MEDIA POLARISATION IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF THE HERALD AND NEWS DAY COVERAGE OF THE 2013 HARMONISED ELECTIONS

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This research is dedicated to my father and son who bear the same name and are equally important to me and to my mother from whose loving hands my son and I have flourished.
ABSTRACT

The study was set to discover if the Zimbabwean media paying particular attention on the coverage of the 2013 Harmonised elections. The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that contribute to the polarisation of the media and the consequences it has on the audience as well as the media as an entity. The research employed primary and secondary collection methods. Interviews were carried out as part of primary data collection and the research also referred to articles and other literature produced during the election period. The findings revealed that indeed the Zimbabwean media is polarised and the coverage of the 2013 harmonised was no exception. This polarisation is as a result of the financial backing of the media house, the environment they operate in and the different editorial policies that govern their publications. The study therefore recommends that there be created a neutral governing body to regulate the operations of both media houses; the state and private media so as to uphold the duty of the media which is to inform, educate and entertain.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**RELEASE FORM** ........................................................................................................i

**APPROVAL FORM** ..................................................................................................ii

**DECLARATION FORM** ............................................................................................iii

**DEDICATION** ...........................................................................................................iv

**ABSTRACT** ...............................................................................................................v

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..........................................................................................vi

**CHAPTER ONE** ......................................................................................................1

1.0 **INTRODUCTION** ..............................................................................................1

   1.1 Background of study .....................................................................................1
   1.2 Statement of the problem ..........................................................................3
   1.3 Purpose of the study ...................................................................................4
   1.4 Significance of the study ..........................................................................4
   1.5 Assumptions ...............................................................................................4
   1.6 Research objectives ..................................................................................4
   1.7 Research questions ...................................................................................5
   1.8 Delimitations/boundaries of the study .......................................................5
   1.9 Limitations and/challenges .......................................................................5
   1.10 Definition of key terms ..........................................................................5
   1.11 Proposed chapter outline .......................................................................6

**CHAPTER TWO** .....................................................................................................7

2.0 **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK** ..............7

   2.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................7
   2.2 Agenda setting and framing theory ..............................................................7
   2.3 Discourse theory ........................................................................................9
   2.4 Literature review .......................................................................................11
       2.4.1 Media polarisation ............................................................................11
       2.4.2 Influence of political economy of the media on the framing of political reality ..................................................................................11
2.4.3 The media and elections.................................................................13
2.4.4 The media and the framing of reality..............................................15

2.5 Zimbabwean press and politics.........................................................18
2.6 Conclusion..........................................................................................20

CHAPTER THREE..........................................................................................23

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY...........................................23
3.1 Introduction..........................................................................................23
3.2 Research design....................................................................................23
3.3 Research methodology.........................................................................24
3.4 Population and sample........................................................................25
3.5 Sampling method..................................................................................26
3.6 Data collection methods.......................................................................26
  3.6.1 Primary data..................................................................................26
  3.6.2 Secondary data.............................................................................27
3.7 Validity and reliability.........................................................................27
3.8 Data presentation and analysis............................................................27
  3.8.1 Data presentation..........................................................................28
3.9 Ethical considerations..........................................................................28
3.10 Conclusion..........................................................................................28

CHAPTER FOUR............................................................................................30

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.......30
4.1 Introduction..........................................................................................30
4.2 Data presentation..................................................................................40
  4.2.1 Polarisation....................................................................................41
  4.2.2 Coverage of elections.................................................................43
  4.2.3 Coverage of atmosphere during election period..........................45
  4.2.4 Media interpretation of Zimbabwe’s 2013 harmonised elections....47
  4.2.5 Influences on a paper’s coverage and reporting............................48
  4.2.6 Implications of media....................................................................48
CHAPTER FIVE ......................................................................................................................... 52

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH........................................................................................................... 52

5.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 5

5.2 Summary .......................................................................................................................... 5

5.3 Conclusions ...................................................................................................................... 5

5.4 Recommendations ......................................................................................................... 5

5.5 Areas for further research ............................................................................................. 55

REFERENCES ................................................................................................................... 56

ANNEXURE ....................................................................................................................... 6
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMH- Alpha Media Holdings
ANZ- Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe
AU- African Union
GPA- Global Political Agreement
ICG- International Crisis Group
IMPI- Internal Media Panel of Inquiry
JUICE- Jobs, Upliftment, Investment Capital, Environment
MDC- Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-T- Movement for Democratic Change- Tsvangirai
MMPZ- Media Monitoring Project in Zimbabwe
NCA- National Constitutional Assembly
SADC- Southern African Development Community
SMS- Short Message Service
SPT- Solidarity Peace Trust
UN- United Nations
UNESCO- United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation
ZANU-PF- Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZBC- Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZEC- Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZIMASSET- Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZSE- Zimbabwe Stock Exchange
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Since independence Zimbabwean media has been dominated by both state and private media. As a result Zimbabwean people are exposed to the opinions of the public media and the private media. This diversity has had a bearing on the coverage of political activities in the country. According to Chuma (2008) the media are active participants in the construction of political reality including elections. Their role in framing events is not value free and neutral; often media framing of elections or any other event for that matter is characterised by selection, salience and salience of one version of reality against the other (Entman 1989; Hall 1997). The Zimbabwean press has been dissected into two broad contesting factions; the pro-government press and the anti-government press.

Since the beginning of the period marking the Zimbabwean crisis, late 1999 and early 2000 (MMPZ 2000; Chuma, 2004; Moyo 2005; Chari, 2008), Zimbabwe’s media environment has represented a politically polarised media system (Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe 2000; Ndela, 2004). The formation of the MDC in 1999 coincided with the launch of the Daily News which observers say played midwife to the birth of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change to which it provided a mouthpiece” (Moyo, 2005: 5). To this extent Moyo argues that without The Daily News the opposition forces of the country could not have made the strides they did since 1999. In contrast to a critical press, historian Terrence Ranger (2004) observes the rise of a patriotic press that vehemently and uncritically sought to explain and defend government’s policies in the rise of opposition and criticism. Ranger (2004) argued that this patriotic journalism that was championed by the government press and ZBC were bent on garnering support of government policies that were becoming unpopular. It argues that the media in Zimbabwe has continued to be polarized but perhaps the degrees of polarity differ in different historical epochs.

This study sought to find out if the press under study continued this polarized reporting of the 2013 elections as previous elections and other issues in Zimbabwean political life of it
changed. The study takes cognizance of the fact that the 2013 election was different from the 2000 and the 2008 elections in that there was less political tension and strife, which could have led the media to report on political life in ways different to the degrees of polarity they had done in previous elections. Zimbabwean media has thus proved to reveal the political thrust in its daily on goings as evidenced by the variance in reporting of the same issues. In a bid to neutralise and monitor the media the recent Zimbabwean constitution of 2013 set up the Zimbabwe Media Commission which is the governing body of the media. According to the IMPI report of 2013, there are now several media houses operating in Zimbabwe, which include Zimpapers (publishes the Herald, Chronicle, Sunday Mail, Sunday News etc), Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) publishes Daily News, Daily News On Sunday and Weekend Post, Alpha Media Holdings (AMH), which is a privately owned company that publishes two daily newspapers, News Day in Harare, Southern Eye (in Bulawayo) and two weekly newspapers, Zimbabwe Independent and The Standard and Financial Gazette (Private) Limited, publishers of The Financial Gazette newspaper.

Media systems are created, their characters shaped by competing political interests that seek to inscribe their own values and objectives on the possibilities facilitated by a complex combination of technological, economic and social factors. (Saunders 2012). In Zimbabwe there is a divergence of political attitudes to ideological extremes; principally between ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change. Government policies and programmes such as the Land Reform Programme, Operation Murambatsvina, the “Look East” policy, and the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio----Economic Transformation (ZimAsset) received mixed reviews from both the private media and state-run media praised. Chuma (2014) states that despite being influenced by editorial policies in the manner in which they report on certain issues, journalists are also responsible for Zimbabwe’s media as they play an active role in shaping the country’s political reality. Chuma observes that “three models of journalism were applied in his framing of the 2000 election, that is, “patriotic”, “oppositional” and “independent nationalist”. He contends that “the press became one of the most visible sites of struggles for control of the State.”

It is then notable that during times of intense political contestations, the media become a political boxing ring where ideological battles are fought with journalists as protagonists. Writing a month ahead of the 2000 elections, the then Herald editor Bornwell Chakaodza admitted that his newspaper had “exercised its democratic right and press freedom and made
the political decision to support the majority shareholder in Zimbabwe Newspapers—the government of Zimbabwe, in its election campaign” (The Herald, May 4, 2000). In the 2008 elections the private media headlines screamed that the MDC had won with a majority of 78% of votes whilst the state media awarded the win to ZANU-PF. According to Moyo (2012) the election received different reports from the different media poles with the private media being accused of marketing western notions and interests whilst the state-run media prided itself in upholding the independence and integrity of Zimbabwe shunning western ideologies. Saunders (2012) further states that while the form a media system assumes at any one time is by no means the direct expression of a state’s political priorities, it makes little sense to ignore the impact of political actors and political values. Media policy, the systematic attempt to foster certain types of media structure and behaviour, is a deeply political phenomenon. This can be noted in the various changes that the Zimbabwean print media and the media in general has gone through over the years. It will focus on both private and state owned media. A special interest will be on the 2013 harmonised elections and focus will be on the coverage of the pre-election period, the elections and the immediate post-election period by newspapers from either side of media houses. This study argues that the polarization of the press in Zimbabwe has not been limited to the framing of the Zimbabwean crisis but has also extended to the coverage of Zimbabwe’s 2013 elections. It argues that the media in Zimbabwe has continued to be polarized but perhaps the degrees of polarity differ in different historical epochs. This study sought to find out if the press under study carried out polarized reporting of the 2013 elections as is evident in previous elections and other issues pertaining to the Zimbabwean political life. Given the high polarisation in society, the media has reflected the same effect along political lines, and this polarisation has contributed to the decline in circulation as readers have become disenchanted by the biased editorial content.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The problem is with the polarisation of the media in Zimbabwe. It affects a broad spectrum of the Zimbabwean society from the politicians to the ordinary Zimbabwean on the street. Each printing house reports in line with the house’s beliefs as well as those of their sponsors. This leads to polarised media as different sponsors have different perceptions as well as expectations on political, economic and social issues. Polarisation of the media in the past has resulted in the outbreak of violence with people from different political parties clashing. Madhuku (2012) argues that there is no objective reporting in Zimbabwe as the printing press
is an essential tool for politicians and they [the politicians] use the tool efficiently. Macmillian (2009) states that the media is the medium of communication between the citizens and the state hence its main role is to create a platform of communication between the two. In Zimbabwe the press is not playing the said role but rather a tug of war within itself as state and private media bombard each other simultaneously giving biased reporting. Therefore the readers are deprived of objective, relevant and accurate coverage of issues.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The study aims to understand the reasons behind polarisation as well as analyse the effects it has on society as well as the media fraternity.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study is significant as it will focus on the shortcomings of Zimbabwean print media in its obligation as a median of communication. It will help media houses to revise their policies as well as the manner they report. The Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services will also benefit from this study as it will bring out the disparities in the Zimbabwean media and this might prompt the responsible ministry to be less lenient to such cases. The academic universe will be obliged to put into perspective the findings of this research and further studies will be inspired by this study. Newspaper readers will be given insight on the need to fully analyse and be objective when reading articles as well as widen their scope when it comes to printed press as opposed to having just one or two preferences.

1.5 Assumptions

   i) The Zimbabwean media is highly polarised and this is eminent in issues of national security and stability such as the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections.

1.6 Research objectives

i) Investigate the causes of media polarisation

ii) Analyse the consequences of media polarisation to both the franchise and the society

iii) Analyse the media coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections (pre-election, election and post election period) paying particular attention on the views aired by different media houses
1.7 Research questions

a) What are the causes of media polarisation?
b) What are the effects of media polarisation on society and the media community?
c) How was the 2013 harmonised elections covered by the press?

