THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PEACE BUILDING: A CASE STUDY OF BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MEDIA IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the roles of both public and private media in peacebuilding in Harare, Zimbabwe following political dynamics of early 2000s to date. The study employed a mixed method approach combining questionnaires with the general public and junior staff in the media industry, focus group discussions with middle management staff in the media industry and in-depth interviews management staff in the media industry. The findings indicate the role and effect of media in peacebuilding is both destructive and constructive when it comes to the issue of building sustainable peace and preventing the recurrence of conflict in Zimbabwe. The study recommended that media should promote co-existence through reconciliation. Both public and private media should instrumental in uniting the top, middle and grassroot people.

KEY WORDS

Media, peacebuilding, propaganda, reconciliation, peace, conflict, public media, private media

1. INTRODUCTION

Media is the collective communication outlets or tools used to store and deliver information or data. It is either associated with communication media, or the specialized mass media communication businesses such as print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television), publishing and point of sale. Media is the sword arm of democracy (Mahatmaji, 2002). Media protects public interest against malpractice and create public awareness. As the fourth pillar of democracy along with judiciary, executive and legislature, media of today has an all embracing role to act against the injustice, oppression, misdeeds and partiality of our society. Media helps in fighting against corruption, nepotism, cronyism of institutional machinery and carrying out relentless campaign against them.

With so much choice of news sources this should be a golden age for media. But in the shifting landscape where so many opposing voices are clamouring for attention, many people do not know who to trust. In many fragile countries fact-based, independent, transparent, accountable and impartial reporting does not exist because of the business and political interests of media owners and the lack of pay and training for journalists. In others it is often subject to increased censorship, regulation and attack from parties that want to undermine its influence (Aladysheva, Asylbekyzy, and Leung, 2016).

Peacebuilding can also refer to direct work that intentionally focuses on addressing the factors driving or mitigating conflict. When applying the term 'peacebuilding to this work, there is an explicit attempt by those designing and planning a peacebuilding effort to reduce structural or direct violence. Second, the term peacebuilding can also refer to efforts to coordinate a multi-level, multi-sectoral strategy, including ensuring that there is funding and proper communication and coordination mechanisms between humanitarian assistance, development, governance, security, justice and other sectors that may not use the term peacebuilding to describe themselves. The importance of media is enormous for politics at different levels of its activities. It stimulates citizen engagement in politics. These include political parties' membership registration, voters' registration, elections and electoral campaigns. The media performs a duty in ensuring that masses are well informed about the true state of issues in governance. Censorship of some information and circulation of fake news will cause disharmony amongst the people and usually leads to violent protests and uprisings which often result in erosion of peace and loss of lives and property. Personal communication through media brings politicians and parties closer to their potential voters. The media enhances politicians' communication and information collation to be faster and easier, and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa.

Media provides people with important information about political, economic and cultural issues in their surroundings and environment. Media also responds to impending problems in society such as natural catastrophes. Media plays two key roles as information provider, either it is active and participates in the violence thereby propelling violence, or stays independent and out of conflict thereby combating conflict and alleviating violence. The role the media takes in provision of information in a particular conflict is based on various complex factors such as independence the media have from the government and political leaders and the relationship between the media and the actors involved in the conflict. Media also serves as an interpreter of events that would have occurred. In most conflict situations, the common man is unable to fully grasp what is happening. The media interprets events beyond our physical realm bringing about understanding and clarity in a time of chaos.

There are four major types of media namely, traditional media, print media, electronic media and social media. Traditional media of passing information and communication is an approach based on the use of traditional devices such as talking drums, flutes and town criers to deliver information and communicate among the people of a particular locality. The print media are an approach of dissemination of information and communication through hard-wares like newspaper, pamphlet, books, magazines, journals, newsletters and novels. Electronic media are methods of disseminating information and communication through electronic devices such as television, radio, computers, microphone and megaphone from one person to another person, or from one place to another place. Social media is the newest approach in dissemination of information and communication through electronic social platform that make use of searching engine like internet, Twitter, You-tube, Google-Chrome, Whatsapp, Nimbuzz, Facebook and Instagram.

