

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**



**THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS IN REDUCING CASES OF  
POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN CHIPADZE SUBURB, BINDURA**

By

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the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Peace and Governance Degree

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the role of church leaders in mitigating political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, where political unrest poses significant threats to community stability. The research problem addresses the persistent nature of political violence in the region, despite the active involvement of religious leaders. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the study conducted interviews with 20 participants including church leaders and community members to explore their perceptions, strategies and the effectiveness of faith-based interventions in promoting peace. The findings reveal that church leaders play a crucial role as mediators and advocates for social justice, leveraging their moral authority and community networks to address the root causes of violence. Participants reported that church-led initiatives, such as community dialogues and support for displaced individuals, significantly contribute to conflict resolution and social cohesion. The study concludes that church leaders are vital actors in peacebuilding efforts, emphasizing the need for enhanced collaboration between religious organizations and local authorities to address the underlying issues of political violence. Recommendations include developing targeted training programs for church leaders in conflict resolutions and engaging them in policy discussions to strengthen community resilience against political violence. This research contributes to the understanding of the intersection between faith and violence, highlighting the potential of church leaders in fostering sustainable peace in conflict-affected areas.

## DECLARATION FORM

I, Trish Tarisai Mbewe, hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research and study, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgments and references included in the body of the paper, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

Student's Signature



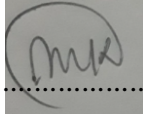
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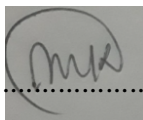


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Chairperson's Signature



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## **DEDICATION**

To my loving family, who have been my rocks throughout this journey. Mother and Father, your unwavering support and encouragement have meant the world to me. My dear sisters, your love and camaraderie have kept me going even in toughest of times.

I dedicate this research to all of you, in gratitude for your love, support and inspiration. May this work make you proud and contribute to making a positive impact in the world

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

CCC-Citizens Coalition for Change

MDC-T-Movement for Democratic Change

ZANU PF- Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZIMSTAT-Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Globally, political violence remains a pervasive and complex issue, threatening the stability and security of nations, communities, and individuals, with its far-reaching consequences extending beyond physical harm to cause psychological trauma, disrupt economic development, and undermine social cohesion. This pressing concern has prompted various stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and faith-based institutions, to recognize the critical role they can play in preventing and mitigating political violence (Gunda, 2010). Among these stakeholders, church leaders have emerged as key actors, leveraging their moral authority, community influence, and spiritual resources to promote peace, reconciliation, and conflict resolution. By doing so, they have demonstrated the potential to reduce political violence and foster sustainable peace, underscoring the importance of exploring their role in this context (Gunda, 2010).

In Asia, the significance of church leaders in reducing political violence is particularly evident, as countries in this region have experienced prolonged conflicts that have necessitated the involvement of faith-based organizations in promoting interfaith dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding (Schirch, 2005). Church leaders have utilized their networks, resources, and expertise to facilitate conflict resolution, support displaced communities, and advocate for

human rights, highlighting their capacity to address the complex issues underlying political violence. The impact of their efforts is evident in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, where faith-based organizations have contributed to promoting peace and reconciliation (Schirch, 2005). These examples demonstrate the potential of church leaders to reduce political violence and promote sustainable peace, emphasizing the value of exploring their role in this context (Schirch, 2005).

Within the Southern African Development Community region, political violence remains a pressing concern, with countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique experiencing varying levels of conflict and instability. In Zimbabwe, specifically, the legacy of colonialism, political polarization, and economic instability has contributed to recurring episodes of violence, particularly during election periods. Church leaders in Zimbabwe have historically played a significant role in promoting peace, reconciliation, and social justice, advocating for human rights and democratic governance. Despite these efforts, political violence persists, underscoring the need for sustained and collaborative initiatives to address its root causes. The involvement of church leaders in promoting peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe highlights their potential to reduce political violence and foster sustainable peace.

In Chipadze suburb, Bindura, Zimbabwe, the impact of political violence is deeply felt, with residents experiencing intimidation, harassment, and physical harm during periods of political tensions. Local church leaders have responded to these challenges by providing emotional support, shelter, and humanitarian assistance to affected communities. However, their efforts are often hindered by limited resources, capacity, and coordination. This context underscores the need for research into the role of church leaders in reducing cases of political

violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, examining the challenges, opportunities, and strategies employed by these leaders to promote peace and reconciliation (Gopin, 2000). By investigating the experiences and perspectives of church leaders, community members, and other stakeholders, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective, context-specific interventions that harness the potential of faith-based organizations to mitigate political violence and foster sustainable peace (Gopin, 2000).

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of church leaders in mitigating political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Despite Zimbabwe's economic and social progress, non-political violence remains a pervasive issue, particularly in urban centers like Bindura. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), in 2020, 34.6% of households in Mashonaland Central Province, where Bindura is located, reported experiencing some form of violence. With 63% of Zimbabweans identifying as Christian and 44% attending church weekly, religious leaders wield significant influence in Zimbabwean society. However, their role in mitigating or exacerbating non-political violence remains understudied. This research investigate the attitudes, perceptions, and strategies of religious leaders in addressing violence in Bindura, exploring questions such as: What are the attitudes and perceptions of religious leaders towards violence? What strategies, if any, are they employing to address violence? And how effective are these strategies in reducing violence?

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the influence of church leadership on community peace-building in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.
2. To evaluate the strategies employed by church leaders in reducing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.
3. To investigate the perception of community members on the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This research study is guided by the following research questions

1. What specific roles do church leaders play in promoting peace and reducing political violence in Chipadze suburb?
2. What strategies and interventions are implemented by church leaders in Chipadze suburb, Bindura to mitigate conflicts during politically sensitive times?
3. How do community members perceive the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence?

## **1.6 Assumptions of the Study**

The study assumes that church leaders possess significant influence over their congregations and the broader community, impacting social behavior and attitudes toward violence.

The study further assumes that active engagement and dialogue facilitated by church leaders can lead to a reduction in political violence and enhance community resilience.

The study also assumes that community members generally hold a positive view of church leaders as mediators and peacebuilders, which may affect their willingness to engage in initiatives aimed at reducing violence.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

Groups and individuals affected by this research study include the church, political parties and the academics.

#### **1.7.1 The Church**

This research holds immense significance for the church, as it sheds light on the critical role religious leaders' play in promoting peace and reducing violence in communities. Through understanding their influence on congregants' attitudes towards violence, church leaders can develop targeted interventions and sermons addressing violence, strengthen community engagement and social cohesion, and foster a culture of peace and non-violence. Furthermore, the research informs church policies and programs aimed at promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation, enhancing collaboration between churches and community organizations to address violence. The findings also enable church leaders to assess their current approaches, identify areas for improvement, and adopt evidence-based strategies to mitigate violence.

#### **1.7.2 Political Parties**

The research is vital for political parties, as it provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of violence and its impact on community cohesion and stability. By

understanding the role of religious leaders in promoting peace, policymakers can develop informed decisions on violence prevention and community development. The study highlights potential areas of collaboration between political parties and religious organizations, enabling policymakers to leverage the influence of religious leaders to promote peace. Moreover, the research identifies the root causes of violence, informing evidence-based solutions to address social and economic factors driving violence. By engaging with the research findings, political parties can foster partnerships with religious organizations, strengthen community-based initiatives addressing violence, and develop policies that promote peace and stability.

### **1.7.3 Academics**

This research contributes significantly to academic discourse on the intersection of religion and violence, advancing theoretical understanding and providing empirical evidence on the role of religious leaders in promoting peace. The study informs methodological approaches to studying religion and violence, identifies gaps in existing literature on violence prevention, and contributes to the development of evidence-based interventions. For academics, the research offers a framework for analyzing complex relationships between religion, violence, and peace, providing a case study for comparative analysis with other contexts. The findings also inform teaching and curriculum development on peace studies, religious studies, and conflict resolution, enabling scholars to integrate cutting-edge research into their academic programs and foster a deeper understanding of the critical issues surrounding religion and violence.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the study**

The delimitations of this research include its focus on Chipadze suburb, Bindura, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, the study's reliance

on self-reported data from church leaders and community members may be subject to biases and social desirability effects. The research also focused on cases of reducing political violence, excluding other forms of violence, such as political or economic violence. Furthermore, the study's timeframe was limited to the present day, excluding historical perspectives on the role of religious leaders in addressing violence. The research also does not explore the perspectives of non-religious leaders or organizations, which may provide additional insights into addressing non-political violence. Lastly, the study's sample size and selection methods limited the representativeness of the findings, and the research may not capture the experiences of marginalized or hard-to-reach populations.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

The study's geographic scope is limited to Bindura, which may not be representative of other urban centers in Zimbabwe. Future research should consider a broader geographic scope or comparative studies. The research relied on self-reported data from church leaders and community members, potentially introducing biases. To deal with this triangulate data collection methods, incorporating observational studies or documentary analysis.

The study focused primarily on Christian leaders, overlooking potential contributions from other faiths. Include leaders from diverse religious backgrounds to ensure a more comprehensive understanding. The research design is cross-sectional, providing only a snapshot of the issue. Conduct longitudinal studies to capture changes over time. The study's reliance on quantitative data oversimplified complex social dynamics. Integrate qualitative methods to provide richer contextual insights. The research may be susceptible to social desirability bias, where

respondents provide answers deemed socially acceptable Solution. To overcome this the researcher ensured anonymity and confidentiality.

### **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

**Non-Political Violence:** Refers to forms of violence that are not perpetrated by or attributed to political entities, such as interpersonal violence, community conflicts, or gang violence (Kelsay 2003).

**Church leaders:** Refers to individuals who hold leadership positions within church organizations or communities, such as pastors, priests, imams, or rabbis (Gunda 2010).

**Peacebuilding:** Refers to the process of building and maintaining peace, particularly in contexts where violence or conflict has occurred (Kelsay 2003).

**Conflict Resolution:** Refers to the process of resolving disputes or conflicts through peaceful means, such as negotiation, mediation, or arbitration (Gunda 2010).

