

**INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES FOR  
PEACE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AMONG ZIMBABWEAN NDEBELES:  
A CASE OF SILOBELA DISTRICT**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

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I, Faith Sibanda, declare that **Indigenous Knowledge and Communicative Strategies for Peace and Conflict Management Among Zimbabwean Ndebeles: A Case of Silobela District** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE

05/12/2018  
DATE

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my wife Thokozani, children Nontokoza and Njabulo together with my entire family and friends.

## Abstract

Indigenous knowledge systems are “a body or bodies of knowledge” which Africans have survived on for a very long time (Mapara, 2010). This study intends to examine the various communicative and indigenous strategies that are employed by the Zimbabwean Ndebeles in issues of peace and conflict management. It is necessitated by the realisation that there is an increase in conflict in the region and country as a result of political and socio-economic challenges. The study adopts a bottom-up approach where conflict management becomes a process that starts from the grassroots going outward. This should also provide an opportunity to demonstrate that indigenous people are as sophisticated as every other society in dealing with their challenges (Warren, 1991). At the same time, it seeks to examine effectiveness of the indigenous and communicative conflict management strategies used by the Ndebele people. The study makes use of research questionnaires and interviews as well as descriptive and content analysis for data gathering and analysis respectively. The main theoretical concept guiding this study is *ubuntu* because it is considered best for Afrocentric approach to African studies. This is emphasised by Moyo and Lantern (2015:103) who state that “... the philosophy of *ubuntu* should be the guiding philosophy in a Zimbabwe poisoned by ill-understood and often ill-digested ontological philosophies of individual rights that give rise to selfishness, violence, fragmentation and the sterile, barren philosophy of each man for himself” which continues to tear our society apart. The study focuses mainly on the Ndebele speaking communities in Silobela District of Zimbabwe. The study helps the nation in combating and addressing cases of conflict by ushering in the cultural dimension which is albeit not foreign in the worldview of the local people. This compliments all other efforts being made by the government to address socio-political challenges. By documenting (indigenous knowledge systems) that which has been otherwise ignored and side-lined for a long time, the study is part of an on-going process of mental decolonisation of the African people at the same time empowering them to face a globalising world with confidence and pride.

## **KEY WORDS**

Indigenous knowledge, reconciliation, cultural beliefs, conflict management, African religion, *ubuntu*, social cohesion, cultural emancipation, decolonisation.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Preamble

This topic, Indigenous knowledge and communicative Strategies for Peace and Conflict Management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles: A Case of Silobela District is drawn from the field of African indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) which is a fairly new area of study whose major thrust and focus is African indigenous knowledge and its contribution as a basis for sustainable livelihoods and development of indigenous societies. The topic is based on various communicative methods such as proverbs, folktales, riddles, taboos and other literary aspects of language which have been traditionally utilised as peace and conflict management mechanisms among the Ndebele people.

African indigenous knowledge systems are a fairly new field of study especially in Africa owing to the negative effects of the colonial system which viewed almost all traditional institutions of the African people as heathen and backward. The sad historical contact between Africa and the Western coloniser left a deep lack of confidence in not only the social, religious or physical institutions but even in the cultural structures which previously guided the indigenous African societies. The colonisation systems entrenched in them a sense of lack of confidence and worked so hard to destroy any form of self-actualisation which they could possibly have had. Among those cultural aspects affected were the once vibrant but helpful indigenous knowledge systems although they remained resilient as highlighted by Mapara (2009:139) who says:

The fact that they did not die as a result of the conquest makes it clear that while conquests were only largely military, they were also meant to purge (attempt to disturb) the colonies of what were referred to as heathen and backward practices, they failed to displace and dislodge some knowledge systems of indigenes.

When the United States President Franklin Roosevelt initiated the signing of the United Nations Charter in 1942, his main vision was to attain total peace in the world

which had been ravaged by both the first and the second world wars. According to the United Nations Charter (1945:5):

The United Nations came into being in 1945, following the devastation of the Second World War, with one central mission: the maintenance of international peace and security. The UN does this by working to prevent conflict; helping parties in conflict make peace; peacekeeping; and creating the conditions to allow peace to hold and flourish. These activities often overlap and should reinforce one another, to be effective.

The same vision was at the back of the minds of those African leaders who met in Tanzania in 1963 to form the Organisation of African Unity which later changed to the current African Union. Both organisations have been battling to make sure that member states attain maximum peace and tranquillity politically, economically, socially and physically. The process of trying to attain this maximum peace has drained a lot of energy and finance at both local and international levels yet indications are that peace will not be attained anytime soon.

Countries like Sudan, Rwanda, Madagascar, to name but a few, are currently experiencing restlessness due to political, tribal and ethnic differences. Lesotho and Burundi encountered attempted coups which almost destabilised their governments on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 and 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 respectively. Apart from these, populous nations like Nigeria and Somalia are living with ticking time bombs in the form of the *Boko Haram* and *Al Shabbab* respectively. According to the United Nations report of 29 October 2014:

Al-Shabbab has engaged in acts that directly or indirectly threaten the peace, security, or stability of Somalia, including but not limited to: acts that threaten the Djibouti Agreement of August 18, 2008, or the political process; and, acts that threaten the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), or other international peacekeeping operations related to Somalia.

Apart from destabilising human lives, this political situation impacts negatively on human and economic development both socially and physically.

The various national and international organisations have not been folding their hands and watching helplessly as all this unrest takes its toll, there are so many conferences and missions that have been going on in order to try and avert the volatile situations. When there was political turmoil in Kenya and Zimbabwe in 2007 and 2008 respectively, the SADC region managed to broker a peace deal which has come to be known as an inclusive government. This is a situation where the respective political parties negotiate some form of peace agreement which ensures that both parties share in the governing of the country until democratic elections are held. However, these two cases were riddled with so much bickering and insincerity and cannot be recorded as successful examples of peace because if anything, they left the people of the respective countries worse than before. With particular reference to the problems associated with GNUs in Africa, Chigora and Guzura (2011:23) point out that:

Zimbabwe's subsequent degeneration is testimony of the sterility of this arrangement which ended conflict but failed to build a true democracy based on tolerance, peace, truth and justice.

Africans have always had and made use of indigenous knowledge systems in solving various problems that they have and continue to encounter in their communities. It is important to note that one of the peculiar elements of indigenous knowledge systems in Africa is the concept of *ubuntu/unhu* which is a cultural principle whose fabric ties the Africans in general regardless of physical boundaries, tribes and boundaries that separate them. Mapara and Mudzanire (2013:1) argue that the "*ubuntu/unhu* philosophy is the Bantu concept of oneness that one is because of another. It is given in Xhosa and IsiZulu as *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* and in Shona ... as *munhu munhu nevanhu* or *munhu vanhu*". This means that as Africans, everyone is bound by the code of ethics which is socially and culturally defined so much so that even on issues that have to do with conflict and management resolution, this concept cannot be avoided.

African people live a wholesome life; this means they believe both in this physical as well as the cosmic world which they believe to be the world of the "living-dead" as expressed by Bozongwana (2000:26). He goes on to underscore the significance of

maintaining a peaceful relationship between the two worlds as this is a vital strategy of making sure that bad omens do not attack the family stating that "... a family is a unit which must maintain integrity in this life and that to come. The family is aware of death as a necessary end that looks forward to finding joy in communicating spiritually with their dead". Bourdillon (1990:68) also highlights the role played by the spiritual realm in the lives of the living when he states that in the African traditional cosmic sphere, "ancestors can cause diseases, misfortunes, death, if people do what is contrary to the living-dead expectations".

In essence, what this means is that peace and conflict management in Africa has to incorporate the religiosity of the local people for it to effectively materialise. This research therefore, investigates the indigenous strategies for peace and conflict management among the Ndebele people of Silobela in Zimbabwe as a way of finding out how they have managed over time to deal with contentious situations among themselves as well as those which emanate from their interactions with other people. In this way, the research investigates as well as demonstrate the significance of indigenous knowledge systems in the process of peace and conflict management especially from grass-root levels.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Africa, just like most of the other continents of the world, is struggling with conflicts on tribal, ethnic, racial lines and otherwise. The recent xenophobic or Afro phobic attacks which left about 30 foreign nationals dead in South Africa as well as the terrorist activities by the *Boko Haram* brotherhood in Nigeria. According to the United Nations Security Council official report of 30 March 2015, Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria have claimed more than seven thousand three hundred lives and over two thousand abductees which is clear testimony of how Africa is at its boiling point. (United Nations Centre for Peace and Development, 2016) Zimbabwe, just like its sister countries of Africa has been experiencing a series of conflict situations socially, politically and economically.

On political matters, Zimbabwe had conflicts which can be classified into categories. The first phase came soon after independence when the government of the day was forced to deal with a situation which has come to be referred to as the Matabeleland

disturbances which are popularly known as *Gukurahundi*. In her unpublished PhD thesis, Mangena (2015:10) defines *Gukurahundi* as:

... the code name for the Zimbabwean government's military operation against 'dissidents' in Matabeleland and Midlands in the early 1980s, which used the North Korean trained Fifth Brigade. What the government termed 'dissidents' were actually members of ZAPU who had the potential of becoming an opposition party.

The operation *Gukurahundi* which characterised the Matabeleland regions and some parts of Midlands in the 1980s culminated into what the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) (2001: xi) estimates to have led to the deaths of over twenty thousand civilians although it is quick to point out that "...the suffering in Matabeleland and Midlands in the 1980s is a history that is unknown except to those who experienced it at first hand". This implies that those who were victims are either hurting in silence or have decided to let sleeping dogs lie due to failure to find any possible solution.

However, the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 served as a solution to the years of physical and political strife in Zimbabwe. This new development appeared to have led to some form of peace between the then ZANU PF and PF ZAPU which were the warring parties even though there are undertones of dissatisfaction from the Ndebele people such that even up to date, there seems to be a permanent rift between the people of Matabeleland and those from Mashonaland. This scenario is retrogressive when it comes to issues of development and at times affects even socio-economic activities. Commenting on the importance of public acknowledgment of truth in any reconciliation as well as the dangers of sweeping the past under the carpet, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (2001: xi) goes on to note that:

It is also apparent that, while the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 was an important step towards reconciliation in Zimbabwe, there nonetheless remains in Matabeleland a deep-seated distrust of the government, and a fear that events of the 1980s could be repeated in the future.

Another phase of political conflict in Zimbabwe came over a decade later than the *Gukurahundi* era when the government consolidated its efforts to address the

historical imbalances of land ownership by taking away land from the then white owned farms to give them to the black majority. The process was characterised by chaos and uncertainty leading to serious food insecurity which has characterised the country since that time. One of the respondents who were interviewed by the Human rights watch at the height of the land reform had this to say:

This is a different administrative arrangement. It is *jambanja* [confusion, nonsense]. I did not attend the meeting. I am not part of those meetings. Some women went who wanted to hold land for their children...It [fast track] created lots of problems for people. There was cattle-thieving. The children who have gone into fast track no longer go to school. Some of them were employed in town but now they have no money. Crops left drying on drying trays are being stolen...In here it's clear-cut that the *jambanja* people stay there so there's no mixing. Conflict can arise with illegal hunting. In this village there is a policy because we think the way it is done, they were not properly settled. So, we think if they go, they must go with their whole families, so we don't have security problems (Alexander, 1991:16).

Such a scenario as being described above creates a lot of anxiety among the people to the extent that certain sections of the society end up failing to actively participate in the developmental issues of the nation. Apart from the chaos described above, some of the white farmers were resisting the new developments and, in the process, the incumbent government was slapped with economic sanctions by Western developed countries who accused it of violating human rights. The stalemate between the Zimbabwean and Western countries which has remained to date has affected the general populace who have no powers whatsoever to influence policy except to suffer and endure both silently and helplessly as the proverbial two elephants are fighting. This state of affairs is highlighted by Scoones (2018:3) who says that:

The sanctions imposed following the land reform of 2000 took their toll too. While only targeting select individuals, and withdrawing aid from government led programmes, this signalled diplomatic disapproval from the West, and it had a major impact on patterns of economic support.

While the effects of the land redistribution process in Zimbabwe were still being felt both physically and economically, there arose another phase of conflict after the national general and harmonised elections which took place in 2008 where the sitting

government was almost unseated by the opposition. There was a wave of violence across the country which resulted in the statistics recorded by Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) claiming “167 documented deaths (with scores of people still missing, presumed dead). Of these deaths 17 are women, generally killed because the perpetrators were unable to locate the primary victim and so murdered the women at home, or abducted and murdered them, dumping the bodies in remote places”. (Women of Zimbabwe Arise, 2008).

It was only after the signing of yet another peace settlement between ZANU PF and MDC-T which is popularly referred to as the Government of National Unity (GNU) whose main thrust was to improve the socio-political situation as highlighted by the Zimbabwe Inclusive Government Watch (2012) which posits that, “the Global Political Agreement, signed by Zimbabwe's three main parties in Harare on the 15th of September 2008, is intended to "create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally acceptable solution to the Zimbabwe situation".” Commenting on the advantages and shortcomings of this political arrangement as a conflict resolution technique, Dodo, Chipaike, Ngwerume, and Chigondo (2012:204) say:

Through quiet diplomacy by Mbeki, by September 2008, the concept of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) was already in place. The GPA sought to establish a GNU. According to regional and some local experts, this was considered the best panacea to the crises at hand hence the need for a special implementation of the prescription.

However, regardless of the peace deal, conflicts remained the order of the day with supporters of both ZANU PF and MDC-T which happen to be the major political parties picking up fights against each other, at times physically, at whatever slightest provocation they got. In essence, this political arrangement did not manage to solve the basic socio-political challenges that were affecting the people of Zimbabwe and according to Makoni (2012:78):

The GNU was not people oriented and hence it was a failure. Five years after the formation of the GNU; Zimbabwe was still struggling with massive water and power cuts, poor health facilities, company closures translating into huge losses, skills flight as evidenced by almost four

million of the country's nationals who have left the country in search of better prospects in the Diaspora.

Although the duration of the GPA was characterised by a number of implementation challenges, it did result in positive strides as far as peace and reconciliation is concerned as Matyszak and Reeler (2011:3-4) point out:

The parties agreed in Article vii to give consideration to establishing a body to advise on what measures should be taken to achieve "national healing". An "organ" on national healing was established as required. However, it should be noted that its mandate is merely to advise on what should be done, and not, as is sometimes claimed, to actually implement a process of national healing.

The Zimbabwean government has in the recent years instituted peace and reconciliation commissions whose main mandate was to address various types of conflicts that the nation continues to face, particularly political violence. Several religious organisations under the Zimbabwe Council of Churches have also thrown their weight in the various efforts to make sure that peace and tolerance is attained in the country especially as far as political conflicts are concerned. However, there remains several political, social, tribal and ethnic undertones right across the country where people are disgruntled over a number of political unfair treatments which they feel even the justice system has deliberately swept under the carpet. According to Keshgegian (2000:20):

The silence is pregnant with meaning; it is filled with yearning. Indeed, the silence screams words of pain, of ignorance, of evil unacknowledged, and of desire unfulfilled. These words have been denied or rejected; they have been rendered mute.... Their silence contains thousands of words, a host of memories that we are yet to hear and receive. We are called to enter this silence as witnesses. We are bid to listen attentively to the words of those who have not yet been fully heard.

While attempts to resolve these conflicts have been made, this research notes with concern that none of these attempts employed indigenous knowledge systems despite its various advantages to indigenous people. Most of these attempts have been concentrating on forcing the conflict management ideas of those in leadership down the throat of those at the bottom. The study feels that the lack of success in the

afore mentioned conflict management efforts has been a result of neglecting the contribution that IK could make and as a result, there has been too much theory than practical, hence more failure than success. This study identifies this gap and would want to investigate the role IKS could play in conflict management among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe.

### **1.3 Aim of the study:**

The aim of the research is to investigate the indigenous peace and conflict management strategies among the Ndebele people for purposes of social, political, physical and economic development in Zimbabwe. The study also intends to investigate the impact and potential of IKS as a conflict management tool at the local level before applying the strategy to the national and or even higher levels such as the international Peace bodies like the United Nations. That way, the study seeks to contextualise conflict in the worldview of the local people and examine how that worldview has been of assistance in dealing with conflict at a local level as a basis for addressing more complex situations affecting the nation and continent at large.

#### **1.3.1 Objectives:**

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the common causes of conflict among African people and particularly among the Ndebele.
2. To investigate the role of indigenous knowledge in the processes of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles.
3. To discuss the role of oral literature as an indigenous tool for peace and conflict management.
4. To explore the place of indigenous religious beliefs in matters of peace and conflict management.

#### **1.3.2 Research questions**

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the causes of conflict among Zimbabwean traditional Ndebele societies today?

2. What indigenous knowledge strategies have the Ndebele people been traditionally using to attain peace and manage conflict among their people?
3. What is the role of oral literature in peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles?
4. Do the dead or the living dead have a role in the processes of peace and conflict management among the Ndebele people?

#### **1.4 Significance of research**

Studies carried out about Africans in general were done by the former coloniser and as such they are historically biased and unbalanced. That being the case, not so much has been documented about the various African indigenous knowledge systems particularly that of the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe and how those systems have been sustaining their wellbeing socially and physically. It is interesting to note that the Ndebele people, just like the rest of the Africans in general, have their own locally based knowledge which works as the driving force behind the various religious, socio-cultural activities making them fight and overcome various life challenges. The culture specificity of indigenous knowledge systems as well as its potential to foster any positive change in the lives of a people is expounded by Warren (1991:1) who views them as a basis for decision making as he says:

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities.

The quotation above bears testimony to the value and presence of indigenous knowledge and characterises it as a cultural base from which all life activities are guided through various socially and culturally designed institutions separate from those that are modern and artificially designed. If viewed from such an angle, it is prudent to suppose that Africans in general, and in this case the Ndebeles to be precise, have always had their own locally brewed strategies and structures designed to deal with peace and conflict among their societies.

Mohandas Gandhi, a political and spiritual leader in India once said, “If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children”. Children are a very essential element of the future, they are actually the future, and as such it is important to document indigenous knowledge systems for the sake of the future generations as well as a peaceful society. The study will influence the society to revisit and tap from its traditional ways of managing peace and harmony as a way of ensuring the development of respectful, well-formed and knowledgeable societies.

A study of this nature comes at an opportune time when the United Nations which happens to be the highest world body is making frantic efforts through its subsidiary arm the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to make sure that culture is placed at the centre of all socio-economic developmental projects. In doing so, UNESCO is guided by the acknowledgement of cultural diversity as well as the realisation that there is limited success in terms of development outside culture as indicated by the observation highlighted by Bridgewater, Nakashima, and Prott, (2000:12) in a UNESCO article saying:

Sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to science. Human societies all across the globe have developed rich sets of experiences and explanations relating to the environments they live in. these “other knowledge systems” are today often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous knowledge. They encompass the sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies around the globe in their innumerable interactions with the natural hunting, fishing and gathering; struggles against disease and injury; naming and exploitation of natural phenomena; strategies to cope with fluctuating environments.

The United Nations, as the highest world body that oversees how world member nations run their affairs in this case is not only acknowledging but also challenging all member countries to utilize indigenous knowledge systems as a way of confronting various socio-economic challenges which are be-devilling their societies. It is not out of place therefore, for a research of this nature to be carried out particularly among

the Ndebeles of Zimbabwe so as to establish whether or not they can positively contribute to the larger community.

This study is worth its while since it could provide a platform for exploration of common causes of conflicts among Ndebeles as well as how these are dealt with so that if they are feasible, they can be adopted by various commissions and Ministries which are created to try and attain peace in the country. Mawere (2010: 209) posits that, “in Africa, like elsewhere, indigenous knowledge systems were used to administer peace, harmony, and order amongst the people and their physical environment” thereby making this research a worthy activity in the wake of all the social and political conflicts that are obtaining among the Ndebeles and the Zimbabweans in general.

### **1.5 Scope of Study**

This research is in the field of African indigenous knowledge systems. The research focuses on the aspect of peace and conflict management among the African indigenous societies with particular reference being directed at the Ndebele people of Silobela District who were used as a case study in this research to represent the larger Zimbabwean Ndebele community. This ethnic group of people falls within the traditional rural communities whose indigenous practices have not been severely affected by urbanisation and communication technological advancement. The research focuses on social, economic, religious and political conflict among African societies and in the Zimbabwean contexts, particularly the period before and after independence.

### **1.6 Conclusion**

This research falls within the field of African indigenous knowledge systems paying particular attention to the use of the same in matters of peace and conflict management. This comes as a result of the realisation that there is so much conflict in today's societies not only in Zimbabwe but in Africa and the world at large. The research is premised on the emphasis of the utilisation of indigenous knowledge systems especially by the United Nations in matters of physical, social, religious and political development in developing countries.

The research is premised on this emphasis with the belief that indigenous knowledge systems have, as they have always had, a role to play in attaining peace and sustainable development from the participation of the local people from grassroots levels. The research is also propelled by the deliberate drive by the government of Zimbabwe to initiate a programme of National Healing whose aim is to eradicate the rift among victims of political violence during and after general elections. The research particularised the Ndebele speaking communities as a case study for testing its hypothesis but also focused on other regions of interest in the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the basic guidelines to this research by introducing, justifying the purpose of the study as well as stating the statement of the problem. The previous chapter also highlighted the major objectives and research questions that guide this research, the research methodology to be followed, scope of the study together with the breakdown of chapters for this whole research. This laid down the foundation for these second and preceding chapters which are all anchored on the first chapter which forms the backbone of the research as a whole. The current chapter focuses on reviewing literature that deals with African indigenous knowledge systems in general before zeroing down to particular Ndebele IKS as a way of laying a solid foundation for data that was collected and presented in the next chapters of the research.

The current chapter interrogates various literatures on African indigenous knowledge systems as well as strategies of peace and conflict management by contextualising them to the African and Ndebele societies. The chapter takes into cognisance the peculiar nature of African literature which, in most cases, has been disseminated in its oral form through various genres. In light of that, this research takes a fluid approach to the study of the same, in order to allow room for the interaction of both the written and non-written literature which is pertinent for a study of this nature. This chapter deals with literature that deals with African indigenous knowledge systems in the context of how African societies in general and the Ndebele in particular have manipulated the same for their own benefit through history especially in issues that have to do with peace and conflict management. The chapter relies on observations of other scholars such as Bridgewater, Nakashima and Prott (2000:12) who have observed that:

Sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to science. Human societies all across the globe have developed rich sets of experiences and explanations relating to the environments they live in... They encompass the sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies around

the globe in their innumerable interactions with the natural milieu: in agriculture and animal husbandry; hunting, fishing and gathering; struggles against disease and injury; naming and explanation of natural phenomena; and strategies to cope with fluctuating environments.

In light of the observation above, it is prudent to interrogate various literature, written and non-written in order to demonstrate to what extent Africans and Ndebeles in particular have utilised this knowledge in their own situations. Such an approach enabled the researcher to base their argument on literature that has been written by other scholars on the subject as a way of paving a way forward in order to tackle current problems which continue to bedevil various African societies and depriving them of social, economic or even physical development due to strife.

Literature on various peace and conflict strategies that continue to be employed to quell different kinds of conflict cannot be an exception in this chapter as it also provides fertile ground for the research of this nature to find theoretical and academic backing which is crucial in attaining the goals of this research. Such an approach was paramount in this research as it provides room for the current research to demonstrate its point of departure from the previous scholarly works on the same subject thereby fulfilling the main thrust of the same for the benefit of the society under study as well as academic obligations.

It was crucial for this research to interrogate literature that has been written by those who do not share in the historical experiences and cultures of the Africans since that same literature has shaped the ideologies as well as hegemonic tendencies that continue to reflect and guide us especially in conflict management strategies. In most cases, these conflict management strategies that we involuntarily inherited from our colonial masters do not augur well with our unique cultural situation as noted by Gbaydee Doe (2009:1) in the introduction of his paper titled *Indigenous Post-Conflict State Reconstruction in Africa: A Conceptual Framework* who observes that:

Current approaches to state building, primarily dominated by the liberal peace thesis, tend to gloss over indigenous or organic mechanisms rooted in the sociological, historical, political, and environmental realities of postcolonial realities of post-conflict contexts. Liberal peace theories prescribe electoral democracy and the free market as panaceas for all post-conflict states irrespective of the institutional and

cultural ripeness of the societies to cope with inherent competitiveness of “democracy” and the markets.

In that case, it was therefore, critical to interrogate such kind of literature as well as that which comes from indigenous people as this would help Africans to pave their own way forward as regards conflict management and resolution especially in Africa.

## **2.2 Warped Eurocentric views about African world views.**

African literature, whether written or not written, has suffered so much vilification at the hands of the former coloniser especially the West whose wrong perceptions and attitude towards their former colonies continue to influence decision and policy making in this side of the world. These misconceptions have shaped the ideologies and perceptions of Africans about themselves to the extent that most Africans view their own traditional institutions as second class compared to those of their former coloniser. If we can just consider the derogatory comments about African oral literature that were uttered a long time ago, we will appreciate that our literature, our culture, and as well, our dignity, are all at stake unless we empower ourselves. One can quickly make reference to such weird observations by Burton (1865: xii) who says:

The savage custom of going around naked, we are told, “has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is none.... There is no metre, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings, or arrests the passions....

One would not over emphasise the need to negate such ideologies if African ideologies are to develop meaningfully. The same goes for indigenous knowledge systems which in this case can be viewed as a weapon with which to defend Africa from the claws of colonial hegemony.

The historic and unfortunate encounter with the colonial system has had an adverse effect in the appreciation of local or indigenous knowledge yet regardless of the fact that it has guided local societies since time immemorial. There was therefore, an urgent need for this research to first highlight some of the misconceptions by the

West as a way of giving African indigenous knowledge a strong foreground as they cannot be studied in isolation to the former. This approach finds backing in the argument propounded by Mapara (2009:143) who views IKS as a way of correcting the past wrongs when he says:

IKS highlight the fact that the post-colonial theory is not just about the formerly colonised people's response to the colonial legacy by writing back to the centre or even moving the centre as Ngugi (1997) proposes. They are also about the formerly colonised writing back to the centre and highlighting their past advances that were in some instances disrupted by the advent of colonialism. Besides focusing on the past achievements, the formerly colonised also emphasise the enduring quality of some of their knowledge and belief systems.

For quite a long time, there has been a deliberate yet very concerted effort by the Western writers inclusive of Joseph Conrad (1996) who wrote on Africa as a dark continent making sure that any literature that celebrates or promotes African literature, in all its forms, including indigenous knowledge is thwarted with all possible effort available. Hegel (2001:117-8) consolidates the same myopic and ill-informed perception of Africa by Europe when he speaks of the absence of history in Africa saying that "...at this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it – that is in its northern part – belong to the Asiatic or European World..." It is this Eurocentric attitude which guided the missionaries as they came to Africa intending to re-invent a people modelled after their own likeness and such should not be tolerated especially at this point when Africa is in a bid to re-define herself.

Mazrui (2002:3) also laments such selfish and injurious attitudes exhibited by the West towards African languages, literature, culture and history. He cites the words of Trever-Roper (1960:6) who is unpopular for having denigrated African culture and history saying "perhaps in the future, there will be some African history [and culture] .... But at the present, there is none; there is only history of Europeans in Africa ...". No one can over emphasise the fact that, while such statements may not be verbally uttered nowadays, actions still speak the same negative and derogatory language. Evidence to this fact can be drawn from the length of time it has taken the West to

acknowledge that African indigenous knowledge has always, and continues to be a powerful means for survival for local people and even the outside world.

Some of the perceptions of the West about Africa are still not only misdirected but also dangerous to the survival and effective utilisation of African indigenous knowledge systems. It is important to note that such sentiments have continued to cause hallucinations for the African citizens who continue to view themselves as second class citizens in a globalising world. Research such as the current one will go a long way in instilling a sense of confidence not only to the Africans but will also enlighten them so that they may gain the requisite confidence in their own traditional knowledge and institutions. This research therefore, differs from the works of such scholars because it is a direct attack and negation of their perceptions and serves as evidence of the historical authenticity of African indigenous knowledge systems.

### **2.3 Defining indigenous knowledge systems**

It is essential to make an assessment of how various schools of thought define or interpret the concept of indigenous knowledge systems just because the definitions themselves can shape the direction which is followed in examining them. There has not been a general consensus by various scholars in coming up with a single definition of indigenous knowledge systems just because they are fluid in nature such that their definition may depend with the context in which they are being evaluated. However, the various definitions given by scholars do not seem to contradict, in fact, most of them seem to be in agreement with each other.

One of the widely accepted definitions of indigenous knowledge systems has been the one given by Warren (1991:3) who postulates that:

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities.

This definition is in tandem with the pillars on which this research is leaning since it already suggests that, contrary to colonial misconceptions, cultures of the world are different and more so, African cultures. In light of this definition, indigenous knowledge systems are a set of codes of operation which are designed by a particular society using its own expertise, experiences, history and knowledge in order for it to survive among life challenges that it may face. It is also apparent to note that indigenous knowledge is unique or peculiar to a cultural group of people and therefore, not in any way universal.

This implies that there is no one who does not belong to a particular cultural group of people who can understand very well the knowledge systems of that group or let alone pass judgement about them because they are a by-product of communal effort. This view is also supported by Ajibade (2003:24) when he says that “the term IK is used to describe the knowledge systems developed by a community as opposed to the scientific knowledge that is referred to as modern knowledge.’ Each community or cultural group of people is responsible for designing its own set of knowledge systems which are in line with its immediate needs and environment.

Bridgewater et al., (2000:12) also present a slightly different but mutually similar definition to indigenous knowledge systems as they even go on to cite some of the terms that are associated with it where they say:

Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge that is unique to a culture or society. Other names for it include: ‘local knowledge’, ‘folk knowledge’, ‘people’s knowledge’, ‘traditional wisdom’ or ‘traditional science’. This knowledge is passed from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, and has been the basis for agriculture, food preparation, health care, education, conservation and the wide range of other activities that sustain societies in many parts of the world.

Just like the other scholars mentioned above, these three also view indigenous knowledge systems as a peculiar set of information which guides a particular cultural, geographical, social or political group of people in all their facets of life. They also emphasise the fact that indigenous knowledge is unique to a given society and can only be understood by those who have either been part of its formulations or

have learnt through close association with them. It is also important to highlight that the decisions made by a specific group of people largely depend on the guideless which are embedded in their knowledge forms so much that their behaviour is dictated by the same.

The fact that indigenous knowledge systems contrast with modern knowledge forms implies that the two are attained differently and disseminated using different methods. Bridgewater et al., (2000:12) distinguish indigenous knowledge from modern knowledge but at the same time fear the possibility of losing the former due to the destructive nature of the later as they say:

Indigenous people have a broad knowledge of how to live sustainably. However, formal education systems have disrupted the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning, replacing them with abstract knowledge and academic ways of learning. Today, there is a grave risk that much indigenous knowledge is being lost and, along with it, valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably.

In essence, what these scholars are acknowledging is the historicity of indigenous knowledge as well as its capacity to sustain indigenous societies as long as modern knowledge and technological advancement is not allowed to bully it out of survival. They also point out the fact that indigenous societies are familiar with their own knowledge forms and they have their own ways of disseminating them or even making sure that they are not destroyed unlike modern knowledge which is abstract and foreign to them. This makes indigenous knowledge systems more relevant to the indigenes such that even in issues of conflict management, they can be utilised to play their role thereby ensuring sustainable peace.

Flavier (1995:479) views indigenous knowledge systems as that locally designed structure from which all members of the society resort to whenever they are losing focus or they are losing direction on their way. Local people are the ones who collectively participate in the formulation and construction of these knowledge forms which they adopt as a library for storing vital information which later informs all their

activities as a community such as how to share natural resources, how to deal with illnesses and all other situations that confront them in their daily lives.

It is the same library which becomes their source of inspiration in making various decisions that might be necessary in dealing with life challenges or even entertainment programmes. Local people use their creativeness to come up with relevant indigenous knowledge systems so much that they are even dynamic in response to both internal and external forces that they interact with. In that regard, Flavier (1995:479) views indigenous knowledge systems as:

... the information base for a society which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems.

What is very crucial in this definition is the fact that the writer has indicated the sophisticated nature of indigenous knowledge systems which he says are dynamic and versatile to adjust accordingly as they interact with internal and external forces. He also points out that they resemble the creativeness of local people who sit down and design their own knowledge forms which are tailor-made to address their physiological as well as sociological needs on a daily basis. This demonstrates the ingenuity that is inherent in Africans in general, as well as Ndebeles in particular, to be able to manipulate their own immediate environment so that they can make their life comfortable. Such abilities are investigated so as to demonstrate how much they are invoked in crafting strategies for dealing with conflict in their societies.

While the definitions given by the above-mentioned scholars go a long way in informing and shaping the direction that is taken by this research, it is important to note that the present research does not only concentrate on defining what indigenous knowledge systems are. It moves a step further and makes use of the same definitions to demonstrate how the Ndebele people also have their own bank where they have deposited their knowledge concerning various aspects of life including strategies of conflict management.

## **2.4 The importance of indigenous knowledge systems**

One cannot over emphasise the value that Africans and the other cultural peoples of the world place upon their indigenous knowledge systems as can be observed from the way they continue to rely on them for most of their social, religious and physical activities. This section focuses on literature that explores the importance of indigenous knowledge (IK) the world over as a way of evaluating how far such literature succeeds in promoting the integrating them into modernity. Reviewing such literature provides an opportunity for the current research to examine what other scholars have written about indigenous knowledge systems so as to demonstrate its own point of departure from the others.

Regardless of the denigration and vilification that African indigenous knowledge systems have endured from those who presume that they are better, they have registered their impact and usefulness over the years as can be observed from the way the World Bank (1998: November 4) places an emphasis on them as an alternative recipe for physical and economic development. In its document titled "*Indigenous Knowledge for Development: A Framework for Action*", the World Bank outlines how it views indigenous knowledge systems as a way of attaining maximum success in the developmental programmes particularly in the developing countries. In its introductory stages, the World Bank is guided by its own interpretation of indigenous knowledge systems which emanates from the very principle that IKS is not a universal phenomenon since it is culture specific. According to the World Bank, "IK is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. It is essentially tacit knowledge that is not easily codifiable."

In essence, the World Bank is of the opinion that every community as an entity is in full charge of unique traditional practices which have an impact in issues of development be it socially, physically and economically and as such, these practices are not only to be recognised but respected as well. The emphasis in this regard is seen where the World Bank (1998) through its document notes that:

Indigenous knowledge provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities especially the poor. It represents an important component of global knowledge on development issues. IK is an underutilised resource in the development process. Learning from

IK, by investigating first what local communities know and have, can improve understanding of local conditions and provide a productive context for activities designed to help the communities. Understanding IK can increase responsiveness to clients. Adapting international practices to the local setting can help improve the impact and sustainability of development assistance.

This approach discourages any attempt to universalise people's knowledge rather advocating for the recognition of local or indigenous knowledge especially when focusing on developing countries. The world bank recognises the dangers of despising local knowledge in issues of development just because the ability to solve some (if not most) of the problems on various levels is embedded in the culture of the people so much that disregarding it is tantamount to making a futile attempt to develop them.

The World Bank, as a very important world international financial body, plays a very important role in the bettering of the lives of different societies. Opinions by such a high-level world body cannot be ignored because they are essential in ensuring sustainable development in our societies. It is therefore, quite an advantage for purposes of this research that it shares the same point of view with the World Bank as regards the recognition and utilisation of indigenous knowledge systems in finding lasting solutions to the various problems that are affecting especially African societies. The current research finds a pillar of strength in the principles that guide the World Bank since it also advocates for the use of indigenous knowledge systems in trying to combat conflict and resolve differences amicably.

However, while the document by the World Bank is essential in buttressing the arguments that are going to be raised in this research since it takes special recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, it does not particularise any cultural group as does this research. Besides that, the current research differs with the World Bank research in the sense that the later concentrates on issues that have to do with economic development yet the former researches on the utilisation of IKS on conflict management in a specific cultural context.

## 2.5 Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Conflict Management

The world today is characterised by so much political, social, religious and economic crises such that in most instances, there have been conflicts of different magnitudes which have affected people in various ways such that in worst cases they have left a trail of disaster which continues to be felt to date such as the bombing of Hiroshima. The results of conflict have not always been physical and destructive to the physical wellbeing of the victims, there has been a lot of emotional and economic violence that has continued to affect people the world over and it is at times such subtle conflict whose consequences are long lasting and difficult to eradicate.

This section focuses on literature that deals with conflict and conflict management in various parts of the world as a way of exploring how it has not only been perpetrated but resolved as well. Such an approach enables the current research to take a comparative approach to the subject of conflict management between the Ndebeles and other cultures especially the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in that regard. It also presents a chance for the researcher to critique the arguments by other scholars in terms of theoretical application of their ideas to the practical situations of conflict especially among Africans.

Colombia is one of the nations that have suffered greatly due to political unrest between the Colombian National Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (FARC-EP). Belazelkoska (2013:5) outlines the conflict situation in Colombia in an article titled *Colombia: Indigenous Peoples Still plagued by Violence Amidst Reconciliatory Talks*. In this article, the writer explains how political bickering has affected peace talks between government forces and the rebels. Apart from stalling the talks and peace processes, “... there isn’t a Colombian that has not been affected by this five-decade long internal conflict, the indigenous communities have been hurt most severely”. Despite the international call for both fighting parties to respect peace treaties and agreements, fighting has continued and the rights of indigenous people have been violated as highlighted by Belazelkoska (2013:2) where he says:

Ignoring the communities’ pleas for the respect of their physical and cultural integrity and autonomy, the government and FARC continue to

impose their agenda on the indigenous communities, regardless that Colombia signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in April, 2009. The declaration upholds the Indigenous Peoples' right to their land and to protection by the state.

The people of Colombia face brutality from both the government forces and the rebels so much that there are times where women and children are forced to join these forces and face their wrath whenever they resist. Some of them have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees where they are exposed to more physical and political abuse. Apparently, some of the most targeted victims of the conflict are indigenous leaders who speak out against atrocities committed by the FARC-EP and the national government, and stand for solidarity and respect of their traditionally owned lands (Belazelkoska, 2013:5). There are divergent opinions between the government forces and rebel groups in terms of priorities in case peace is attained. The government prioritises demilitarisation of paramilitary forces while the opposition sides believe that agricultural reorganisation is the “landmark for peace” and progress.

Despite all the pushing and pulling apart that is taking place, the writer registers some progress in terms of peace negotiations ever since the inclusion of civil society and active participation of the United Nations and other local organisations. Belazelkoska (2013:6) posits that progress has also been made just because various local traditional, religious, political and social players have also been incorporated in the peace process, a development which is believed to be capable of bringing the situation to normalcy given its inclusivity as indicated where he says:

Regional roundtable meetings were also designed to “guarantee the extensive participation of different regional social sectors, including organizations of farmers, indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, women, union workers, students, human rights defenders, youth, environmentalists, LGBTQ communities, peace initiatives, churches, guilds, businesses, academics, social researchers and victims of the conflict.

It is indisputable that the situation in Colombia resembles that of many other warring nations of the world and therefore, has a lot of lessons to teach the world. This article

mainly concentrates on exposing how violence can disturb and terrorise the lives of people in any society. It also highlights the fact that different social and political groups have been engaged in trying to foster peace in Colombia but does not specify the exact contribution that the same people will present to the whole process of attaining peace.

The current research is very different from the one by Belazelkoska (2013:7) because it does not end at outlining the violence that is caused by conflict but also goes on to seek solutions in the very people on whom that violence has been perpetrated. The current research is also different from the one by this scholar because it focuses on conflict which does not have much to do with the physical war but various other forms whose consequences may not be as visible as those in a war situation.

Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:33) have carried out a research on “indigenous conflict resolution in Africa” with Ghana and Botswana as main areas of study. In this research, the researchers make a lot of observations about how African societies continue to utilise their home-grown techniques in making sure that they live harmoniously in the face of differing opinions and digressing viewpoints. Their research establishes the inseparable link between conflict management in Africa and the traditional cultures of the people in which all the structures for peace and conflict management are embedded thus they say:

Traditional conflict resolution processes are part of a well-structured, time-proven social system geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships. The methods, processes and regulations are deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of people of Africa. (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2007:33).

In Africa, conflict management is not an event but a process which happens over time, effort and experience as indicated by Choudree (1999:1) who states that the intention of the process is “to restore a balance, to settle conflict and eliminate disputes”. In light of that, Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:33) stress upon the advantages of local or traditional methods and processes of dealing with conflict

compared to the modern judicial system. Traditional methods do not alienate conflict from the everyday life experiences of the people because they take into consideration the very fact that conflict should not be permanent, thus, solutions should always emphasise the idea of restoration so that people can manage to live together even after the conflict.

An approach of this nature is in contrast to modern ways of resolving conflict particularly those exhibited by the judicial system which does not care what happens after individuals have left their premises. Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:33) highlight the collective nature of traditional conflict management systems where they say:

Traditional processes are relatively informal and thus, less intimidating. Those who use them are also more at ease in a familiar environment. The role of chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and stop/or intercept conflicts. Group relationships and rights are as important as individual ones as emphasis is on restoring relationships and reconciling groups.

Traditional environments like the traditional *dare/ida* are always familiar to the local people so much that when they are summoned before traditional leadership, they do not find the environment intimidating, neither is the language that is used in the proceedings unfamiliar since it comes from familiar members of the society. Whatever the whole group does in trying to resolve conflict, they do it for the betterment of the community as observed by Fred-Mensah (2005:1) when he states that the “capability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together by effectively setting and facilitating the terms of their relationship ... sustainability facilitates collective action for achieving mutually beneficial ends.” This means that the community itself employs all its expertise in dealing with different kinds of conflict yet the major aim is for the whole process to bring members closer at the end of the day.

In certain instances, the offenders are asked to pay restitution as a way of expressing remorse yet; on the other hand, the offended may accept the payment as a symbol of forgiveness and reconciliation. In that case, there is hardly any conflict

that is permanent because society does not take kindly to individuals who keep grudges. Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:35) go on to give evidence to this as they point out that:

Conflict resolution comprises a complex network of forces surrounding the parties in the conflict. It is a healing process in which all stakeholders contribute positive energy. The task is to re-establish the energy flow within individuals, families and communities so as to re-build social harmony. In this context, reconciliation often requires symbolic gestures and associated rituals including exchange of gifts, and slaughter of animals (chickens, goats, sheep, cows etc.).

The view by the above-named scholars promotes a holistic approach to issues of conflict resolution in Africa instead of basing only on what is written down as is done by modern conflict resolution institutions. Indigenous people take each case as it comes and emphasise on appreciating the various causes and conditions as well as contexts which would have preceded the conflict situation yet the primary motive is to ensure peace and harmony prevails regardless of the gravity of the conflict. Contextualising conflicts in issues of conflict management places indigenous knowledge at the centre of whatever efforts are made in resolving them. Brock-Utne (2001:6 & 9) underscores the advantages of involving “values and beliefs, fears and suspicions, interests and needs, attitudes and actions, relationships and networks.... The immediate objective of such conflict resolution is to mend the broken or damaged relationship, rectify wrongs, and restore justice.”

In the same vein, Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:36 & 37) move on to emphasise the collective nature of indigenous knowledge systems in conflict resolution by taking a positive approach whose major mandate is to restore rather than destroy individual and even communal relationships. It is these indigenous methods which dictate how natural resources such as minerals, water, forests, and wild animals are distributed equitably without problems as can be noted where they say:

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms focus on the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation in dealing with common problems which underline the essence of humanity (*ubuntu/unhu*) cultural approaches to resolving and managing disputes play a vital role in promoting peace and social order in communities. Cultural values and

attitudes provide the basis for interaction and the norms by which individuals and communities live. These also promote sharing and equitable distribution of resources, thus promoting a climate for peace. African cultural principles relate to the very essence of existence and being human and how all humans are inextricably related. (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2007:36 & 37).

Apart from cultural aspects of resolving conflict in Ghana and Botswana, Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:42 & 43) go on to mention the role of indigenous religious institutions in issues of peace and conflict management. Africans, like any other group of people of the world, are very religious so much that almost everything that they do has a religious inclination to it. There are conflicts which may occur between people and their gods while some conflicts can occur between individuals yet they are religious in nature. In cases like that, there is always need to invoke the spiritual realm to be part of the resolution. Fortunately, African culture is wholesome in such a way that it has structures to deal with conflict of this nature without getting desperate for solutions:

Conflicts that have a spiritual dimension involve incantations, curses, witchcraft and oath-taking, among others, are brought before the traditional and spiritual leaders including the fetish priests, custodians of deities, herbalists and soothsayers... It is also common to invoke an oath during conflicts. A litigant may swear an oath to support his/her claim.... (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2007:42 & 43).

There is so much that the current research may borrow from the work of Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007:44) since they both focus on African indigenous knowledge systems in conflict management in Africa. At the same time, the research by these scholars outline how traditional societies use their home-grown structures such as traditional leadership in solving conflict just the same way the current research is bound to be shaped. The issue of incorporating religion in conflict management is also the thrust of this research. However, there is going to be a marked difference between this research and that by the above-named scholars since they are specifically focusing on Ghana and Botswana as case studies unlike this research which focuses on the Ndebeles of Zimbabwe. It is the belief of this researcher that, while African societies have similar cultures, they have a lot of

differences here and there. This makes the current study crucial since it exposes those variances.

While the current research also explores the aspect of religion in conflict management, it explores more detailed issues than these two scholars who just dedicated two small paragraphs to it thereby excluding so many other important details. Besides, there is a vast difference between the way Ndebeles express their religions compared to what happens in Ghana and Botswana. Apart from these differences, the research by Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2007) does not include the communicative element of indigenous knowledge systems as does the current one which interrogates the role played by communicative aspects of language particularly oral literature in fostering conflict management in the Ndebele society.

Mengesha, Seid-Yesuf, Gebre (2015:2) have also carried out a research on Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms among the Kembata Society of Ethiopia where they established that the local people rely a lot on home-grown strategies for solving conflict among themselves as compared to the modern conflict resolution systems. They discovered that there are several reasons why people favour local methods of conflict resolution among the Kembata. The locals believe that the traditional systems are a product designed by the people themselves such they are people centred. The people are custodians of these structures and as such they view modern systems as alien and incompatible as pointed out where these scholars say:

The local communities prefer customary laws than courts due to the following reasons: First customary laws are flexible; they develop as the communities go forward and provide communities with a sense of ownership contrast to formal legal systems that are perceived as alien to a considerable number of people in developing countries in general and Ethiopia in particular. Secondary, customary law provides a fundamental and central role to maintain order in many communities. This owing to the fact that it is developed and maintained by local peoples as a result of which are suits local circumstances...In addition it plays an important cultural role in the lives of many people and beliefs. Thirdly, the law itself is more immediate and meaningful to all people concerned; as it is developed and imposed by the community itself that is by their own community major role in that process, yet having the appropriate limitations that should be imposed on the recognition of customary laws. (Mengesha, Seid-Yesuf, Gebre, 2015:2).

According to Nader (1968) cited by Mengesha et al., (2015:2) “Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in human society’s sphere of life since the entire life of humankind is manipulated by the prevalence of conflict within the society when people set opinion against opinion, run interest against interests”. Be that as it may, the people of Ethiopia therefore, understand and appreciate the fact that there is no society which can survive devoid of conflict since conflict is part and parcel of life.