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The study focused on the polarisation of the media in Zimbabwe. It will focus on the print media as it is the most diverse factor in Zimbabwean media. The study focused on the Herald and News Day only as representatives of state and private media respectively. Focus was on the 2013 harmonised elections that is to say the pre-election period, the election itself and the post election period.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The research faced the challenge of the unavailability of the initial set of respondents as they were out of office most of the time or occupied. During the interviews some questions were not satisfactorily answered as the respondents were guided by their editorial policies and ethics. As result alternative respondents were used and the research compensated for these questions by dwelling more on the ones the respondents were comfortable with.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Media is defined by McQuail (2000) as the collective communication outlets or tools that are used to store and deliver information or data. It is either associated with communication media, or the specialized communication businesses such as: print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television), and/or publishing’

Polarisation refers to the divergence of political attitudes to ideological extremes. Polarization can refer to such divergence like public opinion or divergence within certain groups.(Frymer 2011)
Public/state media as defined by Monroe (2004) state media or state-owned media is media for mass communication which is ultimately controlled and/or funded by the state

Elections are defined as a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Elections may fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and for regional and local government (Mueller, 1996).

Manifesto, Robertson (2004), a manifesto is a published verbal declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of the issuer, be it an individual, group, political party or government. A manifesto usually accepts a previously published opinion or public consensus and/or promotes a new idea with prescriptive notions for carrying out changes the author believes should be made. It often is political or artistic in nature

1.11 Chapter outline

Chapter one focuses mainly on the introduction of the study. It consists of the background of the study, which in this case is a background on Zimbabwean media in relation to polarisation and coverage of issues of national importance. It also highlights the relevance and purpose of the study. The research problem and assumptions are also part of chapter one.

Chapter two is made up of the literature review and theoretical framework. It brings forth concepts and notions surrounding media polarisation and contextualises it with the Zimbabwean situation. It also expands on the theories used in the study; the agenda setting and framing theory and the discourse theory.

Chapter three is the research design and methodology. It outlines the research design used to carry out the study and the methodology used to collect, present and analyse data. The research is qualitative in nature hence the qualitative methodology was used.

Chapter four is on data presentation and analysis. It presents the data gathered as well as offers a discussion and analysis of the findings.

Chapter five is made up of the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is on literature review and theoretical framework. The study was informed by framing and discourse theory. Literature reviewed for this study include the works of Chuma (2005, 2008, 2010); Moyo (2004, 2005); Chari (2009), Willems (2009); Ranger (2003, 2004) and Chiumbu (2004) among others who have written on the framing and representation of Zimbabwean elections and political life in general. Literature for this study was thematically reviewed and presented.

2.2 Agenda Setting and Framing Theory

Agendas are principles of organisations that govern events in terms of what is topical and deemed most important that the audiences have to know and remember Goffman (1986). Agenda-setting theory, first developed by McCombs and Shaw (1968) argued that, the mass media set the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues over others. How the mass media make other issues more important and prominent than others is a central tenant of this study which seeks to investigate how the media under investigation set an agenda regarding how we ought to have read the 2013 elections according to their frames. Having studied the way political campaigns were covered in the media, Shaw and McCombs found out that the main effect of the news media were agenda-setting, i.e. telling people not what to think, but what to think about. Often the media has assumed effects in setting what is topical and what the audience has to read and make more important than others as investigated by this study. This study is thus also concerned in highlighting what the media under study pointed to people to read and suggested possible meanings and interpretations of these texts.

Agenda setting is however usually referred to as a function of mass media and not a theory McCombs (1972). As a function of the media, agenda setting is an obvious manifestation of media power during elections. This study used the agenda setting theory to answer issues of how the power of the media to set what needs to be done, or given consideration by the audience in terms of what the media think is more important than the other. According to
Cohen (1968) the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but they press is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about (Cohen (1968). In as much they may not be successful all the times as alluded to by Cohen, this study is also of the conception that the media to some degree do posses the power to influence public views and opinions regarding certain matters in political life. Agenda setting theory is of importance in this study as the two press under are considered to have played a pivotal role in telling the Zimbabwean audience what not to think but what to think about and how to think about certain news events during the 2013 harmonized presidential election. Agenda setting theory thus explains well the correlation between the rate at which the press cover a story and the extent to which people think that this story is important. This should benefit this study in seeing what the press gave more prominence to some issues over others during the election period and what was made silent over and the possible ways to account for these biases.

It is possible to theorise how the more prominence a story is given in the media over others the more the public may begin to see the issue as important and give it consideration. It is possible for this study to see which stories were covered and which news angles were given prominence by the two newspapers under investigation to see how they framed political life. Agenda-setting is believed to occur because the press must be selective in reporting the news. News outlets act as gatekeepers of information and make choices about what to report and what not to report. What the public know and care about at any given time is mostly a by-product of media-gate keeping (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Gate-keeping is thus another central concept to agenda setting, which speaks of how certain information is or is not published over others because of the editorial bias of the press. This study is informed thus, that, there are certain gates which can be opened for certain views to be published while other gates are closed for certain views to be not published by the press. The Herald and The Daily News are viewed by this study as gate-keepers of information as they open and close some views to the public. This study makes the argument that gates are opened for certain views that are in line with the political economy of the newspapers under study as the mainstream press has always played the role of gate-keepers in Zimbabwean political life (Moyo 2007). Agenda setting works well through “selecting some aspects of perceived reality and make them salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation and or treatment
recommendation (Entman, 2006). These arguments assist this study to explore and explain the aspects of Zimbabwe’s 2013 political reality that were made prominent than others. But most importantly is to find out the causal interpretation of these representations to see what the two press from their polarised views gave as reasons for their representations.

This study also takes the theory of framing as central to and as an extension of agenda setting theory which this study discusses concurrently seeing they speak to the same discipline. The theory of framing views the media as active participants in the framing of political reality (Chuma 2008) including elections. Framing is the way in which the media resort to particular interpretative structures to set particular events within their broader context (Chuma 2008). Thus the essence of framing is “selection to prioritise some facts, images, or developments over others, thereby unconsciously promoting one particular interpretation of events (Norris, Montague and Just 2003; Chuma 2008).

This study seeks to investigate how political reality surrounding the 2013 harmonised presidential elections was framed in ways that defined a problem, the cause of the problem and the perceived solution to that problem by the press under investigation. This is because frames are not neutral, neither are they value free. They seek to define who the problem to a situation is and what has caused that problem as well as how it can be averted. This is done through the power of the media to choose a certain news angle over the other, to be loud and vocal over an issue or to be silent over another issue. Silence and salience are therefore important framing techniques (that is what the media seem to emphasise more or less-inclusion and exclusion). This study also sought to explore how framing works through priming, that is, positioning of news stories in order of importance, for example what will be at the front page of a newspaper should be deemed as more important than the others thereby conveying a certain political meaning. This study is interested in finding out what was said about the 2013 presidential elections and how it was said by the respective newspapers under study in light of their political economy of framing news. The study sees frames of news references as far from being innocent, however it accepts that the media constitute the bellwethers of democracy and that their coverage of elections is a pivotal feature of that democracy.
2.3 Discourse Theory

This study is also informed by the theory of discourse which is owed to the work of French post structuralist Michel Foucault who theorised about discourse as a system of representation. Commenting on Foucault, Jesse Tseng cited in Ndau (2013) concluded that by discourse, Foucault meant ‘a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. For him discourses never consist of one statement, one text, one action or one source- as such there exist many discourses. In relation to this study, there are many discourses enunciated by the press under study and these discourses should not be treated as a passive reflection of reality but an active construction of that reality (Ncube 2011). Discourse theory is significant to this study as it helps the study to analyse the various texts and discourses produced and circulated by the press under study as acts of power. The world view of one newspaper over the other is dependent on how it discursively constructs that world to the rest of the world. This theory is important in that it helps us to analyse and see what was said about the elections and why what was said about them was actually said- implying a deeper analysis of texts in relation to their implications on power.

Political meaning is attached to everything that happens in a given society. For Foucault (1998) discourses qualify, disqualify and regulate what can be said about a certain topic in a specific historical context. As such depending on the newspaper’s ownership, control and funding patterns there is a unique way in which that publication frames certain realities. It is these discursive frames of reference of the 2013 presidential elections that this study is interested in finding out. Most obviously and interestingly for this study is the conception that there are certain truths which can be said by The Herald which obviously cannot be said also by the Daily News and vice versa-because of their editorial policies.

Discourses are sites for the exercise of social power and the production of discourse may also constrain and challenge the exercise of power (Foucault 2003). It thus brings an understanding into the way scholars think of power as diffused and not concentrated, embodied and enacted than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them’ (Geventa 2000). “Power is everywhere” and ‘comes from everywhere’ so in this sense it is neither an agency nor a structure Foucault (1998), rather it is a kind of ‘metapower’ or ‘regime of truth’ that pervades society, and is in
constant flux and negotiation. Those that seek power as Foucault (2003) goes on to warn must seize discourse in order to do so. It is interesting for this study how the press under study use their various discourses to seize power to frame the 2013 election process and results in ways they deem advantageous to them. The media (The Herald and New Day) become special sites for the production, circulation and dissemination of ideological discourses. The study sees there being many but conflating and opposing discourses which compete for power. This study is concerned about how the two newspapers under study have polarised views regarding Zimbabwe’s 2013 elections and how their imagination and representation of these elections is an act of power in itself. Therefore how they oppose each other and challenge each other’s reality in favour of their own versions of reality becomes central concern this study seeks to address.

2.4 Literature Review

2.4.1 Media polarisation

Media polarisation is defined by Frymer (2011) as the division of the media through a difference in politics and ideologies. He further states that political polarization has implications for mediating institutions, namely the media, elections and political parties. As Mann and Ornstein (2010:44) argue, political polarization and the proliferation of media sources have “reinforce[d] tribal divisions, while enhancing a climate where facts are no longer driving the debate and deliberation, nor are they shared by the larger public.” As a result a polarised media results in a divided community.

Political scientists such as Moyo (2010) and Mandaza (2012) argue that in a polarized environment, it is easier for the media and interest groups to inform voters if elected officials are following through on their campaign promises because politicians are forced to take more distinct stances on policy issues. Thus, as postulated by Carrol (2001) polarization can facilitate the elucidation of political actions and then help or harm representatives who do not follow through on their undertakings. It is also a platform used to undermine other contenders in the political arena. Althusser (1971) concurs that this increases accountability of politicians to voters, but it can also be detrimental since in some circumstances it is more important for politicians to focus on unexpected or long-standing issues instead of their campaign promises. This is notable in Zimbabwe where during the campaign period most of the media
coverage on the MDC-T was on how they were afraid of rigging and the unfairness of the election playing ground.

Similarly, some scholars have argued that a positive consequence of polarization is that it leads to strong and definitive political parties that offer explicit platforms and messages to voters. Giving voters more distinct choices leads to more participation through voting, working on campaigns, expressing opinions to representatives and giving to candidates or particular causes. According to Frymer (2011) as polarization reinforces party affiliation and makes policy positions less ambiguous, voters focus more on the differences in substantive policy views of candidates as opposed to personal attributes and voters are more likely to cast policy-oriented ballots. Therefore, some political scientists have found that “the rise of polarization is not necessarily a bad thing for the polity overall” as more differentiated political parties can benefit voters when using different communication channels.

2.4.2 The influence of political economy of the media on the framing of political reality.

Literature on media framing of events suggests and agrees that framing is a product or is influenced by the political economy of the media. The various frames of references that the media employ in their coverage of events including elections is influenced by the political economy of the media- that is the ownership, financing and control of the media by powerful elites has a telling effect on media representations of political reality (Golding and Murdock 1995; Saunders 1999; Ndela 2005; Ranger 2004). Observing the Norwegian media’s representation of the Zimbabwean crisis, Ndela (2005) observed that the ownership and funding mechanisms influenced the Norwegian media’s framing of the Zimbabwean crisis and how it was treated as a ‘typical Africa story’ of tragedy and despair. While he looked at the Western media, he argued that “African countries are generally given very scant coverage except when there is a big event going on like a catastrophe. While this study looks at notable events like elections that the media have framed, a study of local media is important to see how the local political economy of the media has influenced news framing of political life.