**Community Cohesion:** Refers to the bonds that bring together individuals and groups within a community, promoting social inclusion, trust, and collective well-being (Gunda, 2010)

**Faith-Based Initiatives:** Refers to programs, projects, or activities that are led or supported by religious organizations or communities, aimed at addressing social issues, promoting peace, or providing humanitarian assistance (Gunda, 2010).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

To examine the role of church leaders in reducing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, this study will consider examining theoretical framework and empirical studies as shall be seen in the respective subsections.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This research study will be guided by at list two (2) theoretical frameworks including conflict transformation theory and peace building framework. By employing these theoretical frameworks, church leaders in Chipadze suburb, Bindura can play a crucial role in mitigating political violence. Their influence is helpful in cultivating community resilience, promoting dialogue, and encouraging peaceful political participation. The integration of these approaches can provide a comprehensive strategy for addressing the challenges of political violence in the region

##### **2.2.1 Conflict Transformation Theory**

The conflict transformation theory is associated with John Paul Lederach (considered the proponent), followed by Johan Galtung who introduced it in the peace studies and later joined by Rupesinghe and Burton who contributed to the theoretical foundations (Lederach, 1997). The term “conflict transformation” gained traction in the 1990s in response to the limitations of traditional conflict resolution approaches that focused merely on ending the conflict rather than addressing the underlying cause and dynamics (Galtung, 1996). Lederach

(1997)'s work, 'Building Peace' played a key role in solidifying the concept with peace and conflict studies. The theory has been referenced in numerous contexts including community mediation, reconciliation processes and systematic change in conflict affected areas (Rupesinghe, 1995).

The above implies the conflict transformation theory focuses on the underlying causes of conflict rather than just the immediate issues and aims to transform relationships and social structures. When applied to this study, church leaders can serve as facilitating conversations that address grievances and promote understanding, which can lead to the transformation of violent conflicts into peaceful resolutions.

### **2.2.2 Peacebuilding Framework**

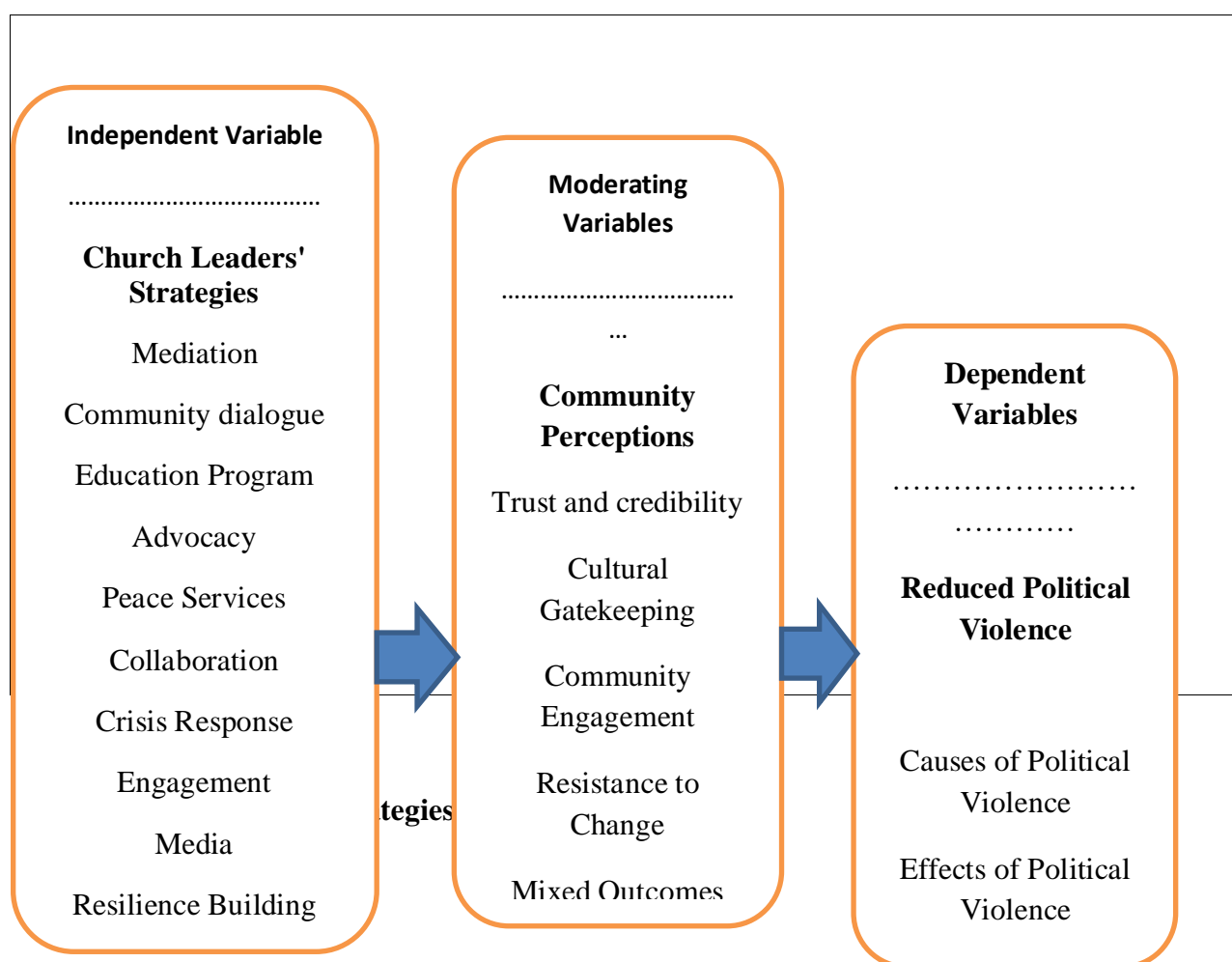
The term peacebuilding was first used by the Norwegian Sociologist, John Galtung in his paper, 'Three Approaches to Peace' 1975 and hence, considered one of the principal founders of peace and conflict studies which he influenced by his work (Lederach, 1997). It was developed further by John Paul Lederach in the 1990s, who emphasized the importance of grassroots involvement and the necessity of comprehensive approach to peace building and the different stages involved in conflict resolution and transformation (Lederach, 1997).

What can be deduced from the above work is that, peacebuilding framework highlights the processes and actions that contribute to the establishment of lasting peace. When applied to this study, church leaders can engage in peacebuilding activities, such as organizing community events, workshops, and forums that promote peace, reconciliation, and healing.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009) defined a conceptual framework as a visual or written representation that outlines the key concepts, variables, and relationships that inform a research study. This implies that conceptual framework serves as a guide for understanding the research problem, forming hypotheses, and designing the study. According to Maxwell (2013), a conceptual framework provides a structured way of thinking about the research problem. It therefore illustrates the theoretical underpinnings of the study and shows how various concepts are interconnected. Key concepts relevant to this study include; Church Leaders' Strategies, Community Perceptions and Political Violence. This is illustrated in Fig 2.1 below.

**Fig 2.1 Conceptual Framework**



This section provides a detailed overview of various strategies employed by church leaders in addressing political violence. Church leaders often act as mediators in conflicts, facilitating dialogues between opposing groups to promote understanding and negotiate peace (Perry and Whitehead, 2020). Thus, they organize peace talks to address grievances between conflicting parties in the community. Leaders mobilize community members to participate in peacebuilding activities, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. (Gorski2019). Hence, they initiate community service projects that bring together diverse groups to work towards common goals. Again, they provide educational resources and training on conflict resolution, tolerance, and the importance of peaceful coexistence (Campbell, 2018). As such they conduct workshops on non-violent communication and conflict management for youth and community members.

On the other note, church leaders advocate for social justice issues, addressing root causes of political violence such as inequality and discrimination (Baker, 2021). This is for example they organize campaigns for policy changes that promote equity and social welfare in the community. Church leaders also organize religious services or ceremonies focused on prayer for peace and healing within the community (Djupe and Gilbert, 2019). They hold interfaith prayer vigils to unite different religious groups in the pursuit of peace. Much else, church leaders form alliances with NGOs, governmental agencies, and other faith-based organizations to strengthen peace initiatives (Harrison, 2020). For example, they partner with local NGOs to implement community dialogue programs and support services for violence victims.

Parallel to the above, church leaders develop response plans for crises, providing support and resources to those affected by political violence (Smith, 2017). In this regard, they establish safe havens or shelters for families fleeing violence and offering counseling services.

Again, church leaders encourage open dialogue among community members to foster understanding and reduce tensions (Wuthnow, 2018). So, they facilitate discussions that allow individuals to share their experiences and perspectives on political issues. In addition to that, church leaders leverage media platforms to disseminate messages of peace and unity, counteracting narratives that promote violence (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Thus, they utilize social media campaigns to highlight stories of reconciliation and positive community interactions. Finally, church leaders foster resilience among community members to withstand and recover from political violence (Chaves, 2017). As such they implement programs that teach coping strategies, conflict resolution skills, and community solidarity.

These strategies highlight the multifaceted role of church leaders in addressing political violence. By employing a combination of mediation, education, advocacy, and community engagement, church leaders can significantly contribute to peacebuilding efforts and foster a culture of dialogue and understanding within their communities.

### **2.3.2 Community Perceptions**

Community perceptions of church leaders' strategies in addressing political violence are shaped by various factors, including the effectiveness of these strategies, the cultural context, and the historical relationship between religious institutions and community dynamics.

### **2.3.3 Influence of Church Leaders**

Church leaders often hold significant influence in their communities, which can enhance their ability to mediate conflicts and promote peace (Baker and Smith, 2020). Their moral authority can foster trust among community members, making them effective advocates for non-

violence and reconciliation. More to that, in many communities, especially those with strong patriarchal structures, church leaders are seen as cultural gatekeepers (Holt, 2019). Their perspectives can either challenge or reinforce existing norms related to violence and conflict resolution. This dual role can complicate community perceptions, as leaders may inadvertently perpetuate harmful cultural tropes while attempting to address violence. Again, the extent to which church leaders engage with the community can significantly affect perceptions (Djupe and Gilbert, 2018). Active involvement in community issues, such as organizing peace talks or educational workshops, tends to enhance their reputation as effective leaders in conflict resolution.