There are many reasons why there could be conflict in the society at any given time and as such the Kembata people, like most other African societies have not folded their hands and watched helplessly but have manipulated their own culture to deal with conflicting situations in their community. Mengesha et al., (2015:2) posit that “almost all societies, regardless of their location in time and space, have laws for handling disputes and achieving resolution of differences” and in supporting their argument, they cite Roberchek, (1998) who puts forward three common strategies for conflict management saying:

... conflict can be managed through strategies and through institutions. The conflict management process through strategies encompasses reconciliation, adjudication and alimention; these strategies demand the conflicting parties’ commitment to reconcile with one another and their commitment to accept the decision of the third parties. The ultimate objectives of these strategies are to handle and minimize conflict among parties who have different demands.

These are some of the strategies that are commonly used in conflict management and resolution among the Kembata just as they are used in other African societies. The most important to note here is that these strategies are not there to completely do away with conflict but just to minimise damage and reduce permanent conflict by involving third parties who could be elders or traditional leaders of the community. According to Mengesha et al., (2015:4), “the conflicts in the Kembata areas include dispute over land, conflict over marital issues, conflict over property, and conflict arise due to homicide cases. Issues like cattle theft, abduction, physical violence and adultery are also common” among other things. These scholars go on to describe the various types of conflict which they classify under two forms; the first one being

direct conflict which is manifested through visible physical violence such as war or fist fights and even loss of lives.

The second form is the one they classify as indirect conflict which is entrenched in the social, religious and political structures of the society and at times is very difficult to eradicate because it is invisible and subtle. This type of conflict deprives some members of the society to access socio-economic resources and leads to inequitable sharing of natural resources thereby leading to violence and resistance in certain instances. "It is all about discrimination and marginalization, suppression and exploitative world order". In qualifying their argument, Mengesha et al., (2007:7) quote Jeong, (2007) who explicitly clarifies the form of direct conflict saying:

Direct violence, the popularly understood meaning of violence, is referred to physical injuries and the infliction of pain that is caused by specific person. Thus, killing and beating, whether they happen in war or interpersonal situations represent direct violence.... In direct violence, clear subject-action-object relationships are established, as we observe someone who hurts other people by a violent act. Direct violence generally works fast and grammatically. It is personal, visible, manifest and non-structural.

On the other hand, he describes what they define as indirect conflict by making reference to its effects and consequences on those that it affects especially those that are at the bottom of the political hierarchy when they say:

Poverty, hunger, repression and social alienation constitute another way to characterize situations causing human misery. Quality of life is reduced by denial of education opportunities, free speech and freedom of association. Conditions are associated with uneven life chances, inequitable distribution resources and unequal decision-making power. Given its indirect and insidious nature, structural violence most often works slowly in eroding human values and shortening life spans. It is typically built into the very structure of society and cultural institutions .... (Jeong, 2007:20-21).

These two descriptions can be viewed as a summary of some of the causes of conflict, not only among the Kembata of Ethiopia, but also many other African nations or even the world at large. A close analysis of these types of conflict show

that there is a close connection between conflict and the society so much that leaving out the immediate society in finding solutions to conflict is recipe for disaster. This is where indigenous knowledge systems of conflict management become indispensable because they are created in response to the specific situations and needs.

Apparently, Mengesha et al., (2007:7) put forward a scientific argument surrounding the various causes of conflicts in our societies. They are of the opinion that conflict is naturally inert in human beings such that when we are born, we are born the seed or the ability to conflict hence when we grow, we engage in conflict not only because we have been provoked but just because there is that element in us which gives us the ability to do so. The same argument is raised by scholars such as Nader, (1968), Collier, (1975), and Tadesse, (1988), who postulate that “Throughout the history of the study of conflict, whether the aggressive behaviour is an inborn human quality or a reaction to social, political and economic factors is where lay the controversy among the scholars”. There is an ongoing debate on whether or not it is true that conflict is caused by the supposed seed in us which we are naturally or inherently born with.

On the same note, they cite Schellernberg (1996:15) who also argues that conflict should be viewed from the context of the individual and his actions instead of contextualising the actions on their own just because violence is rooted in us humans as part of the animals. Thus, he says that “human conflict is inevitable not because it is part of social life, but for it is a biological fact lying within us all”. Such a view point goes on to reflect unequivocally the need for humans to have structures in place for finding solutions to conflict since it is inevitable both biologically and socially.

Ethiopia is believed to be over three thousand years old and home to over eighty ethnic groups. The diversity of the cultures of these ethnic groups makes it most conducive for conflicts of various shades to breed more often than not. It would be difficult to imagine how much effort would be exerted towards making sure that people live harmoniously when they have so many issues that separate them if it were not for the presence of their own traditional structures and institutions which

have persistently guided them towards peace and tranquil all this while. This is highlighted by Mengesha et al., (2007:13) when they say:

Ethiopia is believed to be the “museum of peoples” with more than 80 ethnic groups constituting and forming one nation state... History also tells us that Ethiopia is as ancient as 3000 years back. It is, therefore, definitely true that it had experienced strong and cohesive systems of administration with its world top leading civilization, namely Axumite civilization. Indeed, every Ethiopian ethnic groups as their African counterparts have traditionally age-old and time-tested administrative and conflict resolution institutions at the grass root levels. In fact, exhaustive and thorough studies about these institutions are not bulky enough and so are limited literatures in this area.

Some of the traditional indigenous institutions found among the *Kembata* include *gogota* which is a traditional army whose main thrust is to train young man in physical fitness. This process comes immediately after circumcision. Another method is the *ilamo* which is a by-product of those who belong to the royal family and monitors marriage arrangements making sure that there are inter-tribal marriages as a way of promoting harmony. The *Kembata* also make sure that their geographical as well as social settlements follow a certain pattern to avoid conflicts with neighbouring villages and tribes. These settlements are known as *Gotsho* which literally means a “gate”.

Another traditional institution among the *Kembata* is called *Kokata*. This institution facilitates the formulation, dissemination of political policies and rules by those in authority through the use of orators. Whatever is decided by the authorities is binding and final since “there is a belief that the *gada* (grace) and the *ayana* (blessing) of *Kambata* are in it. Defiance or breach of a *kokata* decision is believed to attract the “black” eyes and unpronounced curse of *Kambata* on those who go against it”. Elderly people are indispensable as well among the *Kembata* since they play a very significant role in issues of conflict resolution due to their wisdom and experience. There is a general consensus concerning the neutrality of the elders so much that they are given power to handle any type of conflict as indicated by Mengesha et al., (2007:24) saying:

When any sort of conflict, trivial or serious in nature, occurs in the community, the council of elders keenly strives to help them resolve it in a peaceful mechanism without harming or inclining to any of the conflicting parties. The council of elders requests the disputants to handle their problems in a set of expression as saying: “*Magganitta*”. This is the same as saying let’s try to resolve the problem under a help of Almighty. *Magganitta* literally means complain made by one of the disputant parties to the council of elders.

There are some similarities between what the Kembata of Ethiopia do for conflict resolution with the rest of other African nations and cultures. However, there are a number of differences when compared to the way the Ndebeles resolve their conflicts. While the research by Mengesha et al., (2007:27) goes a long way in supporting arguments raised in the current research, there are differences in the sense that, the current research goes on to focus on the communicative aspects such as taboos, proverbs and wise-sayings among others which are used by the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. The research by these scholars is purely specific or tailor made for the Ethiopian Kembata cultural group and as such would naturally not be the case with the Ndebele situation given the geographical, social, physical, religious and political variances of the two tribes.

Mutisi (2009:17) is one of those who have carried out a research on how Rwanda utilised its traditional court systems known as the *Gacaca* courts as an endogenous Approach to post-conflict justice and reconciliation soon after the common genocide arguing that “the inadequacy of Eurocentric and other western models to effectively address healing requirements within societies in Africa is increasingly evident”. The genocide in Rwanda left a trail of disaster, socially, physically, mentally and otherwise. This scenario required a completely new approach to postcolonial conflict resolution just because there was not going to be any form of progress in all facets of the society unless a solution was found as soon as was possible.

Traditionally, it would be expected that the judicial system deals with all criminal cases that emanated from the genocide but the case in Rwanda was peculiar since it had taken more than a decade for post-conflict resolution to yield positive results. Having realised the need, the government then “enacted the *Gacaca* Law to give

traditional courts a mandate to deal with cases of individuals who had committed atrocities in their communities during the genocide”. According to Mutisi (2009:17):

*Gacaca* is a traditional mechanism of conflict resolution originally practised among the *Banyarwanda*, who use it to resolve disputes at the grassroots level through dialogue and a community justice system. It is an intricate process based on custom, tradition, and social norms. *Gacaca* is one of the largest community-based restorative justice processes in post-genocide Rwanda.

In light of the definition given about *Gacaca* courts, it can already be appreciated that they emanate from the traditions and cultures of the local people. It is a system that is designed by the people in connection with their historical challenges and experiences and can be trusted that it can perform the expected tasks since it has been tried and tested. One can also observe that, apart from being punitive to crime and vice, the *Gacaca* court adopts a restorative approach especially in the face of a genocide which in most cases was perpetrated by known people or neighbours who stayed together before and will continue to stay together after the genocide. Such an approach is even recommended by Laderach (1995:10) who posits that endogenous methods of healing and reconciliation are based on the premise that “understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in, and must respect and draw from, the cultural knowledge of a people”.

Emphasising the need and urgency of addressing the volatile situation in Rwanda after the genocide, Mutisi (2009:18) gives the details of how long it would have taken the government to deal with the genocide crimes had it not invoked the services of the *Gacaca* court system as she says:

In Rwanda, a country of approximately 12 million people, an estimated 800 000 Tutsis and Hutus were killed and 2 million refugees fled the country.... From a practical perspective, Rwanda’s formal courts faced a backlog of more than 12 000 accused perpetrators, known as *genocidaires*, living in debilitating conditions. The national court system and the UN-sanctioned International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda proved unable to process these cases fast enough.

It is not questionable given the circumstances to observe that the modern methods of solving conflict would have faced serious challenges in the present circumstances and in the majority of cases, both the perpetrators and victims would have not received fair justice as deserved hence “the *Gacaca* system was resurrected so justice could be administered at the community level”. The general belief is that, since the *Gacaca* traditional system is not a new phenomenon, in this case would just be given a governmental mandate and upgrade its operations to cover the new demands since it was traditionally concerned with “moderate disputes concerning land use rights, cattle ownership, marriage, inheritance rights, and petty theft, among other interpersonal disagreements” (Werchick 2001:19).

In a normal situation, it is to be expected that any system, whether modern or traditional, has its own strengths and weaknesses since it is hard to come up with a perfect system. In this case, Mutisi (2009:21) highlights some of the advantages of the *Gacaca* court system. She sees the *Gacaca* systems as a particular conflict solving mechanism in a peculiar situation since it involves the culture of the people so much that it provides a platform for people to solve their own problems in a manner that they themselves understand.

The system also affords the victims a chance to speak out, a vital element in conflict resolution. The whole community makes its own observations and contributions during the court sessions thereby making all decisions final and acceptable to both parties. A decision that comes from the community is always binding so much that in most cases, it operates within the realm of cultural norms, values and “community participation, provides for consensus building, because the approach requires the *inyangamugayo* (people who hate evil) to agree on the verdict after having listened to the members of the community”.

Apart from meting out communal justice to the affected people, the *Gacaca* system has encouraged people to work together as a community since they are required to participate as witnesses and in certain instances as judges. Such a scenario is essential for social transformation as well as long-lasting peace and stability in the nation of Rwanda as it helps in preventing what Volkan (2000:117) refers to as trans-generational transmission of trauma. He goes on to point out the advantages of

solving conflict in issues of future development as he points out that “if painful memories about the past atrocities are not adequately dealt with by one generation, they will contaminate future generations with cycles of violence and counter-violence”. In essence, incorporating local people is crucial for the sake of both the past, present and the future.

Having looked at the advantages of the *Gacaca* court system, the researcher also observes its short-comings. One of the limitations to this system is that it relies so much on truth-telling, yet truth is at times elusive and complex thereby presenting more challenges to the system. At times, truth may lead to further straining of relations and at the same time endanger the lives of those that would have acted as witnesses. The other challenge comes when some of the victims feel that the judges or adjudicators are taking sides with the perpetrators.

This renders the whole process chaotic and unsustainable. This is highlighted by Mutisi (2009:24) who states that, “although *Gacaca* was conceived as reconciliatory justice, its potential for inciting ethnic tension should not be underestimated, especially if *Hutus* (an ethnic tribe in Rwanda) continue to perceive it as an instrument of *Tutsi* (another ethnic tribe) power”. These are some of the limitations of the *Gacaca* traditional court system. However, they are outweighed by the advantages because, given the situation at hand, there might not have been any other better way of dealing with conflict issues successfully than this one.

The research by the above-named researcher is of paramount importance to the current one since it acts as an eye opener to the various possibilities of how traditional and indigenous social structures can be manipulated to benefit the immediate communities. It should, however, be pointed out that the current research differs in so many respects from the one by Mutisi (2009) since, first and foremost, the two are focusing on two very different cultural groups whose way of doing things is not in any way co-related. Their indigenous knowledge systems are likely to be digressing given the socio-political experiences of the two.

The current research does not focus on one aspect of indigenous knowledge systems as does the one by Mutisi (2009) whose main thrust was the way the

*Gacaca* system was used in Rwanda. The current research goes a step further by focusing on several aspects of Ndebele culture in dealing with conflict of various shades and forms as a sign of how sophisticated the African people in general, and the Ndebeles in particular, are dealing with conflict situation.

African indigenous knowledge systems are a fairly new phenomenon as a field of study although they themselves have been part of the lives of African societies since time immemorial owing to the problems highlighted in one of the sections above. However, they have received quite a vigorous attention from scholars within and without Africa. In defending the relevance and resilience of African indigenous knowledge systems, Mapara (2009) states that:

Indigenous knowledge systems are bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of a particular geographical area that they have survived on for a very long time. They are the knowledge forms that have failed to die despite the racial and colonial onslaught that they have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and arrogance.

In light of the above assertion, indigenous knowledge systems are viewed as that type of knowledge which is peculiar to a particular group of people. This group of people should be geographically located in the same vicinity for them to organise and appreciate the same knowledge so much that a stranger may not immediately understand it the same way. Viewing indigenous knowledge systems as specific to a particular geographical area actually means that the local people have a close or mutual understanding with their immediate environment. This relationship is in such a way that they make everything within their power to manipulate the environment in their favour.

This knowledge is also organised by the people themselves bearing in mind the complexities of their own geographical environment just because the geographical location on its own presents its own challenges to the survival of the people. For instance, what the people eat or drink maybe dictated or determined by the climate in that particular area. The type of animals they rear also may depend on the same environment since some may not survive due to either heat or cold in the area. As such, it is prudent to point out that the geographical location of a particular group of

people is the basis for their indigenous knowledge systems since it comes as a way of survival (Warren 1991:56).

Apart from that, Mapara (2009:143) views indigenous knowledge as a resilient system which was targeted by the coloniser for total destruction but due to its connection to the breathing pipe of the local people, that attempt did not succeed. He therefore, views African indigenous knowledge systems as a way that the former colonised societies are fighting for their independence be it on spiritual, social and even physical sphere. In that case, he argues that IKS are a post-colonial theory of self-liberation by the once oppressed who are now eager to show their former colonial master that they have always had their own sustainable means for survival. These were derived from their own intelligence and expertise in direct contrast to what the former coloniser claims and wants the whole world to believe. He points out this when he says:

IKS are more than just a displaying of the knowledge and belief systems of the formerly colonised.... They are a way in which the formerly colonised are claiming their dignity and humanity that they had been robbed of by colonialism. ... IKS are attempts to put the record straight on several issues, among them those that relate to history, education, architecture, philosophy, language and science, stating that the formerly colonised have been either misunderstood or were deliberately ignored, because if they and their knowledge systems had been acknowledged by the colonisers, there would have been no justification for colonialism. (Mapara, 2009:143).

Such views about indigenous knowledge systems are not shared by the above-mentioned scholar alone as there are a plethora of other scholars who are of the same opinion. Several scholars highlight the presence of magnificent structures like the Great Zimbabwe monuments which tower the world as a world wonder and listed among the world heritage sites because of its complex architectural construction. Apart from that, Garlake (1982:64) also cites the similar structure called Mapungubwe which is found in South Africa as well as Manekweni in Mozambique which stand as evidence of the complicated nature of African indigenous knowledge systems at work.

Garlake (1982:7) goes on to emphasise the sophisticated nature of African indigenous knowledge by making reference to the historical commercial interactions between Africans and Portuguese traders as early as the sixteenth century, a period which was characterised by trade in iron ore, minerals and other wares. Mapara (2009:144) uses this evidence to justify his argument of describing indigenous knowledge systems as a post-colonial theory to counteract white supremacy in its ideological as well as physical form.

He goes on to cite some of the white scholars who have acknowledged the presence of indigenous knowledge in Africa when he says “even white historians like Randles (1979:52) also make it clear that at the height of the Portuguese with the Shona on the Zimbabwean Plateau, Blacks had become specialists in metallurgy, that some of the produce of their labour was bought by the Portuguese for re-exportation to Genoa in India to make guns.”

No one can dispute the presence of indigenous knowledge systems in Africa as evidenced by the facts mentioned above except those who would not want to appreciate anything that comes from a people with the black skin colour. This is the major reason why Mapara (2009:143) courts us to look at indigenous knowledge systems in a different light where we view them as a way of fighting for our independence and also as a way of redressing the wrongs that were imposed on us by the former colonial system. He makes this emphatically saying “IKS as a post-colonial theory also attempt to remove the tag of being called the other and relabeling the West as the other that is not only greedy, but also murderous and myopic. The same Western world is also presented as disruptive and unappreciative.”

While the views by the above-mentioned scholar fall within the domain of the current research, it is critical at this point in time to mention that they remain at peripheral level because they focus on a different topic altogether. This research differs with that of Mapara’s (2009) approach in the sense that it goes a step higher by interrogating indigenous knowledge systems at work in a particular cultural context. Mapara (2009) does not concentrate on the utilisation of indigenous knowledge

systems as sustainable strategies for peace and conflict management in African societies as does this research but has theoretical aspects of IKS as his major thrust.

Mawere (2010) is one of the various scholars who discusses indigenous knowledge systems as a way of attaining a moral and virtuous society in a research paper titled “Indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) potential for establishing a moral, virtuous society: lessons from selected IKSs in Zimbabwe and Mozambique”. In presenting his argument, Mawere (2010) starts by castigating the West for its role in the destruction and undermining of local cultures and cultural institutions. This has resulted in their underutilisation in benefitting local communities as would have happened, were it not for colonialism. He posits that:

The West considered Africa as a “dark continent”, and hence despised its traditions, customs, belief systems, and indigenous knowledge systems as diabolic, and backward. This had a negative impact to Africa’s own socio-economic and political development. Africa’s valued traditions and knowledge systems had to change to fit in with the western scientism and modernity.

The colonial system aimed at completely eradicating most, if not all, local traditional structures which served as a source of unity and moral fibre for the Africans by instilling a lack of confidence in these traditional structures. It is not strange therefore, to discover that African traditional beliefs and religion were battered and left bleeding only to be replaced by the western forms of religion such as Christianity and others. Up to today, Africa is grappling in the darkness trying to make sense out of this foreign religion which somehow came to “fill a vacuum” as the coloniser purported. Africans were made to accept a strange religion which despised their own and made them feel barbaric if they practised it yet it is the same which had seen them through the years.

Apparently, the efforts of the coloniser did not fully succeed in most instances as there is ample evidence pointing to the dependence on traditional African institutions, particularly indigenous knowledge systems by the indigenes. Africans have, and continue, to rely on their own home-grown knowledge as a source of attaining a moral and virtuous society as indicated by Mawere (2010:210) when he says:

More importantly, despite the cultural onslaught on African thought, particularly their knowledge and belief systems through the spread of the western scientific worldview and the Christian religious tradition, the Mozambican and Zimbabweans never completely lost touch with their traditional thought and values. The traditional belief system has continued to inform much of the life and activities of the people in these two societies.

Mawere (2010) further expounds his argument by suggesting that a moral and virtuous society in the traditional setup was embedded in the values and moral standards that were inculcated in the minds of all members of the society from childhood till death. There were various ways of teaching and imparting these values such as proverbs, taboos, songs, riddles and folktales among many other methods of teaching. A morally virtuous society was essential in the traditional world since it assured them of economic, socio-political development and otherwise and as such these societies had to design their own ways which were in tandem with the demands of their daily lives or environment. Giving evidence of how a morally virtuous society was attained, Mawere (2010:210) says:

Their common belief system in traditions of avenging spirits (*Ngozi*); fencing a wife/husband using a charm (*runyoka*); fencing property using a charm (*rukwa*); and taboos (*zvierwa*) are still critical in maintaining a moral, virtuous society, especially in the country sides where traditions are still seriously observed.

It is necessary to mention that African societies have always been religious since most, if not all; their life activities have an inclination towards a religious realm. There is a close connection between the world of the living and the world of the “living dead” which is believed to be wielding superior authority over those in this world. All the examples of methods of attaining a moral society that are cited above can only make sense as long as they are viewed in light of the spiritual connection. Flouting them is tantamount to provoking the spiritual world and that is the last thing a living traditional African would want to do because they understand that the consequences are dire. “Fundamentally, the African traditional customs and practices emphasise the connection between the empirical world and the cosmos” (Mawere, 2010:212).

Mawere (2010) goes on to celebrate the sophisticated nature of the traditional African society which was able to manipulate its natural resources as well as its physical or social environment in order to make sure that they live a normal life. One can just imagine how they managed to handle various diseases that could have affected them yet they did not have hospitals and healthcare centres. It is also mind boggling to imagine how they managed to institute law and order in the absence of modern judicial services and law courts. In qualifying his point, Mawere (2010:213) cites Nzewi (2007:13) who says:

If our ancestors had no sound intellectual mettle, how did they develop the scientific cultures of food, childbirth, and mental nurture, also the musical arts genres that were non-sanctionable mediators in the indigenous societal polity and social-cultural practices, including the policing of egalitarian law and order, medical arts delivery, etc?

This position advocates for a radical turnaround of perceptions especially for African societies of today which are struggling to contain various societal ills ranging from crime to homosexuality which in the African context is unacceptable. Due to their close links with the spiritual world, African indigenous knowledge systems may pave a way forward in the attainment of moral and virtuous societies. The same is advocated by Mawere (2010:212) who posits “that, indigenous knowledge systems are the adhesives that bind spirit mediums, rain makers, and rural dwellers”. They set the ground rules in terms of cultural practices and customs observance in their communities. It is therefore, his proposal that African societies should return to the use of indigenous knowledge systems as a way of correcting the vice that seems to prevail in today’s societies. He qualifies his position by quoting Nzewi (2007:14) who also argues that:

Contemporary Africans must strive to rescue, resuscitate, and advance our intellectual legacy or the onslaught of externally manipulated forces of mental and cultural dissociation now rampaging Africa will obliterate our original intellect and lore of life.

The argument put forward by Mawere (2010) shares a lot with the current research since it advocates for a moral and virtual society which is basically part of what this research intends to achieve. Mawere (2010) discusses how indigenous knowledge systems have and continue to serve Zimbabwean and Mozambican communities in terms of trying to attain virtual societies and outlines how the Whiteman attempted without success to destroy them. The same line of thought guides this current research which also focuses on indigenous knowledge systems in action among African communities for purposes of achieving peace and tranquil.

However, the current research differs on a number of aspects with that of Mawere (2010) since it is focusing on a particular cultural group of people which are the Ndebeles unlike him who looks at Zimbabwe and Mozambique as his case studies. More precisely, he mainly dwells on Shona traditions and indigenous knowledge thereby leaving a gap for the current research to fill. It can be noted that, while Zimbabwe is one nation, the cultures and experiences of the people are vastly unique and studying one cultural group may not mean a full representation of all the other groups, as such this research becomes crucial in focusing on a cultural group which is not well discussed in the work of Mawere (2010).

One other scholar who discusses the subject of indigenous knowledge systems extensively is Agrawal (1995). He makes frantic efforts to dismantle the divide between indigenous and western knowledge with special attention to the contributions, or lack of them, to the issue of economic, social and physical developmental programmes in developing countries. His study attempts to establish the divide between western and indigenous knowledge in light of the arguments raised by Atte (1992); Richards (1985); Tjahjadi (1993) and Scoones et al., (1992). These view indigenous knowledge as the best solution to pick up from where modern knowledge has failed in issues of development as they say:

Where 'western social science, technological might, and institutional models – reified in monolithic ways- seem to have failed, local knowledge and technology – reified as 'indigenous' - are often viewed as the best strategy in the old fight against hunger, poverty and underdevelopment. Because indigenous knowledge has permitted its holders to exist in harmony with nature, allowing them to use it

sustainably, it is seen as especially pivotal in discussions of sustainable resource use.

For a long time, a lot of money has been directed towards developmental projects in developing countries especially by the western world yet the more they do it, the poorer it seems their benefactors are getting. There has therefore, been a cause for concern and a soul searching among those organisations which foster development especially in Africa so much that they now feel that their efforts are going unrewarded. This has led them to the acknowledgement of the indispensability of indigenous knowledge systems as a way out of the quagmire. Confirming this state of affairs, Agrawal (1995:416) states that:

At the same time, the science of development studies seems to be in disarray. The most prominent actor in development, the state, is in full retreat in most third world countries. The temper of the times is perhaps best illustrated by the significant role being accorded to NGOs – they channel more development aid to the South than the World Bank and the IMF put together. The relative failure of externally introduced development initiatives has impelled a shift toward a participatory and decentralised motif in development.

Agrawal (1995) also takes a swipe at the West for undermining local input in developmental issues for a long time until they realised that that a lot of financial, social and physical effort is being directed towards development yet very little is being realised. He highlights the fact that for a long time, the West has relied only on its own knowledge and expertise as well as their own theories of development and not necessarily taking into consideration what part the Africans have to play in the whole process. As a result, most, if not all, models of development have always been those that are centred on empirical theories and measurements.

These have been forced down the throats of those who are being developed without them making any contributions except to receive. “In the 1950s and 1960s, theorists of development saw indigenous and traditional knowledge as inefficient, inferior and an obstacle to development” (Agrawal 1995:413). This superiority attitude is also lamented by Warren (1991:162) when he compares indigenous and western knowledge saying:

Modern scientific knowledge is centralised and associated with machinery of the state, and those who are its bearers believe in its superiority. Indigenous technical knowledge, in contrast, is scattered and associated with low prestige rural life, even those who are its bearers may believe it to be inferior.

These scholars view it as a grave mistake to side-line indigenous knowledge systems as inferior in issues of economic and physical development just because the historical complications of doing so have been felt. They also regret the unfortunate admission by indigenes to stand as spectators yet they harbour the missing link to the complex equation of development. Agrawal (1995:15 & 41) observes that “Indigenous knowledge forms the capstone of several convergent trends in social science thinking and development administration practice”. He goes on to cite a scientific definition given by Warren (1991) which resembles the interconnected nature between western and local knowledge as the recipe for development where he says:

Indigenous knowledge is an important natural resource that can facilitate the development process in cost-effective participatory, and sustainable ways. (Vanek, 1989; Hansen and Erbaugh, 1987). Indigenous knowledge (IK) is local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society... It is the basis for local-level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Such knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, in many societies by word of mouth. Indigenous knowledge has value not only for the culture in which it evolves, but also for scientists and planners striving to improve conditions in rural localities. (Warren, 1991:1).

This definition, apart from explaining elaborately what indigenous knowledge systems are, goes a long way in demonstrating that they are a necessary ingredient in the development debate and castigating them is done at the peril of the same.

Agrawal (1995) goes on to investigate the major points of departure between western and indigenous knowledge as a way of trying to establish whether the argument put forward about the latter being an essential element of development is authentic. He argues that it is important to find the differences and similarities

between the two so as to change the perceptions about indigenous knowledge systems which seem to continue to play second fiddle to their western scientific counterpart. In doing so, he seems to be pushed by the following questions:

But ... questions still remain. Why should academics, development professionals, and governments, who shunted aside indigenous knowledge for five decades of planned development, start using it now? And even were they to become persuaded that indigenous knowledge is valuable, how can they gain it? (Agrawal, 1995:419).

The sudden interest in the study of indigenous traditional knowledge (ITK), especially as regards their contributions to development is evidence that they are an important element in the lives of both the developed and the developing worlds. This is also proof that there is a marked difference between the two and there is need to integrate them so as to achieve the compatibility that is necessary for any form of progress to be made. Highlighting some of the major differences between western and indigenous knowledge systems, Howes and Chambers (1980:330) say:

An important difference between science and ITK lies in the way in which phenomena are observed and ordered. The scientific mode of thought is characterised by a greater ability to break down data presented to the senses and to reassemble it in different ways. The mode of ITK, on the other hand is 'concrete' and relies almost exclusively on intuition and evidence directly available to the senses. A second distinction derives from the way practitioners to the two modes of thought represent to themselves the nature of the enterprise in which they are engaged. Science is an open system whose adherents are always aware of the possibility of alternative perspectives to those adapted to any particular point of time. ITK, on the other hand, as a closed system, is characterised by lack of awareness that there may be other ways of regarding the world.

Adding on to the complications encountered in trying to distinguish between western and indigenous knowledge, Agrawal (1995:415) goes on to make reference to the arguments raised by other scholars who believe that indigenous knowledge is more inherent in woman than men. He cites Thrupp (1989:140) who claims that "women have particularly rich insights in many indigenous cultures and local knowledge systems". This argument emanates from the very fact that women seem to be the

major custodians and benefactors of indigenous knowledge systems as evidenced by their ability to carry out so many tasks which reflect their understanding of the importance of indigenous knowledge systems. There are so many examples of women who conduct traditional healing sessions or perform maternal birth procedures in Africa outside modern technical expertise. While this might be the case to a certain extent, Agrawal (1995:418) however, sees it is an exaggeration he says:

In all cultures and for all knowledge systems women may purposes particularly rich insights about some aspects of their culture. Therefore, the existence of knowledgeable women in local knowledge systems can scarcely be a distinguishing feature of these systems. Secondly, numerous cultures discriminate against women possessing knowledge that members of the culture value.

The arguments by Agrawal (1995) have a serious bearing on the foundations of the current research in the sense that they confirm the authenticity of African indigenous facets of their lives and helps to cement the principles that guide this research. This it does in terms of espousing indigenous knowledge systems as being useful in dealing with conflict management among the indigenes. His argument helps negate the negative publicity that African indigenous knowledge continues to receive from the bully colonial hegemony. In essence, his arguments lay a solid foundation for the current research whose intentions are to explore how the Ndebeles of Zimbabwe then go on to utilise this God-given resource that they possess without having to export.

It is important to emphasise that the current research does not concentrate on explaining the significance of indigenous knowledge systems as does the one by Agrawal (1995), but proceeds to apply these in a particular case study. This enables the current research to practically examine the potential exhibited by indigenous knowledge as indicated by scholars such as the one mentioned above. This research is not only about distinguishing between the West and the South as does that one by Agrawal (1995) and as such has its own mandate which it intends to execute.

Ajibade (2003:40) postulates that “the term indigenous knowledge is used to describe the knowledge systems developed by a community as opposed to the scientific knowledge that is referred to as modern knowledge.” In other words, the Ndebele people, just like any society, are capable of designing their own knowledge which tally with their social, political, economic or physical needs without having to copy or learn from others. It is therefore, proper to suggest that the society under investigation in this research should also be understood in the context of an ideal society which, like any other normal society, is expected to be in a position to design its own methods of managing conflict from both within and without.

It has already been ascertained that there is no society, no matter how perfect, that can rid itself completely of conflict since conflict takes diverse colours. Conflict is one of those problematic elements that have, and continue to terrorise Africans in general as well as Ndebeles in particular. As indicated in the introductory chapter, Ndebeles have experienced different types of conflict ranging from social to political and beyond and as such they have never at any given time denied the presence of conflict among themselves or even those that surround them. They have acknowledged its presence for as long as they can remember as highlighted by Ndlovu, Ncube and Ndlovu (1995:46) who say that:

*Khona ukuxabana kanye lokuphambaniselana yinto eyadabuka ikhona ebantwini. Kodwa loba kunjalo ingxabano eziba khona zihambelana lendlela lesizwe esiphila ngayo. Ngakho-ke umhlobo wamacala lendlela alungiswa ngayo konke kugxile enhlalweni yaleso sizwe.*

(Conflict itself including crossing each other’s path is something that has always been there among people. But, despite that, the types of conflict are synonymous with the way that particular group of people live. In that case, types of conflict and the way they are resolved all depends on the way of life of that society.)

The acknowledgement by the above-named scholars is testimony that conflict is part and parcel of human societies but what is most important is to know how to deal with it. These scholars also underscore the fact that while conflict might be similar, the way they are addressed is embedded in the culture of that particular society and

cannot be universal whatsoever. In other words, they also emphasise the fact that conflict resolution is culture specific thereby dismissing all efforts by outsiders who do not share in the same culture. This exclusivity of the role of indigenous knowledge systems is supported by Castro and Ettenger (1996:3) who postulate that:

Conflict exists to some degree in every community. The form and intensity of conflicts vary widely by place, and over time within each community. The ways which communities and their members respond to conflicts also vary considerably. Significant diversity often exists within communities in terms of knowledge, opinion, material wealth, power, and status. Therefore, conflicts and the way they are handled should be examined from a social and historical perspective, with an understanding and appreciation of the range of local viewpoints.

It should also be noted that the types of conflict vary from one society to another so much so that even the ways of conflict resolution have to vary depending on the indigenous knowledge systems of the people concerned. The above-mentioned scholars do not delve much into the aspect of conflict management and resolution except to highlight that conflict management has traditionally been a problem among the people. Theirs is not a research into indigenous knowledge systems and how they are applied in the Ndebele communities, but they are just interested in describing various cultural aspects of the people. This research digs deeper into the various causes of conflicts as well as the possible indigenous solutions given to them. Such an approach enables the researcher to also evaluate the effectiveness as well as limitations of such strategies with a view of suggesting possible improvements and adjustments.

This research stretches the concept of indigenous knowledge systems in relation to conflict management and resolution from the traditional methods to include also the communicative elements of African languages. These are interpreted as a sign of the ingenuity of the indigenes in manipulating their immediate environment for the sake of societal benefit. It is un-arguable that local people have for such a long time continued to utilise their oral literature in communicating various messages to their societies. In essence, when one wants to find out about an African society, they may not do so without examining their oral literature since it is a library of cultural values, norms and expectations. It was therefore, essential to explore literature that deals

with African or Ndebele oral literature and how it is used in imparting knowledge especially to the young generations of the society with the expectation that when they grow up, they will be responsible citizens in future.

Finnegan (2012:17) takes a very detailed account of the functions of oral literature in Africa as intangible heritage which defines who the Africans are. She underscores the very fact that oral literature is essential in understanding the behaviour of the local people since it cannot be separated from the culture of the same. This is pointed out in the introduction where it says:

The study and appreciation of oral literature is more important than ever for understanding the complexity of human cognition. For many years people around the world – particularly in areas where history and traditions are still conveyed more through speech than in writing – the transmission of oral literature from one generation to the next lies at the heart of culture and memory. Very often, local languages act as vehicles for the transmission of unique forms of cultural knowledge.

Since the people's oral literature is responsible for the transmission of their cultural values and norms, it is also undoubtable that elements and strategies for conflict management and resolution are also transmitted through the same means since they are part and parcel of culture. She presents various genres of oral literature which she discovered in various parts of Africa such as folktales, riddles, songs, poetry, drama or performances. These, she discovered that they play an important role in the daily activities of the local people and as such they ought to be protected and preserved for future generations since most of them are only transmitted by word of mouth.

It will also be indicated here and now that African languages, be they oral or written, have an intimate relationship with their immediate surrounding and in most cases, some statements need to be contextualised for them to make a desired meaning. Ndebele as a language is awash with some of these statements which do not necessarily fall within any of the genres of oral literature such as folktales or riddles nor songs. Such statements have been referred to in most cases as wise-saying because they are presumed to portray the people's wisdom so much that the people

are always compelled to give credence to such when they are mentioned (Ndlovu, 1995:67).

This research alludes to these as common statements because tradition reflects that their wide application has been useful especially in issues that have to do with conflict management. Statements such as “*ukutshaya indiva*” (to pretend as if nothing has happened), “*ukuyekela ilale ngenxeba*” (to give in and allow your own opinion to be overpowered), are among many such statements. Like most other traditional language genres, these wise-sayings are passed through the word of mouth yet they serve a great purpose in making sure that people live harmoniously in the society as will be demonstrated. Finnegan (2010:17) points out this attribute among African languages and emphasises the need to first appreciate the context in trying to understand some of these statements as she says:

I want to reiterate here, the more emphatically because of the way it has so often been overlooked in the past, is that in the case of oral literature, far more extremely than with written forms, the bare words cannot be left to speak for themselves, for the simple reason that in the actual literary work so much else is necessarily and intimately involved. With this type of literature, a knowledge of the whole literary and social background, covering these various points of performance, audience, and context, is, however difficult, of the first importance.

It was in the best interest of this research to examine how Ndebeles use the sophisticated nature of their language as a way of promoting peace and tranquil in their societies. In doing this, the current research differs sharply with that of Finnegan (2012) whose main concern was to study various genres of oral literature in the continent of Africa as a whole unlike this research whose focus is on the use of oral literature as a tool for peace and conflict management.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has been interacting and investigating literature from all sections of the world as a way of getting more knowledge as regards the role played by indigenous knowledge systems in issues of conflict management. Examining literature from all parts of the world helps to find out how other world communities view indigenous knowledge especially between the developed and developing countries. The World

Bank and the United Nations (UN) for example, have come out in full support of traditional indigenous knowledge systems. They view them as a sustainable way of improving efforts by those who intend to send aid to the needy societies of the world since ignoring them is tantamount to failure.

Scholars like Mawere (2010) and Mapara (2009) help to express the feelings by Africans on how the West has for a long time denigrated African indigenous knowledge as useless yet there is ample evidence that the later have relied on them for survival since time immemorial. These scholars also view African indigenous knowledge systems as a weapon that Africans are suing to fight colonial hegemony and redefine themselves in a world that is hostile to other cultures especially traditional cultures. This chapter also provided an opportunity for this research to demonstrate its point of departure from the rest of the writers who have also written on a similar subject before and has attempted to point out the strengths and weaknesses of previous literature.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter was an interrogation of the various literatures that have been written in connection with conflict, conflict management strategies in the world, as well as those in the continent of Africa. It also explored several works written on indigenous knowledge systems and other issues which are pertinent to the current study. In that chapter, a number of discoveries were made particularly in line with the gaps left out by previous scholars on issues of conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles as such giving a solid foundational base for the current research to be undertaken. This current chapter concerns itself with the theoretical framework that informs this entire research. In doing so it explains theoretical underpinnings involved as well as justification for selecting them for purposes of authenticating the various arguments raised in the research.

#### **3.1.1 The Importance of a Relevant Theoretical Framework**

In undertaking a study of this nature, it is essential to always remember that one is dealing with a group of people who have once been colonised and dehumanised. This is a people whose confidence in their own institutions, social structures and self defence mechanisms have previously been subjugated and subjected to denigration and vilification by the colonial system. In light of such an unfortunate encounter, it is quite mandatory for the research of this nature to be guided by a proper theoretical framework. There is need for a theory which is also well grounded in its ability to foster the process of re-orienting, redefining as well as reassuring the lost confidence in self for the Africans in general as well as the Ndebeles in particular.

This approach finds meaning in the words of Ngugi (1982:150) who advocates for an approach that provides us with “means of knowledge about ourselves ... (and how we should relate to each other) and after we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover other peoples and worlds around us”. This ideology gives us a challenge to always consider our own historical experiences and situation whenever we intend to carry out a study about ourselves as this gives us a safe backing in dealing with our past for the sake of the future.

In support of the idea of striving to find a favourable theoretical grounding in dealing with local problems, Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Shizha (2012:23-23) state that “there is need for a philosophical framework that respects the cultural diversity and the lived experiences of all people”. Similar sentiments are echoed by Chinweizu (1987:496) who also believes that African culture is under siege so much that any effort available should be directed at making sure that she changes her battered self-confidence hence:

... we must approach all problems and issues from the viewpoint of our own interests ... We must work to liberate Africa, to create a liberated African culture, to foster a new global order within which we can stay liberated.

No one can dispute the importance of anchoring a research of this nature on a proper and locally brewed conceptual framework because Africa is at the crossroads and a proper road needs to be selected or else the direction will be lost for good.

### **3.2 Theoretical framework**

This research is guided by the theory of *ubuntu/unhu*. *Ubuntu* is an ethic or humanist philosophy focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other. The word has its origin in the Bantu languages of southern Africa. *Ubuntu* is seen as an exclusive African indigenous concept. The *Ubuntu* operating system was named for this principle. In other words, this conceptual framework, which is a locally designed, is based on an idea which is meant to address peculiar African problems in an indigenous way instead of tackling them using a universal formula. The theory is meant to move away from looking at African people through an exotic lens because it is in doing so that they end up seeing an impaired vision of themselves. As a way of emphasising the need to adopt a theory that is relevant to our situation and problems, Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Shizha (2012:23-23) go on to support the theory of *ubuntu* by suggesting that:

In our context, the philosophy that comes to mind is the philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu* (humanity, good behaviour, respectfulness to others, pleasant and honest). *Unhu* forces us to come to terms with the fact that whether we are African, European, Shona, or Ndebele, *tose*

*tirivanhu*. (In spite of our racial or ethnic diversity, the bottom line is that we are all human beings).

In other terms, these scholars view this theory as a wholesome theory which is tailor-made in such a way that, while it deals with our unique African challenges, it also gives us an opportunity to develop into better citizens of the world.

### **3.2.1. Ubuntu/Unhu**

According to Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Shizha (2012:22) “the philosophy of *unhu* places premium on human life and promotes the dictum *Munhu munhu nevanhu* (ChiShona) or *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (IsiNdebele/IsiZulu). These are local proverbs which Mbiti (1987:106) translates to mean that “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”. At the centre of the Africans’ life is the belief that we are all joined by a single umbilical cord whose length and breadth encircles all of us as the black indigenous community making it inevitable for us to look down upon each other, let alone fight one with another. The same feeling is echoed by Nussbaum (2003:21) who postulates that:

*Ubuntu* is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community. *Ubuntu* calls on us to believe and feel that: your pain is my pain, my wealth is your wealth, and your salvation is my salvation. In essence, *Ubuntu*, a Nguni word from South Africa, addresses our interconnectedness, our common humanity, and the responsibility to each other that flows from our connection.

There is no doubt from the arguments raised by the above-mentioned scholars that the philosophy of *ubuntu/unhu* is a locally brewed African concept which is premised on a peculiar worldview which is common among Africans as a people which they may not even share with any other group of people in the entire universe. Both scholars place an emphasis on the role played by communalism in the life of an African which acts as a connecting cord from one person to the next regardless of where they may be originating from in terms of the geographical location. In essence, the scholars seem to suggest that, way before the arrival of the colonial master, African people already subscribed to the philosophy of “loving one’s

neighbour as thyself” which seems to be one of the basic commandments in the biblical principles that regulates the behaviour of Christians.

The very fact that Africans value communalism as a standard for relating with one another makes the theory of *ubuntu* very relevant in the present study as it gives the study a foundation on which to anchor its pillars of analysing things. Communalism itself is a strong principle in the African culture for purposes of conflict management since it affords the people to deal with all their conflicting situations as a group thus making whatever techniques that are employed in that regard to be both communally approved and executed. Communalism affords Africans a chance to craft and implement social norms among their societies as indicated by Tutu (1999:34-35) who makes an overview of how *ubuntu/unhu* operates as a way of giving guidelines on how African people are expected to behave saying:

*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “*Yu, u nobuntu*”; “Hey, he or she has *ubuntu*.” This means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs, we belong in a bundle of life.

Apart from the elements of respect and dignity that are embedded in the concepts of *ubuntu* are the attributes of hospitality, friendship and compassion for the next person. In essence, a well-polished African is expected to exhibit these qualities and even more as a way of making sure that society lives harmoniously. Another dimension of the concept of *ubuntu/unhu* is expressed by Luhabe (2002:103) as he explains how Africans value *ubuntu* as a way of making sure that the whole community moves at the same pace with no clearly defined extremes between the rich and the poor.

Our own African culture taught us concepts such as respect, trust, compassion and above all, that we are a collective with the success of one person depending very much on the success of all. This is a concept widely referred to as “*ubuntu*” or “*umntu ngumntu ngabanye*” (what makes us human is our recognition of the humanity in other).

Bourdillon (1990:17) defines *ubuntu/unhu* as a “term used to designate acceptable conduct or behaviour”. In this case, the concept of *ubuntu/unhu* is viewed as a standard designed and set out by the African society to describe what they regard as normal and humane behaviour which is not only acceptable but also to be emulated by the rest of society’s members. Most, if not all, African countries do not encourage disrespect for the elders, indecorous behaviour and a whole host of other traits which form ill behaviour. It should be taken into account that there is no society, no matter how advanced it may be, which has so far managed to invent a machine or instrument that it can use to measure or control the behaviour of its members. As a result, there are instances where unacceptable behaviour and vice seems to affect most societies whether they want or they do not. It is in that backdrop that Africans have come up with the philosophy of *ubuntu/unhu* to act as an instrument of guiding its members towards acceptable behaviour especially in issues that have to do with communalism. This is supported by Ramose (1999:78) when he says:

*Ubuntu* is instrumental in sustaining social cohesion, managing peace and order for the good life of everyone in the society including strangers and passers-by.

One can argue that the various strategies for peace and conflict management which have been traditionally used, and continue to be used in most African societies, and indeed among Zimbabwean Ndebeles, has strongly relied on the strengths of the concept of *ubuntu*. This is possible because the ethos embedded in the concept of *ubuntu* are regarded as a wholesome idea whose principle delineates right from wrong, good from bad and so on. The other advantages of the *ubuntu/unhuism* is the fact that it is steeped in the culture of the African people which in most cases is imparted through socialisation so much that it comes from the innermost heart of the African. Emphasizing the importance and relevance of culture in understanding African people, Laderach (1995:79) states that:

Culture is a shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing and responding to social realities around them.

African culture, like other cultures of the world, has been very instrumental in dealing with so multiple challenges that the local people have faced and at times managed to overcome in the past. Such a state of affairs makes the concept of *ubuntu/unhu* very much applicable as a conceptual concept for this study especially for the main reason that the current research is dealing with a cultural group of people.

Shizha (2009:134) underscores the importance of the philosophy of *ubuntu/unhu* in the political problems that are bedevilling the nation of Zimbabwe with particular reference to the post-*Gukurahundi* and post-independence periods which were characterised by a dire need for conciliation and justice. He argues that the volatile situation after the war was not conducive for reconciliation between blacks and whites given the immediate histories that had separated the two groups during the war. However, central to the conciliatory processes that could be initiated successfully was the concept of *ubuntu* which is inherent in the blood veins of the African people. It is *ubuntu/unhu* which could bring the African to forgive the former enemy because *ubuntu* emphasises on the sanctity of communalism:

If the policy of National Reconciliation is to be resuscitated and be firmly grounded, there is need that all groups concerned attain a realisation of their common humanity. Commonality is a strong cultural, social, political and economic foundation to an African philosophy that is fundamental to community living. (Shizha, 2009. In Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Shizha, 2012:21).

In other words, the above-mentioned scholar is of the view that Zimbabweans should manipulate their own culture in dealing with their immediate challenges which in this case happens to be the issue of reconciliation, justice and peace.

Samkange and Samkange (1980:6-7) have classified the functions and impact of *ubuntu/unhu* on the lives of the African people into three categories in the following manner which appears critical and crucial for analytical purposes of the current research:

1. To be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with others.

2. If, and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life.
3. The king owed his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him.

