The culprits got significantly more strength from the utterances and speeches of their party leaders. President Mugabe has regularly said;" There will never come a day when the MDC will control this nation, Never, ever" (Mhlanga, 2013: 14). The MDC was (is) regularly depicted in colonialist terms while ZANU-PF saw (sees) itself as being more devoted, what Bond and Manyanya (2003) portray as “Exhausted Nationalism”. President Robert Mugabe is likewise on record saying that the patriots (war veterans) conveyed freedom to Zimbabwe through the barrel of a firearm thus the MDC would be wandering off in fantasy land to surmise that they could get the privilege to administer the country through pen and paper. Many individuals are believed to have died in all post-2000 parliamentary and presidential elections. The casualties were from both ZANU-PF and the MDC, however by a long shot the last had the more noteworthy number of setbacks. In period prompting the Presidential run –off in June 2008 Tsvangirai needed to pull back his candidature to spare the lives of his

supporters, since he asserted that up to two hundred of his kin had been slaughtered (Collen 2015).

With the establishment of the GNU in 2009, a few new media players were seen on the national scene. While the state still enjoys the greatest share and presence in the print publication, the increasing number of alternative voices in the country has been widely credited for improving the democratic space offered to the public with diverse alternative information. The print available in Zimbabwe includes the six newspapers owned by the Zimpapers Group: The *Herald* which commands the highest percentage of national readership (1 430 439); The *Chronicle* with the readership of (656 647); and the two weeklies, The *Manica Post* based in Mutare that has a readership of 27 327, and the *Gweru Times* which is the smallest. The *Sunday News* and The *Southern Times*. It has long been maintained that the government of Zimbabwe's calls to open the media landscape over the years were not sincere and the media laws have borne witness to this.

There have been some noticeable efforts especially during the period of GNU to liberate the media environment. There has been an increase in the private newspapers and radio stations. For instance, newspapers like the *Financial Gazette* (194 443) which is a weekly publication. The weeklies the *Standard* (378 953) and the *Zimbabwean Independent* (183 157) are privately owned. The African Media Barometer (to be called AMB) on Zimbabwe (2012) observed that since 2008 there has been an increase in the private media ownership in Zimbabwe. To substantiate that observation, in 2008 the office of the Prime Minister published a weekly newsletter which was distributed in all provinces free of charge. In addition to that the *Weekly Agenda* was also launched in 2008, the press was owned by a Bulawayo non-governmental organization. The Zimbabwean Lawyers for Human Rights (to be called ZLHR here after) also published the *Legal Monitor*. There are a significant number of provincial newspapers distributed in the country, most of which are owned by the state run ZIANA and a few privately owned publications that have a total circulation of 4000. Lastly, the *Zimbabwean*, a London produced press, is published in South Africa and distributed in Zimbabwe three times a week and has a total readership of 63 987. The *Newsday* which was launched in 2010 and regarded as the "voice of the voiceless" hit the streets and few days after its first circulation it became the second largest national publication with a total readership of 658 219 in 2013 (Collen 2015).

The ZAMPS survey 2013 (released late in 2013) revealed that the Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation ranked the *Herald* the paper with the highest readership in 2013. It is read by three quarters of the urban adult population and just under a quarter of the rural adult population. Second to the *Herald* stood the *News Day* and in the third place is the *Daily News*. In this research it was found that the *Zimpapers* owned papers (the *Herald*, *Zimpapers*, *Chronicle* and *H-metro* had a combined readership of 465 000), while the competitors of the *Herald* had paltry readership of 287 000.

In 2015 *Zimpapers* dominated media space with all its newspapers and its radio station gaining readers and listeners. The *Herald* in that year was read by 41 per cent of adults in urban Zimbabwe and this constitutes 65 per cent of the urban population. Moreover, the *Sunday Mail* retains similar dominance over all weeklies with its total readership in 2015 growing to 38 per cent of the adult urban Zimbabwean population (Collen 2015).

South African newspapers and magazines have also penetrated the Zimbabwean news market. For example, the *Sunday Times*, *Business Day*, *The Sowetan* and *Mail and Guardian* are available and have a market in Zimbabwe. In the case of prices, the *Sunday Times* and *Mail and Guardian* have a special edition with a copy going for US\$1 (Collen 2015).

## 2.9. The Government of National Unity

Following three years of the GPA, the media changes were not completely implemented (Mapuva 2010). Major reforms contained in the GPA, which were to some degree intended to lay a foundation for a political serene environment never materialised. This was seen through the continuous attacks, brutality and the infringement of the freedom of expression. Subsequently, the media confronted an overwhelming crisis inferable from the provisions of Article 19 of the GPA that was intended to liberate it. The article expresses that the procedure of enlistment and reregistration of new and closed media players respectively will be done within the framework provided by AIPPA and BSA. In any case, the paradox in this situation is that the afore mentioned pieces of legislation were previously responsible for the closure of the media and later was relied upon to make a favourable media environment that will guarantee there is a free and reasonable playing field for all media. It was indistinct additionally, how the enactments that have a long history of stifling the right to express oneself freely could be the major forces for the changes or transformation. For this situation it can be misdirecting to think that the GPA would convey significant media reforms given

how the legislations are oppressively organized to diminish the same objective of media freedom which all Zimbabweans are yearning for.

Additionally, it is likewise obvious that the GPA arrangements on media reforms from both MDCs and ZANU-PF spoke to tepid measures committing the political parties to a less than appropriate policy approach. Basically, for the signatories to the GPA to remove the ZANU-PF official to supplanting him with an individual accepted to be apolitical was not going to accomplish much, because the new administrator was entrusted with implementing similar statutes through the same bureaucratic structure.

After all is said and done, it can be said the supposed GPA agreement to media reforms indicated the continuation of the old oppressive framework as opposed to anticipated genuine reforms. This is clear in the way in which the ZANU-PF maintains its dominance in both electronic and print media in the country. More discussion on how ZANU-PF and its repressive laws affect media after 2010 is found in Chapter 3.

#### 2.10. The polarisation private/public dichotomy of Zimbabwean Media

Media in Zimbabwe during election periods are heavily criticized for taking political sides. Scholars in their research (Mararike 1998, Waldhal 2004, Collen 2015 and Mutsvairo 2012) have focused on the polarization of the Zimbabwean media. In this case, scholars concurred that the media in Zimbabwe has been divided between political lines. Collen (2015: 22) stressed that, “the media in Zimbabwe has been polarized since the late 1980s with the emergence of vibrant privately owned newspapers, especially the *DailyNews* and *Newsday*”. While Collen focused on the 2013 presidential election in his research, it is important to note that his research was more inclined to analysing how media frames political candidates, thus failing to reveal or answer the important question, that is, the level the Zimbabwean media negates principles in a bid to serve certain political interests. To add, Collen also focused on the *Herald* and *DailyNews* with Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai as primary samples of analysis. Thus this limited focus would not allow his research to interrogate the extent to which the two newspapers could have breached the ethics of journalism when reporting election stories. Collen (2015) was thus limited to analysing reports on Mugabe and Tsvangirai, ignoring a whole range of media reports that were carried by the media during the period leading to the elections.

More so, Range (2005) Mararike (1998) and Waldahl (2004) revealed that the Zimbabwean media particularly print takes the form of politics and this is seen by how the two dominant

political parties (MDC-T and ZANU-PF) have wielded much control on the type of news content being distributed by the two. Similarly, Mutsvairo (2011) reasoned that the war between differing news houses had risen to unprecedented levels. In this case he observed that the *Herald* does not hide its loyalty for ZANU-PF as seen by its ultimate offer of alternative coverage of Zimbabwean politics. Further, he claimed that since the beginning of the land reform in Zimbabwe in 2002, the *Herald* supported the ZANU-PF policy at any cost, thus making it a mouth piece of the ruling party (ZANU PF). However, on the other hand commenting on the role of the media on the land reform policy, Moyo (2005) opined that, the private and international media were committed to delegitimizing the ZANU-PF crafted policy, creating negative impressions that the land reform policy was not going to benefit the nation in any way. Mutsvairo (2011:33) reasoned that, “While the independent and international media have sought to delegitimize Mugabe’s rule on the basis of misrule and maladministration of the country”, the *Herald* has maintained its unwavering nationalistic stance.

More so, Moyes (2009) also observed that there is a huge gap between what the state-run media calls legitimate news and what the private media refers to as a credible and true reflection of the Zimbabwean politics. In his research that focused on the 2000 elections, Moyes revealed that over the years the *Herald* has been on record prudently reiterating the government hymn blaming the western countries for the problems that rocked the country. On the other end the private media relentlessly attacked and blamed the government for the woes that crippled the economy of the country. Of note in Moyes’ research is the notion that though the findings of his research resonate with the current socio-political atmosphere, his methodology was on contrasting the state media and private media without giving specific attention to a specific newspaper. Thus his was a broad analysis of the Zimbabwean media. Similar to his findings were the revelations by Mutsvairo (2011), who argued that the state-run press unremittingly fails to deliver a correct image of Zimbabwean news by unceasingly supporting ZANU-PF policies no matter how the government has crippled the social, political and economic fabric of the nation.

Moreover, Mhlanga (2012) maintained that the Zimbabwean media has, due to its partisan reporting, abandoned the fundamental ethic of journalism. In this case, he argued that the *Herald* and some other private owned press have chosen to negate neutral and unbiased reporting. On one hand the *Herald* has maintained an unswerving nationalistic pro-ZANU PF agenda, and in the process forgetting its mandate as a public informer on current affairs.

Mhlanga (2012) said the same can also be said of the private media. He reiterated that, in Zimbabwe it is now difficult to draw a line between what one may call the editorial policy of the newspapers like the *NewsDay* and *DailyNews*. This he reasoned is because, since their establishment, the private press has been at the fore front attacking each and every policy of the government, at the same time sending signals to the public that the opposition political parties have the potential of turning around the struggling economy of the country. However, it should be noted that Mhlanga's findings, informative they were, were based on a general study of the legal framework that governs the Zimbabwean media. Mhlanga (2012) did not focus on any single election as is the case of this study.

From the above discussion it is clear that scholars (Mhlanga 2012 and Mutsvairo 2011) believe the state-run media supported the ZANU-PF policies while the private media endorsed the ideology of the opposition parties. Lacking in their research however, is a discussion on the manner in which content was reported and the extent to which that type of reporting could have affected the credibility of the news organization or the journalists.

Close to the aims of this current study was the study by Mukusa (2003) whose research focused on the *Herald*. In his research findings he argued that the *Herald's* partisan stance can be seen in the early 1980s where it downplayed Joshua Nkomo the then rival of Mugabe after the country got its independence. In this case, he stressed that Mugabe's war against Nkomo spilled into the state media rooms, in which Nkomo's comments were warped or snubbed. To add, he contends that it is important to mention that this practice in media circles is not limited to the state-run press. Like Collen (2015) he adds that the private media is capable of twisting and sensationalising the statement and comments of the ZANU-PF leader president Robert Mugabe. Although Mukusa's (2003) research has been cited by various scholars (Moyo 2009, Waldhal 2005, Moyes and Sachikonye), Mukusa's main objectives and research questions focused on Zimbabwean media history and how the media was manipulated during the height of Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo's rivalry to influence the public into following Robert Mugabe. This research methods and sampling unit were not print media but the Zimbabwean radio stations and the country's only television channel (ZTV).

Similar to Mukusa (2003), Mugari (2011) observed that the formation of the new political parties and the rise in new independent voices in the media space in 1998 and the following years meant that the media policy framework would be divided into two. In this case he

stressed that the media begin to “frame some aspect of the situation rather than others” (Sutton 1991 cited in Mugari 2011).

Mugari (2011: 6) has this to say about the polarised Zimbabwean media:

*The communication problem in Zimbabwe has been framed differently but mainly along two binary opposing stand points championed by elite organizations aligned to the two major political ideological formations and orientations that characterised Zimbabwean polarised politics during much of the decade since the emergence of a strong political opposition part in the form of the MDC in 1999*

Thus the above observation by Mugari (2011) serves to shed light on how the interplay between ownership, political and economic power has led to the polarization of the media in Zimbabwe. As a consequence, the polarization affected the nature of the content distributed by both state-run and privately owned media.

#### 2.11. Media in democratic elections

Political communication scholars like Mhlanga (2013), Moyes (2009), Moyo (2009), Makumbe (2005) and the Human Rights Bulletin (2011), contend that the Zimbabwean media is biased and sacrifices objectivity and impartiality at the expense of political allegiance. However, their research on the credibility of the Zimbabwean media was not based on a specific election. Also more attention was given to the role the media plays as a political institution. Noticeable in their research is therefore the idea that the media plays a crucial role in informing the citizens. However, little focus was paid to how the media could have tampered with the information they feed the electorate to achieve certain ends.

More so, they also stressed that from the first democratic elections, the role played by mass media is unprecedented and indispensable. Mhlanga (2012) argued that during and after election periods the mass media ensured that the electorate accessed voter information, shared thoughts and also developed opinions that are absolutely important if there are to be any meaningful election results that reflect the will of the people. More so, in tandem with the above assertion, research by Moyo (2009) and Moyes (2009) revealed that the expansion of the media industry and the increasing improvement in technology has seen the rise in the role of mass media as a tool for dissemination of information.

Additionally, scholars (Moyes 2009) reasoned that this increasing importance of the mass media is what forced the Zimbabwean ruling party to have a monopoly over the various

media channels. Moyo (2009) argued that with the realization that mass media can play a determining and shaping role in the electorate's opinion, both authoritarian and democratic governments have incorporated media in their campaign strategy. This incorporation would guarantee the effective manipulation and exploitation of various media channels in favor of either the incumbent or the political contender (Makumbe 2002). Likewise, Moyes (2006), echoed that the Robert Mugabe regime has come to understand how the media can work to effect public opinion and thus has manipulated it, denying free public broadcasting to the opposition political parties. The above assertion also resonates with the character of the media before the country gained independence from white minority rule. Zimbabwe has had one television channel since 1980 that controlled Zimbabwean airwaves. To that end, it can be argued that the ZANU-PF government weakened all independent media bodies that seem to contradict with its policy and began to assume control over all newspapers influencing their editorial policy (Mukundu and Ngwenya 2013). The ZANU-PF government has enjoyed a large stake of media support in many of the country's elections. It enjoys enormous control of the daily newspapers and broadcast media.

## 2.12. Media Ownership

The discussions and debates on media ownership and its impact on media control has been on the rise in recent years. Bagdikian (2004) notes that trends in media ownership and control suggest that there is a sharp decrease in the number of companies that are controlling the mass media. This he said was as a result of the rise in the concentration of media ownership in the few corporations, for example, conglomerates in the US media landscape. Straus (2013) stressed that media ownership has a mammoth bearing on the nature of a media outlet's coverage or for that matter, any political coverage. For example, he stressed that state and government owned media are under direct state ruling party control and may favour incumbent parties or candidates. In the case of most African countries, Public Service Broadcasting is said to be independent of any political body, but the paradox is that they draw their financial support from the state or the ruling party. On the other hand, privately-owned media though said to be independent, are generally owned by individuals or groups of people with certain political affiliations. In some countries, for example USA, the owners of the media outlets are the political parties or the election candidates themselves.

Straus (2013) stressed that it is the creation of the diversity and balance within the media ownership landscape that is one of the basics to nurturing democratic processes in any society, not least free and fair elections. Similarly, scholars like Murphy (2007) and Smith

(2006) opined that in any given country, that country's structure of media ownership has a significant effect on how the elections are conducted. This includes issues of the extent to which political advertisement is allowable, the citizens' access to public and voter guidance as well as campaign information. This also includes the extent to which elections are reported in a balanced and fair manner.

Moreover, in their research that focused on the role of media as a watchdog, Kaid and Bocha (2006) contended that media ownership has had a negative effect on the watchdog role of the media. This they said is because state or government media are sometimes noticeably partial in favour of certain candidates or the incumbent political party. This trend has been noticed not only in African states but in most young and transitional democracies such as Cambodia in 2007. Moehler and Singh (2009) stressed that the Russian 2013 election was marred by high levels of biases owing to the ownership structure of the media that was government controlled and some private-owned by the political heavyweights that supported the Vladimir Putin campaign. Kaid and Bocha's (2006) revelations on the effects of media ownership resonates with what has been alluded to in early chapters of this study. Earlier in this chapter, it was revealed that Rhodesian government ideology was evident in the radio and television content. The state-run press and television press after independence carried on the same practice. Furthermore, Smith (2006) claimed that voters' right to information is heavily affected by the media ownership construction of any given country. He argued that, "voter access to information on elections is limited in some countries by poor diversity of media ownership" (2006:23). However, Marxist scholars like Chomsky (1994) claimed that the media structure in countries that are characterised by heavy media concentration leads to high chances of the dissemination of insufficient information and as a result mistrust of media content by the audience.

### 2.13. Media and the State in Zimbabwe

Although the government has repeatedly promised to open up the airwaves, Zimbabwe has only one state-owned public broadcaster and no alternative broadcaster. Owing to that diversity in the media sector is heavily limited. Magorokosho cited in the Media Sustainability Index 2012 (hereafter referred to as MSI), reiterated that, the issuing of licencing for broadcasting is one reason why there is only one broadcaster in Zimbabwe. This is to say that the government has been reluctant to give out broadcasting licences to

individuals citing national security as their main reason<sup>11</sup>. In that case, Magorokosho in MSI (2012) contended that the notion that there is no single community broadcaster who has been given a broadcasting license in Zimbabwe remains a matter of concern. Similarly, Maponga also observed that in Zimbabwe the issue of broadcasting remains a problem. In that regard, he indicated that ZBC holds the monopoly of the broadcasting sector. As has been mentioned, Maponga cited in MSI (2012) opined that, ZBC controls two television channels and four radio stations. This monopoly has led to concentration of media control in the hands of the state. It thus can be reasoned that the uneven distribution of the broadcasting has repeatedly directly and indirectly affected the gathering and reporting of news events within the state-run media corridors. It also could lead to poor quality of news content as broadcast news tends to repeat and reformulate the same news content across all the stations (Maponga, Makorokosho cited in MSI 2012). Mhike cited in MSI (2012) cautioned that the situation at the ZBC is undesirable since ZBC is a public media but reports from it are devoid of diversity of opinion. He claimed that while in name a public broadcaster, the ZBC has served essentially as a propaganda mouthpiece for the government of the day since colonialism. Therefore, the effects of the state dominance in the media have been the narrowing of the public sphere and hence creating an impoverishment of democracy. Important to note also is the fact that the heavy presence of the state in media was made possible by the legal framework that regulated media registration, ownership and distribution of content.

#### 2.14. Key Communication Channels

Moyo (2009) has argued that radio, television and internet remains the influential vehicles with which the politicians have managed to reach out to their audience in Africa. He stressed that in the case of Zimbabwe, three quarter of the electorate could only be reached by either radio signal or television broadcast. As such, it is because of the affordability of these communication channels in Zimbabwe. In addition to that Mare (2009) reveals that radio as a medium of communication has been adapted and appropriated the new technologies to extend its reach while opening up novel platforms of audience participation. Therefore, the two above assertions seem to be in line with the findings of English (2008). She reasoned that radio remains the largest medium for news in Sub Sahara Africa. She further highlighted that while the media landscape is ever expanding and diversifying, radio remains the most

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<sup>11</sup> The government of Zimbabwe has repeatedly argued that opening up their airwaves to private persons will lead to the unmonitored increased flow and dissemination of information that threatens the existence of the state. In 2013 Robert Mugabe was on record blaming the social media networks as agents of “regime change agenda”. (Mhlanga 2013). This is to say these media channels were cascading information that would dissuade and affect the opinion of the general population against the government in power.

prevalent and accessible form of media worldwide. She argues, “Where FM radio is sparse or non-existent, AM radio is often still accessible” (English 2008:12). Moreover, findings revealed by the SADC Report on Zimbabwean elections indicated that, there exists more than one million radio sets in Zimbabwe and radio is the only means by which the politicians could reach the rural Zimbabwe. In tandem with the SADC Report on Zimbabwean elections, The MISA Position Paper on Broadcasting in Zimbabwe (2012) reveals that in Zimbabwe Radio and Television remain the most important channel with which the citizens of the country can speak to one another in a public manner.