Moreover, studying the local media makes the current study worthy and important as it looks at the impact of politics to this field. Moyo (2005) has documented how the so called independent press in Zimbabwe have been critical in providing alternative views to Zimbabwean politics. He argues that the private media because of their ownership and
funding mechanism have naturally been associated with opposition politics. “The Daily News was a catalyst to the birth of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change to which it provided a mouthpiece” (Moyo 2005; 5) to the extent that it has been suggested that without The Daily News the opposition forces of the country could not have made the strides they did since 1999.

This study therefore stems from the critical political economic notion of the media as concerned with the array of forces that exercise control over cultural production as limiting or liberating the public sphere (Graham and Murdock 2008; 78). In light of this view, this study argues that the Zimbabwean media framing of the 2013 elections was influenced by the political economy of The Daily News and The Herald as postulated in previous studies. However, this study, as informed by critical political economy, argues that the changes in the political, social and economic and cultural environment during the 2013 elections was different as from what the studies have earlier documented. This calls for a study of the politics of the 2013 elections context which could have influenced the way the media framed the elections.

However, like the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (2000) and Ndela (2004) have observed the media in Zimbabwe are polarized along political party lines to the effect that we have what is known as ZANU PF media and on the other extreme MDC media. Ndela (2005) argued that the polarization of the media the period describing the Zimbabwe crisis has had serious implications on the media selection of news sources and commentators who also comment from a politically polarized angle (Ndela 2004; Chuma 2005). Chuma further noted the restlessness of the civil society driven by local and foreign interests that came out to oppose government. This confrontation led to the bifurcation of the press, which became sharply polarized along simplistic pro versus anti-government editorial stances (Chuma 2005; 54). For example political tensions during the 2000s during the Fast Track Land Reform which resulted in land seizures, the fall of the Zimbabwean dollar around the year 1997, the economic collapse and other factors (Mano 2005; Chuma 2008; Ranger 2004) are very different to the Zimbabwe we know post GNU. Ranger (2004) has argued that in the midst of this crisis the publicly owned but state controlled media especially the ZBC and the Zimpapers engaged in a patriotic journalism that sought to divide the nation between patriotic and sellout Zimbabweans. While times and factors defining the Zimbabwe crisis might be changing or have changed since the period under the Global Political Agreement (GPA)
which led to obvious ease of political tension between Zimbabwe’s main political parties, there is still polarization in the Zimbabwean media.

Resuscitated enmity between opposing political elites had a telling effect on the reporting of the 2013 elections because ownership and control of the press by both political and economic hierarchies have a telling effect on media's framing or representation of political issues, in particular elections (Chuma 2005; 8). This study agrees that the representation and framing of political debate by the press during the period under investigation should be viewed against the background of fiercely competing political interests (Chuma 2005). The framing of news particularly the 2013 elections should be seen as premised on the sociology of news production that “journalistic framing of a given issues is influenced among other factors the sociological norms and values, organizational pressures and constraint, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines and ideological or political orientation of journalists” (Scheufele 2000; 307).

This study argues that media frames should be seen as constructed representations that reflect broader relations of power in society driven by political and economic crises (Chuma 2008; 26). In light of the arguments proffered by the above literature this study sought to establish how the political economy of the newspapers under study influenced their coverage of the 2013 elections. The News Day is owned by Alpha Media Holdings, a privately owned company. The Herald under the Zimpapers is partly owned by the public but controlled by the Government through the Ministry of Information and Publicity.

2.4.3 The media and elections

The media have a democratic function in elections and they must inform the public about the goings on of political parties, inform and educate the public about the voting processes and anything pertaining to the election information, (Okuneye and Nwokeafor 2013). The media are also used for political campaigns and the introduction of political party candidates and their manifestos. In most cases they help the audience in making choice of a candidate to support. According to Chuma (2000; 25) the issue of framing of elections has drawn and continues to draw academic attention in Africa and Zimbabwe and elsewhere because it is a significant pointer to the role of the media in a democracy. The media thus have a key function in a democracy of which elections are a key tenant of democracy. Ward (2004)
posits that elections are important because they are democratic instruments deployed by nation states to ensure democratic rights and participation of citizens in political decision making. This study argues that 2013 elections are a key marker of democracy in Zimbabwe and the media have a democratic function in covering elections processes.

The current study also argues that despite their power in society, how the media are organized, owned and produced has a direct bearing on their democratic function (McChesney 1997). However the mainstream press has always played the role of gatekeepers in Zimbabwean society. Chuma (2008) postulated that the media coverage of elections is one of the foremost roles of the media in the constitution of citizenship. In the case of the Kenyan media, Ochieng (1996) said that the press should be a political sphere or public forum accessible to all contending political players, groups and interests whose objective is the deliberation of common public issues or affairs and the framing and influencing of public policy. They strive to create an informed citizenry regarding electoral processes. It is therefore right to say that the media go beyond informing the citizens, they actually constitute the very political subjects they purport to serve, interpolating those subjects into the social reality they redundantly invent.

An analysis of the media’s role in a democracy is pertinent as McNair (2003; 14) argues that knowing that political contests are largely mediated experiences an understanding of contemporary political processes is inconceivable without an analysis of the media. This is because the media constitute the bellwethers of democracy, their coverage of elections is in itself a pivotal feature of democracy which can help strengthen or weaken democratic participation. In the constriction of the press in Zimbabwe, Moyo (2009) observes the rise of citizen journalism; journalism practiced by ordinary citizen Zimbabweans which is deinstitutionalized and de-professionalized as having aided to the expansion of democratic processes in Zimbabwe. Moyo (2009:48) observes that through the use of Short Message Services (SMS) “people jostled to exchange information via text messages and voice calls during the 2008 elections. Sharing and exchanging of information through mobile phones as studied by Moyo is an exhibition of media democracy in action. This study argues that the press just as the SMS should also be seen as providing for electoral democracy though conventional and restricted by factors such as the political economy. The press should continue to be regarded as the bellwethers of democracy, therefore studying the influence of the Zimbabwean press and its democratic role in Zimbabwe’s 2013 elections is important.
In view of the democratic role the media played during the Zimbabwean elections and politics in general this study agrees with Moyo (2009) that in instances where the opposition are weak or non-existent, owing to state repression, the independent press can occupy that role of opposition (Ronning 1988). This study seeks to see if the press in Zimbabwe during the 2013 elections played a role of opposition in favour of opposition political parties and an opposition force to government in itself. Moyo (2005) is firm of the role ascribed to the Daily News that it played midwife to the MDC, and had it not been for the paper the MDC could have died a still birth like other independent newspapers in Zimbabwe. But new times call for new thinking as articulated by James Curran (2013) and it serves better to understand if the same newspaper ascribed the midwife status of the MDC went on to play the role of nurturer to the same party during the 2013 elections. This study however argues that while the media have a democratic function they have completely demonstrated prejudice in favour of one political party over the other.

2.4.4 The media and the framing of reality

Objective coverage of events such as elections has always been problematic both in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, which has birthed polarized interpretations (Ndlela 2005; MMPZ 2000; Waldahl 2004). Literature on representation and framing contend that the media are not passive reflectors of reality (Hall, 1997). Framing is central to the coverage of elections by the media. Framing, thus, refers to the way the media resort to particular interpretive structures to set particular events within their broader context (Chuma 2008). The essence of framing is selection to prioritise some facts, images, or developments over others, thereby unconsciously promoting one particular interpretation of events (Norris, Montague and Just 2003; 11). This study is interested in finding out how the press under investigation actively selected, frame, constructed and reconstructed the political reality of the 2013 elections.

This comes from the standpoint that the media are not merely reporters of reality but they are actively involved in the construction of that reality. According to Chuma (2008) the media are active participants in framing reality. Herman and Chomsky (1988), state that contrary to being a dispassionate observer of the electoral contest, the media are active participants who often take strong positions and sides. In their propaganda model Edward Herman and Naomi Chomsky (1963) pointed to the role the media play in propagating the views of dominant
political elite in society. Zimbabwean elections have often been characterized by media propaganda as competition to get international recognition intensifies during elections. Ndlela (2005) states that it is characterized by the usual ZANU PF rhetoric of regime change agenda of the private media and the MDC.

In light of the political economy of the media, the media should be seen as part of a grand hegemonic project that seeks to proffer one reality as the reality for all. The current study is interested in investigating the role played by the Zimbabwean media in constructing the 2013 election reality. The study concurs that whatever was covered by the media regarding the elections was not a passive reflection of issues on the ground; rather it was a construction of that reality. Commenting on the press in Ghana, Hasty (2005) cited in Chuma (2008; 25) observes that the media framing of political life was “so driven with political passions and vivid personal narratives that it could not measure up to the liberal notions of objective journalism.

This study contends that in Zimbabwe and elsewhere the public media versus private media biases in framing political reality is a dominant act. It therefore sought to see how the press under study has been influential in framing the political reality that surrounded the 2013 elections. It is premised from the standpoint that the coverage of different elections in Zimbabwe by both the private and state media has been along partisan lines rather than policy issues. The study sought to see how the framing of elections becomes an exercise of turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of political allies, while exaggerating the weaknesses of the newspapers political opponents.

The current study gained from these insights of the partisan political nature of media framing of political reality. It is possible however that the degrees of media polarity along political partisan lines can be different from the Zimbabwean scenario in the case of the Nigerian and Ghanaian media as postulated by Nyamnjoh (2005) and Hasty (2005). Bernstein (2010) have argued that in terms of framing Zimbabwean politics has been reduced to a total potent and near universal political binary; either you repudiate Zimbabwean elections or you are labeled pro- Mugabe. James Curran (2000) postulated “new times calls for new thinking,” hence the times under which current study is premised on should be seen as different not only in terms of the degree of media polarity but also with regards to the political and economic climate prevailing during the time which also contributed greatly to the degree of polarity. This study
was therefore wary of the fact that the media are not mere conduits of political debates, but are also active participants not only in contributing to the debate but also seeking to influence the outcome of that debate.

Commenting on the role of the Zimbabwean press in framing the 2000 election Chuma (2008) notes that the elections was divided along patriotic, oppositional and independent nationalist reportage. Immediately after the year 2000 historian Terence Ranger also observed the emergence of a patriotic press that framed Zimbabwe’s political reality along narrowly divided lines of patriotism. Media framing of political issues in Zimbabwe has thus always been selective and partisan. The media’s active role in the construction and representation of political reality is a notable issue especially taking cognizance of the fact that the media are themselves political actors in the representation process.

The selection and salience of some issues over others is a key tenant of framing theory which has been used by the media in framing reality. Central to framing is salience which gives importance to aspects of perceived reality (Morna and Walter 2009). This study seeks to find out what issues where made more salient than others in the framing of the 2013 political reality. By making more issues salient and others silent, the media are thus setting an agenda on how we should interpret reality. Chari (2011) looked at the photographic representation of Zimbabwe’s operation ‘Murambatsvina’ by the Standard newspaper along certain ideological grounds. While Chari focused on photography as a system of representation this study is interested in looking at texts and discourses surrounding the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe. Just as pictures have been used to represent political life, texts and discourses are also used to represent political life. The study is premised on an analysis of sampled articles that represented political life during the 2013 elections. Discourses just like pictures provide an in depth to the representations in the media.

Moreover, the media provides context and history which pictures do not provide. It is pertinent to study as the discursive construction of the 2013 election reality. Entman who has made significant contribution to our understanding of framing has argued that framing gives a particular problem definition to events, a causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation for the item prescribed (Entman 1953; 53). In light of the above, current study seeks to establish not only what was given prominence by the press; it seeks to find out what the two newspapers under investigation defined as the problem to the 2013
election from their standpoints and the solution which they prescribed to the problem. This is important for this study to address because there are puzzles over why one particular frame is adopted and is prevalent over another by the media and as to why one reality is reinforced as the dominant view by the media (Gutlin 1980; 6).

