BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



Influence Ethnic Narratives On Cultural Identity In Peacebuilding: A Case of Shamva

By

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Peace and Governance in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honours in Peace and Governance Degree

Bindura, Zimbabwe

June, 2026

Abstract

This study explored the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and its contribution to peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, addressing the gap between rich indigenous knowledge systems and their neglect in formal reconciliation frameworks. Guided by four objectives examining how ethnicity shapes cultural identity, identifying indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, exploring challenges to sustaining cultural identity, and assessing integration of indigenous systems into formal peacebuilding the research adopted an interpretivist philosophy and a mixed-methods case study design focused on shambva District. Data were collected from 50 participants through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, analyzed using thematic analysis alongside descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that ethnicity profoundly shapes identity through totems, oral traditions, and the ethos of unhu, though generational and gender tensions exist. Indigenous mechanisms such as the Dare system, cleansing rituals, and nhimbe remain active and valued for their restorative, consensus-based approach, yet face limitations including patriarchal biases and compromised legitimacy of traditional leaders due to state co-optation. Challenges threatening cultural sustainability include urbanization, economic hardship, partisanization of chiefs, and commodification of culture. Participants strongly supported hybrid integration of indigenous and formal systems, conditional on gender reform, state enforcement with oversight, and pedagogical approaches. The study concludes that sustainable peace in Zimbabwe requires complementary, reformed hybrid frameworks. Recommendations include policy reforms empowering traditional leaders, internal institutional reforms addressing gender inequalities, and civil society facilitation of collaborative peacebuilding.

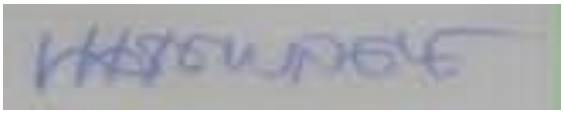
Declaration Form

I, Clarrise Ruwona **(B221230B)** hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research and study, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgments and references included in the body of the paper, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

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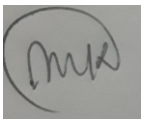


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Signed ……..

Chairperson. **Date:**



Signature……

Dedication

To my family, whose sacrifices and unwavering support made this journey possible

Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of many individuals and institutions. First and foremost, I extend my profound gratitude to my supervisor(s) for their scholarly guidance, patience, and constructive feedback throughout this research journey. Their insights shaped this work in immeasurable ways. I am deeply indebted to the traditional leaders, community elders, and all 50 participants in Shambva District who generously shared their time, stories, and wisdom. Your trust and openness formed the heart of this study. I hope this work honors your voices. I wish to thank the university administration and the ethics review committee for their approval and facilitation of this research. Special appreciation goes to my research assistants for their dedication in the field, and to the community liaison officers who helped navigate local protocols with cultural sensitivity. To my family, whose patience, encouragement, and sacrifices sustained me through long months of writing thank you does not suffice.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CHENURA	Cleansing ceremony
CSOS	Civil Society Organizations
DARE.	Traditional court (Shona)
IKS.	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
INKUNDLA.	Traditional court (Ndebele)
MUTUPO.	Totem system
NHIMBE.	Communal work party
NGOZI.	Avenging spirit
NPRC.	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
NGO.	Non-Governmental Organization
SIT.	Social Identity Theory
TRC.	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN.	United Nations
UNHU/UBUNTU.	Philosophical ethos of communal humanity

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

From the studies conducted by scholars around the world it was discovered that Cultural identity is one of the cornerstone architecture of peacebuilding. This is also most true in societies which are characterized by ethnic diversity. In most of the countries around the world indigenous communities have been instrumental in preserving cultural heritage. They have also been successful in fostering social cohesion and mediating conflicts. One of the good example include countries like Nigeria where the Yoruba people employ indigenous peace practices such as participation, cleansing, reintegration, reconciliation, and retribution. This according to Ishola (2022) is considered fundamental to preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding efforts (Ishola, 2022). Also to add more such practices demonstrate that ethnic communities have historically been central to sustaining social harmony and guiding collective behaviors. They have proven to do this even in the face of modern challenges.

To add more one may also look at the African community and argues that countries in the African region presents a unique case study for examining the interplay between ethnic identity and peacebuilding. For example the Bantu communities other communities have historically relied on indigenous knowledge systems to resolve disputes and maintain social cohesion. To add more scholars such as Tiet (2020) argue that traditional mechanisms like the Dale system in Umguza District of Matabeleland North Province gives priority to community involvement and restorative justice. This in theory culture illustrates how ethnic natives shape both cultural identity and local

conflict resolution processes (Loveness & Chikodzi, 2017). Thus this shows to some extend that practical value of indigenous practices are instruments for peacebuilding and social cohesion.

To add more to this discourse one can also discover that despite the recognized importance of these practices the influence of ethnicity on cultural identity in Zimbabwe remains underexplored. Scholars have not published much literature to explore the formal peacebuilding frameworks presented by ethnic narratives. Thus for example post-conflict tensions between Shona and Ndebele communities are rooted in historical events. This also indicates that there is need for persistence of ethnic divisions and culturally sensitive peacebuilding strategies (Gusha, 2019). Thus this gap shows that while the contributions of ethnic narratives are significant they are not fully integrated into contemporary approaches to reconciliation and governance in contemporary academic scholarship.

Therefore when one looks at these realities he concludes that this research sought to bridge the divide between traditional cultural practices and formal peacebuilding strategies in Zimbabwe. This was achieved by investigating on how ethnic communities influence cultural identities. Thus the main thrust of this study was to provide insights into how indigenous knowledge can enhance peacebuilding efforts in a relevant manner. Also the research shows that understanding these mechanisms not only contributes to academic discourse but also offers practical guidance for policymakers and community leaders who are seeking to foster sustainable peace (Ishola, 2022; Loveness & Chikodzi, **2017).**

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main overall purpose of this study is to explore the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and its contribution to peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

One of the recognized role of ethnic communities is to preserve cultural identity and facilitating peace building. But however the study recognise that there is paucity of literature concerning the roles of ethnic communities in Zimbabwe's peacebuilding processes. This role remains insufficiently understood by scholars. Thus Ethnic narratives especially among the Shona and Ndebele communities have historically contributed to conflict resolution and social cohesion. This has been done through indigenous practices yet contemporary peacebuilding frameworks often neglect these cultural dimensions (Loveness & Chikodzi, 2017). Thus this presented gap limits the effectiveness of reconciliation strategies since they will often take a western perspective which diminishes opportunities to harness indigenous knowledge in fostering national unity and sustainable peace. Also on Historical events which led to massive massacre such as the Gukurahundi, this events have left deep-seated mistrust between ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. This leads to an ugent need for culturally informed peacebuilding interventions (Gusha, 2019). Thus the problem this study explored is not only one of historical grievances but also of underutilized cultural resources and indigenous mechanisms that could mediate conflict and restore social harmony. Also the fact that these issues are often overlooked by modern governance and policy frameworks. Thus there is also , a pressing need to investigate how ethnic natives influence cultural identity and how this supports effective peacebuilding strategies in Zimbabwe (Ishola, 2022). Therefore this research problem is significant because it addresses a dual challenge. It looks at the lack of integration of indigenous knowledge systems in formal peace initiatives. On the other hand

it looks at the ongoing ethnic tensions that threaten social cohesion. Thus by looking deeply at the relationship between ethnic identity, cultural practices, and peacebuilding this study sought to provide evidence-based insights that can inform both academic scholarship and practical interventions.

1.4 Research Objectives

I. To examine the ways in which ethnicity shape cultural identity and social norms in Zimbabwe
II. To identify the mechanisms through which indigenous practices contribute to conflict resolution and reconciliation
III. To explore the challenges faced by communities in sustaining cultural identity in the context of modern governance and socio-political dynamics.
IV. To assess how the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into formal peacebuilding frameworks can enhance social cohesion and sustainable peace.

1.5 Research Questions

I. How does ethnicity influence cultural identity in Zimbabwe?
II. What indigenous mechanisms exist that contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution?
III. What challenges do communities face in maintaining cultural identity amid modern socio-political structures (Gusha, 2019)?
IV. How can indigenous knowledge systems be integrated into formal peacebuilding strategies to enhance social cohesion and sustainable peace?

1.6 Assumptions

The study operates under the following assumptions:

- Ethnicity possess indigenous knowledge and cultural practices that have the potential to influence peacebuilding
- Indigenous knowledge systems can complement formal peacebuilding frameworks if appropriately integrated
- Cultural identity plays a significant role in shaping social cohesion and conflict resolution mechanisms within communitie.

1.7 Significance of the Study

One of the significance of this study is that it offers ans Understanding of the influence of ethnicity on cultural identity and peacebuilding. This is very significant both theoretically and practically. On the theoretical side of the story this study contributes to the broader discourse on indigenous knowledge systems cultural identity and conflict resolution. Thus by examining how communities in Zimbabwe shape cultural norms and values that promote social cohesion the research fills a notable gap in peacebuilding scholarship. Thus to a greater extent this study is significant because is provides perspective that underscores the importance of integrating cultural factors into peace studies and conflict management theories.

Also to add more the findings of this research are very significant because they offer valuable insights to policymakers, community leaders, and peacebuilding practitioners. This is so because an understanding on how the mechanisms on which ethnicity influence cultural identity can inform strategies to integrate indigenous practices into formal conflict resolution frameworks.

This thus also enhance their relevance and effectiveness. Thus for example incorporating local dispute resolution methods and traditional reconciliation practices into national peacebuilding programs can help bridge the gap between formal governance structures and community-based mechanisms (Loveness & Chikodzi, 2017).