### 2.15. Legal Framework and Freedom of Expression

Scholars like Mugari (2011) observed that the Zimbabwean communicative cosmos has been relentlessly constrained since the beginning of the opposition political parties. Although Moyo (2009) observed this earlier before 2013 it is important to note that the 2013 media environment was not different from that which existed in 2009 (Mukundu and Ngwenya 2013). This assertion has been reinforced by the findings released by the Media Law Handbook for Southern Africa (2012), which highlighted that the country’s print media environment routinely features extremely low on international barometers of media freedom<sup>12</sup> (MLHSA 2012). In line with Moyo’s assessment a considerable number of scholars (Moyes 2006, Waldhal 2005, Madhuku 2005, and Meldrum 2010), also argued that the rise of independent newspapers and the rise of social media use that is supposedly responsible for the loss of ZANU-PF in the 2000 and 2008 election to the country’s main opposition (MDC), has obliged the ruling party to enact laws that are rigid and restrictive to the fundamental rights of freedoms of expression and access to information. Thus, from whatever angle one might desire to look at the Zimbabwean media space, it is clear that the media in Zimbabwe has been operating in a legal and political environment that was antagonistic to the right of citizens to practice freedom of expression (Mugari 2011).

In addition to the above, Meldrum (2010) also stresses that the media space in Zimbabwe was heavily controlled through the use of legal and extra-legal measures, for example, unlawful arrest of journalists. In addition to that, he claims that the media in Zimbabwe has come under systematic attack, and the government has limited the role of media in its favor before elections by enacting repressive laws like the AIPPA, POSA, and BSA. The Amnesty International cited in Madhuku (2005:8) has described the laws as having a “chilling effect on

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<sup>12</sup> Featuring low on the barometer of media freedom would mean that the country and its institutions meant to protect the right of speech and freedom of expression are failing to protect these fundamental rights.

freedom of expression and introduces a cloud of fear in media circles”. Therefore, it can simply be articulated that participation of the general population in any aspect of life becomes strictly controlled by pieces of legislation that had an ink-mark of the ruling political party. The laws, Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012, 130) contended, were tailor made to achieve the particular political drives and to present a sheer cover of legitimacy to “practices and norms otherwise they considered as unpopular and illegitimate” (2012:130).

Madhuku (2005) claimed that the enacted pieces of law and the amendment thereof only served as means to vindicate the government position against any opposing emerging voices. In addition, he stressed that, this is because the laws were geared at confining citizen’s involvement in governance and policy procedures. In the same vein Biti (2005) observed that, though some of the laws were justified by the state as they would protect the right to information, most if not all, of the enacted pieces of legislation barred massive amounts of information from exposure. Human Rights Watch (2010), hereafter referred to as HRW, revealed that from year 2000 the ZANU-PF government embarked on a wholesale process in which it reacted to all critical voices and civic activists by narrowing democratic space through the legislation of laws that curtailed fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression. Similar to the above, Makumbe (2005) opined that the ZANU-PF regime through its majority in parliament was able to enact and implement AIPPA and POSA and all this was done to control the Zimbabwean media space and restrict the freedom of expression. Thus it can be said that, instead of protecting the general population, the laws enacted by the government in this period has given government the unquestioned power with which it can clamp down and silence any opposition and advocates of the so called “regime change agenda” (Mapuva and Muyengwa 2012:128). In this case the independent media was not an exception. Thus the following paragraphs will review literature on the two laws enacted by the government to stifle media freedom in Zimbabwe.

#### 2.16. The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (2002)

POSA was passed in January 2002 and had its roots in the draconian Rhodesian Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA). Amnesty International (cited in Solidarity Peace Trust 2004) stressed that the law was drafted as a government strategy to suppress the campaigning activities of the opposition parties. It was also aimed at tightening restrictions on the private media and gave unrelenting powers to the police. To that end, the law was heavily criticized both locally and internationally.

Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012) stressed that just like the LAMO<sup>13</sup>, POSA served the interest of the ruling government at the expense of the citizens. In addition, they claimed that the act utterly restricts freedom of assembly and movement and gives the police extensive unrestricted powers. Correspondingly, Madhuku (2005) stressed that section 19 and 20 of POSA defines opposing voices as “offenses against constitutional government and public security” which in these instances encompass disruption, and acts of terrorism, as well as undermining the authority of the president. Moreover, Muchena (2013) indicated that section 24 and 25 of POSA have over the years been misunderstood and intentionally misapplied by the state enforcement agencies. As a consequence, legal scholars like Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012), Madhuku (2005), Biti (2005) concurred that POSA made it a criminal offense to publish or communicate false statements deleterious to the state and not forgetting calculated to undermine the authority of the president. Therefore, it can be easily seen how these provisions in the Act have been manipulated by the government to mute legitimate voices that criticize the government. It should also be borne in mind that “over the years, laws have been put in place to protect citizens, but in time these laws were amended to curtail human rights and suppress the very citizenry that they were intending to protect” (Mapuva and Muyengwa 2012: 127) .

#### 2.16.1 Effects of POSA

POSA was passed two months before the presidential elections; the limitations on open social gatherings seriously affected the battle for the presidency. President Mugabe addressed around 50 campaign rallies amid that period and all ZANU-PF campaigns were permitted to continue unhindered. Conversely, Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the MDC and its contender for president, figured out how to hold just eight campaigns. The MDC secured a court order to keep the police from meddling in a rally in February 2002; however the rally was scratched off after the police declined to give security even at the face of impending dangers. On the whole, the police utilized POSA to upset or avert 83 MDC rallies in the period between January and March 2002. They frequently disrupted MDC gatherings in private homes too, and upset a meeting held between Mr Tsvangirai and diplomats at a hotel. The police disrupted a few social occasions of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, an organization committed to voter education and free and credible elections, in the wake of classifying the gathering as political and along these lines subject to the provisions of POSA.

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<sup>13</sup> Law and Order Maintenance Act

### 2.17. Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act

AIPPA was enacted by the Zimbabwean parliament in 2002. Muchena (2013, 71) stressed that, “the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act was passed by the Zimbabwean parliament in January 2002 and assented by President Mugabe on the 15 March 2002”. It is also imperative to note that the act was passed during the same period as the POSA. According to the Human Rights Bulletin (2011) this Act, though legislated for various reasons, its main objective at least in principle, was to offer the general public the right to access information and records that is held by public bodies. The Act also aims to protect personal privacy and provide for the regulation of the mass media. However legal scholars like Biti (2002), Madhuku (2005), Muchena (2013) and Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012) have long criticised AIPPA arguing that it granted the government unlimited power to monitor and control the kind of information the citizens receive. Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012) states that since the enactment of this legislation media freedom and independent media have been under constant threat from the state and many of the staff working in private media organizations have been brought to court time and again. Similarly, Biti (2005) claims that the law compromised the ethics of journalism and the freedom of expression in that the government determines what should be reported and what should not. In this case, it can be seen that rather than fulfilling its objectives, the law rather “presented an arduous licencing system for media outlets, confining foreign ownership of the media and prolonging the Herald’s monopoly”. Hence, it can be seen that the law directs the operations and overall conduct of the media in a manner that leaves the mass media with a very restricted breathing space (Muchena 2013).

Apart from the harsh legislature mentioned in the previous section, Mapunya and Munyengwa (2012) reasoned that most of Zimbabwean’s challenges were brought into existence with the lop-sided policy implementation. He claimed that the policy was reinforced by the continuous rule of the desperate and authoritarian government that used its mandate to rule by promulgating and enacting restrictive legislation. As a consequence, this worked to deny qualified members of society freedom of expression by restraining civil liberties and by propagating unsophisticated human rights violations (Muchena 2013). Moreover, it has also been observed that AIPPA is the most disreputable law that the government of Zimbabwe has formulated (Media Law Handbook 2014). Similarly, Biti (2005) stressed that, some sections of the Act (38, and 42) have been used relentlessly to prohibit the publication of unverified stories. To that end, these sections have given the state

absolute power to register journalists and deny them a license to practice. However, it can be observed in this case that though section 20 of the Zimbabwean Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the policy and laws implemented by the government are not conducive to the recognition of the right of expression within the media zone.

As such, the Zimbabwean current legal framework has not been conducive in the development of a free media that will reflect the multiple diverse voices in the country. In support of this assertion Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012) highlighted that the security agents enforced the laws selectively especially on the independent press. This has resulted in the growth of mistrust between the government and the independent media.

In 2001 the *Daily News* was bombed and finally closed. Mutsvairo (2011) stressed that, before it was granted another operating licence in 2010, the *Daily News* which proclaims to be the country's first independent newspaper, had been chocked by a myriad of challenges. In this regard, he claimed that the newspaper fell prey to a catalogue of new repressive laws that were introduced by the government through the Ministry of Information. Important to note in this regard is that the closure of newspapers is not only unique to Zimbabwe. Rather it can be said it is an African practice by most African governments (Otieno 2009). For example, the same has happened many times in Equatorial Guinea. In September 1993, the state in Equatorial Guinea closed the only monthly private newspaper in the country (*La Verdad*). The closure of the newspaper followed after a warning issued by the members of the political bureau who issued a notice that the paper would be closed if it did not voluntarily cease publication.

Moreover, in light of Mutsvairo's (2011) observation, the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) ranks the AIPPA as the hardest hitting blow against the freedom of the press in Zimbabwe. In relation to that, Mapuva and Munyengwa (2012) stressed that efforts have been made numerous times to fight against these repressive laws in the courts of law. But the courts were used as agents of the state in silencing any legal challenges against the laws that repress the freedom of expression, movement and association. The above scholars also revealed that a court application by the ANZ was dismissed on the basis of "Clean Heads" doctrine that is the company may have erred in not complying with the provisions of the Act that requires all companies to be registered by the Media and Information Commission (hereafter referred to as MIC). In that case, legal scholars (Madhuku 2005, and Mapuva and Muyengwa 2012), believe that the many provisions found in media laws in

Zimbabwe do little to extend freedom of expression and have severe impacts for the freedom of the Zimbabwean press, more specifically of the print media.

In addition to the above, Madhuku (2005) further claimed that since its enactment AIPPA has stood to shut down independent media, arrest numbers of journalists and thwart foreign reporters from working in Zimbabwe. Because of such draconian laws terrorisation and harassment of journalist has been the order of the day in Zimbabwe. In that regard, it is clear that the media and political policy that shapes Zimbabwe have made it dangerous for one to practice journalism. It comprises of extreme “high risk that involves interminable frustration and constant police and judicial harassment” (Mugari 2011:1). Commenting later on the discussion on media law reforms on BBC, Mhlanga (2013) reasoned that in 2013 the repressive legislations were used to invade Zimbabwe’s independent daily newspaper, the *DailyNews*. In addition to that, Mutsvairo (2011) claimed it is daunting and intimidating to work as journalist in the private sector. To explain this assertion Timberg (2007) cited in Mutsvairo (2011:7) stressed that:

*Working for the independent press has been more daunting. Examples of state-sanctioned repression and intimidation of the private media can be seen in the 2007 incident involving veteran journalist Bill Saidi. A soldier, apparently unhappy with an article published in Saidi’s Standard newspaper, left an envelope with a bullet and a handwritten note reading, “What is this? Watch your step.*

Consequently, Madhuku (2005) further reiterated that these repressive laws were systematically used to justify the unwarranted search and temporary closure of some media houses, in March 2013, and the *Weekly Times* of Bulawayo in February 2013. Thus the result of this has been a relentless crackdown on the media’s ability to effectively cover in an objective way the elections to an extent that only the ZANU-PF was able to broadcast its election message without any barriers of the law. This is simply because the provisions of AIPPA that have granted the state absolute power to control the free flow of information and the right to grant and deny journalists licence to practice compromises freedom of expression as it makes some journalists to be co-opted and taken advantage of (Mapuva and Muyengwa 2012) so that they receive and retain their licences.

## 2.18. Conclusion

This chapter traced the emergence and development of the Zimbabwean print media. It has also reviewed literature relevant to the study. In a sequential order, it has unpacked the

origins of the print media from the period before 1980 to 2013. The transition from the Rhodesian controlled media to the post-independence controlled media was also discussed and made clear. Further, the chapter also included discussions on the ownership structures of the two newspapers (*Newsday* and *Herald*) that are the main focus of analysis in this study. To add, the chapter also incorporated the GNU in its discussion. In that regard, discussion regarding the commitment to a shift in media policy and direction by political parties was also discussed. The proposed media reforms were discussed and analysed. This chapter reflected on the prevailing media environment that led to the 2013 presidential elections. Finally, this section of the study has revealed that, owing to the repressive media and publishing laws that govern the Zimbabwe, little has been done in relation to the how the print media communicate during the presidential elections. As an inevitable consequence literature in this field is not only limited but could not direct its focus on how the media in an election could have compromised its principles of fairness, impartiality and objectivity.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Theoretical Framework

#### 3. Introduction

This study aims to evaluate the extent to which the Zimbabwean print media abided by the standards of fairness, impartiality and objectivity when reporting the 2013 presidential elections. Inexorably the theory of public sphere (Habermus 1967), agenda setting (McCombs 1972) and framing theory (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) informs the study. The public sphere is applied in this study as a meta-theory (foundation on which the other media theories are built). Moreover, the agenda setting and framing theory are discussed as the main theories for the purpose of this study. These theories have received wide-spread attention due to the contribution they had in informing research in the field of political communication. The theories have been informative in the understating of how new media shapes public opinion. Therefore, this study will discuss some of the key fundamentals embedded in these theories and then take a standpoint on which of the arguments in the theories will best inform the study.

#### 3.1 Theory Defined

Theory is defined as a “set of statements asserting relationships among classes of variables” (Bowers & Courtright, 1984:13). Baran and Davis (2011:11) observe that these could be “stories about how and why events occur”. The purpose of theory is to explain, comprehend and interpret phenomena, and put forward propositions suggesting why such phenomena occur in the manner they do (Fourie, 2009:103). The role of theory seeks to explain how and why events take place. It is imperative to note that there are different theories such as critical media theories, political economy and normative theories. But in the case of this study three media theories be discussed and form the backbone of the study. The public sphere will be used briefly as a meta-theory. The agenda setting and framing theory will also inform this current study.

#### 3.2. Theory of Public Sphere

The theory of public sphere has its roots in the works of Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher. It featured prominently in his work called the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1964). Habermas (1984:49) defined the public sphere “as a realm of social life in which something can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes in to being in every conversation in which public individuals gather to form a public body”. In this case Habermas’ emphasis was on the all-inclusive nature of the

public sphere, he believed that for a public sphere to exist some pre-conditions are required for example the parties in the deliberation are supposed to be equal. He claims we call events and occasions public when they are open to all (Habermas cited in Fuchs 2013). Moreover, Hauser (1998) also defined the concept of public sphere but in his definition he departs from the tension and identity of publics that shaped Habermas' explanation. In this case he claims that the public sphere was formed by "specific members around societal issues" (Hauser 1998:92). In that case he defined the public sphere as a living space where individuals come together to discuss societal issues with an aim to inform action. He claims the public sphere can be defined as "a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and when possible, to reach common judgement about them". In the same vein, Arendt (1958) stressed that the public sphere is "a common world" that gathers persons and collections together and prevents them from dominating one another. Shirk (2008) cited in Fuchs (2011:88) stressed that the political usage of social media ensures and extends freedom. He further states that the "to speak online is to publish, and to publish on line is to connect with others" (Shirk cited in Fuchs: 88). In this case what it simply means is that, with the advent of manageable publishing, freedom to speak is now the same as freedom of the press. Therefore, freedom of the press is freedom of assembly (Fuchs 2011).

### 3.3. Media as a public sphere

Scholars (Loader and Mercea 2011) have argued that the mass media is a typical example of the public sphere. Habermas claims that the public sphere involves different methods to transfer information and affect those who receive it. This assertion, however, shows the indispensable role the mass media plays in sustaining the public sphere. Drawing from Habermas's concept of the mass media as a medium of the public sphere, Livingstone and Lunt (1994) claimed that the mass media are a medium of talk, of communicative action and of potential consensus. In this case what it simply means is that magazines, newspapers, television and radio are the medium of the public sphere. To add to that, Loader and Mercea (2011) claim that mass media especially social media offered the citizens the opportunity to participate meaningfully in democratic spaces, therefore, forming a public sphere in which societal issues are debated and consensus reached. These two scholars maintained that "mass media offers increasing opportunity for political communication and enables democratic capacities for political decision within the virtual public space" (Loader and Mercea 2011: 579).

The debate of media as a modern public sphere has been taken to another level. Habermas' public sphere is best understood as a set-up of communicating information and ideas which will in turn be reproduced through communicative action (Daen 2011). In this case the standard of the public sphere would mean and include an open discussion of issues that vary widely and it is a place where issues that affect the general public are exposed and subjected to conversant debate and scrutiny. For Dean (2011:178) therefore "the public sphere presupposes freedom of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision making".

Sen (2001) cited in Dean (2011) stressed that owing to its role in creating the space for lively discussion and examination of issues that affect the general public, the mass media has been able to create a democratic space that is powerful in averting preventable disaster such as famine. In this case Dean stressed that such disasters can be avoided in democratic governments where there is an existence of a free and a plural media constituent that enables free dissemination of ideas. He said,

*catastrophic but preventable disasters such as famines rarely or never occur in democratic states", partly because of the continuous existence of free and plural media. This open media constitutes a major policy platform of much current development policy by bilateral and multilateral organizations, particularly in its role ensuring good governance and transparency in decision making (Dean 2011:178).*

Media facilitates the social sphere for public debate and action. In the case of television, the audience over and over again experiences interpellation. This is to say, they perceive themselves as members of a national audience. To that end, television assists in creating the idea of a national culture even though it moves images around the planet. For instance, television talk shows and political programs have excessive influence in starting public debates. Loader and Mercea (2011) argued that the level of debate and discussion aggregated by mass media tends towards the lowest common denominator not only to the educated mind.

### 3.3.1. Is the public sphere public?

There has been increasing criticism of Habermas' concept of public sphere over the years with scholars (Dean 2011) questioning the public-ness of the public sphere. Dean contends that, to claim that the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century public sphere as described by Habermas is a typical public sphere is misleading. In this, he reasoned that what Habermas referred to as the public sphere was in actual fact a place that excluded large parts of the population that

would have had been affected by many decisions discussed in these conversation. Kellner cited in Dean (2011) observed that Habermas' public sphere was a bourgeoisie public sphere that was formed by the urban well to do people with exorbitant incomes, the educated and the elite. Dean stressed that the original public sphere excluded the poor and women.

The same can be said of the modern day media where the early energy and dynamism following liberalization, and much of the idealism and hope that accompanied it among journalists, radio talk hosts and others is declining in the face of powerful trends that are responsible for corroding the public sphere. An example is the transformation that characterised the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which a series of government monopolies were transformed into a series of private oligopolies.

While there has been a remarkable upsurge in public debate owing to the increased openness of the mass media, there is ample evidence that shows that content that is being disseminated by the mass media does not reflect the peoples aspirations but it's a mere microcosm of the ideals and agendas of the big corporations and sponsors who pay for air time and fill the media with their ideologies. As a consequence, there is in the media an increasing biased, consumer driven media which have distorted the interests of the poor people in different societies. Dean (2011) argued that the broadcasting media pitch their airtime to a diverse audience with buying power. In that process those who can afford fill the television or radio with their products. In that regard, it is those who have power who can influence the discussion and debate in mass media, in this case the elite.

Furthermore the concentration of the media has also been responsible for the dissipation of the public sphere both at national and global level. Cultural research scholars (Kellner and Dean 2011) have identified there has been an increasing influx and flow of the western cultures to many parts of the world and this has been made possible by the powerful western media and communication conglomerates who determine the regular type of content that will be consumed in all corners of the world. Kellner cited in Dean (2011) argued that television was a tranquilizer that unites and consolidates multitudes under a single political belief and replaces participation in organized politics. However, Keller's argument can best be explained in relation to Marxist analysis assertion of media ownership.

#### 3.4. The public sphere and media ownership

Traditional Marxists were concerned with class relations and how these relations were sustained by the ruling elite. In Britain they contended that the financial arrangement of

Britain, i.e. private enterprise, is characterised by incredible imbalances in wealth and salaries which have been achieved by the exploitation of working classes Miliband (1973) and Bates (2010). Marxists alleged that with a specific goal to legitimate this arrangement of disparity, the ruling class utilizes its cultural power to dominate establishments like education and the mass communications channels, and transmits ideologies of the ruling elite. The purpose of these establishments is to socialize the masses into accepting the authenticity of the ruling class system and its ideas. Consequently, Marxists contend the masses encounter a false consciousness – they are convinced to acknowledge that capitalism is a fair system that improved every social group similarly (Gramsci 1926 cited in Bates 2010). They neglect to see the truth of their circumstance that they are being misused by a system that exclusively benefits an effective minority (Marx 1898). Thus the Marxist analysis of media ownership is grounded on class relations and ownership of property. Miliband (1973) argued that the media has an indispensable role in shaping how people think about the world they live in. He further reiterated that the media audience in a society is rarely informed about the pertinent issues such as the inequalities in wealth and the reason why poverty exist.