2.5 The Zimbabwean press and politics.

There is a relationship of symbiosis between the media and politics. Some have suggested that journalists and politicians dine and eat together. Journalists demand scoops and news stories from politicians while politicians demand media attention. The two should not be seen as independent, they are very dependent. According to Chiumbu (2004), central to all political processes has been the role of the media as a conduit for political discourses of nation building, sovereignty and others to be expressed through the media. The representation of political debate during the period under investigation should be viewed against the background of fiercely competing political interests that dominated the political life that began during the late 1990s. Chuma (2005) postulates that the Zimbabwean press has both shaped and been shaped by shifting contestations within and between different centers of power during the second and third part of independence as representation of critical national debate in the press was largely limited to competing interests in business, labour and politics. The state in Zimbabwe has always shown interest in influencing the manner the press conducted its business. According to the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (2008) and Moyo (1992) the Zimbabwean state has always tightened its grip on the press and as a result the coverage of elections, both presidential and parliamentary, elections in Zimbabwe has always been biased in favour of government.

According to Moyo (1992) the relationship between the press and government of Zimbabwe during the 1990s when the ZANU PF government was contesting against the Zimbabwe Union Movement (ZUM) resulted in the public press equating voting for the opposition with choosing ‘death.’ This led to what Moyo (2010) has termed the death of the public sphere in Zimbabwe which was characterized by the press being used as a hegemonic tool by the political elite. Ranger (2004) argues that the press as intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwe revolution tradition…an attempt to reach out to youth over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values.
Chuma (2008) states that this closure of democratic space resulted in both an oppositional press and oppositional politics in Zimbabwe motivated by the incessant actions of a paranoid and authoritarian state. This militant press sought to delegitimize ZANU PF and the state, foregrounding the economic and political blunders made by the ruling party. This press saw the future of the country safe in the hands of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). According to Mano (2005) the opposition press and politics used the “nothing-can-ever-come-out-of-this-wretched-government”. The Zimbabwean press has thus had a politically polarized relationship with political elites. This could also have influenced their reportage of the 2013 elections.

The relationship between the public press and the government during the 2000 elections was characterized by the state using the press for purposefully defeating the MDC while the opposition press was used by the opposition politics to do the same to their political opponents mainly the ZANU PF (Editors 2000). Chuma (2008) states that outright and uncritical support for the ruling party politics by the public press was accompanied by a media blackout of the opposition MDC except for events that cast the latter in bad light. The private press was blamed for meddling and straying into politics and provoking media war by engaging “no holds barred-bare fist brawls against their opponents and showing extreme hatred, irreverence and an obsession with the ouster of government (Chakaodza; The Herald May 4 2000). This makes current study address these issues with the aim of seeing the extent to which these media blackouts where continued from the 2000s to the 2013 elections and the degree to which uncritical reportage of the ZANU PF party has continued and biased reportage of the MDC has been maintained especially by the public media and the inverse being true of the private media. Demonstrating the connivance between the public press and politics, Chuma (2008) observes a general news coverage of concentrated state activities of politicians mainly ZANU PF such as launching of manifestos, campaign trails or attacking the opposition and its alleged foreign handlers. While it did this for the ZANU PF politicians, issues that dominated the MDC election agenda such as the economy, corruption, good governance and the rule of law were generally shunned by the public press as election topics (Chuma 2008).

This study was also interested in investigating the coverage of the 2013 elections by The News Day and The Herald newspaper, looking at their political biases and favour as well as their lack of. It sought to establish the coverage of political parties from issues ranging from
the launching of manifestos during election campaigns and to the reportage on the actual election process and outcome itself. Chuma (2008) further argues that the relationship between the press to capital and the state in Zimbabwe’s history has always been conditioned by socio-political and economic developments during these periods. In these epochs the public press has always been viewed as an appendage of government in the name of nation building and development. Saunders (1991) notes that during this time of political contestation the relationship between government and the private press became confrontational. Chuma (2008) argues that the private press has always been a significant terrain for mobilization of issues around poverty, democratic rights and corruption especially as expressed by those opposed to government. An observation by the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe is that the press in Zimbabwe has always been politically polarized between the privately owned commercial press and those publications produced by pro-government controlled publishing company the Zimbabwe Newspapers. Because of political tensions in the country the privately owned media approached Zimbabwean politics from the perspective of being the voice of the voiceless providing alternative perspectives to the ruling political elite. In this binary nature of representation of political life Habermas (1992) noted that representation of political life has never innocent and the private press has not provided the critical discursive realm in the ideal sense of the public sphere. The element of Habermas’ public sphere is important for this study to see if the press in Zimbabwe during the period under investigation approximated or even represented the Habermasian public. This study argues that this widely celebrated public forum did and does not exist especially in the Zimbabwe context where the media have been refeudalised and bifurcated along political party lines.

In the Zimbabwean politics, an increasingly restless civil society, driven by both local and foreign interests, has always come out to oppose government. The confrontation on the ground led to the bifurcation of the press, which became sharply political along simplistic pro versus anti-government editorial stances. As a result of this the private press has been directly commandeered by government officials through the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services. Chuma (2005) notes that this relationship of the press to politics resulted in the hiring and firing of editors for not sharing enough patriotism which gave birth to a culture of cheerleading and self-censorship in the press especially The Herald newspaper. This study seeks to find out if this culture persisted even to the period under study and if so the degree to which this change transpired. The media thus become an endless campaign
most of the times involving coverage of rallies where political information is disseminated to voters to attract their support.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the theories and literature that informed and guided this study. It has reviewed the theories of representation and framing as well as the discourse theory. The study is anchored on these theories as they assist in revealing how certain aspects of the media have a bearing on the society such as its representation and framing of the political reality and how the discourses pertinent in the media influence peoples way of thinking and their perspectives of the society they live in.

The study has also reviewed literature on framing of political life in Zimbabwe from notable scholars such as Chuma (2005), Moyo (2004) and Ranger (2009) among others. Papers by these scholars have helped provide an insight on the relationship between the media and elections as a reflection of the political environment in Zimbabwe. This has helped the study in asserting if the Zimbabwean media is polarised and what other scholars think of the Zimbabwean media in relation to the coverage of important national events such as the 2013 harmonised elections.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that were used while conducting this study. The chapter justifies the type of research design used and the research methodologies applied in the study. This chapter also discusses the data collection methods, data analysis techniques and data presentation methods that were used in this study. This study relied on qualitative research methods to explore the polarized representation of Zimbabwe’s 2013 Presidential elections in The Herald and The News Day. It thus relied on qualitative data gathering, qualitative data analysis and qualitative thematic approaches to present research findings as will be discussed in the chapter. This chapter also discusses the population and sampling techniques used in this study.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions of validity, objectivity and accuracy (Kumar 1999). For Mouton (1996; 175) a research design plans, structures and execute the research to maximize validity of research findings. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables one to effectively address the research problem De Vaus (2001; 113). The research design used is a case study of The Herald and News Day’s representation of the 2013 elections. The research used qualitative data gathering, qualitative data analysis and presentation techniques. Gillham (2000) defines a case study as an investigation to answer specific research questions which seek a range of different evidences from the case settings. The Case Study approach is especially useful in situations where contextual conditions of the event being studied are critical and where the researcher has no control over the events as they unfold. This was used in studying the bigger contextual factors that helped shape the discourses produced and
circulated during the 2013 elections by the two newspapers under study. This research design was ideal for this study because a case study as postulated by Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) allows for an intensive descriptive analysis of a phenomenon being investigated. The research was able to give a detailed description of the way the newspapers under study represented the elections from polarized views. Using this approach, qualitative data gathering techniques such as key informant interviews and document analysis were used. A critical discourse analysis on purposively sampled news articles was carried out. Data collected was analyzed and presented using a qualitative thematic analysis.

3.3 Research Methodology

Palys (1997) defines research methodology as a procedural logic followed to conduct a scientific inquiry to test a key hypothesis or answer a research question to enable the research to predict and explain specific phenomena by amassing various scientific facts in an endeavour to tacitly agree to the epistemic imperative meaning and quest for truthful knowledge. A qualitative research approach focuses on the way that human beings make sense of their subjective reality and how they attach meaning to it (Bryman 2006). This approach was used so that the research would be able to address the issue of media polarisation in Zimbabwe focusing on The Herald and News Day’s coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections. This is plausible because it involves descriptive data that are made of words rather than numbers (Rudestam and Newton, 1992) which allow for depth and analysis. The research appreciates the influence of culture and tradition in present day life and activities. Their historical contexts shape how they encode and decode meaning from media texts and discourses. The research will assess if the 2013 harmonised election reality was socially constructed (Bryman 2006) rendering a complete objective and neutral view impossible to achieve. This is because the values of researchers and participants become an integral part of the research (Smith 1983).

For this study this means that the polarized representation of Zimbabwe’s 2013 elections is understood as a social construction by the two newspapers under study. While using qualitative approach Merriam’s (1988) assumptions that learning how people make sense of their lives and experiences places the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis was applied. The research was interested in the processes, meanings, and understanding brought about by the two newspapers (Creswell, 1994). It is plausible for this study to use a qualitative interpretive approach to understand how the editors and journalists
of these newspapers as actors in themselves were influenced by professional and other context based factors that control the media. The discourses used by these newspapers to represent the elections can be understood by interpreting them however subjective these interpretations may be. Qualitative research methods to gather data such as critical discourse analysis on purposively sampled newspaper articles to find out how they presented polarised views of the 2013 presidential elections. These were followed up by key informant interviews with newspaper editors and journalists to find out how they represented the 2013 elections. These allowed the researcher to validate and get a deeper understanding of the issues at hand by probing respondents.

3.4 Population and Sample

The term population in social science research is used to refer to the larger pool from which a smaller sample to be studied is drawn from. (Saunders, 2010). A research population is the collection of all units of study about which the research wishes to make specific analysis and conclusions (Welman, 2007). This study focused on the polarized representation of the 2013 harmonised elections period from April to August 2013; hence the population included people who contributed directly to the coverage of the said elections. This period coincided with the pre election reporting, actual coverage of the elections and post election reporting. This enabled the study to get a holistic appreciation of issues raised around the elections from the time before they were conducted, when they were conducted and the after math which usually coincides with announcement of results. How the media frame all these processes was pertinent. There are quite a number of daily newspapers that circulate in Harare from both the state and private media, but the study focused on the Herald and News Day. Part of the study population also included two editors and four journalists of the newspapers who were subjected to key informant interviews to find out how they reported on the elections and the forces and constraints that made them report in the manner they did.

Latham (2007) argued that sampling is a process whereby the researcher takes a representative group from the bigger population and uses this group as the basis of collecting data and gathering information for the research. According to Bryman (2001) in qualitative research it is not always that the selected group is a true representation of the population, as such research findings from qualitative studies should not be generalized. Nonetheless this representative part of the population can be studied to learn something about a larger grouping (Patton (1990). The sample consists of key informants and relevant newspaper
articles. The research is based on at least ten selected articles published by the two media houses during the election period and key informant interviews with at least three people from each media house. The sample was selected so that it answers the research questions and meets the research objectives. A lot of newspaper articles were published during the particular period and a large number of journalists were involved hence the research used purposive sampling to select the relevant articles and individuals to be part of the study. This analysis and interaction enabled the study to get first hand information on the issue of media polarisation and how the players in the fraternity viewed the whole issue, is it a myth or a reality that Zimbabwean media is polarised.

