

# DIALECTICS OF ETHNICITY AND YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ZIMBABWE. CASE OF GUKURAHUNDI INCIDENT (1982-1987)

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**Abstract.** *This study sought to analyse how ethnicity contributes towards youth political participation in Zimbabwe. This study examines how Gukurahundi incident between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups affect youth political participation in Matabeleland region. The researcher made use of constructivist theory that contends ethnic conflict is the product of a social construct built on one group's experiences, understanding, and attitudes as they perceive another. The study employed semi-structured interviews and secondary sources to collect data. Qualitative data was analysed using textual analysis. The research findings presented that forgiveness is the last resort to make peace regarding the Gukurahundi incident. The social relations between the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups is largely hostile as the young people are angry as they carry Gukurahundi stories from which their parents or elders are traumatised. The research findings also indicated that financial constraints in the country limit reconciliation as the relatives of the victims of the Gukurahundi demand for compensation. The study revealed that the Shona and Ndebele ethnic conflict can threaten Zimbabwe internal peace stability as long as perpetrators of Gukurahundi incident fail to apologies and offer compensation to the relatives of the victims.*

**Keywords:** *ethnicity, youth, political participation, elections, Gukurahundi*

## 1. Introduction and Background of the study

Zimbabwe is ethnically diverse with sixteen official languages which are spoken by different ethnic groups. Zimbabwe has a diverse mix of ethnic groups that include Kalanga, Ndebele and Tonga. Section 6 of the Zimbabwe Constitution (2013) provides ChiNambya, ChiKalanga, ChiVhenda (XiVhenda), ChiShangani (Tsonga), Sign Language, ChiTonga, ChiChewa, ChiBarwe, English, Sotho, Koisan/ Tshawo, Tswana, Xhosa, ChiNdau, Shona and Ndebele as the official languages. Shona and Ndebele are the main languages spoken in the country which divided the country linguistic lines. The country has ten provinces from which the population of Matabeleland North, South, and Bulawayo region constitutes approximately 15% and 20% of Zimbabwe's total population, and the region is considered to be culturally dominated by the Ndebele speaking people. While, the remaining approximately 80% of Zimbabwe population is Shona speaking group.

The liberation war which ended in 1979 led to the country independence in 1980 over white minority rule. According to Mlambo (2014:160) the Second Chimurenga war

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1965–1979 was fought by the black majority in an attempt to stop illegal white minority rule. The Lancaster House Constitution signed in 1979 ended the devastating war and allowed elections between Rhodesian Front (RF) Party, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the United African National Council (UNAC) (Chitiyo and Rupiya 2005:337).

According to Mlambo (2014:147), the black population in Zimbabwe was not united in pre-colonialism period because of ethnic, personality, and socioeconomic inequalities within the liberation movement. After 1980, political affiliation was mostly defined by ethnicity, since then President Robert Mugabe's ZANU PF advocated first for the interests of the Shona ethnic group. While the now-defunct ZAPU party represented the largest minority community, the Ndebele came second on priority given. According to Alexander (2021), Ndebele people were suspected of planning to remove Mugabe on rule. Responding to these allegations, an episode called Gukurahundi was released from which Mugabe hired 5th brigade, a North Korean trained brigade was sent to instill violence in Matebeleland and Midland regions where the Ndebele people reside. Eppel (2004:59) states that Gukurahundi is a Shona word meaning the first rain of summer that washes away the chaff left from the previous season. The Gukurahundi phase sought to silent oppositions against the ZANU-PF party and in particular targeted the Ndebele people in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces.

Alexander (2021:5) noted that thousands of innocent citizens from the Matebeleland region were killed. Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (1997) concurs with Alexander and states that more than 20 0000 civilians were killed by the Gukurahundi violence. Mugabe said that the Brigade was a form of punishing the Ndebele for supporting the white minority during the Liberation war. However, on 22 December 1987, ZANU PF and ZAPU signed Unity Accord as a way of bringing unity among the Ndebele and the Shona ethnic group regardless of the perpetrators of Gukurahundi incident not being punished. Although the Unity Accord tried to bring the political parties together political tensions and ethnicity are still vibrant. Efforts of reconciliation have been made by the church with the gospel of forgiveness, but Chitando and Taringa (2021) research titled; *The Churches, Gukurahundi, and Forgiveness in Zimbabwe* and Moyo (2021) research titled, *Anger resides decades after 1980s genocide in Zimbabwe* shows that efforts made by the political leaders to unite and observe peace in the country were of vain. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003) also stated that the perpetrators of Gukurahundi were not punished neither the victims' relatives were compensated. This explained that Unity Accord failed to deal with issues of compensations of the victims, from which to date, the political environment is still haunted by the 1983-1987 Gukurahundi incident.