Furthermore, this study is significant to the local communities themselves. Thus by documenting and analyzing the role of ethnic natives in sustaining cultural identity and promoting peace, the research validates the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and encourages their preservation. Also on the other hand Communities may gain recognition for their contributions to social cohesion and conflict prevention, which can strengthen local cultural pride and resilience in the face of socio-political challenges.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

Since every study has boundaries in which it is delimited to this study was not also an exception. The study was delimited to the Shambva communities where it focused on ethnic groups available in Shambva to provide a rich context for examining the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and peacebuilding. Also the the research was limited to indigenous cultural practices and knowledge systems on peacebuilding. This thus excluded formal governmental interventions . Also on the other hand the stud concentrated on peacebuilding at the community level and not on national or international level on peace processes. This allowed for in-depth qualitative exploration of local dynamics.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study also acknowledges several limitations inherent which most of the limitations came from the methodology which was chosen. Thus the findings may not be generalizable beyond the selected communities because cultural practices and peacebuilding approaches vary across ethnic groups. Also on the other hand the study relied on self-reported data through interviews which could not be subject to recall bias or personal interpretation. Also the challenge faced by the study was finding and identifying the people who belong to different ethnic groups in shambva discrict. Thus access to participants was limited due to geographic or logistical constraints affecting the diversity of perspectives captured. To solve this challenge the research also relied on documentary studies and also preferred sampling methods where participants referred to the researcher other participants who belonged to ethnic groups. Despite

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Ethnic Natives

The term was used in the study to refer to lndividuals or groups belonging to an indigenous or long-established community with distinct cultural practices, traditions, and social norms within a specific geographic area (Loveness & Chikodzi, 2017).

Cultural Identity

The term was also used toe refer to the sense of belonging to a cultural group which is shaped by shared values, beliefs, language, and traditions. This also influences social behavior and group cohesion (Ishola, 2022).

Peacebuilding

This referred to Processes, actions, and initiatives aimed at reducing conflict, reconciling communities, and fostering sustainable social harmony through both formal and informal mechanisms (Shoko, 2022).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

The term was used to refer to mainly Localized, traditional knowledge, practices, and methods that communities develop over time to manage social, environmental, and cultural challenges (Loveness & Chikodzi, 2017).

Social Cohesion

The bonds that bring individuals and groups together within a society, fostering trust, collaboration, and a shared sense of identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

1.11 Dissertation Outline

The dissertation is structured into five chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction: The first chapter was very important part of the study because it Introduced the study, including background, purpose, research problem, objectives, research questions, assumptions, significance, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and methodology. Thus It also outlines delimitations, limitations, budget, time frame, and chapter summary.

Chapter Two: Literature Review And Theoretical Framework: This chapter was also the concerned stone of the analysis of the study because it looked at a detailed review of global,

regional, and national literature on ethnic identity, indigenous knowledge systems, cultural identity, and peacebuilding. The chapter synthesizes scholarly debates, identifies research gaps, and situates the study within existing academic discourse.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design: The chapter detailed the research philosophy, design, approach, population, sampling, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. It also justified the use of qualitative methods and interpretivist philosophy.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings: Also the chapter presented the findings from interviews and documentary analysis. Discusses results in relation to research questions, objectives, and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas for future Research: Summarizes key findings, draws conclusions, highlights contributions to theory and practice, and provides recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity within the context of peacebuilding. The primary purpose of this chapter is to situate the current study within the existing body of knowledge, identifying the conceptual foundations that underpin the research while simultaneously highlighting the gaps that this study seeks to fill . A robust literature review is essential for understanding how cultural narratives folklore are not merely, but powerful sociopolitical tools that shape the architecture of peace and conflict.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

To rigorously analyze the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and peacebuilding, this study adopts Social Constructionism as the overarching theoretical lens. Social Constructionism, largely articulated by Berger and Luckmann (1966), posits that reality, particularly social reality, is not an inherent, immutable fact but is continuously constructed through human interaction, language, and cultural narratives. In the context of this study, this theory is pivotal because it suggests that "ethnicity" and "cultural identity" are not biological fixed assets but are fluid concepts shaped by the stories communities tell about themselves and others. By viewing ethnic narratives as social constructs, the researcher can analyze how specific narratives are mobilized to either incite conflict (by constructing the "other" as an enemy) or promote peace (by constructing a shared history). This framework

allows for a deep exploration of how Zimbabwean ethnic identities have been historically constructed from pre-colonial interaction to colonial classification and post-colonial politicization and how these constructions influence current peacebuilding efforts.

Supporting the overarching framework is Social Identity Theory (SIT), proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). While Social Constructionism explains how narratives are formed, SIT explains the psychological motivation behind them. SIT posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups . This theory is instrumental in addressing the study's focus on inter-group dynamics. It explains the "in-group" versus "out-group" biases that are often perpetuated through ethnic narratives. In Zimbabwe, where political and social fault lines often run along ethnic divides (such as the Shona-Ndebele dichotomy), SIT helps explain why individuals cling to specific ethnic narratives to maintain self-esteem and group cohesion, often at the expense of national unity. This theory supports the analysis of how cultural identity is maintained and how it can become a barrier or a bridge to peace.

Furthermore, Conflict Transformation Theory, championed by John Paul Lederach (1995), serves as a second supporting theory, specifically addressing the peacebuilding aspect of the topic. Unlike conflict resolution, which seeks to merely stop the violence, conflict transformation focuses on changing the relationships and structures that cause conflict. This theory validates the study's focus on indigenous knowledge systems and cultural narratives. Lederach argues that sustainable peace must grow from the "soil" of the culture in which the conflict takes place. Therefore, this theory provides the necessary academic backing to argue that integrating indigenous practices and re-framing ethnic narratives are not just sentimental gestures, but essential components of transforming the deep-rooted relational dynamics of conflict in Zimbabwe. Together, these theories form a triangulation that covers the construction of identity

(Social Constructionism), the psychology of group belonging (SIT), and the mechanism of sustainable change (Conflict Transformation).

2.3 Review of Empirical Literature

Having established the theoretical boundaries of the study, this section turns to the review of empirical literature. To ensure a systematic and focused analysis, the review is organized according to the specific research objectives outlined in Chapter One. This approach prevents a haphazard presentation of sources and ensures that the discourse remains tightly aligned with the study's specific inquiries into ethnicity, indigenous mechanisms, modern challenges, and integration strategies.

2.4 The Shaping of Cultural Identity and Social Norms by Ethnicity

The relationship between ethnicity and cultural identity is a dominant theme in global sociological discourse. Scholars like Benedict Anderson (1983) have long argued that ethnic groups are "imagined communities," bound together not by physical proximity but by shared narratives and mental images of affinity. Globally, literature from the Balkans highlights how ethnic narratives were weaponized to reshape social norms. In the dissolution of Yugoslavia, empirical studies indicate that political elites manipulated historical narratives to transform neighbors into enemies, effectively rewriting the social norms of coexistence into norms of exclusion. This demonstrates that ethnicity is a potent container for cultural identity, capable of dictating social behavior and defining the boundaries of moral obligation.

In the African regional context, the literature reveals a complex interplay between colonial history and ethnic identity. Mamdani (2001), writing on the Rwandan genocide,

illustrates how rigid ethnic classifications (Hutu and Tutsi) were codified by colonial powers, transforming fluid social identities into rigid political identities. This calcification of ethnicity fundamentally altered social norms, creating a binary society where cultural identity was viewed as a zero-sum game. Similarly, in Kenya, literature on the 2007 post-election violence suggests that ethnic narratives regarding land ownership and political entitlement have deeply entrenched specific social norms regarding "indigeneity" and "outsiders," influencing who is perceived to have the right to speak or live in certain areas.

Focusing on Zimbabwe, the literature is replete with analyses of how the Shona and Ndebele ethnic identities have been shaped by historical narratives. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) argues that the narrative of the " patriotic history" has been used to conflate Shona identity with the ruling party and the liberation struggle, often marginalizing other ethnic identities. Empirical studies on the Gukurahundi massacres highlight how state-sanctioned narratives labeled the Ndebele population as "dissidents," thereby attempting to strip them of their legitimacy within the national cultural identity. However, counter-narratives exist; literature on the totem (mutupo) system suggests a layer of identity that cuts across tribal lines, serving as a unifying social norm that dictates incest taboos and social etiquette, proving that ethnicity in Zimbabwe can also serve as a cohesive social glue when separated from partisan politics.

Contemporary researchers also point to the role of oral tradition and language in shaping these norms. In rural Zimbabwe, the dare (court) system relies heavily on proverbs and idioms that are specific to ethnic dialects. These linguistic tools carry the weight of ancestral authority, defining acceptable social conduct. The literature suggests that when young people lose fluency in these ethnic narratives, there is a corresponding erosion of social norms such as respect for elders and communal responsibility. Thus, ethnicity acts as the repository for the "software" of

social behavior, and the narratives told within that ethnic group determine how that software is updated or corrupted over time.

However, a critical analysis of the literature reveals a tension between "instrumentalist" and "primordialist" views of ethnicity in Zimbabwe. Instrumentalist scholars argue that ethnicity is merely a tool used by elites to secure resources, implying that cultural identity is a facade for class struggle. Conversely , primordialists argue that these ethnic bonds are ancient and deeply emotional. This study leans into the gap between these two, suggesting through the literature that while elites may manipulate narratives, the resonance of those narratives relies on deep-seated cultural identities that cannot be easily dismissed. The way specific ethnic groups in Zimbabwe perceive justice, forgiveness, and truth is filtered through these identity lenses.

Furthermore, the impact of migration and the diaspora on these narratives is an emerging field of study. As Zimbabweans migrate, the literature suggests a "long-distance nationalism" where ethnic identities become hyper-defined in the diaspora. Online spaces become new battlegrounds for ethnic narratives, which then loop back to influence social norms within Zimbabwe. This digital dimension of ethnic identity formation is crucial for understanding modern conflict dynamics, as social media allows for the rapid dissemination of polarizing narratives that can bypass traditional gatekeepers of culture.