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) is a dynamic, member-driven network of national chapters co-ordinated by a professional regional secretariat which seeks through monitoring, training, capacity building, research and the distribution of information to foster free, independent

and diverse media throughout southern Africa in service of democracy and development. This is in accordance with the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, which highlights the vital role free and pluralistic media play in social, political and economic development. The role of MISA is primarily one of a co-ordinator, facilitator and communicator, and for this reason MISA aims to work together with like-minded organisations and individuals to achieve a genuinely free and pluralistic media in Southern Africa.

MISA Zimbabwe's civic awareness efforts have enhanced citizens' participation at community and national level in campaigns to reform the media policy and legislative environment to foster freedom of expression and access to information. Notable achievements include the mobilisation and participation of citizens in the constitution-making process and subsequent Constitutional Referendum of 2013. Zimbabweans overwhelmingly and explicitly demanded a guarantee for media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information as provided under Sections 61 and 62 of the current Constitution of Zimbabwe. MISA Zimbabwe also promotes media professionalism and accountability through training initiatives based on the media's capacity needs and global trends. MISA Zimbabwe often helps journalists to get information being revealed which otherwise would have been kept hidden. This entails that the state must be able to control all the information regarding its own actions and be accountable to the masses. Consequently, the importance of a free press cannot be under-estimated. In a liberal democracy, the aim of a free press is to continually scrutinize the government and provide people with accurate and impartial information so that they can act on it accordingly (Syallow, 2014).

Unfortunately, not all roles the media plays in conflicts are positive. Media are a powerful communication tool that can be used for a lot of good but can also be used to cause a lot of harm. In volatile political environments, the media are used as a communication tool. How it is used as a communication tool is sometimes left in the hands of media houses. Depending on how volatile and or fragile a community is at the time of conflict, media can fuel conflict. An example would be the use of local language newspapers during the 2007/8 Kenyan Post Election Violence (PEV). These newspapers targeted their local tribesmen and transmitted messages of hatred and disunity that propelled the PEV. This resulted in the eliciting of feelings of animosity and hatred amongst Kenyans countrywide and thus fuelled the PEV (Mbeke, 2009).

Peace journalism can be a proactive manner to promote the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural changes in the society. Years of violent conflicts have left a mark on the people of Zimbabwe. Conflicts that have been experienced include the post-election violence in 2008 and 2013, the civil unrests and sporadic demonstrations in 2016, the removal from power of President Mugabe by the army in 2017, the post-election violence in 2018 and the violent protests in 2019. The use of the media as a peacebuilding tool is still controversial as peacebuilding blatantly omits the role of the media as noted by Tailor (2018).

AIPPA is regarded as unlawful under the current Zimbabwean constitution. In 2013 Zimbabweans approved a new Constitution that explicitly provides for citizens' rights to access to information and also promotes the enjoyment of the right to freedom of the press under Section 61 and 62. AIPPA has made journalists be targeted and become endangered species considering the harassment, intimidation, arrest, prosecution and persecution of journalists from both the public and private media for allegedly committing flimsy offences. UNDP (2013) claimed the

government interfered with operations and the practice of journalists through imposing new and illegal layers of accreditation of journalists apart from the Zimbabwe Media Commission. AIPPA hinders freedom of expression.

The state-controlled Herald is used regularly to propagate government and ruling party policies and propaganda and to attack government opponents, both domestic and foreign. Government opponents are rarely featured in the state-controlled print media, except in a negative manner or when reporting news of their arrests or when they are attacked by government officials or their surrogates. During the 2002 election Mugabe was pitted in spirited contests against Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the only publicity for the Mugabe opponent was found in the privately owned The Daily News, now the country's leading daily newspaper. These publications regularly use their editorial pages to denounce the government and their news pages are often filled with critical stories and comments. The state media regularly returns the fire, but, unlike the state media, the private media also carries some stories critical of opposition groups. The state print and broadcast media never carries anything critical of the government.

The Daily News is the most influential newspaper in the country. It boasts a circulation of more than 100,000 and growing, despite having its printing press destroyed. It is seen as the voice of those who oppose Zimbabwe's government, although it is careful not to be seen as blatantly anti-government or pro-MDC. It also is under relentless attack by ZANU-PF and its supporters. The Herald, once the most influential newspaper in the country, has seen its circulation drop from a peak of 132,000 to between 50,000 and 100,000. Some advertisers and readers boycott it because of the perception that it is blatantly and slavishly pro-government and pro-ZANU.