Rwafa (2012) stated that Mugabe acknowledged Gukurahundi incident as moment of madness and the Ndebele people accuse the Shona people for ethnic cleansing through violence. Despite this statement, Mugabe did not ask for forgiveness from what he called as moment of madness to the Ndebele people. Ndebele ethnic group still carry anger and struggle to forgive without compensation despite that President Mnangagwa who outcasted Mugabe from power over a military coup tried to preach New Dispensation and National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Act. This study therefore sought to analyse the impact of Gukurahundi incident on youth political participation in Matabeleland regions.

## **2. Ethnicity in Zimbabwe**

In Africa, the position of ethnic identities in managing the state is rooted in colonial politics. Mamdani (2002) argues that the ethnicization of politics started with the construction of ethnicity as a divide and rule device used for political control. Ethnic minorities and youth populations in particular are less likely to vote and participate in political activities than other sectors of society (Hayward, 2006). This research sought to focus on young people as they are capable of carrying the anger and hatred of what happened to their elders during the Gukurahundi incident. Youth are regarded as an identity group susceptible to perceptions and influences of their adults (Galtung, 2006). The study therefore sought to investigate how the youth in Matabeleland region politically participate in relation to the Gukurahundi incident.

Rising pressure groups in the Matabeleland shows seeking of justice and independence of the Ndebele Kingdom due to unresolved Gukurahundi. Alexander (2021) states that the Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP) and Ibetsu Likazulu is composed of youths who have learnt Gukurahundi through a painful and emotive process. Due to unresolved legacies of massacres in Matabeleland region, Rwafa (2012:323) considered the country as a wounded country filled with frustrated citizens over unresolved Gukurahundi incident.

Gusha (2019) carried out a research on “Memories of Gukurahundi Massacre and the Challenge of Reconciliation” from which researcher expressed that there has not been true reconciliation among the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups over the Gukurahundi massacre. The post-colonial government further consolidated ethno-political structure by maintaining provinces and constituencies with ethnic boundaries, which has paved way of Zimbabwean complex politics. Gusha (2019) further states that the memories of tribalism are kept alive from the Government maintenance of provincial names such as Mashonaland, Midlands and Matabeleland. It is questionable, how political active is youth engagement within a country that has historical unresolved issues of ethnic conflict dated back in 1987 lacking transparency and accountability. Several studies have been conducted on Gukurahundi incident, however, few researches have focused on the effects of Gukurahundi on youth political participation in the Matabeleland region. This study sought to analyse whether being a Ndebele affects the political mindset, attitudes and political participation in Zimbabwe.

## **3. Youth political participation**

According to the Zimbabwe Youth Council (2013), youth are citizens aged 15 to 35. This age range is specified in Section 20 of the 2013 Constitution, which stipulates that youths are classified as those between the ages of 15 and 35. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), on the other hand, states that the legal voting age in Zimbabwe is 18 years old. There is a 3 year age difference from the starting age of being a youth and legal age of starting to vote.

This study sought to investigate youth political participation in Matabeleland region despite the Gukurahundi incident. A concern of many democratic nations is the lack of participation by young people as voters in elections (Edwards, 2007). For the purposes of this study, political participation refers to in political activities such as campaigns and exercising the right to vote. Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002) states that youth engagement is based on involvement in institutional politics (elections, campaigns, and membership), protest activities (demonstrations and new social movements), and civic engagement (associative life, community participation and voluntary work). Dezelan (2015) states that

there has been a decline in voter turnout, membership of political parties, interest in politics and trust in political institutions amongst young people in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has historically had poor youth voter turnout (Musarurwa, 2018) and participation in other decision-making processes. According to the Research and Advocacy Unit's (2013) examination of Zimbabwe's June 2013 Voters' Roll, only 8% of those below 30 years registered voters. Statistics from Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) (2017) states that only youths from the marginalized provinces of Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and South were less enthusiastic about voting in the upcoming 2018 elections. Whilst, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (2018) indicated that in 2018, only 44% constitute youth between the ages of 18-34. It is through these statistics that the researcher sought to analyse how the ethnic conflicts between the Shona and Ndebele contributes towards youth political participation.