Gramsci (1926) cited in Bates (2010) argued that media owners and the wealth holders working in conjunction with the political elite are united for the same cause. The aim which is to hoodwink and brainwash the general population by not exposing them to real issues pertinent to their lives. However, this assertion by Gramsci was criticized and castigated for lack of empirical evidence to support it. Simmons (2000:56) argued that “it is almost impossible to gather empirical evidence that support the Marxist argument on the ideological conspiracy of the mass media”. However, Curran’s (2003) work on the British press suggested that there is strong evidence that the media owners interfere with and manipulate newspaper content. In this case, just like the present day African authoritarian governments, Curran stressed that in the period 1920-50 press moguls blatantly boasted that they ran their newspaper for the sole drive of propaganda. Curran (2003) points out that even when engaged in investigative reporting, the majority of newspapers in Britain have supported the Conservative Party.

Curran's (2003) examination of British daily papers proposes that both pluralist and Marxist speculations might be mixed up in the way they take a gander at media ownership. He contends the pluralist argument that media proprietors don't mediate in media content is evidentially false. Curran contends that since 2000 there has been much more prominent intercession by proprietors, for example, Murdoch. Be that as it may, Curran opposes

Marxists about the motive in this. He noticed that the activities of media proprietors are not collectivized; rather they seek after their financial objectives in a heartlessly individualized manner trying to acquire a greater share of the market than their entrepreneur rivals.

#### 3.4.1. The new media and public sphere

The emergence of the new media technologies has increased and expanded the number of people who participate in the democratic dispensation around the globe. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter have been cited as the channels indispensable in making possible the existence of these communicative spaces. For example, the emergence of citizen and participatory journalistic practices such as blogging fits within Habermas's description of the public sphere. Through the blogosphere, citizens are free to express their opinions and even expertise about a variety of topics and issues while engaging in a discussion with their fellow bloggers. Essentially, a blogger brings about "a relation among strangers" (Rheingold, 2008: 102) that would not otherwise exist without the computer technology and websites that provide the means to create and maintain blogs. Rheingold (2008) points out in his study that the blogosphere has proven itself to be an effective method of investigative reporting while holding the mainstream media accountable when it fails to adhere to its "fourth estate" obligation as a neutral "watchdog." Of two notable examples, one involves public racial remarks made by former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. The blogosphere unearthed the story and kept it alive until Senator Lott was forced to resign from his leadership post.

Mudhai *et al* (2010) stressed that the emergence of new media technologies has assisted in creating a platform in which all people would communicate directly or indirectly with people of like and unlike mind. He stresses that,

*Citizens hunger for access to their leaders and to means for expressing their own opinions and judgments. It is this problem of access for a growing, diverse, and dispersed population that makes a national system of interactive information technology civically useful. If well designed, such a system could counter divisive trends and help bring the nation together.*

(Mudhai *et al* 15:2010)

Therefore new media technologies could encourage conversation between citizens and citizens and their leaders. Morriset (2003) argues that the new media technologies can provide a more liberated public sphere. He said, new technologies can be used to provide a modern day equivalent of the barbershop, connecting citizens across the nation and with their leaders. To substantiate the above assertion, in Africa, there has been an increase in the role

of the media creating spheres of discussion and connecting ordinary people with the centres of power. Godfain and Van der Merwe (2006) cited in Mudhai et al (2010) revealed in their study that although blogs are not well established in South Africa, their function is to “provide citizens with an alternative source of news, add more to the events and issues of the day, and initiate conversation”. These scholars further argued that “a blog works as an aggregator of information” (Mudhai et al 2010:27) and has the possibility to offer the marginalised a voice. Moreover, it can be claimed that the proliferation of the new media technologies has made possible the emergence of new improved means of communicating, developing communities and preserving diaspora personalities.

To support the above assertion, a compounding example can be drawn from the Zambian case. Spitulnik (2002) cites the Zambian Z-List. The Z-List was initially used by the Zambian nationals leaving abroad for political dialogue and news interchange. In this list, an average of forty to sixty posts was posted per day. To that end, discussions, political interpretation, comical jabs and friendly jokes were extensive. Some threads would go on for weeks with notches of postings. Though there were non-Zambian posts, for the most part, the list was dominated by a “very tightly knit community of Zambian nationals who built up a history of friendly relationship and repartee” (Spitulnik 2002:187).

Therefore the theory of public sphere is important to explain the intricate role that the media plays in developing a deliberative platform among citizens. The public sphere ensures that citizens in and out of the country have a chance to shape policy and decision making through the communicative space created by the media.

Therefore for the purpose of this study, it will be maintained that the media creates the public sphere that gives the citizenry the deliberative opportunity where people of different social, political and economic statuses could come together and discuss issues for the common good (Habermas 1984). It therefore can be reasoned that, television, radio, and print media have to some extent become the modern day public sphere because it offers people from diverse backgrounds a platform to discuss and deliberate on issues that have affected their lives.

Moyes (2005) stressed that the media are indispensable to democracy, and a democratic election is awkward without media. A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices. Thus the media

with this role as mentioned above provides a sphere in which issues of common good and elections are discussed, debated and interrogated until a consensus among the equals is reached.

### 3.5. Agenda Setting Theory

In political and communication science, various scholars have set to examine the extent of which mass media sets the political agenda of the day. According to Graber (2005) dominant in communication science is the idea that agenda setting is probably the single most used methodology to understanding media effects. In simple terms scholars like Graber (2005:6) defined Agenda-Setting as “the practise in which the mass media decides what people contemplate and worry about in their day to day lives”. Moreover, Shaw and McCombs (1972) propose that the mass media in selecting and presenting news plays a significant role in making political reality. This is to say in any given society, readers of any news item learn not only about a specific issue, but how much attention to give to that subject from the amount of information in a news story and its location. An example may be, in reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues, that is to say, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign (Runyowa 2009). With particular focus on the agenda setting function of the media, Lang and Lang (2005) observed that, the mass media force attention to specific selected issues, and construct public images of political individuals. To that end they are in a constant process of presenting objects suggesting what individuals should feel, know about and think about.

In the same manner Lippmann (1922) cited in MacCombs (1972) stressed that the media controls over construction of pictures in our head; he believed that the public reacts to the various pictures in their heads and not to the actual events in the real world settings. Therefore, drawing from that assertion, at the core of the agenda setting is the understanding that the process of setting the agenda is designed to alter all events occurring in our milieu, into an deconstructed model so that the public can easily deal with it. Consequently, Lippmann’s proposition was followed up by researchers Shaw and McCombs (1972) who stressed that, the concept of agenda setting offers the media the ability and power to establish the news we see or hear and also what part of the news is important to see or hear. McCombs and Shaw (1972:13) stressed that,

*Though mass media have not been proven effective in determining how audiences will accept opinions and point of view in media reports. Mass media are effective in determining what*

*audiences see as important. By the issues they cover, media can legitimize a story or marginalize either the entire story or certain aspects of it.*

This can be said of the elections in Zimbabwe. Findings by the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (2013) revealed that mass media were very instrumental in setting the news agenda. In this period the MMPZ results revealed that from the 16 of June to the 31 July (2013), 98 per cent of the news reports and television programs carried by all Zimbabwe mass media channels, were elections-related programming. These programs vary from election administration, political candidates, political party activities and rallies. Furthermore, an abrupt shift on focus from non-election related programming to election related coverage was observed by the MMPZ. To be specific they stressed that the national broadcasting channel (ZTV) would cover all political rallies for ZANU-PF and other campaign activities using the time they usually use to broadcast some other program well before elections. Therefore it can be seen that by way of shifting focus from their normal schedules mass media channels play a great role in setting a tone of what the public will perceive as important to them.

Thus, agenda-setting has been used by media for various purposes. It has been used to inaugurate the media agenda and to shape public opinion. On the other hand, agenda-setting is imperative because the public agenda influences the policy agenda, and this therefore would mean that candidates will strive to pay attention to matters that the public wants to hear about. To that end McCombs and Shaw (1972) argued that agenda-setting research appears to offer an alternative to the scholarly search for direct effects on attitude change and overt behaviour change. However, research done (Lipmann 1946) earlier seem counterintuitive to research by Shaw and McCombs (1972) who had previous mass media experience. It maintained that mass media agenda setting has limited to no effects on public opinion. To add, earlier mass communication researchers embraced that the sole purpose of the media was to inform the public rather than to sway or alter unconcealed behaviour. Resulting from that was the search for perceptive effects, just like agenda setting in which people are told what to think about. Most of the agenda setting scholars and researchers (McCombs and Shaw (1972), McCombs (2001) and Carragee et al (1987) reasoned that the key rationalization for their theory was an effort to fill in the vacuum left by past research (Lipmann 1922 and Lipmann 1946).

Moreover, Carragee *et al.* 1987 evaluated the impact of agenda setting research to understanding effects in this way. These scholars stressed that it is imperative as it assists to sway the emphasis of mass communication research away from the study of short-term attitudinal effects (Runyowa 2011) to a more longitudinal analysis of social impact.

Therefore, the argument proposed by this theory upon this study is that the mass media has the power to set the agenda or terms of reference for social, political and economic issues. In that process the media staff, newsroom and personnel abandon the core principles of journalists which are fairness, impartiality and objectivity.

The agenda setting theory suggests that mass media plays a role in setting the public agenda. This is made possible by the conscious role played by the media to focus attention on a few key public issues (McCombs and Shaw 1972). The media is used for political campaigns and the introduction of party candidates and their manifesto which in most instances assist the audience in making choices of a candidate to support. McCombs and Shaw (1972) stressed that the media are the chief source of national political information; in that case for the majority of the voters the media provides the best information about ever-changing political realities that affects the electorate.

However, the theory proposed that people do not only acquire voter information from the news media, but viewers and readers also pick up the importance of such news content from the salience attached to certain topics on the basis of emphasis placed on it in the news. Newspapers provide a multitude of prompts about the significance placed on the topics in the “*Daily news*-lead story of a page one, other front display, large headlines, etc.” (McCombs 2005, 1). For example, the *Daily News* and *Herald* during the 2013 presidential elections were leading culprits in the act of using prompts that would draw the audience attention into a certain way of thinking and as a result gave significant attention to specific issues. The *Daily News* carried a series of reports replete with the following prompts, “ZANU PF burning” (*Daily News*, 22/6), “ZANU PF in disarray” (*Daily News*, 27/6). “How SADC failed Mugabe” (*Daily News*, 17/7). “Mugabe runs out of steam” (*Daily News*, 20/7). ‘ZANU PF wants talks’ (*Daily News*, 15/8). All these prompts and cues, however, serve to draw the reader’s attention to the simple idea that the Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party is in a state of disintegration and is seeking help from outside. The above assertion therefore, helps explain how the media used prompts during the 2013 elections. These prompts directed people’s

attention to a certain way of thinking. In this case people were directed to perceive ZANU-PF as weak and being led by a weak president.

In the same manner television and radio also plays an agenda setting role by the opening story on the screen, the length of time devoted to the story, etc. In that case if the prompts are cast repeatedly, they connect the audience to the importance attached to it by the newsroom staff. Cohen (2013) stressed that the news media may not be successful most of its time in telling people what to think but it is splendidly effective in telling its audience what to think about. To substantiate the above, Ronyowa (2013) observed that the media in *ZVT* and *Herald* between the period 2000-2005 were very instrumental in setting the agenda by focusing on certain national issues. In that case his research revealed that the state-media in the height of the government initiated land reform programme would prioritize programs and reports that were in line with the government position on the issue of land. Furthermore during the same period it was observed that 75 per cent of the programs run by *ZTV* were land reform related programs. To add the state-run radio station would devote most of its time to programs that discuss the issue of land, and justify it as a necessary initiative by the government. Therefore, all this unwavering effort devoted to certain programs help give the public cues and ideas on what is actually worth giving their attention. Simply put, the mass media is very successful in setting the agenda for the public's attention to a certain limited number of topics around which public opinion was formed.

However, just like any other theory the agenda setting theory is not without limitations. Though the media manufacture and maintain public opinion, it has long been observed that it is not the sole conduit through which construction and maintenance of public opinion is done. Rather, public opinion can come about in places like one's occupation, school, family, social classes and peer groups. Different communication personnel have probed the agenda setting theory, mentioning that there is inadequate confirmation to show a direct link between the several issues news has channelled in the society and the way the people think.

The agenda-setting theory is of importance in that it helps explain the role of media in setting the tone of what is important to the public. The mass media direct and draw attention to issues, difficulties, solutions and people in ways which can favour one political candidate over the other. In some instances the media can function as a conduit for conversion and conscription of resources, information and manpower (Runyowa 2013). In the election period the media tend to be polarised along ideological and political lines.

In the history of Zimbabwean elections, news media played a role in reporting issues of newsworthiness, in that process creating unnecessary hysteria to draw the attention of the unsuspecting public. Nwokefor and Okunye (2013) stressed that “during elections in a democracy, the media’s role as an effective tool for getting the public opinion in its favour makes it very necessary to sway them on a particular candidate against the other” (Nwokefor and Okunye 2013:14). Simply put, the media uses its agenda setting power to give a sense of importance on issues that the public would hear. The *Herald* is argued (Mhlanga 2013) to have drawn attention to creating a positive image of Robert Mugabe as not only a Zimbabwean icon but an African leader who is sent by God to take the African continent to its sought after destiny. In his research Collen observed that the *Herald* set the tone and mood of what people would think about Robert Mugabe. He argued that the *Herald* used various frames to set the agenda of the 2013 election. In its coverage, Robert Mugabe was presented as the “epitome of principled leadership standing for the good of everyone, weak or strong” (Collen 2015:100). To add, research by the MMPZ revealed that in the March and June 2008 presidential elections, the ZTV played a great role in setting the tone of the election. This was made possible by the uneven distribution of election programs in its daily schedule. In the two elections (March and June 2008), ZBC blatantly prioritized the ZANU-PF programs. In that case, the ruling party was afforded a sum of 210 hours and 39 minutes broadcast appointment for its campaigns contrasted with its scope of the other political parties, which just got 16 hours and 44 minutes' broadcast appointment in the March race (MMPZ 2008). Also, the vast majority of this reporting depicted the opposition in a negative light. The prioritization of one programme over the other seems to give the audience a sense of what issues to give attention to. Thus it can be reasoned that ZTV placing of ZANU-PF material in a positive light could have led people to making choices on what political party is important and worth giving their vote.

Furthermore, in selecting the important issues to tell the public, the media’s role was seen as that which is aimed to hoodwink the public into voting for the political parties and candidates they deem appropriate. Garret (2010) cited by Nwokefor and Okunye (2013:6) opined that “the role of the media in politics is committed to misleading the public into a particular way of thinking, which is further described as propaganda”. In support of the argument Nwokefor and Okunye (2013) stressed that as a tool of propaganda, the media’s sole purpose during political campaigns is to get candidates of their liking elected into power. In so doing private and public media regularly delude the electorate by carefully selecting issues

they report as newsworthy. In the case of 2008 Zimbabwean elections it has been observed that news media is always characterised with slogans and what Garret (2010) cited in Nwokefor and Okunye (2013) called the bumper sticker slogans. In the case of the *Herald*, the notion of patriotism and national struggle against the western-funded forces that are hell-bent on bringing regime change by unconstitutional means featured prominently in the period leading to elections. The hymn of the fight against a regime change agenda evoked emotions and feelings among the war veterans who felt that they should do all they can to protect their patron Robert Mugabe who was under attack (Collen 2015). To that end, it is therefore clear that print media gave salience to political gimmicks which they then ran as many times as possible as it finally becomes not only what the people think about but also what they should think about (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Moreover, in a aim to create a noble, exciting image out of Robert Mugabe, the *Herald* makes everything possible to present this candidate as one to beat and in so doing hides all his shortfalls.

### 3.6. Framing theory

Framing theory has its background in sociology and psychology (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). In the field of psychology researchers examined how related decision making situations obtainable in a different way can cause individuals to make unlikely choices (Kahneman and Tversky cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Moreover, scholars like Cacciatore, stressed that in the 1981 study carried by Kahneman and Tversky , the two scholars concluded that it is common cause that persons are more opposed to risk when they are offered to make a choice in terms of advantages. However, on the other end, when the same people are presented with that same information in terms of losses persons are more risk-seeking. This kind of framing is what Cacciatore et al. (2015) described as equivalency framing. Therefore, it is clear that from the psychological perspective framing is centred on disparities in how information is offered and presented not in what is presented (Collen 2015).

From the sociology perspective, framing is understood as the process when people use schemes of elucidation. Simply put, Collen (2015:66) argued that people use “frameworks that helps in making an otherwise meaningless succession of events into something meaningful”. This sociological origin of framing theory explains it as encompassing the manufacture of meaning and how different persons manage to make sense of their everyday worlds (Cacciatore 2015).

By definition framing refers to the “process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman 2007: 164). Further, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007:11) opined that framing “is based on the supposition that an issue is categorized in a news report can have a stimulus on how it is understood by its constituency”. Pan and Kosick (1993:57) reasoned that framing is a “stratagem of creating and processing news discourses or a characterization of the discourse itself”. To add, Maher (2001:86) contended that framing is a process by which ‘potential elements are either included or excluded from a message or its interpretation by virtue of a communicator’s organizing principles.’ Moreover scholars like Van Gop (2007) stressed that framing can be understood as the technique in which news reporters profile the news within some concealed edifices of meaning as well as the mode where the audience interpret the world as media do. Therefore, from the above definitions for the purpose of this study it is clear that that unifying principles or concepts are utilized in the manufacture of reality that shapes news reports that serve to endorse a certain interpretation.

Gamson and Modiglian (1989) argued that the framing theory utilises frames that act as core consolidating ideas for making understanding of pertinent incidents and proposing what is important for discussion. To add, frames can be largely understood as unrecognized and tacit, shaping the world for both those who are dependent on the reports from news media and the journalist who report the events. At the centre of this study is a search to explain central organizing ideas that were used to report on the Zimbabwe 2013 election and the extent to which the reporters of the two newspapers jeopardized the principles of fairness, impartiality and objectivity.

Maher (2001) cited in Collen (2013) stressed that there is a relationship between the microcosmic components in a given message and the macrocosmic perspective of the communicator. This view was also echoed by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) who contend that as a macro-construct framing relates how media correspondents introduce news in a way that reverberates with their audience's current fundamental schemas. Fiske and Taylor (1991: 131) defines schemas as intellectual structures that epitomise knowledge about an idea or kind of stimulus including its traits and the relations among characteristics. Further, Entman (2010) stressed that schemas help gatherings of people to process and comprehend new messages by choosing, deliberately or unknowingly, how the approaching messages fit into their comprehension and emotions about the world. Along these lines, as journalists settle on choices on the best way to present their stories, they have to insert for their gatherings of

people cues on how this little story adheres with their earlier states of mind and values. Entman (2010) Reese (2001: 11) includes the component of time and contends that "frames are organising standards that are socially shared and persevering after some time, that work typically to genuinely structure the social world.

To substantiate the above assertion, trends that iconize Mugabe and vilify Tsvangirai were observed in the *Herald* and *Newsday* respectively. In this case, schemas or frames were used to create a certain image and perception of the two leaders. In the *Herald* words like, "**puppet**", "**Agent of the West**", "**Agent of regime change agenda**" dominated reports of Tsvangirai. All these in these frames had an internal meaning that can be drawn from one's understanding of the political atmosphere that surrounded Zimbabwe. Simply put Tsvangirai and his MDC-T political party is the main opposition party. The political party was formed in 1999 at the height of misrule and maladministration by the Robert Mugabe regime. However, after its formation, because of its neo-liberal policies the MDC-T attracted funding from western countries. This therefore posed a great threat to the ZANU-PF regime which was almost bankrupt. As a consequence, the ZANU-PF accused the MDC party for its woes and claimed that it was not a legitimate political party but rather an "**Agent of the West**" hell-bent to spearhead the "**regime change agenda**" that would see the demise of ZANU-PF. Therefore, these phrases have been in the Zimbabwean public discourse for many years and some sections of society have internalised them. Consequently it can be contended that in creating a perception of Morgan Tsvangirai by means of framing him, journalists at *Herald* did not simply force their own perspective upon their audience, but utilized time tested perceptions that were in accordance with those of their focused audience.