#### **2.3.4 Strategies and Their Reception**

Strategies that involve mediation and open dialogue are generally well-received, as they promote understanding and cooperation among conflicting parties (Smith, 2021). Community members often perceive these efforts as genuine attempts to foster peace. Programs aimed at educating community members about conflict resolution and the importance of tolerance are viewed positively (Pew Research Center, 2020). These initiatives can empower individuals and reduce the likelihood of violence, thereby enhancing the church's role as a peacebuilder. When church leaders advocate for social justice and address systemic issues contributing to violence, community perceptions can shift positively (Wuthnow, 2018). This advocacy demonstrates a commitment to the well-being of all community members, particularly marginalized groups.

#### **2.3.5 Challenges in Perception**

Some community members may resist new approaches to conflict resolution, especially if they challenge deeply ingrained cultural norms and this resistance can lead to skepticism about the effectiveness of church leaders' strategies (Campbell, 2019). The effectiveness of church-led initiatives can vary, leading to mixed perceptions for example if a strategy does not yield immediate positive results, community members may question the leaders' capabilities or intentions (Gorski, 2020). The broader political environment can also influence community perceptions (Harrison, 2021). In times of heightened political tension, church leaders may be viewed with suspicion, particularly if their strategies are perceived as aligning with specific political agendas (Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

Community perceptions of church leaders' strategies in addressing political violence are complex and multifaceted. While many community members appreciate the efforts of church leaders to mediate conflicts and promote peace, challenges such as cultural resistance and political dynamics can complicate these perceptions. Understanding these nuances is crucial for church leaders aiming to enhance their effectiveness in fostering community resilience against political violence.

## **2.4 Reduced Political Violence**

Reduced political violence refers to a decrease in the incidence, severity, and impact of violent actions motivated by political factors, including protests, riots, armed conflicts, and terrorism. The reduction of such violence is essential for fostering stable societies, enhancing social cohesion, and promoting development.

### **2.4.1 Causes of Political Violence**

Political violence arises from a complex interplay of factors. Some of the primary causes include are discussed in this sub-section.

Disparities in wealth, power, and access to resources can lead to grievances among marginalized groups, for example economic inequality fosters resentment and lead to uprisings or protests against perceived injustices (McQuade, 2014). More to that, authoritarian regimes that suppress dissent and limit political freedoms can trigger violent backlash, for example government crackdowns on peaceful protests often escalate into violent confrontations (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017). Again, historical animosities and competition between different ethnic or religious groups can lead to conflict, for example ethnic cleansing and sectarian violence often stem from deep-rooted mistrust and competition for resources (Pain and Cahill, 2022). In addition to that, states with weak institutions and lack of governance can become breeding grounds for violence, for example in regions where the government is unable to provide security or basic services, armed groups may emerge to fill the power vacuum (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017).

More to that, foreign interventions, whether military or economic, can exacerbate local conflicts and lead to violence, for example proxy wars fueled by foreign powers can escalate tensions and result in widespread violence (Nanes, 2016). Much else, radical ideologies, whether political or religious, can motivate individuals or groups to engage in violent acts, for instance terrorist organizations often recruit members by promoting extreme ideological narratives that justify violence (Siroky, 2012). Finally, leaders may exploit societal divisions for political gain, inciting violence to consolidate power or distract from failures, for example politicians may use

inflammatory rhetoric during elections to rally support, which can lead to violence against opposition groups (Broder, 2022).

The role of the church leaders as argued herein is to either exacerbate or reduce the prevalence of political violence, hence the need to investigate the situation in the Chipadze suburb, Bindura area.

#### **2.4.2 Effects of Political Violence**

The consequences of political violence can be profound and far-reaching. Some of the key effects are discussed in this section.

Political violence often results in significant casualties, including deaths and injuries among combatants and civilians, for example armed conflicts that can lead to thousands of deaths, traumatizing communities and destabilizing regions (Loadenthal, 2021). Again, violence can force individuals and families to flee their homes, leading to internal displacement or refugee crises, for example civil wars often result in large numbers of displaced persons seeking safety in other regions or countries (Krüger et al. 2018). In addition to that, political violence disrupts economic activities, leading to loss of livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure, and reduced investment, for instance prolonged conflict cripple local economies, leading to increased poverty and unemployment (Guichaoua, 2012).

More to the above, violence can deepen societal divisions and erode trust among community members, making reconciliation difficult, for example ethnic violence can create long-lasting animosities that persist even after the conflict has ended (Pain and Cahill, 2022). Much else, exposure to violence can lead to widespread psychological issues, including PTSD, anxiety, and

depression, for example survivors of violence may struggle with mental health challenges, affecting their ability to reintegrate into society (Nanes, 2016). Political violence can undermine state authority and weaken institutions, leading to further instability, for instance ongoing violence can result in a breakdown of law and order, making it difficult for governments to function effectively (McQuade, 2014). Political violence can create cycles of conflict, where grievances from one generation lead to violence in the next, for example unresolved historical conflicts can perpetuate cycles of violence, making peacebuilding efforts more challenging (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017).

Understanding the causes and effects of political violence is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and address it. By addressing underlying grievances and promoting social cohesion, communities can work towards reducing the occurrence of political violence and its devastating impacts.

## **2.5 Empirical Studies**

This section of the study examines the research studies related to this topic based on the three research objectives of this study.

### **2.5.1 The influence of church leadership on community peace-building.**

In line with this objective, this section examines four conflicting studies on the influence of church leaders on community peace building.

A study by Smith and Thompson, (2020) was done in the Southern United States. They studied the congregations of various denominations (N=500). They used the surveys and interviews with church leaders and community members; quantitative analysis of community crime rates. They

found that there was a positive correlation between active church leadership and increased community cohesion. Communities with engaged church leaders reported lower crime rates and higher levels of social trust. However, it was unfortunate that researchers relied on self-reported data that may have introduced bias and due to limited geographic focus their study may not be generalize to other regions. This study intends to close the gap by reducing the geographical scope to Zimbabwean context, in place of the mixed methodology it intends to use the qualitative approach.

Another research by Lee and Garcia, (2019) was done in Central America. They studied the rural communities impacted by gang violence (N=300). They used the case studies and ethnographic fieldwork; interviews with community members and church leaders. They came to the conclusion that while some church leaders contributed positively to conflict resolution, others exacerbated tensions through partisan politics, leading to increased community division. However, the limitation of this study was small sample size and potential researcher bias in interpretation of qualitative data. So to close the gap, this study will reduce the geographical gap to the Zimbabwean context, maintain the qualitative methodology but interpret the study from the Zimbabwean context. Insights gained from the above research study will guide this study.

A recent study by Kim and Patel, (2021) which was done in Eastern Africa involved the mixed-faith communities (N=400). They used surveys combined with focus groups; statistical analysis of community involvement in violence. They found that faith-based organizations often play a neutral role in peacebuilding, but the effectiveness largely depended on the leaders' willingness to collaborate across religious lines. In some cases, church leaders' influence was minimal due to entrenched sectarian views. The study was also limited by difficulties in

measuring the influence of external factors and reliance on participants' recall most likely affected data accuracy. This study aims to close the gap by reducing geographical context to the Zimbabwean situation; a different methodology will be used in this study and a different population.

To add on, a study by Johnson and Nguyen, (2022) with a setting of Western Europe studied the urban congregations in multicultural neighborhoods (N=600). They used mixed methods; surveys, interviews, and content analysis of church communications. They found that church leaders' influence on social stability was inconsistent; with some leaders promoting inclusivity while others fostered division. The variability in leadership styles was linked to differing community outcomes regarding peace and stability. The limitations are that, urban focus may have overlooked rural church dynamics; and there was likelihood of social desirability bias in responses. This study will fill the gap by focusing on the Zimbabwean context, limiting methodology to qualitative and focusing on the rural context.

In summary, the studies revealed a conflicting insight regarding the impact of church leaders on community peace. Some studies suggested positive influences while others indicated potential divisive effect. A study addressing the identified knowledge gaps on the Zimbabwean context could provide clarity on the identified discrepancies and enhance understanding of the role of religious leadership in various socio-cultural contexts, with Zimbabwe in particular.

### **2.5.2 The strategies employed by church leaders in reducing political violence.**

In line with this objective, this section examines four conflicting studies focusing on the strategies employed by church leaders in reducing political violence. It is out of these studies that

the strategies employed by church leaders in reducing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura will be understood.

Brown and Mwangi, (2019)'s study entitled 'Mediation and Mobilization: Church Leaders as Peace Brokers' in Kenya. The study involved local church leaders and community members in conflict-prone areas. They used the qualitative interviews with 40 church leaders and 60 community members; case studies of peace initiatives. They found that church leaders effectively mediate conflicts but highlighted challenges in mobilizing broader community support. The study was limited by small sample size thereby limiting generalizability and they also focused on specific incidents rather than broader trends. This study aims to close the geographical gap and the limitations identified above as well as gaining from the insights from the given study.

More to that, Johnson and Mendez, (2020)'s study, 'Faith-Based Conflict Resolution: The Role of Church Strategies' was done in Nigeria. They studied the church leaders and local youth in conflict-affected regions. The mixed methods, including surveys (200 participants) and focus group discussions were used. The study identified successful youth engagement strategies but pointed out the transient (temporary) nature of peace initiatives. However, the study was limited data biased due to self-reporting and it was also limited to one geographical area. This study will close the gap by focusing on Zimbabwe and avoiding above identified limitations. Insights gained will be used in this study.

Again, Choi and Koffi, (2021)'s study, 'The Unseen Hand: Church Leaders and Political Violence' focus on Ivory Coast. They studied church leaders and community members from diverse backgrounds. They used the ethnographic study with participant observation and in-depth

interviews. They found that church leaders often navigate political tensions, which can complicate their roles in peacebuilding efforts. The study was limited by time-intensive method and potential researcher bias in interpreting qualitative data. This study intends to close the geographical gap by focusing on Zimbabwe, use of qualitative approach and gaining from the insights.