Musarurwa (2018) noted that most young people have felt reluctant to participate in electoral processes because of fear of victimization. The 2008 elections noticed a vast number of youth terrified and terrorized, in some instances to death, for political participation. Youth should take heed of their demographical advantage and their right to active public decision making to influence power. According to Hodzi (2014), the most of Zimbabwean young people are loosely attached to group benefits and seek individual benefits. In particular there have been a number of initiatives, both legislative and academic, aimed at encouraging young people in Zimbabwe towards political participation. Campaigns on register to vote such as “#RegisterToVoteZW” have been flooded on social media platforms encouraging young people to register and vote in 2023 elections. Effective youth participation strengthens the legitimacy of democracy. In any case youth engagement is low, this leaves state control in the hands of the elderly demographic group thus national development will grow at a stunted pace as there will be little collaboration from all age groups. This study therefore sought to understand how young people handle the Gukurahundi incident in relation to political participation.

#### **4. Constructivist theory**

The study made use of constructivist theory in order to analyse the Gukurahundi conflict between the Shona and Ndebele people in relation to youth political participation. Jackson (2004) states that constructivist theory focus on human awareness or consciousness and actions in a conflict situation. Ethnicity, according to constructivism, is a fluid identity that can be produced through conquest, immigration, or colonization (William, 2015:149). Ethnic conflicts are the result of historical processes that alter the relationships of various ethnic groups. As such country politics is also determined by the ethnic conflicts. The critics of this theory claim that it fails to explain why people split themselves in such explicit ways or why societies have such cleavage structures (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). It can be argued that struggle for political power by the political leaders is the main motivation behind ethnic conflict and such was a suspected case in relation to Mugabe on Ndebele people as threat to his rise to power. Tensions between the Shona and Ndebele speaking people go back to the colonial era and became vibrant due to Gukurahundi incident. Gukurahundi incident between the Ndebele and Shona people can be explained through constructivist point of view basing on Mugabe desire for power, as such this study made use of constructivism theory in order to analyse the conflict between Shona and Ndebele people on youth political participation.

## **5. Methodology and scope**

This study made use of qualitative research methods in order to analyse how ethnicity affect youth political participation in Matabeleland region. The researcher made use of qualitative research methods and adopted interviews to collect data from the participants. Qualitative research methods are particularly beneficial in investigations when little information is known regarding the intended research area (Davidson and Tollich, 2003). The researcher made use of interviews to collect primary data from the participants from Matabeleland region. Data was collected from youth from Matabeleland provinces whose ages ranged between 18-35 years in order to understand political attitudes and political engagement of youth. A total of 9 interviews were held within participants that fall in the 18-35 years age group. The researcher sought to start at age 18 and not 15 since the age of 18 is the legal age that one is allowed to vote in elections. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. That is, selecting participants who have fall in the required criteria and who are able to assist the researcher in understanding the research motive.

Ethical considerations were also observed in this study. Participants were told that there was no harm in participating in the research and were also told that they were allowed to exit from participating in the study whenever they wish to do so. The researcher referred the participants with numbers so as to adhere to anonymity and ethical conducts.

## **6. Discussions of findings**

### **Demographic of the participants**

The researcher sought to conduct 12 interviews with the participants, however managed to successfully conduct 9 interviews with participants aged from 18-35 years. Participants were from different religious backgrounds such as Catholic, Apostolic Faith Mission and none. The study found that religion that does not necessarily play a role regarding ethnic conflict between Ndebele and Shona people. The participants expressed that role of church is seen as a mediator preaching forgiveness to those who have been hurt, yet the ones who have hurt are not asking for forgiveness. The researcher managed to conduct 3 interviews with females whilst five of the respondents were males. The researcher sought to balance gender of the participants to avoid getting biased responses in order to get an understanding of the impact of Gukurahundi incident on young people political participation. The researcher noted that there were more males than females who participated in the study which shows that there is low level of women political involvement in political activities. Women should be motivated to politically participate from the youth level as this affect political representation on national level.

### **Youth participation in politics**

The researcher sought to understand how young people in Matabeleland region engage in politics and get an understanding of their attitudes and perceptions regarding Gukurahundi case. Participants were asked if they had voted in the elections or if they have participated in any non-electoral political activities. Five participants expressed that they had experience in participating in elections including the 2008, 2013 and 2018 elections, whilst 2 participants expressed that they had never participated in political activities and only one participant expressed that she had registered to vote for the 2018 elections but did not manage to go and cast her vote. The researcher found that the youth political engagement in Matabeleland region was low especially on demonstrations or non-electoral activities. The participants expressed that they feel that political power lies in the hands of the Shona people.