Finally, the literature emphasizes the gendered dimension of ethnic narratives. Exploring works by Zimbabwean feminist scholars, it becomes evident that ethnic narratives often prescribe rigid roles for women, framing them as the "mothers of the nation" or custodians of culture. These norms can be restrictive, yet they also offer women specific platforms for peacebuilding (as seen in the Ndebele culture where grandmothers often mediated disputes). Understanding how ethnicity shapes these gendered norms is vital for any comprehensive analysis of cultural identity.

2.5 Mechanisms of Indigenous Practices in Conflict Resolution

The second objective necessitates a review of how indigenous practices function as mechanisms for peace. Globally, the shift towards Restorative Justice has spotlighted indigenous mechanisms. The literature on the Navajo "Peacemaking Courts" in the United States demonstrates a mechanism based on Hozho (harmony), where the goal is not punishment but the reintegration of the offender. This contrasts sharply with Western retributive justice. Similarly, the Ho'oponopono practice in Hawaii emphasizes "setting to right" through confession and forgiveness. These global examples provide a benchmark showing that indigenous mechanisms prioritize the restoration of relationships over the adjudication of guilt.

Regionally, the Gacaca courts of Rwanda are the most cited example of indigenous conflict resolution. Scholars like Clark (2010) describe Gacaca as a mechanism that allowed communities to process the immense trauma of genocide through truth-telling on the "grass." While criticized for lacking legal rigor, the literature generally agrees that without this indigenous mechanism, the formal justice system would have taken centuries to try all perpetrators. In Uganda, the Mato Oput ceremony of the Acholi people involves a bitter root drink to symbolize the washing away of bitterness between warring clans. These mechanisms operate on the spiritual and psychological level, addressing the "pollution" that violence brings to a community, a concept often missing in formal legal proceedings.

In the Zimbabwean context, the literature focuses on the Dare (Shona) and Inkundla (Ndebele) systems. These represent the traditional courts presided over by Chiefs or Headmen. The mechanism here is consensus building. Unlike a magistrate's court where a winner is declared, the Dare aims for a solution where both parties can continue to live together. Murithi

(2006) discusses he concept of Ubuntu/ Unhu as the philosophical undercurrent of these practices. The mechanism of Ubuntu dictates that "I am because we are," meaning an injury to one is an injury to the collective. Therefore, resolution requires communal healing, often involving restitution (paying of goats or cattle) rather than incarceration.

Another critical mechanism identified in Zimbabwean literature is the role of the Spirit Mediums (Masvikiro). In traditional cosmology, conflict is often seen as a disruption of the spiritual balance between the living and the ancestors. Literature on the liberation war (Chimurenga) highlights how mediums were used to legitimize the struggle and resolve disputes among guerrillas. In contemporary peacebuilding, scholars argue that these spiritual authorities still hold immense sway in rural areas. They have the power to perform cleansing ceremonies (Chenura) for those haunted by the "avenging spirits" (Ngozi) of those they killed. This metaphysical mechanism of conflict resolution addresses the psychological trauma of perpetrators in a way Western psychology cannot.

However, the literature also points to the limitations of these mechanisms. Feminist critiques in Zimbabwe note that indigenous courts can be patriarchal, often ruling against women in cases of inheritance or domestic violence. The mechanism of "reconciliation" can sometimes pressure victims to forgive abusive husbands to preserve family honor. This critical perspective is vital, preventing the romanticization of indigenous practices. The literature suggests that while the mechanisms (dialogue, restitution, ritual) are sound, the application is often flawed by existing power dynamics within the village structure.

Furthermore, empirical studies suggest that these mechanisms are most effective in localized, interpersonal, or inter-family disputes but struggle to address national-level political violence. When the state is the perpetrator, local chiefs who often receive stipends from the

government may be compromised. The literature indicates a "crisis of legitimacy" where indigenous mechanisms are viewed with suspicion in urban areas or among opposition supporters who perceive traditional leaders as extensions of the ruling party machinery.

2.6 Challenges in Sustaining Cultural Identity in Modern Governance

Objective three explores the tension between tradition and modernity. Globally, the literature describes a "clash of civilizations" or, more accurately, a clash of legalities. In Canada and Australia, indigenous communities face the challenge of "legal pluralism," where their cultural identities and land rights conflict with the positivist laws of the state. The literature highlights how modern governance systems, driven by bureaucracy and written statutes, often delegitimize the oral, fluid nature of cultural identity. The challenge is often existential: to participate in modern governance, indigenous groups must often translate their identity into the language of the colonizer, losing nuance in the process.

Regionally, the African nation-state is often described in literature as a "hybrid" entity that struggles to accommodate cultural diversity. In Nigeria and Ethiopia, the challenge of "federalism" highlights the difficulty of sustaining ethnic identities within a unitary state. Scholars argue that the modern African state, inherited from colonialism, was designed to erase ethnic loyalty in favor of national loyalty. Consequently, communities face the challenge of "dual loyalty," oscillating between their cultural identity (tribe) and their civic identity (citizenship). This bifurcation often leads to the instrumentalization of culture, where politicians only invoke cultural identity during elections, distorting its true meaning.

Urbanization is another major challenge identified in the literature. As Zimbabweans migrate to cities like Harare and Bulawayo, the traditional structures that sustain cultural identity (extended family compounds, evening storytelling) disintegrate. The literature on "urban youth culture" in Zimbabwe describes a creolization of identity " Zimdancehall" culture, for example which borrows heavily from Jamaica and America. While this creates a new identity, scholars warn of a "cultural memory loss" regarding traditional conflict resolution and peacemaking norms. The challenge is how to sustain the values of Ubuntu in a capitalist, individualistic urban environment.

Economic turmoil in Zimbabwe also presents a unique challenge to cultural identity. The literature suggests that extreme poverty erodes cultural norms. For instance, the traditional concept of Zunde RaMambo (the Chief's granary for the poor) has collapsed in many areas due to economic hardship and land reform complexities. When the material basis of a culture (cattle, land, harvest) is threatened, the symbolic identity attached to it weakens. Literature indicates that transaction-based relationships are replacing kinship-based relationships, fundamentally altering the social fabric necessary for traditional peacebuilding.

Another challenge is the influence of Christianity and globalization Early missionary education demonized many indigenous practices (such as spirit mediums) as " pagan." The literature shows that t his historical legacy persists, with many modern Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe actively discouraging members from participating in traditional rituals. This creates a spiritual conflic t within individuals and communities, making it difficult to sustain a cohesive cultural identity that relies on ancestral connection. The "Gospel of Prosperity" is often cited as being at odds with the communal ethos of traditional culture.

2.7 Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Formal Frameworks

The fourth objective addresses the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into formal peacebuilding. The Global literature on "Hybrid Political Orders" (Boege et al., 2008) suggests that pure Western state-building has failed in the Global South and that a "hybrid" approach is inevitable. Examples from East Timor and Sierra Leone show attempts to integrate local truth-telling into formal Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs). The literature argues that integration enhances legitimacy; when local people see their own traditions reflected in the peace process, ownership of the outcome increases. However, critics warn of "co-optation," where the state merely uses IKS to rubber-stamp government decisions.

In the African region, the integration of the "House of Chiefs" in Ghana and Botswana into the parliamentary system is often cited as a model of institutional integration. The literature suggests that this formalizes the role of traditional leaders in governance and conflict prevention. However, regarding peacebuilding specifically, the literature on the South African TRC is critical. While it used the concept of Ubuntu, many scholars argue it was a "thin" application that prioritized state forgiveness over true reparations, suggesting that integration requires more than just borrowing terminology; it requires a shift in the legal philosophy.

In Zimbabwe, the establishment of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) provides a fertile ground for literature on integration. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) explicitly recognizes the role of traditional leaders. However, academic analysis of the NPRC's operations suggests t hat integration has been cosmetic. Civil society reports indicate that while traditional leaders are consulted, the methodology remains largely technocratic and Western-centric (workshops, reports, bureaucratic hearings). The literature argues that true

integration would involve giving the Dare system binding legal power in reconciliation cases, which the formal state is reluctant to do.

Scholars like Machakanja (2010) advocate for a "bottom-up" integration. The literature suggests that instead of trying to fit IKS into the formal structure, the formal structure should support IKS. This means the state providing resources and enforcing the judgments made by traditional courts, rather than overriding them. Research on the "Local Peace Committees" in Zimbabwe shows promise where NGOs have facilitated a hybrid model involving pastors, chiefs, and local government officials. These committees function best when they allow indigenous protocols to guide the process while using formal mechanisms for documentation and resource mobilization.

A significant theme in the literature is the "epistemological barrier." Formal peacebuilding is written, codified, and time-bound. Indigenous systems are oral, fluid, and cyclical. Integrating these two distinct ways of knowing is difficult. The literature suggests that successful integration requires a "legal pluralism" that accepts multiple avenues to justice. For example, a murder case might go to the High Court for retributive justice (prison), but simultaneously go to the Chief's court for restorative justice (reparations/appeasing the spirit). Scholars argue that Zimbabwe's legal system is currently too rigid to allow this parallel processing effectively.

Furthermore, the literature explores the role of education in integration. Integrating IKS into the school curriculum is seen as a long-term peacebuilding strategy. Ishola (2022) and others argue that if children are taught indigenous conflict resolution strategies alongside civic education, integration becomes organic. Currently, the literature notes a gap where peace studies

in Zimbabwean universities are dominated by Western theories (Realism, Liberalism), marginalizing local knowledge.