3.5 Sampling method

To find out how The Herald and News Day represented the 2013 elections from polarized points of view this study employed the purposive sampling technique in the selection of articles to subject to journalists and editors to conduct interviews with, (Doherty 1994). This method was used because the research wanted to avoid random selection of newspaper articles and journalists and editors. There was purposive sampling so that selections fitted with the purposes on the study, thereby using the purposive sampling technique designed by (Babbie 1990). As the name implies this technique is based on selecting elements for study based on the intentions of the research. This is a type of non probability sampling technique that focuses on sampling techniques which involve the investigation of units based on the researcher’s own subjective prior knowledge or judgment, (Latham 2007). While using the purposive sampling technique, (Latham 2007) warns that for one to use this method, one must know some details and characteristics of the population that give him/ her, an advantage in the actual selection of those most appropriate and most suitable elements for study. From the population sample, the study purposively selected ten stories that directly revealed the polarisation of the media in the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections. While these were many the study selected with bias and subjectivity in stories that best helped answer the research objectives. Since the case study is of a political nature the key informants from the two media houses was made up of two newspaper editors, two political editors and two political journalists thus making up a panel of six key informants. These respondents were selected as politics is their field of speciality and elections are a national as well as political event hence these individuals were in a better position to provide insightful responses to the topic. These respondents were equally selected from the two media houses for the sake of equal representation as well as to avoid bias in the analysis of the data.
3.6 Data collection methods

Data collection is the application of the measuring instruments to a sample or cases selected that have been selected for investigation (Duffy 1985). This study proceeded by way of a qualitative approach. It used qualitative data collection techniques such as key informant interviews and document analysis. To collect secondary data, the research used document analysis to go into The Herald and News Day Archives to get newspapers which were later subject to a critical discourse analysis to find out how they represented the 2013 presidential elections in light with media polarisation.

3.6.1 Primary data

To get a deeper meaning data was gathered from those who write and publish the stories. Newspaper editors and journalists were interviewed to get primary data on how they covered the elections processes and results. Therefore primary data was collected from key informants through in-depth interviews which were carried out on a one on one basis.

3.6.2 Secondary data

This study relied on the use of document analysis to find out how The Herald and News Day produced polarized versions of Zimbabwe’s 2013 harmonised elections. Archives are places where records such as newspapers, books, magazines, tapes, etc are kept for future reference and use. Document analysis uses publicly available records and documents as sources of data. These can be libraries, information centres, recording studios, websites, etc. The study used articles from the Zimpapers library (publishers of The Herald) and the Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) library (publishers of the Daily News) to find newspapers under the study period to subject to a critical discourse analysis. In the archives newspapers were identified that were relevant in conducting a purposive sample selection of specific articles. Selected articles were subjected to a critical discourse analysis which was also aided by key informant interviews. Commentaries and journals published in relation with the media coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections were also used.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Kerlinger (1980) defines reliability as the degree to which studies or measures are free from error and can yield consistent results over repeated studies on the same population. There is a high possibility that when a different set of people are made part of a similar or the exact
study the findings will be different. This is so because people bear different perspectives of
the same thing and qualitative research has no absolute end result as opposed to quantitative
research. Someone could generate different findings on this population because qualitative
researches are highly subjective and replication is difficult because of things such as level of
education, culture and political grounding. There is bias and multiplicity of interpretation
regarding this and other qualitative studies. For the same reasons as above this study does not
claim validity. Gregory (1992) Validity is the extent to which the text measures what it
claims to measure with precision. A measure is valid if it measures what it claims to measure
doing so closely. While the theories and methods used are plausible to measure the concerns
of this study, they do not claim absolute validity. Messick (1995) warns that validity cannot
be claimed by a single study. There is need for multiple studies to validate what one claims as
truth. The findings and methods of this study thereof remain open to criticism and multiple
interpretations. Generalizations of these study findings cannot be made. The findings remain
limited to this study only.

3.8 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

3. 8.1 Data presentation

This is a qualitative research and it employed qualitative data gathering and data analysis
techniques. Research findings were presented using a qualitative thematic approach. Thematic
analysis is a method used to present and analyse data in primary qualitative
research (Harden 2006). Data analysis involves the practice in which raw data is ordered and
organized so that useful information can be extracted from it (Smith, 2003). The study used
qualitative thematic analysis to extract major ideas that came out of from the study, assign to
them headings and describe them linking them to relevant literature. this approach was used
to synthesis the findings of qualitative research that address questions about peoples’
perspectives and their experiences (Harden 2004) about how they framed and represented the
2013 harmonised elections. Therefore the data was presented in a narrative form. The
presentation was characterised by stating the finding and elaborating on it in the descriptive
form

3.9 Ethical considerations

While conducting this study there was informed consent of research participants. They were
provided with assurance of confidentiality of the information they provided to the study and
that this was an academic study hence the information granted will be used for academic purposes only. However everyone who took part in this research was based on voluntary participation and no bribes or inducements where used to entice participants. Care was taken to minimize damage to the concerned stakeholders by not misrepresenting their views.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter was on research design and methodology. The chapter discussed the research design and the type of research methodology that was employed in this study as well as giving the advantages of using them. The study is qualitative in nature hence the research design and methodology are in line with the qualitative research paradigm. The chapter discussed the sampling method and data collection methods that were used in this study. These include primary data from interviews with key informants and secondary data from purposively sampled newspaper articles and literature on the 2013 harmonised elections. The chapter also discussed the data analysis and data presentation methods that were used in this study. The data was presented in a narrative and analysed using critical discourse analysis which is a component of thematic analysis. Also highlighted in this chapter are ethical considerations which were observed during the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the findings of the research through descriptive presentation and interpretation. An analysis of the data is done using thematic qualitative data analysis. Data collection was done through in-depth interviews with main respondents as well as document analysis. As the research is based on media polarisation in Zimbabwe focusing on the 2013 harmonised elections data collection was carried out in the media fraternity with the two different media houses involved Zimpapers represented by the Herald and Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) represented by the News Day. Their views on the matters raised by this research will be presented and analysed in this chapter.

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data collected through secondary sources influenced the drawing up of the interview questions for the key respondents. Articles published by the Herald and the News Day on certain issues were read and differences noted. According to Hammersly (1992), the aim of social research is to represent the reality not to reproduce it, hence the study will present the findings as they were stated by the interviewees and as they appear in the newspapers and literature referred to.

In the pre-election period it was noted that certain political parties featured more in certain newspaper publications. The News Day bore more of the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) campaign advertisements whilst the Herald bore more the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) advertisements. Also noted during the research were commentaries in the herald which were more critical (negatively) of the MDC-T whilst in-cognito playing the ZANU-PF tune. The same was also noted in the publications
of the News Day though they did not make it so obvious as the Herald. The two media houses also had mixed sentiments concerning the timing of the election. According to a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2013) the elections were a return to protracted political crisis, and possibly extensive violence, was likely, as Zimbabwe held inadequately prepared presidential, parliamentary and local elections on 31 July 2013. Conditions for a free and fair vote did not exist. Confidence in the process and institutions was low. The News Day voiced the belief that the country was not yet ready to hold elections and should make do with the inclusive government until the time was right. It stated that the Government of National Unity (GNU) still had some outstanding mandates and these had to be fulfilled before the country embarked on elections.

According to a report by the International Crisis Group (2013),

*The voters roll is a shambles, security forces unreformed and the media grossly imbalanced. The electoral commission is under-funded and lacked time to prepare. Concerns about rigging are pervasive, strongly disputed results highly likely. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) face severe credibility tests.*

The MDC-T were reluctant to undergo the elections as according to their leader, Morgan Tsvangirai the elections were rigged. The News Day published on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of July 2013 bore the story;

*MDCT leader prime minister Morgan Tsvangirai yesterday told Top officials of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) that his Party had unearthed a massive scam where ZANU-PF allegedly plotted To rig the forthcoming harmonised elections using state security agents and A hired Israeli intelligence organisation’ Tsvangirai also alleged that section 56(1) of the Electoral Amendment Act which Prohibited double voting had been clandestinely deleted, a move he described as Highly suspicious.*

The News Day on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of July 2013 also published a story on how the notorious *Baba Jukwa* had predicted a landslide win for Tsvangirai in the presidential race and on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of July another follow up of the rigging article was published on how both the MDCs (Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai and the Movement for Democratic Change) had ruled out free and fair elections and had taken up a plea which was rejected by the constitutional court.
An article by the New Day stated that thousands had been denied to register on the voter’s roll (10/7/13) as the ZEC deadline had been met for voter registration. The paper argued that the manner in which the exercise was being carried out was at a snail’s pace hence the period ending with only a few people managing to be registered. Alexander and McGregor (2013) stated that the Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT) was responsible for the analysis of the voting patterns during the election and it confessed that the information available was inconclusive though some bussed in the MDC-T stronghold of Harare, assisted voting occurred in some rural constituencies; and very substantial increase in voter turnout correlate with ZANU-PF victories in Mashonaland Central, East and West provinces. The Newsday also published that the Southern African Development Committee (SADC) had plead with the constitutional court to take on board these concerns before embarking the country on elections but these pleas were ignored.

The Herald on the other hand labelled the rigging allegations as a myth in a commentary by one of their reporters on the 26th of July 2013. The article read,

*But what is important is that our local law governing elections allows the contesting political parties to be involved in issues such as the location of polling stations, the inspection of the ballot before and after the votes have been cast, the counting process, the verification and the sealing of the ballots.*

*Practically, all the political parties, through polling agents or their contestants, are involved in every aspect of the voting process. And to exorcise the fear of those that are paranoid of the country’s security forces, the law ensures that no polling station is located in a police station, barracks, cantonment area or other place where police officers or other members of the defence forces are permanently stationed.*

*It also guarantees that voting does not take place in any place “which, for any reason, may give rise to a reasonable apprehension on the part of voters as to the secrecy of their votes or the integrity of the electoral process”*  

*...When one exhaustively reads and understands the Act there is no conceivable way that an election can be rigged.*

In this article parts of the constitution were quoted which are applied and followed to make contending participants as part of the whole election process. There was an article in the Herald stating that the AU and SADC were satisfied with the preparations made by
Zimbabwe prior to the elections and everything was up to the expected standard hence there was no question on the credibility of the elections. Herald on the 26th of July 2013:

*South Africa yesterday said the prevailing peace in Zimbabwe bodes well for credible harmonised elections....* The SADC Troika meeting held on July 20 in Pretoria also noted progress with regards to the elections in Zimbabwe. Panellists at a mass public opinion institute seminar in Harare concluded that the country had met the fundamental provisions to hold credible elections. ...Cde Musarara said “This year’s is one of the elections that is in fact the most peaceful to the extent that the AU has commended us. As ZANU-PF, we are adhering to the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. We don’t care what the Americans or British will say. If AU has okayed us and SADC okayed us, that’s it we are moving forward.

According to a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2013) states;

*The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) face severe credibility tests. They must avoid a narrow technical approach. If the vote is deeply flawed, they should declare it illegitimate and press for a re-run after several months of careful preparation or, if that is not possible, facilitate negotiation of a compromise acceptable to the major parties.*

The above quotes show that the state-run paper, the Herald was the only one that was rooting for the nation’s ability to hold credible elections. Opinions from other civic groups such as the ICG raised the same concerns as those of the opposition parties and the private press. Due to the difference of opinion on the preparedness of the country to hold elections by different stakeholders the media was bound to give biased reports on the events as influenced by the sponsors.

The presentation of party manifestos during the election period was also noted during the research. Both media houses published the different manifestos by the two major parties in the election, ZANU-PF and MDC-T and these were put under scrutiny by analysts and they aired their views. The ZANU-PF manifesto was Taking Back the Economy: Indegenise, Empower, Develop and Create Employment and the MDC-T manifesto was Jobs, Upliftment, Investment Capital, Environment (JUICE). The MDC-T manifesto pledged that;
“the MDC party recognises that the people of Zimbabwe are suffering. We know that the solution lies in revitalising and transforming the economy. The MDC economic plan, presented in our JUICE strategy will elevate Zimbabwe into a stable, growing and inclusive economy based on the rule of law.

The MDC plan is aimed at uplifting all citizens in all corners of the country and will create one million jobs by 2018 and a US$100 billion economy by 2040.”