All the participants who had been politically engaged expressed that they had never thought of running for an office in their Constituencies. Respondent 2 expressed that, he does not have time to get in political races. The participant further acknowledged efforts made by young people to motivate youth the vote. The participant said hashtag Register to Vote 2023 elections have been promoted on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Further acknowledgements were also given on Civic organisations that are advocating for “EkhayaVote2023” seeking to mobilise and encourage first time voters to register to vote in elections.

The research findings presented that youth political participation is generally low and the situation is even worse in Matabeleland region where Gukurahundi massacres occurred in 1987. The research findings concur with literature and reports from ZEC that youth from Matabeleland region have not yet registered for the 2023 elections. Respondent 6 expressed that there are several issues that contribute towards negative youth political engagement such as lack of voter education, lack of interest and past events.

### **Ethnicity and active political participation**

During the interview discussions, the participants were asked the motivation behind participation or non-participation in political events. Respondent 1 expressed that he always participate in political activities so that his vote counts, the problem is that he has no trust in ruling government since it has failed to account for the burning issue of Gukurahundi incident. The participant further expressed that my grandmother died of bitterness due to the massacre of Ndebele people by the soldiers hired by the former president Mugabe. The researcher noted that trust issues determine youth political engagement. This shows that young people’s attitudes to politics are sensitive to historical activities which negatively impact their energy to be engaged in political activities. The research findings concur to Chitando and Taringa (2021) who found that the young people are so hurt with the stories behind the Gukurahundi incident.

During the interview discussions, respondent 3 expressed that, it might look as if there is no political grudges between the Shona and Ndebele people but there is an ethnic tensions which were caused by the Gukurahundi incident where there was human rights violations and loss of lives. The participant further expressed that he was sure that the youth are told stories of Gukurahundi incident by their parents and grandparents and this brings emotions and justification was not given to the perpetrators of violence. The researcher found that young people carry generational bitterness and are disenfranchised politically through Gukurahundi incident.

Respondent 8 concurred with respondent 3 and said that Gukurahundi stories from parents and guardians, are considered contribute largely to towards withdraw political engagement of young people. The participant further indicated that stories carry great impact and political awareness on young people. Respondent 2 said that parents and elders of today’s youths are still traumatized by the Genocide which stirs anger in young people. The research findings presented that young people carry intergenerational traumas and hatred regarding incidents that happen during the Gukurahundi incident. The elders or parents share their painful stories on young generation as such it is difficult to make a peaceful negotiation when the other party is furious. The ruling government will always owe an apology and compensation to the descendants of the victims of the Gukurahundi incident.

Respondent 3 and 7 said that they discuss political issues and the possibilities that can happen in the upcoming 2023 elections with their family and friends. Both the participants expressed that Zimbabwe has always been having contested election results and

this is likely to happen unless the current president Mnangangwa ensure transparency and credibility in elections. The research findings however, concur with literature as Resnick and Casale (2014) states that young people who discuss politics are more likely to be active participants in elections. The research findings imply that youth are inclined to get involved in politics when they perceive credibility and fair procedures in the electoral processes. The research findings concur with Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) who indicated young people who are rising in Matabeleland pressure groups are seeking Gukurahundi redress and political balance. The research findings imply that mass killings that occurred on ethnic Ndebele citizens can never be erased from history of Zimbabwe unless justice is observed.

During the interview discussions all the participants expressed that those who were young during the 1980s when Gukurahundi occurred carry more bitterness than those who were told the stories by their parents. Respondent 1 expressed that if it had not been of the power greed of the late president Mugabe who ordered the Gukurahundi Genocide against Ndebele people, today the Shona and Ndebele would have been living peaceful. The participant further expressed that Mugabe feared political threat from Nkomo and cautiously decided to do an attack against rise of power against him. Sithole and Makumbe (1997) acknowledged that Mugabe had always wanted one rule and political opposition was never accepted.

Whilst, respondent 5 expressed that there has not been transparent and credible elections in the country since 1980. Currently, the country is facing socio-economic challenges which needs undivided unity from all the state provinces. However, the Ndebele people are in continuous grief of the Gukurahundi incident which limits total cooperation on country sustainable development. The participant further explained that 2023 elections are soon yet, the concerns and grievances of Ndebele people regarding Gukurahundi are still pending. Respondent 7 said that most of the Ndebele youths are leaving the Matabeleland regions for neighboring countries especially South Africa and Botswana in search of greener pastures and employment opportunities. The participant further expressed that most of the remaining youth engage in political violence due to anger they hold against the government.