The first and second categories emphasise the importance of recognising the role played by others in the life of an individual since Africans do not subscribe to the idea of individualism as does other cultures. In other words, Africans' lives are defined not only by self but by the rest of those that are in the immediate surrounding so much that no one can make final decisions on how their life should be lived especially if it has to be independent of the rest. Shizha (2009:143) asserts that:

A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

The idea of feeling pain and compassion for the next person is a foundational element in the process of attaining sustainable peace and justice in any society. Africans emphasise that no one lives as an island as this is not considered as humane because it promotes individualism and selfishness, both characteristics which are loathed in the society. This finds support in the thinking of Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Shizha (2012:22) who argue that “the philosophy of *unhu* is attractive for the values that it extols such as love for one another, respect for each other, brotherhood, and respect for the sacredness of human life”. One would therefore, be in order to anchor a research of this nature on the fundamentals of the concept of *ubuntu/unhu* just because it already acts as fertile ground for the arguments which are going to be raised in the research.

Basing on the second category as mentioned above, it should be highlighted that the concept of *ubuntu/unhu* puts others first before self as a way of doing away with greed and self-aggrandisement; a mole which has devoured many societies and left them in shreds. There are so many conflicts whose source is traceable to greed and

selfishness among family, community members and especially those in political power. *Ubuntu/unhu* then comes in handy as a reflection of the philosophy of local people to deal with potential threats to their moral fabric and ensuring that society is kept intact. Addressing delegates at an international meeting, the iconic former South African president Nelson Mandela demonstrated out-rightly that *ubuntu* has a potential of keeping us together despite our socio-historical experiences when he says:

*Ubuntu ... asserts that the common ground of our humanity is greater and more enduring than the differences that divide us. It is so, and it must be so, because we share the same fateful human condition. We are creatures of blood and bone, idealism and suffering. Though we differ across cultures and faiths, and though history has divided rich from poor, free from unfree, powerful from powerless and race from race, we are still all branches on the same tree of humanity. (Khoza, 2006: xxv).*

As has already been indicated, African societies groom and promote selflessness among their members as a way of making sure that they contribute to the wider community in whichever way possible and in the long run make the life of other members liveable. This attitude of selflessness also acts as a way of eradicating discrimination of whatever nature just because discrimination retards progression and threatens peace. Sithole (2001:3) concurs with this when he points out that “ubuntu functions as a unifying factor, bringing people together regardless of their background or access to wealth” in the process making sure that those who are vulnerable are taken care of.

The third category brings out one of the best attributes of the African philosophy of *ubuntu/unhu* as regards political and traditional leadership. It cannot be disputed that, regardless of the various structures put in place by traditional societies, there were instances where those in authority abused their powers and victimised dissenting voices. Inarguably, bad political authorities have led to several tribal and ethnic conflicts not only in Africa but the world over. The common *Nguni* proverb extends to espouse on the attitude of traditional societies pertaining how they would want to be ruled or governed as it says that “*inkosi yinkosi ngabantu*” (a king is one because of by the people).

The whole idea of how African people should and want to be governed is embedded in this proverb as it spells out the basic principle such as the fact that the mandate to rule comes from the people, the way of exercising your powers also comes from the same people. A king who behaves otherwise automatically goes against the will of the people and as such becomes a social misfit who should be removed from that authority. Ramose (1999:49) marvels at this attribute of traditional intelligence by stating that “*ubuntu* is simultaneously the foundation and the edifice of African philosophy” which acts as a revelation of how sophisticated and intelligent they are.

*Ubuntu/unhu* therefore, provides the best viewpoint since it also provides a platform for looking at issues not from a cultural but also a liberating point of view considering that the subject under study has been subjugated and vilified by colonialism for such a long time. This theory enables the researcher to delve much into the intricacies of the cultural aspects of the group under study and yield the expected results since it is closely related or tailor-made for the same group so to speak.

### **3.2.2 Postcolonial Theory**

The second conceptual framework which guides this research is the postcolonial theory. The current research, which deals with African indigenous knowledge systems is not only a piece of work scrutinising how indigenous knowledge systems work especially in matters of peace and conflict management. It is a weapon targeted at empowering the African traditional people and cultural institutions in order to liberate them from the claws of the former aggressive or repressive colonial shackles. This process finds meaning in the words of Chinweizu (1987: xix) who underscores the need for reorientation, re-education and re-empowerment as he observes that:

A decolonised and re-educated African ought always to demand that matters be explained from an Afrocentric viewpoint, with scientific tools, and that the results be translated into intelligible common sense. By so insisting, we enable ourselves to spot and avoid ideologies, open as well as hidden, by which we are liable to be confused and misled, and attractive myths by which we are liable to be tricked and lynched *en masse*.

One cannot overstate the importance of adopting theories that are bound to negate all the damage that has happened to African societies at the hands of colonialism as this has been rightly mentioned by the above-named scholar. At this juncture, it becomes most imperative to point out that a study of this nature would be incomplete without adopting the perceptions propagated by the postcolonial theory. This theory complements the theory of *ubuntu/unhu* which has already been discussed widely in the section above and gives another (not so different, but very crucial) dimension to the research objectives, analysis and outcomes.

Mapara (2009:139) in the introduction of his article on Post-colonialism argues that the sudden interests in the emergence of IKS as a field of study especially by scholars from former colonial masters should not be taken just as mere admission of defeat. He argues that it should be perceived as a way that the formerly colonised are fighting back and regaining their ground in the global village. He goes on to point out that:

IKS are those forms of knowledge that the people of the formerly colonised countries survived on before the advent of colonialism. They are knowledge that was swept aside, denigrated by the colonialists and their sciences as empirical and superstitious as they sought to give themselves some form of justification on why they had to colonise other people's lands. (Mapara, 2009:140-41).

It is envisaged that this study which deals with indigenous knowledge systems of Zimbabwean Ndebeles will come face to face with the effects of the colonial systems on the same. It is highly likely that some of the IKS of this group of people which used to serve its purpose effectively before the advent of colonialism has been severely bruised by the same and as such may no longer be serving its purpose in the contemporary situation. In that case, it is imperative for this research, just like is expected from all other written and unwritten material about Africa in general and Zimbabwean Ndebeles in particular, to be sensitive to the process of decolonisation. Asante in Hudson-Weems (2007:30) underscores this exercise where he says that:

The principal motive behind their intellectual works seems to be the use of knowledge for the cultural, social, political and economic transformation of African people by suggesting the necessity for a re-

centering of African minds in a way that brings about a liberating consciousness.

This thought and approach to the study of African IKS is in tandem with the auspices of the postcolonial theory because it provides an analytical lens for looking at the lives of the African societies. It does so with a view that takes into cognisance their historical journey as well as the dire need for them to be reassured of their lost confidence in their cultural institutions which they have relied on for such a long time. In explaining the dictates of the postcolonial theory, Mapara (2009:149) states that:

The postcolonial theory is an area of cultural and critical theory that has been used in the study of literary texts. It deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously colonised countries. Postcolonial theory may also be literature that was written in colonising countries dealing with colonialism or the colonised people.

It cannot be denied that there is a lot of literature that has been written about the African people, most of which is not in sync with their cultural traditions as it aims at removing them from as far as is possible from these for the benefit of the coloniser. African indigenous knowledge systems are an essential part of the life of African people and should be freed from the claws of colonialism as they are the soul of the people. Their history has been deliberately distorted and at times deleted such that Africans are at the verge of losing direction since they now behave like a ship which has lost its radar. This has severely affected self confidence and trust in both themselves and their cultural institutions despite having relied on the same since time unrecorded. In demonstrating the role of the postcolonial theory in the process of correcting historical distortions and restoring self-confidence as well as fighting against white domination, Mapara (2009:141) goes on to astutely point out that:

The theory also focuses largely on the way in which literature by the colonisers distorts the experiences and realities of the colonised, and inscribes the inferiority of the colonised while at the same time promoting the superiority of the coloniser. The postcolonial theory is also about the colonised and formerly colonised announcing their presence and identity as well as reclaiming their past that was lost or distorted because of being “othered” by colonialism.

As has been highlighted in the first chapter of this thesis, historical writers like Trevor-Roper (1960), Hegel (2001) and Joseph Conrad (1996) have clearly exemplified how weird the views of former colonial masters were concerning the African people and their lifestyle. One cannot agree more with the parameters laid out by the postcolonial theory as regards the duties of those who undertake studies on and about the lives of the formerly colonised.

While we may spend so much effort, it is also crucial to indicate that we should be careful not to over-celebrate the African culture and IKS in a vacuum and fail to prove its authenticity in line with whatever arguments we raise. Gray (2001:101) warns about such an incomplete attitude and advocates for a functional approach whereby African experiences are put to tangible application so as to prove our detractors wrong. In support of the postcolonial theory in that initiative, Gray (2001:101) postulates that:

It does not consist, however, of simply having a surface or conversational familiarity with the African past. It includes drawing on that past functionally, anchoring efforts in that past-gleaning the most instructive and constructive information from the African past, referring that information as necessary and then utilizing the information along with one's particular personal desires to achieve pro-African purposes in the present and the future.

It would be a grave mistake to undertake a research in the lives and cultures of the formerly colonised and not benefit them at the end of the day by making empty claims which have no basis. The current research therefore, finds guidance from the theory of post-colonialism as it provides a platform not only for analysis but also for testing the hypothesis targeted by the research.

According to Mapara (2009:141), the postcolonial theory was propounded by Franz Fanon and Edward Said (1978). Their main intention was that of exposing the hypocritical tendencies of the coloniser as well as to promote an unavoidable direct or indirect fight against the inferiority complex created in various structures of the colonised which include "language, culture, customs as well as belief systems" among others. In that regard, as Fanon argues and perceives it, "the colonised must

fight for the liberation of their nation. It is only when the nation is free that the formerly colonised can reclaim and reconstruct their own history and culture.” (Mapara, 2009:141). This approach affords the current research an opportunity to be involved in the process of fighting for the freedom of the Africans or the Ndebeles in particular since it interrogates the operations and functions of their cultural institutions which have been under siege from the coloniser for a long time.

Mapara (2009:141) goes on to highlight the view of Edward Said, one of the founders or proponents of the postcolonial theory who published a book called *Orientalism* in 1978 in order to explain his ideas about this theory. In that particular book, Said (1978) makes an analysis of how the West makes its biased representations of what they call the *Orient* in reference to North Africa and the Middle East.

Said argues that the *Orient* is represented as inferior to the *Occident* (the West) that is depicted as superior. It is the *Occident's* Other. Said further asserts that the *Orient* is viewed in the West as having no history of its own, but one that it got from the West. While the West is represented as masculine, active and dominant, the *Orient* is viewed as feminine, passive and submissive. (Mapara, 2009:141).

The colonial master would have loved a situation where they continue to dominate and direct the lives of the colonised for as long as could be possible as they believed they were the superior species on the planet. However, when the colonised finally liberated themselves through armed struggles, their political superiority collapsed, but, the coloniser has not yet liberated himself from the colonial dominance. This is what drove Said (1978) to found the postcolonial theory as a way of guiding those involved in the business of undertaking research among the formerly colonised. The arguments by Said (1978) provide a favourable platform for the current research. His arguments equip it with requisite guidelines and principles to follow so that set goals are achieved in the process of interrogating African indigenous knowledge systems and how they are applied by the Zimbabwean Ndebeles given their histories and experiences.

Mawere (2010:210) places a special emphasis on the resilience of African indigenous knowledge systems which he believes have resisted all the darts and spears that have been directed towards them since time immemorial. He observes that the amount of effort that the colonial system directed towards eliminating local knowledge has been so vigorous and well-orchestrated so much that by this time, we would be referring to them as a past legacy. That has not been successful as he points out that:

More importantly, despite the cultural onslaught on African thought, particularly their knowledge and belief systems through the spread of Western Scientific worldview and the Christian religious tradition, the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans never completely lost touch with their traditional thought and values. The Traditional belief system has continued to inform much of the life and activities of the people of these two societies. (Mawere, 2010:210).

The above-named scholar fulfils some of the assumptions which triggered and influenced the current research as he points out that African indigenous knowledge is still relevant and active in the lives of the local people today. If that is the case, the current study has a justification for interrogating how Zimbabwean Ndebeles are applying them in matters of peace and conflict management, an activity which is also fore-grounded by the postcolonial theory.

Traditional indigenous knowledge has a multi-faceted function among the African societies at both literal and mental levels. There has been a long history of controversy surrounding the issue of whether or not, civilisation was ushered into the lives of the Africans by the arrival of colonial system. In a number of cases, such thinking has been used a number of times as justification for introducing a brutal and oppressive system of colonialism to disturb and displace the peaceful habitants of the colonised world. In light of such controversies, it is prudent to view IKS as:

... attempts to put the record straight on several issues, among them those that relate to history, education, architecture, philosophy, language and science, stating that the formerly colonised have been either misunderstood or were deliberately ignored, because if they and their knowledge systems had been acknowledged by the colonisers,

there would have been no justification for colonialism. (Mapara, 2009:143).

It cannot be disputed that when a people's history is robbed of its authenticity and replaced by that of another, it is as good as though that people were non-existent at all. It is better to live without a history than to live with a wrong and distorted history because it is the past which helps us to chart a way forward and avoid certain pitfalls that might have disturbed us along the ways. History, correct history for that matter, helps us, in the words of Chinua Achebe (1988:16), "to see where the rain began to beat us" so that we can cover ourselves and find a way of going ahead.

The role of IKS in the correction of our history finds strength in the auspices of the postcolonial theory because they act as evidence of how rich and sophisticated Africans have always been even in matters to do with technological prowess. This, among a plethora of other issues is a development which the coloniser claims not to have been present in Africa before his arrival. While this is not only a fallacy and wishful thinking, "when Blacks in Zimbabwe refer to their past achievements, they argue that technological advancement was not something that was brought to Africa by colonialists. It is something that was already there" (Mapara, 2009:144).

On the same note, Garlake (1892:7) argues that "there was evidence for example that iron smelting was taking place on the continent and especially in what is today Zimbabwe, long before the British and other Europeans docked on the African shores". While the level of technological expertise was not as advanced as what it is today, one can argue that whatever was there at the time was enough to service the immediate daily needs of the local and even external groups of people. In essence, the people's indigenous knowledge was the one guiding them in this technological advancement so much that even the coloniser themselves are now baffled by the state of affairs as highlighted by Mapara (2009:143) when he says that:

As an extension of the postcolonial theory, indigenous knowledge systems have highlighted among the past glories and achievements of the formerly colonised, the architectural successes of the pre-colonial period. Scholars like Bhebe (2000:7-8) have pointed out that structures like the Great Zimbabwe Monuments, that have been declared a world

heritage site are a clear indicator of the architectural prowess of the pre-colonial Shona who built it.

The presence of civilisation on African soil before the advent of colonialism is also celebrated by Gray (2001:91) who speaks from the point of view of Afrocentricity which also falls within a set of postcolonial theories. He challenges all African scholars to expose the hypocritical tendencies of colonial masters by writing to show that civilisation was not a new phenomenon in Africa but in fact it originated here. He says that:

Afrocentric thinkers, practitioners are clear about the fact that African people are not only the parent people but the parent-civilisation of world civilisation. Afrocentric work must celebrate the indisputable truth that Africa is the mother of civilisation. All Afrocentric thinkers, practitioners and writers must know, bear witness to; and bear forth these truths. (Gray, 2001:91-3).

One can not dispute the fact that the postcolonial theory is therefore a very befitting concept on which to foreground the arguments to be raised in this research as it provides a favourable platform on which to anchor its analysis. Evidence has shown that indigenous knowledge has been a pillar of strength among African societies to the extent of giving them enough expertise for architectural and technological developments. It would therefore, be naive to imagine that if IKS was able to play such a meaningful role in some aspects of the lives of the people, it would not be applicable to issues or matters of peace and conflict management.

The postcolonial theory affords this research a chance to interrogate and prove how effective and useful IKS was in dealing with various types and levels of conflict in the traditional societies. Apart from that, this theory, just like *ubuntu* and Afrocentricity which are also brothers to it, provides the researcher with a chance to contribute to the process of decolonisation and re-orientation. This is the prerogative of all who decide to research and or write on the formerly colonised as Asante says in Chinweizu (1975:496-7) that:

... a strong Afrocentric view of the world and of ourselves ... [That] we must approach all problems and issues from the viewpoint of our own interests ... We must work to liberate Africa, to create a liberated African culture, to foster a new global order within which we can stay liberated.

The process of, and the need for, liberation as propagated by the postcolonial theory in the study of African indigenous knowledge systems cannot be over emphasised. It has been reiterated overtly in the works of most of the cited scholars in this section of the thesis thus making this theory appropriate and relevant in dealing with issues in the current research.

### **3.2.3 Conflict Theory**

It is in the best interest of this research that a theory of conflict be adopted for purposes of increasing the chances of engaging in an objective analysis of issues of conflict among Zimbabwean Ndebeles who exist in a cosmopolitan society where there are several internal and external forces at play. This research will also make use of the conflict theory which was propounded by Karl Marx. In founding this theory, he “focused on the causes and consequences of class conflict between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production and the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class and the poor)”.

A general definition or explanation of how conflict comes about among various societies of the world, be they rich or poor, developed or less developed, is highlighted in the New World Encyclopaedia (2016) which points out that:

In sociology, conflict theory states that society or an organisation functions so that each individual participant and its groups struggle to maximise their benefits which inevitably contributes to social change such as political change and revolutions. The theory is mostly applied to explain conflict between social classes, proletariat versus bourgeoisie; and in ideologies, such as capitalism versus socialism.

The Ndebele people of Zimbabwe are facing a number of challenges and struggles both from within and without so much that an approach guided by the arguments enshrined in the conflict theory would provide adequate room for a thorough analysis

of the various conflict situations that are found among them. It is indisputable that there are possible conflicts which emanate from inequitable distribution of resources in most African societies since that has been a historical challenge. In most cases, this inequitable distribution of resources has led to tribal and even ethnic conflicts such as the Rwandan genocide of 1994 (Mutisi, 2009) between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. In the majority of cases, those who have access to power and resources make every trick in the book to make sure that they continue to gain more yet on the other hand, those who are less privileged remain struggling to reach a better level. In the long-run, conflict erupts as these groups try to address the gap that exists between them.

Crossman (2016:1) elaborates on the conflict theory by highlighting that it is premised on the unfairness that exists in most societies of the world where the rich continue to abuse the poor by denying them opportunities in life. Most state resources are not equitably distributed to the extent that the poor remain poor while the rich continue to get richer. According to the conflict perspective, society is made up of individuals competing for limited resources such that “competition over scarce resources is at the heart of all social relationships. Competition, rather than consensus, is characteristic of human relationships”. It should be noted that when people spend time trying to address their social, political or economic differences, they waste a lot of opportunities for progress and development. In support of this assertion, Burton and Dukes (1979:72) state that:

Human need for survival, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creativity, are shared by all people, are irrepressible, and ... have components that are not easy to give up. No matter how much a political or social system tries to frustrate or suppress these needs, it will either fail or cause far more damage in the long run.

One would therefore be interested in finding out how much of such a state of affairs continues to affect or influence social and political activities among the Ndebeles given that they also have long histories of struggles for survival under different socio-political conditions.

Similar sentiments are echoed by Galtung (1973:24) who views conflict as a situation whereby two forces pull in the opposite direction and fail to find a point of compromise. In that case, one group feels that it is owed materially or physically by the other so much that it spends time making effort to gain access into the sphere of the other yet the other group also uses all its power to secure its perimeter:

We can now define conflict, building on the notions of contradiction and incompatibility developed in the general goal-notions explored here... A conflict, then is a contradiction where the acceptability region is located inside the incompatibility region. (Galtung, 1973:24).

As long as there are forces that are pulling apart, there is likely to be conflict in that society. According to Crossman (2016:2), the conflict theory views the uneven political and social distribution of wealth as the major contributor to conflicts in most societies as it forces those who are disadvantaged to spend time crafting ways of accessing the same. The theory has also been used to explain the origins of workers' unions which came about as a way of trying to deal with harsh working conditions imposed on the worker by the employer. On the other hand, trade unions were a ploy by the employers to protect themselves from attack by the worker. Crossman (2016:2) asserts that:

Marx theorized that this system, premised on the existence of a powerful minority class (the bourgeoisie) and an oppressed majority class (the proletariat), created class conflict because the interests of the two were at odds, and resources were unjustly distributed among them. Within this system an unequal social order was maintained through ideological coercion which created consensus-- and acceptance of the values, expectations, and conditions as determined by the bourgeoisie.

It cannot be over emphasised that the conflict theory is presumed to be applicable in the present study for the very reason that one of the objectives here is to establish the sources of conflict among Zimbabwean Ndebeles before one can investigate the use or effectiveness of their indigenous strategies which seek to address the same. It is also crucial to point out that, as stated in the first chapter of the thesis, Zimbabweans in general, and Ndebeles in particular, have been victims of political

violence at different stages of the political eras that Zimbabwe has passed through. It is apparent that the conflict theory becomes applicable as a foundation for establishing how conflict has impacted or handled by the same society.

### **3.2.4 Reconciliation Theory**

The subject of peace and conflict management would not be complete without discussing and incorporating the aspect of reconciliation. Any effort or goal of conflict management would be ordinarily incomplete if its main target was not reconciliation especially in a traditional community where people stay together and perform a lot of social functions together. It is imperative at this juncture to adopt the reconciliation theory as part of the conceptual frameworks guiding this research as that would increase its scope of viewing things and enable the researcher to test hypotheses.

Zimbabwean Ndebeles, just like any group of people, are believed to be capable of fighting or conflicting among themselves at different levels and for different reasons such that time and again, reconciliation becomes mandatory. There are a number of common proverbs and wise sayings that characterise the Ndebele language which reflect their views pertaining reconciliation. Examples such as the proverb which says “*okoniwe ngomlomo kulungiswa ngomlomo*” (that which has been wronged by the mouth is restored by the same mouth) implies that when people wrong each other, they need to dialogue and iron out their differences. It therefore, goes without saying that the aspect of reconciliation is a special issue among the Ndebele as it provides an avenue for conflict resolution and management.

Galtung (1996:6) once made an attempt at defining the term reconciliation using a mathematical equation which says “*reconciliation = closure + healing*”. His point of view was such that when a conflict occurs, there is always need to solve the differences and close the chapter so that life goes on. However, it should be noted that reconciliation is not as simple as that: it is more complicated than just bringing two conflicting parties to an understanding. In fact, Karl Marx argues that reconciliation “... was a conservative term, coined by Hegel as a way to dissolve social conflicts in the interest of the state” meaning that it worked as a political gimmick to suppress those that would be less powerful in the political hierarchy.

According to Andrieu (2012:23), Reconciliation in issues that have to do with political conflict almost seems to be one sided thereby benefiting one party at the expense of the other. As a result, pursuit of justice is heavily compromised in the process that is why “some scholars therefore, argue that one should talk of “conciliation” than “reconciliation”. Others say that reconciliation is an abandonment of Justice and an invitation to political apathy and resignation in front of justice.” It would be argued that politicians use reconciliation to force their subjects to close past experiences and move on with life without following proper channels of exercising justice to perpetrators of violence. At times reconciliation is done so as to make sure that the victims of such violence continue to support the status quo.

The Ndebele people always had a way to make sure that conflicting parties mend their fences and move forward because they understood that grudges and conflicts were detrimental to national progress and development of the society. It should be envisaged that try as they would, there are instances where the types of conflict did not warrant the normal type of reconciliation due to the amount of pain that would have been inflicted on the other party. It is in such cases that people would be separated by making the other party leave the village as was done by Okwonko in Achebe’s (1985) *Things Fall Apart*. When Okwonko had committed a heinous crime of wrongly killing another member of the society, his punishment was to live the village for more than twenty years as a way of making the offended family to come to terms with the act. In that case, reconciliation does not mean impunity.

Referring to such a scenario, Andrieu (2012) states that “reconciliation thus becomes a simple *modus Vivendi*, a departure from violence, and a way to coexist without the reconciling parties necessarily interacting or forgiving one another” so that there is progress in the society. In presenting another dimension to the subject of reconciliation, Fischer (2011:406) describes two types of approaches to it which she refers to as the top-down and bottom-up processes to proper reconciliation. Just like the above-mentioned scholars, she underscores the prevalence of a one-sided type of reconciliation. She views it as top-down process because those who are in power usually have the powers to manipulate the ones at the bottom to accept their own designed form of reconciliation regardless of whether it benefits the other. Be that as

it may, Fischer (2012:406) still views reconciliation as an unavoidable aspect of sustainable peace and conflict management as she says:

Many researchers and practitioners see reconciliation as a necessary requirement for lasting peace, assuming that once a top-down political settlement has been reached, a bottom-up process should take place, in which unresolved issues of the conflict will be handled in order to prevent questioning of the settlement and a return to violence. In this context, coming to terms with the past is considered a precondition for building peace and future relationships.

Having discussed the complexities that surround the issue of reconciliation, there is evidence from what is going on around the world especially in post-war situations that total reconciliation is synonymous with truth and the act of forgiveness. According to Brouneus (2003:12), it is always important to first deal with the past before attempting to move forward just because “acknowledging the past atrocities recognises the survivors’ suffering and can help reinstate a sense of dignity and scrutiny.” In most cases of reconciliation, it is common practice that, as has been stated earlier, the victims are forced to suffer in silence pertaining to what would have happened to them especially if it involves top politicians.

However, this does not lead to complete healing because people will be angry and “letting bygones be bygones is not an alternative to disclosing the past – the past is there and will not go away through silence” (Brouneus, 2003:12). Speaking of the importance of truth telling in the process of reconciliation, Hayner (1976:19) says that “reconciliation implies building or rebuilding relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday” and this is the basic mandate of Truth and Reconciliation commissions. There is evidence that those involved with taking testimony for the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996) have noted that:

In many instances the act of telling their stories to a sympathetic statutory body which acknowledges their pain has proved a cathartic one for witnesses. A common thread running through their testimony is an extraordinary capacity to forgive, if they can.

When one looks closely at the African traditional court system, they can recognise the ingenuity of the indigenous knowledge systems in making sure that truth is told. The traditional *idale/dare* court system is designed in such a manner that both the offender and victim are given a chance to speak their case out in the hearing of everyone. It is only after the whole audience has listened to both sides of the story that a judgement is reached. There is a general consensus that when one has been given a chance to speak, they should accept whatever verdict will be passed by the court. The bottom line that guides this arrangement is that truth is exposed during the process of narrating what would have caused the conflict.

It should also be noted that, the process does not end at exposing the one who is wrong but goes on the make ways for the conflicting parties to come together and reconcile once again. This can be done in several ways which include physical apologies or even payment of restitution. Such an approach is in line with what took place in Rwanda through the *Gacaca* court systems after the Genocide. (Mutisi, 2009). The CCJP (2001:3-4) explains the adverse effects of burying truth under the carpet as detrimental to any efforts towards peace and reconciliation where they note that:

One of the most painful aspects of the 1980s conflict for its victims is their perception that their plight is unacknowledged. Officially, the state continues to deny any serious culpability for events during those years, and refuses to allow open dialogue on the issue. In effect, there is largely unknown, except to those who experienced it at first hand. All Zimbabweans, both present and future, should be allowed access to this history.

The role of truth and justice in conflict management is also echoed by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace with particular reference to the *Gukurahundi* era of Matabeleland. They also underscore the close link between truth and forgiveness, appreciating that forgiveness should not be a force matter but a matter of choice. This choice is extended to human beings from the deity (God) who showed love and forgiveness by giving his Son Jesus Christ. When peace and reconciliation commissions are formed in various countries of the world, they should base their

mandate on uncovering the truth and correcting the past so that they attain total peace and reconciliation because burying the past without the truth is detrimental:

Forgiveness, in its truest and highest form, is a free act of love. But precisely because it is an act of love, it has its own intrinsic demands the first of which is respect for the truth... Forgiveness, far from precluding the search for truth, actually requires it. The evil which has been done must be acknowledged and as far as possible corrected. It is precisely this requirement which has led to the establishment in various parts of the world of appropriate procedures for asserting the truth regarding crimes between ethnic groups or nations as a first step towards reconciliation. (CCJP, 2001:3).

While the aspect of truth is essential in conflict management, it should be realised that at times the truth becomes subjective depending on how those with political power have room to manipulate it. At times the truth that is told is biased towards a particular goal of those who are privileged with the resources of telling it to those who are less privileged. In the process, historical experiences are disturbed at times leading the victims to reject any efforts which are directed towards reconciliation. "Truth commissions have been promoted as alternatives to prosecutions and as important mechanisms for countering cultures of denial" (Fischer, 2011:410) so that those who have been offended are afforded a chance to speak the truth from the way they know it thereby avoiding apathy. Lamenting the effects of subjective truth on matters of conflict management, Mendeloff (2004:356-7) states that:

Divided societies in particular need truth-seeking and truth-telling mechanisms. Given that nationalist myth-making, based on historical distortion, has fuelled both interstate and intrastate wars, efforts to prevent the instrumentalisation of facts and history are needed to prevent a return to violent conflict.

For a group of people like the Zimbabwean Ndebeles, it is within the parameters of this research to investigate the issue of truth in connection with what transpired politically in the early eighties. Apart from the political disturbances which they have faced, one might want to investigate what part is played by the aspect of truth telling in conflict situations among the Ndebeles and how they use it to complement their efforts to resolve such incidences. Such an approach would enable the research to

assess how much effort has been or needs to be done by the newly created National Peace and Reconciliation Commission for the good of the country as well as the affected people. The reconciliation theory therefore provides a clear framework of how the research can carry out the investigations in order to reach expected and unexpected conclusions.

However, much simplistic as the relationship between the two may appear from face value, they are not at all synonymous in practice. Brouneus (2003:17) points out two dimensions of the relationship of the two aspects arguing that forgiveness is a personal choice which should be extended to others just for the sake that God forgave us as sinners. As such we, “can extend forgiveness to others” yet on the other hand he says that “forgiveness is at the heart of reconciliation”. There are some scholars though who believe that there is, or there should be no relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation since the two have different impacts between the victim and the perpetrator. Brouneus (2003:19) points this out where he says:

Individual forgiveness is a personal process and decision, based on a person’s own sentiments regarding the past as well as issues such as morality, responsibility, punishment, and empathy. Individual victims and survivors cannot be expected or obligated, implicitly or explicitly, to personally forgive their perpetrator for the greater good of society. Doing so may even cause the attempt to create peace to backfire because it may simply feel inappropriate to forgive, or too difficult – increasing feelings of incapability, shame, and low self-esteem. Forgiveness from one individual to another is simply a personal understanding that is not to be meddled with by society.

The above-named scholar places special attention on the need to avoid premature attempts at making victims of conflict forgive those who would have wronged them as this may have its own dire consequences which include recurrence of the conflict or even violence. No one should force another individual to forgive as a way of reconciliation since the former is a personal and independent decision which needs to be done at the most appropriate time in order to attain sustainable peace. It would be interesting to apply the reconciliation theory to the Zimbabwean Ndebeles’ situation in order to investigate what place is occupied by the aspect forgiveness in

issues of reconciliation and conflict management especially their own indigenous approaches to it.

Reconciliation itself is a progressive principle to make sure that conflict does not stall any form of progress in the society and ensures that life returns to normal even after a season of conflict has been experienced. In that case, the reconciliation theory which in this research is applied alongside other theories in the current research is used for the sake of examining the various approaches and techniques that the Zimbabwean Ndebeles use in order to attain sustainable peace in their societies. The assumption being that, apart from all other strategies, Ndebele people also relied upon conciliatory programmes in dealing with conflict among their societies.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the various theoretical underpinnings that shape and direct the arguments raised in the study as a crucial stone on which the various arguments are anchored. The chapter observed that it is in the interest of the current research to adopt theoretical concepts that are capable of dealing with the peculiarities as well as complexities in the life and history of African people in general and Zimbabwean Ndebeles in particular. The research adopts the theory of *ubuntu/unhu* which provides a framework for studying issues of indigenous knowledge systems in the context of social, cultural, physical and political needs of the people. This enables the researcher to establish the strengths and weaknesses of their indigenous ways of dealing with conflict given various circumstances. The other relevant and applicable conceptual framework discussed and adopted for purposes of this research as outlined in this chapter is the postcolonial theory whose main thrust is to free the African from postcolonial mental and ideological bondage. At the same time, the research would be very difficult to undertake without the conflict theory which presents the various approaches to the subject of conflict and conflict management. This theory provides various definitions which espouse on the basic and common causes of conflict in societies. The fourth equally important conceptual framework which has been discussed in this chapter is the reconciliation theory. This theory is essential for the current research in the sense that it lays a foundation for various strategies that can be employed in peace and conflict management.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter has explored the theoretical underpinnings that inform this research as a way of giving it a standpoint from which to explain and evaluate various arguments raised concerning conflict and conflict management in the indigenous traditional Ndebele societies. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology that is followed in realizing the intended goals of the research. In that case, the chapter outlines the various methods, strategies and techniques that are utilized including the strengths and weaknesses of each with the sole purpose of explicating the subject under study in the best way possible. The chapter presents the research designs, methods, research instruments, sampling techniques, data collection and processing strategies among other issues.

### **4.2 Research Methods**

Research methods are a key component in the process of carrying out research as well as finding answers to the problem that the researcher would be investigating. It is apparent that when research is being carried out, all processes that are followed should respond directly to the question which the researcher seeks to address. As such, research methods are also determining factors on whether the process will be a success or not. According to Kothari and Garg (2014:6):

Research methods may be understood as all those methods/techniques that are used for conduction of research. Research methods or techniques, thus, refer to the methods the researchers use in performing research operations. In other words, all those methods which are used by the researcher during the course of studying his research problem are termed research methods.

In other words, it is mandatory for one to engage the most relevant and appropriate research methods when carrying out research as this has a bearing on the results thereof as well as determining the success or failure of the research process.

### **4.3 Research design**

There are several research designs that may be used in carrying out research but not all can be applied to all types of research. Designs work as a pillar for carrying out research as they respond directly to the questions that are being asked in that particular research. Gray (2004:128) views a research design as “the overarching plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data”. This implies that it is a grave mistake for a researcher to engage in carrying out research without first setting out clearly the plan of action for doing their research.

This is also pointed out by Makore-Rukuni (2001) who observes that “a research design is a plan or structure for an investigation. It is a set of plans and procedures that reduce error and simultaneously help the researcher obtain empirical evidence about isolated variables of interest”. It is the research design that controls the research processes and isolates those aspects that could distract the researcher by setting parameters of operation and allowing him/her to fully explore the various variables which can provide the answers to his/her hypotheses.

The research design also acts as a guideline when it comes to the research methods to be used in carrying out of the research as they guide in the selection of appropriate and effective approaches and research instruments. It is important that when one is carrying out research, they take necessary steps to make sure that they safeguard the validity and authenticity of the research findings. At the same time, research outcomes should also be protected because these are the major reasons why research is undertaken anyway. Appropriate research designs result in research findings that are authentic and valid and as such, research designs act as the watch-dog and security in that regard. Emphasising the importance of adopting the best research design, Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2014:130) say that:

A research design relates directly to the answering of a research question. Because research is a project that takes place over an extended period of time, it is unthinkable to embark on such an exercise without a clear plan or design, a sort of blue print.

In brief, the research designs outline how the research will be undertaken in order to streamline those aspects which might be related yet not relevant to the current research. It also evaluates the various methods that are going to be used in the collection and analysis of data that would have been gathered during the process of research.

#### **4. 4 Qualitative research design**

The current research falls within the field of indigenous knowledge systems and, like any social science researches, naturally falls within the qualitative research design. Chiromo (2006:8) defines qualitative research as a systematic, interactive and subjective approach used to describe life experiences and giving them a meaning. In essence, qualitative research pre-occupies itself with investigating social phenomena which ordinarily is not quantifiable such as the ideas, ideologies and feelings of people whether as a group or as individuals. Putting it more explicitly, Denzin and Lincoln (2011:4)

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establish patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for a change.

In other words, the qualitative research design provides a platform for the researcher to interact closely with participants whose voice needs to be heard in the final product. This design also is in sync with the goals of the current research since it allows the researcher to investigate cultural issues which, apart from being sometimes sensitive, are better observed in action or in their natural contexts in order to make authentic conclusions. Indigenous communicative strategies of conflict management need to be observed in context for instance at a traditional court known

as *idale* or *dare*. Since these (communicative strategies) are ideas and perceptions, it also follows that the findings would be presented not in form of figures or quantities because ideas and perceptions cannot be reduced to that level. They are a social subject or problem which cannot be quantifiable or measured in figures.

In the same vein, Jupp (2006:248) views qualitative research as “research that investigates aspects of social life which are not amenable to quantitative measurement.” A research of this nature would not worry itself by attempting to reduce its research findings to quantitative interpretation just because, while some of the issues may require presentation through figures, such information will be interpreted and presented in argumentative form. Such an approach is supported by Jupp (2006:248) who points out that qualitative research emphasizes depth and detail as well as interpretation which is usually on a small scale. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:4) also explain the role of qualitative methods in research such as the current one which focuses on social ideologies in the following manner:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

It is not disputable that qualitative research methods are the best for the current research. They enable the researcher to apply all the available strategies in unravelling the various communicative indigenous strategies in peace and conflict management among African communities particularly the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. The qualitative methods enable the researcher to employ requisite strategies for enquiry as well as a platform to include the voices of the participants by making descriptions, deductions and interpretations of the same.

It is apparent that the subject under research in this case deals with people's histories, ideologies, feelings, views and assertions which may not be reduced to quantities. In that case, these augers well the dictates of qualitative research especially as expressed by Raj (2005:18) who defines it as a "method in which while studying a social problem stress is laid upon quality rather than on quantity aspect ...". Communicative strategies entail a close analysis on aspects of language such as proverbs, taboos, and a lot more. Some of these are not written down and they are passed on through oral tradition which is a very important part of the African's life. Niane (1997: viii) acerbically declares:

Unfortunately, the West has taught us to scorn oral sources in matters of history, all that is not written in black and white being considered without foundation. Thus, among African intellectuals there are those who are sufficiently narrow-minded to regard "speaking documents" ...with disdain, and to believe that we know nothing to our past for want of written documents.

When confronted with such myopic perceptions by the West in studying African cultures and values, one would be at an advantage if they employ the qualitative research design because it provides a fertile ground for exploring all avenues in carrying out such research.

Since this research investigates indigenous communicative strategies of peace and conflict management among a group of a particular socio-political dispensation, it revolves around interpreting their various oral literatures which has been traditionally used in attaining peace among their societies by basically testing certain hypothesis. It is important to note that contemporary factors on socio-political events have been taken into account during the research. Approaching things this way could assist the researcher to make deductions pertaining to the success or failures of indigenous communicative strategies in addressing and managing conflict among local Ndebele communities. Such an approach, thus, makes the research more qualitative than quantitative as espoused by Jupp (2006:249) who stresses that:

... qualitative research is often based upon interpretivism, constructivism and inductivism. It is concerned with subjective meanings through which people interpret the world, the different

ways in which reality is constructed (through language, images and cultural artefacts) in particular contexts.

It cannot be overstated that the Ndebele communities under study here also have their peculiar worldview and ways of interpreting the various sociological, political, economic and religious environments that they find themselves in. The researcher is bound to make deductions from these interpretations in light of indigenous and communicative strategies for peace and conflict management especially in the post-independence era. Qualitative research provides the best platform for testing such hypothesis because as highlighted before, it enables the researcher to investigate and interpret ideologies, feelings and interpretations of the group under study. In his Doctoral thesis, Tembo (2013:70) quotes Szezerbinski and Wellington (2007) in order to try and explain the various characteristics of qualitative research and it would be to the advantage of the current research to also make reference to them. These serve as a way of demonstrating how effective qualitative research methods are to the current study:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| View of the world                       | Reality is subjective, socially constructed<br>Facts and values are inextricably linked.  |
| View of the researcher of the situation | Researcher is always involved; he/she is part   |
| Researcher's Status                     | Reflexivity is crucial<br>Democratic (involves informants and stakeholders). Equal status of researcher and all participants.                               |
| Mode of Science                         | Social practices are an autonomous discipline   |
| Aim                                     | Understanding social phenomena  |
| Perspective                             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Person (search for personal knowledge)  |
| Emphasis                                | Ideographic (focus on describing individual cases)  |
| Participant Selection                   | Opportunistic, purposive  |
| Nature of data                          | Non-numerical (narratives/images)   |
| Data Analysis                           | Inductive<br>Interpretive   |
| Writing                                 | Personal, Collaborative writing, account, story   |
| Specific Methods                        | Case Studies<br>Participant observation<br>Interviews; path and structured partially determined by participants<br>Ethnographic research<br>Action research |

(Szezerbinski and Wellington 2007, cited in Tembo, 2013:70).

The current research fits well under the above classification and description. This is because it also makes use of participants who are practicing and sharing in the communicative indigenous strategies that are the major thrust of the current research so much that they have first-hand information on the same. Indigenous knowledge systems are a product of culture and as such they are modelled in line with the people's worldview and interpretation of phenomena that surrounds them. In the process, it gives them a chance to explain things in the best way they understand. Such a state of affairs is in line with the observation by Jupp (2006:249) who states that "the methods used in qualitative research, often in combination, are those which are open-ended (to explore participants' interpretations) and which allow the collection of detailed information in a relatively close setting." This adds to the chances of arriving at the desired deductions and conclusions as targeted by the research.

Marshall and Rossman (2006:125) consider qualitative research as "the appropriate mode of inquiry for making inferences about a large group of people based on data drawn from a relatively small number of individuals in that group." Various techniques that local people use to solve disputes among their societies can be interrogated as a way of reading into their cultural beliefs and traditions which guide them in most of their life activities and experiences. Such a process can be done through the use of interviews, ethnography as well as participant observation, historical experiences that are narrated, oral literature such as proverbs and wise sayings and where possible, case studies. This is also pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln (2011:3) when they describe the advantages and characteristics of qualitative research when they say that qualitative research is:

... a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to self ...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

It is imperative to note that qualitative research methods enabled the researcher to gather information directly from the group of people under study through direct as well as indirect means. Such a scenario provides room for effective access to information especially about a cultural group of people such as investigated here who have their own way of interpreting phenomena basing on their history and life experiences. Corbin and Strauss (2008:12) also underscore the fluidity of qualitative research methods when they say that it “allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables.” This in itself explains that qualitative research methods are better placed in investigating issues where culture and traditions are involved such as the case at hand. These scholars go on to outline some of the advantages of qualitative research saying:

Though not specific to qualitative researchers, those who do “good” qualitative research tend to share the following characteristics:

- A humanistic bent
- Curiosity
- Creativity and imagination
- A sense of logic
- The ability to live with ambiguity
- The ability to work through problems in the field
- An acceptance of the self as a research instrument
- Trust in the self and the ability to see value in the work that is produced (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:13).

The characteristics of qualitative research as outlined above go a long way in contextualizing the current research whose major thrust is investigating how indigenous people have, and continue to manipulate their indigenous knowledge. It also investigates how they apply their understandings and values to deal with problematic episodes of conflict in their societies. The researcher is presented with the requisite skills of dealing with various participants in the study as well as their own space in the whole process thereby raising the chances of arriving at the expected outcomes. Having made so many allusions to the advantages of using qualitative research in this particular study, it is sufficient to mention that this research entailed the use of primary and secondary sources of data collection in order to reach expected conclusions.

#### 4.5 Primary Sources

As mentioned above, this research falls within the realm of social sciences and as such investigates a cultural group of people and how they apply their cultural practices in dealing with conflict situations that have, and continue to plague their communities from within or without. It was imperative for this research to utilize primary and secondary sources of information in order to fully exploit all possible avenues of gathering information relevant to the objectives of this research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:3) underscore the advantages of using primary sources of information in carrying out research as it provides a platform “on which to base and confirm their research and findings”. They state that “primary data is the data collected by the researcher themselves” such as that collected using the following methods:

- Interview
- Observation
- Action research
- Case studies
- Life histories
- Questionnaires
- Ethnographic research
- Longitudinal studies

It is apparent that the researcher undertook this research in the communities under study. In doing so, the researcher had a chance to administer research instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and even practical observations as participants engaged in some of the rituals which they perform in order to resolve various kinds of conflicts as suggested by the scholar mentioned above. According to Gravetter and Forzano (2009:46-7), “a primary source is a first-hand report of observations or research results written by the individual(s) who actually conducted the research and made the observations” during the process of doing the research. In elaborating their definition, the above-named scholars state that:

Typically, a primary source is a research report, published in a scientific journal or periodical, in which the authors describe their own research study, including why the research was done, how the study was conducted, what results were found, and how those results were interpreted (Gravetter and Forzano, 2009).

With as many techniques as the ones mentioned above, it was envisaged that this research would go a long way in covering all the corners of the communities under study so as to assess the effectiveness, or lack of it, of the indigenous communicative strategies of dealing with and managing conflict.

#### **4.5.1 Interviews**

This research made use of interviews as a data gathering technique among those “individuals who possess special knowledge or communication skills and who are willing to share that knowledge with the researcher”. This technique was applied particularly on indigenous knowledge because this is information which is embedded in the cultures and lifestyles of the local people. (Le Compte and Goertz in Fetterman,1984:34).

The process of conducting interviews as a data collection technique is viewed as an essential way of making sure that researchers do not isolate humans from the process of gathering information among them since they are the custodians of most of the knowledge that the researcher needs. In this case, interviews are a way of placing the targeted indigenous people at the centre of research as it gives the researcher a chance to tap into their histories, values, experiences and most importantly, strategies to deal with conflict in their societies. According to Kvale (1996:11):

The use of interviews in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans often through conversations... an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data.

In other words, interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher to share ideas with his research populations who in this particular case are the Zimbabwean Ndebeles as a way of sharing in their life experiences in connection with the topic of study. Such intercourse is highlighted by Collins, duPlooy, Grobbelaar, Puttergill, Terre-Blande, VanRensburg, and Watson (2000:176) who define an interview as a

data collection method using personal contact and interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee. Magwa and Magwa (2015:71) also underscore the value of the interview technique which they view as “a technique by which research participants get involved in the study and talk about their views”. Similar sentiments are echoed by Arksey and Knight (1999:32) who state that:

Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feeling and understandings.

Basing on the above scholarly ideologies pertaining interviews, one can safely mention that this research benefited from the use of interviews since they provided room for the researcher to interface with indigenous knowledge from people of different educational levels, religious inclinations and social background among the Ndebele. Quoting Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:75) in explaining the interconnectedness between the interview technique and its ability to contextualize the research in the lives of the interviewees, Magwa and Magwa (2015:71-2) posit that:

... the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life but it is part of life itself hence its human embeddedness is inescapable. An interview is therefore a powerful means of obtaining information and gaining insights into people’s behaviours, beliefs and attitudes.

The fact that interviews have a potential of creating dialogue between the interviewer and interviewees creates an opportunity for the researcher to effectively observe even non-verbal actions. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions and other actions as the interviewees express themselves on issues related to their indigenous knowledge in dealing with conflict situations thereby extending the chances of attaining the expected results.

The fact that interviews can create dialogue between the interviewer and interviewees does not in any way reduce the complicatedness of the same as indicated by Dyer (1995:56-8) where he states that “an interview is not an ordinary,

everyday conversation". Interviews, though they may be simple and straight forward, still retain some level of complicatedness and need to be treated with caution. It is important to note that interviews provide an opportunity for the interviewees to express themselves fully such that even in cases where they would not have understood, they can say so. In cases where they are ignorant, they are also allowed to express that ignorance. This is confirmed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:409) where they say that:

... in a contrast to an everyday conversation, it (interview) has a specific purpose, it is often question-based, with the questions being asked by the interviewer; the interviewer alone may profess ignorance (and not the interviewee), and the responses must be as explicit and often as detailed as possible. The interview is a construed and usually a specifically planned event rather than naturally occurring situation, and this renders it different from an everyday conversation; therefore, the researcher has an obligation to set up, and abide by, the different 'rules of the game' in an interview.