Reporting by the privately owned The Daily News and the state owned The Herald, reflect positional and unbalanced reporting of Zimbabwe's crisis. The result of such reporting is propagandistic, boring, uninformative and predictable journalism. Reporting by the state media is patriotic journalism while that of the private media is anti-establishment. These two make the media in Zimbabwe an active participant in the crisis. The post 2000 media and communication policies in Zimbabwe coupled with power was tilted in favour of the owners of the newspapers (state and private). This led to the decline and fall of professionalism within the journalism sector. This contributed to propaganda, hate language and a general disregard for journalistic ethics. The Zimbabwean government has always argued that the press has always been free after independence. Contrary to the argument, it became clear that the government regards the media as an important apparatus in extending and maintaining its political legitimacy. The communication media has suffered from contradictory tendencies as political self-interest has oftenly taken over the public's right to free and unbiased information. In the turbulent days before and during the Ian Smith regime, pre-publication censorship was common. Since the attainment of independence, there has been no direct censorship but government control of the print and broadcast media. Editors have also engaged in self-censorship.

The rational of this study lies in the fact that Zimbabwean citizens believe that the print media has a lot of influence for example during and after the post-election violence, fuelling hatred and violence during the conflict. Ronning and Stubeger (2008) argued that the print media served as a peace-making and peace-building tool thereafter. Mbeke (2009) feels that the media institutions in Zimbabwe could have passed a law that banned the publishing of graphic content such as dead,

decaying and tortured bodies at the time. Speculations are rife that the print media was used to fuel conflicts in order to further political agendas. The implication is the spreading of hatred and anger which may destabilise the country. Media therefore should be fair and just in their reporting so as to promote peacebuilding. However, given that print media in Zimbabwe has been closely associated with the country's political state, its effects and role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention remain undocumented. This has led to the failure of current literature on print media and peacebuilding to either prove or disapprove the effect and role print media has played before, during and after the conflicts and preventing their recurrence as well in Zimbabwe.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Media played several roles in the different stages of political dynamics in Zimbabwe since the early 2000 to 2019. It is clear that media played a peacebuilding role from the pre-elections period to the post-election period. In the pre-elections period, despite there being little need for peacebuilding, there were advertisements that promoted free and fair elections urging the citizens to respect one another. How best can the use of both public and private media promote peaceful co-existence in a polarized state? The purpose of this study was to identify factors which promote peaceful co-existence through the use of both public and private media in Zimbabwe.

1.2 Objective

The objective of the study was to explore the roles of both the public and private media in peacebuilding.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Harare. The study used a mixed methods approach combining questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Survey data was collected from a sample of 120 respondents which was drawn using a stratified random sampling approach from the junior staff in the media industry. In-depth interviews were done with 4 participants representing the senior management in the media industry. Seven focus group discussions were conducted with the middle management staff in the media industry. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants for both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers wanted to have an in-depth of what the word `media` means in both public and private media houses. The following results were obtained:

3.1 The Role Of Media In Peacebuilding

This study wanted to identify the roles of both the public and private media in peacebuilding activities. The following options were provided for the respondents to choose the best option:

Table 2: Roles of media in peacebuilding

Option	Respondent Choice
A	Information provider
B	Peace promoter
C	Motivator for peace
D	All of the above
E	None of the above
F	Other (specify here).....

Source: Survey Data 2019

The following were the responses obtained from the survey data:

All respondents indicated that the media plays a role in peacebuilding through providing information, promoting peace and motivating for peace.

From the focus group discussions, all of the informants made it clear that the media had a major role to play in peacebuilding. One participant criticised unprofessional journalists who aggravate tensions. He stated that "*some media are profit driven, selling popular propaganda, rather than stories that facilitate unification.*" He gave an example of how media assuaged panic during the bombings by the Boko Haram in 2017. Another participant mentioned that journalists are vital even after crisis and conflicts. She stated that *"they can empower citizens to make informed daily decisions by distributing critical information such as good crops to grow, current market prices, and where development projects such as a road are coming through."*