Frames are structures that draw limits, set up classifications, characterize a few thoughts as out and others in, and for the most part work to catch related thoughts in their net in a dynamic process (Reese 2007). In this manner, frames cannot be diminished to story subjects or themes, for example, business or law breaking (Carragee and Roefs 2004, D'Angelo 2002); however, they develop specific implications about issues through accentuation, interpretation, understanding and omission. This proposes that when dissecting frames in newspaper stories as this research does, it is basic that one goes past the text to explore the impacts around how the content was presented. A clearer example is presented below.

The SADC Special Summit on Zimbabwe elections 2013 received wide coverage from both *Herald* and *Newsday*. The summit was held in the Mozambican capital Maputo. The meeting was called for in response to among other things the pressure exerted by the Zimbabwe's impending elections. Reports in the *Herald* on the summit revealed that the SADC body, "has **"suggested"** to the Zimbabwean government to approach the Constitutional Court for an extension of the election date two weeks further in order to make possible the implementation of the arranged reforms".

On the other hand, the *Newsday* carried a similar report in which case it interviewed the officials who attended the summit. Quotations in the *Newsday* from members of the opposition reviewed that the "SADC principles had **"ordered"** the Government of Zimbabwe to make and launch an application to the Constitutional Court so that the date may be changed".

However, important to note in the two reports is the use of weighty phrases and words that carry different meaning to readers. The careful use of the word **"suggest"** in the *Herald* presupposes that the SADC only gave its consideration and the Zimbabwean government has a choice to launch the application. On the other hand, the use of the word **"order"** in the *Newsday* report presupposes that the Zimbabwean government was given a command to follow. On that note, the two reports in these newspapers reported the same event but the meaning and the outcome were distorted by the use of different words. It is therefore not clear whether the SADC leadership gave a recommendation or a dictate. This action by the two newspapers calls in to play the concept of news framing. In this case it is evident that the *Herald* used the frame in order to sway the outcome of the summit in favor of ZANU-PF which was in full support of the 31 election date.

D'Angelo (2002) contends that framing is guided by a mix of cognitive, critical and constructivist points of view. The cognitive model is the one that focuses on how people interrelate with content and after that use earlier knowledge or interpretive compositions to make sense of the content (D'Angelo 2002). The critical paradigm looks at frames as "controlling, hegemonic and setting to bigger class structures" (Reese 2007: 150). The constructionist worldview sees journalists as makers of interpretive sets of the spots of politically intrigued sponsors and a frame can command news scope for quite a while (Collen 2015). Reese (2007) contends that the constructivist worldview identifies with Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) perspective of framing as focal organizing standards. While

this study is more tied down the constructivist worldview it additionally draws from the critical paradigm in as much as it foregrounds power contestations showing.

The cognitive paradigm is best seen in how Robert Mugabe is iconized in the *Herald* and attacked in the *Newsday*. In the *Herald*, Robert Mugabe is portrayed by the use of frames like “*the son of the soil*”, “*gallant son*”, “*liberation fighter*”, “*leader of the quarreller war*”, “*champion of black empowerment*”. The frames used in the *Herald* draws upon and reminds its audience of their prior-knowledge of Robert Mugabe during and after the liberation war struggle. In Zimbabwean political circles Robert Mugabe is understood as the icon who fought against the white minority rule and ultimately brought independence to the nation in 1980. His policies of black empowerment are well documented and said to be people driven and anchored in advancing the lives of black people. All these ideas and knowledge have dominated Zimbabwean public discourse for years. On the other hand, the private press (*Newsday*) used frames like, “*non-agerarian*”, “*the oldest African President*”, “*Frail Mugabe*”, “*Mugabe out of steam*”. All these captions existed and were informed by the prior realities that shape the discourse about Robert Mugabe. Robert Mugabe has been the president of Zimbabwe since 1980. He initiated and implemented a number of policies most of which were detrimental to the Zimbabwean economy. He is frequently referred to as weak and unable to run state business given his advanced age. Thus it can be said the newspapers used frames to evoke prior knowledge that existed in the minds of the public.

Frames can be branded as episodic or thematic (Iyengar 1990, Scheufele 1999, and Gross 2008) cited in (Collen 2015). Episodic frames are identified with particular occasions or case studies while thematic frames put issues into a more extensive context (Collen 2015). On the other end, thematic frames strive to aid audience comprehension of the link between problems or political issues and put them in broader societal dialogue (Gross 2008). Then again episodic framing helps groups of people make associations amongst issues and place them in more extensive societal conversation (Gross 2008). Consequently, for the purpose of this study thematic frames are more applicable since the representation of candidates, political parties, and other political figures recently in terms of the occasion or particular period itself. Rather it is a representation informed by recorded historical stories and also more extensive societal dialogues around governmental issues in the country.

Scholars like Scheufele (1999) distinguishes what he calls media frames and individual frames. Media frames according to Scheufele “serve as working routines for journalists” that

permit the journalist to rapidly recognize and classify information and package it for effective hand-off to their readers or listeners (Scheufele 1999: 105). More so, these frames might be purposeful or inadvertent with respect to the journalist (Scheufele 1999). Individual frames are the mental sets that help people to process received information (Scheufele 1999).

However, frames can be studied as either independent or dependant factors (Scheufele 1999, Van Gorp 2007). Dependant variables outline how a myriad of factors for example, social and hierarchical structures assume a part in the construction or alteration of frames (Scheufele 1999). This study will be informed by dependent variable frames because reports and news carried out during the period were informed by prevailing social, economic, political atmosphere in Zimbabwe.

### 3.7. A synthesis of the Framing and Agenda-Setting theories

A lot of ink has been spilled by agenda setting and framing researchers on how the two theories are related. On the one hand is a group of scholars (McCombs and Ghanem 2001) who believe that Framing and agenda setting are different sides of the same coin. This group of scholars believe that framing is a mere extension of the agenda setting theory. While on the other hand is the camp up by (Scheufel and Tewksbury 2007) that maintains that the two theories are not in any way related and must be treated as separate entities. However, for the purpose of this study, the difference between agenda setting and framing theory shall be made clear because the two theories have generated a lot of debate in the field of political communication. Scholars like De Vreese (2005), contend that while agenda-setting specializes in the salience of issues, framing is more concerned with the presentation of issues. This assertion is in line with what Frank Luntz observed, as contended by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007: 9), that "it's not what you say, it's the manner by which you say it". Scheufele and Iyengar (2012) stressed that agenda setting postulates that the scope of an issue and its coverage more habitually or conspicuously in the news leads to a higher probability that audiences will think of it as more imperative. Nonetheless, McCombs and Ghanem (2001) contend that agenda setting ought to not simply be constrained to prominent issues in the media. They contend that transmission of object salience is just the opening (first) level of agenda setting.

According to McCombs and Ghanem (2001) second level agenda setting is similar to framing in light of the fact that it concerns how the media tell us how to consider or think about certain objects, drawing from Entman's (1993) definition that to frame is to choose a

few parts of an apparent reality and make them more striking in a communicating text so as to advance a specific issue, causal understanding, moral assessment as well as treatment recommendation for the thing portrayed. Further, McCombs and Ghanem (2001) contend that it can be summarized with regards to second level agenda setting that: framing is the manufacture of an agenda with a confined number of thematically related properties combined to make a rational image of a specific object. To add, drawing from his prior definition Entman (2007) reasoned that agenda setting is proportional to effectively executing the first function of framing, that is, to characterize issues worthy of public and government consideration. Of note is the idea that for Entman (2007), attribute or second level agenda setting includes framing's fundamental business of highlighting the reasons for problems, empowering moral judgements and advancing preferred policies.

Moreover, though the definition by Entman (1993) has been generally acknowledged, it has been scrutinized however as missing the mark by a few researchers (Cacciatore et al 2015, Scheufele and Iyengar 2012, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Scheufele and Iyengar (2012) argue that Entman's (1993) meaning of framing has brought about difficulties in distinguishing it from agenda setting. As indicated by Scheufele and Iyengar (2012) the confusion created by Entman's definition has prompted a few researchers, for example, McCombs (2005), entreating for framing to be viewed as an augmentation (extension) of agenda setting. The reason for that being Entman's definition, that makes reference to salience, which is a fundamental element of agenda setting. Scheufele and Iyengar (2012: 9) take note that the individuals who call for framing to be viewed as an augmentation of agenda setting maintain that mass media impact audience interpretations by highlighting the significance of issues (first level agenda setting) or issue traits (second level agenda setting, which they see as identical to framing).

More so, Carragee and Roefs (2004) additionally contend that combining framing with agenda setting neglects to consider specific means in which frames build specific connotations and how they propel particular methods for perceiving issues. They additionally contend that diminishing framing to attribute agenda setting disregards how specific frames apply to numerous issues and how a particular issue can be a result of manifold frames. In underlining this idea Carragee and Roefs (2004) contend that an agenda setting examination of American foreign policy in the period after the cold war to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 may recognize frames as they relate with specific countries, for instance Vietnam. Such an examination disregards, "that the ideological character of the Cold War

informed the news scope of American programmes in numerous countries over forty years" (Carragee and Roefs 2004: 218). In connection to this review, this contention could be applicable in that an agenda setting perception may concentrate on the belief system working at the time of the occasion overlooking how even pre-existing ideologies, for instance, single party stateism, may have affected news coverage by the two daily papers.

Carragee and Roefs (2004) reasoned that the pedigree of the two theories ought to likewise be considered with a specific end goal to separate them. They contend that, while agenda setting has its foundations in media effects, framing has its underlying foundations in the sociological inquiry of Goffman (1974) and media human science of Tuchman and Gitlin (1976) who investigated how frames informed news creation and in addition the ideological ramifications of framing. Consequently it is plausible to contend that though attribute agenda setting may portray the characteristics of an object of specific news coverage which are intended to advance a specific meaning, frames are what inform the making of the news in any case. It is a frame that defines what attributes will be fused to an object. Thus, as contended by Borah (2011) in political matters framing alludes to the "characterisations of plan of action where a focal organizing thought gives "meaning to the event". It shows up thus in this case that while agenda setting and framing are harmonious, they are not really the same and the call to view framing as second level agenda setting places restraints on the operation of frames. Therefore this study is informed by the argument that while the two are related, agenda setting does not consider "the more dynamic capacity of frames" (Reese 2011: 152).

### 3.8. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the theoretical framework. It had its focus on the theories that informed the study. Three theories were discussed, namely public sphere (meta-theory) agenda setting and framing theory. Furthermore, the chapter also highlighted the controversy that exists between the framing theory and agenda setting theory. In this section it was highlighted that agenda setting theory and framing though somewhat interrelated, must always be treated separately.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Research design and methodology

#### 4. Introduction

The chapter will provide a clear description of the selected methodology operationalized by the researcher. It will highlight how the researcher intended to collect, gather and analyse the useful information required to answer the research question. Consequently, because this study seeks to assess the level at which the Zimbabwean print media adhered to the principles of objectivity, impartiality and fairness in reporting the 2013 presidential elections, the research design that will be used is the descriptive research design. Additionally, because this study involves the collection of the secondary literature (qualitative data) it will adopt a qualitative research design in its endeavor to answer the research questions.

#### 4.1. Research design

Research design refers to the structure of an inquiry. According to Van Wyk (2013) research design denotes the complete strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a comprehensible and rational manner. The sole function of the research design is to make sure that the evidence obtained permits us to address the key question as clear as possible. It is a logical rather than a logistical matter. This is to say that design is different from methods of data collection. Design is a logical task that is employed to make possible that the evidence collected enables us to answer questions or to test the theories as unambiguously as possible. Moreover Van Wyk (2013) stressed that what is unique about a research design is its ability to tell beforehand what data is required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyse this data and how all of this is going to answer the research question. The research design also helps reflect the purpose of the inquiry.

##### 4.1.1. Exploratory Research Design

The research design employed in this study is the exploratory research design. Because this study gives a comparative analysis of the *Herald* and *Newsday*, the research design of choice is the exploratory research design. According to Van Wyk (2013), exploratory research design is commonly used in projects that are addressing a subject about which there are high levels of uncertainty and limited literature. Exploratory research design can be defined as the initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea. Its main purpose according to Omromd is to lay a ground work that will lead to further studies, or to determine if what is being

observed might be explained by a currently existing theory. Thus simply put, exploratory research lays the foundations of further research. In this current study, exploratory research design is not intended to put any conclusive evidence, but helps the researcher to have a better understanding of the problems. Exploratory research is widely known as research that forms the base for other conclusive research (Ormond 2005). In other words, exploratory research design simply explores the research questions, leaving room for further research. This type of research has its own advantages. More importantly is that it is flexible and adapts to change. Further Van Wyk (2013) stressed that exploratory research is effective in laying the groundwork that will lead to future studies.

This study adopts an exploratory design simply because little is known about the topic. Thus because of that, this research design will help reveal and add on to the existing body of knowledge.

#### 4.2. Self-Reflexivity of the Researcher

In qualitative research reflexivity refers to the continuous process of reflection on the research. Collen (2015) stressed that reflexivity is the process of examining both oneself as a researcher and the research relationship. Macbeth (2001:35) reasoned that “reflexivity is a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersection of the author, other text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself”. In this case, reflexivity plays an integral part because of its inherent potential to and the understanding of the researcher and the research procedure itself (Walt 2007 cited in Collen 2015). This researcher has had firsthand personal experience of the Zimbabwe press. The researcher has for years been able to read the Zimbabwean press that includes private and state-owned press. Exposure to these newspapers has enabled the researcher to acquire a balanced understanding of the issues and political issues in particular. It is therefore acknowledged that the knowledge and experience of this polarized reporting could have some influence on how the researcher analyzed the agenda setting by the *Herald* and *Newsday*. The researcher being a native Zimbabwean is heavily affected by the current prevailing socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe and strongly believes that the ZANU PF government is on the whole responsible for the worsening conditions, and this could not be treated in isolation but could also sway the researchers’ perception and its nonagenarian leader Robert Mugabe.

#### 4.3. Qualitative Methodology

Content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases. Sarantakos (2005)

defines content analysis as a documentary method that aims at a quantitative or qualitative analysis of the text, pictures, films and other forms of verbal, visual or written communication. In the same manner Patton (2002:453) stressed that “content analysis can be defined as any data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings”. This kind of method includes the study of the content of text, such as words, pictures and meanings. It also focuses on the meaning and interpretation of text. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stressed that content qualitative analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. One advantage of content analysis is that it allows the researcher to study the documents without the knowledge of the author. Because this study will focus on human forms of communication, like newspapers, weekly election reports latent qualitative content analysis will best inform the study. In this case, the researcher will adopt the latent content analysis in which the underlying meaning in the text will be analysed.

#### 4.4. Latent Content Analysis

Latent analysis refers to a group of techniques used to identify unobservable or latent, subgroups or meaning with a study population. Latent analysis of content involves a more interpretive analysis that is concerned with the response of classification, summation and tabulation. In this study the researcher will make use of latent analysis to interpret and analyse collected data. The researcher will go beyond counting words or extracting objective content from text to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or concealed in a particular text. According Zhang and Wildemuth (2000) latent analysis allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.

#### 4.5. Units of Analysis

The study uses newspaper articles from the *Herald* and *Newsday*. Unit of analysis simply refers to the foremost object that is being analysed in any given study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) stressed that a unit of analysis refers to what and who that is being studied in that given context. Collen (2015) opined that the unit of analysis in social research comprises social objects, assemblages and social organizations. Moreover, Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) also mentioned that a period of time also forms part of a unit of analysis. Because this study focuses on the newspapers stories, its scope falls under the category of social interests. Babbie and Mouton (2001) mention that newspaper editorials, front pages, opinion or any individual piece that can be analyzed forms a unit of analysis. Therefore in

this study, front page news stories, editorials, analyses (economic and political) are all effectively measured with the sole supposition that editors would only publish content from a provider that fits in the scope of its agenda (Collen 2015). In this case the unit of analysis in this study is any election based story (favorable, unfavorable and neutral) from the 31 June to 31 July 2013. These include front page stories, editorials, and analyses and images that contained material that was election related. An entire story is used as a unit of analysis because various agenda setting and framing techniques are found throughout any story which combines to lead to the frame (Van Gorp and Vercruyssen 2012)

#### 4.6. Data Collection and Sampling

To collect data, newspaper articles from the *Herald* and the *Newsday* were utilized. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) stressed that in qualitative research documents that consist of books, newspaper articles and official documents can best be used to gather data. Collen (2015) also stressed that newspaper articles and official documents can be regarded suitable for constructionist analysis. This is because they have a constructed nature and are a mode in societies by which ideas and discourses are disseminated.

In this study a newspaper article or document is considered a point of juncture for social discourses (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). In an attempt to study the use of agenda setting in the newspapers in certain stories, each single article becomes the entry point to analyse into component elements. This study could not include interviews to compliment the news stories because it was realized that all the research questions can be answered with the information available in the news archives. Moreover, the researcher feared the cost associated with conducting interviews. The researcher was also concerned with the common challenge posed by carrying out and understanding data from interviews. This reasoning is drawn from Denzin and Lincoln (1998) who opined that participants are in most cases incapable to express the reason they chose to act and do things in a certain manner. Also in interpreting interview, interviewers may understand and transcribe interviews in different ways. Therefore, putting into consideration that frames are unacknowledged and unspoken (Gamson and Modiglian 1989 cited in Collen 2015), it was preferred that the analysis of the two newspapers would draw its focus on archived stories as is the study by Collen (2015), Van Gorp and Vercruyssen (2012) and Gamson and Modiglian (1989).

The emergence of the Internet has made it easy for news websites and other organizations to upload and create archives of their documents online (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). This has also made it easier for researchers and other interested people to access and retrieve

information and these documents for different use. In this study, online archives of the *Herald* and the *Newsday* were selected. Further in comparison to physical archives that requires the researcher to read through the whole newspaper for the selected period of study, online stories are easier to access and collect for analysis because, by the use of the key word search, the internet usually leads you to the most relevant and related stories (Collen 2015). Moreover, what is unique and special about online archives is that both newspapers in the period of study they were constantly updating their websites with new stories every day. During the period of this study, for example the researcher identified that the *News Day* constantly updated its news stories and ran a live blog that gave people updated stories on what was happening in different constituencies. The case was also the same with the *Herald* though much of their news stories were updated sometime in the afternoon.

#### 4.6.1. Purposive Sampling

A total of fifty stories were purposively sampled and selected for this study (twenty five from the *Herald* and another twenty five from *Newsday*). In this case only fifty were selected because of the time constraints. This is to say, the exercise of reading and re- reading content for data analysis involves a great deal of time and is thus time consuming (Braun and Clarke 2006). The selected fifty stories are in this study counted sufficient because they offer a cross-sectional news stories and content that focused on the 2013 presidential elections. Du Plooy (2009) stressed that sampling entails a great deal and is a laborious process of choosing units of analysis from the earmarked population.

In this study, the populations were fifty news and editorial stories from the two newspapers (*Herald and Newsday*) from the day the official campaign started until the actual day of the presidential elections. The reason the study opted for a purposive sampling technique is because the researcher was familiar with the study population including its characteristics together with the objectives of the study (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Therefore, in this regard, the most valuable and useful information that collate with the research objectives and research questions were selected from both newspapers (*Herald and Newsday*).

This study is a desktop research. A desktop research is the research method that employs the gathering and analysing of secondary information published on the internet or in print. This study utilises a content qualitative analysis technique. The study will also offer pertinent data on newspaper coverage of political parties, election candidates and campaign stories by examining the following:

a) Amount of space (in paragraphs) in the front pages of newspapers given to political parties and/or their candidates.

b) Tone of coverage that is whether favorable, unfavorable or neutral coverage is provided for certain political parties and/or their functionaries and candidates and campaigns.

The key instrument used to gather data is a personally designed coding sheet. In the coding process, the determination of the nature of coverage is guided by three key indicators.