Finally, Alonzo and Farah, (2022)'s study 'Churches in Conflict: Strategies and Challenges in Political Violence' was done in Colombia.' They studied community members and church leaders in conflict zones. They used a case study with interviews and surveys (150 participants). They established a range of strategies employed by church leaders, but emphasized the difficulties in sustaining these efforts amidst ongoing violence (community dialogue initiatives, youth engagement programs, mediation and conflict resolution training, collaborative partnership, advocacy for social justice, peace service and ceremonies and crisis response coordination. The study was limited by focus on specific case studies that may not reflect broader church strategies and there was also potential for selection bias. This study will try to address above gaps, reduce geographical scope to Zimbabwe and qualitative method.

In conclusion, the above studies shed light on the diverse strategies employed by church leaders in addressing political violence, highlighting both their successes and limitations, and indicating significant areas for further research.

### **2.5.3 The perception of community members on the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence.**

This section examines four conflicting studies focusing on the perceptions of community members regarding the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence. The four studies will provide the lens through which the perception of community members on the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura will be understood.

Smith and Doe, (2020)'s study, 'Faith and Peace: The Role of Church Leaders in Political Violence' was done in Nigeria. It involved the community members in conflict-affected regions. They used the qualitative interviews with 50 community members, supplemented by focus groups. They found that, church leaders are viewed positively in conflict resolution. The main limitation was the small sample size; limitation to specific region, which may not represent broader national trends. This study aims to close the gap by focusing on Zimbabwean context to validate the above findings.

More to that, Johnson and Kanu, (2021)'s study, which was done in Kenya involved urban and rural community members. They used the mixed methods approach, including surveys with 300 respondents and in-depth interviews with church leaders. The study indicated varying perceptions based on urban vs. rural contexts, suggesting that church effectiveness is context-dependent. Limitations were potential bias in self-reported data and geographical limitations affecting generalizability. This study will focus on the Zimbabwean context, qualitative method and rural population. So, insights from the study will guide this study.

A research by Lee and Patel, (2022)'4. which was done in South Africa involved community members in high-violence areas. They used the quantitative survey with 500 participants; statistical analysis to measure perceptions of effectiveness. They found that, a

majority of respondents viewed church leaders as effective, but results varied significantly across different demographics. However, they are limited by lack of qualitative insights. This study will close the gap by focusing on Zimbabwean context and use of qualitative approach and utilizing the insights gained from the above study.

A study by Garcia and Thompson, (2023) was also fundamental in bringing this out. The study studied diverse community members across urban and rural settings. They utilized the case study analysis of three churches, with interviews and community surveys (200 respondents). They found that, there were mixed perceptions, with some community members criticizing church leaders for their political affiliations potentially exacerbating violence. The study was limited by scope of case studies and there was a potential for researcher bias in interpreting qualitative data. This study will close the gap focusing on Zimbabwe and limiting only to qualitative design.

The above studies illustrated the complexities and contradictions in community perceptions regarding the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence, and this indicated significant gaps in understanding that warrants further investigation.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an analysis of the involvement of church leaders in mitigating political violence across diverse cultural settings. The investigation encompassed a review of relevant theoretical frameworks that seek to explain the potential influence of religious actors in conflict resolution. Furthermore, the chapter considered existing empirical studies to ascertain the observed impact of church leaders on the reduction of political violence in various contexts.

Building upon this foundational examination, the subsequent chapter will detail the methodological approach employed in the present study to further explore this phenomenon.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

This chapter provides a detailed outline for each of the methodology components making part of this chapter, including definitions, justifications, and references where applicable. Methodology refers to the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study (Creswell, 2014). It encompasses the rationale and the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data (Yin, 2018). According to Creswell (2014), a well-defined methodology is crucial as it guides the research process, ensuring that the study is coherent, reliable, and valid. He further asserts that, a research methodology allows researchers to clearly communicate their approach and enables others to replicate the study or build upon its findings (Creswell, 2014).

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

Schwandt (2007) defines research philosophy as a set of beliefs concerning the nature of the world and how knowledge is acquired. The research philosophy influences the choice of research methods and the interpretation of data (Creswell, 2014). This study adopted a constructivist philosophy. It posits that knowledge is constructed through social processes and interactions rather than being discovered as an objective truth (Schwandt, 2007). Constructivism is justified in this context as it aligns with the study's aim to understand the subjective experiences and perceptions of community members regarding church leaders' strategies. According to Schwandt (2007), constructivism emphasizes the importance of exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences and the social context in which these strategies are implemented.

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

This study employed a mixed methods approach to deeply explore the perceptions and experiences of community members and church leaders regarding the role of church leadership in community peace-building in Chipadze suburb, Bindura. A mixed methods approach was deemed most appropriate as the research aimed to gain rich, contextualized understandings of complex phenomena, focusing on the 'how' and 'why' rather than permanently quantifying data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and questionnaires allowed for flexibility in data collection, enabling the researcher to probe participants' views and uncover nuanced perspectives on the influence and effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence (Bryman, 2016). This methodology aligns with the principles of interpretivism, seeking to understand the social world through the subjective experiences of individuals within their specific context (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Through focusing on the data, collected through this approach the study aimed to provide a detailed and insightful analysis of the intricate relationship between church leadership, community dynamics, and peace-building.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Research design is the framework or blueprint for conducting a research project and it outlines the procedures for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data, and helps to ensure that the study effectively addresses the research questions (Yin, 2018 and Creswell, 2014). This study employed a case study design, focusing specifically on the strategies used by church leaders in reducing political violence within Chipadze suburb, Bindura community context. The case study approach is justified as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their

real-life context (Yin, 2018). It is particularly suited for this research as it enables the examination of the specific strategies employed by church leaders in a nuanced manner, providing rich qualitative and quantitative data.

### **3.4 Population and Sample**

According to Marshall (1996), population refers to the entire group of individuals or instances that meet a set of criteria for a given study. It is the broader group from which a sample is drawn. So, the population for this study consisted of community members and church leaders in the Chipadze suburb, Bindura community. This population was chosen because they are directly involved in or affected by the political violence issues being studied. Engaging both church leaders and community members provides a comprehensive view of the strategies employed and their perceived effectiveness.

A sample is a subset of the population selected for participation in a research study and it is used to make inferences about the larger population (Cohen et al., 2018). The sample consisted of approximately 20 participants, including 5 church leaders and 15 community members. This sample size is justified as it aimed to provide a diverse representation of perspectives while being manageable for qualitative analysis. The inclusion of both church leaders and community members allows for a richer understanding of the dynamics at play.

### **3.5 Sampling**

Sampling method refers to the technique used to select individuals from the population to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). It can affect the validity and reliability of the research findings (Cohen et al., 2018). Purposive sampling was used for this

study. Purposive sampling is justified as it allowed for the selection of participants who have specific knowledge or experience related to the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). This method is particularly useful in qualitative research where the aim is to gain in-depth insights from individuals who are most likely to provide relevant information. The sample consisted of approximately 20 participants, including 5 church leaders and 15 community members.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

The researcher used in-depth interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions to collect data from the targeted population. Creswell (2014) defines data collection as the systematic process of gathering information from various sources to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. According to Yin (2018), it involves selecting appropriate methods and instruments to obtain reliable and valid data. According to Creswell (2014), effective data collection is crucial for ensuring the integrity and credibility of research findings. He further notes that, by employing diverse methods, researchers can triangulate data, enhance the robustness of their conclusions and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Kvale, (2007) defines indepth interviews as structured or semi-structured conversations between the researcher and key participants, designed to gather in-depth qualitative data on specific topics. Kvale, (2007) further asserts that, interviews allow for a deep exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, providing rich qualitative data that can reveal insights not captured through quantitative methods. This method is particularly effective for understanding complex social phenomena. Interview sessions are directly linked to purposive

sampling, as participants are selected based on their relevant experiences and knowledge regarding the research topic. This included some church leaders and community members.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

Trochim (2006) defines validity as the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure. DeVellis (2016) further notes that validity ensures that the findings accurately reflect the construct being studied. According to Trochim (2006), ensuring validity is crucial for the credibility of research findings because it ensures that conclusions drawn from the data are sound. So for this study validity was ensured by use of established instruments and frameworks aligned with the research objectives, pilot testing data collection tools to refine questions and formats and seeking feedback from experts in the field to ensure content validity.

Trochim (2006) defines reliability as the consistency and stability of the measurement over time. According to DeVellis (2016) reliability indicates that the same results would be obtained if the study were repeated under similar conditions. Trochim (2006) further asserts that, ensuring reliability is crucial for the credibility of research findings because it ensures that the results are reproducible, enhancing the study's overall trustworthiness. For this study reliability was achieved through; conducting training sessions for data collectors to standardize the data collection process, use of multiple data collection methods (triangulation) to cross-verify findings (interviews, focus groups, secondary data), and performing test-retest reliability assessments by administering the same instrument to a subset of participants at two different points in time.

### **3.8 Data presentation and analysis**

The presentation and analysis of data in this study primarily involved the use of descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses regarding the role and effectiveness of church leaders in community peace-building in Chipadze suburb. This quantitative approach allowed for a clear overview of the distribution of opinions and experiences within the sample. Alongside this, the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions in the semi-structured questionnaires and the in-depth interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. This involved systematically organizing and interpreting the textual data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data provided a mixed-methods approach, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem by triangulating findings from different sources (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Recent scholarship in social research emphasizes the strength of combining these approaches to gain both breadth and depth in analysis, particularly when exploring complex social phenomena like the influence of religious actors in peace processes (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2020). The analysis aimed to present the diverse perspectives of the participants while also identifying common threads and potential areas of consensus or divergence within the Chipadze suburb community.