The ZANU-PF manifesto on the other hand stated;

“A particularly telling aspect of the success of the indegenisation of land by ZANU-PF, which has greatly contributed to the generation of local incomes and export earnings is the emergence of A1,A2 and communal farmers who are now marketing tobacco.....So essentially, 1.7 million real sources of livelihoods have been created; 1.7 million lives that have been touched. There are some people who have also benefitted from residential properties and stands built on peri-urban farms acquired by government. As a party over the next five years we will create value from the 51% of asserts that will be unlocked from the 1138 foreign companies that are ear marked for indigenization. Conservative estimates indicate that $7,3 billion in value can be generated through this process. It is hoped that the new government will be able to leverage to create additional value from both local and international financial markets.”

The Newsday propounded that the ZANU-PF manifesto was not impressive simultaneously the MDC-T manifesto was analysed by the Herald in the same light. In a commentary published by the News day the ZANU-PF manifesto was analysed as ‘dog food’ whilst in the herald a commentary was published stating that why should people go for the juice offered by MDC when they can get the orchard ZANU-PF was offering. The difference of opinion of the two media houses in light of the two manifestos highlighted the party being backed by the media house subtly. According to Tendi (2013) ‘patriotic history’ and a narrative about the importance of peace during campaigns, the benefits of ZANU-PF’s Fast Track Land Reform Programme, and a pledge to fully indegenise and economically empower the generality of Zimbabweans were Mugabe’s key campaign messages. Zamchiya (2013) argues that MDC-T rallies were ‘electrifying confidence boosters’ in which Tsvangirai appeared as a ‘statesman’ and delivered an appealing message concerning ‘social and economic values consistent with a
social democratic state’. But there were worrying signs amid the jubilation. The party suffered from a severe dearth of campaign funds, and Tsvangirai failed to counter effectively Mugabe’s invocation of liberation struggle history and indigenisation. Raftopaulos (2013) posits that the manner in which each party marketed its manifesto enabled it to be more alluring to the electorate.

On the day of the election both papers urged Zimbabweans to vote wisely as well as peacefully. On the 31st of July 2013 the herald had a commentary which was titled ‘the Jacob and Esau story’ were they urged Zimbabweans to vote for a party that was revolutionary and would protect the legacies of the liberation struggle. Both papers agreed that the outcome of the elections was uncertain as it was D-Day for both presidential candidates, Robert Mugabe for ZANU-PF and Morgan Tsvangirai for MDC-T and little focus was placed on the parliamentary and council races. The presidential election was the major highlight of the 2013 harmonised elections. According to a report by the SPT (2013) states that although the 2013 harmonised elections included the local council elections and national assembly elections the presidential election outcome was the main focus of both the local and international communities.

The election results were announced gradually with the council and parliamentary results being announced once the constituency results were announced. For the presidential election outcome the results were announced on the 2nd of August 2013. These were announced as they arrived from the polling station in phases such that it took three days before the final results were out. The presidential elections showed a victory for the ZANU-PF candidate R G Mugabe with a 61% majority vote over the MDC-T’s candidate’s, M Tsvangirai’s 33%. After some accusations by the MDC-T of tampering with the election results the Herald on the 11th of August 2013 released an article which stated that the Zimbabwe Electoral Council (ZEC) confirmed that the elections were tamper-proof and there was no way anyone could have rigged the election as no political party had an upper hand in the whole election process. The Newsday also published a story in the same vein stating that the resignations that took place at ZEC soon after the elections left a lot to be desired and it confirmed the accusations of ballot paper tampering. News Day on the 7th August 2013,

*The sudden resignation by two commissioners of the Justice Rita Makarau-led Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Zec) has raised eyebrows.*
Mkhululi Nyathi resigned as a commissioner on Friday last week citing the manner in which the commission had handled the just ended harmonised elections which manner he said “lacked integrity”. Nyathi is a lawyer by profession. Professor Geof Feltoe, also a professional lawyer and a lecturer of law at the University of Zimbabwe, followed suit on Monday. He said in his resignation letter that he was going back to teach and that he had advised he would take this course soon after the harmonised elections.

There was also a difference of opinion considering media coverage during the whole election period. In the Herald of 28 July 2013, ZEC stated that all the political parties involved in the elections were given adequate space and air-time in the media.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Zec) says the coverage of the 2013 election period by both the public and private media has been fair, contrary to MDC-T claims that some sections were deliberately avoiding featuring the party’s activities. Responding to a specific query regarding the MDC-T’s coverage by the national broadcaster, Mrs Ndlovu said the party had failed to provide its programme schedule in line with standing regulations. The seminar was organised by electoral commissions forum of SADC countries.

“Has the media coverage for political parties been fair? Yes, it has been fair because our preliminary investigations and monitoring have shown that all political parties have received equal coverage from ZBC and other private media organisations,” she said. “Who the media organisations choose to endorse is another matter which has nothing to do with rules and regulations of fair coverage. However the problem which is arising is that some parties have not been abiding by regulations which require them to submit their lists of programmes to all media organisations including ZBC for them to be covered. It, therefore becomes difficult for the broadcaster to know where these parties will be conducting their rallies so that they can be covered. That is why it ends up as if ZANU-PF is the only party getting coverage from ZBC. Apart from its advertisements being aired on national television, the MDC-T enjoyed wide coverage from the private media... the same applies to print media; you will realise that the same parties that are crying foul are the ones which have received wide coverage from private media. So our assessment as ZEC is that both the public and private media have been covering political parties fairly.”
A press release by the Media Monitoring Project in Zimbabwe (MMPZ) in 2000 stated that the media coverage during the election period was more in favour of ZANU-PF than the other contending parties. This press release was published in the News Day on the 31st of July 2013.

First of all MMPZ is unaware of any regulations in the electoral law that require all political parties to submit a list of their programmes to all media. But not withstanding this ‘excuse’ it is common cause that ZBC’s bias favouring ZANU-PF its presidential candidate is so extreme that it clearly falls into the category of propaganda. Indeed, it is the gagging of alternative opinion, as practised by ZBC and its state owned sister media organisations that has contributed so much towards creating an environment of intolerance and bigotry in Zimbabwe’s political arena as well. It is precisely for these reasons that MMPZ and its colleagues in civil society have been calling for urgent reform of these state-owned media institutions and especially the national broadcaster, as part of wider media reforms that allow other players to compete in the broadcasting sector that will provide the diversity of opinion and views that democracy needs to survive. Until Zimbabweans are freed from the tyranny of thought imposed by the national public broadcaster we cannot claim that the media environment is conducive to the holding of a credible election.

According to ZEC’s election media report (2013) all parties received media coverage in either the state or private media and as a body they concluded that the coverage of these parties was fair and adequate.

Comments on the elections were varied in the different articles reviewed during the research. The herald bore articles that had the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), SADC and most sectors of the Zimbabwean society and corporate world commended the country and its citizens for holding peaceful elections. The News Day also commended the country on its peaceful conduct during the elections. The MDC-T was urged to accept the results and let the country move on by National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) chairperson Lovemore Madhuku. The News Day on the 6th August 2013,
National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) chairperson Lovemore Madhuku has urged MCC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai to accept defeat and allow the country to move forward. The MDC-T leader has rejected the results of the just ended harmonised elections as ‘null’ and ‘void’. Addressing journalists at the NCA head office in Harare yesterday Madhuku said the only way the country could move forward was to accept the outcome of the election because the process was peaceful. “Given the peaceful nature of these elections and the compelling need to move our country forward the NCA urges the losers to concede defeat and take the country out of the permanent election mode it has been in for several years now,” Madhuku said. “In urging the losers to concede defeat and let the country move on the NCA is not losing sight of the continuing desire by the people of Zimbabwe to have democratic and genuinely free and fair elections.”

These articles also included another that stated that President RG Mugabe was also shocked by the outcome of the elections. Both media houses agreed on the outcome of the elections despite the outbursts by MDC-T leader’s declaration that the Mugabe victory was ‘null’ and ‘void’.

In-depth interviews were also carried out with newspaper editors, political editors and political reporters from both media houses. Respondents from both media houses agreed that the Zimbabwean media is polarised and they also stated the same factors which cause polarisation. These include the influence of sponsors, the environment they operate in, the economic situation as well as the interference of political players in the field of media. Respondents from the state media agreed that the presentation of the 2013 harmonised elections was polarised whilst the private media were firm in defending their position by stating that:

“Our coverage might have led people to believe that we were vying for a certain political party but the truth is we covered all stories on all political parties”
The respondents were also asked of their newspapers’ interpretation of the 2013 harmonised elections. Their responses highlighted that as media houses their duty is to express what the people think and feel hence as a media house they did not possess an interpretation. The state media stated that the picture they painted on the elections was based on the comments of the accredited observers who took part in the election whilst the private media stated that they reported issues as they are and leave the interpretation to the readers.

Respondents from both the media houses revealed that their papers covered the same issues during the election period. These ranged from political rallies, selling of manifestos, electorate sentiments ad bread and butter issues. Both media houses’ agreed that their coverage presented the situation on the ground as they produced facts in their publications. The three respondents from the state media were in agreement that;

‘The elections were a necessary step in the development of the country

as they would bring an end to the stalemate brought about by

the inclusive government’

The private media on the other hand stated that;

‘We presented the reality that was prevailing in the country at that moment

the country was in continuous election mode when focus could’ve been made

on reviving the economy’

Respondants from both media houses agreed that the political parties received adequate coverage during the election period as opposed to the dominance of ZANU-PF on the national broadcaster, ZBC. As an entity the print media as noted by the respondents still has room for improvement in terms of its coverage in general and also on issues of national interests.

The literature and the responses by the key informants managed to answer the research questions as well as fulfil the research objectives. The research was able to bring out whether media polarisation existed or not and also managed to derive the views of the people in media on the consequences of media polarisation. Responses and findings also gave way to the
identification of several themes relevant to the study. Therefore the study will use thematic analysis to find out the themes that are dominant in this research as well as highlight the underlying similarities in both the primary data and the secondary data.

The study applied the thematic analysis method to analyse the data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The research used thematic analysis which is in line with the theoretical framework and purpose of the study. Kawlich and Holland (2004) propound that this analysis is characterized by identifying themes and patterns in data. It focuses on how various participants explore the same phenomenon. In this case the research focused on how participants explore the phenomenon of media polarization in Zimbabwe paying particular attention to its coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections. In coding the data the research compared data from a previous interview to new data from another interview thereby creating a coding scheme which helped in identifying patterns in data. This is known as constant comparative data, Kawlich 2004). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) posit that when one is using thematic analysis, one should take note of recurring words, phrases and topics being discussed in the excerpts taking note of topics, vocabulary and emotions exhibited by the participants. These observations are then set in coded categories designed by the research to create the relevant themes and patterns. Merriam (1998) suggests that selection of categories is intuitive and should reflect the purpose of the research questions.

4.2.1 Polarisation

In Zimbabwe the media has been accused of carrying out partisan reporting resulting in it being polarised by both local and international politicians and academics. According to Kumbuka (2015), it is no secret that the Zimbabwean media is polarised as he argues that the ZBC and Zimpapers’ publications push ZANU-PF propaganda under the banner of ‘patriotism’ simultaneously labelling private media houses as megaphone for the opposition MDCs. Moyo (2011) on the other hand posits that the private media are being influenced by western ideologies and pushing the agenda for the oppositions. However , it must be said that the private media houses are not without fault. Apart from sometimes carrying sensational headlines that seek to depict ZANU-PF as a party without any legitimate support and its leadership as supine prisoners of the securocrats, they rarely critique the MDC formations (Mukunda and Ngwenya 2010)). There is a pattern in which articles are presented in the press and these constitute to the polarisation of the media. Mlotshwa (2013) states that media polarisation is characterised by sharp divisions in the way a country’s newspapers, and
broadcast media cover events and people. This is usually evident in political news as there is a huge disagreement between media houses on what qualifies as news in their space. In Zimbabwe, the result of these divisions has been that the stories carried by the public and private media on one single rally differ creating a credibility crisis for the media. Kumbuka (2015) states that a difference of opinion is acceptable but once it gets to the extremes it fuels the polarisation. In the interviews that were carried out the respondents had mixed feelings when it came to media polarization. Those from the Herald clearly agreed to the existence of polarisation in Zimbabwean media.