Front-page stories and editorials are coded using the following themes in the following manner:

i) The stories that focused on elections administration (Favorable; if it carried supportive or positive information)

ii) Stories that focused on election candidates (Unfavorable; if it carried critical information or negative information about a political actor/party)

iii) Neutral stories; if it is impossible to categorize the story as either political or election related. That is economic and social and international stories.

#### 4.7. Data Presentation and Analysis.

The researcher depends on the presentation of main themes buttressed by the quotes from news articles as the primary form of analysis. Bazely (2009) cited in Runyowa (2011) highlights that after data is collected, reading and interpreting are the entry ports for significant analysis. The data from the two newspapers were at first coded according to the number of themes and presented in tables in no specific order. Themes examined in this section of the study include, proclamation of the election date, ZEC preparedness, Political Parties activities and Campaigns.

The determination of how key a theme is depends on how much it encompasses key elements related to the research question (Braun and Clarke 2006). Therefore, in this research a summative approach to content analysis was used. Hsieh and Shanon (2005) revealed that summative content analysis is the process by which the researcher identifies and quantifies certain words that feature prominently in the text under investigation. Therefore, the purpose in that case is to pave way for understanding the contextual use of these words or themes. Moreover, after identifying the themes, the themes are further explained and examined using the latent content analysis approach. According to Hsieh and Shanon (2005) in latent content analysis, what is key is the in-depth interpretation and analysis of themes than simply

quantifying them. Therefore, focus in latent content analysis as used in this study is on discovering underlying meanings of the key words and themes used in the selected sample.

#### 4.8. Ethics of Desktop research

Trustworthiness of the study involves all the relevant steps that the researcher takes in order to convince his audience that the research is worth their consideration. Credibility is measured by the extent the research findings reflect the actuality of the reality being studied (Bless *et al.* 2013). To ensure that the research is credible, reliable and rigorous, this research will make use of the measurement techniques called the sampling content validity technique. This technique according to Ormrod (1999) ensures that the measures cover the broad range of areas within the concept under study. Since this study is desktop research study, data collected will be measured and tested against various sources available within the same field. In this case not everything will be covered, so items will be sampled from all domains according to their relevance in answering the research questions. For example content from the main local leading newspapers (*Herald* and *Newsday*) will be given priority and measured against other relevant literature drawn from other newspapers and news websites. This will also be completed using literature from various scholars or experts to ensure that the content area is adequately covered (Ormrod 2005).

#### 4.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design and the research methodology to be used in this study. It explains why an exploratory research design was used and how it aids the study. Furthermore, the chapter also sets out the methods of data collection, sampling and data analysis. It has been highlighted in a particular chapter that, data will be drawn from electronic archives was used. This chapter highlighted two methods of data analysis which are thematic data analysis and latent content analysis and why they are chosen for the study. The next chapter discusses the findings and analysis of data.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Data presentation and analysis

#### 5. Introduction

This chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion. Extracts gathered from the *Herald* (state newspaper) and *Newsday* (private) articles during the period 31<sup>st</sup> June to 31 July were analyzed. In this section, two content analysis approaches will be used for data presentation and analysis. As an entry point to data presentation, the researcher will use summative content analysis to present the data. After the data is presented, then a latent approach to data analysis will be carried. In this instance data will be critically analyzed. As mentioned in the previous chapter the gathered news headlines and extracts from editorials will be presented in the form of a coding sheet. The sheet will be dissected into three categories of, favorable, unfavorable and neutral. In addition, it is important to note that in this chapter analysis of the data was done following the order of the research questions. The discussion is aimed at finding the extent to which the press in Zimbabwe 2013 presidential elections adhered to the principles of objectivity, fairness and impartiality in the period between 4 June and 31 July.

Through the coding process which forms part of the data collection method, four themes emerged in both newspapers. At different levels, the themes were used by the media to set the agenda and frame the 2013 presidential elections. To that end it was identified that the two newspapers set the agenda of the election using similar frames albeit in a divergent manner. In this section therefore, the four themes will be drawn and expounded in order to answer how the question and extent to which the principles of fairness, impartiality and objectivity were adhered to by the two newspapers when they covered the 2013 elections. The four frames that stood out in this study include the following.

- Proclamation of election date
- Election Administration (voter registration, preparedness of ZEC and voter education)
- Political Candidates and personalities
- Political Parties campaign activities

### 5.1 Herald Coding Sheet.

Themes	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable
Proclamation of election date		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties, lawyers hail constitutional court ruling (08/07/13)</li> <li>Constitutional Court rules 31 pool date (04/07/2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July: The month the MDC calendar skips (Herald June 7 2013)</li> <li>Tsvangirai distorting discourse (June 18)</li> <li>I'm not party to Ncube's application</li> <li>Court upholds 31 July date</li> <li>Tsvangirai poll application dismissed (04 July)</li> </ul>
Election Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ZEC presses ahead with poll preps (18/06/13)</li> <li>ZEC invites local and foreign observers (20/06/13)</li> <li>ZEC presses ahead with poll preps (18/06/2013)</li> </ul>	ZEC invites local and foreign observers (20/06/13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tsvangirai want poll date proclamation nullified</li> </ul>
Political Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is one president in Zimbabwe and he is not the creation of the GPA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five eye Presidency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PM: "Holding the Key while the lock has changed". (14 June)</li> <li>For Tsvangirai courage is proportional to</li> </ul>

			<p>distance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Tsvangirai is running scared. He knows his days in government are numbered”</li> <li>• Don’t be misled Tsvangirai told.</li> <li>• EU dumbs Tsvangirai.</li> </ul>
<p>Political Parties and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zimbabwe: the revolution continues (June 9)</li> <li>• Zimbabwe: Curing the Grand Headache</li> <li>• High turnout in ZANU-PF primaries.</li> <li>• ZANU-PF in grand confusion</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaking News: Foreigners push MDCs, Mavambo, ZAPU to strike panicky alliance</li> <li>• MDC-T implicated in police bribe scandal</li> <li>• MDC-T manifesto found on crisis</li> <li>• MDC-T unleashes waves of violence (18/06/13)</li> <li>• The MDC-T expects to lose.</li> <li>• <i>MDC-T unleashes wave of violence (The</i></li> </ul>

			<p><i>Herald</i>, 19/6).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Envoy takes regime change agenda to another level – (The Herald, 8/7).</li> </ul>
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## 5.2 *Newsday* Coding Sheet

Theme	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable
Proclamation of election date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parties gang against Mugabe (06/06/13)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poll saga takes new twist</li> <li>• Constitutional Court rules 31 poll (04/07/13)</li> <li>• SADC summit date set (12/06/13)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mugabe poll move unfortunate (15/06/13)</li> </ul>
Election Administration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Counting to be done at polling stations”( 29 July 2013)</li> <li>• Treasury act to raise poll funds</li> <li>• Still no money for Zimbabwe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The voter registration has been deliberately designed to deny bona-fide citizens of this country their right to vote” (05 July)</li> </ul>

		<p>poll: Biti</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shadowy group launched voter registration website (09/07/13)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Junta takes over polls: MDC-T.</li> <li>“The voter registration has been deliberately designed to deny bona-fide citizens of this country their right to vote” (05 July)</li> <li>Voters roll website gains popularity (04/07)</li> <li>Complicated voter registration process designed to prevent voting (09/07/13)</li> <li>Is something being hidden on poll funding (20/07/13)</li> </ul>
Political candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why Tsvangirai will be next President.</li> <li>President Tsvangirai’s rallies attract massive of rural communities”</li> <li>Baba Jukwa Tips Tsvangirai</li> <li>I am ready to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Death at Mugabe Rally</li> <li>Mugabe Tsvangirai trade insults (12/07/13)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zimbabwe needs fair election and freedom from Mugabe</li> <li>55 injured at Mugabe rally.</li> <li>Tsvangirai stole my ideas: Musindo.</li> <li>I will suffer heart attack if I lose Harare: Mugabe (29 July)</li> <li>Is ZANU-PF</li> </ul>

	<p>govern: Tsvangirai (08/07/13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tsvangirai election will be rigged</li> <li>• Wear their regalia but dumb them:Tsvangirai (24/07/13)</li> </ul>		<p>straining Mugabe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporters walk out of Mugabe</li> <li>• Age threatens Mugabe campaign</li> <li>• Confusion reign supreme in Mutambara faction (12/07/13)</li> <li>• Death at Mugabe Rally (17/07/13)</li> <li>• Mugabe a hostage of factionalism</li> <li>• Supporter walk out of Mugabe Rally (19/07/13)</li> <li>• Another lesson as Mugabe begs Manicaland (24/07/13)</li> <li>• Mugabe poll disaster (24/07/13)</li> </ul>
<p>Political Party activities</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDC plugs poll loopholes (neutral)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why Zimbabwe Must vote against ZANU-PF. 29 July</li> <li>• 55 injured on way to Mugabe Rally</li> <li>• More protest rocks fractious ZANU-PF</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live:Updates: Zanu PF primary elections (27 June)</li> </ul>
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5.3. Summative Content Analysis

The following section will briefly provide a summary of the stories covered by the two newspapers in the period under review. In this case, a summative content analysis approach will be used in order to code and quantify all the stories covered without giving much detailed analysis. Straus (2013) stressed that summative content analysis involves the quantifying of the data in order to pave way for in-depth (latent) critical analysis. Thus after quantifying stories covered the researcher will then do the latent analysis of the coded themes.

Distribution of stories in the *Newsday*

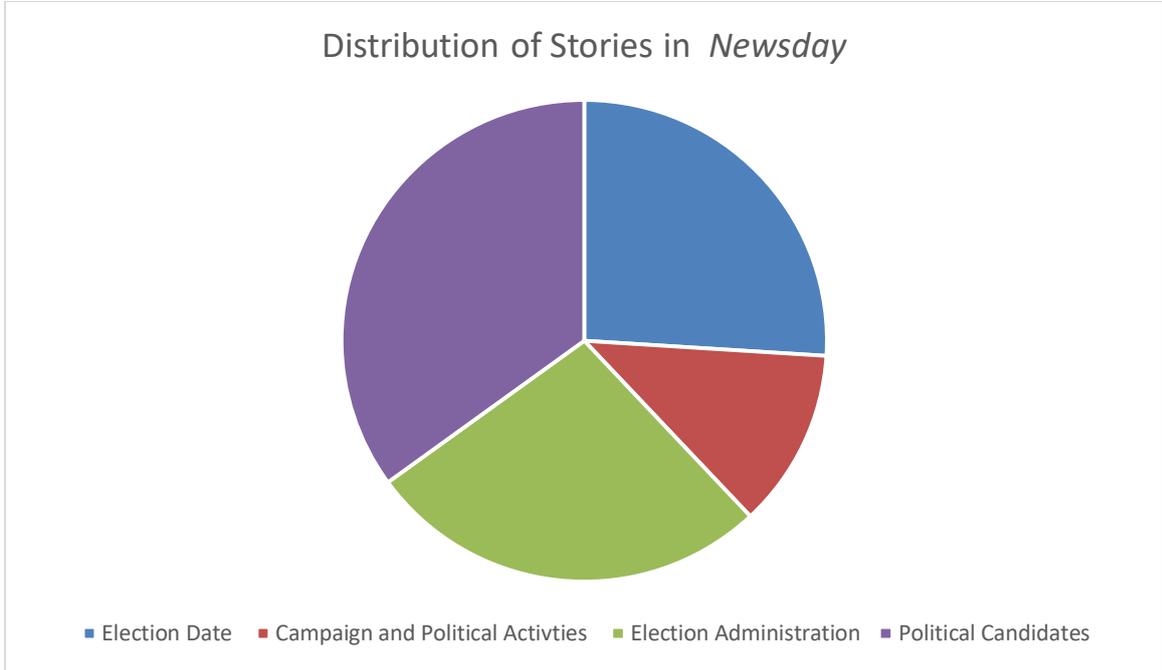


Fig 5.1

From the 31<sup>th</sup> of June to 31<sup>st</sup> of July *Newsday* distributed a sum total of 122 stories. In that case all (100%) of the distributed stories were election related ranging from, proclamation of election date, political party campaigns, election administration, candidates and their

personality to opinion articles. In that case, twenty-six (21%) of the reported stories focused on administration processes with all of the headlines criticizing and questioning the preparedness of ZEC and fears that the Committee would fail to conduct the elections in a way that will ensure a free and fair outcome. Only 35% of the monitored headlines and opinions mentioned and focused on election candidates. Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai attracted attention. Tsvangirai was to a great extent portrayed in a positive light as compared to Robert Mugabe who was depicted as a villain. Only 26% percent of the stories focused on the proclamation of the election date. In addition (12%) of the distributed stories focused on campaigns and rallies of the major political parties (ZANU-PF and MDC-T). In this case 7 of the distributed campaign stories were live updates of the MDC-T party including its *Cross-Over Rally* that was held in Harare a day before Election Day. Only 5 campaign stories covered ZANU-PF political campaigns and rallies. To add on that all stories that focused on ZANU-PF had negative connotations and depicted the party in a debauched light. For example 3 headlines on ZANU-PF rallies distributed by the *Newsday* read, “55 injured at Mugabe Rally”, “Supporters walked out of Mugabe Rally and Death at Mugabe Rallies”. Moreover, only 1 headline focused on the small opposition political parties like MDC-N election rally.

### 5.3.1. Analysis

The data presented above clearly shows how the *Newsday* focus was directed towards elections within the period under review. In this period 100% of the news headlines monitored in this private press were election related. The press focus was unevenly distributed. The *Newsday* covered stories that painted a positive picture of Morgan Tsvangirai and his political party. This has led the newspaper to follow MDC-T election activities so closely that it almost failed to cover ZANU-PF and Mugabe’s election activities. Moreover, the press gave limited attention to voter education and information news. In this case of 27% coverage given to election administration stories only 3% focused on voter education and on informing the electorate on the constituencies and the location of the polling stations. The press was also biased in its coverage of political parties and candidates. Ninety percent (90%) of the monitored headlines and editorials partly endorsed MDC-T as a legitimate political party while denigrating ZANU-PF as a violent political party.

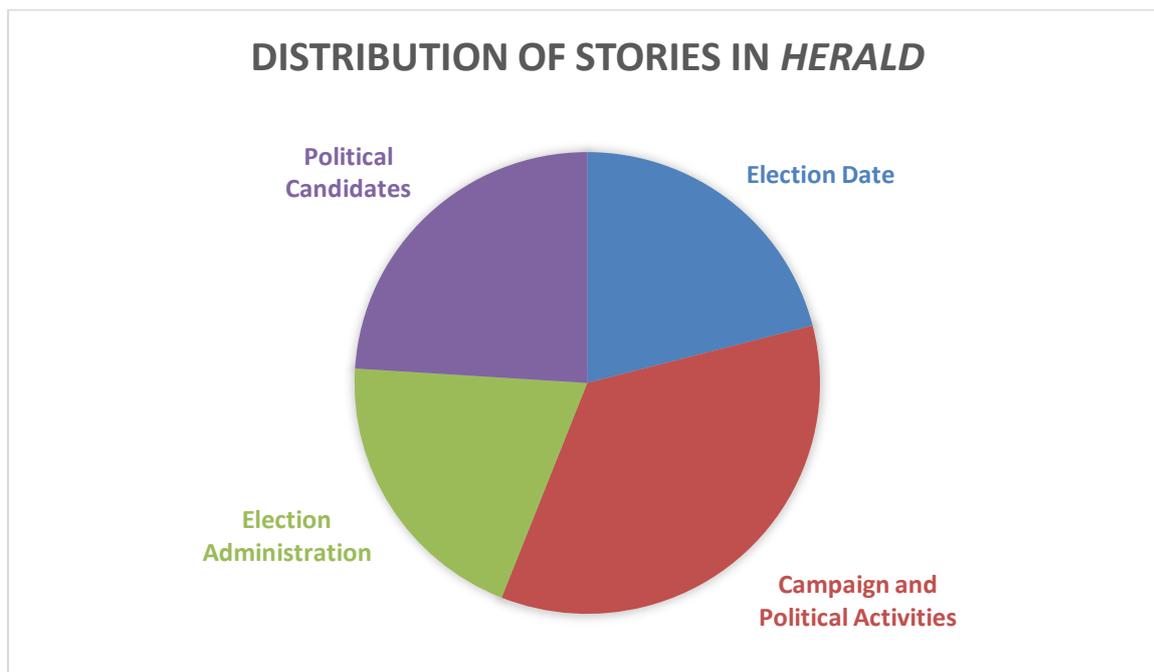


Fig 5.2 Distribution of stories in the Herald

The *Herald* distributed a total of two hundred and four (204) election stories during the period under review. Of the two hundred and four stories, sixty-five (32%) of the stories were on political party campaigns and rallies by the main two political parties (MDC-T and ZANU-PF). In the same vein, it is important to note that 95% of the campaign stories and rallies monitored were ZANU-PF rallies and campaigns in different parts of the country. Only 5% was given to MDC-T and other small political formations that were contesting the elections. Moreover, only twenty stories (9%) monitored in the *Herald* mentioned the elections administration process with much focus on the readiness and preparedness of ZEC. Political party coverage was seen in forty-four (22%) of the monitored stories which were on political parties and widespread (70%) coverage was given to ZANU-PF while 30% was devoted on vilifying other political parties like MDC-T, MDC-N and other small political parties. Last but not least, stories on candidates constituted a total of fifty (25%). In this group of fifty, 80% were devoted on glorifying Mugabe as a gallant hero who fought for the liberation of the nation, and the only “firm leader to protect the interest of the black population of Zimbabwe” (*Herald* 16 June 2016). Twenty percent of the stories on candidates and their personalities were mere attacks on Morgan Tsvangirai as a “*puppet of the west who wants to reverse the gains and benefits of the hard won independence*” (*Herald* 12/06/13).

### 5.3.2. Analysis

The data presented above clearly shows how the coverage of the *Herald* was lopsided in favor of ZANU-PF. In this case most (95%) of its stories in all categories monitored were clearly framed to endorse ZANU-PF and its candidate Robert Mugabe, while at the same time vilifying and demonizing the opposition parties as “*agents of the west sent to push for a regime change through unconstitutional means*”. It is also clear that the *Herald* had more (85%) ZANU-PF related headlines stories than of any other political parties. Of all its stories, the *Herald* paid less attention and covered few (2 %) election administration stories that were necessary if the electorate was going to make informed choices in the elections. It can also be reasoned that, while election stories were covered in the *Herald*, they carried some underlying negative connotations that were only meant to discredit the opposition political parties.

The following section is comprised of the presentation of the front page headlines and extracts from the editorial pieces. The a-fore mentioned will be presented according to themes in a coding sheet that has three categories. That is *favorable*, *unfavorable* and *neutral*. Thus data from the *Newsday* will be presented first.

This section of the chapter comprises of the actual analysis that seek to address the research questions. In this case, the researcher will go beyond only tallying words or removing target content from text to inspect meaning, patterns and themes that might be latent or manifest in a specific content.

## 5.4. Latent thematic analysis of data

### 5.4.1 Proclamation of election date

The proclamation of the election date by the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe received wide coverage from *Herald*. The president declared 31 July 2013 as the election date and 11 September 2013 as the run-off date if there is no complete winner. The proclamation of the election date by the president was necessitated by the Constitutional Court ruling which ruled that the election should be held on or before the 31 of July. Reports in the *Herald* on the proclamation were drawn from the decision by the Constitutional Court and this assisted in setting the background for the president’s decision on the chosen date.

Consequently, after the set date, news, and editorials carried responses on the declaration of the election date. The reports on the election date as portrayed by the *Herald* were inclusive in revealing positive and negative reactions from the leaders of various political leaders. In

the *Herald*, MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai was quoted and portrayed as opposing the announcement and accusing Robert Mugabe of breaching the constitution, while Welshman Ncube the leader of the other MDC faction was portrayed negatively in his direct attack of the court's decision. On the other hand, the Zimbabwe Development Party (ZDP) and ZANU Ndonga leadership were also portrayed albeit in full support of the proclamation of the election date because they argued that the GPA was no longer necessary.

However inclusive they were, it was observed from the headlines and editorials section of the *Herald* that the reports on opposition leaders were unfavorable and tried in all situations to discredit opposition political parties for not supporting the "early" election date. Some of the headlines include; "*Tsvangirai poll application dismissed*", "*Tsvangirai distorting discourse*" and "*July: the MDC-T calendar skips*" (*Herald* 18/06/2013, 04/07/2013, 07/07/2013).