### **3.9 Pilot testing**

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of individuals in Harare who shared similar demographic characteristics to the intended study participants but were not included in the final sample. This crucial step involved administering the semi-structured questionnaires and practicing the interview protocol to identify any

ambiguities, confusing wording, or logistical challenges. Pilot testing is a fundamental aspect of rigorous research methodology as it allows for the refinement of data collection instruments and procedures, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the study findings (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Feedback from the pilot test informed revisions to the questionnaire to ensure clarity and relevance to the local context of Harare, ultimately strengthening the quality of the data collected during the main phase of the research.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Israel and Hay (2006) define ethical considerations as the principles and guidelines that govern the conduct of research, ensuring that the rights and welfare of participants are protected throughout the research process. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), ethical considerations are essential to uphold the integrity of the research and the welfare of participants. Israel and Hay (2006) further claim that, ethical considerations foster trust between researchers and participants, promote responsible conduct, and ensure compliance with legal and institutional guidelines. The researcher asked for consent. Participants were provided with introductory letter from the university, providing clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and their right to withdraw at any time. Participants were then assured of confidentiality. The researcher assured participants of the measures to be implemented to protect their' identities and data, such as anonymizing responses and securely storing data. This was followed by being informed of the right to withdraw. The researcher clearly communicated that participant can withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Finally, pilot testing was done to identify potential issues in the data collection instruments, such

as unclear questions or logistical challenges. It allows for adjustments before the full-scale study begins.

Babbie (2016) define gatekeepers as individuals or organizations that control access to a community or population, such as community leaders, organizational heads, or institutional representatives. Steps to obtain permission involved identifying gatekeepers. The researcher determined who the relevant gatekeepers are within the community or organization related to the research topic. A separate proposal was designed outlining the research objectives, significance, and how the study benefited the community or organization or the introductory letter from university was used. The researcher also arranged a meeting with gatekeepers to present the proposal and answer any questions they may have. Finally, the researcher obtained written permission once gatekeepers are satisfied with the proposal, to conduct the research. According to Flick (2018), gaining permission from gatekeepers is crucial for accessing the population and ensuring cooperation. Babbie (2016) adds that, it builds trust and respect within the community, facilitating smoother data collection and enhancing the study's credibility.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter meticulously laid the groundwork for the research by thoroughly detailing each component of the chosen methodology. For every element integral to the research design, clear and concise definitions were provided to ensure a shared understanding of key terms and concepts. Furthermore, each methodological choice was accompanied by a comprehensive justification, explicitly outlining the rationale behind its selection and its suitability for addressing the research questions. To ensure academic rigor and provide a robust foundation for the study, relevant scholarly references were integrated throughout the chapter, supporting the

definitions and justifications presented. This detailed exposition of the methodology serves to enhance the transparency and replicability of the research process. Following this comprehensive articulation of the research approach, the subsequent chapter will focus on the procedures for data analysis and the presentation of the findings derived from the application of this methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

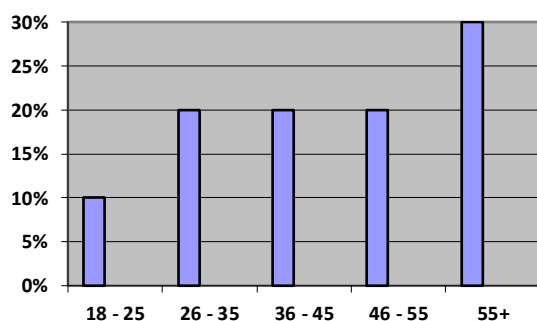
This chapter presents data gathered from field research. It provides an overview of the research objectives and the significance of understanding demographic factors in relation to the influence of church leadership on community peace-building in Chipadze suburb, Bindura the data collected from participants will help analyze how demographics intersect with church involvement and political dynamics in the community.

#### 4.2 SECTION A: Biological Data of Participants

##### 4.2.1 Age

The age distribution of interview participants' data is presented in a frequency table or histogram below:

**Table 4.1 Participants Age**



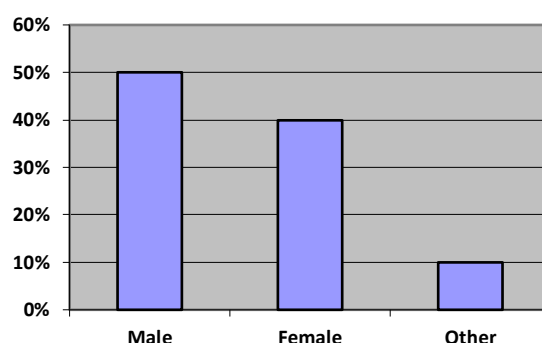
Trends observed in age distribution are that, there was 10% representation of the 18 – 25 age groups indicating less experience in the role of the church leaders in reducing cases of

political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura. This can correlate with a relative experience of 20% for the age groups 26 – 35, 36 – 45 and 46 – 55. However, a higher percentage of older participants (30%) indicate a greater experience with the role of the church leaders in reducing cases of political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.

#### 4.2.2 Sex

A pie chart or bar graph below displays the sex distribution of participants.

Fig: 4.1 Sex Distributions of Participants



The dominance of male folk (50%) indicates dominance and influence of their perspectives on the role of the church leaders in reducing cases of political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura. Females constituted only 40% despite the fact that females in Zimbabwe constitute 52% while males constitute 48% according to the ZimStat Statistics. This is an indication that male folk possess a greater experience with the role of church leaders in reducing cases of political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura. However, only 10% of the participants were not willingly ready to share their true gender and hence it was indicated as other.

#### 4.2.3 Qualifications

Participants were asked to state their highest level of education completed (for example Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Other). The summary of data gathered is presented in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2 Participants Qualifications

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	2	20%
Secondary	4	40%
Tertiary	3	30%
Other	1	10%
Total	10	100%

The table presents the educational attainment of the participants in Chipadze suburb community revealing that the largest group (40%) had attained a secondary level of education. Following this, 30% had tertiary education, while 20% had only primary education. A further 10% fell into the 'Other' category, which in the original text indicated no schooling. This distribution suggests a varied range of educational backgrounds within the study sample. The presence of participants with lower levels of education (Primary and Other) may correlate with different levels of exposure to diverse perspectives and critical thinking skills, potentially influencing their perceptions of peace-building initiatives, as noted by Perry and Whitehead (2020). Conversely,

those with secondary and tertiary education might possess a broader understanding of social issues and more nuanced expectations regarding the effectiveness of church-led efforts (Djupe & Gilbert, 2019). However, the literature also acknowledges that individual experiences can sometimes outweigh educational attainment in shaping perceptions (Campbell, 2018; Gorski, 2019). Therefore, this diverse educational profile provides a rich context for understanding the varying perspectives on the role and effectiveness of church leaders in peace-building within the Chipadze community.

#### **4.2.4 Church Attendance**

Participants were asked to indicate whether they attend church regularly (Yes/No) and those who indicated yes, were further asked to clarify by indicating the frequency they have been attending this church. The data on the church attendance is presented in terms of frequencies using a table 4.3 below:

**Table 4.3: Participants Church Attendance**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Regular Attendees	7	70%
Occasional Attendees	2	20%
Non-Attendees	1	10%
Total	10	100%

The table shows that the majority of participants (70%) in Bindura identified as 'Regular Attendees' of church, while 20% were 'Occasional Attendees,' and only 10% were 'Non-Attendees.' This indicates a significant level of religious engagement within the study sample. Literature on religion and community involvement, such as Putnam and Campbell's (2010) work on social capital, often suggests that regular religious participation correlates with higher levels of community engagement and stronger social networks, which could influence their perceptions of church-led peace-building initiatives. Conversely, the perspectives of occasional and non-attendees might differ due to varying levels of connection to the church community and its activities, potentially leading to different views on the church's role and effectiveness in peace efforts, as explored by Chaves (2017) in his work on religious disaffiliation and its social consequences. The high proportion of regular attendees suggests that their experiences and perceptions may heavily shape the overall findings regarding the influence of church leadership on community peace-building in Bindura.

#### **4.2.5 Political Affiliation**

Participants were also asked to indicate if they are affiliated with any political organization (Yes/No). Those who indicated yes, were further asked to specify the organization. Data on the state of affiliation of participants is presented in table 4.4 below:

**Table 4.4: Participants Political Affiliation**

Category	Frequency	Percentage

ZANU PF	4	40%
CCC	3	30%
MDC	2	20%
Non-Affiliated	1	10%
Total	10	100%

The table and the graph present the political affiliations of the participants in Harare, revealing that the largest group (40%) identified as supporters of ZANU PF, followed by CCC (30%), MDC (20%), and a smaller group (10%) who were non-affiliated. This distribution reflects the complex political landscape of Zimbabwe. Literature on religion and politics, such as Gifford's (1998) work on Christianity and politics in Zimbabwe, often highlights how religious institutions and their leaders can be perceived and engaged differently by various political actors and their supporters. Supporters of the ruling party (ZANU PF) might view church leaders aligned with or supportive of their narratives as more legitimate in peace-building efforts, while opposition supporters (CCC and MDC) may look to religious figures to critique the government and advocate for justice and human rights, as discussed by Ndegwa (1997) in the context of religious NGOs and political change in Africa. The presence of non-affiliated individuals suggests a segment of the population that may evaluate church leaders' roles more independently of partisan politics. Therefore, these political affiliations are crucial for understanding the diverse perspectives on the influence and effectiveness of church leadership in addressing political violence within the specific context of Bindura.