2.8 Summary of Knowledge Gap in Available Literature

A synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals a robust discourse on the macro-politics of ethnicity and the general utility of indigenous knowledge systems in Africa. The arguments establish that ethnicity is constructed and that indigenous mechanisms like Ubuntu are vital for restorative justice. However, a significant knowledge gap persists regarding the micro-dynamics of narrative transmission within the specific context of Zimbabwe's current polarized environment. While scholars have extensively documented that politicians manipulate ethnicity, there is limited empirical research on how ordinary community members in Zimbabwe actively negotiate, accept, or reject these narratives in their daily lives to build localized peace.

Furthermore, much of the existing literature treats "Indigenous Knowledge Systems" and "Modern Governance" as binary opposites. There is a lack of research that models the hybridity that actually occurs on the ground how a rural Zimbabwean might use a police station in the morning and a spirit medium in the afternoon. The literature is also deficient in exploring the specific role of cultural narratives (storytelling, myths, proverbs) as distinct from structures (chiefs, courts). Most studies focus on the institution of the Chieftaincy rather than the software of the stories they tell. This study seeks to fill these gaps by specifically examining the influence of these narratives on identity formation and exploring practical, lived experiences of integrating these systems, moving beyond theoretical advocacy to empirical reality.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed theoretical and empirical foundation for the study. It established Social Constructionism, supported by Social Identity Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory, as the framework for understanding the fluid and constructed nature of ethnic identity. The empirical review, organized by objective, highlighted the power of ethnicity in shaping social norms , the restorative potential of indigenous mechanisms like the Dare system, the challenges posed by modern state governance and urbanization, and the complexities of integrating these systems into formal peacebuilding . The chapter concluded by identifying the specific knowledge gap regarding the micro-level influence of narratives and the practicalities of hybrid peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. This sets the stage for Chapter Three, which will outline the methodology used to gather primary data to address these gaps.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The last chapter looked at the literature review of the study. Thus this chapter outlines the methodological framework utilized to investigate the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Also the chapter is important because it also details the research philosophy, methodology, design, and the specific procedures for data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Philosophy

On the philosophical assumptions of this study it adopted an interpretivist philosophy. This philosophy which posits that social reality is not objective but is highly subjective because it is shaped by human experiences and social contexts (Bryman, 2016). Thus Interpretivism was chosen by the researcher because it seeks to understand the meaning that ethnic communities attach to their cultural identities and indigenous peace practices. Thus unlike a positivist approach that seeks universal laws interpretivism thus allowed the researcher to explore the concept of ethnic narratives by engaging with the participants' lived experiences and internal perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus through the use of this philosophy the research captured th multi-layered reality of how indigenous knowledge systems function as instruments for social cohesion in the Shambva District.

3.2 Research Methodology

Also of importance was the research approach used in the study. Thus on this the research utilized a mixed-methods approach. This thus involved the intentional integration of both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Thus on the other hand whilst the the study was primarily by qualitative study the inclusion of quantitative elements such as structured survey data allowed for the identification of broader patterns across the 50 participants regarding their views on cultural identity and modern governance. This methodology was thus chosen because it facilitated triangulation which ensures that the rich descriptive insights gained from interviews regarding traditional mechanisms were complemented by measurable data on the prevalence of these practices (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021).

3.4 Research Design

Also to move one the study also made use of a case study design. This is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon and in the case of this study it was ethnic identity and peacebuilding (Yin, 2018). Thus the case study design was chosen and used because it focused l on the Shambva District. This also produced an in-depth exploration of the interplay between traditional restorative justice and formal peace frameworks. Thus the design is advantageous because it allows for a description of the socio-political dynamics and historical contexts that influence how indigenous knowledge systems are preserved or neglected (Geertz, 1973).

3.5 Target Population

To move on the target population included members of the ethnic communities in the Dhambva District of Zimbabwe. This participants were used because they provided a rich context for examining the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity. Thus these included traditional leaders, community elders, and local residents who possess first-hand knowledge of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices. Also to add more the population was constitutive of individuals who had navigated the challenges of maintaining cultural identity amidst modern socio-political structures.

3.6 Sample Size

Also on the sample size the study used a size of 50 participants. The number was thus chosen to balance the need for in-depth qualitative detail. This also led to a sufficient breadth of perspectives to identify common themes. Also thus the sample included a mix of community members which included traditional authorities and local practitioners of indigenous peace mechanisms within Shambva. A sample of 50 was substantial enough in a methodology which used mixed-methods study to achieve saturation. This is a situation where no new significant information or emerge from additional interaction (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). This specific number thus allowed the researcher to conduct detailed interviews and survey assessments while remaining manageable within the study's logistical and temporal delimitations.

3.7 Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques are the specific methods used to select a subgroup from a population to participate in a study (Taherdoost, 2016).

3.7.1 Purposive Sampling

In the case of the study the researcher chose to use purposive sampling technique. Thus Purposive sampling is defined as a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on the researcher's judgment (Patton, 2015). Thus this sampling method was used to identify individuals in Shimbva who had rich information regarding indigenous peace practices and ethnic history. Thus these included traditional leaders and elders who were purposefully selected because they serve as the primary custodians of indigenous knowledge systems. They also provide authoritative insights into reconciliation rituals.

3.7.2 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is a technique where existing s tudy subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances, creating a chain-referral process (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This method is particularly useful in Shambva for reaching individuals within the community who may be hesitant to discuss sensitive cultural or historical topics with an outsider. Once initial trust is established with key community members through purposive sampling, they were asked to recommend others who possess deep knowledge of local dispute resolution or who have navigated ethnic identity challenges. This approach will be used to overcome potential barriers to access and to capture a more diverse range of perspectives that might not be visible through formal channels. Snowball sampling thus facilitates the inclusion of voices that reflect the internal social cohesion of the district (Noy, 2008).

3.8 Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering information from all the relevant sources to find answers to the research problem (Kothari, 2004).

3.8.1 Questionnaire

The research used also a questionnaire to select participants. Thus a questionnaire defined by many scholars to mean a research instrument which consist series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Bell, Waters & Ebook, 2018). Thus in this study questionnaires were used to collect quantitative and semi-structured data from the 50 participants in Shabva. This was done so as to collect information regarding their perceptions of cultural identity and the effectiveness of indigenous peacebuilding. Thus this instrument was very important because it was used to provide a standardized way of measuring community attitudes toward modern governance versus traditional mechanisms. Also it was used because it permited the researcher to gather data baseline of information that could be further explored in-depth through qualitative means (Oppenheim, 2000).

3.8.2 Interviews

Moreover the research also used interviews. As stated by different scholars interviews involve a direct conversation between the researcher and the participant and this is done to extract detailed personal accounts and opinions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). This study thus used a semi-structured interviews. This was used to explore the deep-seated meanings behind ethnic narratives and the practical application of indigenous knowledge systems in Shambva. Moreover interviews were used because they allow for flexibility and they also enable the researcher to probe deeper into complex issues such as the maintenance of cultural identity amidst modern socio-political dynamics (Bryman, 2016) . Thus the method was very essential for capturing the "voice" of the participants. It also provided the richness required by the interpretivist philosophy. By engaging in one-on -one dialogue, the researcher could gather

context-specific insights that a questionnaire might miss, ultimately leading to a more profound understanding of how local practices contribute to sustainable peace.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleansing, and modeling data to discover useful information and support decision-making (Kumar, 2019). This study will employed thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data from interviews and questionnaire responses were transcribed and coded to identify recurring concepts such as "indigenous mechanisms," "social cohesion," and "cultural challenges". These themes were then synthesized to answer the research questions concerning the influence of ethnicity on peacebuilding in Shambva. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed to present a clear picture of community trends. The presentation of data includes the use of narratives and direct quotes from participants to provide evidence for the conclusions drawn.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

To add more every research should ensure validity and reliability. In this study Validity wass used to refer to the accuracy and truthfulness of the research findings. Also reliability refered to the consistency and replicability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus to ensure validity, the study used triangulation where the researcher ompared data from questionnaires, interviews, and documentary analysis to see if they corroborated each other (Denzin, 2017). Also the study also used a method known as Member checking. This was also employed and it means that participants were given the opportunity to verify that their cultural practices and experiences were

accurately represented (Birt et al., 2016). Also on the other hand reliability was also ensured because the researcher maintained a detailed account of the methodology and the rationale for research decisions.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

It is a request that every research should be guided by specific ethical conditions. Thus this study also ensured that the participants were protected by ethical considerations. Thus ethical considerations refer to the principles and guidelines that protect the rights and well-being of participants (Resnik, 2020). Thus to ensure that the participants were protected the study adhered to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from all 50 participants. This ensured that they understood the purpose of the research and their right to withdraw at any time (World Medical Association, 2013). Also the research also guaranteed Anonymity and confidentiality amd these were used because of the personal nature of discussing cultural identity and historical grievances thus in this case names were replaced with codes to protect the identities of the respondents (Saunders et al., 2019). Thus also to add the researcher also ensured that the study was conducted with cultural sensitivity. This was done respecting the traditions and social norms of the ethnic communities in Shambva.

3.12 Chapter Summary

Thus this chapter was very important because it detailed the mixed-methods approach and interpretivist philosophy used to investigate the role of ethnic identity in the Shambva District's peacebuilding efforts. The chapter outlined that the researcher chose the research design as of a case study and through use of a case study design much data was extracted.

Also the research focused on 50 participants who were chosen by the use of purposive and snowball sampling, the study collected rich data via questionnaires and interviews. The use of thematic analysis and rigorous validity checks ensures that the findings are both credible and contextually relevant. The next chapter will present the data gathered and provide a detailed analysis of the findings in relation to the study's core objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was important because it led to this chapter which presents, analyses, and discusses the data collected from the field. The data concerned the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Just to remind the research study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 50 participants drawn from Shambva District. The data are organized and presented according to the research objectives that guided the study.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Since demographic data helps to analyse the findings. This section presents the demographic characteristics of the 50 participants who took part in the study. Thus this was done because Understanding the demographic profile is essential because it provides context for interpreting the findings and establishes the credibility of the sample in relation to the research objectives. The demographic variables examined include sex, age, level of education, and marital status. Each variable is presented in tabular form, followed by a detailed interpretation of the data.