On the other hand, it was also observed that reports (*Herald*) on the election date were more favorable and positive, meaning it endorsed the ruling of the Constitutional Court. Of note here is the idea that ZANU-PF endorsed the ruling of the Constitutional Court and claimed that the proclamation of the election date was in accordance with the rule of law. Therefore, it is sufficient to say that, by upholding the Constitutional Court ruling the *Herald* was simply endorsing and was favoring the ZANU-PF position. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June the *Herald* carried an editorial article authored by Nathaniel Manheru. In this article, Manheru questioned the stance of the opposition parties on the proclamation on the election date. In the article the phrase "The month the MDC calendar skips" (*Herald* 07/07/2013) was used. The article provided a background in which MDC-T leader, Morgan Tsvangirai was initially in support of and pushed for an earlier election date only to make a U-turn after the date was set by the president. To add, Manheru portrayed Mr. Tsvangirai as a very forgetful person who proclaims dates and make U-turns when things are not going according to his plan. Manheru suggested that the MDC-T leadership were seeking for an extension simply because they had not planned and probably forgotten the month of July on their calendar. The phrases "*MDC calendar skips*" presupposes the unpreparedness of MDC-T in the elections. The use of cues and phrases in this article resonates with what McCombs said when he indicated that media uses cues and phrases respectively to attach importance to certain stories. It is clear that journalists use cues and phrases in order to direct people's attention towards certain thinking. This has been common in the *Herald* on various reports carried out during the period under review, and in most cases the cues were meant to portray Mr. Tsvangirai as a weak and

incompetent leader. Some of the controversial headlines are as follows: “*Tsvangirai distorting discourse*”, and “*EU dumbs Tsvangirai*” (07/07/2013). It is also clear from the above assertion that rather than focusing on the ruling by the Constitutional Court, the news agenda in the *Herald* is set on focusing attention towards attacking and crediting some political leaders and their parties over others. Therefore it can be reasoned that, the *Herald* frequently utilizes labels and titles to depict individuals, places and occasions. The nature of these names and titles set the tone of the story and impacted how viewers and readers see the news story and the political candidates and political parties that are the focus of the news report. Therefore, by so doing, the *Herald* in focusing attention on discrediting Tsvangirai would not give a fair and impartial coverage of the true nature of the political dynamics unfolding in the period leading up to the elections.

In addition, the disparaging and undesirable representation of Tsvangirai was placed in direct contrast with positive portrayals of Robert Mugabe the ZANU-PF leader. After proclamation of the election date, Robert Mugabe was portrayed as a law abiding leader who could not but act according to the dictates of the rule of law. Reports on Robert Mugabe in relation to the proclamation of the election date endorsed and warranted the Constitutional Court ruling. Of note is the strategically employed editorial intrusions that were evident in the report. The *Herald* (08/07/2013) carried a report with the title, “*Parties, lawyers hail constitutional court ruling*”. The interviewed legal experts endorsed and upheld the final ruling that the election should be held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, while the interviewed legal experts were drawn from all the political parties and gave their fair analysis of the ruling. It was observed in the report that there was some gross editorial intrusion in that among other things it interpreted the Constitutional Court ruling as a loss for the opposition that “*was bent on burdening the court with frivolous court cases*” (*Herald* 08/07/2013). The widespread editorial intrusion in most of the reviewed reports and opinions raises questions of the credibility of the *Herald*. It simply reveals the biased nature of the *Herald* and helps to validate the assertion by Marxist scholars (Chomsky, and Gramsci) who argued that journalists and editors in state run media are not merely professional but are accessories of the government used to sway the populace in the direction the government position. Editorial intrusions were also observed in a report titled: “*Obama pokes nose in Zim affairs*”. The *Herald* (30/6) reported: “US President Barack Obama yesterday blatantly displayed his support for the MDC-T after telling a South African audience that Zimbabwe has to undergo “some reforms” if it is to hold a credible election”. The daily added: “While clearly singing from the same hymn book as the Western-sponsored

party, President Obama also claimed that some Zimbabwean citizens and groups were being harassed during the build-up to the elections set for July 31”.

The *Newsday* also carried similar stories on the proclamation of the election date, although with different headlines and from a slightly different viewpoint. Headlines and editorials in the *Newsday* though agreed that the elections were overdue and must be held as early as possible. The tone from the extracts revealed that Robert Mugabe erred in his announcing 31 July as the date of elections because he did not put into consideration the surrounding circumstances and the fact that most of the reforms that were supposed to be implemented before the elections were not done. In a report titled, “*Mugabe poll move unfortunate*” (15/06/13), there were a number of editorial intrusions most of which made the report unfavorable towards the election date. An extract from that report reads, “*Now the proclamation of the election dates has been done without sufficient dialogue*”. The writer of the report argued that Mugabe’s pronouncement was not discussed with other parties who signed the GPA, as a consequence it was unilateral and must be revoked. To add, the *Newsday* also carried a report titled “*Poll saga takes new twist*” (11/06/13) in which a woman from Bulawayo filed a court application seeking for the postponement of the election date. Some of the major issues that were cited were that the law restricts and represses freedom of expression. It emerged that the POSA, AIPPA, and some other electoral laws were supposed to be repealed before the elections were conducted. Owing to these and other reasons, the reports in the *Newsday* did not favor the “early” proclamation of the electoral date by Robert Mugabe. Furthermore, *Newsday* reports and the tone of coverage portrayed the early proclamation of the election date to be a ploy by ZANU-PF to fast track the election without implementing the reforms agreed in the GPA. In a report titled, “*SADC summit date set*” the editor wrote, “*Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party insists that election must be held with or without reform set out in the GPA*” (*Newsday* 12/06/13). This expression seems to suggest that the ZANU-PF party was in full agreement with the early date and was prepared to go for polls even with the prevailing status quo.

Therefore it can be reasoned that the early proclamation of the election date as portrayed by the *Newsday* did not favor Mugabe’s move and thus was attacked from all angles. To add, the reports also were biased as they represented Mugabe as a power hungry individual. Among the reports and editorials that negatively portrayed Mugabe and did not favor the early election date are the following. “*Poll saga takes new twist*”, and “*Constitutional Court rules 31 poll*” (11/06/13. 04/07/13,). In the article “*Poll saga takes new twist*” the author expressed

concern that Mugabe was only concerned by his stay in power and less by ensuring the electoral reforms are put in place before the country goes to the elections. Most importantly the article heading did not reflect exactly what the author was talking about in the article. At first glance “*new twist*” might seem that there was a shift from one direction to another. But in the article it was clear that the author’s line of argument was against the idea that the Constitutional court has ruled in favor of Mugabe’s proposed date for the elections.

#### 5.4.2. Legal battles on the election dates

The two newspapers monitored had extensive coverage on the legal cases that stemmed from the SADC summit in Maputo. In Maputo the leaders of the three main political parties were recommended to approach their constitutional court for the postponement of the election date. The most prominent case covered is the application made by the Justice Minister, Patrick Chinamasa for the postponement of the 31 July 2013 election date to the Constitutional Court. This was followed by the submission made by the two MDC formations to the same court in which they argued that their applications must be amalgamated with that of Chinamasa. The opposition parties also requested in their application that the Constitutional Court reverse its ruling on the early election date. The *Herald* covered the legal battles extensively from the day it started to its final day.

The *Herald* ran a report with headline, “*I’m not party to Ncube’s application*”, with story line, “*President Mugabe and Justice and legal Affairs Minister Chinamasa yesterday rejected MDC leader Professor Ncube’s attempt to make them a joint application in a case in which he is seeking the extension of the election date from 31 July*”. In this report Robert Mugabe was distancing himself from Ncube’s effort to have the election date overturned. Robert Mugabe said he could not be part of Ncube who was confused as he was initially part of the team that was pushing an early election date only to reject it when announced. From the reports carried by the *Herald* in which Mugabe was accusing Ncube it is clear that the *Herald*’s tone of coverage was not balanced. Ncube whom Mugabe was accusing of launching a frivolous court case was never given an opportunity to respond or clarify his position on the matter. In this case, it was observed that though Ncube could have justifiable reasons that led him to launch the application, the *Herald* did not cover or report on those reasons other than that Mugabe did not want to be part of Ncube’s application. Ncube was not given a chance to respond to these accusations in the *Herald* or any other newspaper.

To add, on the report, “*Court rules 31 July poll date*” (*Herald* 04/07/13), Tsvangirai was also accused by Mugabe of the same act, but never given a single opportunity by the *Herald* to respond to the attacks by Mugabe. Tsvangirai’s responses to Mugabe’s accusations were only reported in the *Newsday* and other private newspapers (*DailyNews*). Therefore it can be reasoned that the *Herald* deviated from the ethics of best practice in news reporting that states that, an individual, political party, or candidate must be afforded a reasonable right to reply to any allegations made in the news media that are claimed by the political parties or candidates to be false.

Moreover, following the final ruling by the Constitutional Court that threw out the applications that to extend the election date, the two newspapers covered the same story from different angles. The news articles in the *Newsday* interpreted the ruling as an outright victory for ZANU-PF together with organizations that petitioned for the 31 July election date. It quoted a statement from the Youth Agenda Trust that described the Constitutional Court ruling as “*only serving to show that the country’s judiciary is not independent but one that is swayed by the whims and caprices of selfish politicians who wanted to ambush Zimbabweans into a sham election motivated by selfish political interests*”. On the other hand, the *Herald* gives the impression that the opposition parties’ attempts to stop the elections have failed. For example in the report, “*Tsvangirai poll application dismissed*” (04/07/13), the editor claimed that Tsvangirai and his western funded party had failed to stop a decision sanctioned by the rule of law. He further stressed that Tsvangirai’s maneuver to avoid an election was a sign of an imminent election defeat.

#### 5.4.3 Election Administration

The *Newsday* and the *Herald* informed the general public and the electorate on the electoral process on a regular basis and frequently reported on the activities of the body responsible of managing the presidential elections (ZEC). News reported by both papers mainly focused on the various successes of ZEC and its failures. Areas covered in relation to ZEC election administration were voter registration programs, education and its general preparedness to conduct the election.

ZEC’s preparedness to hold an election was extensively covered by the two newspapers in the period leading up to the elections. The Commission’s daily reports submitted to the press indicated that ZEC was ready to conduct the presidential elections. In that regard, it (ZEC)

admitted that there were limited resources but it would utilize those it had to make sure the election was a success and would be free and fair.

However the reception and response to the ZEC's preparedness was represented and portrayed from different angles in both the *Herald* and *Newsday*. Reports from the *Newsday* never ceased questioning the readiness given that the body had no requisite resources and logistics that included funding. It emerged in these reports that the Finance Ministry did not avail enough funds to the body to enable it to run the election to the satisfaction of all political parties.

#### 5.4.3.1 Funding

The issue of funding dominated reports until the final day of the elections. It was used by the two newspapers to measure the Commission's capability to manage the electoral process efficiently. Monitored headlines and editorials in the *Newsday* focused on the idea that the Commission did not have money to fund elections. It also raised concern that there was that the nation would not be able to raise the money internally, as such it has to rely on the donors (*Newsday* 2013). Of note in this case is that the *Newsday* position was synonymous to that of the then Finance Minister Tendai Biti, (MDC-T) who tirelessly complained that the treasury was bankrupt and could not fund the elections. A considerable number of reports were carried in *Newsday* in which Tendai Biti was quoted and in some instances published some opinion pieces to explain the situation at ZEC. On the other end, the ZANU-PF position was similar to that of ZEC. In the *Newsday* reports ZANU-PF was portrayed as a beneficiary of ZEC. As such it can be observed that reports from the *Newsday* suggested that the prevailing financial problems of funding in ZEC were man-made to so that they can make possible a ZANU-PF victory.

On the contrary, reports published in the *Herald* endorsed the stance of the ZANU-PF government. For example The Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity published an article it dispelled the reports peddled by the *Newsday* and opposition parties that the country could not raise enough money for the election. In a report titled "ZEC presses ahead with poll preps" (18/06/13) the writer argued that ZEC was ready to conduct the elections with the available resources. In the same report, efforts to raise money to fund elections from outside the country were castigated as an attempt by the MDC-T to invite their western friends to meddle into Zimbabwean elections, something ZANU-PF and its leadership was not ready to

witness. Among the reports that endorsed the ZEC position are “ZEC invites local and foreign observers” (*Herald* 20/06/13).

Important to note, therefore is that the issue of funding of the election as portrayed by the two newspapers escalated into a political contest. In this case, media coverage of the topic on funding proved the bias and lopsided nature of the two newspapers. In the *Herald* stories had a connotation that the reason why there was little or insufficient money for the elections was because the Finance Minister (Tendai Biti) who was the MDC-T general secretary had misappropriated the funds and converted some of the state funds into his personal use. Sadly these allegations were never imputed with supporting evidence. While in the *Newsday*, the minister was quoted repeatedly saying that the country did not have sufficient money, blaming Patrick Chinamasa (ZANU-PF) to be meddling in his job and blocking any opportunity the Finance Ministry had to borrow money from the international community.

#### 5.4.3.2. Voter registration and voter education

The media covered extensively the process of voter registration and voter education. Most of the reports published in the two newspapers were reports on the progress of ZEC from the Commission’s chairperson. Thus in this case, the two newspapers played an important role as a vehicle for the dissemination of messages on voting awareness. More so, media reports on the issue of voter education and registration were somewhat fair in that the media recorded accurately the noteworthy increase in the number of voters from 5.2 million to around 6.4 million. The two newspapers also noted that there were some people who complained that they were unable to register due to the expiry of the 30 day registration period, which affected them to the extent that they could not be able to cast their ballot on 31st of July.

However, the *Herald* presented was reasonably fair when covering the last day of the voter registration process. The *Herald* and *Newsday* covered the final day extensively with both having Live Blogs that were updated every few seconds. In this case reports from the *Herald* reviewed that the last day of the voter registration did not run effectively owing to the logistical drawbacks suffered by ZEC. They also cited long queues in the urban areas and the limited time that eventually ran out. In most parts of Harare the newspaper reported that ZEC failed to cope with the overpowering turn out as thousands of people, mainly youths and women were pushing to register. It was observed that most centers were understaffed.

On the other end, it is important to note that although the *Newsday* covered voter registration and voter education extensively, monitored reports were replete with biases and editorial

intrusions. On July 17<sup>th</sup> the *Newsday* covered a MDC-T rally and quoted Tendai Biti who told party supporters at a campaign rally at Mutora business centre in Gokwe “that ZEC had deliberately bungled the special voting to rig the polls”. Furthermore, Tsvangirai was also quoted as saying,

*“They (ZEC and ZANU-PF) want to steal elections through the special ballot vote. They had all the 80 000 ballots, but what their intelligence told them was that the police also wanted change. They then created an artificial shortage and only released 5 000 special envelopes” (17/07/13)*

To add, the *Newsday* published a series of carefully selected interviews of people who had failed to register to vote. In this case the general response of the people interviewed was that people were denied their right to register to vote simply because ZEC did not have sufficient time, manpower and funds to carry the registration process to the satisfaction of all.

Concerning voter education, the *Herald* and *Newsday* carried a few reports on voter education. The reports’ initial purpose was to inform and educate members of the public about how to vote in the 31 July presidential elections. In this case, the electorate was informed that they were supposed to cast three ballots to elect the President, Members of Parliament and Councilors for urban and rural councils. Voters were required to elect 60 senators, 60 women members of the House of Assembly and eighty provincial councilors using a party-list proportional representation system based on provincial House of Assembly constituency results.

Therefore, although the ZEC voter education program received seemingly fair coverage in the *Herald* and *Newsday*, it must be noted that the program as reported by the two newspapers targeted the Shona, Ndebele, and English speakers. This is so because there was absence in these newspapers reports on voter education in other national languages spoken across the country<sup>14</sup>. This could have made some sections of the electorate to benefit more from the voter education exercise.

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<sup>14</sup> Zimbabwe is a multilingual nation, yet the nation's national language policy keeps on underestimating indigenous African dialects at all levels of the nation's education framework. The three languages that are authoritatively instructed in schools as subjects are English, Shona and Ndebele. A current review by Magwa (2009: 61) recognized the following as the language spoken in Zimbabwe yet enormously ignored: Kalanga, Nambya, Sotho, Shangani, Tswana, Sena, Kunda, Nyanja/Chewa, Xhosa, Tshwawo, Venda.

#### 5.4.3.3. ZEC's readiness to conduct elections

In spite of its effort to reassure the voters and the nation that the Commission was in a position to conduct fair and credible elections, questions on the readiness and its ability to deliver took center stage in the media. The *Newsday* reports carried throughout featured heavily negative connotations. For example “*Junta takes over polls*”, *The voter registration has been deliberately designed to deny bona-fide citizens of the country their right to vote*” (05/07/13). These two quotations simply paint a negative picture on the voter registration process that was being run by the Commission. There is an underlying assumption that ZEC's efforts were only for the purpose of ensuring that ZANU-PF wins the elections. On the other hand the *Herald* was committed to endorsing the ZEC's position and pronouncement that it was ready. In this case the *Herald* carried a number of stories that had the connotation that supported that ZEC was ready to hold elections. The *Herald* had the following, “*ZEC presses ahead with poll preps*” (18/06/13) and “*ZEC invites local and foreign observes*” (20/06/13).

The press also covered extensively the special vote that was set to take place on the 14th and 15 of July. Reports carried by the *Herald* revealed that the ZEC chairperson had fears of double voting. The *Newsday* carried reports in which the MDC-T was quoted repeatedly accusing ZEC officials of the poor logistics that resulted in the delay of the voting process. It was revealed in *Newsday* that the special voting process failed to take place in areas like Masvingo. More so, reports that ZEC was deliberately disenfranchising the soldiers and police forces during the special voting process featured prominently in the *Newsday* more than the *Herald*. The *Newsday* quoted Tsvangirai when he expressed concern about the voter's role in Manicaland, saying, “The voters roll in Manicaland was handwritten and this exposed that the Commission is not ready for the vote”.

However, though ZEC's readiness to hold elections was given wide coverage by the media, where they explained to the voters the drawbacks they encountered with the process, there has been a clear bias in how the matter was reported by both newspapers. In this case reports carried by the *Herald* were clearly positive that the Commission was ready and had insufficient funds to hold the elections. The level of bias revealed a lack of accuracy of facts in the *Herald* and was exposed when the Chairperson of the Commission issued a statement that the ZEC did not have enough funds to hold the special vote. The same story was published in the *Newsday* with direct quotes from the Chairperson of the Commission. In this *Newsday* the Chairperson was quoted saying, “the Commission was not fully funded and this

would compromise the readiness to conduct free and fair elections”. But in the *Herald*, where no quotation from the Chairperson was used, it was maintained that the Commission was now ready and had acquired all required funds to conduct the elections. The *Herald* reported in an article titled “ZEC presses ahead with poll preps”, the Commission was described as being progressive and upholding the ruling of the constitutional court. Furthermore, ZEC in this case was also presented as organized and prepared, by inviting local and international observers, and by setting an Observer Accreditation Committee according to the provisions of the Electoral Act. ZEC was presented as a fully organized commission in the *Herald*.

More so, in an attempt to bolster its position and stance on the reports on ZEC’s readiness the *Newsday* relied on some so-called “*reliable sources*” and quotations from other opposition aligned non-governmental organizations. In the report “*Complicated voter registration process designed to prevent voting*”(09/07/2013) the *Newsday* quoted The Zimbabwe Election Support Network, a coalition of NGOs observing the elections,

*“the nature of the voter-registration process, the prevailing conditions associated with it, and the disruption and intimidation of civil society were an attempt by Mugabe’s Zanu PF party to instigate violence at the polls in order to reclaim its political legitimacy”.*

Another organization that had its opinion piece published in the *Newsday* was The Youth Agenda Trust. The organization argued that,

*“The cumbersome processing of aliens is a direct violation of the rights of the people of Zimbabwe and a breach of the constitutional right to vote as stipulated in the new Constitution. The time that has also been allocated to register is not enough as most people have either failed to cope with the long and winding queues and or have not had time to visit the centres in the short period due to other competing interests,”* ( *Newsday* 09/07/2013).

*“There is a total disconnect between Zec and their officers on the ground. Unknown elements have literally taken over the show. They (Zec officials) are now taking instructions direct from the junta,”*

*“The voter registration process has been one that has been marred by poor administration and is custom made to frustrate potential registrants”* (*Newsday* July 05).