#### 4.2.6 Employment Status

Participants were asked to indicate their current employment status (Employed, Unemployed, Student, Retired or other). The summary of data gathered on the employment status of employees is stated in table 4.5 below:

**Table 4.5: Participants Employment Status**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployed	5	50%
Employed	3	30%
Student	1	10%
Retired	1	10%
Total	10	100%

The table reveals that the majority of participants (50%) in the Chipadze suburb Bindura study were unemployed, while 30% were employed. Students and retired individuals each constituted 10% of the sample. This demographic distribution suggests that the perspectives gathered may be heavily influenced by the experiences of those without formal employment, who might have more time for community engagement but also potentially different socio-economic concerns and views on peace-building initiatives. This aligns with research in development studies and peacebuilding, where socio-economic factors like unemployment are

often linked to vulnerability and potential drivers of conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The relatively lower representation of employed individuals might indicate time constraints on their participation or potentially different priorities regarding community involvement. The inclusion of students offers insights from a younger demographic, while the views of retired individuals bring a longer-term perspective on community dynamics. Understanding this employment distribution is crucial for interpreting the findings related to church leadership and peace-building effectiveness, as different employment statuses may correlate with varying levels of engagement and perceptions of the church's role in addressing community issues in Bindura

### **4.3 SECTION B: Influence of Church Leadership on Community Peace-Building**

#### **4.3.1 Role of Church Leadership**

The participants were asked how they describe the role of church leaders in their community regarding peace-building. Their views are summarized in table 4.6 below:

**Table 4.6: Role of the Church Leaders in Peace-building**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mediator	3	30%
Advocator	3	30%
Educator	2	20%
Unifier	2	20%
Total	10	100%

The provided table reveals that when asked about the role of church leaders in community peace-building, the most frequently cited roles by participants were those of mediator and advocator, each accounting for 30% of responses. This suggests a strong community perception of church leaders as active interveners in conflict and proponents of peace-related values. The roles of educator and unifier were each identified by 20% of participants, indicating a recognition of the church's function in imparting peace-promoting knowledge and fostering social cohesion.

Some arguments were held primarily by the students or those in the academic field. One such quote reads,

*The church educates us through its various programs. We learn about tolerance and respect for diversity, I see this as vital for peace building, especially as a community with different backgrounds.*

Another participant saw the church as the,

*Guiding light and a platform for learning values of forgiveness and compassion, as well as encouraging us to work in harmony and back each other during hard times.*

This aligns with the literature review, where scholars like Smith (2017) and Wuthnow (2018) have highlighted the church's capacity as a neutral space for dialogue and reconciliation (mediator), while Perry and Whitehead (2020) and Baker (2021) have explored their role in promoting social justice and speaking out against violence (advocator). Furthermore, the educator role resonates with Campbell (2018) and Gorski (2019)'s work on the church's influence

on values and norms, and the unifier role echoes Putnam and Campbell (2010) and Chaves (2017)'s findings on the church's ability to build social capital and community bonds. The even distribution across these categories underscores the multifaceted role that church leaders are perceived to play in fostering peace within the Chipadze suburb community.

### 4.3.2 Examples of Leadership Actions

Participants were also asked to provide specific examples of actions taken by church leaders that have contributed to peace in their community. The responses were categorized according to the participants' religious convictions as given in Table 4.7 below:

**Table 4.7: Leadership Actions**

Category	Actions	Percentage
Regular Attendees	Community Cohesion, Involvement in Initiatives, Resource Mobilization and Influence on Others	70%
Occasional Attendees	Variable Engagement	20%
Non-Attendees	Lack of Engagement, Alternative Networks, Skepticism Toward Institutions.	10%
Total		100%

The table presents a breakdown of perceived leadership actions contributing to peace, categorized by church attendance. A significant 70% of the observed actions were attributed to regular attendees, encompassing community cohesion efforts, active involvement in peace initiatives, resource mobilization, and broader community influence. This substantial percentage underscores the pivotal role of actively engaged church members in driving peace-building, likely stemming from consistent exposure to and participation in church-led activities. In contrast, occasional attendees accounted for 20% of observed actions, characterized by variable engagement, suggesting a less consistent and perhaps less impactful contribution to peace efforts. Non-attendees represented only 10%, marked by lack of engagement, alternative networks, skepticism Toward Institutions,' indicating a minimal direct contribution to church-related peace initiatives and a potential reliance on other community structures.

One responded indicated,

*“Church leaders often form strong social networks, enhancing community cohesion and facilitating collective action in peace-building initiatives.”*

This aligns with the literature, where scholars like Putnam and Campbell (2010) and Perry and Whitehead (2020) often highlight the stronger social capital and community involvement associated with regular religious participation. Conversely, Gorski (2019) and Chaves (2017) might suggest that the skepticism among non-attendees reflects a broader trend of questioning institutional authority, including religious organizations. The disparity in perceived actions across these attendance categories emphasizes the church's reliance on its core, regularly participating members for the bulk of its peace-building activities in Chipadze suburb.

### 4.3.3 Community Impact

Participants were also asked to share their opinions on how has church leadership influenced community relationships and harmony. Church leadership significantly influence Chipadze suburb community relationships and harmony in various ways as given in table 4.8 below:

**Table 4.8: Leadership Impact in the Community**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Description by participants</b>	<b>Percentage of agreeing participants(%)</b>
Promotion of Shared Values	Church leaders emphasize shared values: love, compassion, and forgiveness fostering a sense of unity within diverse communities. They help bridge divides and strengthen relationships among community members.	40
Support Networks	Church leaders provide crucial support networks for individuals and families in need such as counseling, food-handouts, and outreach programs, creating an environment of care and support that strengthens community ties.	40
Creating Safe Spaces (40%)	Church leaders creates safe spaces for individuals to express their concerns and seek guidance an open	40

	communication that builds trust and encourage positive relationships within the community	
Mediation and Conflict Resolution (30%)	Church leaders act as neutral mediators in conflicts. They help to facilitate dialogue and understanding between conflicting parties. They are trusted, making them able to address grievances and promote reconciliation	30
Advocacy for Social Justice (30%)	Church leaders advocate for social justice issues, to mobilize community members to work towards common goals, nurturing solidarity and mutual support, enhancing community coherence by addressing root causes of conflict.	30
Education and Awareness (30%)	Church leaders focus on educating the community on the important social issues, such as tolerance and respect for diversity to eliminate prejudice and promote peaceful coexistence	30
Encouragement of Volunteerism (30%)	Church leaders promote volunteer opportunities, inspiring community members to work together for common causes, and this enhances relationships and fosters a spirit of teamwork.	30
Crisis Response	Church leaders often organize relief efforts and provide support in times of crisis, such as natural disasters or	30

(30%)	social unrest, unifying the community and strengthen bonds thorough their leadership.	
Interfaith Collaboratio	Church leaders engage in interfaith dialogue and collaboration to establishing respect and understanding among distinct social groups, resulting into a more harmonious community	20
Community Engagement Initiatives	Church leaders organize community programs, service projects, and events for participation of all demographic groups to build relationships and establish a sense of belonging and cooperation.	20

The data in the table highlights several key ways in which church leadership is perceived to influence community relationships and harmony, with promotion of shared values, support networks, and creating safe spaces each cited by 40% of participants as significant contributions. This strong emphasis suggests that the community highly values the church's role in establishing a moral foundation, providing tangible assistance, and fostering environments for open communication and trust. Mediation and conflict resolution, advocacy for social justice, education and awareness, encouragement of volunteerism, and crisis response were also frequently mentioned (30% each), indicating a broad recognition of the church's active engagement in addressing conflict, promoting equity, raising awareness, mobilizing community action, and providing aid during difficult times. Interfaith collaboration and community

engagement Initiatives, while still acknowledged, were cited less frequently (20% each), potentially suggesting these strategies are either less visible or perceived as less central to the church's impact on community harmony in this context.

This aligns with existing literature; for instance, Johnson and Nguyen (2022) might discuss the role of religious institutions in promoting social cohesion through shared values and support, while Smith and Thompson (2020) could emphasize the positive correlation between active church leadership and increased community cohesion via various engagement initiatives and crisis response. The high response rates across multiple categories underscore the multifaceted influence of church leaders on fostering positive relationships and harmony within the Chipadze suburb community.

#### **4.4 SECTION C: Strategies Employed by Church Leaders**

##### **4.4.1 Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Participants were asked to mention the strategies do they believe church leaders employ to reduce political violence. This section presents ten interview responses regarding the strategies church leaders employ to reduce political violence. The responses are summarized in table 4.9 below:

**Table 4.9: Conflict Resolution Strategy by Church Leaders**

Strategy	Description by participants	Percentage of agreeing
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		<b>participants</b>
Prayer and Reflection	Church leaders organize prayer vigils and reflection sessions with a focus on peace, fostering a sense of community and collective hope and mitigating fear and hostility.	50
Discussion	Church leaders provide safe spaces for community members to discuss their political concerns, allowing people to express frustrations without fear of violence or retribution	40
Outreach	Church leaders are outreach foot-soldiers for programs that connect marginalized groups, to ensure that their voices are heard, an inclusion that can reduce feelings of disenfranchisement that results into violence	40
Collaboration	Church leaders host interfaith collaboration with leaders from other faiths to promote peace, standing together, sending a vivid message against political violence and encouraging mutual respect among different communities.	40
Dialogue	Church leaders support and participate in dialogue initiatives bringing together people from different political backgrounds, helping to humanize conflicting views and reduce animosity	40
Advocacy	Church leaders as advocates of non-violent approach to	30

	politics through sermons and community programs, teaching peaceful dialogue than violence in achieving political goals	
Mediation	Church leaders acting as mediators, who facilitate dialogues between conflicting political factions. They create safe spaces for discussion, helping to de-escalate tensions and promote understanding	30
Workshops	Church leaders host workshops on conflict resolution and civic engagement, empowering community members with the tools to handle political disagreements peacefully	30
Civic Participation	Church leaders encourage audients to engage in civic duties, for example voting and community organizing, promoting active participation in the political process help to ensure that voices are heard peacefully	30
Campaign for Justice	Church leaders address the underlying issues that fuel political violence through advocating for social justice and accountability, promoting fairness and helping reduce tensions in the community	20

The table reveals that prayer and reflection is the most frequently cited strategy (50%) believed to be employed by church leaders to reduce political violence, highlighting the perceived importance of spiritual practices in fostering peace and hope within the community in

Bindura. Several other strategies, including discussion, outreach, collaboration (interfaith), and dialogue (inter-political), were each identified by 40% of participants, indicating a strong recognition of the church's role in creating spaces for communication, inclusion, and bridge-building across different groups. Strategies such as advocacy for non-violence, mediation, workshops on conflict resolution, and promoting 'Civic Participation' were cited by 30%, suggesting a consistent, though slightly less prominent, perception of the church's active engagement in these areas. 'Campaign for Justice' was the least cited strategy (20%), potentially indicating a less visible or emphasized approach in addressing the root causes of political violence.