Data from interviews indicated that all of the interviewees agreed that media indeed had a role to play in peacebuilding. One of the interviewees mentioned that "*towards presidential elections it is very essential for the media to give equal space to each candidate*". The interviewee further indicated that media has to talk about the ordinary citizens and give their concerns as they are. This will give the citizens a zeal to participate in the elections as they get a feeling it is a balanced election. He went on to say "*it also reduces fears of election fraud thereby averting any thoughts of post-election violence.*"

Media plays a role in peacebuilding. This is further supported by Mahatmaji (2002) who stated that broadcast media allows development of creative and imaginative advertising messages. He gave the radio as an example. Radio has a wide reach. During the tribal war of the Hutu and Tutsi it was the radio that had incited the killings through its hatred speech hence the war spread very fast and was difficult to control. It was the radio again that was effectively used to stop the war and spread the peacebuilding messages. The radio helps to reach lower income and illiterate people and has a wide coverage. Radio however lacks visual data

According to Mahatmaji (2002) media is the sword arm of democracy. Media protects public interest against malpractice and create public awareness. As the fourth pillar of democracy along with judiciary, executive and legislature, media of today has an all embracing role to act against

the injustice, oppression, misdeeds and partiality of our society. Media helps in fighting against corruption, nepotism, cronyism of institutional machinery and carrying out relentless campaign against them.

Media is indeed effective in peacebuilding. This has been demonstrated on the role of the media after the reconciliation of Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga in Kenya in 2008. Peaceful songs were played over radio stations. Peace caravans were found in different corners of the country and other media events such as concerts and open forums that provided Kenyans at the grassroots with a chance to air their grievances (Syallow, 2014). Prior to the 2013 Kenyan general elections, by campaigning the media efficiently acted as a peace promoter by effectively promoting free and fair elections while subconsciously planting a seed of loyalty in the minds of Kenyans (Syallow, 2014).

The media has a great role to play in peacebuilding through the dissemination of vital information. The flow of information is essential, despite restrictions. During conflict and crisis, journalists can convey essential information for survival: where to get medical treatment, where there is shelter, and where to get basic human needs. Media also can mitigate ethnic and religious tensions and can also help avert violence in vulnerable regions and promote democracy.

Lack of information can, at any stage of a conflict, make people desperate, restless and easy to manipulate. The ability to make informed decisions strengthens societies and fosters economic growth, democratic structures and the positive outlook on the future. For this very reason, the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2011) stressed the need to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.

From the findings, the media can motivate people to take action and to participate in community events by encouraging them to work with other community members for the good of the community. The media is more likely to work on attitudes and opinions that shape behaviours rather than directly affecting people's actions. In Zimbabwe towards the 2018 elections, non-governmental initiatives bolstered the reporting process while citizens were involved in proactively disseminating information and messages of peace. The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network's (ZESN) support project involved both traditional and social media to influence public awareness and educated voters, encouraged participation in the electoral process and served as an advocate for peaceful acceptance of the results. Voter education is a very important part of peacebuilding. Inadequate voter education exposes some voters to be frog-marched to register to vote in a manner tantamount to coercion as they shall be in lack of adequate knowledge, which pits them to make uninformed participation. On the other hand, some of the prospective eligible voters will not muster enough motivation to participate at all, which perpetuates the undesired cancer of voter apathy. Voter apathy usually leads to PEV.

Media has been essential in quickening the responses of governments and the international community through global reporting. Policy makers have been forced to formulate and enforce conflict prevention measures, at the same time design responses for violent conflict. In addition, the media have provided a platform for the policy makers to broadcast their message. An example would be the introduction of the definition and repercussions of the use of hate speech in the new Kenyan Constitution of 2010.

3.2 Promoting the role of media in peacebuilding

The researchers wanted to determine whether the respondents had knowledge on the role of media in peacebuilding. The following results were obtained

Table 2: Ways To Promote The Role Of Media In Peacebuilding

N=120

Possible Option	Agreed	Not sure	Disagree	Total
Introduce peace journalism	64%	16%	20%	**100%**
Regulation to prevent incitement of violence	92%	4%	4%	**100%**
Use of social media	92%	2%	2%	**96%**

Source: Survey Data 2019

3.3 Introduce conflict sensitive and peace journalism

64% of the respondents agreed that the introduction of conflict sensitive and peace journalism is one of the ways of promoting the role of media in peacebuilding, 16% were not sure and 20% disagreed. Collectively, 64% of the respondents agreed whilst 36% disagreed. This shows that the introduction of conflict sensitive and peace journalism will be positive acceptable development in the media industry.