One cannot over-emphasise the appropriateness of interviews in gathering information for this type of research whose main source of information is a known group of people. This creates an opportunity for participating in their cultural ceremonies and even rituals so as to appreciate the way Ndebeles use their social, religious and physical environment to deal with conflict in their societies. This affords an opportunity for the researcher to interrogate such structures in order to taste their effectiveness especially in the modern and global world which seems to be struggling with conflicts of various shades and magnitude. This approach finds meaning in the views of Cannel and Kahn (1968) cited by Cohen et al., (2011:411) who stress that:

The research interview has been defined as 'a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on consent specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation'. It is an unusual method in that it involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals.

It would be naïve to blindly embrace the interview research instrument without considering its strengths and weaknesses. Such considerations can go a long way in authenticating even the outcomes of the research since strengths and weaknesses can show how reliable the collection and collected information is. For purposes of this particular research, the researcher made reference to the observations made by Gray (2004) and those from Collins, et al., (2000) that is summarised by Magwa and Magwa (2015:75) as follows:

### **Advantages**

- (i) Usually yields richest data, details, and new insights.
- (ii) Permits face to face contacts with respondents.
- (iii) Provide opportunity to explore topics in depth.
- (iv) Researcher can probe for more information hence there is greater flexibility.
- (v) Researcher can take into consideration the non-verbal responses which can be observed and recorded.
- (vi) High response rate, response is immediate.
- (vii) Allows interviewer to explain or help clarify questions, increasing likelihood of useful responses.
- (viii) Allows interviewer to establish rapport, personal relationships with respondents.
- (ix) Respondents do not have to be literate.

### **Disadvantages**

- (i) Bias is a central problem. Interviewer can hold a biased opinion toward interviewee because of respondent's demographics for example race, gender, age.
- (ii) Expensive and time consuming (personal interviews).
- (iii) Flexibility can result in inconsistency across interviews.
- (iv) Volume of information too large – may be difficult to transcribe and reduce data.

The fact that advantages seem to outweigh the disadvantages gave reasonable grounds for this researcher to engage in data collection through the use of interviews

in this research. The researcher felt that this would provide a platform for both the researcher and respondents to interact and examine the effectiveness of the indigenous structures of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. Communicative aspects of literature such as riddles, taboos, proverbs and songs can be examined in their natural contexts so much that, rather than relying on what has been documented previously, the present researcher would discover new insights and participate in the generation of new knowledge.

#### **4.5.2 Questionnaires**

Apart from interviews, this research made use of the questionnaire as a research instrument. The research intended to collect and gather data from various sections of the Zimbabwean society, particularly the Ndebele communities and as such it required a multi-pronged and most appropriate approach in terms of data collection. In light of that, the research made use of the research questionnaire tool especially in gathering information from literate members of the community such as teachers and all those who can read and write. Magwa and Magwa (2015:75) define questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”.

Raj (2005:167) underscores the advantages of using the questionnaire method which he says acts as a systematic way of collecting information from respondents through asking them similar questions and then drawing up conclusions from their responses. According to him, a questionnaire method is:

A method in social science research in which information is obtained with the help of questionnaire, which is prepared exclusively for the purpose. In other words, with the help of a set of questions all the data required is collected.

The same sentiments are raised by Borg and Gall (1996) in Chiota (2003) who postulates that questionnaires are “documents that ask questions to all individuals in a sample” so much that the responses become the basis by which the researcher tests hypothesis and draws conclusions. McMillan and Schumacher (1998) also

explain how questionnaires work in gathering data as they state that “questionnaires encompass a variety of instruments in which the subject responds to written questions to elicit reactions, beliefs and attitudes”. The fact that questionnaires have been historically used in gathering data that relates to cultures and beliefs in the past made them more befitting for use in the current research which investigates traditional beliefs and cultural norms of a group of people.

Questionnaires assisted the researcher in sourcing information from those who have either been victims of conflict for instance at family level or even at community level. At the same time, this would assist the researcher in drawing conclusions as regards the practical applications of indigenous communicative strategies in dealing with conflict. Victims of conflict are better placed to explain themselves through answering a set of questions concerning how they deal with the conflicts especially using culturally oriented solutions. This would also provide a good index to assess how effective indigenous strategies are in terms of dealing with conflict at personal or societal level. Questions asked to those in positions of authority such as traditional leaders would also go a long way in capturing statistics of how many people have benefitted from the application of indigenous and communicative strategies in dealing with conflict in their villages. In the process, the researcher would be in a position to make conclusions that are relevant to this study.

It must be stated in this case that questionnaires are far from being spontaneous or haphazard because, should they be that, then there would be high chances that even the information collected using them could be erratic and false. There is need for one to be systematic and precise in designing the questionnaire so that only relevant and correct information is sourced and gathered. In cases like the current research, where beliefs and feelings are being investigated, it was essential to design the questionnaires in a manner that does not render them ineffective thus gathering unnecessary information.

This is highlighted by Jupp (2005:252) who points out that a questionnaire should be “a set of carefully designed questions given in exactly the same form to a group of people in order to collect data about some topic (s) in which the researcher is interested”. In this case, these are the best ways the Ndebeles in Silobela have dealt

with cases of family feuds which at times could be threatening peace and unity of the family. Communicative strategies such as proverbs have traditionally been used to discourage domestic violence for instance “*induku kayakhi muzi*” (a knobkerrie does not solve domestic issues) is commonly cited to discourage domestic violence. Through a questionnaire, the researcher could be able to find out how many people are still applying these communicative techniques in dealing with conflict and also gather information pertaining to the perceptions of the locals concerning the effectiveness of these strategies.

Shumbayawonda (2015:61) also highlights the need to be precise and thorough when designing a questionnaire so as to avoid repetition as well as inconsistencies thereby increasing the chances of objectivity as well as standardizing the responses made by respondents. He “conceives a questionnaire as a form prepared and distributed to secure responses to certain questions ... a systematic compilation of questions that are submitted to a sampled population from which the information is desired”. This goes to emphasise that the authenticity of responses from respondents depends on the type of questions that the researcher has designed in their questionnaires. Questionnaires targeting traditional healers would precisely source information pertaining various religious or spiritual methods that are used by local people in dealing with certain kinds of conflict. Mawere (2005:15) speaks about the use of *ngozi* (avenging spirit) which he says is used as a way of settling a dispute especially where a death has occurred under unclear circumstances and the offended family can:

... seek revenge in the family of the murderer by causing atonable sorrow through illness, misfortune or a series of deaths until the perpetrator pays reparations to the offended family.

Ngozi is not only popular among the Chishona people but even the Ndebeles have used it and call it *uzimu*. The concept and principle are the same since it also targets punishing the family of a murderer in case where the murderer is unknown. Sibanda (1981) in his novel *Sesitshaye Kwazwela* gives an account of how *uzimu* operates and functions in solving cases of murder that are suspicious in the society. It is

prudent therefore, to gather information on such traditional conflict solving techniques by requesting traditional leaders to answer through questionnaires.

While questionnaires are an effective way of collecting information in research, it is not always the case that they are applicable in all instances. It was therefore, imperative for this research to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this research instrument so as to justify why it was useful in the current research. Haralambos and Holborn (1990:731) argue that questionnaires are an advantage in research because they allow researchers to “collect large quantities of data from considerable numbers of people over a relatively short period of time” thereby acting as a cost-cutting measure for most researches. By its nature, qualitative research involves dealing with ideas, value systems, perceptions and cultural practices; this practically compels the researcher to investigate a good number of people on a particular topic or issue so as to draw conclusions on its effectiveness and usefulness. For instance, the researcher intended to investigate how many families are still applying communicative strategies such as proverbs, taboos and riddles in solving conflict.

Questionnaires therefore, went a long way in finding out more on these cultural aspects without the researcher having to physically ask each and every family member. Apparently, questionnaires are also handy because they do not necessarily have to be carried physically by the researcher to the respondents. They can be emailed or sent by post, thus affording the researcher a chance to investigate various sections of the society under study without necessarily getting there physically. It might be prudent to take advantage of the most recent publication on advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires as presented by Magwa and Magwa (2015:76-7) who present them as follows:

### **Advantages**

- (i) The researcher incurs low costs of collecting data
- (ii) Analysis and processing of data is less expensive in terms of both time and material resources, less travel expenses.
- (iii) No likelihood of interviewer bias as the interviewee would be interpreting the questions on his/her own.
- (iv) Questionnaires can be handled by geographically distant correspondents.
- (v) Response rate is high (self-administered).

- (vi) Data collected is easy to process (can be analysed more scientifically and objectively).
- (vii) Reliability is high, since figures provided can be achieved by other researchers.
- (viii) Larger samples are used.

On the other hand, Magwa and Magwa (2015:76-7) mention a few disadvantages which come with the use of questionnaires as a data collection instrument but as can be observed, these are outweighed by the advantages and therefore, authenticating their use for purposes of this research. The disadvantages are as follows:

### **Disadvantages**

- (i) There is no follow up mechanism.
- (ii) Response rate is low.
- (iii) Not suitable for a low literacy society, the old, small children, visually impaired person.
- (iv) Lack of control over the nature of respondent's responses.

Notwithstanding their limitations, questionnaires were used in the current research due to their user-friendliness as well as their characteristic of being able to reach where the researcher may not be able to go physically. They are also tried and tested in terms of gathering social data which deals with belief systems and attitudes, part of which dominates the current research. In any case, according to Dooly (1990:109), "... because of their ease of use, questionnaires dominate social science measurement of the obtrusive, verbal type. They have been designed to measure demographic characteristics, aptitude, achievement... to name just a few" thus making their application in the current research authentic and unavoidable since they are an easier way to apply in carrying out qualitative data.

The questionnaires carried questions which sought to test the extent to which indigenous and communicative strategies of managing conflict are still being utilized in Silobela as well as find out which those strategies are. Information from the respondents was expected to assist the researcher to draw conclusions pertaining effectiveness of using indigenous systems in solving contemporary problems as this would go a long way in providing alternatives to national and even international conflicts.

### 4.5.3 Practical observation

This research involves a particular group of people whose behaviour is sometimes observed in action and not necessarily through words. Culture, and in particular, African culture, is by its very nature more understandable in action, thus the researcher has to see some of the strategies that are used in dealing with conflict management being practiced either in a ceremony or in a day-to-day life situation. Some of the cultural aspects being investigated such as the process of reconciling two or more family members in conflict through *ukukhumisana umlotha* (conciliatory rite) may not be fully comprehended unless the researcher observes as people literally and physically practice or perform them.

Apart from the conflicting parties, this ceremony involves a number of people from the community who act as witnesses to the reconciliation thus making both the conflict and reconciliation a community problem. Rituals are performed in order to make sure that conflicting parties once again come to talking terms. In such cases, traditional healers play a major role because they connect the living and the living-dead, who are the ancestors of the people. In this case, the researcher would greatly appreciate how the community deals with conflict by observing as the ceremony is conducted. Gravetter and Forzano (2009:353) state that, “in the observational research design, the researcher observes and systematically records the behaviour of individuals for the purpose of describing behaviour ... as a technique for measuring variables”. Magwa and Magwa (2015:83) also authenticate the observation method by quoting Chiromo (2006) who postulates that:

... observation is the most direct means of ascertaining what people think and do by watching them in action as they express themselves in various situations and activities. It consists of observing behaviour and interactions as they occur but seen from the eyes of the researcher. It is the systematic description of events, behaviours, artefacts in social setting chosen for the study.

Observation itself is a double-faced process although in both cases, the researcher must be present during the observation process and see things for him/herself so as to draw authentic conclusions. Gravetter and Forzano (2009:356) speak of two types of observation which are the naturalistic and participant observation methods and

they emphasise that in both instances, “a researcher observes behaviour in a natural setting as unobtrusively as possible”. The naturalistic observation method entails non-participation on the part of the researcher. This means that, the researcher is just a silent observer who neither contributes nor influences the activities of the group under observation except to see and record what would be happening within the particular group. There are certain advantages to this type of method as stated below:

Naturalistic observation is particularly useful in providing insight into real-world behaviour. The results of studies using naturalistic observation also have high degrees of external validity because the behaviour is examined in real-world settings as opposed to laboratories. Further, naturalistic observation is useful for examining behaviours that for practical or ethical reasons, cannot be manipulated by the researcher. (Gravetter and Forzano, 2009:353).

In finding out about what happens at a traditional court, naturalistic research techniques would be very much applicable as they would enable the researcher to sit and observe as various cases are being tried as well as sentences being passed in a way that will allow him to make own deductions and conclusions. The researcher does not in any way influence the process or ultimately, the outcomes of the court processes as things continue as naturally as possible as this is in sync with the dictates of the qualitative research design which will be guiding this research.

On the other hand, when one is doing participant observation, they literally take part in the activities of the group under study so as to generate discourse that will eventually culminate into information for the research. The current researcher, being a member of the Ndebele community that is under study, would easily interact with the informants as they undertake their day-to-day activities such as traditional gatherings where issues that affect the villages are concerned. By virtue of being a participant in the traditional activities such as *ilima* (traditional cooperatives), *umngcwabo* and *umthimba* (funerals and weddings) would provide a platform for the researcher to access first-hand information on how local conflicts are managed using indigenous ways. Participants or respondents are bound to discuss issues freely in a

naturalistic environment thereby raising the chances for drawing accurate conclusions.

Participant observation also has the advantages and possibility of raising chances of accessing even the hidden information since most African cultures are known to be secretive with some aspects of their culture since “the secrets of the homestead are not meant for the ears of the strangers” (Ngugi, 1982). In the same vein, speaking about the secrecy surrounding initiation ceremonies among the Tsonga people, Mapindani (2014:4) observes that:

Traditionally or communally owned secrets can be as important as trade secrets which in most countries are legally protected and invaders can be charged for violating the rules that govern their protection and disclosure.

Issues of communicative conflict management strategies are sensitive and would most probably be guarded secrets especially where communal peace is at stake because no community would like to destroy itself by revealing things that should remain hidden, even to researchers. It becomes invaluable, therefore, for a researcher to explore most appropriate methods of accessing such information and participant observation comes in handy. Gravetter and Forzano (2009:358) point out the advantages of participant observation when they say:

Participant observation allows researchers to observe behaviours that are not usually open to scientific observation – for example, occult activities – and to get information that may not be accessible to outside observation. Additionally, by having the same experiences as the participants in the study, the observer gains a unique perspective, obtaining insight into behaviour not obtainable by observing from afar. The results of participant – observation studies have high external validity because the behaviours are examined in real-world settings, not laboratories.

In this case, the researcher would have to visit and observe as traditional leaders deal with conflict of diverse nature among their communities so as to get the feelings of the people pertaining to those sessions, the trials carried out, the evidence presented, the convictions made as well as sentences passed. The advantage of

doing an observation method in carrying out qualitative research where cultural beliefs and practices are involved is highlighted by Magwa and Magwa (2015:84) when they observe that it allows the researcher to:

... explore important events and situations. By being present on the scene, issues that might otherwise be overlooked are examined more carefully. It is suitable when making observations of people, organizations in their natural settings. It allows the researcher to get close to the people being studied and to understand the world that they see.

One cannot over emphasise the fact that practical observation provides the best platform for a researcher to experience first-hand as cultural ceremonies are conducted. The same method also provides a platform for the researcher to be present possibly as conflict is being resolved using locally designed strategies which will provide good ground for making conclusions about their effectiveness.

#### **4.6 Secondary sources**

This research would be incomplete without reference to secondary sources of information. "Secondary source material draws upon existing primary source literature to analyse, interpret, or discuss a concept" (Mapindani, 2014:15). In this case, it means that the researcher would have to draw from various secondary sources as regards African indigenous knowledge systems as well as strategies that have been used to deal with conflict in indigenous societies. According to Perry (2011:13), secondary source material can be found in literature reviews, which "try to make sense of all of the research that has been done in a given area". These are essential in providing a platform for the researcher to fully explore and explain issues in relation to how other scholars have viewed them.

It is a foregone conclusion that there has been research prior to the current one on almost the same subject so much that such works, if consulted, would go a long way in buttressing the arguments raised in this research. In reference to secondary sources of information during research, Haralambos and Holborn (1990:720) state that, secondary sources of information "consist of data which already exists" which is so useful when later researchers are carrying out their research. In the same vein,

Tembo (2013:75) in his unpublished PhD thesis observes that “secondary sources consist of critical works which are related to the present inquiry. These include books, journals, thesis and newspapers” which publish stories about different types of conflicts as well as solutions in certain instances day-in-day out.

Crossen (1997:1) notes that there is a vast difference between primary and secondary data since the former is literally done by the current researcher yet the later makes use of data gathered by others through analysis and interpretation. His opinion subscribes to the fact that there may not be a completely brand-new subject of research, it may be a deviation from what has already been done before or even a theoretical difference between the current and previous researchers. This can be seen where he says:

Secondary data analysis can be literally defined as “second-hand” analysis. It is the analysis of data or information that was either gathered by someone else (e.g., researchers, institutions, other NGOs, etc.) or for some other purpose than the one currently being considered, or often a combination of the two (Crossen, 1997:1).

In other words, it would be prudent for this research to rely on previously collected data for purposes of validation of the arguments raised pertaining indigenous and communicative strategies of conflict management in the Ndebele communities of Zimbabwe. As has been demonstrated above, this approach would expose the current research to several angles and theories of dealing with conflict in indigenous societies with a view of drawing conclusions for the benefit of this research. In essence, this means that, such literature as novels by Ndebele writers, collections of proverbs and riddles, newspapers, journals and literature on conflict management and resolution would be examined in order to reach conclusions as raised in this research.

The value and importance of using secondary sources of information is summarized by Novak (1996:1) who argues that a proper consultation and reference to secondary sources is a cost-cutting technique which helps explicate the research questions and objective of the research as he says:

If secondary research and data analysis is undertaken with care and diligence, it can provide a cost-effective way of gaining a broad understanding of research questions. Secondary data are also helpful in designing subsequent primary research and, as well, can provide a baseline with which to compare your primary data collection results. Therefore, it is always wise to begin any research activity with a review of the secondary data.

In a nutshell, this research made use of secondary sources of data in order to tap from the advantages of doing so. In that case, whatever arguments are raised in the research should be able to find backing in that which has already been discussed by forerunners in the area of conflict management among African indigenous societies.

#### **4.7 Population and Sampling**

A research of this nature, and any research for that matter, especially that which falls under the social sciences, ought to have a targeted community or population. This is key or the immediate target of the research from which the researcher intends to carry out his/her investigations and draw conclusions in response to certain hypotheses. Borg and Gall (1989) cited in Shumbayawonda (2015:72) define a research population as “all members of a real or hypothetical set of people to which we wish to generalize the results of our research.” In the same vein, Gravetter and Forzano (2009:128) state that:

A population is the entire set of individuals of interest to a researcher. Although the entire population usually does not participate in a research study, the results from the study are generalized to the entire population. A sample is a set of individuals selected from a population and usually is intended to represent the population in a research study.

As has already been highlighted in the previous sections of this research, including the topic, this research focuses on a particular cultural group of people who are predominantly found in the Midlands province specifically in Silobela district. This community is found in the Western part of Kwekwe rural areas. According to information from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), Silobela constituency is composed of 13 political wards which are wards 4,5,15,17,18,19,20,21,25,27,28,29, and 33. It should be noted that five of the

possible thirteen wards are technically excluded from the current research for the simple reason that they are predominantly Chishona language speaking communities.

These are not of interest in this research since it is important to focus more on the target group whose behaviour, culture and values fall within the parameters of the objectives of the research. Such an approach is emphasized by Magwa and Magwa (2015:62) who underscore that a target population “is the group of individuals to which researchers have access to and can legitimately apply their conclusions”.

While there are common cultural traits here and there among most communities, especially since they are all African, Chishona speaking communities were excluded from this research except for comparative reference purposes. This is done because they may not contribute meaningfully to the discourse here since this research focuses on Ndebele speaking communities. This is supported by Tuckman (1994:71) who views a research population as “the group which the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusions” which in this case are about the utilization of indigenous strategies in dealing with conflict.

When researchers are carrying out their research, they endeavour to collect as much information about a larger group of people by making use of a small group of informants as representatives. Whatever conclusions are made from the few participants can be regarded as authentic to represent the whole group that is believed to share most, if not all, with the sampled group of participants. According to Magwa and Magwa (2015:62):

A sample is a proportion of the population, a slice of it, or a part of it. It is the selected element (people or objects) chosen for participation in a study or simply put, a subset of the population being studied. It is a research technique used to gather information about a population without having to measure the entire population.

As has already been highlighted, it would not be possible to carry out the research in all the eight wards of Silobela where Ndebeles are found as this is both physically and logistically challenging.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:35) have pointed out that when carrying out research, it is necessary that “the sample size through surveys should be more than 30 percent” of the targeted population. It is therefore, justifiable for this research to utilize three out of the eight Ndebele speaking wards in Silobela as this is already over thirty percent and the results thereof would be authentic. Gravetter and Forzano (2009:128) point also out that:

Each research study is a unique event that involves a specific group of participants. However, most research attempts to answer a general question about a large group of individuals as opposed to a specific question about a few, unique individuals. Therefore, researchers typically want to generalize or extend their results beyond the individuals who participate.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:202) have also argued that the population for research is key in reaching desired conclusions since the researcher streamlines the groups as he/she sees fit for the purposes of accessing different information concerning the subject of study. They say that “many qualitative researchers employ ... purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where ... the processes being studied are most likely to occur”. This justifies the current researcher’s efforts to sample various groups among the larger population so that he can administer various research instruments accordingly as long as he finds it relevant for a particular group. Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tenant and Rahim (2014:112) articulate some of the strengths of sampling design when they say:

The sampling strategy for a study is an integral component of the research design because it will affect the usefulness of the data collected, the type of analysis possible and the extent of opportunities to draw wider reference.

This means that the researcher has to sample out all the necessary clusters and groups accordingly so that relevant information is retrieved with whatever research instruments available for those groups as the researcher finds fit. Gravetter and Forzano (2009:130) underscore the role of the sampling technique in a study of this nature by pointing out that “a target population is the group defined by the

researcher's interests. Individuals in a target population typically share one characteristic" which in this case happens to be language, culture and experience, key components of interest in this research.

Dividing the targeted population into various research groups as well as further using sample techniques in accessing relevant information from them is supported by Bless, et al., (2014:161) who make reference to the use of the sampling method saying:

Without doubt, if one wants to collect accurate information about a group of persons or objects, the best strategy is to examine every single member or element of the group. But it is also possible to reach accurate conclusions by examining only a portion of the total group. This assessment of only a portion of the group is commonly used in both the social and natural sciences... admittedly, many factors might reduce the accuracy of the results based on a small section of the whole group, but these are not of immediate concern and will be dealt with later.

Apart from being logistically advantageous, the sampling method makes the job slightly easier for the researcher because it provides an opportunity to draw conclusions without going through the laborious activity of visiting every homestead in Silobela and asking questions to each and every member of the community. Shuttleworth (2008), Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000:212) point out that "sampling reduces investment in time and money. Sampling an entire population as part of research experiment is impossible due to time, population and sheer number of subjects."

Among the various sampling techniques that are available from which to choose, this research adopts probability sampling because it provides an opportunity for each member of the targeted population to be chosen to participate in the study. There are three ways to carry out probability sampling. The first one is the simple random sampling technique. Under this technique, each member is chosen independent of the other so much that those who make it into the sample are equally capable of contributing positively to the requirements of the research just like those who do not make it. In the case of the current research, this technique is unbiased and assumes

that as long as the selected members are Ndebele, they can respond meaningfully to the debate of conflict management through indigenous systems.

Secondly, there is the stratified sampling technique which “involves dividing the population into different groups or subgroups called strata so that each element of the population belongs to one stratum.” (Magwa and Magwa, 2015:65). Eventually, the random sampling technique is applied so as to come up with workable samples thus enabling the researcher to carry out his investigation using relevant research instruments depending on what type of information he requires from a particular group. For instance, when the samples have been established, the researcher may conduct interviews among the older members of the community in order to establish from their experiences, the various conflict management strategies as well as their effectiveness in situations where they have been applied.

Apart from the above-mentioned types of sampling, the researcher applies the purposive sampling technique as it further enhances the chances of coming up with relevant conclusions which respond directly to the objectives of the research. Purposive sampling is “one in which the researcher identifies certain respondents as being potentially able to provide significant data in the study” (Magwa and Magwa 2015:68). Since the researcher is a bona fide member of the community, he was bound to use his discretion in identifying sample groups according to the desired information as this would help in making sure that time and effort is not wasted on irrelevant information. Magwa and Magwa (2015:68) underscore the advantages of purposive sampling where they say:

The researcher handpicks the cases to be included in his sample on the basis of his judgment of their typicality. He builds a sample that satisfactory to his specific needs... The sample is clearly not representative of all the members of the society. The advantage is that the units or respondents are specifically qualified to assist in the research... purposive sampling enables the researcher to use own judgment to select cases that will be best in enabling the researcher to answer research questions and meet the objectives of the study.

Having discussed the various sampling techniques that would possibly be employed in furthering the causes of this research, it is prudent for the researcher to discuss how he organised various samples especially in reaction to the dictates of the purposive sampling that has been discussed above.

Elderly members of the community are central in issues of indigenous knowledge systems particularly peace and conflict management because they are products of the same. The common English adage which says that “wisdom comes with age” qualifies the elderly people among the Ndebele community as the custodians of the traditional values and especially knowledge on conflict as well as strategies that were and are still used in dealing with it.

Their experience is invaluable and useful as alluded to by Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2014:1) who say that, “elderly people in a village, who, because of their age, have had more opportunity to accumulate experience in a society where formal education is minimal, are often placed in this position.” Mohamed-Bhai (2013:47) also talks about the role of the elderly in terms of the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and writes in a document directed to the World Bank on the threats that IKS is facing because of globalization saying:

... indigenous knowledge is always passed by word of mouth from one generation to another. Many of the bearers of indigenous knowledge are from the older generation and now find it difficult to communicate their beliefs and practices to the scientifically educated younger generation; once the older generation passes away, the knowledge disappears with them.

Logistically, the researcher had targeted to interview at least thirty adults, both male and female who preferably might be over sixty years of age first, those above the age of thirty next and then those above the age of twenty so that they contribute to the debate of how things were done in the past in relation what is happening in the contemporary society. The elderly people have also experienced conflicts of different types and possibly have even facilitated in resolution of some of these,

notwithstanding also the fact that mediation duties are usually done by the elderly as a way of stamping authority in the process. Questionnaires were also distributed to the elderly members of the society targeting up to about fifty adults. These questionnaires would be soliciting information about the known communicative indigenous techniques of conflict management as well as rating their effectiveness in cases where they have been utilized.

Traditional leadership in African societies plays an important role as custodians of culture as they are empowered traditionally to stand between the ancestors and the people whom they represent. Bourdillon (1998:117) notes that:

Among the *Karanga* where the centralised cult of the high god, *Mwari*, is strong, the chief is responsible for sending delegations to the oracle of *Mwari* when consultation is deemed necessary, and for sending contributions to important festivals at the cult centre. The traditional chief is thus a religious as well as political ruler.

Apart from this cultural duty, traditional leaders have been mandated and empowered by the Zimbabwean government since the colonial era up to the present-day independent Zimbabwe. Despite the government initiative, Bourdillon (1998:112-113) laments that the former had more respect for the office of the chief than the latter as he points out that:

... in colonial times the authority of the chiefs was supported by government policy with all the forces behind it.... In independent Zimbabwe, the political power of the chiefs has been further diminished”.

All the same, the duty of chiefs and other supporting traditional leadership structures is to preside over various disputes among their subjects in their traditional courts. In the majority of cases, common cases are those that involve conflict among fellow residents, family members or even strangers and foreigners. It was in the interest of the research to investigate the effectiveness of whatever strategies traditional leaders use for peace and conflict management in their courts.

All the same, the duty of chiefs and other supporting traditional leadership structures is to preside over various disputes among their subjects in their traditional courts. In the majority of cases, common cases are those that involve conflict among fellow residents, family members or even strangers and foreigners. It would be of interest to investigate the effectiveness of whatever strategies traditional leaders use for peace and conflict management in their courts. In this case, as has been indicated before, the researcher applied mostly the practical observation method because it would provide a platform for him to observe as cases are being tried and sentences are passed.

It would not be difficult to draw conclusions from the processes since the researcher could even make follow-ups to both victims and offenders after the court session to find out what their feelings could be as regards the processes. Interviews were also conducted with the particular chiefs so that they could share their experiences gained from conducting the traditional business of solving conflict so that hypotheses are tested and conclusions reached. Since there are only three wards that were investigated, there are only two chiefs in charge of the area, so, wherever possible, the researcher would attend at least three different traditional court sessions conducted by these chiefs so as to also carry out a comparative analysis of the same.

Questionnaires and interviews were also administered among those who are in positions of leadership in the targeted wards such as headmen and village heads. It was envisaged that by virtue of their social positions, these undertake conflict management on various conflicts time and again. It was therefore, prudent for the researcher to investigate the strategies that they employ and furthermore determine the effectiveness of those techniques in dealing with conflict. These are the local prosecutors, magistrates and judges who pass sentences to various offenders using various traditional methods. Those offences, convictions and sentences were put to test in order to find out how they are satisfactory to the victims as well as how they assist both victim and offender to live harmoniously afterwards.

On average, each ward has thirty village heads that are of different literacy levels as well as age. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to find a

representative sample of at least three of them per ward. Such an approach is not unfounded since Magwa and Magwa (2015:68) also support it when they say that in using the purposive sampling technique, “the researcher believes that some subjects are fit for research compared to the other individuals and this is why they are purposively chosen.”

The younger generation was also the target of this research since they are believed to have possibly tapped from the elders but have also experienced the modern side of things so much that they can provide a comparative approach to the study. Bless et al., (2014:1) highlight the authenticity of this approach which they refer to as the “method of authority” which finds its strength in the fact that, culturally, what is said by elders is not questioned especially in the African culture. This is clarified further where they say:

For children, the first source of knowledge is most often their parents or caregivers. This method of authority is not only used by children but very commonly by each one of us when we rely on the knowledge and ‘wisdom’ of prominent and significant people who are recognised as having a better grasp of their environment than ordinary people. Thus, the statements of these ‘qualified’ people are rarely questioned or challenged. ..., the knowledge imparted by them is usually accepted as absolute and a certain amount of trust is placed in these authorities as sources of knowledge. (Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, 2014:1)

In this case, the researcher would want to find out how the younger generation embraces the various traditional strategies for conflict management and resolution in contemporary issues that affect them directly and indirectly. It is obvious that the young, just like the older generation, also encounter various forms of conflict where they are forced to participate actively or passively for instance in conflicts which involves adults who may be their relatives or parents. At times young people get entangled in conflict situations due to poor choices that they would have made such as falling pregnant before marriage or having been affected by peer pressure. Such situations sometimes get so volatile and threaten even war between two villages or families.

The researcher administered interviews and questionnaires to this group so as to solicit information on communicative indigenous strategies for conflict management where young people are involved. On average, the researcher would administer interviews with not less than five (5) people per ward and administer around twenty (20) questionnaires so as to reach to those who may not be accessed through interviews.

The Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, like most African societies, have a strong connection with the world of the living dead (ancestors) and they believe that those in the other world have got power to control what happens in the world of the living. This religious inclination has seen a number of activities conducted in consultation with the ancestral spirits whose approval is valued and cherished. Traditional healers and other responsible elders are the ones entrusted with the duty of performing traditional rituals, be they for good or for worse. It is common practice in the Ndebele communities for a spiritual diviner to be consulted in order to solve a complex socio-religious dispute. This is cemented by observations from Bourdillon (1998:140) in relation to the Shona traditional court systems when he says:

Divination by prophets or traditional diviners is often accepted as convincing evidence in cases of witchcraft or adultery, and very occasionally traditional ordeals may still be applied. It is true that these may be supported by more modern procedures, such as a blood test to determine the paternity of a child, and it is also true that resort to divination normally requires the prior consent of both parties.

Serious conflicts such as those that involve murder or witchcraft sometimes get so complicated and inexplicable even after the intervention of police or courts of law. It is a known fact that there are cases in African tradition which cannot be solved by the modern court systems such as *ngozi* or *uzimu* and any attempt to find a solution in those circles could be waste of time. Such cases are not in any way new to traditional African communities who have experienced and dealt with them since time immemorial. *Sukuzukuduma* in the novel *Ukuthunjwa KukaSukuzukuduma* by Khiyaza (1966) is captured by the enemies. When he gets the foreign lands, he haunts those people by turning into various creatures until they decide to take him back to his homeland.

Such weird and bizarre incidents are not new and neither are they unfamiliar in most African countries because they have experienced them since time immemorial. Cases of people manufacturing and striking enemies with lightning or where they use wild scary animals to communicate messages are very common in conflict management spheres in African traditions including the Ndebele. When such unusual things happen, traditional leaders are the ones who take the lead in interpreting or suggesting and administering a possible solution to them.

Mawere (2010:121) posits that “spirit mediums act as intermediaries between mortal beings and the living dead or ancestral spirits” so much that they are believed to be endowed with extraordinary powers which the ordinary individuals do not have since they have the ability to connect with the spiritual world. They have this advantage of seeing beyond the obvious and therefore, act as solution seekers and providers even in issues of complicated conflict. Their services are invaluable especially “in the processions of rainmaking ceremonies, witch-naming ceremonies and ceremonies for appeasing the dead” (Mawere, 2010:212).

In light of this, the research also targeted traditional healers so as to establish the role they play in the process of peace and conflict management. The researcher administered interviews among traditional healers as a way of soliciting information on how they conduct their business as far as communicative conflict management is concerned. Approximately, six traditional healers in the three wards under study were consulted through interviews and questionnaires with the hope that they would cooperate and participate in the research leading to the desired outcomes.

School Teachers are an influential force in any community. While their primary duty is to educate the learners, in most societies where they operate, there are so many occasions where they are compelled to act as if they are court judges or as arbitrators in different types of conflicts among their school children. It is common that some of the conflicts end up degenerating into serious ones even sucking in the parents and guardians of the learners. It was therefore reasonable for the researcher to involve teachers in this research so as to establish the various conflictual situations they encounter and deal with during the execution of their duties.

Some of the conflict that teachers encounter is culturally related, for instance, a situation where the teacher would have failed to observe the cultural norms of the area in which they operate due to the fact that they are strangers in that area. At times teachers may get into a conflict with a villager at a beer garden, such conflicts may not be solved by the Provincial Education officer; they at times end up at the chief's court. There are also several cases of teachers who are arraigned before the chief's court having impregnated either a school girl or a villager who is not necessarily a student. It would be interesting to find out how such cases are treated particularly because most of them are resolved locally without the knowledge of the Ministry authorities.

This researcher felt that carrying out a research on conflict management among teachers would add a literate dimension to the study as their ideas and observations are bound to be influenced by the very fact that they are more literate than most members of the targeted community. This approach sought to assess how relevant the culturally initiated communicative strategies for conflict management are to the contemporary society and thereby giving the study the requisite relevance. The researcher would in most cases administer questionnaires among an average of five teachers per school among the five schools in the targeted wards thus making the total number to twenty-five (25).

Questionnaires administered to teachers basically solicited information on the specific common conflicts that they encounter during the course of their professional duties which probably emanate from cultural backgrounds. They also sought to find out those conflicts that they solve among themselves and those that compel them to seek the assistance of community traditional leadership or even parents of their school pupils. In the process, the questionnaires also envisaged to establish various attitudes of respondents towards communicative indigenous strategies for conflict management as well as possible recommendations for dynamism if there is need for that. Questionnaires are considered the best method to undertake research among this group for the very reason that they are literate and they can respond well to the questions given to them. Apart from that, questionnaires would give them an opportunity to respond freely without anyone exerting pressure on them to respond like they would do in an interview.

#### **4.8 Scope of Study**

It is important to state the delimitations of the research in order for it to eliminate those aspects that may derail some of the objectives and unnecessarily include even the irrelevant information thereby making the research open-ended and broad. Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995) underscore the importance of delimiting the research so as to make it precise and focused in order to avoid losing focus and attempting to investigate all aspects of the research problem. This is also important since “your delimitation is where your problem ends. Without stating your boundaries/borders you can be accused of not having included a wide range of issues closely or distantly related to your research” (Chikoko and Mhloyi 1995).

This research focuses on investigating communicative and indigenous strategies for conflict management among the Ndebele people with particular attention paid to the Ndebeles of Silobela area. The research focuses on establishing various causes of common but mainly social conflicts prevalent in this area. Conflicts that border on the spiritual realm were also investigated in the context of the cultural intimacy between African people and spirituality. Religious conflicts that are specifically Christianity oriented were excluded from this research as they fall outside the objectives of this study.

The main focus of this research was to investigate various communicative and indigenous strategies that Ndebeles of Silobela use in addressing these conflicts mentioned above. In other words, this research was interested in investigating Ndebele culture and how it is applied in dealing with social, religious conflict in the contemporary society. Basically, these are the “boundaries” of this research. In a nutshell, this research focuses on communicative and indigenous strategies of conflict management among the Ndebele people with particular attention paid to Silobela district of Zimbabwe.

#### **4.9 Ethical considerations**

This research involves research in cultural matters which might need to be protected in the process so that they do not either erode or expose the cultures of the respondents to unnecessary criticism. The researcher made sure that sample participants are fully aware of the purpose of the research as well as assure them of the confidentiality and safety of their contributions. Ritchie and Lewis (2003:67) underscore the importance of voluntary consent as well as confidentiality of respondents in any research as key where they say:

As in any research study, sample members' informed consent to participate must be obtained. This means providing them with information about the purpose of the study, the funder, who the research team is, how the data will be used and what participation will require of them.

Most of the respondents in this research are culturally oriented people who have got an influence of culture in almost all their activities so much that some of the discussions could make them a bit uncomfortable to share with anyone whom they are not very sure of. The researcher made sure that he clearly explains the position of the research as well as the benefits it is likely to bring to the society at large once it is completed. Emphasis was also placed on making sure that the respondents freely participate in the research without any form of force. The need for freedom of participation in research is highlighted by Silverman (2010:155) who states that "research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion" especially where some deep secrets may be involved and even revealed. The same sentiments are echoed by Ritchie and Lewis (2003:68) who posit that:

In any study, it is important to give consideration to ways in which taking part may be harmful to sample members, and to take aversive action. This arises mostly in studies on sensitive topics which might uncover painful experiences and lead people to disclose information which they have rarely or never previously shared.

Some of the information that was likely to be discussed in this research could be considered to be socially sensitive, with a potential of tearing families or even villages apart in case it is represented or presented wrongly. There was a possibility

that some deep secrets could be revealed during the course of the study thereby creating a sensitive scenario which, if not handled very well, would have a potential of exploding and further straining relations. It is the duty of this researcher to make sure that all confidential information is kept under lock and key so that it is not accessed by wrong hands which will compromise the end result of the whole project as stipulated by the UNISA code of conduct. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2014:94) underscore the need to take necessary steps to make sure that potentially volatile consequences are avoided while carrying out research:

There are some studies where the topic means that the potential for adverse consequences can be predicted in advance and management strategies implemented before, during and after the study. In setting up such studies the researcher would want to take particular care about the selection of people to be approached and the clarity of the information they give about what is to be covered, the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality and anonymity of information given.

Issues that have to do with conflict qualify under the potentially sensitive studies and therefore, the researcher would take all necessary steps to make sure that, while researching on conflict, he does not stir more conflict in the process.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt extensively with the issue of research methods as a way of demonstrating how the research was carried out. It has highlighted the research design that was to be followed as well as its advantages in making sure that all relevant information needed for the research would be sourced. The chapter has also outlined the various research instruments that were utilised in gathering data such as interviews, questionnaires and practical observation. Advantages and possible disadvantages of these instruments have also been explored as a way of making sure that necessary steps are taken in making sure that error is avoided as this would have an effect on the outcomes and conclusions. The chapter has also outlined the various primary and secondary sources of information which were relevant for the current research in order to make sure that the conclusions reached are authentic. The scope of the study together with the ethical considerations that

are necessary for the fulfilment of the goals and objectives of the current research have also been discussed.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **DATA PRESENTATION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt extensively with the research methodology that was adopted for the purpose of gathering data relevant for this research. The current chapter presents and interprets the data gathered in relation to indigenous communicative strategies that are used by Ndebele people of Silobela District. O’Leary (2010: 171) states that “there is nothing like having an inside track or having an expert at your fingertips. In fact, key informants can be instrumental in giving you access to a world you might have otherwise tried to understand while being locked on the outside”. In other words, information provided by respondents is essential in testing various hypotheses as regards the use of indigenous knowledge among Ndebeles of Zimbabwe.

As stated in the previous chapter, data was collected mainly by use of questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions as well as practical observation of some of the activities taking place on the ground such as traditional court proceedings where conflict is resolved in a public arena. For the purposes of clarity on data presentation, this research adopts symbol (N) for indicating the total number of respondents that participated in the study. The symbol (%) refers to the various percentages as reflected in the tables and graphs.

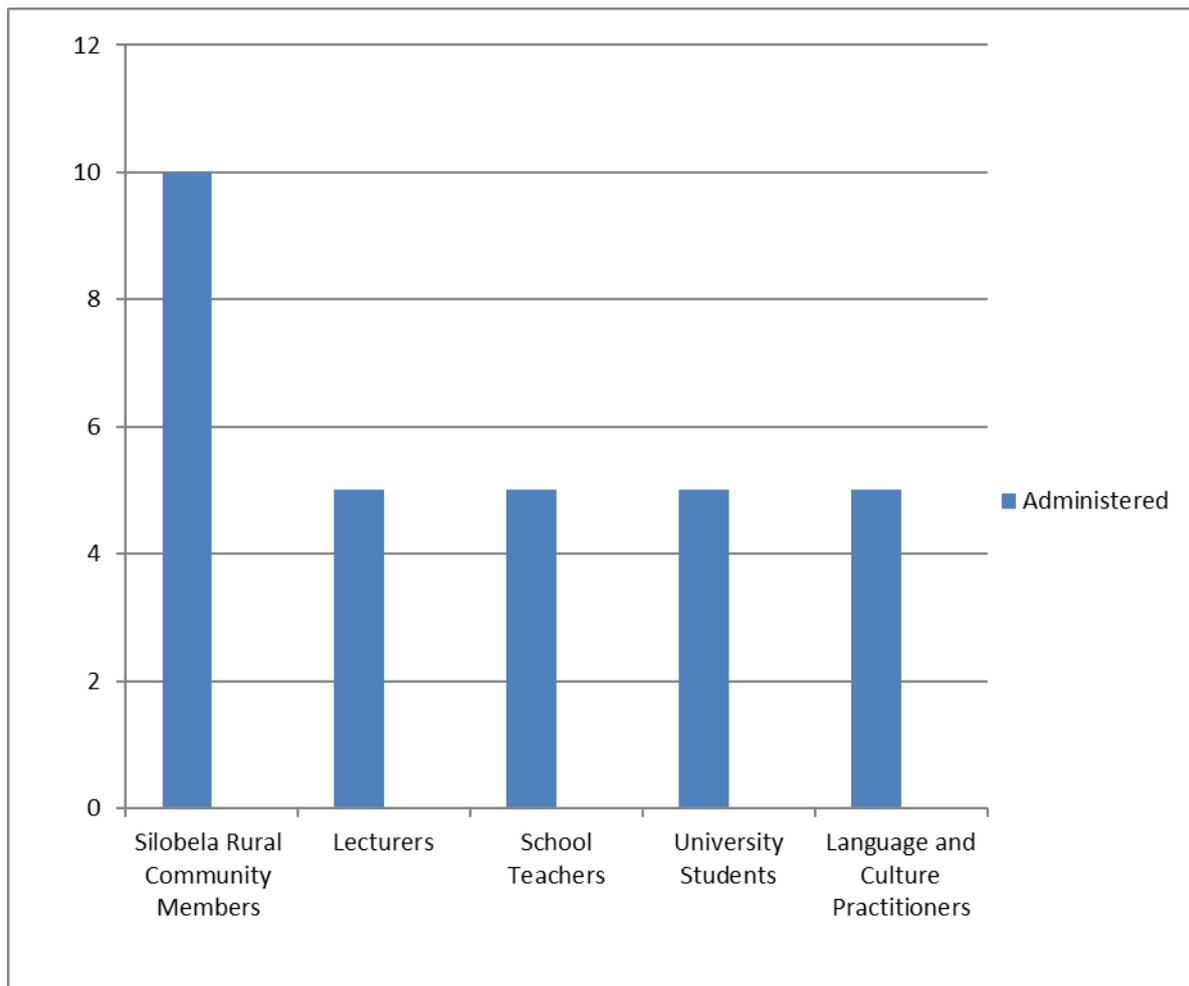
### **5.2 Presentation of Data from Questionnaires**

This section presents the findings from the questionnaire administered among a wide spectrum of the Ndebele population spanning from students, teachers, lecturers, language practitioners and other literate members of the community.

#### **5.2.1 Questionnaire Response Rate**

Below is a diagram demonstrating the questionnaire administration and response rate.

Figure 5.1 Showing Response Rate



Source: Primary Data

All in all, (N) 30 questionnaires were administered and (N) 25 respondents responded giving 83.33% response rate. Response rate is a measurement of the amount of people who respond to a certain call-to-action (Fincham, 2008). As indicated on the diagram above, (N) 10 questionnaires were administered among members of the community in Silobela who were deemed to be capable to make meaningful responses in the questionnaire system. Of the number administered, only (N) 6 were returned with the other (N) 4 either not being returned or returned with incomprehensible information that could not assist in the research. Such therefore, had to be discarded as useless thus it resulted in a 60% response rate. (N) 5 questionnaires were administered among University and Teachers' college lecturers where Ndebele is being taught as a subject and of these, a total of (N) 4 were returned giving an 80% response rate.

(N) 5 other questionnaires were administered among teachers of IsiNdebele from local secondary and primary schools who have had a reasonable experience in teaching IsiNdebele at ordinary and Advanced level. All the (N) 5 respondents returned the questionnaires giving a positive 100% response rate. (N) 5 other questionnaires were administered among University students of IsiNdebele at various levels of their academic careers. These all responded giving another 100% response rate. The researcher also administered (N) 5 questionnaires among Ndebele Language practitioners and activists who are responsible for the preservation of Ndebele traditional culture and religion. Response rate in this category was 100%.