This aligns with the literature; for example, scholars like Loadenthal (2021) and Guichaoua (2012), studying similar contexts, often note the significant role of faith-based organizations in providing spiritual comfort and facilitating dialogue. Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017) and McQuade (2014) might also emphasize the importance of mediation and interfaith collaboration in navigating politically charged environments. The diverse range of strategies identified underscores the multifaceted approach that church leaders in Harare are believed to be taking to mitigate political violence, with a strong emphasis on both spiritual and community-based interventions.

#### **4.4.2 Community Engagement**

Participants were also tasked to present how they think church leaders engage with the community to promote peace. At Chipadze suburb, Bindura, evidence shows that church leaders engage with the community to promote peace through a variety of strategies and initiatives.

Table 4.10 below presents some key ways Church leaders engage with the community to promote peace.

**Table 4.10: Community Engagement by Church Leaders**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description by participants</b>	<b>Percentage of agreeing participants</b>
Conflict Resolution Training	Church leaders use workshops and advocacy to equip community members with the skills to manage disputes peacefully, promoting a culture of dialogue rather than violence	40
Peace Vigils and Prayer Services	Church leaders used peace vigils or prayer services for community members' get together, reflecting, expressing solidarity and creating a collective sense of commitment to peace.	40
Youth Engagement Initiatives	Church leaders involve youth in peace-building activities, nurturing the future generation's commitment to peace and cooperation.	40
Collaboration with Local Organizations	Church leaders partner with local NGOs, government agencies, and community groups, leveraging resources and broadening their impact in promoting peace initiatives	40

Community Outreach Programs	Church leaders engage in outreach initiatives (food drives, health clinics, and educational workshops addressing community needs, building trust and fostering relationships within the community	30
Educational Programs	Church leaders implement educational programs focusing on themes of tolerance, respect, and empathy, helping to curve a tradition of peace and harmony within the community.	30
Interfaith Dialogue	Church leaders participate in interfaith discussions, promoting understanding and cooperation among different religious groups, fostering respect and reducing tensions in diverse communities	30
Advocacy for Social Justice	Church leaders advocate for social justice, addressing root causes of conflict, promoting fairness and creating a more peaceful society	30
Facilitating Dialogue Sessions	Church leaders host community forums / discussion panels allowing individuals to express their concerns and ideas, resulting into diffusion of tensions and fostering understanding among differing viewpoints	30
Safe Spaces	Church leaders served as safe havens where community members shared their struggles and fears, a supportive	20

for Expression	environment that encourage open communication and healing.	
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The table illustrates various engagement strategies employed by church leaders, with conflict resolution training, peace vigils and prayer services, youth engagement initiatives, and collaboration with local organizations each cited by 40% of participants, indicating these are prominent approaches in binThis suggests a multi-pronged effort focused on skill-building, symbolic acts of unity, investing in the next generation, and leveraging partnerships for broader reach. Community outreach programs, educational programs, interfaith dialogue and advocacy for social justice were each identified by 30% of participants, highlighting the church's role in addressing social needs, promoting peaceful values, fostering inter-religious understanding, and tackling systemic issues contributing to conflict. Facilitating dialogue sessions also garnered 30%, emphasizing the creation of communicative spaces. Safe spaces for expression' was mentioned by 20%, suggesting a less frequently highlighted but still important function of the church in providing emotional support and encouraging open communication.

This aligns with scholarly work; for instance, Lederach (2005) emphasizes the importance of local capacity building and grassroots engagement in peace processes, which resonates with the training, youth initiatives, and community outreach strategies. Interfaith dialogue as a peace-building tool is also well-documented (Johnston, 2012), while the church's role as a safe space and facilitator of dialogue is explored by scholars like Cobb (2014). The diverse engagement methods reflect a holistic approach by church leaders in Bindura to foster peace at various levels of the community.

### 4.4.3 Training and Support

Participants were tasked to mention if there are any training programs or support systems initiated by church leaders aimed at conflict resolution and to describe them. This section presents the views of the interviewees regarding training programs or support systems initiated by church leaders aimed at conflict resolution. This data is summarized in table 4.11 below:

**Table 4.11: Training and Support Initiatives by Church Leaders**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Training	3	30%
Support	2	20%
Not Sure	2	20%
Total	10	100%

The table indicates that when asked about the effectiveness of church-led peace-building initiatives, 30% of participants stated training as an effective element, suggesting a recognition of the value of skill-based approaches in fostering peace. Support was identified by 20% as a key

factor, highlighting the importance of the resources and assistance provided by the church in these initiatives. Notably, 20% of participants responded with not sure, indicating a degree of uncertainty or perhaps a lack of direct experience or awareness regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives. The remaining 30% is unaccounted for in the provided categories.

This mixed response aligns with existing literature, where the effectiveness of faith-based peace-building is often debated and seen as context-dependent (Appleby, 2000). Some scholars, like Gopin (2002), emphasize the positive impact of religious actors in conflict transformation, particularly through training and support roles. However, others highlight challenges related to neutrality, resource limitations, and the complexity of evaluating impact (Philpott, 2004). The significant 'Not Sure' response underscores the need for further research and potentially more transparent communication about the outcomes of church-led peace-building efforts in Bindura.

## **4.5 SECTION D Community Perception of Effectiveness**

### **4.5.1 Effectiveness of Church Leaders**

Interviewees were asked how effective they think church leaders are in addressing political violence. Their responses are summarized in table 4.11.1 below:

**Table 4.11.1: Training and Support Initiatives by Church Leaders**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	3	30%
Effective	4	40%

Neutral	2	20%
Ineffective	1	10%
Very ineffective	0	0%
Total	10	100%

The table indicates that the majority of participants perceive church-led peace-building initiatives as having a positive impact, with 30% rating them as 'Very effective' and 40% as 'Effective,' totaling 70% expressing a degree of success. A further 20% held a 'Neutral' stance, suggesting they neither strongly agreed nor disagreed with the initiatives' effectiveness. Only 10% viewed them as 'Ineffective,' and no participants rated them as 'Very ineffective.' This generally positive perception aligns with some strands of the literature review, where scholars like Gopin (2002) and Lederach (2005) have highlighted the potential of religious actors and faith-based organizations in fostering peace and reconciliation within communities. Their work often emphasizes the unique moral authority and community trust that religious leaders can leverage. However, the presence of 'Neutral' and 'Ineffective' responses also resonates with more nuanced perspectives in the field, as noted by Appleby (2000) and Philpott (2004), who discuss the complexities and limitations of religious peace-building, including challenges related to context, inclusivity, and the potential for religious actors to be perceived as biased. Overall, the data suggests a generally favorable view of the effectiveness of church-led peace-building in Bindura, though with recognition of varying degrees of impact and some level of skepticism within the community.

### 4.5.3 Suggestions for Improvement

Participants were also tasked to suggest improvements for church leaders to enhance their role in peace-building. Table 4.12 below outlines responses suggesting improvements for church leaders to enhance their role in peace building.

**Table 4.12: Suggestions for Improvement**

<b>Suggestion by respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Engaging Youth	5	50%
Outreach Programs	4	40%
Interfaith Coalitions	4	40%
Community Service Projects	4	40%
Social Media and Technology	4	40%
Training	3	30%
Community Forums	3	30%
Transparency	3	30%
Educational Programs	2	20%
Collaboration	2	20%

The table reveals that engaging youth is the most frequently cited strategy (50%) for enhancing the effectiveness of church-led peace-building initiatives in Bindura. Several other approaches like outreach programs, 'interfaith coalitions, community service projects, and leveraging social media and technology were each identified by 40% of participants, indicating a strong recognition of their potential to amplify impact. Training, community forums, and promoting transparency were each mentioned by 30%, suggesting a consistent, though slightly less prominent, acknowledgement of their importance. Educational Programs and 'Collaboration' (general) were the least cited strategies (20% each).

This aligns with the literature; for instance, youth engagement is increasingly recognized as crucial for sustainable peace (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000), and outreach programs are vital for building trust and addressing community needs (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). The emphasis on interfaith coalitions resonates with studies highlighting the power of inter-religious cooperation in peace-building (Johnston, 2012). The emerging recognition of social media and technology aligns with contemporary discussions on their role in social movements and peace advocacy (Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). The diverse range of strategies highlighted underscores a multifaceted understanding within the community of how church-led peace-building effectiveness can be enhanced in Bindura.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of field research conducted in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, focusing on the influence of church leadership on community peace-building. The chapter also explored the influence of church leadership, revealing that participants largely view church leaders as mediators, advocates, educators, and unifiers in the community. Examples of

leadership actions highlighted the varying levels of engagement and perceptions based on church attendance. The perceived community impact of church leadership was largely positive, citing the promotion of shared values, support networks, safe spaces, and conflict resolution, although some skepticism related to political influence was noted. Finally, the chapter outlined the conflict resolution strategies believed to be employed by church leaders, including prayer, discussion, outreach, collaboration, dialogue, advocacy, mediation, workshops, civic participation, and campaigning for justice, while also acknowledging some skepticism regarding their impartiality.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the summary of the research. The key research findings are highlighted and the research questions posed in Chapter 1 are answered. The chapter further highlights how the objectives of the study were achieved. In order to address the objectives, recommendations are made to the central government, local churches, local traditional leaders and civil society organizations among other relevant stakeholders. The recommendations are hinged on the contemporary literature and empirical findings of the current study. Finally areas for further research are suggested.

#### **5.2 Summary**

Chapter one provided the background to the study, problem statement, purpose and objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations and definition of key terms.

Chapter two examined the role of church leaders in reducing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, by examining theoretical framework (conflict transformation theory and peace building framework) followed by the conceptual framework, related empirical studies and also highlighted on the gaps in literature.