3.4 Media regulation to prevent incitement of violence

92% of the respondents agreed that introducing media regulations to prevent incitement of violence as a way to promote the role of media in peacebuilding would be a success, 4% were not sure and 4%disagreed. Collectively, 92% of the respondents agreed, whilst 8% disagreed. This shows that the media regulations that are in the country currently are a hindrance to the promotion of peacebuilding.

3.5 Use of social media

96% of the respondents agreed that social media could be introduced as a way to promote the role of media in peacebuilding, 2% were not sure and 2% disagreed. Overall 96% of the respondents agreed, whilst 4%disagreed. This shows that the social media is an effective way of promoting peacebuilding initiatives.

Most of the informants from the focus groups stated that the easiest, fastest and most economic way of promoting the role of media in peacebuilding was using the social media. The print media

was said to be effective to a lesser extent as it did not reach the majority of the population is a short space of time. The radio came second and the newspapers were ranked the least effective as they were said to be influenced by the media regulations in the country. However, the majority of the informants agreed that it was a necessity to introduce a media regulation to prevent incitement of violence as a way to promote peacebuilding.

All of the interviewees mentioned that there was need for the journalists to be trained in peace journalism as this would reduce cases of journalists inciting violence. One of the interviewees mentioned that "*the Rwandan genocide of 1994 was fuelled by hate speech.*" Another interviewee stated that "some of the current laws of the country were harsh towards journalists." The interviewee further mentioned that *"the police and the security forces would always find a way to torture and punish journalists who would have reported on something deemed not suitable for public consumption by the security forces."* Use of social media was also mentioned as one of the most effective ways of promoting peacebuilding.

Supporting the responses given in Table 3Tailor (2007) states that conflict-sensitive journalism encourages journalists to be aware of what effects their language and reporting can have on the conflict as well as how they may become victims of the violence.

The media in Kenya was very active in the promotion of presidential candidates, political parties and issues pertaining to the 2013 elections in Kenya. In fact, the campaigns and coverage was very widespread so much so that they were captured on global channels such as Al Jazeera, Cable News Network (CNN) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) who has a few local journalists working in Nairobi. The media supported the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) by promoting free and fair elections and fostering a unity amongst Kenyans whilst providing civic education to the citizens and therefore acting as a peacebuilding agent. The result was that all citizens were kept informed on the elections and a repeat of the 2008 PEV was averted (Ogola, 2011).

Media regulation, encompassing both codes of conduct and ownership issues, is the necessary rule of law component of every comprehensive media development project. Media regulation is a parallel effort to ensure that what is produced and aired is not inflammatory or contrary to the public's interest in peace. Media regulation is a cost effective way to improve the efficiency of the media in promoting peacebuilding.

3.6 Recommending the media to actively participate in peacebuilding activities

The study wanted to find out if players in both public and private media recommend that the media should play an active role in peacebuilding activities or not. The following results were obtained:

96% of the respondents claimed that they would recommend the media be actively involved in peacebuilding issues and 4% did not recommend. Collectively, it can be concluded the media has to play an active role in the promotion of peacebuilding issues.