4.2.1 Sex of Participants

Participants were asked to indicate their sex to establish the gender distribution within the sample.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Participants by Sex

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Male	28	56
Female	22	44
Total	**50**	**100**

The above Table 4.1 shows that out of the 50 participants, 28 (56%) were male and 22 (44%) were females. Thus from this analysis the researcher learned that the preponderance of male participants was not unexpected because of the nature of the study. The study involved significant engagement with traditional leaders and community elders roles in which in many Zimbabwean communities have been historically dominated by men.

4.2.2 Age of Participants

Also on the demographics of the participants. The Participants were asked to indicate their age group to establish the generational distribution within the sample.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Participants by Age

Age Group	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**

18–30	8	16
31–50	19	38
51–70	16	32
70+	7	14
Total	**50**	**100**

The above table was used to depict the age group of the research participants. The table show that the majority of participants 19 (38%) fell within the 31–50 age bracket. This is alsl followed by those aged 51–70 years 16 (32%). Participants aged 18–30 cconstitutedwre just 8 (16%) of the sample, while those over 70 years represented 7 (14%). Thus the study learned that the distribution is strategically advantageous for the study as it captures perspectives from across the generational spectrum. Also the inclusion of older participants was important because of their role as custodians of indigenous knowledge and oral traditions. More over such individuals possess important experience with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and can provide insights into how these practices have evolved over time.

4.2.3 Level of Education of Participants

Participants were asked to indicate their highest level of educational attainment.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Participants by Level of Education

Level of Education	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**

No formal education	6	12
Primary education	14	28
Secondary education	18	36
Tertiary education	12	24
Total	**50**	**100**

To add more the Table 4.3 reveals thw educational profile among participants. The majority or the highest proportion 18 (36%) and this constituted all the participants who had completed secondary education, while 14 (28%) of the participants had primary education, 12 (24%) had tertiary education, and 6 (12%) had no formal education. Thus the information was crucial because it also indicates the population in rural areas such as Shambva. And this was beneficial for the study because it enables an exploration of how educational background shapes attitudes toward indigenous knowledge systems and formal peacebuilding frameworks. To 2008).

4.2.4 Marital Status of Participants

Participants were asked to indicate their marital status.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Participants by Marital Status

Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Married	34	68

Single	10	20
Widowed	4	8
Divorced/Separated	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

The table above also indicates the participants distribution by marital status. From the above table it can be learned that the majority of participants 34(68%) were married. Also this was followed by single participants 10 (20%), few participants were widowed participants 4 (8%), and those who were divorced or separated were the least with 2 (4%). Thus from the above the study learned that thr predominance of married participants is consistent with the demographic profile of rural communities in Zimbabwe. Thus also to add on the analysis the distribution is significant because married individuals often occupy positions of authority within community structures, including traditional courts and decision-making bodies. Also the study learned that their perspectives on cultural identity and peacebuilding are therefore likely to reflect and reinforce prevailing community norms.

4.3 The Influence of Ethnicity on Cultural Identity and Social Norms

Since the chapter 4 was guided by research objectives and the research questions this theme addresses the first research objective. Also this sought to examine the ways in which ethnicity shapes cultural identity and social norms in Zimbabwe. Thus to achieve this participants were asked about the role of ethnic narratives, traditions, and proverbs in

defining social behavior and identity. From the analysis the researcher discovered that the participants share diverse views.

The majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their ethnic background was a very important part of their identity. Also to add participants also strongly agreed that the stories and proverbs passed down in their community shaped how they behave.

Also when asked during the interviews about the most important traditions that define their ethnic identity the participants emphasized ton the the totem system, oral narratives and the communal ethos of unhu or ubuntu. One traditional leader explained:

> *"Our identity is not something we choose; it is something we inherit. When I say my totem is Shumba [lion], I am not just naming an animal. I am connecting myself to a lineage, to a history, to a set of responsibilities. The totem tells me who I can marry, how I should behave , and who my relatives are even if I have never met them."* (P1, Traditional Leader, Male, 62 years)

Thus from the above extract one can note that this shows that the totem system's role as a foundational element of cultural identity is very important. Also this is in line with the literature discussion of how ethnicity serves as a "container" for cultural identity and also dictating social behavior and defining moral boundaries (Anderson, 1983; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). Thus also the participant's framing of identity as inherited rather than chosen aligns with the social constructionist perspective. Thus this posits that while identities are constructed, they are experienced as deeply natural and authentic (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Another participant, a community elder, elaborated on how proverbs function as vehicles for transmitting social norms:

> *"When a child does something wrong, we do not shout at them. We tell them a story. We say, 'Do you remember what happened to the hare when he was greedy?' In that story, the child learns respect, patience and the consequences of their actions. This is how we have always taught our children. It is more powerful than any written law because it comes from our ancestors."* (P2, Community Elder, Female, 58 years)

Also the above narrative produced by the participants indicates the pedagogical function of oral traditions. This is thus also in line with the literature which identifies it as a critical mechanism for sustaining social norms across generations (Loveness & Chikodzi, 2017). Thus the participant's emphasis on the authority of ancestral knowledge reflects the spiritual dimension of ethnic identity. In that dimension cultural practices are not merely customary but are imbued with moral and spiritual significance.

A young participant explained:

> *"I respect my culture, but sometimes I feel it restricts me. My totem says I cannot marry someone from a certain clan, but what if I love that person? And the stories we are told they are beautiful, but they also keep us in our place. They tell girls that they must be quiet and respectful, while boys can do anything. That is changing now, but slowly."* (P3, Youth, Female, 24 years)

Also to add more from the above findings it can be noted that the gendered and generational tensions are inherent in ethnic narratives. This is thus also resonating with feminist critiques

who argue that indigenous practices can be patriarchal and may perpetuate gender inequalities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). .

A participant who had lived in the area for decades reflected:

> *"Here , we are mostly Shona, but there are Ndebele families who came here years ago. We live together, we share the same markets, our children go to the same schools. But there is still a feeling that we are different. Sometimes jokes are made, sometimes marriages are frowned upon. And when politics come into it, those old stories about the Gukurahundi come back. People remember."* (P4, Farmer, Male, 55 years)

From the findings presented above it can be noted that the findings align with the literature analysed and reviewed in chapter 2 of the study. Thus the findings are consistent with Anderson's (1983) concept of "imagined communities because the participants demonstrated a deep identification with their ethnic groups, which are sustained through shared narratives, totems, and oral traditions. Moreover the findings also support Mamdani's (2001) argument that ethnic identities are not static but are continually shaped by historical and political forces. On the contrary from the findings it can be learned that the participants also presented diverse views where it can be argued that While participants acknowledged the political manipulation of ethnicity, they also emphasized the genuine emotional and spiritual significance of ethnic identity. This is thus also lending support to primordialist insights that ethnic bonds are deeply felt and not merely instrumental (Ranger, 1985).

4.4 Indigenous Mechanisms for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

To add more on the findings this theme addresses the second research objective. The objective sought to identify the mechanisms through which indigenous practices contribute to conflict resolution and reconciliation. Thus the Participants were asked about traditional dispute resolution practices active in their communities. They were also asked about their their effectiveness, and the processes through which these mechanisms operate. Thus it can be learned from the analysis that participants offered diverse views.

Thus the data that was obtained from the questionnaire revealed that indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms remain active in the study area, with 21 (86%) of partreported that the *Dare* was still operational in their community. Additionally, 16 (64%) of participants reported that cleansing ceremonies and rituals to address avenging spirits (*ngozi*) were still practiced.

One of the participants noted a vivid account of the *Dare* process:

> *"When a dispute comes to me, whether it is about l and, a debt, or a marriage, I do not sit alone like a magistrate. I call the elders. We sit under a tree, and we talk. We do not look for a winner and a loser. We look for a solution where the two parties can continue to live in the same village. If one person has wronged another, we do not send them to prison that helps no one. Instead, we find out what will restore the relationship. Sometimes it is cattle, sometimes it is an apology, sometimes it is a ceremony. But always, it is about bringing the community back together."* (P5, Traditional Leader, Male, 71 years)

From this account one can note the consensus-based nature of indigenous conflict resolution. This included contrasting sharply with the adversarial, retributive approach of formal legal systems. Also to add more the participant's emphasis on "bringing the community

back together" resonates with the philosophical underpinning of *ubuntu* or *unhu*, which posits that an individual's humanity is inextricably linked to the community (Murithi, 2006).

An elder explained:

> *"If someone is killed, even if the killer goes to prison, the family of the deceased is not at peace. The spirit of the dead person, the ngozi, will haunt the killer's family. Crops will fail, children will die, and there will be no peace. The only way to stop this is to go to the family, confess, and perform the cleansing ritual. The svikiro [spirit medium] will tell you what must be done. It is not about punishment; it is about bringing the spirit to rest. This is something the courts cannot do."* (P6, Community Elder, Male, 68 years)

Thus the above finding reveals the metaphysical dimension of conflict resolution. This is where violence is understood not merely as a crime against an individual but as a disruption of the spiritual balance between the li ving, the dead, and the ancestors.