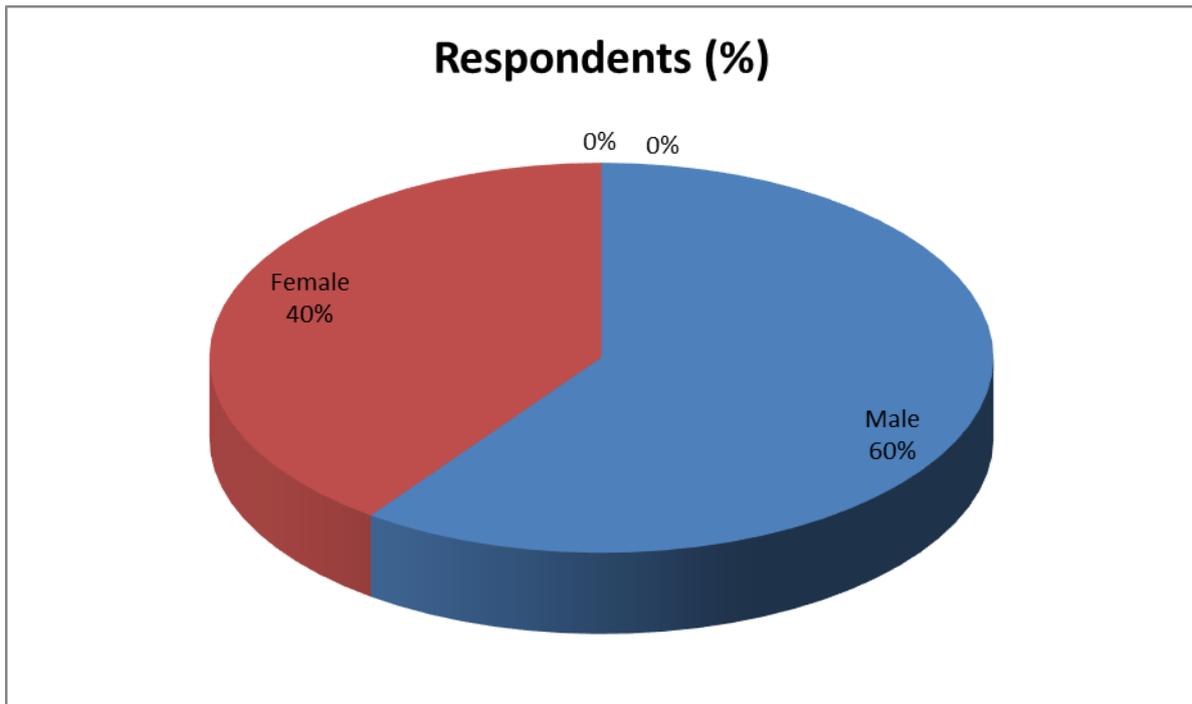
### **5.3 Distribution by Demographic Information**

The research questionnaire considered bio-data information from respondents as a way of distinguishing if there are variances in terms of opinions in relation to demographic trends such as gender, age, level of education, occupation and otherwise as far as peace and conflict management is concerned. The researcher realized that there are implications associated with demographic differences such as those mentioned above in relation to explanation and interpretation of the role of culture in dealing with conflict in the Ndebele society. Aspects such as age have an effect in the sense that the older respondents seemed to present responses that are informed by experience and wisdom while the younger depended on either hearsay or textbook knowledge. As a result, there were more incomplete responses to some of the questions on the questionnaire depending on the age of the respondent.

#### **5.3.1 Distribution by Gender**

Figure 5.2 shows the gender of the respondents that are males and females who managed to return or respond to the questionnaires effectively.

**Figure 5.2 Showing Distributions by Gender**



Source: Primary Data

The diagram above show that the effective respondents who managed to fill and return the questionnaires were (N) 15 males which translates to 60% of the total number of respondents. (N) 10 of the respondents were found to be females who constituted 40% of the total number of respondents. The researcher concluded that most of the respondents who were free to discuss issues that are related to conflict were male rather than female. This is because Ndebele tradition does not encourage women to discuss their private issues with strangers especially such issues that have to do with the family to which they are married. (Ndlovu et al., 1995:35).

### **5.3.2 Distribution by Age**

Table 5.1 below presented the age groups of the respondents who managed to respond and to return the questionnaires.

**Table 5.1 Showing Distribution by Age**

| <b>Age</b>   | <b>Issued</b> | <b>Responded</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 20-40        | 6             | 5                | 83.33             |
| 41-60        | 9             | 9                | 100.00            |
| 61 and Above | 15            | 11               | 73.33             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>30</b>     | <b>25</b>        | <b>83.33</b>      |

Source: Primary Data

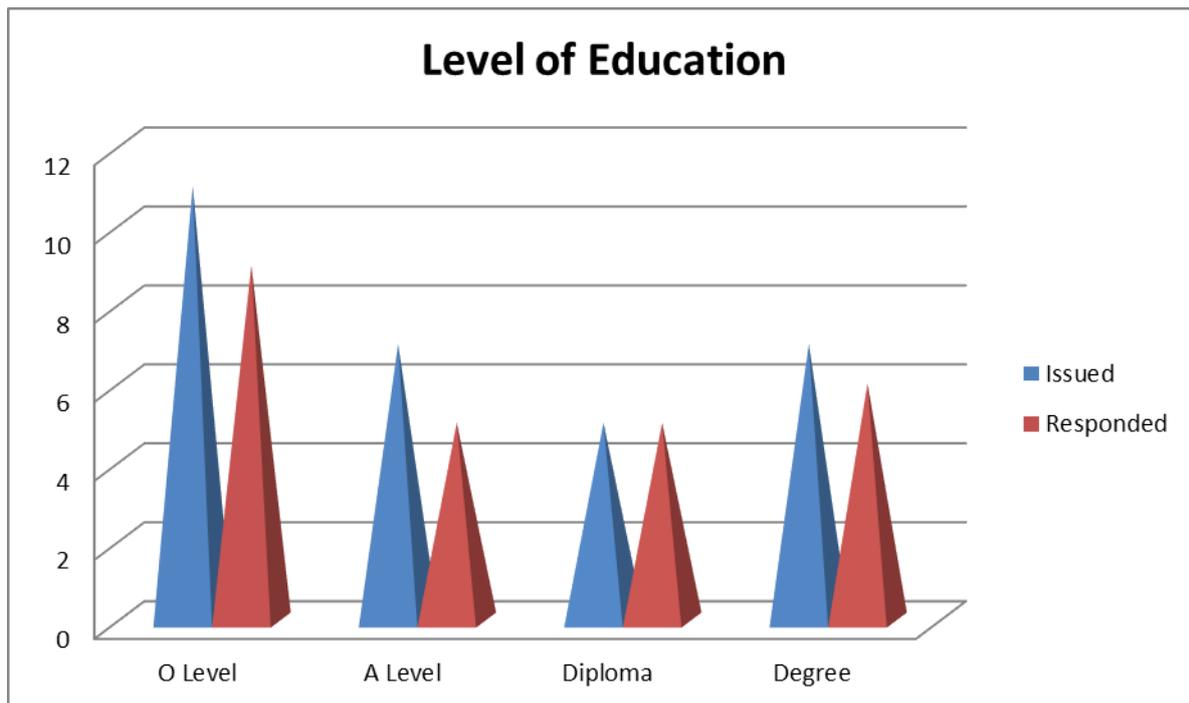
The table above show that (N) 6 questionnaires were distributed among the age group between 20 and 40 years and (N) 5 of them responded. This is the age group which comprises University students and lecturers of IsiNdebele. Contributions from this category of respondents are invaluable because they have carried out research directly and indirectly as far as IsiNdebele language and culture are concerned.

The table also shows that the (N) 9 questionnaires distributed among people who are in this age group were all positively responded to. Questionnaires distributed in the age group of those above the age of 60 were (N) 15 in number but the ones that were responded to were (N) 11. This is attributed to the fact that some of the respondents who had been deemed literate enough to meaningfully contribute through the questionnaire system could not do so. However, the responses from respondents in this category were very essential because most of them have a direct experience with issues of peace and conflict management whether directly or indirectly. Some of these are traditional leaders who have had years of experience in resolving and managing conflicts of different kinds in the society.

### **5.3.3 Distribution by Level of Education**

For the research study to produce unbiased and high-quality results, it was important for the researcher to distribute questionnaires among respondents of various academic levels of education. The graph below demonstrates the distribution of questionnaire in relation to that.

**Figure 5.3 Showing Distribution by Level of Education**



Source: Primary Data

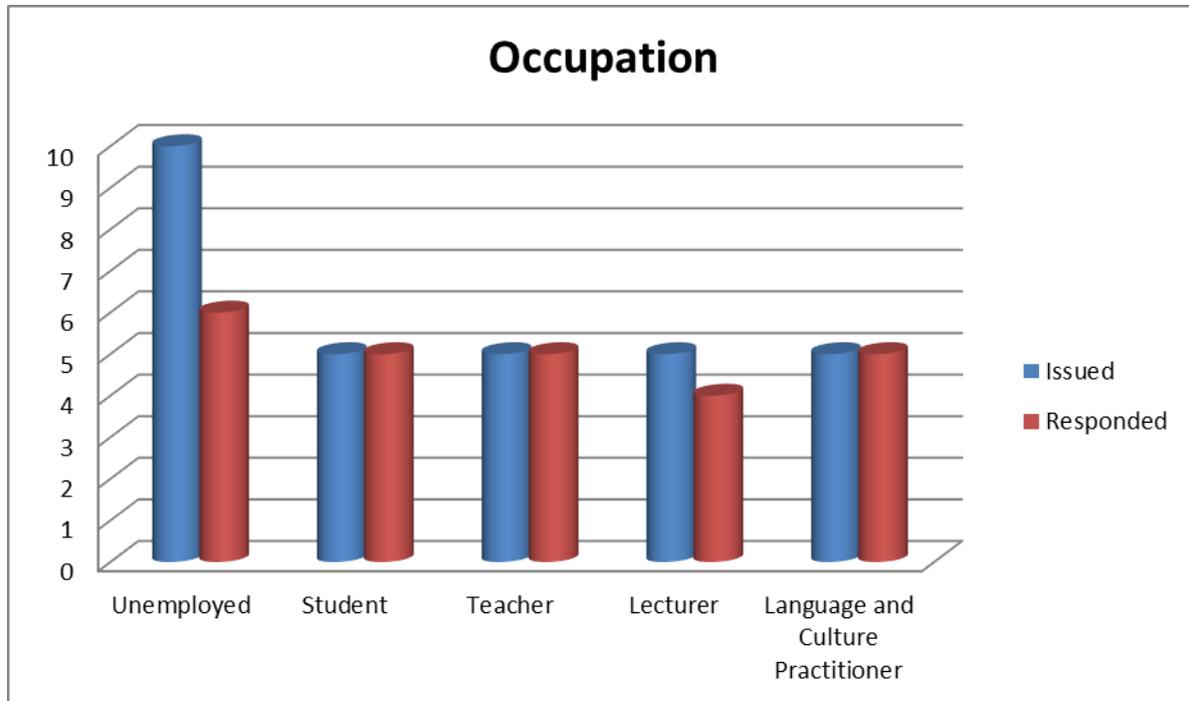
The graph above indicates the percentages of distribution of questionnaires by different levels of academic education. As can be observed from the diagrams, (N) 11 questionnaires were distributed among respondents who have basic Ordinary qualifications and (N) 9 of them responded. (N) 7 questionnaires were distributed among respondents who hold Advanced Level qualifications and (N) 5 of them responded positively. The (N) 5 which were distributed among Diploma holders were all positively responded to while (N) 6 of the (N) 7 which were distributed to those who hold University degrees are the ones which were returned giving a total of 83.33%.

The different qualifications have a bearing on the results that are expected at the end of the research simply because education enables one to conceptualise issues in a certain manner. At times, education is an advantage when it comes to traditional issues yet on the other hand, it can also be a disadvantage. All these aspects are essential for a research of this nature and will go a long way in authenticating or answering some of the research questions that were set at the preceding chapters.

### 5.3.4 Distribution by Occupation

The following graph show distribution of questionnaires in relation to occupation.

Figure 5.4 Showing Distribution by Occupation



Source: Primary Data

The graph above is a reflection of the response rate by occupation. (N) 10 questionnaires were distributed and (R) 6 were responded to positively by those who are not employed. These are some of the traditional leaders and traditional healers as well as community members who reside in the area under study. Tertiary students and teachers of schools were given (N) 5 questionnaires each and in both cases responses were positive. The same goes for those who are Language and culture practitioners. (N) 5 which were distributed among University lecturers received an 80% response rate.

### 5.4 Responses to Questions on the Questionnaire

This section presents data obtained from the questionnaire obtained. It is crucial to examine various responses from respondents in relation to the different questions that were asked in order to draw conclusions from them as set out in the objectives

of the research. It is important to mention that the questionnaire that was administered was divided into five different sections with Section A targeting demographic data/information for the various respondents. Section B of the questionnaire targeted information pertaining conflict and conflict management while Section C focused on issues to do with reconciliation as a strategy for conflict management and resolution. Section D focused on the role played by indigenous religion in dealing with conflict among Ndebele people with the last Section C focusing on the concept of ubuntu in peace and conflict management.

#### 5.4.1 Table showing response rate to various questions on the questionnaire

|  | Broad view                                      | Responses rate per question  |
|--|---|--|
|  | 1. Conflict and conflict management strategies. | 1. Availability of indigenous conflict management strategies among Ndebeles. 100%.<br>2. Usefulness of indigenous conflict management strategies in modern societies. <b>Agreed</b> 90%, 4% <b>Not sure</b> , 6% <b>Not agreed</b> .<br>3. Ndebele proverbs discouraging conflict:<br>a) <i>Impi yomndeni kayingenwa</i> 80% (A clan conflict does not require outside interference)<br>(a) <i>Akukho mfula unghlokomi</i> (There is no river that does not overflow once in a while) 85%.<br>(b) <i>Koniwa ngomlomo kulungiswe ngomlomo</i> 78% (What is wronged by word of mouth needs to be solved by the word of mouth).<br>4. Ndebele proverbs meant to discourage conflict among married couples:<br>(a) <i>Induku kayakhi muzi</i> (A knob Kerrie does not build a house) 100%.<br>(b) <i>Akukho muzi ongathunqi ntuthu</i> 53% (There is no homestead that does not exude smoke).<br>(c) <i>Indoda libhetshu lomziki</i> (A husband is like the skin of a bushbuck) 40%. |
|  | 2. Reconciliation                               | 1. On prioritisation of reconciliation 100%<br>2. Wise sayings on reconciliation:<br>(a) <i>Izolo liyembelwa</i> (Yesterday can be buried)   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  |   | <p>80%</p> <p>(b) <i>Kayilale ngenxeba</i> (let the cow lie on the wounded side) 55%</p> <p>(c) <i>Ginya ilitshe</i> (swallow a stone) 60%</p> <p>(d) <i>Itshaye indiva</i> (pretend not to have heard) 60%</p> <p>(e) <i>Akugobo lingeqondiswe</i> (there is no wrong that cannot be righted) 30%</p> <p>3. On reconciliation rites:</p> <p>(a) <i>Ukukhumisana umlotha</i> 100%</p> <p>(b) <i>Ukumuka</i> 70%</p> <p>(c) <i>Ukugezelana izilonda</i> 30%</p>   |
|  | <p>4. Indigenous religion in conflict management.</p> | <p>1. Signs and symptoms of angry ancestral spirits:</p> <p>(a) Drought 80%.</p> <p>(b) Unusual illnesses and disease 90%.</p> <p>(C) Barrenness and failure to marry 45%</p> <p>(d) Calamity 50%.</p> <p>2. Traditional method of restoring a broken relationship between ancestors and the living:</p> <p>(a) <i>Umbuyiso</i> (spirit returning ceremony)</p> <p>(b) <i>Umthethelo</i> (ancestral appeasement rite)</p> <p>3. Proverbs symbolizing the need for harmony between the two worlds:</p> <p>(a) <i>Idlozi liyaphakelwa</i> (an ancestor is supposed to be fed) 70%.</p> <p>(b) <i>Akudlozi ladela kwabo laya emzini</i> (No ancestor deserts his own and goes to strangers) 30%.</p> <p>4. Steps taken against members practicing witchcraft:</p> <p>(a) <i>Ukubethelwa isikhonkwane</i> (piercing a peg either on their head or annul cavity) 60%.</p> <p>(b) <i>Ukuthuthiswa ngenkani</i> (forced relocation) 90%</p> <p>(c) Made to pay reparations 40%.</p> <p>5. On the role of spirit mediums in conflict</p> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  |   | <p>management:</p> <p>(a) They detect and expose witches 90%.</p> <p>(b) They administer medication to those that would have been bewitched 70%.</p> <p>(c) They prevent further acts of witchcraft 45%.</p>   |
|  | <p>5. <i>Ubuntu</i> in Peace and Conflict Management.</p> | <p>1. Applicability of ubuntu as a concept of conflict management I modern society: (a) Agree 95% (b) Not sure 5%.</p> <p>2. Ndebele proverbs that promote ubuntu philosophy: (a) <i>Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu</i> (A person is a person because of other people 100%.</p> <p>(b) <i>Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu</i> (a king is a king because of the people 80%.</p> <p>(c) <i>Ihlonipha lalapha ingayi kwendela khona</i> (a girl has to respect even those who will not be her future in-laws) 70%.</p> |

### 5.5 Interpretation of questionnaire responses

The table shows that 100% of the respondents acknowledged that Zimbabwean Ndebeles have their indigenous methods of managing conflict while 90% of them also acknowledged that the same strategies are applicable if they are to be used in resolving some of the conflicts that are bedeviling the world today. The argument raised emanates from the understanding that culture is the soul of any nation so much that anything that a nation produces through its cultural structures has a potential to be applied anywhere as long as there are adaptations. Respondents were of the opinion that anything that is embedded in culture is well understood by the owners of that culture and as such they can use the same structures to make sure that they benefit from their cultural products. This is in line with the views

expressed by Zaartman (2000:7) who posits that “understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in, and must respect and draw from, the cultural knowledge of a people”.

It is a positive development for respondents to offer such positive responses pertaining Ndebele culture in particular and African culture in general because this is a step in the right direction in the process of self-re-definition by Africans. It is even a more positive development for respondents at this juncture to view their own local strategy as possessing the potential of contributing to world peace. This is because such a view indicates that Africans are once again, as has always been the case in traditional societies, beginning to appreciate that they are not second-class citizens but owners of their own destiny. This is what most African scholars have been battling to achieve over the years as indicated by Mapara (2010:143) when he says:

IKS are more than just a displaying of the knowledge and belief systems of the formerly colonised. They are one of the forms of responses to the myth of Western superiority. They are a way in which the formerly colonised are reclaiming their dignity and humanity that they had been robbed of by colonialism. They are also an effort to show the world that they are not just the other or the significant other, but equals to the former colonisers.

On the section of the questionnaire which focused on the use of oral literature in issues of conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles 80% of the respondents mentioned the proverb “*impi yomndeni kayingenwa*” (A clan conflict does not require outside interference). 53% mentioned the one which says “*akukho muzi ongathunqi ntuthu*” (There is no homestead which does not exude smoke) with the other 73% mentioning the one which says “*koniwa ngomlomo kulungiswe ngomlomo*” (What is wronged by word of mouth needs to be solved by the word of mouth).

The responses indicated that once more, local people appreciate that, as P B'tek once said, there is “no art for art’s sake” in Africa. It is evident that local people have developed a sense of belonging and as such they accept that their oral literature is a tool by which they can shape their societies and solve whatever problems may come their way. It was also visible from the various responses that some of the

respondents appreciate oral literature as a deliberate yet intelligent creation by their society so as to address peculiar problems encountered by the same. Respondents were able to identify various proverbs which are directed at making sure that community members live harmoniously. Mawere (2010:210) supports this development where he says:

More importantly, despite the cultural onslaught on African thought, particularly their knowledge and belief systems through the spread of the western scientific worldview and the Christian religious tradition, the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans never completely lost touch with their traditional thought and values. The traditional belief system has continued to inform much of the life and activities of the people of these two societies.

Having acknowledged that their oral literature, particularly proverbs, have a positive effect in shaping the behaviour of the people in their communities, respondents went on to identify some of the proverbs which are meant to encourage members to live in peace and tranquil. Proverbs such as “*impi yomndeni kayingenwa*” (a war between kinsmen needs not be interfered with) was common among several respondents. The word “*impi*” (war) is too strong for the magnitude of the conflict that can exist among community members but the term is used deliberately to discourage conflict.

Apparently, respondents argued that Ndebele people understand that conflicts which involve kinsmen such as siblings are very delicate because the same people may join hands and attack anyone who is a stranger. As a way of making sure that conflict is not exacerbated to alarming levels, it is therefore, prudent for outsiders to leave kinsmen to fight and resolve their problems alone. On the other hand, the principle behind this rule is to promote an idea of conflict resolution among kinsmen in the event that they have had a conflict. The community would be telling them that if they do not solve their problem, no outsider will come and help them. Nzewi’s (2007:53) position is that:

Contemporary Africans must strive to rescue, resuscitate, and advance our original intellectual legacy or the onslaught of externally manipulated forces of mental and cultural dissociation now rampaging Africa will obliterate our original intellect and lore of life.

This proverb cannot in anyway be limited to two individuals in a small family setup; it can refer to a broader community that might even be a nation. National problems may not be solved by outsiders because they may not fully understand the source of those problems and as such, it is imperative for members of that nation to find their own solutions. The local people are the ones who can provide the best solution to their problems because in most cases, the solution to each problem has a solution steeped in their local culture. In other words, local people are the best interpreters of their own culture when it comes to finding lasting solutions to those things that affect them. According to Avruch (1998:2), “people derive their sense of meaning from their culture. Cultural values and norms determine the way in which people interact with each other.”

The table shows that 100% of the responded concurred on one significant proverb on the strength of the concept of *ubuntu* as a key element in shaping social and moral behaviours of Ndebele people in as much as conflict management is concerned. The proverb says “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a person can only be a person in relation to other people). The concept of “*ubuntu*” (personhood) was dealt with in detail in the second chapter of this project and as such cannot be repeated. However, in the context of oral literature, the proverb has to be dealt with since it forms the basis for the expected behaviour among not only Zimbabwean Ndebeles but almost the whole of African populace. According to Mapara and Mudzanhire (2013:8) “*ubuntu* is a force that helps maintain the equilibrium of forces natural, spiritual and human in the community”.

When the Ndebele proverbialise that “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a person is a person because of other), they make so many implications just from that one statement. Basically, Africans do away with a spirit of individualism, greed and egocentrism which promotes a culture of going up even at the cost of the downfall of the rest. An individual is reminded that their success is always meaningful as long as it is a collective activity by the whole society thus, they should always remember that they need admiration from other members of the society just because no man is an island. By this, Ndebele people promote a spirit of taking care of each other in making sure that progress is spread to the entire community instead of achieving it at the expense of everyone because this is a recipe for a conflict. Moyo et al.,

(2011:135) postulates that this proverb's endeavour is "... to capture this spirit of personhood, respect, decorum and good values that imbue the community with solidarity and group-ness".

Domestic violence was, and still is an unwelcome evil among Zimbabwean Ndebeles because it brings anxiety and trauma among community members and can lead to serious conflict which may not be easy to resolve. It is not strange therefore, that, as shown on the table, there was 100% consensus from all respondents that the proverb "*induku kayiwakhi umuzi*" (a knobkerrie cannot be used to build a home) is a direct attack on domestic violence. The life of Africans generally derives from a small family unit so much that it is the families which eventually formulate the entire village. In that regard, it is imperative to promote peace in the families so that you will have peace in the village or even at national level. Domestic violence militates against such a goal and is always a threat to national peace and development. Commenting on some of the causes of conflicts, Kazeem (2009:63) states that:

Most conflicts arise in the basic units of society such as within families, clans, villages, locations or other small units. Amongst most African communities there are frameworks that are in place for the resolution of conflicts and for preventing their escalation into violence, thus threatening the social fabric.

It is imperative to safeguard conflicts in families so as to minimize societal conflicts and that is exactly what the Ndebele would be targeting when they discourage couples from fighting using sticks and knobkerries because that is violence. One can quickly point out that the same proverb has overtones of promotion of dialogue as an essential tool in conflict resolution. As will be discussed below, this proverb is in tandem with the other one which was referred to by 53% of the respondents as an acknowledgment that conflict is an inevitable element of life which says "*akukho muzi ongathunqi ntuthu*" (there is no home which does not exude smoke).

The basic principle of finding a solution for a problem is to first accept that there is a problem. In this case, Zimbabwean Ndebeles already teach their members that conflict is inevitable and as such everyone should expect it one time or the other. No one should feel that there is something wrong when they encounter a problem just

because every homestead has its own smoke but no one has run away from their homes. Since problems are part of life, it is important that conflicting members find an amicable solution without resorting to violence because violence does not build, in fact, it is destructive. The invaluable characteristics of dialogue are embedded in yet another proverb cited by 78% of the respondents which says “*koniwa ngomlomo kulungiswe ngomlomo*” (a wrong/conflict emanates from the mouth; it must be righted using the mouth).

According to Ndebele philosophy that is enshrined in their proverbs, there is virtually no room for violence in solving conflicts among Zimbabwean Ndebeles whether the conflicting parties are married, siblings, neighbours or general members of the community. Dialogue is over emphasized and those who resort to violence do so against the dictates of the society and going against the values of the society militates against the dictates of the concept of *ubuntu* which is the crux behind the survival of the same society. Speaking about the cultural value of proverbs, Moyo et, al says:

In light of the above, it can be seen that a people’s culture is something that belongs as much in the past as in the future in that it is a trajectory used creatively and dynamically to solve problems that affect the present. People’s cultural values, captured in proverbs are versatile, in flux, flexible, steeped in context and variably understood. To that end ... wisdom and mechanism of resolving problems as encapsulated in the Ndebele proverbs can be grafted into the present-day institutions. This will help not only make the society better and peaceful but deepen the reality of human beings as creators and not bearers of culture.

Oral literature and its place as indigenous communicative strategies of conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles are discussed in detail in another section of this chapter.

The other section of the questionnaire focused on the aspect of reconciliation as an element of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. Respondents indicated that their society places special value on reconciliation because the main objective of conflict resolution is to make sure that once peace has been attained, disputants continue to live together, if they were neighbours, they

should continue to share salt and sugar as before. Ndlovu et al., (1995:127) highlights this state of affairs when he says that:

*Kwakuthi kungaba lengxabano phakathi kwabantu ababili baxoxe ngodaba lolo bezama ukuxolisana. Injongo kuyikuthi baqhubeke bengomakhelwana besokhelana umlilo njengakudala.*

(Whenever a conflict occurred between two people, they would discuss the matter deeply with the aim of reconciling them so that they may continue to live life as they did before).

There are common wise sayings or statements that were cited by respondents as evidence that the society places so much emphasis on the need to make sure that when people have had a conflict, they must strive for reconciliation. When the Ndebeles say, “*izolo liyembelwa*” (yesterday should be buried), they are sowing a seed of reconciliation among their members to always look ahead and stop bogging themselves down with what would have happened previously. The ability to bury one’s yesterday is regarded as a virtue among the Ndebele because it reflects one’s willingness to resolve conflict, forgive and maybe even forget so that they move forward.

The table goes on to show some sayings cited by respondents such as “*kayilale ngenxeba*” 55%, (let it sleep on the wounded side) “*itshaye indiva*” 60%” (pretended not to have heard it) are also evidence of seeds that are sown for members to forgive each other and allow life to continue. “*Inxeba*” (wound) is painful but painful as it is, a member is encouraged to forget the past and move ahead so that society may not be tied down to past painful experiences. This goes on to show that, notwithstanding the fact that an individual may have been seriously wronged, they are obliged to consider how the entire society views conflict and as such reconciliation is the way out. It should be noted that these statements represent the norms, values, aspirations and feelings of the Ndebele society as far as conflict is concerned and since they are part of their culture, everyone stands to benefit from them. Emphasising the value of indigenous knowledge in shaping a virtuous society, Mawere (2010:211) states that they are:

...developed through the processes of acculturation and through kinship relationships that societal groups form, and are handed down to the posterity through oral tradition and cultural practices such as rituals and rites. As such, IKSs are the adhesives that bind society as they constitute communicative processes through which knowledge is transmitted, preserved, and acquired by humans in their different societies.

The aspect of reconciliation is also discussed in detail in another section of the chapter together with these and some of the otherwise-sayings that respondents cited as markers of the prioritisation of reconciliation among Ndebeles.

As the table shows, the other section of the questionnaire focused on spirituality or indigenous religion in issues of conflict management among Ndebeles with the understanding that the spirituality of the people has so much contribution to how they solve their problems. On symptoms and signs of strained relations between the world of the living and the living-dead, 80% cited drought, 90% cited unprecedented illnesses and disease with 45% talking about barrenness and 50% citing calamity.

African religion in general and Ndebele religion in particular is unique and should not be compared to Western religion because it draws from African experiences with the African natural milieu. Bozongwana (2000:11) attests to this state of affairs when he says:

To believe is to hold onto something firmly, with the conviction and confidence. Belief and culture are interwoven and cannot be separated as they embody the execution of justice and fair play, orderly living and good neighbourliness. African and Western cultures are nearly always at variance with each other...

Religion, therefore, plays an important part in the general life of an African such that almost all the activities revolve around religion. In the same manner, respondents demonstrated the interconnectedness between religion and conflict as well as conflict management systems among the Ndebele. Conflict involves the physical as well as spiritual world with the latter wielding more power over the former by virtue of their vicinity from the gods. Respondents indicated that conflict between the living and the living-dead is to be avoided at all costs because it has dire consequences

that may even lead to death. They also cited some of the signs and symptoms that are used to detect a conflict between this and the other world such as drought, disease, famine and other such mysterious occurrences. According to the respondents, by virtue of being experienced partakers of Ndebele culture, they are able to decipher various signs and symptoms from the world of the ancestors. Bozongwana (2000:10) confirms the same saying that “the appearance of certain things to an individual or community are a sign of coming events ...”.

What is generally agreeable among the cross sections of respondents is that although conflict even with the spiritual world is inevitable, there are traditional structures put in place in order to make sure that the relationship between the two worlds is either preserved or restored in case it is strained. Traditional healers, spirit mediums as well as traditional leaders were cited in most cases as the *bonafide* custodians of this relationship by virtue of their spiritual powers. There is no way a strained relationship can remain strained forever because instruments are there to make sure that it is kept in check and restored when the need arises. Traditional ceremonies such as *umbuyiso*, *ukuthethela* were mentioned as conduits to make sure that the two worlds are joined together for better or worse. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2011:180) postulate that:

The isangoma and isanusi are spiritual diviners that mediate conflicts by using information they get from the gods. It is easier for these diviners to settle conflicts because they are religiously respected by both parties and use the spirits to see what an ordinary mediator cannot see. People in conflicts go to these mediators who advise them on what the gods want as resolution to the conflict, such cases are usually successful as everyone knows that one cannot go against the gods.

Witchcraft was also part of this section on religious conflicts and respondents all agreed that witchcraft was never condoned in the Ndebele society and up to now it is regarded as a product of evil spirits which ought to be exorcised and discarded once it is discovered that someone has them. In this regard, the work of spirit mediums is to detect, and diagnose between genuine illnesses and illnesses that result from acts of witchcraft. In extreme instances, it was mentioned that when an individual decides

to continue with their acts of witchcraft, they are expelled from the community and advised to go and look for a dwelling place in another village. This way, it is believed that the community will remain in peace without any threat from the evil deeds of the witch.

In a nutshell, responses from questionnaire administration were very useful in furnishing the researcher with requisite information ranging from the people's views about conflict management amongst Ndebele people as well as espousing some of those strategies. The researcher had an opportunity to establish how people view their own culture, particularly as indigenous knowledge which they use for their own benefit as well as the whole world as indicated in some of the responses. Respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness of the fact that colonialism has dealt a blow to some of their important cultural values and norms which they were able to revisit because of having been probed by the researcher's demands through questionnaires. Respondents also demonstrated their willingness to re-define themselves using their own culture and identity as advocated by Mapara (2009:143) who views indigenous knowledge as:

... An attempt to remove the tag of being called the other and relabeling the West as the other that is not only greedy, but also murderous, adulterous and myopic. The same Western world is also presented as destructive and unappreciative.

Such a development forms part of the motives for the current research such that, if it could achieve it, then it could be considered a success.

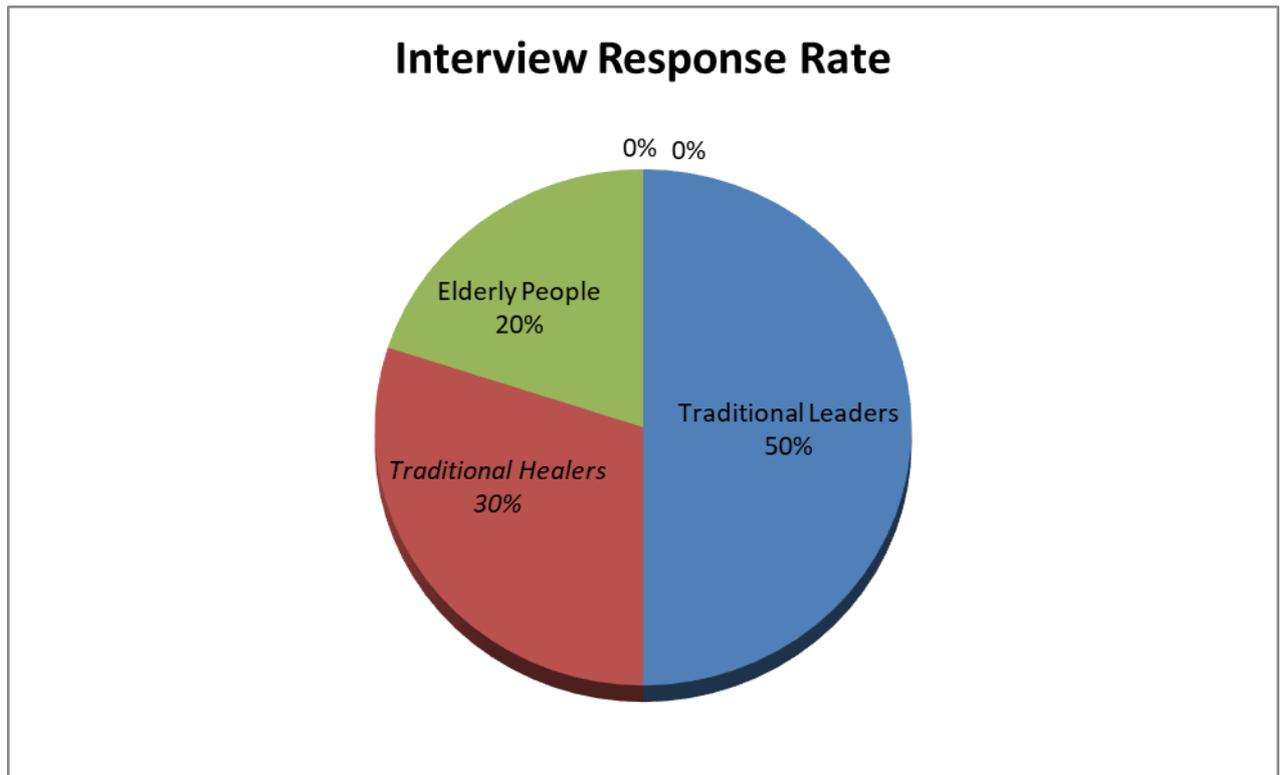
## **5.6 Presentation of Data from Interviews**

This section presents findings from the face-to-face interviews carried out for the purposes of this research. As has already been mentioned, the study also used interviews for collecting data.

### 5.6.1 Interview Response Rate

Interviews involved individual oral questioning of respondents by researcher. Table 5.6 provides a summary of interview response rates. The response rate from interviews can also be shown graphically as shown below on Fig 5.5.

Figure 5.5 Showing Interview Response Rate



Source: Primary Data

The diagram shows that total of (N) 10 interviewees were interviewed and the response rate was 100%. Among those interviewed (N) 5 were traditional leaders who are in charge of resolving conflict in the communities where Ndebeles are found. The researcher also interviewed (N) 3 traditional healers who contributed immensely to the study in terms of the role of spirituality in conflict management and resolution among traditional communities. The other (N) 2 were elderly members of the community whose contributions immensely benefitted the research objectives and helped to authenticate some of the information gathered through questionnaires.

### **5.6.1.1 Interviewee 1**

The first interviewee is a traditional leader is a chief in one of the villages in Silobela and has been in traditional leadership for over fifty years. This traditional leader concurred to the suggestion that by virtue of his position in society, he is a custodian of indigenous cultures and traditions on behalf of the national government. When the researcher asked him about conflicts that involve siblings or members who are related, he had this to say:

Dealing with family members' conflicts is a bit complicated because naturally they have a spiritual bond that unites them so much that at times, they bring their cases out of anger yet after a week or so, they come back and withdraw the case and decide to deal it as a family. Sometimes family members hold grudges that span generations which you would not be aware of and whatever triggers the conflict is just a tip of an iceberg and that presents problems unless you know the background information.

The interviewee also mentioned the fact that it is always important for family or clan members to first deal with their conflicts at their level before approaching his court. Such an approach is encouraged because family members are the ones who can understand some underlying issues about the conflict which the public may not necessarily be aware of. This is a basic stage where conflict can be addressed and contained amicably without undue influence from outsiders.

### **5.6.1.2 Interviewee 2**

The second interviewee is a headman of one area of Silobela District under Chief Malisa. This man has been in charge of the area traditional court dealing with cases that are under his jurisdiction as long as he can resolve them. Those that he cannot resolve, he refers to the Chief for further determination. He is assisted by advisors who are referred to as members of the jury. The interviewer was asked about the place of reconciliation as a strategy for conflict management in his community. He indicated that reconciliation is the top priority of his conflict management policies because it helps to mend relations and keeps families or the entire community intact. The interviewee also pointed out the dangers of anger to both the community and environment. He argues that an angry person is a danger to animals and trees since they can vent all their anger on these.

Asked about the traditional techniques used by Zimbabwean Ndebeles in making sure that there is effective conciliation among aggrieved members, the interviewee mentioned traditional ceremonies such as, *ukumuka* (elopement), *ukukhumisana umlotha*, (reconciliation rite) and *ukugezelana izilonda* (washing each other's wounds). Sometimes an offending member is asked to pay restitution in form of livestock as a way of making sure that the one who is aggrieved can accept his/her apologies.

#### **5.6.1.3 Interviewee 3**

The third interviewee is also a traditional leader in Silobela district and has been in this position for more than twenty years as a village head. A village head is responsible for a few homesteads which are in the same geographical area and in most cases share the same totem or even surname. They usually share a common ancestry and may be related one way or the other. A village head deals with domestic conflicts especially those that are not supposed to be discussed in the public arena such as a traditional court and mostly issues to do with domestic violence and marital problems.

This interviewee was asked about the role of proverbs in conflict management and his response was as follows:

Anyone who is a member of this community understands the meaning of proverbs and wise saying such that when we use them, they relay a strong meaning to members. Proverbs were used by our forefathers effectively so we are just following traditions and as it stands, it works well for us.

In other words, this interviewee, like the rest of those interviewed, appreciates the cultural value of oral literature as a conflict management strategy and also understands that for oral literature to make its meaningful sense, members should be well versed with the cultural ties and bonds that are meant to keep them together.

#### **5.6.1.4 Interviewee 4**

The fourth interviewee is also a traditional leader in Silobela and has been in that position for less than ten years. This interviewee was considered relevant to this

presentation because he has attained a reasonable level of academic education and is a member of the provincial council of chiefs. His contributions shed light on the role of indigenous communicative strategies of peace and conflict management in comparison to modern methods which the interviewee is familiar with since he has received in-house training the integration of indigenous and modern legal systems.

Asked about the applicability of indigenous knowledge to modern conflict situations, the interviewee stated that there is nothing impossible with that because conflict has always been part and parcel of human life and humans have been finding their home-grown solutions to deal with it all the time. The interviewee cited the use of indigenous knowledge in dealing with medical problems which has been implemented successfully in most African societies as an indicator that even conflict can be dealt with in the same manner as long as it is implemented in the correct way.

The interviewee was also asked about whether or not traditional healers have a significant role to play in issues of conflict management among Ndebeles. According to him, traditional leaders cannot fully function without the assistance from traditional healers because traditional healers are the link between the world of the living and the world of ancestors. Traditional healers play an invaluable role in conflicts which are spiritually inclined such as case of witchcraft and dangerous medicines like those that are used to strike people with lightning.

#### **5.6.1.5 Interviewee 5**

The fifth interviewee is a local headman in charge of a village in Silobela. He deals with minor and less complicated cases and reports to the Chief whenever he encounters complicated cases. By virtue of his position in the community, the headman has dealt with various types of conflict ranging from simple to difficult ones. The interviewee was asked about the significance of the concept of ubuntu as a strong force in conflict management in the community and he concurred by attesting that traditional societies depend on this philosophy for the effective execution of their duties. He cited some of the proverbs that are used as a way of controlling the social behaviour of community members in making sure that they conduct themselves in a

manner acceptable to everyone. Some of the proverbs cited are “*ihlonipha lalapha ingayi kwendela khona*” (a girl respects even those to whom she may not even get married to), “*inkosi yinkosi ngabantu*” (a king is such because of the people).

The interviewee was also questioned about his perceptions on domestic violence as well as whether or not Ndebele society condones the practice. He strongly denied the fact that Ndebele, or any society can condone domestic violence which he believes is not only bad but should be eradicated completely since it has negative consequences. He also cited proverbs as a sign that even traditional societies did not take kindly to domestic violence such as “*induku kayakhi muzi*” (a knobkerrie cannot build a home).

#### 5.4.1 Table showing response to key interview questions

|  | <b>Broad view</b>                                     | <b>Responses per theme</b>  |
|--|---|---|
|  | 3. Types of conflict commonly dealt with/experienced. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Field/homestead boundaries. 65%.</li> <li>2. Stray animals destroying crops, 78%.</li> <li>3. Livestock theft, 63%.</li> <li>4. Gossip and defamation, 35%.</li> <li>5. Witchcraft activities, 100%.</li> <li>6. Domestic violence due to infidelity, 80%.</li> <li>7. Pregnancy issues, 50%.</li> <li>8. Drunken misunderstanding, 60%.</li> <li>9. Possession of dangerous medicine/herbs, 90%.</li> <li>10. Inheritance issues, 62%.</li> <li>11. <i>Lobola</i> payment matters, 80%.</li> <li>12. Sibling fights. 40%.</li> </ol> |
|  | 4. Perceptions on traditional leadership              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On perceptions by traditional healers themselves as custodians of Ndebele/African culture. 100% Agreed.</li> <li>2. On perceptions by the people on traditional healers as custodians of culture. 80 % Agreed, 20 % Disagreed.</li> <li>3. On perceptions of traditional healers as custodians of African/Ndebele culture. 100% agreed.</li> </ol>  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>4. On people's perceptions of traditional healers as custodians of African culture. 60% Agreed, 33 % Disagreed, 7 % Not sure.</p> <p>5. Perceptions on the applicability of Indigenous knowledge to modern conflicts. 80%, 15% Disagreed, 5% Not sure.</p> <p>6. On people seeking/trusting services of traditional leaders as reliable conflict managers. 75% Agreed, 25% Disagreed.</p> <p>7. On people seeking/trusting services of traditional healers as reliable conflict managers. 50% Agreed, 30% Disagreed, 20% Not sure.</p>   |
|  | 5. Indigenous religion in conflict management. | <p>1. Responses on whether or not, indigenous religion plays a role in conflict management, 100% Agreed.</p> <p>2. Responses on outward expressions of allegiance to the dictates of African or Ndebele religion:</p> <p>(a) <i>Ukuzila olwesine</i> (Taboos related to abstinence from work activities on each and every Thursday of the week).</p> <p>(b) <i>Umbuyiso</i> (spirit returning ceremony).</p> <p>(c) <i>Umthethelo</i> (ancestral appeasement rite)</p> <p>(d) <i>Ukucela izulu</i> (rain making ceremony).</p> <p>(e) <i>Wearing traditional regalia</i>.</p> <p>3. Responses on conflict involving witchcraft.</p> <p>(a) Occasional cleansing ceremony by an <i>inyangalisanuse</i> (spirit mediums) to sniff and detect those involved in witchcraft.</p> <p>(b) Payment of restitution by offender and making them reverse the witchcraft.</p> <p>(c) Forced relocation from the community to a faraway place.</p> <p>(d) Traditionally there was also a process of <i>ukubethela isikhonkwane</i> (piercing a peg between their buttocks or on the head) but now obsolete.</p> |
|  | 6. Reconciliation                              | <p>2. On prioritisation of reconciliation in conflict management. 100% Agreed.</p>  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>3. Responses on importance of reconciliation:</p> <p>(a) It keeps the society united and in harmony.</p> <p>(b) It prevents generational hatred.</p> <p>(c) It promotes communal cooperation during funerals, weddings and traditional ceremonies.</p> <p>4. Traditional methods of reconciliation:</p> <p>(d) <i>Ukukhumisana umlotha</i> (reconciliatory rite)</p> <p>(e) <i>Ukumuka</i>. (elopement)</p> <p><i>Ukugezelana izilonda</i> (washing each other's wounds).</p> <p>5. Wise sayings on reconciliation:</p> <p>(f) <i>Izolo liyembelwa</i> (Yesterday can be buried)</p> <p>(g) <i>Kayilale ngenxeba</i> (let the cow lie on the wounded side)</p> <p>(h) <i>Ginya ilitshe</i> (swallow a stone)</p> <p>(i) <i>Itshaye indiva</i> (pretend not to have heard)</p>  |
|  | <p>6. Role of oral literature in conflict management</p> | <p>1. Effectiveness of oral literature on conflict management. 100% Agreed.</p> <p>2. Ndebele proverbs discouraging conflict:</p> <p>b) <i>Impi yomndeni kayingenwa</i> 80% (A clan conflict does not require outside interference)</p> <p>(c) <i>Akukho mfula ungahlokomi</i> (There is no river that does not overflow once in a while) 85%.</p> <p>(d) <i>Koniwa ngomlomo kulungiswe ngomlomo</i> 78% (What is wronged by word of mouth needs to be solved by the word of mouth).</p> <p>(e) <i>Iqaqa alihlinzelwa ebandla</i> (a squirrel cannot be skinned in public).</p> <p>(f) <i>Akugobo lingeqondiswe</i> (there is no wrong that cannot be made right).</p> <p>(g) <i>Akuyiwa nganxanye kungemanzi</i> (thongs do not move only in one direction like flowing water).</p> <p>3. Ndebele proverbs meant to discourage conflict among married couples:</p> <p>(d) <i>Induku kayakhi muzi</i> (A knob Kerrie does not build a house).</p> <p>(e) <i>Akukho muzi ongathunqi ntuthu</i> (There is</p> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  |   | no homestead that does not exude smoke).<br>(f) <i>Indoda libhetshu lomziki</i> (A husband is like the skin of a bushbuck).  |
|  | 7. Place of ubuntu in conflict management | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Response on the effectiveness of ubuntu as a conflict management philosophy among Ndebeles, 100% Agreed.</li> <li>2. Role of ubuntu in conflict management: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Gives guidelines on how members should conduct themselves in relation to other people.</li> <li>(b) Binds community members together and makes them have one purpose.</li> <li>(c) Makes people obey traditional leadership and agree to participate in traditional occasions.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Ndebele proverbs that promote ubuntu philosophy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) <i>Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu</i> (A person is a person because of other people.</li> <li>(b) <i>Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu</i> (a king is a king because of the people.</li> <li>(c) <i>Ihlonipha lalapha ingayi kwendela khona</i> (a girl has to respect even those who will not be her future in-laws).</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |

#### 5.6.1.6 Interviewee 6

The sixth interviewee is a traditional healer known as *isangoma/isanusi*. He argues that he is a traditional healer hereditarily since his own father was a traditional healer. He also claims to draw his inspiration from the ancestral spirits who communicate with him in several ways which he could not disclose. He claims to have assisted several people to recover from their illnesses such as cancer, malaria, sugar diabetes, and other ailments which affect people in the area. He also indicated that he is mandated to assist people who would have suffered attacks from witchcraft activities or those suffering from consistent misfortunes such as child miscarriages or failure to bear children. He also claims that he keeps constant contact with the

ancestors and informs particular individuals on what ancestors will be demanding from them.