One journalist from the state media commented;

Yes, Zimbabwean media is polarized though there is a misconception that Zimpapers is government owned. Zimpapers is a public company that is why it is found on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE) hence it is owned by the public, though government is a major stakeholder so we push the agenda of the people. The so called private media which is owned by other interested parties serves to push the agendas of their investors. It is normal in business, `he who calls the tune pays the piper’. So the bottom line is the media is polarized because of who owns the paper as well as the editorial policy of the paper.

An editor from the private media responded;

Yes and no because polarisation can be defined as the incompatability of the two, private and state media because of fear of masters/superiors. Media polarisation is a creation of politicians who do not want to see a harmonised media because it reduces their life-line in medias and the political arena. This is evident on the appointment of editors who are appointed not on merit but their level of loyalty. Also some politicians sponsor journalists to tell their stories as a marketing strategy for their political endeavours creating a breed of journalists who “see,hear and speak no evil” of the sponsor.

Polarisation is therefore present in the Zimbabwean media and certain factors influence its manifestation as shown by the findings made during the study. From what was gathered polarisation is being blamed on sponsors and political players who manipulate the media fraternity in order to push their own agendas. In a study by Matsilele (2013) the research established that The Zimbabwean newspaper (also part of AMH) played, to a larger extent, an active role in challenging the ZANU PF-led government and gave a platform to the
oppositional Movement for Democratic Change. The conclusion arrived at in this study was that just like the state media, which promoted the government’s propaganda, The Zimbabwean did the same for the opposition parties in Zimbabwe. This show the influence that politics has on the presentations made by the media leading to the conclusion by many that Zimbabwean media is polarised.

The other factors that have contributed to the polarization of the media also include the search for markets, the environment that the media is operating in i.e political and economic. According to Masey( 2003) just as the medias duty is to inform, entertain and educate it is also a business entity and in business its all about the profits. In media one has to publish stories that sell and in most cases controversy sells more. Mahatshi (2014) states that with the prevailing economic situation in the country it is vital for media houses to publish stories that increases their sales and saves them from going under. With the controversy shrouding Zimbabwean media especially on political issues it is evident that the media houses are well aware of what sells and are manipulating the public’s interest in such issues by publishing controversial stories that arouse the public’s curiosity and interest. Therefore the media does stand to benefit from the existance and effects of polarisation.

The political atmosphere also has an effect on the media and its operations. Mlotshwa (2013) observes that, over the years, the state media has been coerced by in-house management strategies including the appointment of partisan senior managers. Even the appointment of editors is a political exercise used to reward journalists who are ‘more Zanu PF’ than the party’s president. As Kale (1997:265) points out, the media systems are products of the political systems, which create them. Whether press freedom exists in any country, he argues, can only be ascertained through an investigation of the government-press relationship within the context of the political, cultural, and economic realities of that particular country. He further contends: Every nation operates with a clear set of codes governing the media. These codes reflect the political ideology of the nation. Thus, it is clear that no meaningful discussion of any media system can be addressed without reference to the political ideology of the nation. (1997:265).

Therefore since in Zimbabwe the ruling party is ZANU-PF it is the only party that can monopolise media systems influenced by its ideologies, and these are most evident in state run papers as well as broadcasting services. A paper or media house that publishes or lobbys
for a different ideology is naturally considered a rival or the opposition leading to the polarisation of the media as different ideologies are brought forth from different angles.

4.2.2 COVERAGE OF THE ELECTIONS
The 2013 harmonised elections were an important event in recent Zimbabwean history as they were set to put an end to the GNU and pave way for the victor to rule the country solely. During that period the media kept the populace abreast of the events that were taking place as the political parties were preparing for the election, the election itself and the results of the elections. According to an article by the Herald (28/07/13), ZEC stated that the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections by both the public and private media was fair contrary to MDC-T claims that some sections were deliberately avoiding featuring the party’s activities. Mrs Ndlovu, ZEC commissioner, in the article said that apart from its advertisement being aired on national television, the MDC-T enjoyed wide coverage from the private media. The article quoted her saying:

‘...The same applies to print media; you will realise that the same parties that are crying foul are the ones which have received wide coverage from private media. So our assessment as the ZEC is that both private and public media have been covering political parties fairly.’

The MMPZ report published in the News Day (31/07/13) accused the national broadcaster of favouring ZANU-PF over other parties in its coverage of the elections. According to Alexander and McGregor (2013) the public media covered more biased on ZANU-PF whilst the opposition parties got coverage on the private media.

The interviews helped the study to understand the influences behind such coverages and why the different media houses covered the issues they covered. The interviewees were asked on the prominent issues that their papers covered and these are the responses;

An editor from the state media postulated that;

We covered the presentation of the manifestos by the candidates as well as the personalities themselves. The other issues that were covered were issues on how the candidates intended to do on issues of the economy, the parties’ treatment of sanctions and how the youth were
featured in all this; because the youth are the future and it was high time they were taken on board and made to understand their identity.

The interview at the Herald also showed that it covered stories on the peaceful environment and messages from the political parties and people’s expectations.

A journalist from the private media revealed that;

*We followed politicians and how they were selling their manifestos, talked to people of their aspirations and expectations from the political actors. Since the country is in continued election mode we looked at the humanitarian crises and the negligence to the economy. We focused on the bread and butter issues that the government was not prioritising.*

From the perspectives of the respondants, both media houses covered the same areas during the election period. They focused on the politician, the manifests and people’s expectations from the candidates and the outcome of the election. According to a Broadcasting Media Report (2013), throughout the campaign period, the news agenda of the broadcast media was dominated by three major parties’ planned events, especially the party leaders’ launching of party manifestos, campaign rallies, public pronouncements and recordings of them campaigning. During the campaign period, the parties that received the most detailed coverage of their campaign rallies and party activities were ZANU-PF, the MDC-T and the MDC while the other parties received limited coverage of the elections. The print media also covered the election in the same manner. Issues of national importance were covered by both the public and private media though in most cases their opinions were different.

In relation to the campaigns of the different major parties, Tendi (2013) states that Mugabe’s campaign was slick, well-funded, united and peaceful, in contrast to his 2008 presidential election campaign, which was underfunded, plagued with internal division and characterised by extreme violence in the June run-off. He further states that it is as a result of this organisation within the party that the media focused on the ZANU-PF campaign. Zamchiya (2013), states that the MDC-T campaign was flawed from the start because the campaign team headed by Nelson Chamisa was a technical mistake. There were arguments concerning the venues for rallies as well as to how they would be carried out. He further states that the emergence of other MDC’s (MDC, MDC’99) resulted in the party getting divided attention as well as media focus being on the internal misunderstandings within the party. The 2013
harmonised elections were effectively covered by the press with each party receiving their fair share of either bad or good publicity.

The study managed to ascertain that all political parties were given coverage in the print press and most grievances about coverage are directed to the national broadcaster. According to Matsilele (2013) posits that after a decade long multi-faceted political crisis, political parties in Zimbabwe signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of 2008 following the Southern African Development Community’s (SADC) mediated talks culminating in the formation of an inclusive government, leading to the emergence of diasporic media. Diasporic media in Zimbabwe is a phenomenon associated with the rise of robust political opposition to the former ruling ZANU PF regime. Accordingly, such media operated outside the purview of the contemporary legislative and after the revision of media laws was now readily available to Zimbabweans on the market. A number of anti establishment news media sprouted to challenge and offer resistance in the cyberspace and on shortwave and in print media. The research established that The Zimbabwean newspaper played, to a larger extent, an active role in challenging the ZANU PF-led government and gave a platform to the oppositional Movement for Democratic Change.

The conclusion arrived at in this study was that just like the state media, which promoted the government’s propaganda, The Zimbabwean did the same for the opposition parties in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean is also a member of AMH which Matsilele (2013) used in his study and the conclusion he drew up of the role of the private media in the political arena is viable. All political parties got coverage during the 2013 harmonised elections and the only difference that was there was the media houses which were used.

4.2.3 COVERAGE OF THE ATMOSPHERE DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD

Unlike the 2008 presidential election the 2013 harmonised elections were peaceful. Articles in the Herald (04/08/13) show that the observer teams that had come to observe the elections were happy with the manner that the election was held. The SADC,AU and UN commended Zimbabwe for holding peaceful elections. According to an ICG report (27/07/13) tensions were mounting towards election day and most observers anticipate the violence will be kept within bounds during the first round of voting, but prospects for serious bloodshed are real if a second round is needed to decide the presidency and control of the legislature. As in 2008, it would be orchestrated by parallel networks within the security services working outside
The situation is complicated by divisions within ZANU-PF, fragmentation of its associated youth, militia and veteran forces, and its reported growing links with criminal groups, such as the Chipangano gang in Mbare, outside Harare. There is no visible deterrent to violence; most incidents are not even reported to the police. Both the public and private media reported that the election period of 2013 was violence-free.

The independent bodies were anticipating the repeat of the 2008 election violence but evidence in the media shows that the reality during the 2013 election was a peaceful environment. The interviewees responded in the same manner when asked about the realities that their papers presented during the election period.

State media respondent;

*In a polarised environment it is difficult to trust each other but playing in the same turf, the sponsor is the one who determines the content and it's high time we see things the same way though we all agreed that the election period was peaceful.*

Private media respondent;

*We presented the situation on the ground and feel we did a splendid job in linking the politicians with the electorate.*

Though displaying a polarised front the newspapers did manage to agree that the election period was a peaceful one with both the electorate and aspiring candidates working together to maintain peace.

**4.2.4 MEDIA INTERPRETATION OF ZIMBABWE’S 2013 HARMONISED ELECTIONS**

Overall the elections were said to be free and fair by local, regional and international observers though a few thought otherwise. In the media the Herald ran stories that praised ZEC for hosting thoroughly done elections whilst the News Day published articles where Tsvangirai declared the election result ‘null’ and ‘void’ and his bid to try and contest the outcome as he claimed that the elections were not free and fair, further more they were rigged.
Harris and Hove (2015) evaluate that Zimbabwe’s election processes which many observers believe failed the test of being ‘free’ and ‘fair’ guided by the mandate of the GNU and the Global Political Agreement (GPA). The argue that the GNU was unable to institute reforms in the media and ZEC after the 2008 deeply contested elections because of President Mugabe’s tactics of subverting democratic electoral processes. Furthermore the evaluation asserts that the media and ZEC acted in ways which strongly advantaged ZANU-PF to the detriment of the opposition political parties including the MDC formations. Raftopoulos (2013) states that the elections, which once again established ZANU-PF’s mastery over the country’s political domain, were passed as free and peaceful by SADC and AU but contested by both MDC’s and the western countries. There is a broad spectrum of opinion when it comes to the issue of an election and according to Saunder (2011) events are as we perceive them and this perception is influenced by their proximity to our fantasies. It is therefore difficult to ascertain if the elections were free and fair and the media also had to publish their own perception of the outcome.

In the interviews the study managed to understand why the different interested parties labelled the elections as free and fair or otherwise. State media respondent;

*When people lose an election or the turn-out is not the one they expected*

*They are bound to cry foul so they would claim they were rigged or not free and Fair. As a paper we interpreted the outcome as it was described by the observers And monitors, and they described the elections as peaceful, free and fair.*

Private media respondent;

*As a paper we didn’t have a personal opinion but our opinion was people-oriented*  
*ZANU-PF~free and fair*  
*MDC’S (all formations)~not free and fair*  
*Civil and political analysts also conjure that the elections were free and fair. And That which constitutes a free and fair election is the same level of playing ground, Equal media coverage and no use of state machinery for any one particular candidate Or party and the 2013 harmonised elections were not like that.*
The public media houses based their interpretation of the elections on the regional and international observers and monitors who had been deployed for the exercise whilst the private media gave the defeated parties a platform to lament. This diversity shows the existence of media pluralism in Zimbabwe. According to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) media pluralism is the existence of viable public, private and community media as well as access to a range of platforms (including online) and a diversity of news content. For Zimbabwe’s the interpretation of the elections was made available to them from all angles and they had the opportunity to choose and decide which interpretation they chose to believe. According to Saunders (2011) the role of the media is to inform, educate and entertain its audience and it is the privilege of the audience to deduce meaning from that which is made available to them. Hence in light of the 2013 harmonised elections the media played its role and the electorate then drew their interpretation of the elections.