The *nhimbe* system emerged as a significant mechanism for preventive peacebuilding, operating through collective labor rather than formal dispute resolution. A participant described its function:

> *"When we have a nhimbe, we are working together, yes, but we are also talking, laughing, sharing food and drink. If there is a dispute between two families, the nhimbe is where they can meet and be reconciled without having to make a formal complaint. The act of working together, of sharing, breaks down the walls. It is peace in action, not just words."* (P7, Farmer, Female, 45 years)

Thus from the above description of the *nhimbe* one can note that "peace in action" detects the performative nature of indigenous peacebuilding. However, participants also identified limitations and challenges associated with indigenous mechanisms. A female participant offered a critical perspective on the gender dynamics of traditional courts:

> *"The Dare is run by men. The elders are men, the chief is a man. If a woman has a dispute with her husband about beating her, the Dare will often tell her to go back to her husband, to be patient. They say, 'A good wife does not shame her husband.' So the reconciliation is at the woman's expense. The man is not really held accountable. That is why some women prefer to go to the police now, even if it means traveling far."* (P8, Community Member, Female, 38 years)

From the above reflection one can note that the critique provides a crucial corrective to any romanticization of indigenous practices. Thus the participant's observation that women "prefer to go to the police" points to the emergence of hybrid justice-seeking strategies, where individuals navigate between indigenous and formal systems based on which is perceived to offer more just outcomes.

Another participant, a young man, highlighted the limitations of indigenous mechanisms in addressing political violence:

> *"The chief can solve disputes about cattle, about land boundaries, about family matters. But when the violence is political, when it comes from the state or from party supporters, what can the chief do? The chief gets his salary from the government. He cannot act against the government. For those kinds of problems, people go to the police, or they say nothing and suffer in silence."* (P9, Youth, Male, 29 years)

Also the above extract reveals the crisis of legitimacy which was also identified in the literature. This is where traditional leaders may be compromised by their relationship with the state. This also limits their effectiveness in addressing conflicts that involve state actors or political violence (Sachikonye, 2011). Also from the above findings it can be noted that the findings also complicate the literature in significant ways. For example some of the critical perspective which were offered by female and younger participants challenge the often-idealized portrayal of indigenous practices in some scholarly accounts. Thus also the identification of gender biases and the limitations of traditional leaders in addressing political violence point to the need for more understanding that recognizes both the strengths and the weaknesses of indigenous mechanisms. Thus from the ongoing discourse on the findings one can note the fact that the findings support the literature as it calld for a "hybrid" approach. This approach integrates indigenous practices with formal systems. Also addressing the power imbalances that can compromise traditional institutions (Mac Ginty, 2011).

4.5 Challenges in Sustaining Cultural Identity Amid Modern Governance and Socio-Political Dynamics

The theme addresses the objective which sought to explore the challenges faced by communities in sustaining cultural identity in the context of modern governance and socio-political dynamics. Thus from the research instruments Participants were asked about the pressures facing their cultural traditions, the changing role of traditional leaders, and the impact of economic, political and social changes on their cultural practices.

Thus from the findings the data revealed widespread concern about the erosion of cultural traditions. When asked about various challenges 22 (84%) participants agreed that

urbanization and migration were weakening traditional customs. Also to addmore the majority of the participants also 15 (78%) agreed that modern political structures did not adequately respect the authority of traditional leaders and also few participants noted that economic hardship made it difficult to practice cultural traditions. A traditional leader expressed his frustration:

> *"The Constitution says we are recognized. The Traditional Leaders Act says we have authority. But in practice, we are treated like civil servants . We must report to t he District Administrator* (P10, Traditional Leader, Male, 59 years)

From the above finding it can be learned that there js the "partisanization" of culture identified in the literature. Thus this is where traditional leaders, salaried by the state, find their authority compromised and their autonomy constrained.

A participant who had moved to the district from Harare reflected on the changes:

> *"When I was young in the village, every evening we would sit around the fire, and the elders would tell stories. That is how we learned about our history, our totems, our values. Now, in the cities, there is no time for that. The children are on their phones, watching foreign things. Even here in Shambva, with roads and shops and radios, things are changing. The young people are losing the language, the proverbs, the ways of their ancestors. They want to be modern, but they are becoming empty."* (P11, Retired Teacher, Male, 66 years)

Also the finding above highlights the disruptive impact of urbanization and technological change on the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

Thus to add more Economic hardship was identified as another profound challenge. A participant explained how poverty undermines cultural practices:

> *"Our traditions require cattle. For marriage, for compensation, for ceremonies, we need cattle. But now, with the economy, cattle are scarce. People are poor. They cannot afford the lobola [bride price] that is customary. They cannot afford the goats for cleansing rituals. So they do nothing. The disputes remain unresolved. The rituals are not performed. And the ancestors are not appeased. The economy is killing our culture."* (P12, Farmer, Male, 52 years)

Thus to a greater extent it can be learned from the findings that economic collapse threatens ethnicity sustainability. Also the finding aligns with the literature's discussion of how extreme poverty erodes the material foundations of culture, leading to the collapse of institutions such as the *Zunde RaMambo* (the chief's granary for the poor) and the transformation of kinship-based relationships into transaction-based ones (Chigara, 2018).

The influence of Christianity emerged as a contested theme. Some participants viewed Christian institutions as a threat to traditional culture, while others saw them as compatible or even complementary. A Pentecostal church member offered a perspective:

> *"I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ. I do not go to the n'anga [traditional healer] or participate in the ngozi rituals because those things are from the devil. But I am still Shona. I still respect my elders. I still speak my language. My church does not take away my identity; it purifies it. Some things in our culture were good, but some things needed to be left behind."* (P13, Church Member, Female, 41 years)

This perspective highlights the complex negotiation between Christianity and traditional culture, where individuals selectively adopt elements of both traditions. The participant's framing of Christianity as "purifying" rather than replacing cultural identity reflects the syncretic nature of religious practice in Zimbabwe, where traditional and Christian elements often coexist in complex configurations (Werbner, 1991). However, a traditional leader offered a contrasting view:

> *"These new churches, they tell our young people that our ancestors are demons, that our rituals are witchcraft. They are destroying the foundations of our culture. How can you be Shona if you reject the spirits of your ancestors? These pastors, they are not building peace; they are creating division between generations, between the living and the dead."* (P14, Traditional Leader, Male, 74 years)

A participant involved in cultural tourism reflected

> *. We sell our crafts. The tourists love it. But what they see is not our real culture. It is a performance. They see the dance, but they do not understand the meaning. They buy the carving, but they do not know the story. This culture, the one that is sold, it is becoming shallow. The deep culture, the one with meaning and power, is being lost."* (P15, Craftsperson, Male, 47 years)

From the above findings it can be noted that the commodification of culture" resonates with the literature's concern that when cultural identity is packaged for consumption and that it is stripped of its regulatory power over social norms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). Thus also it can be seen that the participant's distinction between "deep culture" and performative culture points to the qualitative transformation of cultural identity under market pressures.

From this it can also be learned that the findings also extend the literature by providing rich accounts of how economic, demographic, religious, and market forces interact to shape the sustainability of cultural identity.

4.6 Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Formal Peacebuilding Frameworks

The above theme addresses the last research objective. This thus sought to assess how integrating indigenous knowledge systems into formal peacebuilding frameworks can enhance social cohesion and sustainable peace. Thus Participants were asked about the relationship between indigenous practices and formal governance structures. Thus the study present diverse views on this theme. When asked about the best way to achieve lasting peace, a traditional leader articulated a vision of complementarity:

> *"The problem is that we have two systems that do not speak to each other. There is the government system with its courts and police and prisons. And there is our system with the Dare, the elders, the rituals. Both have their strengths. The government system can deal with serious crimes, can enforce its decisions with force. Our system can heal relationships, can bring people together in a way the courts cannot. What we need is a way for these systems to work together. Not one replacing the other, but each doing what it does best."* (P16, Traditional Leader, Male, 63 years)

A community activist explained

> *"The government talks about traditional leaders. They put them in the Constitution . But when you look at what actually happens, it is just words. They want to control the chiefs, not empower them. True integration would mean giving the Dare real authority ,*

letting its decisions be enforced by the state . But the government is afraid of that because the chiefs might not always do what the ruling party wants. So we have a fake integration, where the chiefs are consulted but not respected." (P17, Community Activist, Male, 42 years)

From the above extract it can thus be noted that the critique of "fake integration" resonates with the literature's concern about co-optation. This is where indigenous institutions are incorporated into state structures in ways that undermine their autonomy and legitimacy (Mac Ginty, 2011).

Also to add more other Participants also offered

"If we are going to bring the Dare into the formal system, we must also reform it. The elders, the chiefs, they must learn that women have rights. A woman should not be forced to stay with a man who beats her in the name of reconciliation. If the government is going to support the Dare, it must also ensure that the Dare respects the rights of women and children. Otherwise, integration will just make the old injustices stronger." (P18, Community Member, Female, 44 years)

Thus it can be noted from the above that this perspective highlights a critical condition for integration. This also thus mean that indigenous institutions must themselves evolve to address gender inequalities and other human rights concerns. Thus from the findings it can be noted that the participant's called for reforms in addition of integration. This also reflects the literature's recognition that indigenous systems, while valuable, are not immune to critique and must be held to standards of justice and equity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009).

Another participant suggested a practical model for integration:

> *"We have something that works already. When there is a dispute, we go to the chief. He hears the case. If it is something serious, he might involve the police. Or if the parties agree, he resolves it his way. The problem is that the chief's decision is not recognized by the government. So if one party refuses to accept the chief's decision, there is nothing we can do. If the government would say, 'We will enforce the chief's decision, as long as it is fair and just,' then people would trust the system more. And the chiefs would have to be careful to be fair, because the government is watching."* (P19, Farmer, Male, 51 years)

Also to add more it can be noted from the above sentiments that the proposed for state enforcement of traditional court decisions are coupled with oversight to ensure fairness, offers a concrete vision of hybrid governance.