When asked whether he regards himself as a custodian of Ndebele traditions and culture, respondent mentioned that he was ordained by ancestors to preserve African traditions on their behalf and it was his calling to make sure that people do not throw away their cultural traditions. He also stated that cultural traditions are the only way to make sure that people live in peace and harmony amongst both themselves as well as between them and their ancestors. Whatever he does as his duties is guided by the principles of African traditional religion hence the reasons why he dresses and eats in a peculiar manner from the rest of the ordinary citizens.

It appears there are a number of people who seek the services of this particular traditional healer but some of them are not willing to be seen going to his homestead because of fear of being vilified by the society which has embraced the Christian religion which by its very nature is against traditional religion. He cites several examples of individuals who prefer to remain anonymous so that other community members do not come to see that they also seek traditional healers' services. He observed that people have not yet accepted that traditional healers are well equipped with the requisite knowledge to tackle several ailments that affect members of the community. He also noted that the Christian religion has a bearing on how people view traditional healers or those that visit them for assistance. As a result, most of his work is done at night under the cover of darkness in order to conceal the identity of his clients especially those from various Christian movements.

When two or more individuals have had a social conflict such as a misunderstanding as neighbours because of livestock that strayed and destroyed the other's crops, or as a result of gossip, it is the traditional healer who is called to assist them so that they can reconcile through the traditional process of "*ukukhumisana umlotha*" (licking the ashes). His role is to administer the necessary herbal remedies which are used in order to reverse the effects of "*ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*" (oath of hatred) that the concerned individuals would have undertaken. These herbal remedies are meant to minimize damage which could result in tragedy since the oath of hatred is a spiritual covenant which involves certain herbal concoctions that are

harmful if the precepts of the oath are unprocedurally violated. The traditional healer is also called upon to be a mediator in conflicts that result in *uzimu/ingozi*. He is the one who can communicate with ancestors and determine the source of *uzimu/ingozi* as well as mediate between the affected families to bring reconciliation.

According to this respondent, it is always important to always maintain peace and tranquil between the people and their ancestors because the later have got supernatural control over the living so much that if they so desire, they can harm the living at any given time should they feel that they are being disrespected. Traditional healers therefore regard themselves as the link between the two worlds and they consider this role to be a very important one which they view as a divine calling. Bozongwana (2000:4) underscores the importance of maintaining a good rapport between the living and their ancestors when he says that:

If this relationship between the spirits (*amadlozi*) and the living is to be of any significance, a certain standard of living must be maintained, and accorded to the ancestors. Our behaviour towards those in authority over us, our behaviour towards our parents, children and neighbours count a great deal towards linking this relationship.

It is not a surprise therefore, when the traditional healers regard themselves as the necessary link that is there to always remind the living about their moral obligations towards their ancestors.

The respondents generally accepted that witchcraft is a problem in their community but they are well equipped to deal with it in line with their religious and spiritual jurisdiction. Their roles in issues of conflict start from diagnosis of the witchcraft act. They have to first determine and distinguish between an honest and a suspicious ailment so that they can execute proper herbal remedy to the victim. They use their spiritual powers to detect the source of the witchcraft and then go on to expose the witch whom they hand over to traditional leaders for sentencing. The traditional healer pointed out that his job is frustrated by the fact that people have mixed feelings about it because they want to come to seek assistance as a last resort sometimes when it is too late to assist especially in cases of ailments.

#### **5.6.1.7 Interviewee 7**

The seventh interviewee is a female traditional healer who is known as *inyanga*. Her jurisdiction is slightly different from the one discussed above since her major role is to assist members of the community in dealing with disease and ailments. She admits that she also draws her inspiration from the ancestral spirits whom she says guide her in carrying out her duties. She mainly depends on visions which usually come at night so that she can determine which tree to use in treating different ailments. She indicated that she assists the community by giving direction whenever there is a natural disaster such as drought and other unnatural occurrences.

That way, she views herself as a mediator between the people and their ancestors and thus, a conflict management entity for the benefit of the community. According to Bozongwana (2000:32), "... an *inyanga* spirit and its chief work is to heal the sick, bring back good luck, protect and drive away the evil spirits which cause suffering and death". In other words, this traditional healer is the source of security for the community because she also offers charms that protect individuals against witches and diseases. It was noted that, in most cases, traditional healers share similar experiences as far as execution of their duties is concerned and as such, their challenges are the same especially in terms of dealing with clients who prefer to remain anonymous. With the current respondent, her major challenge is her gender which she says prejudices her smooth execution of her duties because generally men do not want to trust that a woman can assist them and as such, she is relegated to minor duties.

#### **5.6.1.8 Interviewee 8**

Interviewee number 8 indicated that he cannot be classified as either a *sangoma* or an *inyanga* because he is just endowed with a gift of healing and visions meant to assist members of the community who might need assistance. He has been assisting people for over twenty years and claims that he is not spiritually possessed when he executes his duties but, in some instances, he makes use of his experience in dealing with issues since he has been doing it over time. He could neither confirm nor deny that he is a custodian of African or Ndebele traditional culture but admits that he does his best to make sure that the same are preserved. He also indicated

that he believes that Ndebele traditional culture is under threat from external forces and as such needs urgent measures to make sure that it does not go to extinction.

On issues of conflict and conflict management, this respondent indicated that he has had several instances where he has contributed in resolving conflicts both by providing expert advice as well as herbal remedies where such are needed. He pointed out that his years in the traditional healing industry has given confidence to his clients who turn to him when they need assistance even on issues that have to do with conflict. He however, highlighted that he concentrates on conflict prevention rather than resolution because he offers people charms that are meant to protect them especially from evil forces and as such, he minimizes chances of conflict. On reconciliation, he participates as an advisor as well as provider of the requisite herbs that are used during the process of “*ukukhumisana umlotha*” when individuals would have had a conflict.

Quizzed on the role he plays in terms of maintaining peace between the living and the ancestors, this respondent indicated that he does not play an active role since he is mainly a healer who has a gift of identifying traditional medicines. He also pointed out that he is not well equipped with the necessary skills of dealing with complicated issues involving witchcraft unless they are minor cases where one only needs “*ukuthunqiselwa*” (sniffing herbs to reverse an illness caused by witchcraft). When faced with such a situation, he recommends further administration by those who are more experienced whom he also turns to when need arises. The major challenges he faces as he executes his duties are individuals who mix his remedies with modern remedies thus making his medicines fail to work at times resulting in people doubting his capabilities.

Speaking about the role and importance of traditional healers in the traditional Ndebele society in the past and present, Bozongwana (2000:34) states that:

Because they are able to call upon the spirits in the fight against pestilence, cattle epidemics and drive away crop insects and locusts, *izinyanga* were the spiritual backbone of the tribe and helped strengthen the morale of the nation. The tribe was kept together in unity morally and spiritually by cherishing these beliefs,

hence together with other factors, they brought into existence what was called the “National Spirit” of the Ndebele.

It goes without saying therefore, that traditional healers are an essential element in the structures of conflict management among Ndebeles. They minimize conflict among community members themselves as well as the dreaded conflict between the living and the living-dead.

#### **5.6.1.9 Interviewee 9**

This interviewee was chosen for her age and experience in traditional matters among Ndebeles since she is over eighty years old. It was necessary to conduct an interview with her due to the fact that she is semi-literate and could not effectively respond to questions asked using the questionnaire. As an elderly person in the community, she has been involved in resolving various kinds of conflicts among members ranging from domestic to neighbours and has been an advisor to several traditional leaders on conflict resolution.

Asked to shed light on the possibility of eradicating conflict in the community, the respondent pointed out that it is impossible to do away with conflict completely because it takes different forms each and every time. She however, made mention of the fact that what is possible is to minimise the consequences and damage that results from conflict. Preventive measures can also be adopted so that conflict is nipped in the bud but that calls for a collective approach to it.

The respondent strongly supports the view that Ndebeles have their own indigenous communicative structures in place to deal with all forms of conflict and such structures are inculcated in the minds as children are growing such that even the children’s games which they play have a component of conflict management in them. She cited an example of a game known as “*amandlwane*” which depicts a complete family set up and spells out different family roles including a father and mother who discipline their children. As children are growing up, they are made to understand that a parent has the right to discipline them. Apart from that, they are also taught that they ought to respect their parents which on its own acts as a lesson on living in peace with the rest of the members of society. At the same time, children are taught

that social relations are very important and they ought to be preserved by every member of the society because “there is no beauty but in relationships. Nothing cut off by itself is beautiful .... All beauty is in the creative purpose of our relationships” (Mararike 1998:193).

This respondent mentioned the various conflict situations that she has encountered and participated actively and passively such as domestic violence and others. On domestic violence, she lauded the traditional custom of “*ukumuka*” (elopement) which she says is very helpful in making sure that a wayward husband is made to account for his actions yet at the same time it protects the woman from physical abuse. This custom, she said, allows the couple to take some time away from each other so that they can come to their senses and appreciate how much it is important for them to preserve their marriage. On the other hand, the custom of “*ukumuka*” (elopement) facilitates reconciliation because when the husband makes a follow-up on his spouse, he is given new conditions by the spouse’s parents to make sure that he does not continue to abuse her. After that, he apologises and reconciles with his wife. Reconciliation is the ultimate goal of each and every effort of conflict resolution.

It was discovered that the respondent has participated in negotiations for marriage as *sodombo* for so many families due to her experience and expertise in public relations. In carrying out this duty, she has discovered that *sodombo* duties are endless because they do not end when the couple has wedded but they continue even way after. When the couple faces marital problems, they seek her advice as their *sodombo* before they take the matter further to other relevant authorities. She pointed out that the concept of *sodombo* was put in place deliberately as a traditional way of dealing with conflict among married couples among Ndebele people.

The respondent also pointed out that the various titles that are used to distinguish family and in-law relations are titles that are imbued with social responsibilities which go a long way in making sure that people maintain cordial relations without crossing each other’s paths. These relations which emanate from a family set-up, are essential even for social and physical cohesion to the extent that individual find security in them and get productive even economically (Masitera 2014:139). According to Furusa, Mutsvairo, Chiwome, Mberi and Masarire (1996:40), “the family

ties determine its productiveness and wellbeing” which means it is the same that provides a solid ground for the attainment of peace and resolution of conflicts should need arise. As long as in-laws stick to the designated responsibilities that are spelt out in the socio-cultural titles that are used to identify them, there are limited chances for conflict.

According to this respondent, oral literature in its various forms has an invaluable impact in conflict management among the Ndebele people since most of it is designed to reduce conflict as much as possible. She highlighted the role played by various Ndebele folk stories which children are made to listen to as they grow so that they can avoid conflict when they have become adults thus minimising chances of war and strife. On Proverbs and wise sayings, the respondent pointed out that these have a dual purpose of teaching history as well as communicating those values that society finds valuable especially in issues to do with conflict management.

Asked to cite some of the proverbs and wise sayings that she commonly applies in her endeavours to deal with conflict, the respondent mentioned proverbs such as “*akukho muzi ongathunqi ntuthu, umendo kawuthunyelwa gundwane*” (there is no homestead which does not exude smoke, marriage cannot be foretold). These are used in resolving marital conflicts because they strengthen the couple to know that their problems are not peculiar to them since all marriages go through storms time and again. Other proverbs that she cited are “*inxeba lendoda kalihlekwa, kusasa kuyizolo*” (do not laugh at another man’s wound, tomorrow is yesterday). These are used to discourage indecorous behaviour among members of the community at the same time promoting unity so that they live in peace and harmony. Nyembezi (1954:41) postulates that:

... Some models of conduct are embroiled in proverbs, which serve the purpose of instructing the younger and ignorant generations, it serve as reminders to the old, who have been remiss in their observance of the rules of conduct expected in society.

Having described the various ways by which Ndebele people try to live in harmony, the respondent was quick to point out that all of them rely upon an individual’s

willingness to participate in societal activities. All these efforts are a waste of time outside the context of culture because it is the people's understanding and interpretation of culture that can make them bow to traditional structures of conflict management. In that regard, she pointed out that the concept of *ubuntu* plays an important role in making sure that people comply with the traditional conflict management structures. She explained the meaning of the proverb which says “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” as the backbone of Ndebele traditional conflict management structures which depend on it for success. Apart from *ubuntu*, there is nothing that compels anyone to adhere to the principles of conflict management.

*Ubuntu* controls the inside of a person and make them liable to others in the society thus they accept to be responsible for their actions and how they would affect the next person. If an individual does not care about the next person, they will not be in a position to avoid conflict with them let alone apologise and reconcile when need arises. In that case, without the concept of *ubuntu*, all efforts for conflict management among Ndebele people are fruitless. The respondent is of the opinion that Ndebele conflict management structures are universal and can be adopted; adapted and applied in any situation as long they are contextualized.

#### **5.6.1.10 Interviewee 10**

This interviewee is a man in his mid-fifties who has been resident in one of the villages in Silobela for most of his life. His contributions were considered essential for this research because he has had an encounter with both worlds, the past and present and as such can offer relevant assessment of both scenarios as far as conflict management is concerned. He, like the respondent above does not subscribe to the possibility of completely eradicating conflict in the society. In actual fact, he thinks that conflict is not only a part of life but also a necessary part of it because it solves certain problems as well.

He pointed out that Ndebele traditional culture is wholesome thus it has a complete set of survival strategies including those for dealing with conflict of whatever nature among its members. He made mention of conflicts that emanate from a situation where a man fails to pay *lobola* for his wife until she dies without having been

formerly married. In such situations, the family of the deceased invokes *uzimu/ingozi* as punishment to the husband of their daughter. While this is a punitive measure, the respondent indicated that it is a very harsh method and would want traditional if not government authorities to out-law it.

He also pointed out that it is pointless to make any conflict resolution efforts if the target is not reconciliation because reconciliation allows the community to move forward even after conflict has affected it. He cited proverbs such as “*akugobo lingeqondiswe*” (there is no wrong which cannot be righted) as an indicator that Ndebele people prioritise reconciliation and do not believe that once people have had a conflict, then they should become enemies. This, he said is supported by the wise saying which says “*itshaye indiva*” which encourages people to ignore certain issues which could make them quarrel with the next person because you cannot concentrate on every piece of information that you come across.

The respondent also indicated that traditional cultures rely on the aspect of *ubuntu* which is the ingredient for good conduct among Africans in general and Ndebeles in particular. It is *ubuntu* which dictates how an individual should behave in connection with other people and it is the same *ubuntu* which spells out the qualities of a deviant person who causes discord in the society. When people listen to the voice of *ubuntu*, they are listening to what the society wants because *ubuntu* was formulated by the same society in order to control human behaviour. Ramose (1999:58) views *ubuntu* as “a perpetual and universal movement of sharing and exchange of forces of life”. In that case, Ndebeles’ structures of conflict management can be useful to other societies as long as they are also guided by social codes such as *ubuntu* and as long as they can contextualize them.

The respondent was asked to comment on the role played by kinship relations among Ndebele people and how they contribute to conflict management. In response, the respondent pointed out that most conflict management structures depend on these kinships which exist among Ndebeles so much that before any effort is made in resolving a conflict, the concept of kinship relations would have done half the job. He indicated that kinship relations are an adhesive that keeps

people together and stipulates which route to follow in case a conflict ensues among them.

The intertwined relations that exist among local people are the pedestal upon which conflict management structures are stepping and as such they kick start the process of conflict management even before the conflict has started. They are a conflict prevention mechanism such that, if observed and respected, conflict is not only avoided but also minimized. Commenting on the significance of the role played by kinship structures in uniting communities, Ermine cited in Hammersmith (2007:2) says that these structures are linked to the communities that produce them. He observes that:

Those natural communities are characterized by complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, the earth, the cosmos, etc. from which knowing emanates.

Such complex social interconnectedness should be understood in the context of conflict management as a socially designed method of making sure that local people live in peace and harmony among themselves.

### **5.7 Presentation of Data gathered from Focus Group Discussions.**

As highlighted in chapter four of this research, the researcher made use of information gathered through focus group discussions. Information from focus group discussions is invaluable because it is drawn from a near-natural setting where people are free to express themselves about the subject under discussion. According to Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee (2018):

Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population.

One of the main objectives of the focus group method was to verify and get details on some of the information that the researcher had already attained through the questionnaire and interview methods. Two focus group discussions were conducted

with slightly different compositions in terms of membership so as to maximize on outcomes.

### **5.7.1 Focus Group 1**

The first group comprised of (N) 10 members. Two or (N) 2 of the group members were grandmothers, (N) 1 was an old family man, the other (N) 2 were middle aged men, (N) 2 others were also women in their forties, (N) 1 was a traditional healer and the last (N) 2 were village heads a male and a female. These people have basically stayed in Silobela District for the better part of their lives and are considered to be having relevant knowledge pertaining the subject under discussion since they have experienced conflict directly or otherwise. Their contributions were deemed necessary for this research because they were able to ask and verify some of the facts which had been unclear and they also debated widely on the subjects discussed such that they authenticated some of the arguments raised in the next sections of the research.

The first topic for discussion was whether or not Ndebeles have got their own unique strategies for peace and conflict management to which the group members unanimously agreed and went on to list some of the strategies which were more or less the same with those cited by interviewees and responses to questionnaires. The researcher then picked on the subject of conflict management strategies that concern married couples as a discussion topic. Group members started by debating the attitude of Ndebele traditional people concerning domestic violence. They cited the prevalence of proverbs that speak against it as evidence that Ndebele traditional society never tolerated nor condoned domestic violence.

Proverbs such as “*akukho muzi ongathunqi ntuthu, induku kayakhi muzi, okoniwe ngomlomo kulungiswa ngomlomo*” (there is no homestead which does not exude smoke, a knobkerrie cannot build a home, what has been wronged by word of mouth should be resolved by word of mouth) were cited as indisputable evidence that traditional societies would not have been dominated by violence. It was mentioned that the traditional Ndebele society valued women that is why even an aunt (sister to a father) is also referred to as “*ubabakazi*”, a title which gives her authority just as a father has. This title, they said, accords the aunt a male status and that is why she is the one who intervenes as a mediator when her brother is having an altercation with

his wife. In fact, the term “*babakazi*” is made up of the root /*baba*/ (father) and /-*kazi*/ which is a female stem. So, it is /*baba* + -*kazi*/ = *babakazi* which loosely translates to /female father/.

In line with conflict management for marital conflicts, the group also cited the traditional practice of *ukumuka* (elopement) as an effective practice which helped resolve conflicts between a husband and his wife. This is a practice where a wife runs away from a wayward or abusive husband and temporarily goes back to her parents until the husband comes to look for her. When he arrives, he is told to go and bring his *sodombo* (go-between) so that new rules are spelt out for him to stop the unacceptable behaviour or else he would face stiff punishment from his in-laws. He can then take his wife back home having promised to treat her well. What the group also highlighted was the fact that divorce was never an option among Ndebeles and hence the practice of *ukumuka* (elopement) was an avenue to create dialogue thereby avoiding divorce.

This focus group also discussed the role played by in-law relationships in making sure that married couples do not experience unnecessary conflicts. These they said are relationships that develop when two people get married mainly because the Ndebele people do not believe in individualism where two people who are married can live their separate life independent of the rest. They argued that when two people get married, they are also connecting two different families and at times even two villages just because most of the times people in one village are already related one way or the other. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:183) support this argument when they say:

Marriage which is a highly respected institution among the Ndebele was not a contract between two individuals but a contract involving many relatives who had a role to play in that marriage. In almost all families there are strains and tensions which sometimes affect its existence. As the family is the basic unit of a society, anything that threatens the well-being of a family also threatens the stability of that society.

In this case, the group expressed the opinion that in-law relationships are a deliberate attempt by the indigenous Ndebele society to make sure that society is kept safe from serious divisions which emanate from a couple that divorces. In doing so, the in-law relationships spell out certain responsibilities which those who are connected by them should adhere to in order to maintain peace. In-laws are expected to stay in their socially designated territories and execute their social responsibilities with respect and dignity because any violation of such is tantamount to a conflict.

This therefore, goes a long way in controlling the behaviour of so many people because there are so many people involved just in the marriage unit of one couple for instance the mother-in-law is not only the wife's biological mother but all her sisters including all those from the extended family. If a man is married, at any given time, he has more than twenty people who qualify as his mother-in-law whom he has to treat with respect and as such, the whole community is controlled.

Conflict that involves the spiritual world was also introduced as a subject of discussion in order to extract the variant views pertaining the same especially in light of the changes in people's belief systems due to the advent of Christianity. The subject became a contentious issue since some of the group members were arguing that belief in the ancestral spirits is a fallacy which others were adamant that such beliefs are not relegated to the past but are still alive even to date. The traditional healer maintained his stance that Christianity has not done away with traditional beliefs but has only created hypocrites who claim too believe in God during the day yet during the night they revert back to their traditional beliefs.

The traditional leaders in the group also conquered with him arguing that the traditional beliefs are still being adhered to as can be observed from the way local people still wear some beads on their hands and necks as a way of protecting themselves from witches. They also indicated that witchcraft is still prevalent in the area and as such community members sometimes approach their traditional courts seeking arbitration after suspecting that a community member is practicing witchcraft.

They also indicated that whenever there is a drought, people are always willing to participate in traditional ceremonies for rain making by contributing mealie-meal and millet to brew beer. This they said is an indirect way of acknowledging that there are some conflicts which emanate from the spiritual world. The older members of the discussion group also indicated that they have had a lot of experience in the way the spiritual world operates and as such would not venture into a deliberate conflict with the spiritual world.

Eventually, the group members highlighted some of the traditional structures put in place by the Ndebele in order to make sure that there is peace between the living and the living-dead. They cited the role played by traditional diviners; (*isangoma/isanusi*) spirit mediums and traditional healers who they said have always advised the community on what would have gone wrong when a calamity befalls them. These are the mediators on behalf of the people because they have the authority to communicate with the spiritual world and perform the necessary rituals when need arises. As a confirmation to this state of affairs, Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:180) Ndebele tradition reveres spiritual diviners in the settlement of conflicts because they are religiously respected by both the living and the ancestors since they use the spirits to see what an ordinary mediator cannot see. They act as mediators who offer advice to the people on what the gods want as resolution to a particular conflict, their efforts are usually successful as everyone knows that one cannot go against the gods whom they represent.

Also, of interest in issues to do with spiritual conflict were some traditional ceremonies that they mentioned as a way of making sure that relations between the living and the living-dead remains cordial at all times. The practice of “*ukubuyisa*” (bringing back home a spirit of the dead) and “*ukuthethela*” (appeasing the spirits) were cited as the backbone for peace and conflict management in the Ndebele traditional belief systems. These religious practices are performed in spite of a problem and better still when a problem has arisen. Some of the discussion group members indicated that it is dangerous to anger the spirits and as such these practices are preventive measures against the unforeseen calamities.

### 5.7.2 Focus Group 2

The second focus group was made up of (N) 8 members chosen carefully to represent certain areas of interest to the topic under discussion. (N) 2 of these were University lecturers who have been in charge of teaching and research in IsiNdebele for a number of years. It was necessary to include an academic view to the group's discussion because it would bring another dimension to the subject under study. (N) 2 members of the group were young students of IsiNdebele at tertiary level of their education.

These would ordinarily give an academic but youthful view of the subject of conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles and possibly pose a comparative approach to the research given the traditional nature of it. (N) 2 others were elderly people who live in Silobela whose experience in mediation activities was relevant for the research since they have previously participated in marriage negotiation as well as resolution of family disputes in the community. The last (N) 2 were young people below the age of sixteen whose views would also go a long way in ascertaining whether the Ndebele society is able to disseminate its information to the younger generations for posterity.

The first subject of discussion was on whether or not Ndebele people have conflict management strategies. Group members all agreed to the fact that Ndebele people have got conflict management strategies because they discourage conflict at all levels of life even from childhood. It was pointed out that right from childhood, a child is taught that conflict is bad and should be avoided at all costs that is why a child who would beat up others during child games was strongly reprimanded. Children are also taught to respect those people who would have fallen into problems through such proverbs as "*inxeba lendoda kalihlekwa, kusasa kuyizolo*" (do not laugh at another man's wound, tomorrow is like yesterday). These proverbs are there to remind children that what befalls one person may befall another person next time so they should sympathise with whoever is in trouble.

The issue of reconciliation as a strategy among Ndebeles was also thrown into the arena for discussion and most members seemed to agree that reconciliation is a key goal of all mediation efforts when a conflict would have arisen. The group cited the

traditional practice of *ukukhumisana umlotha* as an indispensable indicator that conflict should be resolved for the sake of progress among community members. Most of the group members agreed that Ndebele people place special value on reconciliation as can be evidenced by the prevalence of proverbs and wise sayings found in the IsiNdebele language.

The group members went on to describe how this practice is performed outlining the importance of specific items that surround it such as the type of tree that is used to perform it as well as the time and place where it is performed. Apparently, the younger generation seemed to be blank about this practice indicating the discontinuity of information dissemination from one generation to another. This is what Ahien (1995:114) laments when he says:

Indigenous people have a broad knowledge of how to live a sustainably. However, formal education systems have disrupted the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning, replacing them with abstract knowledge and academic ways of learning. Today, there is a grave risk that much indigenous knowledge is being lost and along with-it valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably.

The group was also directed to discuss the role played by kinship ties (*ubuhlobo*) in the Ndebele society as a conflict management strategy. In this part of the discussion, the group mentioned the value of the family unit as a base for all social relations which are found among Ndebeles. The group indicated the fact that each member of the family plays an important part in making sure that the rest are not in conflict. Mutual respect is the ingredient that is used in order to make sure that people live in peace and the issue of age plays an important factor since the younger is expected to respect the older. In light of that, it was also noted that the elderly people are accorded a respectable status as a way of making sure that when there is a conflict in the family, there is someone with absolute authority to resolve it.

From the nucleus family, relations move to the extended family which is an integral part of the community because it involves more people and hence if conflict is to take place, more people are affected and as such, it is the duty of every member of the

extended family to make sure that there is peace and harmony in the family. Members of the extended family are called by different names which spell out their social responsibilities to other members of the extended family. These names or codes are there to ensure that lines of communication are always open in case a conflict erupts. Members such as *omalume* (uncles) and *obabakazi* (aunts) have a specific role of conflict management and they carry their authority over every member of the family which in turn is supposed to respect them. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:184) explain the role of kinship ties among Zimbabwean Ndebeles in line with conflict management when they say:

In Ndebele culture individual freedom is not supposed to clash with the interests and welfare of the society. The paternal aunt prepared the girls to cope with household chores and difficulties in marriage. In a way *ubabakazi* mediates between her brother's daughters and the family and even society at large. If some conflict arose between the parents and the daughter, it was the duty of *ubabakazi* to resolve the conflict.

Group members also mentioned that all conflict management strategies are only enforceable in the context of culture so much that outside culture, no one can abide by them. In that regard, they underscored the value of the concept of *ubuntu* as an adhesive that binds society together by spelling out what the society wants and what it does not want. People are compelled to follow these social principles by virtue of being members of the community and in the process, conflict is prevented or resolved whenever it occurs. Mbiti (1975:179) notes that most African societies put emphasis on the social conduct. For an individual to avoid being in conflict with the society, he or she must follow that society's rules and customs.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has outline research findings pertaining indigenous knowledge and communicative strategies for dealing with conflict situations among the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. As presented above, it was discovered that Ndebele people rely on their own home-grown methods in dealing with conflict at different levels such as marriage, domestic violence as well as family disputes and conflicts which involve general community members. Respondents highlighted the value that they place on their cultural values and norms which they teach to their younger generation for

posterity so as to make sure that when the older folk are gone, society will not remain stranded as far as conflict management is concerned.

Data gathered through the questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions also demonstrated that people are aware that conflict goes beyond human relations since there are conflicts which emanate from the spiritual world which call for the invaluable expertise of traditional healers and diviners to fathom. Data gathered through these research instruments also showed that Ndebele societies are very much concerned about the future of their society hence they place special value on reconciliation so as to make sure that those who find themselves in a conflict can forge ahead with life and not to get stalled in the past. The next chapter makes an analytical discussion of the information that has been presented in this chapter together with other documented and non-documented but relevant information as regards conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles.

The concept of *ubuntu* as a social adhesive that keeps the society intact was almost mentioned by all interviewees. It was highlighted that Ndebele people subscribe to this concept hereditarily because their forefathers inculcated it in them through the process of socialization and various rites of passage. It is *ubuntu* which distinguishes a well-mannered from a mischievous member of the society.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

*“So, if Africa has to put the ‘falling apart together’, her original values must be revisited.” (Bob-Manuel, 2000).*

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter is mainly a discussion and analysis of primary and secondary data that was gathered during the research process as outlined in Chapter 5 above. Creswell (2009:183) posits that, “data analysis involves making sense out of collected data.” Apparently, qualitative data collection is heavily dependent on interpretation. This means that once collected, the data still requires several explanations just because huge amounts of qualitative evidence are often collected. In essence, there is no distinction between data collection and its analysis (Cassell and Symon 1994). It would be futile to collect data and store it up without making the relevant analysis since it is from the same that we end up drawing conclusions. Cohen et al., (2011: 537), states that data analysis in qualitative research is distinguished by, “Merging of analysis and interpretation and often by the merging of data collection with data analysis.”

This means that, the process of collecting information cannot be an end in itself until that information has been processed in such a way that it makes meaning to the reader. Mouton (2001:108) also observes that “...all fieldwork culminates in the analysis and interpretation of some set of data”. This implies that the raw information that would have been obtained through the various data gathering techniques has to be synthesized in a way that would develop it into something that even the society from which it would have been obtained can also benefit from it.

Chapter 1 gave a detailed exegesis of the major objectives of this research among which is the argument that African indigenous knowledge systems are still being utilized among various African societies including Zimbabwean Ndebeles of Silobela District. The research intended to explore how Ndebele people make use of indigenous knowledge and communicate knowledge in addressing issues that directly and indirectly affect them particularly conflict which is a perennial problem

the world over. The study was premised on views by scholars such as Mapara (2009:140) who views indigenous knowledge as:

... bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of a particular geographical area that they have survived on for a very long time. They are the knowledge forms that have failed to die despite the racial and colonial onslaught that they have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and arrogance

It was therefore, one of the major goals of this research to provide evidence that African people particularly the Ndebele are still actively utilizing their knowledge in dealing with problematic situations caused by conflict in their societies. The focus of this chapter is to discuss findings from responses to the questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussions as well as document analysis guided by the sub-themes of the research. Discussion and analysis of data was premised on the context of both scholarly and general contemporary perceptions on indigenous and communicative strategies that Zimbabwean Ndebeles use in order to deal with conflict among themselves as a way of demonstrating that these strategies cannot be relegated to the past but, in fact, may go a long way in addressing similar problems in the world today. The next section focuses on the various themes that emanated from the issues raised or discovered during the research in line with the main thrust of the study.

## **6.2. Research Themes**

For purposes of coherence and clarity in raising and discussing various arguments, the discussion of the research results is based on categories and themes that emerged and were discussed during the process of gathering data through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions as well as document analysis. Data analysis involves the process of understanding participants' perspective and subjective interpretation of phenomena as well as social reality as expressed through their various responses to research instruments used in data gathering. These provide untenable grounds for researchers to raise the participants' worldview to a certain level of conceptualization. This enables the researcher to explore the underlying meaning in participants' words thus allowing the researcher to elicit the essence of participants experiences in this case of the various functions of cultural

institutions which are meant to deal with conflict in the society of Ndebeles. In qualifying the advantages of taking a thematic approach to analysing data, Ayres, Kavanaugh and Knafel (2003:6) posit that:

Theme is used as attribute, descriptor, element, and concept. As an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas, it enables researchers to answer the study question. It contains codes that have a common point of reference and has a high degree of generality that unifies ideas regarding the subject of inquiry.

As observed for the previous chapter, the various instruments used in collecting data had certain consistent topics, ideas or subjects which kept on propping up as regards the subject of study. It is prudent to analyse such data in relation to each other regardless of which research instrument it might have come from. In any case, good qualitative research needs to be able to draw interpretations and be consistent with data that is collected. With this in mind, thematic analyses are capable of detecting and identifying such factors or variables that influence any issue generated by the participants. Therefore, the participants' interpretations are invaluable in terms of giving the most appropriate explanations for their behaviours, actions, thoughts and feelings. Such an approach augurs well with the features that are involved in the process of Thematic Analysis (Hatch 2002; Creswell 2009).

The process of undertaking research among Ndebele communities revealed a lot about the way people view their cultural institutions and at the same time it demonstrated that there are a lot of links among the various strategies that they use in dealing with conflict. Of note also was the fact that information given suggests that cultural issues are not independent items or pieces of information. There is a lot of history behind every aspect and unless the researcher seeks to comprehend everything in context, some of the important or relevant information can be excluded in the conclusions reached. It is suggested that researchers ultimately link their story line to the literature around which the content of themes in the study revolves to show how the study phenomenon has been advanced and also facilitate fuller understanding of the phenomenon for readers. Researchers recognize the story line developed based on themes as a strategy of "meaning" making, not "truth" making (Birks, Mills and Francis, 2009:14) so much that a thematic interpretation of data

enhances a better understanding to the reader. .

The current research involves participants' views and opinions about indigenous strategies for peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles and as such subscribes to the idea of analysing those views using the thematic approach. To present content when thematic analysis is applied, the theme must "describe the bulk of the data" (Joffe and Yardley 2004:67). In other words, a large amount of content or data is required because; while one single statement is significant such as an idiom or a proverb it does not necessarily reflect the full story. This is especially true when the research's objectives aim to gain an insight and discover relationships between the diverse data that originated from the different groups of participants. Thus, the researcher has to make use of as much information surrounding data as possible so that more concrete conclusions are reached.

Views expressed by participants through the various research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions have therefore, been categorized under selected themes for effective discussion in order to appreciate the effectiveness of the same as regards the subject under study. It would be difficult to discuss all the perceptions, attitudes, opinions and responses independent of each other and so taking a thematic approach seemed to be more effective as will be discovered in the following sections.

### **6.3 Respondents' views on Indigenous knowledge.**

Chapter five gave an outline of how the research was carried out particularly through the use of various research instruments which were deemed effective to collect relevant data for the research. The same chapter also gave a summative outline of individual and group responses pertaining different aspects under study which in this case are indigenous and communicative strategies for peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. It is important to highlight that there are some important insights that were discovered from various responses which are key to the authentication of the current research.

Since the research focuses on examining the various indigenous and communicative techniques employed by a particular group of people in dealing with problematic

situations such as conflict, it was vital to first establish their perceptions, attitudes and views as regards the same. This means that, it was imperative to understand the views and position of the local people as regards the effectiveness of their cultural institutions which house most if not all of their practices and norms which they use in dealing with different life situations.

Apart from acknowledging that Ndebele culture is well equipped with requisite strategies for conflict management, 100% of those who responded to the questionnaire admitted that even the contemporary society has got a lot to learn from their indigenous ways of dealing with conflict. Their assertion emanates from the fact that these (indigenous methods) have been tried and tested over time successfully. The responses such as these are crucial, not only for the purposes of this research, but they are also invaluable for the possible emancipation of African indigenous knowledge which has suffered vilification from modern and scientific critics. They are also a confirmation that not all hope is lost as far as making use of local solutions to local problems is concerned. In fact, they stand as confirmation that Africans, and in particular, Ndebeles, have not completely disconnected themselves from the umbilical cord that connects them with their culture as well as past successes. Mawere (2010:210) supports this notion when he observes that:

More importantly, despite the cultural onslaught on African thought, particularly their knowledge and belief systems through the spread of the western scientific worldview and the Christian religious tradition, the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans never completely lost touch with their traditional thought and values. The traditional belief system has continued to inform much of the life and activities of the people of these two societies.

The fact that those respondents who were consulted already demonstrated positive attitudes towards African indigenous knowledge and its applicability as an effective source of solutions to African problems is on its own a positive development. Such a scenario provides fertile ground for resuscitation, revitalization and revival of local cultural systems in dealing with local problems particularly conflict among societies. One of the major aims of this research is to interrogate the use and effectiveness of cultural systems in dealing with conflict with a view of influencing contemporary

societies to appreciate and learn from it. However, it is imperative to mention that, before outsiders can learn, locals have to be the first ones to acknowledge the fact that their knowledge is productive and sufficient for themselves and even for strangers. This research therefore, is premised first and foremost, on the understanding that local people already understand and appreciate that their knowledge is there to help them and in fact is adequate to do so.

Having established the various views pertaining indigenous cultural knowledge, it is important to then make reference to relevant themes in order to analyse and discuss the rest of the responses pertaining particular strategies that Ndebeles employ in dealing with or addressing conflict among their members. As was noted earlier, these themes emanate from the various responses as given by respondents to research instruments that were administered in soliciting information from respondents. The following sections are then categorized into identifiable relevant themes which make it possible for the researcher to interrogate and discuss various responses as has already been highlighted above.

#### **6.4 Mediation/Negotiation**

It was crucial for the researcher to establish how local people conceptualise the concept of conflict since its conceptualization has a bearing on how well prepared the people are in dealing with it. Various respondents who were interviewed in this regard indicated that they understand that conflict is a broad phenomenon which stretches from abstract to concrete or from simple to complex.

This means that, local people appreciate that conflict takes various shades and forms depending on the situation at hand thus the process of dealing with conflict is not only unleashed when two or more individuals have had a fight, conflict management is an on-going process which begins as soon as an individual is born. Respondents were quick to point out that some of the rituals which are done when a baby is born such as *ukwethwesa inkanda* (ritual for protecting infants from attack by fontanel) are meant to establish a solid and lasting relationship between the baby and its ancestors for posterity (Ndlovu et al., 1995:45).

Such rituals are performed so as to establish communication lines so that in future, even when the child has grown up to be a mature person, when he/she faces social problems, they can reconnect with their ancestry and extricate themselves from those entanglements. In other words, communication is at the centre of most of the indigenous strategies for peace and conflict management among Ndebele people because they believe that all problems are resolved through communication be it physical, spiritual or otherwise.

Confrontation between the people and the spirit can cause misfortune and resolution of the conflict is the resolution of the misfortune (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 2012:179). In that case, respondents indicated that there are several communication lines which exist either for prevention or resolution of conflict. As such, the aspect of mediation came into light as one of the most utilized and effective ways by which conflict management processes are set in motion in the Ndebele societies.

From the evidence gathered, it was noted that negotiation/mediation is a virtue among the Ndebeles in making sure that conflict is both prevented and resolved whenever it has occurred. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1972) defined mediation as the reconciliation of two opposing forces within a given society and as such, the requisite mediation process is determined by the nature of the conflict. Negotiators play a very significant role as inter-mediators or go-betweens in various facets of the society.

It should be pointed out here that negotiators are not only facilitators in situations where there is a problem, there are instances where negotiators are engaged to facilitate social deals such as marriage, social and religious ceremonies and even in instances where there is need to consult the ancestral spirits. Speaking about the importance of mediation in African conflict resolution, Achieng (2012:11) states that:

Mediation takes place through the intervention of a third party, which serves as a facilitator of communication between the parties and as a catalyst for reaching an agreement between the opposing interests, the parties become active participants in the dispute resolution process, and help forge the terms and conditions of their own settlement.

This section discusses the role of negotiators among the Ndebele in various facets of their life in order to demonstrate that Ndebele people have traditionally and are still utilising the concept of negotiation/mediation as a way of dealing with conflict amongst their societies. Various respondents during the process of carrying out research argued that mediation or negotiation is not an event but a well calculated process. They pointed out that it incorporates a number of factors such as conflict prevention and resolution as highlighted by Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2010:168) who underscore the role of mediation in the Ndebele society when they say:

Mediation in Ndebele is not employed when conflicts occur. However, it is an institution in anticipation and mediators for various types of conflicts are known and are in place to resolve any conflict that may occur.

While there are a number of cultural instruments designed to deal with conflict in the Ndebele society, it should be pointed out that mediation is the key element just because almost all types of conflict that occur need someone to come in as a mediator/negotiator to facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties. Mediation, as has already been mentioned, takes place at both the physical and spiritual realm and as such it is a complex process which cannot be left in the hands of incapable people. As a result, there is need to discuss some of the qualities that are considered first from a general perspective but more importantly particularly among the Ndebeles of Zimbabwe for one to be a mediator/negotiator. Making reference to the role played by a mediator in the Ndebele society, Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:168) go on to state that:

A mediator is respected and cannot be part of the conflict. Mediators are found in all forums of conflict in Ndebele. When two people are in conflict there is always a third person ready to go between them to stop and resolve the conflict. Interests, marriage, generation gap, families, power and resources are sources of conflict in Ndebele society; in all these instances mediation can be employed as a means to resolve existing conflicts.

The research discovered that the value that is placed upon the process of mediation is irreplaceable and as such there are specific qualities that are required for one to

be a mediator/negotiator even among Ndebeles as this is key to successful mediation as well as conflict resolution processes. The sections below will focus on some of the qualities that are generally considered when choosing a mediator with special attention given to those qualities that Ndebele people also consider since they are the main focus of this research. The fact that mediation is not a free-for-all activity even among Ndebele people goes on to explain how sophisticated they are in terms of dealing with conflict in their midst. This also goes on for their act of putting together traditional structures meant to address conflict situations even before they occur. Preceding sections will also discuss various situations where mediation or negotiation is applied among Ndebele people so as to contextualize the arguments raised in this research as well as consolidate issues raised during the process of data gathering.

#### **6.4.1 Neutrality**

It has already been mentioned in the previous section that research respondents highlighted that they view mediation as a complex process which requires those who engage in it to possess specific attributes in order for the process to be meaningful. When two individuals or two different groups of people are involved in a conflict and they can no longer agree even to disagree, they need a third party. This individual is the one who may assist them to re-open closed communication lines and at least help them to try and bridge their differences. This third party cannot just be anyone but must be an individual who is acceptable to both parties as a neutral figure who may not be deemed to be biased towards one of the parties.

At the same time, he/she should be someone who is able to emotionally identify with the situations of both conflicting parties as this is essential in assuring the parties that the ground is level and thus conducive for conflict resolution. Benjamin (2003:111) avers that:

The mediator must connect or get in sync with each party. The mediator must be able to identify with the perspective of each party sufficiently so that the party feels joined and accommodated. The identification works to establish the bond and credibility necessary for trust to develop between the mediator and each party

Neutrality is one very essential element in mediation because it helps to build trust among the conflicting parties thereby doing away with any sort of doubt or feeling that the negotiator is biased towards one party. Hoffmann (1998:76) asserts that “the reward of working as a mediator or arbitrator is to stand for fairness in mediation, fairness of process, and in arbitration, fairness of both process and outcome” thus making neutrality invaluable if positive results are to be reaped. Similar sentiments are echoed by Winslade and Monk (2001:67) who also stress the importance of trustworthiness and neutrality as the cornerstone which develops an effective working relationship with the conflicting parties. It demonstrates the extent to which the mediator demonstrates respect, understanding, and trustworthiness in the mediation.

According to respondents, once one of the parties feels that the negotiator is biased towards the other, negotiation can be stalled because the other party would naturally refuse to cooperate in the conflict resolution process and may even not accept the outcomes of the whole process. Schreier (2002:101) observes that it is crucial for a mediator to always maintain professional boundaries with the conflicting parties and impartiality on the issues involved. At the same time Saposnek (2003:250) also believes that it is very important for the mediator to rigorously maintain balance between parties since it is balance that facilitates more accurate decisions when it comes to finding solutions to a problem. Neutrality therefore is a non-negotiable attribute in a successful mediation process. When the negotiator is deemed to be neutral, both parties feel free to entrust him/her with the negotiation process by freely pouring out their genuine feelings to them so much that the outcomes of the process are based on genuine information.

Some of the interviewees argued that when parties are conflicting, they have prejudices against each other and ordinarily would have failed to resolve their problems on their own. It is their failure to resolve their differences that compels them to seek the services of a mediator. It is therefore, very crucial that at every stage, the negotiator exhibits neutrality and openness to both parties so that they may allow him/her to even come up with a solution on their behalf.

One interviewee emphasized the value of neutrality in mediation when she said that “*akumelanga umlamlankunzi athathe icele elilodwa nxa elamula*” (a mediator should never take sides during the process of mediation). In fact, the term “*umlamlankunzi*” is derived from the prefix /*um-*/ joined to the verb /*-lamula-*/ and noun /*inkunzi*/ (a bull) such that /*um-*/ + /*-lamula-*/ + /*inkunzi*/ = /*umlamlankunzi*/ (a peace maker). The concept of *umlamlankunzi* is derived from the pastoral act of a bulls’ fight in which an individual gets in-between the two fighting bulls in order to separate them and thus stop their fight. When it comes to human beings, “*umlamlankunzi*” therefore stands at the centre of the conflict and does not take any side, he or she remains neutral.

According to Benjamin (2003:111), neutrality entails that the mediator be able to see things in the perspective of both parties so that he/she builds trust in the disputants for maximization of results. A neutral mediator must be in a position to sympathise and empathise with both parties. They in turn must visibly accept that he/she shares in their problem so that finding a solution will be based on this acceptance that he/she is capable of finding one. He goes on to say:

Closely related to empathy is the need for the mediator to connect with the parties: The mediator must connect or get in sync with each party. The mediator must be able to identify with the perspective of each party sufficiently so that the party feels joined and accommodated. The identification works to establish the bond and credibility necessary for trust to develop between the mediator and each party (Benjamin, 2003:111).

During a discussion session with one of the focus groups, the subject of neutrality became a heated debate and members were not in agreement as to the possibility of total neutrality in a dispute. However, they all agreed that it is imperative for the mediator to be as much as possible neutral to both disputing parties. Some of them were of the opinion that when disputants have a feeling that their mediator who is a relative is not neutral, they can settle for a complete stranger, apparently, someone who is not a relative to either of them in order to try and resolve their conflict. A relative to one of the parties is deemed to be conflicted already and may take the side of his/her relative especially where two people who may not be necessarily

blood relations are involved thus an outsider is preferred because they are believed to be impartial.

It is therefore, important for a mediator to exercise extreme caution during the process of settling disputes. This makes sure that they are not deemed to be partial and biased. Among the Ndebele, elderly people are generally accepted and trusted with neutrality due to the fact that they have had enough experience in dealing with conflict. Their age is their license to be neutral figures in handling various conflicts especially marital disputes regardless of being relatives or not. Gaur (2017:3) underscores the significance of neutrality in mediation processes when he says:

The faith reposed by the parties in the mediator at the time of his appointment needs to be maintained not only till the entire proceeding is over but also thereafter. This faith should not only exist but also seen to be existing all the time. Neutrality is that overt act or those overt acts of a mediator, which give reason to the parties to believe that they can continue to have faith in him. A mediator should never give an impression that he is leaning in favour of any of the parties. His conduct should reflect that he is paying equal respect to both the parties; he is paying equal attention to both the parties; he is not extraordinarily respectful to one of the parties; he is not extraordinarily chatty with one of the parties and so on.

He/she should try as much as possible to remain as neutral as possible if positive results are to be realized from the mediation process. Most of the interviewees as could be observed from their responses were of the opinion that most conflicts nowadays have gone unresolved because the mediator would have shown partiality or bias towards one side. They went on to cite the case of former South African President Thabo Mbeki whom they accused of having plainly registered his dislike of the late former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Morgan Tsvangirai. They argued that, instead of negotiating in good faith, the former was biased towards the former president Robert Mugabe which is why the negotiated settlement known as the Government of National Unity (GNU, 2009-2013) was not an outright success. According to Johwa and Muleya (2008) in the "*Business Day Newspaper*", Thabo Mbeki's hatred for the opposition MDC:

... was evident in his publicised letter to Tsvangirai in November 2008 in which he echoed Mugabe's own rhetoric by accusing the MDC leader of showing 'contempt' for African leaders and of seeking allies in the West. This was hardly a private behind the scenes criticism and thus constituted an important breach of quiet diplomacy. Mugabe has never been subject to such strictures throughout eight years of quiet diplomacy.