N=50
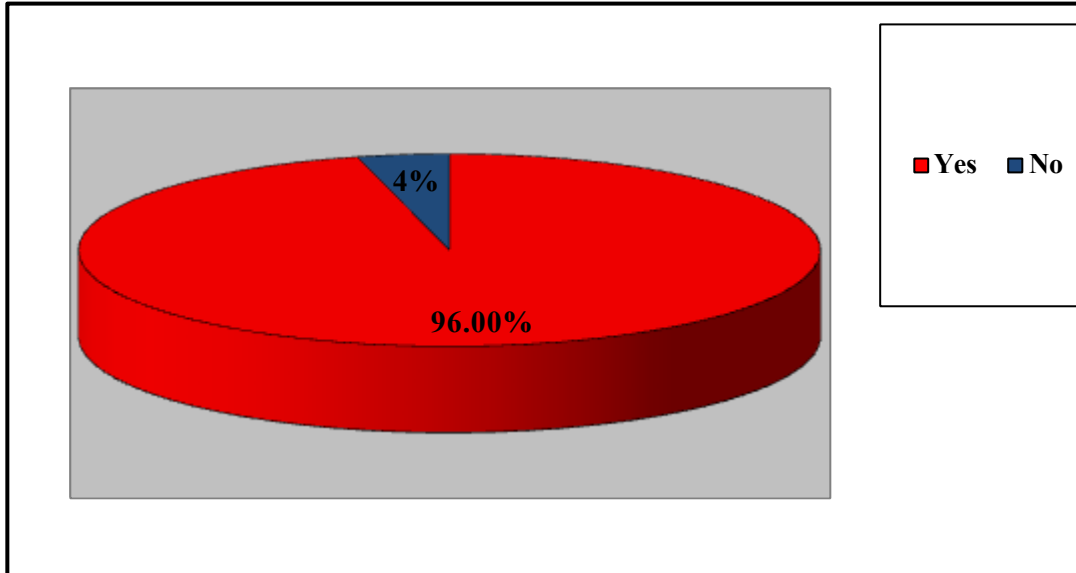
Source: Primary Data 2019

Fig 1: Recommendation of media to be actively involved in peacebuilding issues

All of the interviewees recommended that the media must be actively involved in the promotion of peacebuilding issues. The informants all recommended that the media be used in the promotion of peacebuilding issues.

Media effectively played a role in peacebuilding following the announcement of the Kenyan 2007 election results. As at the time Kenya did not have a law pertaining to hate speech, the names of individuals who were believed to have circulated hate speech were forwarded to the government and parliament which prompted reviewing of legislature to include hate speech (Munyua, 2011). Unfortunately, due to the lack of law on hate speech, little was done to hold these individuals accountable. Despite the setback, the media effectively influenced the Kenyan government to adopt the law on hate speech into the new Kenyan constitution of 2010. The naming of the perpetrators of hate speech served as an example to everyone who had thoughts of spreading hate and this made them shy away.

Despite the gruesome details of the PEV, media efficiently broadcasted the outcome of the PEV showcasing massive destruction of property, violent scenes broadcasted on daytime television which were not suitable for all audiences and the images of corpses on the streets (Ogola, 2011). Consequently, the Kenyan government issued a ban on the media coverage due to the irresponsibility it portrayed. The ban served as a filter to the Kenyan community in order to ensure maintenance of social order and democracy (Vladimir and Schirch, 2007). Immediately violence erupted, the media was keen to call upon Kenyans to shun violence and coexist peacefully (Sriram and Brown, 2010). When tensions were high and violence was uncontrollable, the media offered an avenue of communication between the two political rivals. The media also

facilitated the negotiations and supported this process until the end of the mediation (Mbeke, 2009).

Media and journalism can be a great assistance in violence and conflict management and peacebuilding. However, the power they have is also limited, as they will never be able to eliminate armed conflicts altogether. The media can be a good tool in a healthy and functioning environment but more is needed than ethical and responsible reporting to ensure lasting peace and safety. The role of the media is twofold: on the one hand, the media reports and reflects on pressing issues and can help to question established concepts and ideas. On the other hand, they can be used for propaganda purposes and instead of revealing truths, try to cover things up and by this curtail people's freedom and right to information. Regardless, the potential of the media in conflict and post-conflict situations remains a net positive, and has been sadly underutilized to this point in time Allen and Schaer (2016).

4. FINDINGS

The study found out that using social media is the cheapest and most efficient way to promote peacebuilding initiatives as social media captures people from all walks of life. It is also vital to note that the use of information within a society is not solemnly passive but that the population gets actively involved in creating content and broadcasting it.

The study revealed that the media has an integral role to play in the promotion of peacebuilding issues. It is pertinent that politicians be reminded to stop manipulating media and their followers. The study also reveals that the media generally influence people's perceptions and actions towards violent conflict.

The findings indicate the role and effect of media in peacebuilding is both destructive and constructive when it comes to the issue of building sustainable peace and preventing the recurrence of conflict in Zimbabwe.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that media should promote co-existence through reconciliation. Both public and private media should instrumental in uniting the top, middle and grassroot people Media personnel must be encouraged to resist political manipulation and should practice impartial reporting. An impartial media that gives voice to people from all sections of societies, including the most marginalized, can be an instrument of peace.

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