A younger participant offered a vision that emphasized education and cultural continuity:

> *"Integration should not just be about courts and chiefs. It should be about teaching our children. If we want peace, we must teach our children the values of unhu—respect, compassion, community. But we must teach them alongside the things they learn in school human rights, democracy, the Constitution. The young people need both. They need to know that they are Shona or Ndebele, but also that they are Zimbabwean. They need to know the old ways of resolving conflict, but also the new ways.*

Thus it can be noted that this vision of integration as a pedagogical project where indigenous knowledge is taught in line with formal civic education aligns also with the literature's discussion

of integrating indigenous knowledge systems into education as a long-term peacebuilding strategy (Ishola, 2022).

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented, analyzed, and discussed the data collected from 50 participants in Shambva District, addressing each of the! four research objectives that guide this study. The demographic profile of participants revealed a diverse sample that captured perspectives across gender, age, education, and marital status, providing a solid foundation for the qualitative insights that followed.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter looked the findings of the study. Thus in addition to this study this chapter thus reps up the whole study because it synthesizes the key findings of the study. It also presents the conclusions drawn from the findings on all the objectives noted in chapter one of the study. Thus also to add more the chapter begins with a summary of the entire dissertation because it provide a concise overview of each chapter's contribution to the research. Moreover the chapter also presents conclusions organized according to the four research objectives This also linked the findings to the theoretical frameworks and existing literature that guided the study. Following the conclusions, recommendations are offered for various stakeholders , including policymakers, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, and community members.

5.2 Summary of the Dissertation

Since the inception of this study the first chapter introduced the study. It looked and talked about the background and context of the study. It also highlighted the background of the study by starting at the global perspectives to the regional and also the national frameworks. Moreover the chapter also looked at the main significance of indigenous peace practices in Zimbabwe. It also looked at how the study is significant to various stakeholders of interest. Thus the chapter also looked at the history of the nation where also some of the cases of Zimbabwe were discussed where

this includes conflicts such as the Gukurahundi where tensions from ethnicity emanated from the Shona and Ndebele communities. Moreover the chapter also articulated the purpose of the study and from this it was learned that the main purpose of the study was to explore the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and its contribution to peacebuilding. The chapter also looked at the main problem which the study sought to address and from that it was discovered that the study sought to solve a critical gap. This gap was argued that while ethnic communities possess rich indigenous knowledge systems that have historically Contributed to conflict resolution, its role is often neglected in formal peacebuilding frameworks.

Also to add to this summary the chapter also embarked on a systematic literature review that was provided in chapter two of the study. From that the research argued that it was necessary to use theories such as social constructivism and conflict transformation to guide the study. Thus Two provided review of the literature. Moreover it established the theoretical framework for the study. To add more to this the study also resorted to the providence of Emperical literature review which was also arranged according to the four research objectives of the study which were reviewed in chapter one of this study. The literature was then presented following a funnel approach in which scholars from the global, regional, and national who offer their views on ethnicity and cultural identity were analysed. Therefore in culmination the thus chapter identified a significant knowledge gap where the literature looked only at macro-level analyses of ethnic politics and indigenous institutions exist. It can thus be leaned from a critical analysis that there is limited empirical research on the micro-dynamics. These also includes but no limited or exhausted to how ordinary community members negotiate ethnic narratives in their daily lives and how hybrid peacebuilding actually operates on the ground.

Also moving on from the literature review the study had to look at the methodological approaches which were used by the study to collect, analyse and interpret the findings and the data. Thus this was all detailed in chapter three of the study where which thus also detailed all the procedures which were taken by the study to arrive at different comclusions. Thus it was learned that the study was guided by the interpretivist philosophy. Also the study made sure that it looked at the research approach in this case the study used mixed methodology. The chapter also chose questionnaires as data collection instruments and also used interviews . The data was collecfed from 50 participants who included people with diverse ethnicity. Thus Shambva discrict became the main thrust of the study. Also to add more since it was difficult to pinpoint the participamts the research chose to use purposive sampling technique and snowball balling. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns in the qualitative data, while validity and reliability were ensured through triangulation and member checking. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, were rigorously observed throughout the research process.

Chapter Four presented, analyzed, and discussed the findings from the field. The chapter began with descriptive statistics profiling the 50 participants, revealing a diverse sample across sex, age, education, and marital status. The findings were organized according to the four research objectives. Regarding the influence of ethnicity on cultural identity, participants demonstrated a deep identification with their ethnic groups, sustained through totems, oral narratives, and the communal ethos of unhu, though tensions emerged along generational and gender lines. On indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, the Dare system, cleansing rituals, and the nhimbe were found to be active and valued, with participants emphasizing their restorative, consensus-based nature and capacity to address spiritual dimensions of conflict, though critical perspectives

highlighted patriarchal biases and limitations in addressing political violence. Regarding challenges to cultural identity, participants identified urbanization, economic hardship, the partisanization of traditional leadership, the influence of Christianity, and the commodification of culture as significant pressures threatening cultural sustainability. On integration of indigenous knowledge systems into formal peacebuilding, participants strongly supported hybrid approaches that combine the strengths of both systems, though concerns about co-optation, the need for gender reform, and the importance of pedagogical integration emerged as critical considerations.

Chapter Five, the current chapter, synthesizes the study's contributions by presenting a summary of the entire dissertation, drawing conclusions based on the research objectives, offering recommendations for various stakeholders, proposing a conceptual model framework for integrating indigenous knowledge systems into formal peacebuilding, and identifying areas for future research. The chapter brings the study to a close by reflecting on the implications of the findings for theory and practice and by charting a path forward for continued inquiry into the relationship between ethnic narratives, cultural identity, and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe and beyond.

5.3 Conclusions

This section presents conclusions drawn from the study, organized according to the four research objectives. Each conclusion integrates the empirical findings with the theoretical frameworks and existing literature that guided the research.

Ways in which ethnicity shapes cultural identity and social norms in Zimbabwe

Findings were discovered in chapter four of the study on the first objective . Thus from that it was discovered that ethnicity shapes cultural identity and social norms in Zimbabwe. This thus operates through many things which included inherited traditions, oral narratives, and communal practices. Thus from the findings it was discovered that the Participants demonstrated a deep knowledge of their ethnic groups. Some included them with the totem system , proverbs, and the philosophical ethos of unhu. These thus served as as the foundational elements of identity that structure social behavior, kinship relations, and moral obligations.

Thus from the findings which were discovered above one can conclude the fact that ethnic identities are not fixed primordial essences but are actively constructed and reconstructed through narratives, rituals, and social interactions. Thus in this case the totem system, oral traditions, and proverbs function as discursive resources through which individuals and communities produce and reproduce their sense of self and belonging. Also to add more one can also conclude the findings support Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is so because the participants derived significant social meaning from their ethnic group memberships

mechanisms through which indigenous practices contribute to conflict resolution and reconciliation

To addmore this data findings on the second objective that indigenous practices always and shows a robust system of conflict resolution and reconciliation this system thus operates in preference to formal state institutions. From the findings it was also recorded that the Dare emerged as the central Mechanism. This system was characterized by restorative principles, consensus-building, and the involvement of elders and community members. The court system was different from the formal courts that emphasize adversarial adjudication and punishment

because it prioritizes the restoration of relationships , the reintegration of offenders, and the healing of communal bonds.

Thus from all the findings it was noted that findings provide empirical validation for the principles of Conflict Transformation Theory (Lederach, 1995), which emphasizes that sustainable peace requires changing the underlying relationships and structures that cause conflict, not merely stopping violence. The Dare system, with its focus on relationship restoration rather than punishment , embodies the transformative approach to conflict that Lederach advocates. The findings also resonate with the literature on restorative justice and indigenous peacemaking (Murithi, 2006; Zartman, 2000), demonstrating that indigenous mechanisms are not merely cultural relics but active, functional systems that address dimensions of conflict spiritual, psychological, and communal that formal systems often neglect. However, the critical perspectives offered by participants caution against romanticizing indigenous practices. The patriarchal biases identified in the Dare system and the limitations of traditional leaders in addressing political violence underscore the need for a nuanced understanding that recognizes both the strengths and weaknesses of indigenous mechanisms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). This finding supports the literature's call for "hybrid" approaches that integrate indigenous practices with formal systems while addressing power imbalances and human rights concerns (Mac Ginty, 2011; Boege et al., 2008).

Challenges faced by communities in sustaining cultural identity in the context of modern governance and socio-political dynamics

These findings provide empirical grounding for the theoretical tensions between tradition and modernity discussed in the literature. The partisanization of traditional leadership confirms

Sachikonye's (2011) analysis of how state co-optation undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of traditional institutions. The challenges of urbanization and intergenerational transmission resonate with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2009) discussion of cultural memory loss and the erosion of traditional authority in the context of modernity. The economic challenges identified in the findings extend the literature by demonstrating how the material foundations of culture and, cattle, and other resources are essential for the sustainability of cultural practices (Chigara, 2018). The contested relationship between Christianity and traditional culture revealed in the findings supports the literature's recognition of the complex, syncretic nature of religious practice in Zimbabwe, where individuals negotiate between multiple spiritual traditions rather than simply replacing one with another (Werbner, 1991). Together, these findings paint a picture of cultural identity under pressure from multiple, intersecting forces, yet also reveal the resilience of communities as they adapt, negotiate, and selectively embrace elements of tradition and modernity.

Integrating indigenous knowledge systems into formal peacebuilding frameworks can enhance social cohesion and sustainable peace

The findings reveal strong support among participants for integrating indigenous knowledge systems into formal peacebuilding frameworks, though significant conditions and concerns shape their vision of integration. Participants envisioned a complementary relationship between indigenous and formal systems, with each addressing different dimensions of conflict. Conditions for integration were identified, including the need to reform indigenous institutions to address gender biases and human rights concerns, and the importance of pedagogical integration that teaches both indigenous knowledge and formal civic education to younger generations. A concrete proposal emerged for state enforcement of traditional court decisions,

coupled with oversight to ensure fairness, as a model of integration that balances respect for indigenous authority with accountability.