It was interesting to note that Zimbabwean Ndebeles are so apt with current affairs and observe when political mistakes are made and most of all, they juxtapose the same with their own traditional practices and feel that theirs are more solid and compact in terms of bias.

#### **6.4.2 Confidentiality**

A mediator must be a person who is endowed with confidentiality since what he/she discusses with the conflicting parties may not be subject for public consumption which may have to be kept ignorant of the conflict as long as possible. Mediation relies largely on confidentiality which has been, and remains, one of the most essential theoretical cornerstones of the mediation process. It allows the process to offer a protected negotiation environment away from public view because Ndebele people are always wary of displaying their problems in public because they view it as "*ukwembula amakhwapha*" (opening one's armpits in public), an act they consider as shameful.

However, there was a group of discussants during a focus group discussion who were of the opinion that at times it helps to discuss some of these issues in public because it provides an opportunity for more solutions from others. Their argument was hinged on one of the Ndebele proverbs which they cited as a basis for doing so. The proverb says "*okwehlula amadoda kuyabikwa*" (what men fails to solve alone he should report to others) which seems to suggest that solutions lay in sharing problems with others.

Those who were against sharing confidential with the public argued that discussing private information with other people has a potential of distorting the mediation process because one or both conflicting parties might lose trust in the mediator and

decide not to cooperate thus stalling any possible progress. Confidentiality is used to assure parties that information introduced or exchanged by parties in the process cannot by any chance be later used as evidence against one of the parties. For example, in subsequent court proceedings and at the same time may also not be divulged, by another party or the mediator, to individuals who are outside the mediation process. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:177) attest to the importance of confidentiality in effective conflict management situations when they say:

A good mediator in Ndebele is one who can keep secrets, the people are not supposed to know about the matter. Contemporary mediation borrows from this strategy and the media are sometimes barred from covering the mediation talks, but the fact that people know that there are talks, works against the strategy of secrecy in mediation.

A mediator in any conflict is chosen for their sole ability to contain delicate information especially concerning those people who would be conflicting. There are instances where conflict might be so sensitive to the extent that if information is prematurely disclosed to wrong individuals, it has a potential of increasing the intensity of the conflict. Ndebele people have a common saying concerning those people who have a problem of disclosing confidential information whom they refer to as "*olesifuba esakhatshwa lidube*" (the one with a chest which was once kicked by a zebra). Such an individual is scorned in the society because their actions can lead to fights and misunderstandings among community members. Such individuals cannot be considered as mediators because they are a danger not only to the mediation process but to society at large because they can cause tension and turmoil by their actions.

It cannot be over emphasized that a mediator has a duty to retain the confidence of the conflicting parties if his/her efforts or interventions are to bear any meaningful fruits. During the process of carrying out the research, respondents emphasized the importance of confidentiality in dealing with conflicts among conflicting members because anything to the contrary is recipe for disaster. Individuals such as aunts, uncles and the elderly are generally viewed as neutral figures when their families are engaged in conflicts and time and again, they are called upon to assist in resolving

conflicts because society has already assigned this attribute to them in various oral literatures such as folktales and proverbs.

### **6.4.3 Integrity**

Apart from confidentiality and neutrality, respondents cited the other requisite attribute for effective mediation in conflict management and resolution as integrity. When individuals are involved in a conflict, they have so much that separates them and they would not in any way want to see a mediator who does not command respect. Interviewees were all unanimous in their responses concerning neutrality because they said they so much desire a mediator who is trustworthy so that they appreciate that whatever they tell him/her, it would be used in finding a solution to their problem. Their views are supported by Benjamin (2003:94) who points out the fact that conflict itself is already a complex phenomenon which needs those involved in resolving it to understand that they are dealing with a complex scenario as he says:

Most complex disputes require risk assessment and management. There are seldom clear choices and certainly no guarantees. Mediators, by definition, work in this terrain of ambiguity, which requires a multivalent thinking frame.

From the evidence gathered through the process of research, it was discovered that there are instances when a mediator is exposed to explosive and sensitive information that has potential of tearing the family apart in case it is not handled very well. It is therefore essential for the mediator to retain the trust of the disputants so that the worst does not happen. One of the interviewees during the research indicated that barrenness is a potential conflict in a family if not dealt with on time. She went on to explain that in the traditional Ndebele culture, when parents discovered that their son cannot make his wife to fall pregnant, they can provide a solution by making a private arrangement with his young brother or cousin brother so that he sleeps with the brother's wife and bear children for him.

One of the interviewees who was asked on the aspect of integrity was quick to mention that such an arrangement is done with so much secrecy such that it may

only be known by not more than five people who in most cases are the mother, the aunt/grandmother and the other two who are ultimately supposed to sleep together. She highlighted that the arrangement is kept a guarded secret to the extent that it is one of those secrets which are classified as "*imfalayo*" (a secret which cannot be revealed even unto death). The aunt or mother in this case acts as a mediator and would not be expected to reveal this secret because that would definitely lead to a serious family dispute. Bozongwana (2000:22) makes mention of the same tradition where he says:

... adultery is outlawed except where and when necessary for instance if one of the sons is impotent, a younger brother from the same mother may be authorized to get into bed with the brother's wife only for purposes of producing children for him. The impotent may not be told of the brother's participation in the procreation.

It is imperative therefore that, way before the two individuals agree to mate, the mediator should have already demonstrated unquestionable levels of integrity and trustworthiness since the arrangement is as good as treading on thin ice especially for the wife who ordinarily would have made a vow to her husband. While there were divergent views concerning this method of solving a fertility problem, most of the respondents consulted seem to concur. They agreed on the fact that this was one of the best solutions as long as it was not affected by greed and selfishness from those involved. Asked if they would want the same method applied to them, most of the respondents were reluctant and would rather it be done to others excluding them. However, they almost all agreed that it was and may still be an effective way of resolving contemporary issues if it is applied cautiously with the prevalence of HIV and Aids nowadays.

It should be noted that integrity in the African context is not measured in the same way that it is measured in the western world. Africans in general and Ndebeles in particular have their own method of measuring integrity and they know who among themselves has integrity and who does not. Above all, it is still as important among Africans as it is in the western world for a mediator to have integrity so that they can realize positive results in their issues of conflict management as highlighted by Winslade and Monk (2001:67) who says that:

The cornerstone to developing an effective working relationship with the disputing parties is the extent to which the mediator demonstrates respect, understanding, and trustworthiness in the mediation.

Old age in the Ndebele society comes with social respect and dignity to the extent that when one develops white hairs due to old age, the hairs are referred to as “*izimvu*” (sheep) because they are a sign of wisdom. It is not a surprise to discover that age is a major factor when it comes to mediation. This is because it is generally assumed that the older the person grows, the more respect he/she garners and as such, conflicting parties would naturally have faith in him/her and agree to resolve their conflicts. The same feeling still resonates among some of the respondents who were consulted for purposes of this research who feel that if today’s society would take advantage of those that are aged and experienced, some of the problems would have long been resolved. The following section deals with the concept of negotiation in marriage since it was established during the process of undertaking research that it plays a vital role in making sure that the marriage is safeguarded.

### **6.5 Negotiation in marriage**

The subject of marriage was thrown into the arena for debate among members of one of the guided focus discussions. The idea was to first establish members’ views about the role of marriage in the Ndebele society and in Africans in general. The general consensus was that marriage is considered a very important rite of passage in the Ndebele society and group members indicated that there are so many reasons why Ndebeles place so much value on marriage. One of the reasons is that marriage indicates a stage in life where one would have grown into a responsible member of the society who can physically, socially and emotionally assist. Members argued that it is the desire of every parent to see their children grow up and develop into adulthood but all would not be complete unless they get into the marriage union. Marriage is an assurance that the name of the clan will be perpetuated to the next generation.

Once again, respondents to both questionnaires and interviews were of the opinion that marriage is a potential source of conflict right from the beginning since it involves two strangers coming to live together for the rest of their lives. They all concurred on the fact that, unless requisite steps are taken, there is no way a marriage union can last. They went on to examine the significance of the various steps that are followed when establishing a marriage union as evidence of indigenous expertise in establishing requisite structures for conflict management way before it occurs.

When two people are getting married, there is always need for them to employ the services of a negotiator who acts as a go-between in order to negotiate especially on behalf of the groom to the bride's family. In this case, the negotiator is called *umnyayi/usombo* and his/her role is spelt out in the dictates of the Ndebele social constitution though not written down but whose basis is found in the common Ndebele saying which says "*umthunywa kalampontshi*" (a messenger cannot be held accountable for a crime). Sibanda (2002: 88) explains what happens when a young man has identified a woman to marry. He says that "*Abakwabo kajaha bathuma indoda eyingcwethi ukuba iyevelela ijaha eselikhonjiwe. Indoda leyo (umkhongi) ifika njengomuntu wemzini*" (The family of the bridegroom sends an intelligent and knowledgeable man to go and introduce them to the family of the bride the man goes there as a visitor). Discussants viewed the idea of involving the whole family as a strategy to make sure that even when the man has finally married his wife, they do not leave apart from the rest of the family. In other words, the family continues to have a say in the behaviour of married couples such that when conflicts arise, they are able to solve them together.

Traditionally, it is taboo for a prospective son-in-law or suitor to personally go by himself to ask for his girlfriend's hand in marriage from her parents. This was interpreted as an act of being rude and at times the brother to the girl would even confront him and send him away in an embarrassing manner for despising them. As such, it is the *sombo*, a traditionally approved figure, who has this immunity against any form of violence by the girl's brothers who is given the social duty to act as a representative of the suitor until such a time when necessary steps have been taken for him to come and meet his girlfriend's family. The saying "*umthunywa*

*kalampontshi*” acts as a shield to protect him since he would just be but a stranger who has been sent and not necessarily the suitor himself. This means that no one is culturally permitted to attack a negotiator because that will be shutting out any avenues for conflict resolution. Yanka in Furnish and Gunner (1995:212) have this to say about mediation:

The use of an intermediary, through whom formal talk is rooted, is the social dimension of the general practice and direction that permeates the speech of several cultures in Africa

The *sodombo* as a negotiator is not just any individual but a person who possesses certain qualities which are a pre-requisite for the task ahead. Such qualities are important simply because negotiation is no mean task but a very sophisticated one which requires skill and tact just because it is a “process of combining divergent viewpoints to produce a common agreement” (Zaartman, 2008:13). The negotiator, therefore, is someone who is able to articulate issues, someone who is gifted in eloquence so much that he can sweet-talk the bride’s family and possibly bring them down in terms of some of the charges that they might be demanding as bride price. In cases where bride’s family might be refusing to accept the son-in-law to-be due to some historical reasons, the *sodombo* must be able to negotiate until they budge and agree to move forward despite the past events.

It was established during a group discussion that the role of the *sodombo* does not expire with the ultimate marriage of the two individuals. He remains a very key figure throughout this new union even when they grow old. Since marriage among the Ndebeles is not a matter between two individuals but two families, or even two villages, *sodombo* plays an important role. These families may not necessarily have direct communication especially when there is a problem between their married children. If we are to take for instance when the son-in-law is no longer fulfilling some of his obligations pertaining *lobola*, the father-in-law is not allowed to demand directly from him but he is allowed to call *sodombo* and ask him to explain. It is *sodombo* who eventually goes to remind the son-in-law to own up (Sibanda, 2000:9). This way, the *sodombo* acts as a very effective avenue for conflict management and

resolution. Some of the discussants indicated that life for married people would be very difficult in the absence of the concept of a *sodombo* because then, all communication among those involved would have been rendered impossible especially in the event that conflict arises.

Apart from making sure that *lobola* obligations are honoured, this research found out that *sodombo* remains playing an important role even to the two married individuals throughout their marital life. As a way of illustration, one of the interviewees stated that in simple terms, *sodombo* plays the role of a referee in a soccer match. According to the discussants, Ndebele people always envisaged that when people are married, there are instances when they may not agree on certain issues and in some instances their disagreements can even degenerate to physical conflict and abuse.

*Sodombo* is always called upon to monitor such eventualities as a way of making sure that marriages do not collapse at times over small arguments. When an argument ensues, he/she may be called upon to come and act as an arbitrator between the husband and wife and seek necessary solutions which will eventually sustain the marriage union. From the debate, the researcher established the fact that, though it may appear like a simple task, the concept of *sodombo* is a well-organized, well thought out system designed to deal with conflict from a preventive to a resolution level and beyond.

Questionnaires distributed for data collection also canvassed for respondents' views on communicative strategies particularly the use of oral literature in dealing with conflict among married couples. From the responses given, it was observed that some of the respondents mentioned a common Ndebele proverb which says "*eyomndeni kayingenwa*" (a domestic family matter does not require outside interventions). In reference to this proverb, they said that it is used to discourage outsiders from interfering in the issues of conflict among even those that are married. Apparently, though a stranger, *sodombo* is the only one with the diplomatic social passport to meddle in the affairs of a married couple especially when they are in a conflict. In that case, it is always important to select a *sodombo* wisely because in essence, you will be engaging a permanent marriage advisor who will closely

monitor how the marriage is developing. If the *sodombo* is not a mature person, they would not be able to bear the burden of resolving conflicts.

The researcher went on to seek the opinion and interpretation of the proverb “*eyomndeni kayingenwa*” among members of a focus group discussion and divergent views ensued. Some were of the opinion that the outsiders who are being referred to are those that are not family members while others felt that even family members in this case are regarded as strangers. The bottom line however, was that, where a conflict involves a married couple, everyone ought to tread carefully because it has been observed that couples fight and resolve their problems and carry on with life.

This usually put other people in a precarious position depending on what they would have said during the period of conflict and as such, better to stay outside. In other words, the researcher came to the conclusion that, while it may be difficult to extricate oneself from a domestic conflict involving relatives, they need to keep a safe distance. Doing such serves as a way of making sure that conflict is not extended to so many other people thereby making it difficult to contain.

The other proverb which was cited by almost respondents to both questionnaires and interviewees says “*akula muzi ongathunqi ntuthu*” (there is not homestead which does not exude smoke). Upon enquiry and debates, it was established that Ndebele people understand that no society can be completely rid of conflict, let alone those who are in marriage unions. This proverb acts as a source of inspiration to those who are married as it stands as an indicator that when conflict arises, they should never imagine that they are the only ones or the first and last ones for that matter. It is both a warning and an admission that once in a while married people have differences but what is important is to solve them amicably. Just like all rural homesteads once in a while exude smoke, so is conflict. No one should run away from their home because they have failed to agree with their spouse. Apparently, this is a subtle way of encouraging people to live harmoniously and persevere in their homes so that the society does not experience many family break-ups because such lead to societal strife and social meltdown.

The various communicative strategies employed by the Ndebele as indicated above go a long way to ensure that there is social cohesion and progress among community members. On the other hand, of importance as discussed above and observed from various research instruments, the concept of *sodombo* is a well calculated social strategy for a lasting solution to potential sources of conflict. It is a deliberate social system which Ndebeles designed and incorporated in their cultural systems in order to make it viable in dealing with problematic situations.

The same concept has been adopted in a number of conflict situations in political crisis even in contemporary societies especially where politically negotiated settlements of disputes are brokered. Organizations like SADC, African Union (AU) and even the UN have acted as guarantors in peace treaties the world over. It is the submission of the current researcher that the same principle has been used since time immemorial among Ndebeles as can be observed from the role of *sodombo*. The following section examines how Zimbabwean Ndebeles have and continue to rely on their locally designed social structures for peace and conflict management as embedded in the in-law relationships.

### **6.6 In-law relations**

Evidence from chapter five points out to a deliberate inclination by the respondents to questionnaires, interviewees and focus group discussion towards safeguarding the marriage institution by making sure that it does not suffer much of the general conflict that takes place in the society. Marriage in the African context is a rite of passage which every normal individual is expected to go through because it is the basis for the perpetuation of humankind. If people fail to get married, procreation is affected and eventually, humankind will go to extinction. However, unlike what transpires in the Western world, marriage in Africa is not an individuals' affair. When two individuals get married, their union involves a lot of people who include the immediate family, clan, and at times different communities. (Sibanda: 2000:18) This marriage union triggers a new set of relationships among the two main families involved.

As indicated by some of the respondents during the process of carrying out research, Ndebele people's life is hinged on the family unit which forms the base for

all other relationships that eventually develop including in-law relations. Family plays a crucial role in Africa. Mbiti (1975:175) asserts that “each person in African traditional life lives in or as a part of the family”. Kisembo (1998:202-203) also argues that “the family community was the fundamental element of the African, this basis sphere of action, through which he became integrated with the larger, human community ... he always acted from within the sphere of the family”. In essence, it is demonstrated by the various research respondents, the concept of a family unit cannot be underestimated when one is discussing African and Ndebele people’s social and even physical behaviour.

Most of the respondents argued that most of the conflicts experienced by the society of today have got a lot to do with the family unit and most of all, the extended family set-up which characterises most African societies. As a way of qualifying the argument on the role of the family unit and its contribution to either conflict or conflict management, the researcher decided to examine the relations formulated by marriage unions as an extension of the family set-up among Ndebeles. The term in-laws which is adopted for purposes of this discussion refers to distinct relationships that are formed by or through marriage (Horsely, 1996; Rittenour & Soliz, 2009). Both focus discussion groups were led into a guided discussion of the aspect of in-law relations and a number of issues were discussed and discovered as outlined in the preceding sections of the study.

About 95% of the respondents responded positively to the idea of the in-law relations as a key element or mechanism engineered by the Ndebeles to prevent as well as deal with conflict in their societies. They almost all concurred on the fact that in-law unions among Zimbabwean Ndebeles are revered and have got different titles which spell out different responsibilities to their bearers especially as far as conflict management is concerned. In demonstrating the value of family social relations among Africans, Furusa et al., (1996:40) postulate that “the individual’s success in many ventures may depend, therefore, on his position to kinship structure and upon accepted patterns of interactions”. In other words, this means that every member of the family has to play their part as spelt out in their relation to the others. Echoing similar sentiments, Horsley (1996) points out that in-law relationship constantly, directly or indirectly, influence newly formed families because the in-laws show the

couple where they came from and create a preview of where the couple may be going.

This section of the research presents an assessment of the role played by various cultural in-law titles among Ndebele people as an intelligent mechanism which is anchored on the very ethos of the incontestable intelligence embedded in African indigenous knowledge. The assessment derives from the arguments raised during the process of carrying out research particularly as regards the concept of the family unit which according to respondents is the basic source of survival for humanity among Africans. In-law relations shape an ideal and expected behaviour for whoever is involved and compels them to act in a manner that is expected by the society in order to fulfil certain duties which in most cases have something to do with the other person.

These in-law relations are perceived in this research as an intelligent mechanism designed by indigenous societies in order to describe and interpret phenomena. They are undoubtedly a product of African indigenous knowledge systems which have been designed culturally over time in order to deal with all potential conflict situations among the Ndebele people. Mapara (2009) states that:

Indigenous knowledge systems are bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of a particular geographical area that they have survived on for a very long time. They are the knowledge forms that have failed to die despite the racial and colonial onslaught that they have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and arrogance.

Basing on the arguments raised concerning in-law relations and how they are intertwined, the researcher proffers the notion that African people in general, and the Ndebele in particular, have, in their unquestionable wisdom and knowledge which is mentioned by the scholar above, designed ways of making sure that peace prevails in their communities. It cannot be over emphasised that African culture has a very strong way of making sure that whatever program local people engage in, as long as it is anchored in their culture, it succeeds. Laderach (1995:35) states that “culture is a shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving,

interpreting, expressing and responding to social realities around them.” Research respondents stated in no uncertain terms that those who are involved in in-law relationships can only leave peacefully as long as they observe the dictates of their culture.

In this case, the researcher discovered that the seemingly insignificant distances prescribed and proscribed by various in-law titles act as the vanguard for making sure that peace prevails and as such, any form of violation of those distances leads to conflict. Shorter (1998:83) defines family as a “minimal effective group of relatives by blood and/ marriage and analogous groups”. The term analogous is referring to members who are not related by blood or marriage as such qualifying the argument that the family unit, ad in this case, the bonds enshrined in the in-law titles and relations plays a significant role in issues of conflict management among Ndebeles.

The researcher made an extensive examination of the concept of *ubuntu* and particularly the role it plays in shaping the behaviour and conduct of Ndebele people of Zimbabwe and responses from respondents through questionnaires and interview questions. Respondents unanimously admitted that the concept of *ubuntu* is an essential element in dictating laws and principles of how members should behave both at individual and at community level since it is the adhesive that connects them to each other.

Respondents argued that in-law relations hinge on the concept of *ubuntu* for everyone involved and if any relationship attempts to survive outside this concept, it ceases to be recognised among the chain of relations among Ndebeles. Discussants indicated that the concept of *ubuntu* in this case is closely connected to the various religious beliefs and customs that the local people uphold which in turn bind and compel them to uphold. In-law relationships provide a platform for the (re)negotiation and (re)establishment of different traditions, rituals and values that come from the families of the in-laws (Horsley, 1996; Walsh, 1999).

Unlike those from Western nations of the world, Ndebeles live as a community such that even a wife gets married not only to her husband but metaphorically to the whole clan. As such, both she and him operate under the principles which are

dictated by that same clan or community. Mbiti (1969:106) states that “for African people the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brother and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives”. As the respondents argued, all these relations come about as a result of the marriage institution which establishes various linkages through a web of inter-relations which eventually formulate a wider society.

As demonstrated by the responses mentioned in chapter five of this research, respondents highlighted how Ndebeles regard the concept of *ubuntu* highly and rely on it for making sure that all these intertwined relations are kept in check. This they do as a way of making sure that they save an effective purpose as desired by their designers. This is supported by Ramose (1999:78) when he says that “*ubuntu* is instrumental in sustaining social cohesion, managing peace and order for the good life of everyone in the society including strangers and passers-by.” In the same vein, “*ubuntu* is a philosophy that sets a premium on human relations” such that outside *ubuntu*, even these in-law titles of the Ndebele are not only meaningless but worthless too (Samkange and Samkange, 1980:34). The following sections then investigate the various inter-relations that are generated through the marriage processes in order to test the effectiveness of the same as far as peace and conflict management is concerned.

#### **6.6.1 *Ubabazala* (father in-law) vs *umalukazana* (Daughter-in-law)**

Respondents indicated that there are a number of traditional processes that one through when they are getting married such as payment of *lobola* as a sign that the man not only loves the wife but also as a sign that he is willing to take care of her. When two individuals get married in the African context, new relationships are created because in essence, the two do not marry for themselves but for the whole clan. In the traditional society, polygamous marriages were a preferred form of marriage. Such marriages contributed to the extension of relationships of the family by incorporating more people and thereby presenting more potential problems especially as far as conflict is concerned (Waruta, 2005:105).

According to the respondents as discovered during focus group discussions, the act of marriage which brings two separate families together to a new establishment already poses a potential ground for conflict since these two families would be ordinarily separate socially, religiously and at times even metaphysically. Respondents made reference to what they termed a common saying which says “*sihlangane imihlathi isomile*” (we met when our jaws were already strong) which is used to explain the complications associated with different backgrounds of those who are getting married.

Evidence from the respondents indicated that basically, those who are getting married are already prepared to accept that they may differ in opinions on several issues since they were brought up under different conditions. The same goes for their families who are also called upon to consider this fact strongly as it may also affect the way they view especially their daughter-in-law because she is the one who lives her family to come and stay with her husband’s family.

In light of these realities, respondents observed that most in-law relations affected the woman in a marriage union simply because of her vicinity to these ‘strangers’ with whom she is which compelled to stay probably for the rest of her marital life and thus has more room for making social and physical errors. The fact that the woman comes and stays at her husband’s home presents her with a plethora of laws and by-laws by which she should conduct herself. These include even in carrying out various duties and transactions in the new family.

Most of the respondents concurred that the vicinity of the woman places her under stringent conditions which, if not well managed would present potential grounds for conflict. They went on to observe that there are several laws or codes of conduct which govern the woman (*umalukazana*) in regard to her father-in-law (*ubabazala*). It is therefore, prudent for this discussion to consider the relations between father-in-law and daughter-in-law concurrently because, then, their distances can be distinguishable.

According to respondents, both *umalukazana* (daughter-in-law) and her *babazala* (father-in-law) have a cut out code of conduct which is meant to ensure that they

minimise chances of conflict whether between the two of them or with the entire family. Respondents underscored the damage that a conflict between a *malukazana* and her *babazala* can cause not only to their immediate families but also to the entire community because it pauses complicated scenarios which society may not find easy to extricate itself from. In that case, they pointed out to the stringent conditions given to *umalukazana* and her *babazala* by the society in order to try and avoid any form of conflict. One of the respondents mentioned that “when it comes to *umalukazana* and her *babazala*, Ndebeles left no room for chance so much that, of all in-law relationships, theirs is the most constricted and restrictive”.

Traditionally, *ubabazala* is not expected to have direct contact with his daughter-in-law so much that, he must find a way of avoiding direct constant contact with her as much as possible. As a result, in order to make this contact easily avoidable, it is taboo for *ubabazala* to have any of his meals in the presence of *umalukazana*. In essence, *ubabazala* is ordinarily prohibited from staying under the same roof or in the same room with his *malukazana* under whatever circumstances as this would increase their chances of meeting.

Apart from that, *umalukazana* is expected to wear clothes that cover much of her body especially her sensitive body parts such as buttocks and breasts as long as there is a chance that she may accidentally meet with her *babazala*. Short skirts are discouraged as they are likely to trigger sexual attraction on those who see her including her *babazala* so long skirts are a mitigation measure to avoid any eventualities. She is also supposed to wear head gear to cover her hair and basically avoid direct eye contact with him as much as possible.

In an attempt to verify the effectiveness of the arguments raised during the discussions concerning what the researcher calls the social distance created between a *malukazana* and her *babazala*, the focus groups were guided into discussing the prevalence of father and daughter-in-law illicit love affairs which seem to be on the rise nowadays. The reference point was a story in the local H Metro Newspaper of the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2017 which was under the headline “father-in-law caught red handed with daughter-in-law in Mutare”. In that particular story, the son, who is the husband to this woman was said to be working in Harare while the

wife was staying with his parents in the rural areas of Mutare. The two were having a love affair in secrecy and one day the wife of Mr X who had developed suspicions over time due to the strange behaviour of her husband then set up a trap and caught the two love birds in bed in the daughter-in-law's bedroom.

During focus group deliberations, discussants argued that modernisation and especially rural-urban migration had brought along with-it new dynamics to the traditional African family set-up. This is because it has ushered in the problem of separation between husband and wife which are a new feature which has resulted in such social problems. At the same time, the discussants insisted that regardless of the new socio-economic shifts to the family arrangements, Ndebele, and even African culture for that matter, still had no room for such incidents which they strongly resent as taboo.

Discussants are still adamant that Ndebele tradition is still well resourced to protect the family and in particular the relations and conduct of both *malukazana* and *babazala* even in the absence of the son who is the husband to this woman. The researcher made conclusions from the deliberations to the effect that, cultural norms have a very strong influence in shaping human behaviour. If the structures and dictates that are enshrined therein are followed to the letter, society would avoid some or most of the conflicts that are affecting it today.

The aspect of *ubuntu* was once again strongly put into operation as a method that Ndebeles use in order to shape and control the behaviour of *malukazana* as indicated by the respondents who argued that it is only *ubuntu* which can do the trick. If *malukazana* is able to keep a safe social distance away from *babazala*, Ndebeles use that attribute that to distinguish between a *malukazana* who has *ubuntu* and the one without and they refer to the latter as “*owadlula zisengwa koyisezala*” (an uncultured daughter-in-law). By doing this, Ndebeles are treading in the footsteps of Bourdillon (1990:17) who defines *ubuntu/unhu* as a “term used to designate acceptable conduct or behaviour”. A *malukazana* who does not exhibit *ubuntu* is an embarrassment not only to her in-laws but worse to her original family who stand accused of having failed to raise her very well. It should be noted that, having anticipated the possibility of a wayward individual, Ndebeles leave room for a

*malukazana* to be temporarily sent back to her own family so that they may teach her good manners and how to behave in the presence of her *babazala* as well as the entire family of her husband.

Those who made responses to research questionnaires cited some proverbs which are essential in making sure that the relationship between a *malukazana* and her entire in-law family remains cordial such as “*ihlonipha lalapha ingayi kwendela khona*” (a girl respects even a family where she may not marry). Marriage is impressed upon girls as they grow so much that they must prepare their way by making sure that they respect everyone since they would not know exactly who is going to eventually marry them. This is the same respect which she is expected to exhibit once she is finally married because it is out of this respect that comes the dignity of her own family. In connection with this state of affairs but with reference to Shona society, Furusa et al., (1996:86) argues that:

A close study of the Shona proverbs reveals that they express the Shona people’s strong desire to cultivate and promote the best in individual and society at large as determined by their resources at each stage in their development.

Asked about how the woman is expected to cope with all these social demands and expectations which seem to somehow not affect her male counterpart, respondents were quick to point out to the role of child socialisation which includes children’s games. They made reference to such aspects as children’s games which they said are loaded with requisite skills to make sure that when a girl grows up, she would just revert to them as a library where she can derive her wisdom on how to address or deal with situations as they come.

Berger (2008:45) asserts that the children’s games are more than games. Nyota & Mapara (2008:73) also posit that Shona traditional children’s games and play songs that they sang provided an opportunity where children learnt by guided participation in social experiences and explorations of their world. Respondents were of the opinion that there is no excuse for indecorous behaviour for any *malukazana* since they all go through the same process of socialisation. In support of this notion,

Mutema (2013:60) observes that “it was this socialization which made it possible for children to adapt to their natural and social events” meaning that conflict management is also included.

It is therefore, expected that once a girl is married, she will utilise all the skills that she would have gained as she was growing up. All training is done so that she exhibits positive character traits among her in-laws and avoid bringing shame on her family by being a source of conflict. Should she by any chance fail to comply with the expected standards of a well-groomed *malukazana*, especially if she fails to respect the family if her husband, they refer to her using one proverb which says “*wadlula zisengwa koyisezala*” (she passed by the kraal as the cows were being milked at her in-laws’ place). This proverb is used to ridicule wayward behaviour and encourage good social conduct to all daughters-in-law because their behaviour is key to peace and tranquil in the home and community at large.

Basing on the arguments raised during the various interviews and discussions held during the research, the researcher discovered that Ndebele traditional culture has various structures put in place to prevent, resolve as well as manage conflict between father and daughter-in-law. The strength of this strategy can only be successful mainly because it places so much value on the marriage institution as the basis for procreation. Secondly, the concept of *ubuntu* plays a major role in making sure that whatever cultural methods are put in place for conflict management, they are adhered to by all who are involved. The researcher discovered that the social distances created between *babazala* and his *malukazana* are meant to protect both of them as well as the entire family unit.

### **6.6.2 *Umamazala* (mother-in-law) vs *umkhwenyana* (Son-in-Law)**

Having had a wide discussion concerning the relationship between *babazala* and *malukazana*, attention shifted towards the relationship between mother and son-in-law who in IsiNdebele are referred to as *umamazala* and *umkhwenyana* respectively. Within the South African Black and indeed among Ndebele culture, the husband’s family becomes the dominant in-law family (Mashishi, 1998). According to Nganase and Basson (2017:66) “cultures across the world differ in their expectations of the relationship between mothers-in-law and sons-in-law...in-law relationships remain

among the vaguest and most challenging of family relationships". In most cases if the in-law relations are not handled well, they lead to animosity, competition and resentment. Sometimes the relations are so strained such that some of the discussants were of the opinion that in Silobela area, these are some of the most common conflicts which traditional leaders have to deal with time and again.

For purposes of the arguments raised in this research, reference is made mainly to the mother of the wife in relation to her son-in-law because the husband's mother has very few restrictions on her daughter-in-law. Discussants commented on the reason why mother and daughter-in-law have got fewer proscriptions compared to their male counterparts. What came up from the discussions was the fact that Ndebele traditional culture regards both of them as *abantu bemzini* (strangers) since they both came into the family through the marriage union and they are not connected to the family by blood. One of the respondents actually connoted that both these women are "*malukazana*" who are only distinguished by the different times of arrival.

On the other hand, respondents unanimously concurred that *Umkhwenyana* and his *mamazala* have cultural restrictions which appear to some extent to be even worse than those that affect father and daughter-in-law for a number of reasons which were raised during the process of carrying out research. Some of the respondents argued that the very fact that these two are of the opposite sex is already a potential threat to their relationship since physics says that unlike poles attract. They went on to observe that both son and mother-in-law are not blood relatives and as such they have nothing that can stop them from getting attracted to each other. Yet, on the other hand, such a scenario is not only taboo at social or physical level; it is taboo even at imagination levels. The researcher then observed that the strict conditions created between son and mother-in-law are a deliberate mechanism meant to deal with potential conflict that may arise if the two are allowed close vicinity of each other.

Similarly, these two (*mamazala* and *mkhwenyana*) cannot partake of their meals in the same vicinity; neither can they stay under the same roof for a long time no matter the circumstances. If they have to, there has to be other people in that room and

they cannot sit side by side because this would be shameful since they would be in possible physical contact which is a taboo in Ndebele society. Mother-in-law is expected to wear a head gear as well as *umgaxo* (a belt crossing from the shoulders) once her first daughter gets married and may not remove it unless a traditional ceremony is performed for her to do so. In certain circumstances, she has to pay restitution to her son-in-law for her to be freed from wearing *umgaxo*.

In the event that mother and son-in-law accidentally meet on the road while they are travelling on foot, they move to the extreme ends of the road and both kneel facing opposite directions and then greet each other without having to look at each other's faces. When they are through, each of them stands up and goes their way without looking back. According to informants, it is taboo for a son-in-law to look directly into the eyes of his mother-in-law as this is regarded as a serious sign of disrespect which can warrant that the matter be taken up to the chief's court where he will be asked to pay a fine.

The researcher made efforts to find out how much the traditional leaders charge as punishment when *umkhwenyana* has violated codes of conduct regarding her *mamazala*. The headman who was consulted said "*umkhwenyana angaxabana lomamazala ngenxa yokuswela inhlonipho, uvala icala ngembuzi ephiwa yena uninazala ukuthi axole*" (when a son-in-law has disrespected his mother-in-law, he pays a goat as restitution. The goat is handed to the mother-in-law so that she forgives him).

When an outsider is exposed to the behaviour which regulates *umamazala* and *umkhwenyana* particularly what they do even in public when they meet on the road, such actions may appear awkward or exaggerated. This is because the outsider does not share in the traditional culture of Ndebele people and therefore cannot appreciate why and how they do their things. Such extremes are meant to exaggerate the need for these *umkhwenyana* and *umamazala* to keep their distance as far as possible so that they do not in any way end up in a conflict situation and send the community into turmoil.

Speaking about the value placed on these moral laws by African societies, Mandova and Chingombe (2013:105) state that laws are basically generated by the people and as such they are a product of the people's input and not something imposed on them. The distances created act as a security measure to safeguard both parties and the researcher regards them as one of the mechanisms generated by the Ndebele society to address conflict among them. It is a way of serving and saving them from unforeseen problems.

Discussants deliberated on the issue of mothers and sons-in-law who are reported in newspapers as having love affairs as a test for the effectiveness of the traditional distances created by Ndebele culture. All the respondents unanimously agreed that such cases are a very strange and new phenomenon in the Ndebele community because traditionally, the social distances that existed between them would completely obliterate any possibility that the two can fall in love. In essence, such an illicit relationship is abhorred because it violates the dictates of *ubuntu* which compels members to behave in a certain acceptable manner consistent with what the norms and values prescribe. Speaking of which, Nussbaum (2003:21) postulates that:

*Ubuntu* is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community. *Ubuntu* calls on us to believe and feel that: your pain is my pain, my wealth is your wealth, and your salvation is my salvation. In essence, *Ubuntu*, a Nguni word from South Africa, addresses our interconnectedness, our common humanity, and the responsibility to each other that flows from our connection

The ability to retain our humanness hinges on our ability to respect each other, respect each other's territories as spelt out by our cultural institutions which come as a result of experimentation, observation and experience. Ramose (1999:49) marvels at this attribute of traditional intelligence by stating that "*ubuntu* is simultaneously the foundation and the edifice of African philosophy" which acts as a revelation of how sophisticated and intelligent they are.

Having examined and listened to the deliberations on the aspect of mother and son-in-law, the researcher came to a conclusion that, if properly adhered to, the conditions and regulations defining how the son-in-law should behave has potential to act as mitigation to reduction of conflict situations between the two. If it can be applicable on these two by virtue of their social relations, then it can be used for the entire society. The following section discusses some of the responsibilities that come with the position of being a son-in-law which also are considered to be a subtle way of making sure that conflict is managed through social responsibilities.

### **6.6.3 Social responsibilities of *Umkhwenyana* (son-in-law)**

While a son-in-law has his social and physical distances especially as regards the parents of his wife and their family, he has a number of other obligations which may be physical, financial and even physical. In most cases, *umkhwenyana* and wife would be from different villages in accordance with the proverb which says “*induku enhle iganyulwa ezizweni*” (a good knobkerrie is found in forests that are far) and also since it was sometimes not advisable to marry from the same village because most of the people would be relatives. Ndebele tradition therefore prohibits a son-in-law naturally from making frequent visits to his in-laws because doing so may increase chances for them to pick a quarrel leading to a conflict which might even suck in the whole two villages, his and that of his wife’s.

Respondents noted that the Ndebele are so particular when it comes to making sure that this moral code of conduct is adhered to so much that it is taboo among Ndebeles for a son-in-law to be a constant visitor to his wife’s place. Whenever he visits, it is expected that a fowl will be slaughtered for him as relish and a sign that he is welcome at home. Ordinarily, this means that, a son-in-law who visits more frequently will finish his in-law’s fowls and risks being served with green vegetables for relish, an act that is regarded as a bad omen for him. According to informants, it also follows that, whenever a son-in-law visits his in-laws, he must not spend a long time, just a day or two at most so that he can depart while they (his in-laws) are still happy with his presence.

In order to qualify their argument concerning the social responsibilities as well as the socially acceptable interaction between *umkhwenyana* and his in-laws, the

respondents cited a few examples. They made reference to the negative attitude by the Ndebele towards an *umkhwenyana* who constructs his homestead in the village of his in-laws as long as he comes originally from another. *Umkhwenyana* is supposed to be as far as possible from the vicinity of his in-laws because they may interfere with his day-to-day running of his family's business. In showing their disdain at an *umkhwenyana* who goes against this social expectation, the respondents made reference to a term used by the Ndebele to call him. Such an *umkhwenyana* is classified as a person "owendileyo" (the man who is married by a woman).

Apparently, Ndebele culture, unlike other cultures, it is the woman who "gets married" and not the other way around. That is why she is the one expected to leave her parents and come to stay with her husband's family. So, when a man decides to stay in the village of his wife when he originally comes from elsewhere, he is derogatively called that way and he has no respect among other men. This is just one of the expressions of how much distance Ndebele culture intends to create between *umkhwenyana* and his in-laws and it is prudent to regard it as a social construct meant to minimise conflict in the society. Respondents had no kind words for an *umkhwenyana* who violates this ordinance as they viewed him as a foolish man "*odonswa ngamakhala*" (traditional expression referring to a man who is controlled by his wife)

When a son-in-law visits the home of his wife's parents, his contact with his mother-in-law remains restricted, controlled and limited to formal greetings and nothing more because the environment does not allow for a lengthy discussion between the two. Actually, *umkhwenyana* stays in his *ixhiba* (a house reserved for son in-law usually situated at the periphery of the homestead) and only goes out to relieve himself unless his father-in-law invites him to go to the fields or a beer drink. While visiting, *umkhwenyana* must always put on a jacket and long-sleeved pants so that no one can see either his legs or his arms. According to Ndlovu et al., (1995:68), even the *ixhiba* for *umkhwenyana* is located at a further distance from the house where his father and mother-in-law sleep. This is done to make sure that neither party can hear what the other is doing or discussing especially at night.

The analysis given by the informants pertaining the dressing of *umkhwenyana* was that, wearing clothes that cover the whole body is a way of reducing chances of sexual arousal from both mother in-law as well as his wife's younger sisters just in case his body is hairy or considered to be sexually attractive. Once any other member of the family who is not the wife develops a physical attraction to *umkhwenyana*, this would definitely be a recipe for a very complicated type of conflict which may threaten the peace of the whole family.

Respect and honour are a closely guarded attribute among Ndebele people. Right from an early age, children are taught the value of respect so that when they become of age, they would not be disrespectful and an embarrassment to the society. Discussants underscored the role played by mutual respect not only between *umkhwenyana* and his in-laws but the whole society as demonstrated by the act of forbidding *umkhwenyana* to wear a hat anywhere in the vicinity of his in-law's homestead. This is regarded as a sign of disrespect, the last thing a son-in-law would want to be accused of because it attracts a fine. In any case, disrespect does not resonate well with the ethos of *ubuntu* as highlighted by Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Shizha (2012:22) when they say that "the philosophy of *unhu* is attractive for the values that it extols such as love for one another, respect for each other, brotherhood, and respect for the sacredness of human life".

*Umkhwenyana* is supposed to fulfil certain economic obligations that may arise among the members of his wife's family for instance in case of death; he is the one to foot the bill of the burial especially that of his father and mother-in-law. This is done as a way of encouraging *abakhwenyana* to be responsible so that they can take good care of their own families. It would be very difficult for *umkhwenyana* to take good care of his in-laws if he does not do the same for his own wife and children. *Umkhwenyana* is expected to buy beer for his in-laws whenever he meets them at a beer spot. Their argument is premised on the Ndebele proverb which says "*umkhwenyana yingxoza kayipheli kwebulwa*" (a son-in-law is like a tree fibre, you cannot finish extracting it) and as such he is not supposed to complain when buying beer or drinks for his in-laws because that is his social duty. In substantiating the role played by marital relations in conflict management in African societies, Mbiti (1969:133) says that:

For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point all the members of a given community meet; the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated and revitalised.

It should be noted that the idea of making *umkhwenyana* buy groceries for his in-laws is not influenced by greed but it is a subtle way of making him to be responsible thereby minimising chances of conflict between him and his entire in-laws' family. The various social duties that are thrust on *umkhwenyana* are a way of making sure that society does not harbour deviant good-for-nothing sons-in-law who are disrespectful and irresponsible. Basing on the deliberations highlighted above and evidence from various research instruments, one can argue that Ndebele people have demonstrated a high level of ingenuity and complexity. This is demonstrated by their ability and expertise in crafting social structures that assist them in dealing with possible conflict situations through these in-law relations as discussed above. The following section focuses on the use of kin and social relationships as a conflict management strategy by the Zimbabwean Ndebeles.

### **6.7 Kinship Ties**

Conflict management is an on-going process which is approached from a variety of angles by different societies particularly African societies because they use their culture to deal with whatever surrounds them. Karbo and Mutisi (2008:3) emphasise the fact that conflict management in Africa is rooted in the African culture which is responsible, and has always been responsible for the welfare of the people since time immemorial. It is the people's culture which gives them guidance on how to construct necessary structures for conflict management. No matter how minute and insignificant these structures may appear in the eyes of an outsider, to the indigenes they are the glue that makes their societies stick together as they have done over the years. This is visible when they say:

Endogenous approaches to conflict resolution are methods that are rooted in the culture and tradition of a community. These mechanisms of conflict resolution emerge from a complex set of knowledge and technologies that were developed around specific conditions effecting particular populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area (Karbo and Mutisi, 2008:3).

As the researcher was carrying out this research, it was established that one way of making sure that conflict is avoided or minimized is through emphasis on respect of various kinship ties that exist in the Ndebele societies. These kinship ties emanate from the very fact that life among Africans, unlike in the European societies, is not individualistic but communal. Everything is done in line with the dictates of the community such that a violation of the same is against the spirit of *ubuntu* which is the adhesive that keeps not only Africans but even Ndebeles together.

To that end, the process of conflict management is part and parcel of daily life and every effort is made so that people do not engage in unnecessary conflicts. This state of affairs finds meaning in the words of Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:170) who stress that even as children grow, conflict management is inculcated into their minds as they say:

Mediation in Ndebele society is part of life. It occurs in two forms: passive and active mediation. To every potential conflict, there is a passive mediator or passive mediation. Ndebele social, political and religious structure includes a mediator in all possible points of conflict. The Ndebele use oratory to train people from early age, on how to be good and peaceful citizens. Such knowledge becomes inert and acts as a form of passive mediation between adversaries.

The *Thesaurus dictionary* (2012) defines kinship as “a close connection marked by community of interest or similarity in nature or character” as well as “relatedness or connection marked by blood or marriage or adoption”. While this is a purely linguistic definition of the subject under study, one cannot deny the fact that it also captures, may be not precisely, and brings out the same interpretation that informs a study of this nature. In light of that, the concept of kinship will be elaborated in line with the African perceptions of what a relative is and how relatedness is essential for the mutual responsibilities and respect for individuals.

The kinship ties here are interpreted as that long winding string which ties so many individuals together starting with the immediate then stretching out to the extended family as well as the elderly or senior members of the community. Mbiti (1975:47) qualifies the invaluable part played by kinship structures in most African societies

where he points out that even the elder members of the society qualify to be negotiators for conflict resolution. He argues that they do this by virtue of their age since there is a general belief that “wisdom comes with age”. This general appreciation of social relations obtains also among the Ndebele whose culture is more or less the same as that of the rest of fellow African societies.

Kinship structures were created by and large by the people as a way of maintaining order, peace and harmony in their communities. They did this after realising that there is a natural strong bond that ties them together which can be used to bind them together and enforce some kind of mutual respect for each other thereby minimizing internal as well as external conflicts. Maphosa (1988:59) makes reference to the role played by the extended family which he sees as a very effective force which can be used in issues of sustainable development simply because it taps from the very essence of their survival.

In the Ndebele society, mutual respect for each other varies from one individual to another depending on the definition of the connecting relationship but all the same, this respect is still a force to reckon with since at the end of the day it could emerge that the whole village is somehow related one way or the other. Regardless of how close or how distant the connecting relationship is, the bottom line is that there is that due respect for kinship ties and relationships. As such, respect for one another is not only enforced by the fact that individuals are from the same family but also the fact that by and large they are related. The Ndebele traditional society like many African societies was, and remains organized around an extended family and the extended family in Ndebele provides mechanisms for conflict resolution. (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 2012:23).

While this might be the case, research has shown that conflict still finds its way into the communities despite these kinship ties. However, be that as it may, there are some positions of responsibility that are assumed by certain individuals like the aunts, uncles, and the elderly which are automatically positions of authority in most African societies including the Ndebele. As realized during the process of carrying out this research, these socially established structures act as a way of making sure that in the event of conflicts and instability among the people, there is always a way

of restoring peace and stability in both the family as well as the community at large (Haralambos 1990:435).

The fact that most people in African societies have respect and high regard for these structures that are dictated to them by their various societies is a solid base on which to found our quest for world peace and stability starting at the grassroots. This respect is embedded in the culture of the people, and since the people have a respect for their culture, they have this mutual respect for each other so much that any conflict management strategy that they are prescribed to follow, as long as it is through their culture, they are bound to obey it. Karbo and Mutisi (2008:2) echo the same sentiments when they say:

Endogenous methods of conflict resolution are based on the premise that, understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in, and must respect and draw from, the cultural knowledge of a people.

It is therefore, imperative at this juncture to mention that kinship structures work not only as a conflict management strategy but a preventive one for that matter. It is in these kinship relationships wherein lie the various techniques that can be employed once a conflict has occurred. In other words, kinship relationships determine how a particular conflict is to be handled or resolved with at times specifications as to who must handle it. For instance, a conflict that involves adults who are siblings has its own way of resolution separate from a conflict that involves a married couple. These are dynamics to the issue of conflict management which an outsider might not be aware of and as such it is these kinship relations that are discussed in the following section in order to evaluate how they work as a conflict management strategy among Zimbabwean Ndebeles.