*“Despite the fact that elections are only three and a half weeks away, there has been no serious attempt by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to educate Zimbabweans on the impending plebiscite and their right to vote”. (Newsday July 05).*

*“The country’s voters’ roll which is maintained by the registrar general remains the biggest fraud in the electoral history of the country” (Newsday July 06).*

*“It is also in the public domain that the voters’ roll is being used to mask electoral fraud with a lot people confirming that their names are being deliberately deleted from the list and replaced with imaginary characters” (Newsday July 08).*

It therefore must be noted that the two organizations quoted by the Newsday were adamant opponents of the ruling ZANU-PF who endorsed the MDC-T presidential candidate in their pre-election statement. They also claimed that ZEC was simply an appendage of ZANU-PF, only ensuring that ZANU-PF wins the elections.

#### 5.5. Political Candidates

Of note in this theme is the “iconization” of Robert Mugabe in the *Herald* by the continuous use of frames that created positive impressions of the ZANU-PF leader. As discussed in the background section of this study (chapter 1), Robert Mugabe has been at the helm of power since the country attained its independence in 1980. The *Herald* has ceaselessly celebrated him for his shrewdness as a liberation leader and brilliance in emancipating the black population from white oppression. From the land re-distribution program, indigenization of the economy and the economic empowerment of the common people, all these were regarded as achievements of Robert Mugabe. This iconization of Robert Mugabe brings to the fore the account of “ordeal” as articulated by McAdams (2008: 242). As utilized by the *Herald* the story of ordeals constructs Robert Mugabe as an icon by inserting his encounters and involvements in a narrative manner to style and portray him in a social network of meanings as a great world-shattering liberator. The frames used in the stories and articles on Robert Mugabe gave him a character of a lion that singlehandedly brought down the forces of repression and colonialism in Zimbabwe. It pays little attention to other characters that played an equal role in the liberation struggle, for example Joshua Nkomo and the like. More so Robert Mugabe’s iconicity and prowess have been used as the embodiment of the party of ZANU-PF. Therefore, this sub-theme of iconizing Robert Mugabe has brought to the fore the partiality inherent in the *Herald* in the reviewed sample as it is exclusionary and keeps making mention of one single political figure.

Furthermore, the fact that Robert Mugabe dominates news stories in the *Herald* is positive proof that the *Herald* newspaper is wholly under the control of some powerful figures in Zimbabwe whose ideas and political interest and ideologies are channeled to the public. This also confirms the assertion by Marxists who stressed that concentration of media in the hands of the elite empowers them to control media output and sends out ideologies which benefit ruling class interests. To add, Robert Mugabe's iconic figure is mostly contrasted to that of Morgan Tsvangirai as will be elaborated in the following paragraph. Key articles in the reviewed sample that employ this theme include: "*Victory of Mugabe*", "*ZANU-PF: The man who floored empire*", "*ZANU-PF: Hinges that opens against giant doors*".

Attacks of political candidates in the *Herald* and *Newsday* are a frequent practice. During the period under review, the *Herald* used frames that vilified all opposition parties as agents of the West. But most focus was on Morgan Tsvangirai who featured in most of the news reports that were carried by the *Herald*. Morgan Tsvangirai was portrayed as a partner of the West with the single idea of reversing the benefits of the revolution and bringing about regime change in Zimbabwe. More so his juxtaposition with Robert Mugabe who was portrayed as an icon in these reports only serves to expose Morgan Tsvangirai as an unfit leader who was only contesting the election on behalf of the Western countries. This gesture by the *Herald* confirms the idea that the *Herald* is controlled by the government to attack the opposition in the same way the *Rhodesian Herald* was used by the Rhodesian Front<sup>15</sup>.

It can therefore be observed that, in publishing reports on Tsvangirai and Mugabe the *Herald* used misleading headlines and sensationalism. Sensationalism in the media involves the deliberate production, staging and presentation of stories, including headlines, with the intention of provoking public interest. In a story the same newspaper (*Herald* 8/7) carried a front-page report distorting what transpired at the MDC-T's launch of its campaign manifesto at Rudhaka Stadium in Marondera. The daily reported MDC-T leader Tsvangirai as having urged supporters to vote for him so he can invite his Western "*friends*" to flood Zimbabwe with money. It observed that Tsvangirai had made a similar pledge ahead of the formation of the inclusive Government in 2009 and even though ministers drawn from his party superintended over the finance and economic development portfolios over the past four years,

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<sup>15</sup> Rhodesian Front was a conservative political party in Rhodesia (or Southern Rhodesia now Zimbabwe) when the nation was under white minority rule. Driven first by Winston Field, and, from 1964, by Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Front was the successor to the Dominion Party, which was the principle ruling party in Southern Rhodesia amid the Federation time frame. The RF was formed in March 1962 by whites restricted to any quick change to black majority rule.

*“no money was forthcoming from the friends”. The Herald added: “If anything, the so-called friends have since dumped Mr Tsvangirai and his party to re-engage President Mugabe and Zanu-PF and development analysts equated to an indictment of MDC-T's **electoral chances**”. The paper also claimed that Tsvangirai indicated “he will reverse key national policies put in place by the Zanu-PF Government should his party win” during the launch of the manifesto, which The Herald said “**has no five-year development plan, but just a 100-day programme**”. Among the major headlines where sensationalism was ripe are as follows, “MDC-T expects to lose polls” (The Herald, 17/6) MDC-T unleashes wave of violence (Herald, 19/6) EU dumps Tsvangirai (The Herald, 26/6) “PM seeks to deny citizens right to vote” (Herald, 3/7) “Envoy takes regime change agenda to another level” (The Herald, 8/7), “Tsvangirai chickens out...withdraws petition at eleventh hour” (The Herald, 17/8).*

In another case, the *Herald* (26/6) carried a front-page lead story entitled; “*EU dumps Tsvangirai*”, apparently based on an observation contained in an EU policy document entitled, Quick Policy Insight, Zimbabwe's 2013 General Elections published at the end of May. This reportedly observed that, “*Government turnover does not guarantee democratic change in Zimbabwe. ZANU-PF lacks democratic roots; but the MDC has, for its part, done little to prove its trustworthiness. Rather than asking who is in power, international analysts might want to put a stronger focus on how to actually improve Zimbabwe's political culture and institutions*”, These “revelations”, *Herald* claimed, amounted to “a virtual vote of no confidence in MDC-T's electoral chances”, and were sufficient evidence to support its unsubstantiated headline, which itself assumed that the EU was supporting the MDC-T in the first place. But the paper made no attempt to explain how the EU's criticism of Tsvangirai and his party was tantamount to “dumping Tsvangirai”.

An article authored by Obert Gutu MDC-T spokesman, indicates, “Tomorrow will forever be marked in the annals of history as the date on which the people of the great nation called Zimbabwe finally extricated themselves from a very painful 33 year of ZANU-PF hegemony, cronyism, decadence, corruption and greed” (*Newsday* 30/07/13).

The people of Zimbabwe will cross over from the house of slavery and bondage into a life of plenty and happiness under the stewardship of a brand new, people-loving government headed by the people's choice, Morgan Tsvangirai. The issue in this case was that the ZANU-PF government has been in power for a period of more than 33 years. The Mugabe

regime stay in power was accompanied by a lot of policies that resulted in the economic collapse of the country. The regime was responsible for the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe. Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF members in government reduced a country from being a bread basket to be a borrowing bowl. Gutu said, “ from being the second biggest economy in Southern Africa in 1980 after independence, Mugabe and his allegedly corrupt officials have ransacked and looted the country into becoming a small, impoverished economy which now ranks lower than the economies of little Lesotho and Swaziland” (*Newsday* 30/07/13).

The *Herald* had the highest number of stories with single sources. The state-owned daily also published reports based on anonymous sources. *Newsday* also carried single sourced stories, others based on unnamed sources. In a report “*Mugabe runs out of steam*”, Mugabe’s health was discussed and extended in juxtaposition with the state responsibilities. The *Newsday* reported, “*But it is hard to imagine how at 89, Mugabe is coping with strain of running government, spearheading a decisive campaign and containing reported party factional fights. There has been wide speculation about Mugabe’s declining health*”. Of note in this article is the claim that Mugabe was suffering from prostate cancer. Although the allegations of Mugabe’s health have been a subject of public discussion, Mugabe denied this allegation. The *Newsday* in this report could not provide the sources and evidence where they got the information about Mugabe suffering from prostate cancer. The report said as evidence, “*according to impeccable sources*” Mugabe is suffering from prostate cancer. The question of whom and where the impeccable source got the healthy condition of Mugabe remained unanswered in this case. The lack of credible and multiple sources however, jeopardized the credibility of the new report. Kovach and Rosenstiel, argue that journalists should find not just one authoritative, identifiable source, but multiple sources for many of their stories. This is particularly so because there are almost always two sides to an issue or story, especially debatable, contestable and controversial ones such as politics and elections.

The *Newsday* tried to be inclusive when it covered reports on presidential candidates. Mugabe and Tsvangirai were given somewhat equal coverage. In the report “*55 injured*” the article was neutral at first only narrating the events on how the victims were injured. In the same article Mugabe was quoted attacking Tsvangirai, a rare phenomenon in the *Herald*. In the same article, both political candidates were given chance to respond to allegations by the *Newsday*. After attacks from Mugabe that blaming Tendai Biti (Finance Minister) of

misappropriating public funds, Biti was reached for comment by the *Newsday*. Below is an extract from the *Newsday*:

*“Mugabe also accused Finance minister Tendai Biti of allegedly stealing half a billion dollars meant to resuscitate industrial production. “As we moved with them in the inclusive government, we later realised that these people were after self-enrichment. They were just taking money and building expensive houses, Biti was building a house in South Africa. He stole money that was given to Zimbabwe by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to resuscitate industry,” Mugabe said.*

*“It’s cheap politicking from a tired party. The money from the IMF was used for industrial development for this country. Mugabe is the chairman of Cabinet and nothing can be done without Cabinet’s approval,” Biti said.”*

Therefore in summation, the polarization of the media that has even spilled into affecting the media content can be traced to the ideological differences that inform their editorial policies. This is in line with the observation by Runyowa who noticed that media predispositions emerge from issues of ideological contrasts and interests of their lenders. He further said, "What you consider as newsworthy ought to satisfy your patrons else you die". The two media camps (both private and state) speak from such opposed ideological position that they will never observe similar things from similar perspectives. Thus, these ideological differences have affected the credibility of news reports. This is so because journalists tend to write news in favor of one political party over the other, by so doing, facts, fairness, objectivity and accuracy becomes secondary after allegiance to their political parties.

In an article by Manheru (*Herald* 14/06/13), Tsvangirai was described as an ineffective leader who would miss important meetings while dining with former colonizers. Manheru said, “The Prime Minister who left the country the previous Saturday, was busy cuddling and lipping with his Rhodesians in South Africa, too happy and engrossed to come back in time for the Monday meeting”. In this article the use of words, “cuddling and lipping” denotes that Tsvangirai has an intimate political and financial relationship with his “Rhodesians”. This expression also draws one to the historical background of Zimbabwe in which the “Rhodesians” were well known by the people of Zimbabwe for their brutality and imperialist behavior. Thus the linking of Tsvangirai with the “Rhodesians” simply gives the impression that he was not to be trusted by vote because he would bring back the imperialists.

However the article by Manheru was full of accusations that were not supported with evidence. In this case, Manheru accused Tsvangirai of missing important cabinet meetings. The expression in he “*was busy cuddling and lisping with Rhodesians*” was not supported with evidence. At the time he referred to “*Tsvangirai as being busy with the white people*”, it was reported by his spokesperson that Tsvangirai had travelled to South Africa for his routine medical checkup. Also Manheru could not provide proof as to whom and where Tsvangirai was meeting the white people.

The *Herald* on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June quoted Manheru who said, “*Tsvangirai has grown very weak, very weak, and his two alter egos have been Simba Makoni and Dumiso Dabengwa, two very bare but bitter politicians who cannot wait to see the back of President Mugabe.*” This is one of the few incidences where Makoni and Dabengwa were mentioned in the *Herald*. In this case, the *Herald* sensationalizes the story in order to provoke people’s interest. The notion of Tsvangiri’s weakness was a common song in the *Herald* reports. In this particular report the author could not explain how Tsvangirai has grown weak except to argue that Tsvangirai has been given confidence with his fellows in opposition.

#### 5.6. Political Parties and activities

In the news monitored, the newspapers paid particular attention to the political parties’ campaign activities and their readiness to conduct the elections. The nomination of candidates and their primary elections were covered extensively in the press. It emerged that the political party primary elections were marred with high levels of confusion and corruption where candidates were involved in vote buying and imposition of candidates against the will of the people. The *Herald* and *Newsday* reports revealed that primary elections in Makoni South, Makoni Central and Chikanga/Dangamvura were characterized by the practice where candidates were imposed. The *Newsday* also carried the same story on the imposition of candidates and revealed that in the same area differences within the three political parties had deteriorated into political instabilities and led some party members to break away from the party to stand as independent candidates in the July elections.

The government and private media distorted and exaggerated issues on political parties and their activities. The *Newsday* (28/6), for example, exaggerated the circumstances under which ZANU-PF conducted its primary elections. Under the headline: “*ZANU PF in disarray*”, the daily reported: “*So chaotic were the primary elections that the former ruling party has been left further weakened ahead of critical elections after influential members allegedly rigged*”

*the elections in broad daylight...*” But the paper provided no evidence as to why this might have “**further weakened**” the party and left it in “**disarray**”. Other stories containing distorted and exaggerated facts appeared under the following headlines: “*55 injured on way to Mugabe rally*”.

The *Herald* (17/7) reported that the “*chaos that characterized special voting which ended on Monday night has been attributed to an intricate plot by the MDC formations, working with some elements in ZEC, to scuttle harmonized elections due in two weeks’ time*”. Under the headline: “Plot to scuttle polls flop”, the paper reported that the plot, however, “flopped after it was unearthed and a host of interventions to neutralize it to ensure the harmonized elections proceed as scheduled were adopted”. Citing unnamed sources to support its specious conspiracy claim, The *Herald* alleged that MDC-T employed five strategies to sabotage special voting with a view to building a case against the country's preparedness for the elections that it wants deferred. Among the strategies were the “inexplicable breakdown” of ballot paper printing machines at Printflow and Fidelity, which won bids to print the ballot papers and the “spirited load-shedding” around the areas where the printers were located. According to the *Herald*, the MDC-T achieved this through priming its ministers who head ministries under which Printflow and Fidelity Printers fall, its control of the energy and power development portfolio, and pro-MDC ZEC commissioners, who were “*sending conflicting statements to operatives on the ground*”.

When covering political parties, their campaigns and activities it was learnt that the press covered the candidates in many different ways and formats. These formats included news reports, editorial opinion pieces and open letters to the editor. The *Herald* and *Newsday* reported mostly on the campaigning of the candidates of the nation’s largest political parties. That is ZANU PF and MDC got more visibility than the newer parties and independent candidates.

On the July 16<sup>th</sup> *Newsday* carried a story on primary elections where it revealed that the MDC had concluded its elections preparation in terms of selecting candidates but the process was not immune from imposition of candidates. Further, on the same day the *Herald* on the 16<sup>th</sup> July carried a story on primary elections that took place in Zvimba, Chipinge, Bikita South and Murehwa North. It was reported that candidates who failed to win the primary elections were not happy with the way the primary elections were conducted and that they have decided to register as independent candidates in the elections.

### 5.6.1. Campaign Activities

The campaign that started on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July marked the beginning of the official and serious campaigning period. The ZANU-PF launched its manifesto on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July while MDC-T launched its own on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. ZANU PF President Robert Mugabe launched the manifesto in the Zimbabwe Grounds in a Harare suburb. The launch of the ZANU PF manifesto, and campaign rallies were covered by the *Herald* extensively. The star rallies all of which were addressed by Robert Mugabe were all covered. The *Herald* had an Online Blog through which it would update the public on the proceedings that took place in those rallies. Other rallies by ZANU PF that took place around the country addressed by the ZANU PF officials were also given fair coverage in the *Herald*.

In the *Herald*, editorials and opinion pieces published portrayed ZANU PF as a progressive political party with people's needs at heart and the only party that is capable to deliver its promises. Quotations of party officials used as headlines in the *Herald* were very positive. Party officials were quoted guaranteeing the people that ZANU PF would implement the promises in its manifesto. Editorials that spoke of the benefits that the people already had (land, freedom) enjoyed from the ZANU PF government were replete in the *Herald*. While the MDC quotes noted in the *Herald* were those that would paint a negative picture on the reputation of the MDC-T.

The MDC-T manifesto was launched at Rudhaka Stadium in Marondera by Mr Tsvangirai. Tsvangirai was quoted in the *Herald* saying that if he wins the elections, his political party among other pressing issues would launch a land audit and craft a code for a security sector. All this was interpreted as synonymous to reversing the gains of the land reform program and the liberation struggle. However, it was observed that the MDC campaign received wide and fair coverage from the *Newsday*. The rallies that were addressed by Tsvangirai and other party officials were all covered by *Newsday*. Reports on MDC-T rallies describing the party's focus to be on employment creation with help from investors was portrayed in much more positive light with endorsement from quotations by different economic analysts who stressed that the only way the Zimbabwean economy could recover was by reversing the indigenization policies that are not investor friendly. Some of the issues reported to have been raised in MDC-T rallies were the need to provide housing and improve the health delivery system in the country.

The *Herald* publication of the 16<sup>th</sup> of July carried a total amount of seven stories that featured political party activities. In this case all the stories covered ZANU-PF campaign activities and portrayed the political party in a positive light. With quotations from Robert Mugabe the news articles attacked the opposition political parties. The only time the *Herald* made reference to the two MDC political parties was Robert Mugabe in his campaigns was “blasting the opposition parties for being agents of the West bent to push for the “regime change agenda”. Addressing ZANU-PF supporters at Rudhaka stadium in Marondera, Mugabe was quoted by the *Herald* (16 July 2013) saying “Hazvichinje (*Nothing will change there will never be that nonsensical British transition. Keep it to yourselves, filthy aggressors. Hatidi izvozo! (We do not tolerate that!). Leave us alone. Takuzvitonga, (we are a sovereign country)*”). In contrast to the *Herald*, the *Newsday* was inclusive of its coverage of all political party activities and campaigns. They used columnists and editorials to analyze most if not all of the candidates and political party manifestos and campaign messages.

Remarkably, the MDC-Ncube was for the most part identified with regards to undermining Tsvangirai and his gathering. For this situation, The *Herald* distributed an emotional piece by Peace Thabane guarding Ncube's refusal to shape a "fantastic" coalition with Tsvangirai against Mugabe. Thabane contended that if Ncube had joined the MDC-T he would have run "the danger of undermining his principled position of separating himself from viciousness, debasement and the various indecencies connected with MDC-T". The MDC-N pioneer would have joined "a substance he obviously showed harbors everything that is undemocratic and rough", Thabane asserted, including, "In the event that he joins this coalition with a filthy history, Ncube will have a troublesome occupation reasserting himself as a principled, peaceful and equitable pioneer".

The *Herald* in an article “*High turnout in ZANU-PF primaries*” has this to say as a lead story, “The ZANU-PF primary elections that ended country wide yesterday were highly subscribed with thousands of people spending hours in queues to cast votes for their preferred candidates”. The turnout was high even in MDC-T strongholds in urban and peri-urban areas with over 10 000 people casting their ballot in Mabvuku-Tafara constituency”. However a lack of accuracy and truthfulness on the ZANU-PF primaries outcome is exposed in the *Newsday*. The *Newsday* in a report, “*ZANU-PF in disarray*” reviewed something contrary to what has been reported in the *Herald*. The *Newsday* argued that the primaries were marred by violence and poor attendance as some people boycotted owing to the undemocratic practice that was perpetrated by some ZANU-PF members.

The MDC-T is viewed and portrayed by the *Herald* as advancing neoliberal policies and as an agent of the British and American interests. This party and its leadership is largely accused of having a undesirable image that they have brought to Zimbabwe, however important to note is the idea that the ZANU-PF land reform program was to a large extent responsible for the negative image that branded Zimbabwe, particularly in Western countries in Europe and North America. Furthermore, the MDC-T and other political parties are framed in the *Herald* newspaper as weak and clueless without any policy document to run the country. This theme was linked to the leaders. For example in many occasions Tsvangirai was framed as follows, “*Tsvangirai is running scared. He knows his days in government are numbered*”, “*Don’t be misled Tsvangirai told*”, “*EU dumbs Tsvangirai*”. All these phrases carry with them deep meaning that seeks to demonize Tsvangirai and the MDC-T.