These findings both affirm and extend the literature on hybrid peacebuilding and legal pluralism (Mac Ginty, 2011; Boege et al., 2008). Consistent with this literature, participants recognized that sustainable peace in contexts like Zimbabwe requires approaches that draw on both indigenous and formal resources, rather than imposing Western models that ignore local realities. The participants' vision of complementarity reflects the insight that different knowledge systems have different strengths and that effective peacebuilding requires drawing on multiple traditions (Lederach, 2005). However, the findings also add important nuance to the hybrid peacebuilding discourse. Participants' concerns about co-optation highlight the political dimensions of integration that theoretical discussions sometimes overlook: the state's motivations for incorporating indigenous institutions may be less about genuine respect for tradition and more about extending control (Mac Ginty, 2011). The insistence on addressing gender biases within indigenous institutions provides a critical corrective to any uncritical embrace of "tradition," affirming that integration must be accompanied by reform (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). The proposal for state enforcement with oversight offers a concrete model of integration that balances the strengths of both systems while addressing their respective weaknesses.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered for key stakeholders involved in peacebuilding, governance, and cultural preservation in

Zimbabwe. These recommendations are designed to be practical, context-sensitive, and responsive to the needs and perspectives expressed by participants.

Traditional Leaders and Indigenous Institutions

It is recommended that traditional leaders undertake internal reforms to address gender inequalities within indigenous institutions. This could include ensuring the inclusion of women in traditional courts, developing protocols that protect women's rights in dispute resolution, and actively challenging patriarchal norms that subordinate women's voices. Traditional leaders should also work to preserve and document indigenous peace practices, recognizing the importance of oral traditions while also creating written records that can be used for training younger generations and for advocating for the recognition of indigenous systems.

Civil Society Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations

It is recommended that CSOs design and implement programs that facilitate collaboration between traditional leaders, local government officials, and community members, creating spaces for dialogue and mutual learning . Rather than imposing external models, CSOs should support communities in articulating and implementing their own visions of peacebuilding, drawing on indigenous resources while also providing access to formal mechanisms when needed.

Community Members and Local Peacebuilders

The findings of this study reveal the agency of community members in negotiating between tradition and modernity, selectively embracing elements of both to meet their needs. It is recommended that community members actively participate in traditional institutions, ensuring that these institutions remain responsive and accountable to the community.

5.6 Areas for Future Research

This study has provided valuable insights into the influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, focusing specifically on Shambva District and employing a mixed-methods approach that captured the perspectives of 50 participants. However, like all research, this study has limitations that suggest directions for future inquiry. The study was confined to a single district and a relatively small sample, which, while appropriate for the qualitative-dominant design , limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused on community-level dynamics and did not systematically examine the perspectives of national-level policymakers, formal justice officials, or political elites, whose views and actions significantly shape the context within which community peacebuilding occurs. Future research should extend the scope of this to examine the role of digital technologies and social media in shaping ethnic narratives and peacebuilding would address an emerging phenomenon that is likely to become increasingly significant as younger generations engage with cultural identity through new media platforms.

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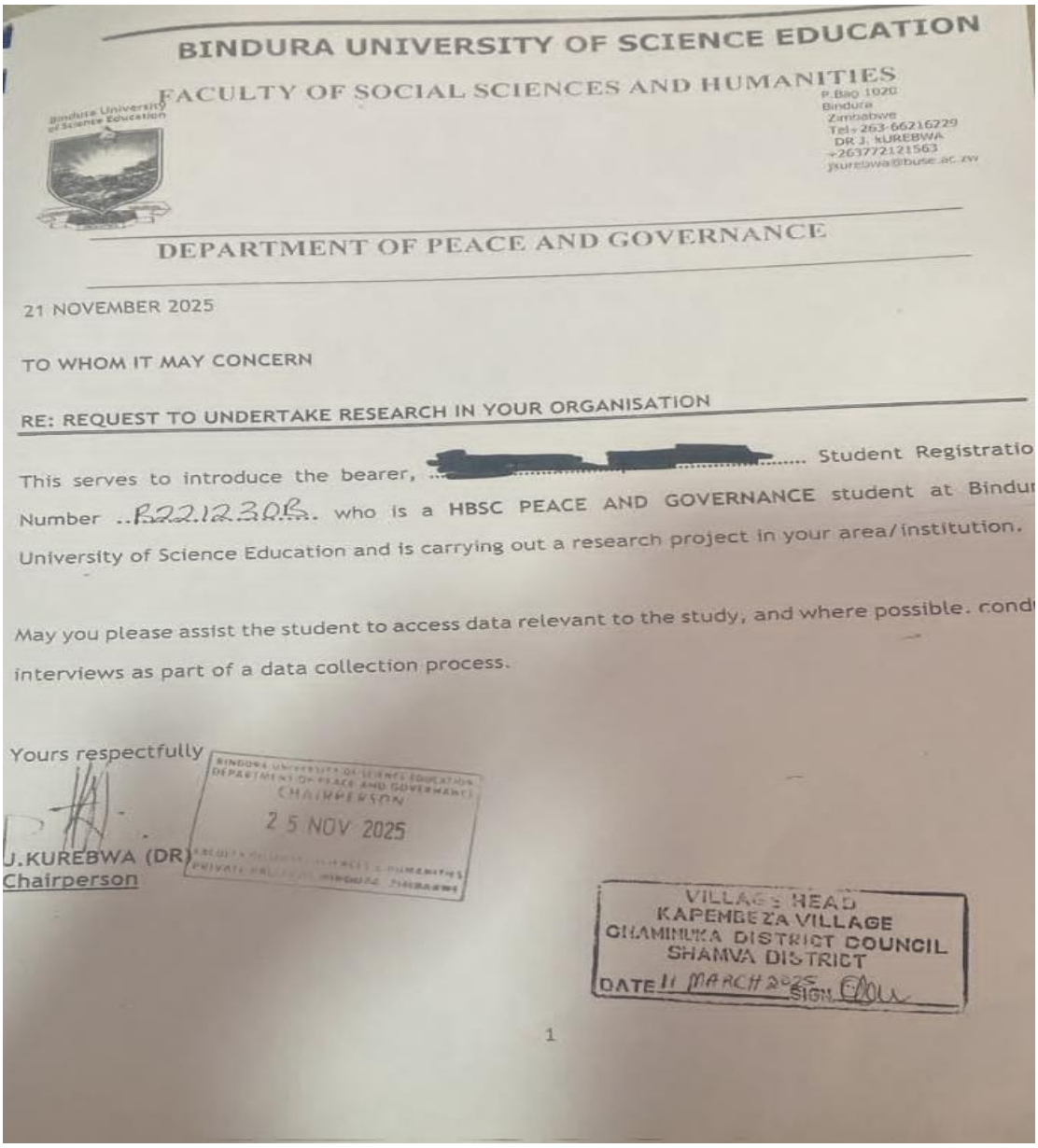
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APPENDICES

Appendice 1: Permission Letter



BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

21 NOVEMBER 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, [redacted] Student Registratio

Number ..R221230S. who is a HBSC PEACE AND GOVERNANCE student at Bindu

University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where possible. cond

interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours respectfully

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
CHAIRPERSON
25 NOV 2025

J.KUREBWA (DR)
Chairperson

VILLAGE HEAD
KAPEMBEZA VILLAGE
CHAMINUKA DISTRICT COUNCIL
SHAMVA DISTRICT
DATE 11 MARCH 2026 SIGN

1

Appendice 2: Consent Form

Purpose: To explore how ethnic identity and indigenous practices contribute to peacebuilding.

Procedures: 45–60 minute interview, audio-recorded with your permission.

Risks/Benefits: No known risks. No direct personal benefit.

Confidentiality: Your name will not appear in any reports.

Voluntary: You may withdraw at any time.

Consent:

I agree to participate. ___ Yes ___ No

I agree to be audio-recorded. ___ Yes ___ No

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendice 3: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Good day. My name is..... a student at Bindura University studying for a Bachelors Degree in Peace and Governance. I am conducting a study on cultural identity, traditional conflict resolution, challenges to culture, and peacebuilding. ***The study is titled Influence of ethnic narratives on cultural identity in peacebuilding***. You have been selected to participate because of your knowledge and experience. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. This will take about 20 minutes. Thank you.

Demographic Information

Please tell us a little about yourself.

1. Age: _____ years

2. Gender:

3. Education level: None / Primary / Secondary / Tertiary

4. Village/area of residence: _____

5. Role in community (e.g., elder, farmer, youth, traditional leader, etc.): _____

Section 1: Cultural Identity

1. What does "cultural identity" mean to you?
2. What stories or traditions define your ethnic group?

Section 2: Traditional Conflict Resolution

We are interested in how disputes are resolved in Shambva area.

1. What types of disputes happen in Shabva? (e.g., land, family, boundaries, etc.)

2. How are these disputes traditionally resolved?

· By negotiation

· By mediation

· By arbitration

· By litigation (courts)

· Other (specify): _____

3. Who is involved in resolving these disputes? (e.g., chiefs, village heads, elders, families)

4. Are traditional methods effective? Why or why not?

2. What does the Chief do? How is this different from the police or court?

Section 3: Challenges

1. What are the biggest pressures on your culture today?

2. How has the role of traditional leaders changed with modern politics?

Section 4: Peacebuilding

1. What is the best way to achieve lasting peace here?

2. How can government better support traditional peacebuilding?

3. What would you recommend to improve peace in Shabva?

Thank you for your time.