4.2.5 INFLUENCES ON A PAPER’S COVERAGE AND REPORTING

The factors that influence the reporting of a paper in this study were obtained from the responses given during the interview. The research focused on the editors as well as political reporters because these people work in the field of politics and are fully aware of the editorial policies of their papers. According to the Information and Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI) report (April-December 2014), there is no single body of rules or standards of ethics or professional behaviour to guide Zimbabwean journalists in the practice of their profession, although a few media organisations have crafted their own Codes of Ethics to guide editorial operations. Hence the editorial policies of the media house are the lighthouses to the journalists in their work. The report further states that VMCZ is not a governing body of the Zimbabwean media and unfortunately, Zimpapers and the ZBC are not part of the panel as they do not agree with their code of ethics. This policy of isolation by the public media shows that there still need to unify the Zimbabwean media despite the difference of opinion on certain matters.

The interviewees provided an insight into their editorial policies and how these influence the manner that they report in and the stories, commentaries as well as analyses that they publish in their newspapers. An editor from the state media passionately stated that;
The main factor that influenced our coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections was that we sought to protect and safeguard the gains of the liberation struggle and concentrated on the gains of the struggle as well as to hamper the influence of the west and get rid of sanctions and be able to choose our own leaders as a nation.

From the above response it is evident that the Herald is a patriotic paper and stands as a reflection of Zimpapers as a whole. From an editor working for the private media;

Our editorial policy as a paper is “listening media organisation and deals with and listens to the concerns of those we serve” we create conversation between the powerful and ordinary people with no qualms or boundaries. We give criticism based on solid facts, report the truth irrespect of public or private domain. We simply provide everyday news for everyday people.

The policy of the News Day is to tell the story as it is. It is the editorial policy that has influence on the content found in a paper. In a patriotic paper like the Herald one can come across issues like Vote for development says Zimpapers boss (29/07/13), Let’s defend African dignity, freedom, democracy(Sunday mail 28/07/13-03/08/13) and July 31 a crossroads (29/07/13). According to Chuma (2008) the media are active participants in the construction of political reality. Hence the contributions and perspectives offered by the media on issues concerning the politics of a country do have a bearing on how the people perceive their political environment. As such comments and articles will manoeuvre the reader to think more along those lines.

The News Day on the other hand carries articles such as Chief blasts ‘food’ campaigns (20/07/13), will the elections offer a wise government? (23/07/13) and Resignations expose ZEC( 07/08/13). The policy of the paper states that they are a listening paper and report what the public has to know. Such articles urge the reader to probe further into the issues being discussed as well as offer an insight on issues that the public media house does not publish.

The polarisation of the Zimbabwean press has had serious implications on the media’s selection of news sources and commentators who comment from a politically polarised angle (Ndlela, 2004 and Chuma, 2005). This then leads to different editorial policies which results in the diverse manner in which the same issue is covered by the private and public media.

4.2.6 IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA REPORTS ON SOCIETY
The media is the communication median between the people and the state/political players (Macmillian 2009). According to Gordon (2014), the media is the megaphone used by politicians to address the public on certain issues and create a certain communication line between the two. Arnolds (2013), argues that the media causes certain effects in the societal mindset for example when an issue is placed on the main headline the audience deems it important and pays more attention to it. Therefore, the media has the ability to control people’s way of thinking as well as the issues that people prioritise most. It is therefore important to also look at the implications that the media has on the society. An example of the implications of the media is the article published by the News Day on the prediction made by Baba Jukwa on the outcome of the election with Tsvangirai getting a resounding victory. (News Day 04/07/13). Zamchiya (2013) also states that Tsvangirai also said he was in possession of a survey that showed that the MDC-T was going to win 65% of the rural vote in the harmonised election. With all these surveys and the virtual as well as print private media publishing these, the MDC-T was assured of a victory in the election. The shocking news of the actual election results led to the MDC-T contesting the election result and their leader labelling them as ‘null’ and ‘void’.

In the interviews the responses to the question on how their coverage has implications on the society were;

One respondant from the Herald;

*Everything leads to a divided community meaning everyone is going in a different direction and people are influenced by the different messages from the divide leading to a polarised community. We need to be united because a divided community is a confused and restless community. Journalists are sometimes aggressive hence they end up pushing agendas.*

A journalist from the News Day;

*In the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections we managed to uncover the rot in all the political parties. And reduced the margin of violence and rigging and other elements which could have negatively affected the people’ The way we report has resulted in us being labelled and being called different names. But it has also given the people a chance to look at issues from a different angle and question some of the things published.*
Macmillian (2009) states that the media has the ability and potential to divide or unite a country or its audience. Arnolds (2013) further states that though media pluralism is good as it adds to diversity and various platforms for individuals to express themselves it has both positive and negative effects its audience. Such is the case of the Zimbabwean media and in particular its coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections because the society is divided on the credibility of the elections resulting in journals such as *Free and fair elections: Mugabe and the challenges facing elections in Zimbabwe*, *Civil society’s contested role in the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe* and *The youth factor in Zimbabwe’s 2013 harmonised elections*. Therefore despite the accredited observers and monitors from the regional and international community applauded, approved and recognise the outcome of the whole 2013 electoral process, there is still a bone of contention in some spheres and the media is the fighting arena that is being used.

**4.3 Conclusion**

It can therefore be noted that the Zimbabwean media is polarised and the polarisation is along political lines. Saunders (2011) further states that while the form a media system assumes at any one time is by no means the direct expression of a state’s political priorities, it makes little sense to ignore the impact of political actors and political values on the character of the wider media environment. The Herald as part of state media is compelled to act in favour of the government that is in power and defend its policies and AMH as a private entity is free to choose the stance that they want to be pro-government or anti-government.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the research and highlight the main research findings. The chapter also highlights if the research objectives were met and the research questions answered. In order to address the objectives, recommendations are made to the major stake holders in the Zimbabwean media, the government, the responsible ministry, media moguls and the people employed by the media houses. The recommendations are based on contemporary literature and empirical findings in the current study. Finally areas for further research are suggested.

5.2 Summary

Chapter one introduced the study as well state what the study was all about. It provided the background of the study, the problem statement; purpose and objectives of the study; the research questions to be answered; the methodology that was used; importance and relevance of the study. It also highlighted the delimitations and limitations of the study and an introduction to the state of the Zimbabwean media.

Chapter two provided the literature review of existing literature on media polarisation in Zimbabwe as well as literature on the 2013 Harmonised elections. The study was informed by the agenda setting and framing theory as well as the discourse theory. The chapter also provided different literature on the functions of the media by regional and international scholars as well as specific literature on the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections as well as Zimbabwean media in general.

The research design and methodology applied to address the research questions and objectives of the study was provided in Chapter three. The research used purposive sampling and a selected population was used to carry out the research. Data was collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary source was interview responses from key informants; newspaper editors, political editors and political reporters/analysts. News paper articles and relevant literature were used as secondary sources of data. Qualitative analysis
was used to analyse the data collected. This analysis method was used as the research was anchored on the descriptions provided by the interview respondents hence the findings were descriptive in nature. The size of the population also influenced the type of analysis methodology being applied as it as too small to be quantified.

Chapter four focused on the research findings and it included data presentation as well as data analysis. The data was presented as a narrative and tables were included to highlight the key findings. The tables include those of newspaper articles as well as those of the responses from the interviews that were carried out with the key respondents. Data analysis was also included in a narrative and descriptive manner. Thematic analysis was used hence the data was analysed in the various themes relative to the study and relevant in answering the research questions as well as meet the research objectives. Themes relevant to media polarisation in Zimbabwe as well as the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections were used.

Chapter five included the summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the study, recommendations and areas for further research.

5.3 Conclusions
The study drew up the conclusion that indeed Zimbabwean media is polarised. The research further managed to divulge the factors that have led to the polarisation of the Zimbabwean media. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings and Zimpapers have been the major players in the Zimbabwean media since the advent of independence and the banning of the Daily News in the early 2000s. As state entities they have been pushing for the government’s agendas hence it is safe to say they are pro-government. The internet then gave the people alternative media outlets and during the existence of the GNU private media moguls were invited to operate in Zimbabwe if they met the set requirements. It is at this juncture that media polarisation and pluralism became a reality in Zimbabwe. (Chuma 2008) AMH and ANZ then set up their media houses and contested with Zimpapers for readers of the printed word. These two media houses; state media and private media operate from two angles which has led to the polarisation of the media. On the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections the difference can be noted in the manner that the same issue was reported on in the two papers that were used as case studies; the Herald and the News Day. The herald would report that the election had been declared tamper-proof by ZEC as well as the accredited monitors and
observers whilst the News Day would run a headline that stated that the ZEC resignations soon after the elections exposed the parastatal. Therefore this shows that there is a level of polarisation in the print media.

The study also noted that the issue of media polarisation isn’t a Zimbabwean phenomenon but is typical of most African countries. Mukhongo (2010) assesses the role of the media looking at the media's role in shaping the political destiny of Africa as a continent. The response of the media to political crisis and its role in shaping Africa's political future with emphasis on three main issues: control and censorship of media, political economy of media and ethnicization of national politics in African countries results in the manner that the media portrays the politics of the continent. The political economy of the media also influences its relationship with the government and how this impacts on its role in enhancing political accountability. Therefore the state-run media will be pro-government so as to enhance the political accountability of the existing government.

5.4 Recommendations
The study recommends that the media be given a chance by the government and political players to operate as an independent entity and not allow politicians to have an upper-hand in their day to day businesses.

It also recommends that there be legitimate bodies set up to regulate the operations of the media houses. This is as a result of the ugly reality of the media being used as a tool for politicians’ personal aspirations abandoning their duty to inform, educate and entertain. This has been evidenced on the coverage of elections and any on goings in Zimbabwean politics.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Systems (ADR)s for conflict resolution in the media are processes ‘alternative’ to statutory courts. Players in the Zimbabwean media industry are developing and promoting ADRs as a means of evading the restrictive, expensive and time-consuming legal courts. Media and complainants arguably have speedier and satisfying resolutions outside the courts. However, typical of Zimbabwe there are marked signs of contestation, controversy and lack of unanimity with regard to the ADRs. Therefore it is a recommendation by this study to form ADRs that are neutral.
On the one hand, there is the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ), a self-regulatory structure favoured by the privately owned media players. On the other hand, there is the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) formed under statutory law and whose structure is still not adequate to resolve cases brought before it. Therefore it is paramount that one governing body has to be established to help regulate the manner in which political activities of national importance and significance are being covered. It is a recommendation to legitimise these already existing bodies and integrate them.

5.5 Further research
Research on the nature of financing of the media houses, both private and state-run. It is an important contributing factor to the media fraternity and its operations hence research on it will give broader understanding to the operations of the Zimbabwean media.
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ANNEXURE

Interview Guide

Do you think the print media in Zimbabwe in particular The Herald and Daily News are polarized against each other?

What do you think are the factors or constraints that have led to the polarization of these two newspapers against each other?

Do you think these two newspapers presented a polarized version of Zimbabwe’s 2013 presidential elections?

What do you think was your newspapers interpretation of Zimbabwe’s presidential elections?

What are the prominent issues that your newspaper covered around Zimbabwe’s 2013 presidential elections?

How do these issues you covered present a different version of reality in comparison to the other newspaper’s version of reality?

What factors do you think influence the stance your newspaper’s took regarding Zimbabwe’s 2013 presidential elections?

What do you think are the implications of the representations presented by your newspaper during the coverage of the 2013 harmonised elections?