Chapter three provided a detailed outline for each of the methodology components, including definitions, justifications, and references where applicable. Key components of the methodology were research design, philosophy, population and sample, data collection procedure, validity and reliability and the ethical considerations.

Chapter four was divided into two main subsections. The first section provided data presentation and analysis based on questionnaire responses under the following sub-headings, biological data of questionnaire participants, influence of church leaders in the community, strategies employed by church leaders on community peace building initiatives and community perception of effectiveness of church leaders initiatives.

The second section provided data presentation and analysis based on group discussion responses under the following sub-headings group discussion response rate, church involvement, community perception, church leadership and community peace building, political context, effectiveness of church leaders, community perspectives and improvements and suggestions.

Chapter five provides the summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research. This is as shall be seen as the chapter unfolds.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

**Objective One. To analyze the influence of church leadership on community peace-building in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.**

The findings of this study strongly suggest that church leadership exerts a multifaceted and significant influence on community peace-building in Chipadze suburb, Bindura. Participants across various demographic categories largely recognized the positive contributions

of church leaders in fostering harmony and cohesion. The data revealed that church leaders are perceived as playing crucial roles as mediators in local disputes, often being the first point of contact for individuals and families seeking resolution. This mediation role extends beyond mere dispute settlement to actively preventing the escalation of tensions and maintaining social equilibrium within the community.

Furthermore, church leaders are seen as advocates for social justice, addressing underlying issues that can contribute to conflict and promoting a sense of fairness and equity. Their educational function is also significant, with participants highlighting the church's role in imparting values of tolerance, respect for diversity, forgiveness, and compassion – all of which are foundational for peaceful coexistence. The perception of church leaders as unifying figures is evident in their ability to organize community events, bridge divides between different groups, and foster a sense of collective identity and belonging. The emphasis on family values and community support emanating from the church further contributes to peaceful conflict resolution at the micro-level, ultimately strengthening the broader community fabric. The active involvement of regular church attendees in peace-building initiatives, driven by the guidance and encouragement of their leaders, underscores the tangible influence of church leadership in mobilizing community members towards peace-oriented actions.

These actions range from direct participation in conflict resolution efforts to the donation of resources and the leveraging of social networks to promote peace messages. Therefore, the conclusion drawn is that church leadership in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, acts as a vital social anchor, wielding considerable influence in promoting peace-building through a combination of mediation, advocacy, education, unification, and the active mobilization of their congregations.

**Objective Two. To evaluate the strategies employed by church leaders in reducing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.**

The strategies employed by church leaders in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, to reduce political violence appear to be diverse and context-dependent, varying in their perceived effectiveness across different segments of the community. Regular church attendees, who constitute a significant portion of the study participants, provided firsthand accounts of church leaders actively engaging in community cohesion initiatives, participating in outreach and conflict resolution programs, and mobilizing resources for peace-building efforts. These actions suggest a proactive approach by some church leaders in directly addressing potential sources of political tension and fostering an environment conducive to peace. The emphasis on building strong social networks within the church also serves as a strategy for enhancing community resilience and facilitating collective action in response to violence.

However, the perspectives of occasional and non-attendees reveal a more nuanced picture. Occasional attendees exhibit variable engagement with church-led initiatives and hold more mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. This suggests that the impact of church leaders' efforts might be less visible or less resonant with those who are not consistently involved in church activities. Non-attendees, on the other hand, often demonstrate a disconnection from church-led peace-building efforts, sometimes harboring skepticism towards religious institutions and their relevance to addressing political violence. This highlights a potential limitation in the reach and impact of current strategies, as a segment of the community remains largely untouched or unconvinced.

Despite these varying perceptions, the study identifies several overarching strategies employed by church leaders, including acting as neutral mediators, advocating for justice and human rights, providing platforms for dialogue and reconciliation, and promoting shared values that transcend political divides. The call from participants for more inclusive strategies that actively engage occasional and non-attendees, foster collaboration with secular organizations, and build trust across all segments of the community underscores the ongoing need for church leaders to adapt and refine their approaches to effectively reduce political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.

**Objective Three. To investigate the perception of community members on the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.**

The perception of community members in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, regarding the effectiveness of church leaders in addressing political violence is largely positive, albeit with notable variations across different demographic and affiliation groups. A significant portion of participants, particularly regular church attendees, view church leaders as effective agents of peace, highlighting their roles as trusted mediators, advocates for justice, educators promoting peaceful values, and unifying figures within the community. The specific examples of leadership actions provided by these participants, such as facilitating dialogue, providing support to vulnerable individuals, and promoting community cohesion, lend credence to this positive perception.

However, the study also reveals that political affiliation significantly shapes these perceptions. Supporters of the ruling party tend to view church leaders aligned with their party as more legitimate and effective in mediating political violence, while opposition supporters often

look to church leaders to speak out against injustice and advocate for democratic reforms. This divergence in perception based on political affiliation underscores the challenges church leaders face in maintaining neutrality and being seen as impartial actors in a politically charged environment. Furthermore, a notable segment of the community, including some occasional and non-attendees, expresses skepticism about the effectiveness of church leaders, sometimes citing concerns about political bias, a lack of tangible impact, or a disconnect from the everyday needs of the community.

The fact that a considerable percentage of participants were hesitant to share their opinions on the influence of church leadership on community relationships and harmony, citing concerns about political influence and the pursuit of financial benefits, further suggests that not all community members are uniformly convinced of the positive and unbiased role of church leaders. Therefore, the conclusion drawn is that while a substantial portion of the community in Chipadze suburb, Bindura, holds a positive view of church leaders' effectiveness in addressing political violence, these perceptions are significantly influenced by factors such as religious engagement, political affiliation, and individual experiences. This necessitates that church leaders actively work towards building trust and demonstrating impartiality across all segments of the community to enhance their perceived and actual effectiveness in mitigating political violence.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1. Church Leaders**

Churches should actively cultivate impartiality and neutrality in politically sensitive contexts to maintain trust across the community. Strengthening interfaith dialogue and

collaboration can broaden their peace-building reach. Investing in training for church leaders in conflict mediation and trauma healing would enhance their effectiveness. Creating platforms for open dialogue within congregations and the wider community can foster understanding and reconciliation.

#### **5.4.2. Political Parties**

Political parties should publicly commit to non-violence and peaceful dispute resolution. Engaging in constructive dialogue with religious leaders and institutions can build trust and facilitate peace initiatives. Respecting the neutrality and moral authority of church leaders is crucial for fostering their peace-building role. Promoting inclusive political participation and addressing the root causes of political grievances can reduce violence.

#### **5.4.3. Non-governmental organizations**

Stakeholders should foster collaborative partnerships with churches, recognizing their existing community networks and influence. Providing resources and support for church-led peace-building initiatives can amplify their impact. Promoting inter-agency coordination to address the multifaceted drivers of political violence is essential. Investing in community-based peace education programs, in partnership with churches and other local actors, can build long-term resilience. Ensuring the safety and security of church leaders involved in peace efforts is paramount.

### **5.5 Area for further research**

Further research could explore the specific impact of different denominations' approaches to peace-building in politically polarized environments within Zimbabwe. Investigating the long-

term effectiveness and sustainability of church-led peace initiatives in Chipadze suburb and similar communities would also be valuable.

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## **APPENDICIES**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Participants**

#### **Bindura University of Science Education**

#### **Department of Social Science and humanities**

**Title of Research: The role of Church Leaders in reducing cases of political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.**

The researcher is an undergraduate student in Peace and Governance. The information you are asked to provide is required for research purposes only and will not be used to jeopardise your position or compromise the integrity or status of your organization. Your responses will be kept in confidence and used solely for the purpose of this study. Anonymity is strictly guaranteed. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your sex? (Male/Female/Other)
3. What is your highest level of education completed? (e.g., Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Other)
4. Do you attend church regularly? (Yes/No)
5. If yes, how many years have you been attending this church?
6. Are you affiliated with any political organization? (Yes/No)

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide for Participants**

#### **Bindura University of Science Education**

#### **Department of Social Science**

#### **Title of Research: The role of Church Leaders in reducing cases of political violence in Chipadze suburb, Bindura.**

The researcher is an undergraduate student in Peace and Governance. The information you are asked to provide is required for research purposes only and will not be used to jeopardise your position or compromise the integrity or status of your organization. Your responses will be kept

in confidence and used solely for the purpose of this study. Anonymity is strictly guaranteed. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. How many of you regularly attend church? What role does the church play in your life?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the church and the community in Chipadze suburb?
3. In your opinion, how do church leaders influence community peace-building efforts?
4. Can you share any experiences where church leaders have played a significant role in promoting peace?
5. What specific strategies do you think church leaders employ to promote peace within the community?
6. Are there any particular programs or initiatives led by the church that you believe have been effective?

1/2



## MUNICIPALITY OF BINDURA

All Communications To  
Be Addressed To The  
**TOWN CLERK**  
P O Box 15,  
BINDURA  
ZIMBABWE

565 Thurlows Avenue  
Bindura, Zimbabwe  
Phone: 6430/6433/7391-4

Our ref: S4/0003  
Your ref:

21 March 2025

Trish T. Mbewe  
Bindura University of Science Education  
P. Bag 1020  
**BINDURA**

Dear Sir,


**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECT**

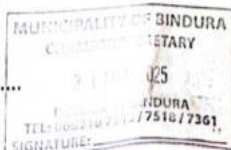
We acknowledge receipt of your letter on the above received on 19 March 2025.

Please be advised that you have been granted permission to carry out your research as requested. The permission is granted on the following conditions: i) that you should share the results of your research with Council in order for her to learn from your findings ii) that the research findings will be used for academic and no other purposes.

Should you require any more information in connection with this issue please contact the undersigned.

Yours Faithfully

  
W. Masimba  
Chamber Secretary  
**For Town Clerk**



## MBEWE DRAFT

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6%

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PUBLICATIONS

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STUDENT PAPERS

### PRIMARY SOURCES

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3	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1%
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