The researcher found that in as much as the Ndebele youth would want to participate in elections, they already have ethnic tensions regarding presidency and not accepting to compensate families who lost their relatives and loved ones due to state instilled Gukurahundi incident. Respondent 3 expressed that even before the colonial period, there has always been ethnic clashes and hostile among the Shona and the Ndebele ethnic groups. The research findings concur with Ndlovu and Dube (2014) when they argue that politics and ethnicity were conflated in Gukurahundi. All the participants acknowledged that government ought to accept its mistake on human rights violations upon the Ndebele people during the Gukurahundi era. In the midst of all what happened during the Gukurahundi, young people in Matabeleland carry story from their families and see hope for unity once the government accept its activities. Interview discussions with the participants' shows that peace is achievable and there is light at the end of the tunnel, though it might not be soon. It is difficult to socio-economically and politically build a country with youths who are heavy hearted from what happened to their fore-fathers or from elderly who lost their children during the Gukurahundi incident.

Respondent 6 expressed that it is sad to note that during Gukurahundi incident there was mass graves and up to now, the graves have not been exhumed. The researcher further expressed that it is considered a taboo for mass graves and without getting any proper burial. The research findings concur with Eppel (2006: 263) who states that during the Gukurahundi massacres many of the people that died were buried in mass graves. Most of

the respondents showed emotions upon indicating that their elders and relatives graves are not unknown and they expressed that African culture owners and respect the dead. Participant 6 expressed that continued reports of activist arrested by the police and being charged with intent of instilling violence on remembering Gukurahundi massacres shows that despite Unity Day celebrations only happens on theory but on reality, the Ndebele people are angry.

The research findings also indicated that most youths have been advocating for independent Ndebele Kingdom. Respondent 8 expressed that there has been rise of pressure groups such as Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC) and Matabeleland Liberation Front (MLF) against ruling government. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) states that these pressure group are rising against unequal economic development of Matabeleland regions. The researcher found that the pressure groups advocating for independent Ndebele state have hatred due to the Gukurahundi incident.

The research findings also revealed a conflict between the Shona and Ndebele peoples for resource availability. Respondent 2 stated National University of Science and Technology and Lupane State University in Matabeleland recruits more students from other parts of the country than from the Matabeleland region. Dube (2014) states that Ndebele speakers in Matabeleland have expressed worry about the deployment of Shona teachers who cannot speak Ndebele in their region, forcing their children to learn in a different language. The researcher noted that despite that the Government of Zimbabwe has established universities in this region, the universities seem to be dominated by the Shona from other state provinces. The research findings imply that people who speak one language or at least similar languages regard themselves as one group. As such, Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008) states that there is a positive relationship between, language, place and politics. The research findings presented that ethnicity and identity is very highly politically charged, although there might not be a conflict on reality. During the interview discussions, respondent 5 said that Mthwakazi Republic Party has been at fighting and advocating for institutional tribalism in Zimbabwe. The researcher noted that Matabeleland people are not happy of the distortion and marginalization of their languages by the Shona people.

During the interview discussions, respondent 6 expressed that young people ought to set aside emotions of historical events and be brave in political engagements. The participant expressed that, it is very sad that relatives of the victims carry fresh wounds unto this day. Participant 6 expressed that there has been truth story telling groups and the church groups where citizens discuss what happened during Gukurahundi period. Chitanda and Taringa (2021) argues that young people feel that the government is using the church to preach the gospel of forgiveness on wounded Ndebele people. The discussions shows that even though the Ndebele people encourage themselves to unite alongside the gospel of forgiveness, it can be noted that the hatred and blame of Gukurahundi incident on Shona people is passed on generations.