The *Herald* set the agenda using various cues and quotes on what the people would need to know on each particular day leading to the election. The tone of the coverage in this case was in favor of ZANU PF portraying that other political parties should not be trusted because they are not home grown political parties but mere machinations of the West that wanted to defeat the revolution that seeks to emancipate the people of Zimbabwe. Though an element of inclusivity was noticed in the *Newsday* coverage of the different political party campaign messages and candidate manifestos, extracts from the content indicate that there was a great bias slanted against the ZANU PF. One of the columnists when analyzing the ZANU PF manifesto stressed that,

*“while the ZANU PF party can make promises of creating two million jobs in 5 years; one should not forget that it is the same ZANU PF and its leadership that destroyed the few jobs we had from 1980 to this present day” (Newsday 12 July 2013)*

Therefore from the above, it is clear that the *Herald* and the *Newsday*’s biased reporting of the political party activities and campaigns constitute a defilement of the rules and ethics on providing balanced and fair coverage of all contesting parties during an election period. This unethical practice also violates section 160J of the Electoral Act which regulates media conduct when covering elections.

The ZANU-PF manifesto launch was described with words, “grand launch”. The storyline in the 5 July report said, “ The highly subscribed star rally, that turned the hallowed grounds into a sea of yellow and green, was reminiscent of President and the late President Joshua

Nkomo's triumphant return to Zimbabwe from Mozambique and Zambia in January 1980 where they had successfully led Zanla and Zipra guerillas to victory over the Smith regime".

#### 5.6.2. Coalition of Political Parties

The reports on the possible coalition were first published by the *Newsday*. The newspaper reported that MDC-T, MDC, ZAPU and Mavambo has struck an election alliance to increase chances of defeating ZANU-PF in the July 31 election. The *Herald* carried a story in which it quoted a MDC official saying "we discussed the coalition but we failed to agree" (*Herald* 2013). A follow up story in the *Herald* in which the New Ziana was quoted added that the coalition plan was nothing other than a machination crafted by the United States of America to spearhead a regime change agenda. The USA President Barack Obama's remarks on Zimbabwe when he visited South Africa were interpreted and distorted by *Herald* analysts as giving believability to allegations that the USA was behind the intended coalition. The *Newsday* (8<sup>th</sup> July 2013) carried a report in which they said the main reason that may have necessitated the formation of the coalition was that the political parties shared a "commitment to bring to an end the current hardship confronting Zimbabwe due to the failed policies of the past".

The *Herald* in an opinion piece by Manheru referred to the coalition as "Grand Headache". Manheru reasoned that "I said the grand alliance was driven by outsiders". On the 5<sup>th</sup> July the *Herald* carried a report in which the phrase "panicky alliance", was used suggesting that the US had panicked and was pushing for a coalition between opposition parties after realizing that the MDC-T support has waned over the years.

In what the *Herald* said were sources without disclosing who the people were, it said, " But sources said they were "whipped into line" by the US and the neighboring country, both worried the parties stood little chance of defeating ZANU-PF in the 31<sup>st</sup> July election" (*Herald* 06/06/13)

However, the nature that this story as reported by the two presses lacked credibility and truthfulness owing to the fact that the coalition talks were done behind closed doors. The *Herald* reports on the matter had no sources other than the "impeccable sources". The same was seen in *Newsday* where reference to their sources was "trusted members who attended the coalition talks". Thus there was lack of clarity on the issue of party coalitions in the build up to the elections.

In a nut shell, it was observed that activities of MDC-T, MDC, and ZANU PF were covered by the press more with other candidates and small parties getting little or no coverage. Further the *Herald* had more coverage on ZANU-PF while the *Newsday* had a positive approach to the opposition political parties. This impartial coverage meant that the people would focus on a political party and its issues concealing the activities of the other political party.

On June the 9<sup>th</sup> *Herald* carried an opinion article titled “Zimbabwe the revolution continues”. The lead storyline reads,

*The decision before Zimbabwe is a clear one: continue on the revolutionary path of Mugabe and ZANU PF or follow Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai’s MDC-T and their pro-US neo-liberal economic agenda. While much of Africa has been turned into a chaotic war ravaged continent struck in destructive cycles of violence, terrorism and dependence on imperial powers, Zimbabwe has managed to maintain the fierce independence and commitment to revolutionary ideals espoused by Mugabe.*

The connotation in this quotation is however clear but biased in favor of Robert Mugabe and his political party. It simply points out that the best choice in the forth-coming election would be Mugabe who started the revolution that liberated the country. In that case Tsvangirai does not fit in any revolution that is not only limited to Zimbabwe but which stands on an African agenda. On the other hand Tsvangirai and his party is closely connected to the USA and its allies that are responsible for the ills that affected the African continent. Eric in the *Herald* said, “Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF emerged from the post-independence conflict as the dominant political party in Zimbabwe, promising to finally address the most pressing issues facing black Zimbabweans”. On the MDC-T he stressed that, “MDC-T is no mere political party. Rather, they are the Zimbabwean face of neo-liberal capitalism and continued subservience to corporate-imperial power”. The quotation on MDC-T has a deeper contextual meaning in the Zimbabwean politics. As Collen (2015) stressed in Zimbabwe to be called neo-liberal and capitalist is to be aligned with the west, and to be aligned with the west is to be the enemy of the state. Therefore, MDC-T and Tsvangirai are subtly portrayed as enemies of the state.

### 5.6.3. Party political violence

On cases of violence reported in the *Herald* in the period under investigation, violence was said to have been perpetrated by the MDC-T. In a news article by Matambanadzo and

Razemba, the violence recorded during the period was alleged to have been started by the MDC-T. They said, “in all recorded cases, MDC-T supporters were at the forefront of attacking their colleagues of those from other political parties, especially ZANU-PF”. On the other hand, the *Newsday* reports on violence revealed that violence was perpetrated by the ZANU-PF youths. In its expedition to exhume the perpetrators of violence that rocked the country during the period building up to the elections, stories carried in the *Herald* and *Newsday* were speculative in nature and left too many stones unturned. Consequently, this has had a negative impact on the credibility of their news stories. Of all sampled and reviewed reports on violence only two of the stories (“Constitutional Court rules 31 poll” and Treasury act to rise funds” 29/07/13) from the *Newsday* were accompanied by credible sources to prove that the violence that took place in some parts of the country were perpetrated by the ZANU-P youths.

Thus it is clear that the *Herald*, as a rule, was utilized to advance the ZANU-PF administration in a good light, denounce resistance by propelling smear campaigns, give skewed coverage to oppositional views or to go about as a mouthpiece to advocate the government’s ideology.

#### 5.7. Findings and Discussions

During the 8 weeks of this study that covered Zimbabwe’s presidential elections, the state owned *Herald* and private *Newsday* failed to comply with the standards of impartiality, fairness and objectivity. Both newspapers failed to comply with the provisions of Section 160J which requires them to deliver fair and equitable coverage of all the political contestants in the July 31<sup>st</sup> poll and were allowed to escape without sanction for their poor performance.

However, the difference between the *Newsday* and *Herald* was that while it (*Newsday*) did make an effort to provide more or less equitable coverage of the contesting political parties and their candidates, the *Herald* abandoned its obligation to adhere to ethical professional journalistic standards and in the process abandoned their public service mandates to provide fair, equitable and accurate news about all the events and players involved in Zimbabwe’s electoral playing field.

It is easy to report accurately on an official statement from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, or the public pronouncements of political party candidates, or the decisions of Zimbabwe’s courts. It is much more difficult to provide fair, balanced and accurate coverage of stories about how these events and opinions affect society – and indeed to provide self-

generated reports on issues and influences affecting the people's constitutional rights. A more balanced attempt at recording these events – and to call the authorities to account – could, most frequently, be found in the *Newsday*.

While both newspapers failed on occasion to meet the standards of fairness, impartiality and objectivity for one reason and another, some of which have been identified in this study, it was imperative that they worked as dependable sources of information about Zimbabwe's preparations for the elections and the flaws that emerged in these processes, such as voter registration and the special voting exercise, as well as the unconstitutional decision to disenfranchise many thousands of voters in the diaspora. To some extent, only the *Newsday* assisted by civil and human rights watchdogs in civil society provided useful information about these issues that so profoundly affected the effectiveness of the electoral exercise.

#### 5.7.1. Events-based report

Event-based reports became victims of political manipulation, though covering events like rallies, campaigns and press conferences is regarded as the simplest and all-can do task in journalism that should not present a challenge to professionalism, because one is required to tell what took place or write what is seen or officially stated. Regrettably, observations from this research revealed that, journalists from across the divide manipulated events and stories reported from rallies, conceivably to suit their editorial policy. These event reports encompassed media conferences of ZEC that were highly misrepresented in the *Newsday* and MDC-T political rallies that were misquoted and interpreted in a negative light in the state-controlled *Herald*. This therefore laid bare the bias as is deeply entrenched in the Zimbabwe print media.

#### 5.7.2. News Framing and News Credibility

The study revealed that ownership of newspapers had a great influence on the quality of content that was reported by the two dailies under investigation. To substantiate the above observation, the news headlines, editorial and opinion pieces reviewed in this study revealed that in both *Newsday* and *Herald* news coverage was biased in favor on the MDC-T and ZANU-PF respectively. With the use of frames and attack on candidates, the *Herald* to a great extent legitimized the regime and leadership of Robert Mugabe both at the political party level and national level. This endorsement was juxtaposed with the attack of the personality and political capacities of Morgan Tsvangirai. On the other hand, the *Newsday*

legitimized to a great extent the political administration of Morgan Tsvangirai while vilifying Robert Mugabe. Therefore the use of frames and phrases intended to legitimize one candidate over the other led the two dailies to compromise the principle of fairness in new reporting. To that end the *Herald* and *Newsday* failed to ensure that all political parties and candidates are dealt with impartially in their news, in respect to the degree, timing and unmistakable quality of the coverage given to them.

In addition to that, the support of one candidate over the other or choosing to report manifestos of limited political parties has been seen as the main source of political hostility among chief political parties. This study identified that the practice of the media in setting the tone of important news by selecting one political party or two political parties and reporting more on them and their post elections intended policies completely negates the principles of fairness in new reporting that the two dailies were supposed to uphold. Furthermore, reporting or selecting on specific issue while paying a blind eye to the rest led to the bigotry of the media which is expected to be nonaligned to any political party or candidate in its news reporting and coverage.

### 5.7.3. Newspaper Ownership, Bias and Impartiality

In this study it has been observed that newspaper ownership and editorial policy had a great bearing on the credibility of the content that was presented to the audience during the period under investigation. The research revealed that, dynamics of ownership and newspaper arrangements in Zimbabwe still has a bearing on how news is gathered, selected and reported. The *Herald* is controlled by the state and ZANU-PF government officials are part of the board of directors. Moreover, the *Herald* editorial board which is composed of pro-ZANU-PF editors has had an impact in deciding and directing the editorial policy and as result indirectly affecting the type of news content carried by the newspaper. Consequently, the fact that ZANU-PF has a stake in *Herald* points to and justifies the impartial and biased attacks that were directed to opposition political parties. On the other end *Newsday's* editorial body is composed of "independent" non-ZANU-PF editors. The independence of these individuals from ZANU-PF has affected the level of and manner in which they handle the major political parties in their reports. The two dailies were not fair when they reported Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai respectively.

This research also revealed that in the period leading to presidential elections in Zimbabwe, the popularity of the ZANU-PF and the MDC-T against other contesting political parties

which may have buttressed their campaigns was not only because of their longevity in the case of ZANU-PF and their widespread support in case of MDC-T, but because of their financial strength which enabled them to pay the media advertising prices which resulted in their contestants and subjects reported rather than other political formations. As a consequence, news media advanced political parties or candidates that support viciousness or contempt against some class of people in Zimbabwe, thus, in that process abandoning the ethics of good practices that they are expected to exhibit during covering and reporting election events and stories.

#### 5.8. Future Research and Methodological Limitations

The researcher confronted a few difficulties amid the study though most of them were overcome prompting the fruitful finishing of the research. Getting all daily papers proved to be cumbersome. However the *Newsday* 2013 Election ONLINE Archives and the Media Monitoring Project online site and *Herald* Online Archive were exceptionally useful.

In addition, this research only made use of two newspapers for this particular study. In future more newspapers (abroad and local, private and state-owned) could be used and reviewed because this study only used one state-owned (*Herald*) and one private owned (*Newsday*). Both newspapers used in this research were published in English. However, future research could also focus on the ones that publish in vernaculars languages. More so, online media news websites, channels, and social media channels can be tools for analysis.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6. Conclusions

This study revealed that the print media (*Herald* and *Newsday*) have turned out to be a vigorous part of Zimbabwean society. The print media are playing an indispensable role in influencing the minds of Zimbabwean citizens. It materialized that media's interest in a political agenda has in many respects led it to abandon the principles that guide best practice in news reporting circles. Furthermore, it emerged that journalists in elections are interested in setting the agenda in favor of a particular individual. In that regard, their motives for starting up newspapers are to endorse certain ideological and political agendas, that is the creation, permutation and maintaining of ideologies that serve the interest of certain groups within the Zimbabwean society. Media owners sway the content and the type of media content portrayed in election news by spending time on certain programmes, and by affording a podium to certain political parties. All this has led the print media to compromise the principles of fairness, impartiality, and objectivity.

The media has found its place in the present day politics. The Zimbabwean press and editorial comments have constructed a stage which they use to express their sometimes hidden social schema and exercise their political influence. The relationship between the print media and politics is one of silent interdependence. The two (media and politics) seem in most cases to be peaceful interdependent variables while a close analysis of the media has revealed that the print media have concealed objectives. The paradox with the media is that, it poses as a sycophant that sees no evil, overhears no evil and transcribes no evil while it is vocal and make out evil and inscribes evil. To that end, the media's role in an electoral democracy cannot be over-emphasized. Besides its fundamental role as a public sphere, that is to act as a foundation for public debate and discussion, the media plays a critical role as an overseer for political pellucidity and accountability. Results of this current study revealed that media ethics of fairness, impartiality, and objectivity were contravened in both the *Newsday* (private) and the *Herald* (state press).

In this study, it materialized that the 2013 presidential elections exposed the polarization that shaped the Zimbabwe media landscape even before the country attained its independence. It further revealed that this polarization led to a manifestation of ideological battles that was characterized by arrays of partisan dichotomies, generating rough division and multifaceted

biases. The credibility of Print media (*Herald* and *Newsday*) in Zimbabwe is highly questionable as the press seeks to push and establish certain interests and ideologies while forfeiting its fundamental role as watchdog and as the mouthpiece of the disenfranchised. Sponsors and investors of the print media houses in Zimbabwe uphold their particular ideologies and promote specific interests and in that process they sacrifice the overriding journalistic principles of fairness, objectiveness, truthfulness and impartiality. Moreover, during the period under investigation, it emerged that antagonism took center stage within the print media in Zimbabwe. This is to say there was a clear cut distinction between the *Herald* reporting and the *Newsday* reporting of political events in that, the *Herald* coverage was pro-ZANU-PF while the *Newsday* and other private owned press were open on their anti-government stance. The antagonism in the print media industry led the *Herald* and *Newsday* to elevate their dissimilarities to attacking each other rather than to pay enough attention on their role as a platform through which the citizens can participate meaningfully in the advancement of their democracy. The *Newsday* and *Herald* meddling and involvement in elections and politics in 2013 led the two newspapers to engage in agenda setting (by giving importance to certain issues) and framing (by attaching cues and meaning to news reports), in a bid to influence the public opinion and promote certain political agendas.

In this study, three related variables were exposed. These are media control, partiality, ideology, bias influential to shape the quality and quantity of media content reported during the period of elections. On one end, the *Newsday* caricatured and gave an exaggerated representation of ZANU-PF and its presidential candidate Robert Mugabe. While on the other end, the *Herald* expended its energies on lampooning the opposition parties MDC-T and Morgan Tsvangirai in particular. Outcomes of this research reveal that the private press set the agenda of the public during the period from the day the official campaign began to the final day of elections. In that case, frames were used to influence people's attitudes and shape their opinions. Among the techniques noticed in this study was the continuous fervent and scornful attack on the ZANU-PF party and its presidential candidate Robert Mugabe. The *Newsday* among other things condemned the ZANU-PF indigenization policy as an inconsistent policy that is not investor friendly and is also responsible for the economic doldrums that have rocked the country. Moreover, Robert Mugabe was referred to as "frail and an economic liability to the national fiscus" (*Newsday* 07/15/13). The ZANU-PF initiated Land Reform programme was labeled a major failure. Major themes of the *Newsday* for the duration 04 June 2013 to 31 July 2013, were replete with frames and extracts that call

for the change of government, demonizing and vilifying the ZANU-PF government and calling for new and fresh brains and blood in the state house. More so the hostility between ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC-T were amplified and extremely exaggerated in the *Newsday*. To add the *Newsday* did not hide its support of the Neo-Liberal and Pro-Western agenda. Research outcomes demonstrate that the *Newsday*'s independent desire to disparage or humiliate Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF while advancing the opposition agenda severely affected the credibility of their news content reported during the period of the study. In this case their reports were partial and biased and in most cases did not reflect the element of truthfulness. For example, all recorded and reported violence cases in the *Newsday* were identified mainly as perpetrated by supporters loyal to ZANU-PF.

In this study, it appeared that the *Herald* (state media) and the *Newsday* (private media) set agendas in their coverage of the 2013 presidential elections, thus exposing their biases. In that regard the *Herald* coverage was pre-dominantly pro- ZANU PF political party while on the other hand the *Newsday* openly supported the opposition parties, pre-dominantly the MDC-T formation. Discourses in the *Herald* asserted and affirmed the status quo, giving rightfulness to the ZANU-PF government, accentuating and belittling the occurrences of violence, and vilifying the MDC-T as a Western initiative formed to spearhead the regime change and neo-colonialist objectives and programmes. This study reveals that state media set the agenda during the election by promoting the ZANU-PF manifesto which emphasized national unity, national development, sovereignty, independence and the shielding the gains of the II Chimurenga War .

Findings of this study expose that ownership and control of the media are key on affecting what people think about in election periods. This study also discloses that the private media *Newsday* in particular strived to ensure victory by the opposition and demise of the ZANU-PF by unending news stories and editorials that stress the dirty hands of ZANU PF in the ZEC and ZANU-PF perpetrated violence and gross human rights abuses, painting a bad picture and rubbishing the ZANU-PF led policies as inconsistent and not investor friendly. It also emerged that, private owners may have different interests in mass media. They may be interested not only in affecting publics, but also in making profit. Owners have the potential to decide what sort of information an audience is allowed to receive. Motivated by self-interest, they show little concern for the very real information needs of their captive audiences.

They often fail to provide a balanced and well researched viewpoint, choosing instead to offer dogma, distraction-based entertainment and stridently biased discourses in their portrayal of the political landscape in Zimbabwe. State media maintained a defensive posture claiming to defend sovereignty, safeguarding independence and supporting the status quo.

#### 6.1. Recommendations

Mass media (print in particular) in Zimbabwe should blow the whistle on and move away from the route of persuasive bias. When covering and reporting topics and happenings they should strive to attain significant and highest degree of impartiality, objectivity, truthfulness and fairness. The state and private media in Zimbabwe must abstain from the practice of factionalism along political lines, and strive to support discourses of national unity and democracy.

Consequently this study recommends an unrestricted media which permits and upholds a multiplicity of ideas and viewpoints, and that is not bent on endorsing philosophies, interests and ideologies of any social or political group. Print media groups wield power by setting the agenda of their audience. Agendas encouraging national growth, national restoration and reunion, the rightful sharing of resources, rights for all, and national pride should be championed in print media discourses.

Correspondents and newspaper reporters are urged to abide by ethical and principled reporting, to encourage unity in their own countries, state autonomy, national integrity and not hatred and acrimony. The media in this era must now contribute completely in greasing the democratic progressions of the developing democracy and for assisting in socio-economic growth.

It is recommended that both private and state print press restore professionalism and adhere to a degree of impartial coverage. The laws that regulate media ownership and freedom of expression and licensing of media ownership should be properly drafted and aligned to the provision of the constitution in order to promote objective, fair and impartial reporting.

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