The research findings presented that despite the Gospel of forgiveness and signing of Unity Accord of 1987 does not bring their loved ones from the dead. Respondent 2 expressed that most of the victims need compensations of all the suffering and torture they experienced during the Gukurahundi phase. The participant further said that what is more hurting is that the Shona people, government or soldiers are not accepting their crimes or admitting to be perpetrator of incident. Respondent 3 concurs with Respondent 2 and said that the Unity Accord was actually a strategy of Mugabe Government to hide from human right violations investigations and causes of the Gukurahundi incident during that period. Murambadoro (2015) agrees with the research findings, stating that reconciliation in



Matabeleland can only be true when the government acknowledges the past actions and redress the injustices that have occurred to the relatives of the victims. The government under the rule of Mnagwanwa tried to preach New Dispensation but this does not heal the grieving Ndebele people on their relatives without compensation and accepting that the government had indeed violated human rights. According to Harris (2022), stakeholders worry over low voter registration in Matabeleland region for the 2023 elections. Harris (2022) further states that Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) released statistics on the voter population as of June 10, 2022, which showed that a total of 5 804 975 people had registered. Out of that number, Bulawayo had the lowest number of registered people at 270 914. This implies that most people within this region have not yet registered to be voters, an issue which needs urgent attention before the 2023 elections.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

The study has contributed on understanding impact of Gukurahundi on youth political participation in Zimbabwe. The study sought to explore Gukurahundi incident and to present contemporary understanding of young people's political participation. The use of interviews allowed the researcher in understanding ethnicity and youth political participation with regard to Gukurahundi incident. The study has revealed experiences and attitudes of young people in Matabeleland region regarding Gukurahundi incident and youth political participation. The study also concludes that young people are faced with socio-economic challenges which is resulting in most of youths in the Matabeleland region going to neighbouring countries such as South Africa to search for better life conditions. Even though, the country is hit by economic challenges and inflations, the young people are mostly affected the worst due to high unemployment levels.

The study has presented unforgiveness from the relatives of the victims of Gukurahundi massacre. This is shown by the rise of pressure groups who advocating for independent Ndebele Kingdom. The researcher concludes that rise of pressure groups is another way of youth expressing themselves. The research findings presents that youths like their elders or parents need compensation from perpetrators of violence. The research findings shows that if compensation is provided positive peace and unity can be achieved between the Shona and Ndebele people. The research findings also presented that despite preaching of forgiveness by the church, youth political participation is low in the Matabeleland region and Gukurahundi incident being one of the reasons limiting political motivation to participate.

The researcher found Ndebele people despite age increasingly carry hurting and mind disturbing stories of Gukurahundi and hold on to crimes and activities done by Shona people against the Ndebele people in 1987. Hence, the study concluded that there is low level of political involvement of youth from Matabeleland region. As such there is demand for greater political engagement within youth from this region. Nevertheless, the researcher concludes that reconciliation remains unattainable since it is impossible to erase painful memories of massacres and compensation cannot change what has happened in history.

### **7.2. Recommendations**

The research findings have presented that youth in Matabeleland carry the burdens and story of their elders regarding the Gukurahundi incident. The study recommends the Government to acknowledge the mistakes or activities that were done during the

Gukurahundi incident. Without acknowledgement, apologizing and compensation the pressure groups advocating for an Independent Ndebele Kingdom cannot be silenced. As such there is no positive interests towards observing the Unity Accord. The youth are capable of sustainable peace and development as long as justice is given. Failure to ensure peace and unity among different ethnic group is a plan to political instability.

The researcher found that most of the youths have trust issues with the government as aligned to Shona ethnic group. As such, the government should make socio-economic and political structures and frameworks transparent, inclusive and of ethnicity balanced. The Government should promote the right of political participation and support equal development on Matabeleland regions to ensure the political participation of Ndebele youth at all levels. The Government should ensure equal input of youth from all districts across the country. The Ndebele youth have felt not belonging by state universities enrolling more Shona than students from the region. The researcher recommends the state universities across the country to enroll equally despite region background.

The Government should economically support young people equally across all the provinces in the country. Lack of government equal support in all provinces brings tensions of ethnic favoritism and conflicts especially between the Shona and Ndebele. Despite the country facing economic challenges, entrepreneurship projects should be supported to show efforts of unity, peace and development. Equal participation on gender should be equally promoted. Women should also actively participate in the socio-economic and political affairs of the country.

The researcher noted that addressing the issue of Gukurahundi and its impact on youth political participation is equally complex and difficulty the same way it is to the Government to admit its actions and punish the perpetrators of the incident. Families are still haunted by the Gukurahundi incident and loss of their relatives. However, true unity and sustainable peace is possible and achievable only that the government cannot preach gospel of reconciliation when it has not admitted its crimes and violations against the Ndebele people. The major question lies on what compensation should the government offer to the families of the victims in order to heal or compensate loss of family members before the 2023 elections. Compensation could it be land, youth empowerment opportunities or regional development and if it is either, is everyone going to be satisfied and lead to acceptance of forgiveness, realization of true peace and unity between the Shona and the Ndebele people?

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