### **6.7.1 *Imuli* (the family)**

According to Ndlovu and Ngwenya (2010:15), “like all other Africans, the Ndebele are a family-centred-people...” However, the concept of a family in both the African and the Ndebele communities is not egocentric or limited to biological connections but covers a wide range of individuals starting with the immediate family unit

normally made up of a father, a mother and children. It then balloons outward to cover what is commonly referred to as the extended family where we have the grandparents, the aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, neighbours and the others.

This boils down to what has been regarded as “blood relatives” meaning that they share certain genetic links as well as genealogical circumstances which the Ndebele in particular prefer to call “*izihlobo zegazi*” (blood relatives). The fact that these have got traits of the same blood is not taken lightly in the African community where blood is considered sacred such that it is the one that ties people together hence the saying “blood is thicker than water”. It is this idea of blood that commands the respect for each of the members of the same family for instance the reason why one cannot get married to his sister solely lies in the fact that they have or share the same source of blood.

Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, there is actually a saying which goes “*rinongova ringa nameso zamu rehanzvadzi*” (it is an admire and leave, like the breast of a sister) which translates to the fact that no one is allowed to lust after his sister’s breasts no matter how attractive they may appear to be. As a result, it is in fact considered taboo for a brother and sister’s marriage arrangement to be sanctioned and there is a general belief that if people engage in such, they face the wrath of the ancestors and the family spirits. Most African societies do not want to anger their spirits, for obvious reasons, fear of the unknown, and as such no sister or brother can get into a marriage arrangement. Various respondents who contributed to this research expressed disgust at the idea of incest which they said is believed to be one of the reasons why rainfall patterns have been unpredictable of late.

The brother is expected to respect his sister in all respects and make it a point that he is there to protect her from possible assailants who most of the times are suitors. What is of interest here is that brothers and sisters from the same family have an obligation to respect, protect and honour each other just because they have the same blood flowing in their veins. One may hasten to highlight that the idea of brother and sister is not confined to the immediate family; it also moves out of this nucleus to cover those members who are born by uncles (fathers’ brothers). In its

original sense, there was no marked distinction between the brother/sister from my immediate family and the brother/sister who belongs to the family of my father's brother.

It was (and still is) common practice among the Ndebele and the Shona to occasionally ask their children to go and stay with their relatives for a short or long term in order to destroy that mentality of saying 'I belong to this family, or I belong to that family' alone and no other such that one is not only restricted to a single family unit where they are biologically born. It is only now that my brother from my uncle's side is referred to as my 'cousin' brother, at least in the sense brought about by the English language. While this terminology is a result of linguistic variations between and among languages, it has a destructive effect on the amount of respect and value that our brother/sisterhood was meant to impart.

### **6.7.2 Abazawethu (Cousins)**

The concept of a cousin in most African communities is almost similar but most importantly it is very different from the way it is defined in the western spheres. The cousin in the traditional context is the one who is descended from the aunt who happens to be a sister to our father or an uncle who is the brother to our mother. Children from the aunts' side are a very special set of relatives since they are born by our fathers' sister or sisters. Most of the time we do not share the same surname with these ones because they use a surname from their fathers' side but they remain an integral part of our family.

Very little can be done without involving them and in most cases, they are called upon to come and solve internal family conflicts. In the majority of cases, cousins are the ones who act as intermediaries when people of the same family pick a fight. This is confirmed by Yankah, et al., (1995:71) who points out that the principle of using intermediaries in conflict management is not unique to the Ndebele but common to most African societies:

The use of an intermediary, through whom formal talk is rooted, is the social dimension of the general practice and direction that permeates the speech of several cultures in Africa

These (the cousins) intermediaries can also be given the opportunity to make some of the major decisions for the family mainly because they are considered to be more neutral than the immediate family members. One cannot run away from the fact that the issue of blood is considered in the case of these cousins, (*abazawethu*) though it is to a less extent. The Shona people call them *vanasekuru* (uncles) which puts them at the same level with their adult counterparts who are also *vanasekuru*.

Conflict with cousins is not a common feature among the Ndebele and no one is justified to raise such as long as they are quarrelling with their cousin who in most cases is regarded as the peacemaker among the kith and kin. It is important to note that the cousins widen the family circle such that if truth could be told, the number of people who are related through this way has already grown so much since the number of people involved in this relationship circle cannot be underestimated. It therefore, means that, if the number of people who are related in form of cousinship can take advantage of the traditional responsibilities and duties it entails, and should they minimize conflict among themselves, we may have almost the whole village living in peace and harmony.

Respondents to the research argued that the various social responsibilities associated with the title of cousin is an avenue to facilitate communication when conflict has arisen especially among family members because cousins have the traditional license to freely address any one for the better or worse. It was established that, cousins (*abazukulu*) are viewed at the same level as husbands by the wives of their uncles so much that when a conflict has arisen, they can intervene without difficulty. This then pits them as an avenue for dialogue in case there is communication breakdown between a husband and his wife.

This research is of the opinion that the same concept of mutual respect and conflict management can be harnessed and applied to today's strife riddled society in order to find a possible solution to the various socio-political problems. Such an approach is also supported by Bob-Manuel (2000:53) who believes that "if Africa has to put the "falling apart together", her original values must be re-visited."

### 6.7.3 Aunts and Uncles

The definition and idea of who the aunt and the uncles are in the African context has already been clarified above so they need no further explanation. Aunts and uncles play a very significant role in conflict management in the African and particularly the Ndebele communities. The two titles (aunt and uncle) are surrounded by an aura of socially prescribed respect, dignity and responsibility among the people and anyone who bears such a title has to be treated that way by everyone who is connected to them thereof. The same duties that are prescribed to the cousins as highlighted above also fall within the jurisdictions of both the aunts and the uncles but this time at an advanced level.

These are responsible for more complex and sensitive issues of the family and no one can go against their word and still command respect from the community. In certain cases, they resolve marital conflicts between their brothers and sisters' in-law and the other way around in the case of uncles. What is of great importance here is to note that the society is the one which prescribes the level of respect that is due to both the aunts and the uncles and as such no one is expected to question their authority.

It is very common that some boys and girls become mischievous and impregnate each other but the boy goes on to deny responsibility afterwards. In that case, usually marriage becomes impossible and the fate of the child is left in the hands of the girl and her family. In conflicts of this nature, most African societies seem to have unanimously laid the responsibility of raising that child to either the aunt or especially the uncle because he is the brother to the child's mother. The child can grow up in the custody of the uncle and at times will even assume the surname of the uncle (*umalume*) without any legal implications. The Ndebele people traditionally regard the uncles as the mothers of their sisters' children regardless of them being male and as such they carry the various responsibilities of mother. During the research, it was established that *omalume* are an extension of the society's effort to make sure that there is no child whose welfare remains unaccounted for as this fly in the face of the spirit of humaneness.

This social responsibility even stretches to the extent that the uncle has got the absolute right to solicit *lobola* in cases where they raise the girl child but on the other hand, they are the ones with the responsibility of raising the *lobola* for those who are boys despite the fact that they are not their biological offspring. It is important to emphasize that these social duties and responsibilities are only meaningful if they are examined and let alone executed in the context of culture. In line with this, Kambudzi in Chiwome and Gambahaya (1998:63) posits that:

So, the question is how we can make a creative and constructive use of culture in African countries as a measure of minimising armed and destructive conflict. Several measures can be tried separately or in complementation

In other words, when a sister gets married and the marriage fails, she is socially allowed to go and leave her children with his brother and make another try elsewhere. If she succeeds, it is up to the new husband to accept her with her children or to ask her to leave them behind since the new husband has no obligation of taking care of another man's children. In that case, the current research interpreted the role of *omalume* as an invaluable social construct meant to make sure that such children do not become destitute yet at the same time they do not act as a reason for their mother not to remarry.

It is therefore unarguable that the value placed upon the role and position of the uncle and aunt in most traditional societies is a strong base on which to place all our efforts to build peace from the grassroots. If people are prepared to respect an individual just because their culture says so, they can respect anyone provided their culture is taken into account and that means the aspect of respect is something innate in an African and can be utilized for the benefit of the next person.

Hunt (1966:53) has stated that the pervasive nature of the extended family in developing countries is such that formal legislations and objectives are largely in the façade and its operations are rooted on the blueprint of family ties. In the same vein, but with reference to the significance of the extended family in issues of development Eke (1998:18) points out that the role of the extended family in and the rationality of

indigenous business practices can be appreciated only when we take culture into consideration hence:

*Build(ing) on the indigenous by making it determine the form and content of development strategy, aspirations and or social institutions which are important in the lives of the people.*

This research avers that there is ample evidence to point out to the sophisticated nature of social relations among the Ndebele to make sure that conflict is managed, prevented and resolved in cases where it would have occurred. In this case, aunts and uncles as the source of the extended family have the social responsibility of making sure that it progresses from one stage to the other. As such, they play an important role in issues of conflict management and most importantly they are a symbol of unity for a large group of people.

#### **6.7.4 The Elderly**

Some of the interviewees interviewed during the process of data gathering were advanced in age as demonstrated by demographic data presented in the previous chapter. Most, if not all, African societies have high regard for the senior members in their communities mainly because of the old adage which says “wisdom comes with age”. This adage is also supported Mbiti (1975:34) who underscores the respect that one earns by virtue of their age in most African societies. In that case, the society expects old people to be responsible enough to solve most of their problems without any form of partiality, fear or favour. There is an unwritten law which permits aged members of the society to be consulted on major issues that affect the community regardless of whether the issues are peculiar to a specific family or what. Commenting on the mediating role of elders, Kenyatta (1965:38-41) notes that:

The function of an elder, both in his own family group and in the community, is one of harmonising the activities of various groups, living and departed. In his capacity of mediator his family group and community in general respect him for his seniority and wisdom, and he, in turn, respects the seniority of the ancestral spirits.”

An elderly person may be consulted or called upon to intervene in a quarrel that involves family members because it is believed that his age will give him the necessary neutrality that is required in solving such matters. The issue of age also came into light during interviews with traditional healers who indicated that they make use of advice from elderly community members because they regard them as people who have gained experience in dealing with issues of conflict. One of the interviewees said “*umuntu omdala angeke akutshela amanga ngoba uyahlonipha ukuqamba amanga. Kangeke akutshelile eceleni enze ukuthi uthathe isinqumo esingaqondanga*” (an elderly person cannot mislead you because they revere their age. They cannot lie to you and make you make a wrong verdict). In support of this, Yankah, et al., (1995:46) posit that:

The use of an intermediary, through whom formal talk is rooted, is the social dimension of the general practice and direction that permeates the speech of several cultures in Africa

Matters that have to do with problematic girls are usually referred to the elderly ladies who use their wisdom and expertise in controlling and giving suitable lessons to the girls. At the same time, society expects the girls to respect the kind of advice that they are given by the elderly people at least for the sake of their age. It will also be realized that even married girls or ladies often consult these grandmothers on marital problems regardless of whether they are educated or not. The general belief is that anyone who defies the advice from the aged members of the society will attract a bad omen and spell upon him/herself and therefore very few people would dare tread where even angels fear to tread and as such there are insignificant cases of disobedience. Bujo (1998:57) also attests to this when he says that:

Respect for elders, ancestors, parents, fellow people and the environment is cherished and firmly embedded in the mores, customs, taboos and traditions amongst Africans. The admonitions, commandments and prohibitions of ancestors and community elders are highly esteemed as they reflect experiences which have made communal life possible up to the present. Due to the respect accorded elders, people avoid being in conflicting situations.

It is even more emphatic if the grandparents belong to one's family. Any defiance to the advice from the elderly and senior members of the community is tantamount to isolation from the community because it is believed that their word cannot go and come back without effect hence the proverb "*ilizwi lomuntu omdala kaliweli phansi*" (the old person's advice does not fall onto the ground). Mbiti (1975:178) notes that the oldest members of the family enjoy a higher status than the youngest members due to their wisdom and age. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2011:178) also concur on the role of the elderly in dealing with conflict among Ndebele people when they say:

In Ndebele society like other African societies wisdom comes with age. In African families there is a hierarchy based on age. One quality necessary for mediation in Ndebele is maturity. Mature people often have the ability and capability to handle complicated cases. In Ndebele society old members of the community automatically qualify to be mediators by virtue of their age. As such there are duties and responsibilities expected from such members.

The research also established that the issue of age transcends social levels since by virtue of experience and age, elders are not restricted to own families but may be called upon to attend to the problems that affect the whole community. Evidence from the research proved that some of the sophisticated matters especially those that have a spiritual inclination such as appeasement of angry ancestors cannot be undertaken in the absence of elderly people. At times their services are required when girls or boys are getting married just to add their blessings to the marriage. Apparently, respondents highlighted the dangers associated with excluding elderly people in such matters which they said may result in misfortunes such as barrenness or infertility.

There is therefore, a community service which is meant to make sure that the community lives in harmony as a whole since it would not help to have peace in only one or two families while the rest of the community is in turmoil. The research argues that Ndebele people take advantage of that which surrounds them in order to deal with their socio-political problems and age is one of those strategies. Some of the respondents pointed out that when an elderly person dies, people mourn and say "*umthunzi sutshile*" which means the shade/shadow has dried up. This puts elderly

members of society at shade level where they provide shade for the society in as much as trees provide shade for natural animals. In reference to Kenya, Kenyatta (1965:61) documents that among the Gikuyu people:

An elder in a community renders his services freely.' In this regard he observes as follows: "He receives no remuneration in the way of a salary, but helps the community with his advice and experience in the same way as he directs the management of his own homestead and family group. In recognition of these services he receives public tributes ceremonially, and is regarded specifically as the father and officiating priest of the community

It cannot be over emphasized that the success of these social institutions lies squarely in the appreciation of the culture of the particular society. This research submits that, it is in the context of the African or particularly the Ndebele culture that the concept of respecting elders as problem solvers can make sense and they be given that chance to intervene in the current political stalemate which obtains in most African countries.

#### **6.7.5 *Umama* (The Mother)**

The issue of family relations canters around the female species since she is the one endowed with reproductive powers which generate generations. In light of that, various respondents indicated that the mother has a special place in the matrix of conflict management. Her role mainly emanates from the belief that she possesses the link between her offspring and their spiritual world hence the performance of various rites and ceremonies when she has given birth. First and foremost, the mother is taken as a stranger or a visitor in the home and as such she is treated with all the respect and comfort that is given to a stranger or visitor.

She is sometimes excluded from some of the family issues for instance when communication is being made with the ancestors pertaining an illness or a problematic issue. The reasons for excluding here are the same reasons why we would not involve strangers in our family matters but the exclusion is understandable to the concerned parties, the mother and the family at large. However, for the same reason of being a "stranger", the mother is believed to be untouchable in terms of

subjecting her to violence or in simple terms, beating, because anyone who beats up her may attract a curse for the whole family from the mother's ancestors who are also believed to be strange to her marital family. The spiritual significance of the mother finds meaning in a Chishona proverb which says "*ukarova mai unotanda botso*" which loosely translates to the effect that if you beat your mother, you would go mad.

A mother, by virtue of having a different surname from that of the rest of the family is feared because her gods are not known and how they react to provocations is also unknown so everyone is safer without provoking them. Since her gods are foreign to her marital family, it is taboo for any child to beat his or her mother because none who does so can get away with it no matter what the circumstances. In fact, it is also taboo for one to provoke their mother to anger so much that everybody tries to make sure that their mother is always happy in order to avoid unnecessary misfortunes. Apparently, an altercation with one's father is normal and pardonable just because he is a blood relative and even shares gods and spirits with his/her children so they cannot turn against them. Some of the respondents were citing examples of local individuals who used to beat their own mothers and misfortunes of different magnitudes were said to have affected them.

The point being driven home here is that, anyone who holds the title of "mother" has that spiritual security that surrounds her and therefore she commands that respect from all those who are attached to her by a mother-child relationship. It is important to note that the title "mother" is not only confined to her direct offspring but extends to every other member of the community. The Shona people of Zimbabwe symbolise the importance of the woman by making sure that right from the time a girl gets married, her suitor pays a cow which is specifically given to her mother which is called *mombe yohumai* (a mother's cow).

The same concept is also found among the Ndebeles and such a particular beast is called "*inkomo yohlanga*" (a cow of the reed). According to some respondents, the "reed" issue stems from a traditional belief in the origins of human beings which suggests that they came from a river which had reeds and so a mother becomes a creator by taking part in the process of procreation. In other words, "*inkomo*

*yohlanga*” acts as some form of payment to the mother for participating in the perpetuation of humankind just like it was at creation. At the same time, this beast is used as a source of connection between the children and their mother’s ancestors who ordinarily are not related to these children since the children have a different genealogy.

According to evidence gathered during the research, both the Ndebele and Shona believe that if this cow is not paid as bride price, it can be a source of complications in marriage which range from general conflicts to barrenness. This cow belongs to the mother of the family such that even her husband has no say over it. She has full control over it as well as its offspring because it is a sign that she has increased the family through the marriage of her daughter to another family. In essence, this cow serves as a conflict management strategy because it avoids conflict that may arise in both the physical and spiritual world. When the mother’s gods are happy, it is believed that they will bless her daughter with a stable and happy marriage as well as children.

While some may view these kinship relations as insignificant, it is the submission of this research that, to the Ndebeles, they go a long way in making sure that conflict is avoided, managed and resolved. In any case, the bottom line is that these kinship structures are a by-product of the culture of the Ndebele people which have been designed, tried and tested over time. They are unique to the indigenous people who have produced them and their success lay in the hands of the same people who have a mandate to obey and respect them. Zaartman (2000:7) asserts that conflict resolution mechanisms can only be labelled as endogenous if:

... they have been practiced for an extended period and have evolved within African societies rather than being the product of external importation.” Endogenous conflict resolution methods are unique, informal, communal, restorative, spiritual, context-specific and diverse, apart from being integrated into life experiences. Furthermore, the use of endogenous methods of conflict resolution reflects the centrality of the community from which the fundamental needs of members are satisfied.

Having gone through the various evidence gathered as well as observations made during the process of carrying out research, this researcher came to a realization that kinship structures among Zimbabwean Ndebeles have, and continue to be used as a conflict management strategy which has endured the test of time. The intertwined relations stretching from a small family outward to an extended family even to the entire village are deliberately designed so that the society deals with any potential conflict situation that could affect them. They are a subtle mechanism put in place by the Ndebele indigenes and they heavily rely on the people's willingness to follow their own culture, norms and values. The following section deals with the issue of indigenous religion as far as peace and conflict is concerned.

### **6.8 Spirituality in conflict management**

The researcher made a deliberate effort through various research instruments in order to find out the people's understanding of the role of spirituality in issues of conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. One of the research instruments, particularly the interview method was dedicated solely to those that are endowed with spiritual powers, the traditional healers. The purpose of interviewing traditional healers was to establish whether or not spirituality has a role to play in society's efforts to deal with conflict amongst their members. A number of issues were raised and came to light in the process of research as explained in the preceding sections.

Generally, the life of Africans and that of Ndebeles in particular, is not only confined to the world of the living but goes beyond even to the world of the ancestors who are referred to the living-dead. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:179) state that "Ndebele traditional society is a monotheistic society believing in *uNkulunkulu* (God), the conduct of religious life is through mediums." It is believed that when someone dies, he or she moves on to another world where she lives as a spirit among others who would also have departed before him or her. In the same vein, those who live in the world of the living-dead are believed to be watching over those who are in the land of the living so much that they have a say in what goes on among the living. In fact, it is believed that those in the land of the living-dead have a larger stake and say in how those in the land of the living conduct themselves on a daily basis.

Traditional healers and traditional leaders who were consulted for this research unanimously concurred with the view that life among Africans in general and Ndebeles in particular operates at two levels, the physical and the spiritual. Given the belief that ancestors have supernatural powers due to their close vicinity to the almighty, those in the land of the living are always careful not to offend them for fear of calamities such as drought, disease, famine and a whole host of other unforeseen eventualities which may befall them at the behest of angry ancestors.

Besides fearing for calamities, those in the land of the living are always comfortable when they have the assurance that their ancestors are giving them security from any misfortunes. Proverbs such as “*akudlozi ladela kwabo laya emzini*” (No ancestor abandoned his family and went to take care of strangers) acts as evidence that people believe that they are secure under the watchful eye of their own ancestors who have an obligation to guarantee their security in all respects.

As such, all necessary steps are taken to make sure that the relationship between people and their ancestors is always safe as indicated by the proverb which says “*idlozi liyaphakelwa*” (an ancestor needs to be fed). When those who are alive are taking their meals, they should always remember to make provisions for the ancestors hence, most adults, whenever they eat, they throw the first morsel on the ground as libation for the ancestors whom it is believed have a way of eating that food. Same applies with those who drink alcohol; they first pour some on the ground as an offering to their ancestors so that they may not be punished for guzzling dozens and dozens of alcohols while the ancestors are going thirsty.

However, having made all necessary steps to make sure that the ancestors are always happy, sometimes the opposite happens and ancestors appear to have been offended. As indicated by most respondents during the process of carrying out research, there are common and well-known signs to show that one’s ancestors are not happy or they are actually very angry. Signs such as persistent illness or strange diseases and even deaths due in unclear circumstances are usually interpreted as a sign that something is not right between the two worlds. At times, the cause for this friction might be unknown and would require the services of a traditional healer or spirit medium to reveal it yet at times the reason might be well known and as such

expected. In both cases, a solution to the conflict must be sought immediately because it is very dangerous to have a conflict with those in the land of the living-dead because they wield more power anyway.

According to respondents, there is a standing belief that angry ancestors can decide to strike offenders with lightning or even wipe the whole clan through death and disease so a solution must always be found as soon as possible to avert disaster. Bozongwana (2000:31) makes an emphasis on the need to maintain a cordial relationship with the ancestral spirits because “the fertility of land, livestock and also human beings is attributed to the cooperation and direction of the ancestral spirits, as such, all that man has is ordered by their governance.” The close connection between the living and their ancestors means that life could be made unliveable if the weaker party does not take necessary steps to make sure that it lives at peace with the other which wields certain supernatural powers. It is not strange then that Ndebeles have put in place several traditional structures embedded in cultural rites and ceremonies so that the connection between the two worlds is kept alive as discussed in the following sections.

### **6.8.1 Ukubuyisa (bringing home the spirit of the dead)**

Death in Africa, just like in most other parts of the world, remains both a myth and mystery which cannot find satisfactory explanations among the people of various origins. Sibanda (2002:148) gives an explanation of how the Ndebele people interpret and fathom the origins of death among themselves. Their understanding of the origins or the causes of death can go a long way in making us understand how and why they have certain behaviours when death has occurred.

*Indaba yokufa amaNdebele ayichaza ngokuthi emvelweni yomuntu uNkulunkulu wathuma uNwabu ukuba ayetshela abantu ukuthi bazakufa bavuke. Njengoba simazi unwabu wanwabuzela esanwabuzela umuntu wenkosi. Ukuphuza kukanwabu lempendulo evela ebantwini akumphathanga kuhle uNkulunkulu, ngakho wasala waguqula ingqondo yakhe wathuma uNtulo lombiko. Nguye lowaya esedlula okuNwabu kulokhu kusikiza endleleni. uNtulo wamqalela uNwabu wethula umbiko wakhe. Abantu bawemukela umbiko wesithunywa esinguNtulo. Ngelikade wafika uNwabu watsho izitsho aziphathisiweyo, ethi uNkulunkulu uthe bazakufa*

*bavuke. Bamphikisa ngoba sebebambe elikaNtulo oze kuqala.*  
(Sibanda, 2000:148).

(Ndebele people explain the origins of death through a story where God sent Chameleon to go and inform the people that they were going to die but resurrect afterwards. Slow as we know him to be, Chameleon took his time on the way until God was displeased that his people had not yet sent a response to his message. He then decided to send Gecko but now with a message that they were going to die and never resurrect. Gecko was fast enough to even overtake Chameleon who was still on his way to convey the message to the people. When Gecko informed the people, they accepted his message. Later on, Chameleon arrived with his original message but people would not accept it because they had already accepted a different message from Gecko)

In essence, Ndebele people believe that death is a natural phenomenon that was originated by God and no one can oppose it. When a person dies among the Ndebele, they feel the physical loss but they get consolation in the belief that when one dies, they join the ancestral world or the world of the living-dead. In that world, there is a belief that those who go there have got power to oversee what happens in the world of the living so much that they can even take care of the family that they would have left behind. The fact that those who are dead wield more power over the living makes it mandatory for those in the world of the living to live to appease those in the world of the living dead so that they keep them happy. There are known consequences when one decided to offend those from the other world. Bozongwana (2002:26) states that:

... a family is a unit which must maintain its integrity in this life and that to come". The family is aware of death as a necessary end and looks forward to finding joy in communicating spiritually with their dead.

The fact that the writer mentioned above has emphasized the need to always maintain a good rapport between the world of the living and the living-dead is a sign that there is a possibility of a fall-out at some point leading to a conflict which may result in dire consequences. Communication between the living and the dead is maintained through the performance of the traditional ceremony of *ukuthethela* as discussed in the section above. However, this section discusses the ceremony of

*ukubuyisa* which is the process of bringing back a spirit of a dead person home because it is believed that when one dies, they move to the next world and as such they have power to watch over their family as a spirit. But, for them to be able to do this, they must first be brought back home.

According to Bozongwana (2000:29-30), *umbuyiso* (Bringing back the dead) is done after a year before the rains of the next season. It is not advisable to conduct this ceremony using beer brewed from the crops that the deceased participated in planting before he died, in fact, according to respondents; it is permissible to conduct the ceremony after two years in order to make sure that no timelines are violated. The ceremony entails that the oldest member of the family takes home brewed beer and says:

This is your beer; we are bringing you home so that you look after the children” ... At sunset, the service begins at the grave. Some families take a goat to the grave to offer to the dead man in order to appease him and induce him to come home. The goat is driven back and killed for the spirits. This is a communion service in which every member of the family can say and ask whatever he or she wants from the ancestors.

According to the respondents, the *umbuyiso* ceremony marks the establishment of a life-long relationship between the living and the dead hence reference is made to the later as the living-dead. The family begins to feel secure under the security of their departed relative who now acts as their shield against disease, theft, evil spirits and witchcraft. Commenting on the significance of the relations between the living and the living-dead, Bozongwana (2000:30) says:

The purpose of the sacrifice is to express or establish a relation of harmony and unbroken fellowship between the ancestors and the living. The belief is that the spirits ... will providently look after the family and stop suffering... this religion reflects its internalism and at the same time giving both ritual and human values. It is a spirit centred religion with its intellectual acceptance of an infallible system – supernatural powers of the dead.

Once this spiritual relationship has been established, it is always protected with all energy and zeal because any violation to its existence can have long-lasting repercussions on the family or an individual. Apparently, as the research was being undertaken, traditional healers indicated that *umbuyiso* puts to rest the spirit of the departed member which presumably would be wondering about until this ceremony is performed. They also pointed out that a wondering spirit is dangerous as it can even settle in foreign lands and leave its family insecure. Some of the respondents observed that while the traditional *umbuyiso* has been affected by new religious beliefs such as Christianity, it is still performed though some have changed the ways of doing it. Reference was made to modern practices such as memorial services and tombstone unveiling as a new way of performing *umbuyiso* especially by Christians.

As evidence provided from the various research instruments shows, most respondents were in agreement on the need to always maintain a cordial relationship between the living and the dead as a way of making sure that society lives in peace and harmony. In other words, it became apparent that the researcher came to a conclusion that the *umbuyiso* traditional ceremony is one of those strategies that Ndebele people designed as a way of making sure that they connect with their spiritual world and thus it is a conflict management system which has kept them going since time immemorial. One of the other ways of maintaining cordial relations between the living and the dead is outlined in the following section.

### **6.8.2 Ukuthethela (Appeasing the spirits)**

It has already been mentioned that conflict is part and parcel of life so much that it can never be completely eradicated from world societies. What seems to be possible so far is to try and reduce the negative consequences of conflict so that it does not leave a trail of disaster when it occurs. According to Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:179) “confrontation between the people and the spirit can cause misfortune and restoration of the conflict is the resolution of the misfortune”. The fact that living human beings cannot commune directly with the gods makes it imperative that they always make sure that they do not offend the later or else they do so at their peril. Nyathi (2000:86) posits that:

When normal rains did not materialize, the people interpreted this to mean that gods or the living-dead were angry. Here was a case of the citizens in the physical world conducting themselves in a manner that angers the citizens of the spirit world.

Given this state of affairs, it would be foolhardy for local Ndebele people to just relax and wait for disaster to strike before they act to resolve any conflict between the physical world and the word of the spirits. Their actions as regards conflict management are always guided by past experiences as stated by Westlake and Westlake (1992:444) when they say “a crisis is a critical time, the decisive moment or turning point in a situation. Your perception of a crisis situation is influenced by all your past experiences”. This means that, basing on past experiences, the Ndebele people never wait for a crisis to strike but are always a step ahead even before it does. There are indigenous structures readily available to deal with conflict between men and the spirits.

It cannot be argued that such types of conflict are not very easy to deal with since they involve the spiritual world where living humans may or cannot have access or direct lines of communication. The spiritual world can only be accessed by other spiritual or supernatural forces which understand the language and channels of communication at such levels. Nyathi (2000:134) argues that “Ndebele religion posits that God never speaks to man of flesh. God, who is spiritual, speaks to the spiritual, the living-dead. The living-dead who once lived can speak to men and vice versa”. Since the living-dead are capable of accessing God just because they are spiritual, it is also not possible for any ordinary human being to communicate directly with the living-dead especially when a conflict has arisen. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:181) say:

Ndebele spiritual practitioners are not ordinary people, they are spirit mediums, a spirit possesses them and it is the spirit that talks to God not them. The spirit that possess the living are spirits of the dead, to talk to these spirits, people organize mediation ceremonies like ukubuyisa (bringing the spirit of the dead back home) and ukuthethela (appeasing the spirits).

It is important to note that conflict prevention is a priority among the Ndebele people since it helps prevent unforeseen calamities such as drought and famine.

*Ukuthethela* is a traditional ceremony which is conducted whether or not there is any sign of conflict. Spirits are supposed to stay happy so that they can function effectively especially in defending the clan against possible attacks from evil spirits, disease or death. This is buttressed by the Ndebele proverb which says “*idlozi liyabekelwa*” (an ancestor should always be taken care of). Ndlovu et al., (1995:150) underscores the ceremony of *ukuthethela* as a conflict management strategy when he says that:

*Ukuthethela kwakuvele kuyimpilo, kusenziwa iminyaka yonke. Kakuthethelwa ngemuva kokubhula. Utshwala bokuthethela buphekwa ngomuhlwa... kuzakuthi amabele lawo eselungisiwe athanjiswa umnimumuzi abuthanise abomuzi wakhe abize labafowabo kubikwe-ke ukuthi kulungiselwa abadala amanzi okucitsha umhawu kanye legazana.*

(The spirit appeasement ceremony has always been part of life which was conducted annually. It would be performed soon after the harvest. Beer would be brewed using the maize that was left behind during the process of harvesting. When the beer would have been prepared, the man of the house would gather all his children and relatives and announce that they were preparing food for the ancestors).

Apart from openly expressing gratitude to the ancestors for making sure that the family does not go hungry, this ceremony was also regarded as an opportunity to give back to those that would have given-the spirits. When the ceremony has been conducted, there is a belief that the family spirits are appeased and as such the whole family can relax and go about their daily business without fear that any misfortune can befall them simply because they believe that the ancestors are protecting them. In other words, this ceremony made peace between the living and the dead thereby acting as a conflict management strategy between the living and the living-dead.

Discussions pertaining the relations between the living and the dead revealed that the living are afraid of the other world simply because they believe that they are powerless and the dead have more power and can exercise that power at any given time if they so wish. Those respondents who responded through the questionnaire were asked to express their opinion pertaining the signs and symptoms of strained

relations between the living and their ancestors. Their responses included issues such as recurrent illnesses, strange diseases, barrenness, drought and other such calamities which may be deemed not common.

Respondents went on to argue that Ndebeles have a way of distinguishing between what they called a “common” illness and that which emanates from angry ancestors. What was apparent in all their responses was this unprecedented natural fear for of the power that the ancestors possess which makes them have the ability to dispense disasters such as disease and drought upon the living. In light of that scenario, respondents stated that there are times when *ukuthethela* should be done because there is a problem which may be in form of disease or some un-explainable misfortune befalling various members of the family. Ndlovu et al., (1995:153) also support this notion saying that:

*Esintwini uma ekhaya kungahlala kuvela imikhuhlane kokuphela njalo lezimfa ezingajayelekanga abadala babakubone kungcono ukuthi baye emhlahlo, enyangeni phela, bayekuzwa imbangela. Uma kuthiwa kuyiwa emhlahlo kutshiwo ukuthi abantu bazadabula ummango belanda inyanga ezikhatshana ezingazi lutho ngenhlalo yabo. Lapha emhlahlo babetshelwa izinto ezinengi, ezisolwa ngamadlozi lapha ekhaya mhlawumbe kuphathelene lokuthethela, inkomo yamadlozi, njalonjalo.*

(When there were several cases of illnesses or unceremonious deaths, adults would see it proper to go and consult the spiritual diviners so that they could identify the cause of the misfortunes. When they went to consult, they travelled to faraway places to diviners who did not have any knowledge of their lifestyle. There they would be told a lot of things that would have angered the spirits maybe it would be something to do with *ukuthethela*, the ancestral beast or any other reason).

As highlighted above, respondents felt that there are times when misfortunes emanate from wayward behaviour by one or more family members especially when they would have failed to follow the precepts set down by the ancestors. In cases where the source of the misfortunes is unknown, the services of spiritual mediators are sought so that they can explain the mystery. Ndebele people in Silobela have always had spiritual mediators to connect them with their ancestors during good or bad times.

These individuals are known as *isangoma* or *isanusi* in Ndebele. Such personalities are endowed with the spiritual gift to commune with the spiritual world as mediators of spiritual conflicts. They make use of their gift to receive sacred information from the gods and deliver it to the ordinary men who have not privilege of direct communication with the other world. When a conflict or a problem has arisen, people consult these spiritual mediators for advice on what the gods want as resolution to the current conflict:

Such cases are usually successful as everyone knows that one cannot go against the gods. Mediation that involves the spirits does not need to balance interests, as the gods cannot be wrong, it is more of enticing the wrong to repent to resolve the conflict. (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 2012:180-181).

When the *sangoma* or *sanusi* has consulted the ancestors to find out what the source of the conflict is, he then communicates the same to the affected family who will also receive and execute the diviner's orders as instructed. It is always essential that the family follows the diviner's instructions to the letter to avoid further conflicts and punishment from the gods. Ndlovu et al., (1995:152) argues that after the consultation, "*kumele ukuthi bangakwenza lokhu, izinto zibuyele endaweni yazo lapha ekhaya abantu baphile kuhle njalo*". (Things should return to normal at home and people begin to live normal lives).

Evidence presented through research instruments goes a long way in qualifying some of the initial assumptions by this research pertaining the attitude of Ndebele people as regards their spiritual and cosmological surrounding especially when it comes to issues of living in peace both among themselves and their spiritual world. There is evidence also pointing to the fact that the spiritual world wields unprecedented power over the living and the later are always cautious to conduct themselves in a manner that will not put them in a compromised position and render them vulnerable.

It goes without say therefore, that the ceremony of *ukuthethela* (appeasing the spirits) is a well calculated method whose main aim is to provide an avenue for

possible communication between the living and the living-dead so that when a problem has arisen, solutions may be easily possibly found. This researcher then realized that *ukuthethela* is a well-organized and well calculated conflict management strategy which operates at preventive as well as resolution levels in finding lasting solutions between the two worlds which operate at very different levels.

### **6.8.3 Ingozi/Uzimu (Avenging spirit)**

The various research instruments dispatched by the researcher initially sought to establish the types of conflict that are common among Zimbabwean Ndebeles so as to establish how prepared their cultural systems are in handling them. This was done as a way of determining whether they understood that different conflicts require different strategies of addressing them. Responses demonstrated a basic understanding by the respondents that conflict magnitudes differ and depending on the magnitude of the conflict, the strategy to deal with it also changes. Most of the respondents indicated that there are simple conflicts such as sibling rivalry, destruction of crops by a neighbour's livestock which are common in their community. These are handled at family or kraal head level and usually they find amicable solution.

However, reference was made to complicated types of conflict such as those that emanate from acts of murder by intent, mistake or even witchcraft. Instances were cited where an individual is killed by unknown assailants and at times even buried in shallow graves or mountain caves in an attempt to cover the evidence. Some of the respondents also cited situation where a husband kills his wife or the other way around but claims innocence because there is no evidence. Such heinous acts of murder usually leave the family of the deceased aggrieved and with unanswered questions. Respondents were quick to classify these acts among sophisticated conflicts which require sophisticated methods in dealing with them because they are guided by the principle of "skin for skin and tooth for tooth" which though not encouraged is applicable because it is meant to address rare and strange situations.

According to the respondents, Ndebele culture is neither vindictive nor vengeful but certain situations require extra ordinary methods of dealing with them. Situations like

some of those mentioned above, respondents argued that they warrant the application of the traditional concept known as *ingozi/uzimu* in IsiNdebele. The researcher quizzed the respondents as to how justifiable the *ingozi/uzimu* concept was since it appears to be dangerous and destructive since they had initially indicated that their culture is not vindictive or vengeful. Some of the respondents pointed out that there is no justification for murder by anyone and the act of concealing evidence is what society does not tolerate so much that culprits have to pay for their acts of misdemeanour. They pointed out that this method is not applied on petty types of conflict, it is used when the conflict is complex or when there are unanswered questions about the death of a family member. It was also established during the research that this strategy is only applied as a last resort after all other avenues have been exhausted especially if the offender is arrogant and not remorseful.

Respondents also pointed out that they themselves would not want to offend other people to the extent of suffering from the effects of *ingozi/uzimu*. In any case, there are so many avenues that can be taken to make sure that a conflict is resolved before it gets to those extents because *ingozi/uzimu* has devastating effects to the extent of wiping out a particular family completely from the face of the earth if the demands by the aggrieved family are not fully addressed on time. To confirm the tragic nature of *ingozi/uzimu*, Bourdillon (1976:238) remarks that “*ngozi* is fearsome and terrifying because it attacks suddenly and very harshly” suggesting that members of the community are afraid of doing anything that can trigger it.

Traditionally, Ndebeles did not believe that a person can die without an externally induced spiritual or even physical force. This is the reason why after a funeral, especially if the deceased was an adult, they would go and consult a diviner *emhlahlo* so that they satisfy themselves that there was no foul play which led the deceased's death. In cases where they discovered that there was foul play, appropriate action would be taken towards the perpetrator and his family. Mawere (2005:218) describes *uzimu/ingozi* as an act of punishment against a wrong doing done openly or privately as he says:

Technically, *ngozi* is the spirit of a person who has been murdered and then comes back to seek revenge in the family of the murder by causing unfathomable sorrow through illness, misfortunes, or a series of deaths until the perpetrator pays reparations to the offended family. *Ngozi* is premised on the idea of “teat for tat”.

*Ingozi/uzimu* is a type conflict resolution where the offended family decides to avenge for their relative by inducing painful deaths to the family of the offender. The offender’s family experiences systematic and mysterious deaths at times once every year until they acknowledge their sin and seek for channels of negotiating with the offended family. In some cases, the offender’s family experiences still birth or mental illnesses among most of its members so much that they end up consulting a diviner who is expected to reveal the source of their plight. In this case, the researcher would like to view *ingozi/uzimu* as a punitive measure meant to deal harshly with wayward members of the society especially those who would want to terrorise others and still go with impunity. Such an approach finds meaning in the argument raised by Mawere (2010:67) who views “*ngozi*” as an attempt by the locals to attain a virtuous society.

Apparently, *ingozi/uzimu* does not directly deal with the one who would have been directly involved in the offensive act, it haunts him by terrorizing his immediate family to the extent that, if no solution is sought, he would be the last one to die after having endured the pain of watching all his relatives go before him. In an interview with The Standard Newspaper of Zimbabwe (2010) Professor Vimbai Chivaura a University Professor views *ingozi/uzimu* as a good method of punishing those who commit heinous crimes and attempt to hide. He also points out that their actions affect even innocent people as he observes:

Have you not heard people say, *usatiparire ngozi? Ngozi imhosva inoda kuripwa* (Ngozi is a crime that demands restitution). Primarily ngozi arise when innocent blood is shed. If you kill a person, you will have terminated all the plans for that person. Even if no one knows that you have done so, you have to acknowledge the crime and pay reparations. When human beings die, their souls would be separated from their body. That soul will torment those who committed the crimes.

As the researcher was carrying out the research, it was discovered that, while most respondents do not favour this method as a conflict management strategy, they indicated that there are instances where they feel that *ingozi/uzimu* should be applied just because it would deter people from committing acts of gruesome murder. They argue that human life is precious and as such it is unpardonable for someone to kill and just get away without some form of punishment because they have not been apprehended by the police. In that light, *uzimu/ingozi* acts as a vanguard against those people who are fond of shedding innocent blood with impunity since they cannot escape the claws of this technique which is capable of attacking an individual even if they run away from the crime scene and cross the border into the neighbouring country.

When *ingozi/uzimu* strikes, it is not selective so much that every member of the family can be attacked anytime so in most cases the whole clan comes together to seek a solution as fast as possible to avoid further disaster. Mawere (2010:218) also highlights this when he says that “it is not always the case that the wrongdoer is the one who gets killed or cursed by *ngozi*, but any person who is a blood relative of the wrongdoer is subject to the anger of *ngozi*”. When the family has consulted a diviner and they have been told the source of this *ingozi/uzimu*, they immediately seek the services of a mediator/negotiator.

In essence, mediation and negotiation is a very key strategy among Ndebeles since it is used in good times as well as times of crises. Usually, such cases as *ingozi/uzimu* require a negotiator who is a spirit medium or a traditional healer so that they can engage with the spirits of the offended family. Usually the offended family makes demands which are usually honoured unopposed by the family of the offender. Payment is mostly in form of cattle which can be up to sixty in number depending on the gravity of the case in point.

Upon enquiry, the researcher discovered that there are so many people who expressed reservations on the use of *ingozi/uzimu* in solving conflicts among people preferring negotiation instead. At the same time, there are a number who indicated that given a choice; they would resort to this strategy since they claim that the justice delivery system in the country favours offenders more than the offended. Some

argued that *uzimu/ingozi* is the best way to deal with murderers since at times police officers are unwilling to apprehend those who perpetrate violence against other members of the community.

In his novel *Sesitshaye Kwazwela*, Sibanda (1978) outlines how *uzimu* is used to settle a dispute which seems to be a puzzle to the community. Mpiyezwe discovers that his brother's wife is involved in a love affair with Mthelisi a man from the neighbourhood who is also married. He decides to track the love-birds who have by now designed a strategy to meet each other in the bush under the guise that MaMhlanga, his brother's wife, is going to fetch firewood. One day when Mpiyezwe has tailed them and caught them red-handed, MaMhlanga decides to grab Mthelisi by the waist and screams for help as if she has been raped. Mthelisi, who had initially run away, comes back pretending to be rescuing her from the supposed rapist and even runs to the village to alert the elders that he has caught Mpiyezwe attempting to rape his brother's wife.

When the family sits to discuss the matter, Mthelisi and MaMhlanga seem to have a strong case against him so much that no one is ready to believe his side of the story since it is his word against theirs. He is made to pay restitution to his brother for making an attempt on his wife and also to Mthelisi as an apology for committing a crime and trying to smear him with it. This angers Mpiyezwe so much and he decides to commit suicide right inside Mthelisi's bedroom as evidence of his innocence. When this has happened, Mpiyezwe's family seeks revenge and evokes *uzimu* to the peril of Mthelisi's family which pays heavily through mysterious deaths until they apologise and pay restitution. In this particular case, *uzimu* is sued first as a way of identifying the culprit between Mthelisi and Mpiyezwe and secondly as a way of punishing him.

Despite the mixed feelings discovered during the process of carrying out this research, the researcher concluded that *uzimu/ingozi* is still considered as a possible option among various conflict management strategies that the Ndebeles use specially to deal with grievous conflicts such as murder and witchcraft. It acts as a deterrent to those who would want to terrorise other people especially during general elections times. The effectiveness of *uzimu/ingozi* as a conflict management strategy

among Zimbabwean Ndebeles is also emphasized by Mawere (2010:218) though in reference to the Shona people of Zimbabwe when he says:

... *ngozi* is an integral part of their justice system. For the Shona, human life, thus, is one of the most valuable assets in the Shona society and *ngozi* is essentially an expression of disapproval when it comes to actions that result in taking away life. Hence, to the Shona people, *ngozi* has a regulatory function which is that of deterrence, rather than retribution.

No one can be found to be careless to the extent of shedding innocent blood in the society because everyone is aware that committing such a heinous crime, even in the most secretive corner of the world, the consequences are dire and they affect even the innocent members of one's family. Human life is regarded as sacred so much that it is a serious offence to take it no matter how much provocation one would have received from the offender. In essence, the strong message sent through *uzimu/ingozi* is to remind members of the society that there are several other methods of resolving conflict apart from killing each other.

Killing another person is never considered as an appropriate option and anyone who does that would face the wrath of the whole society because they would be endangering the lives of innocent people. In a nutshell, the researcher argues that, while the concept of *uzimu/ingozi* may have devastating effects upon some members of the society, evidence gathered demonstrates that the people concerned find it as a better way of resolving sophisticated matters that affect them as a community. It is therefore prudent to mention that, though complex in nature, this is one of the traditional methods of conflict management which has seen the Ndebele people navigate various situations that nature has been throwing at them over time. The following section focuses on the role played by traditional healers in peace and conflict management since it was established during research that they play a very essential role.

#### **6.8.4 Role of spirit mediums/traditional healers in conflict management**

The researcher made a deliberate effort to find out the attitudes of respondents pertaining the issue of witchcraft among Ndebele societies in line with their religious beliefs. Various attitudes were expressed in connection with the same and conclusions were later made after having examined arguments by various respondents and deliberations on the subject as demonstrated in the following sections. The life of an African does not operate only on the physical but stretches to the spiritual realm as has already been highlighted in the preceding sections. Such a dual characteristic of life means that conflict also prevails between the physical and spiritual worlds so much that there is always need for mitigation processes to make sure that conflict of this nature is dealt with. Conflict that can arise between the living and that living-dead has already been discussed above. However, there are conflicts which can arise among the living which are spiritual in nature for instance those that are caused by alleged or suspected acts of witchcraft.

Most respondents demonstrated that they have book knowledge of what witchcraft is all about since they have heard it from stories being told or read it from newspapers. The bottom line is that witchcraft by its very nature is spiritual and complicated such that dealing with it requires a spiritually capable or supernatural being that may be possessing some supernatural powers which enable them to detect or even deal with it. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:179) note that Ndebeles have a strong belief in the supremacy of God and take exception when it comes to issues that have to do with him because they believe that he is all powerful and no ordinary human being can communicate directly with him. One of the respondents had this to say concerning the supremacy of God:

*Unkulunkulu nguyey umvelinqangi, umdali wethu sonke kungakho siyamhlonipha kakhulu okokuthi ngeke sikhulume laye mathupha, sisebenzise amadlozi ukumfinyelela. Amadlozi yiwo asifikisela izicelo zethu ukuthi sivikelwe ikakhulu kumikhuhlane lemoya emibi efana lobuthakathi engasihlasela nxa yena engasasivikelanga. Lapho ke yikho esisebenzisa khona izinyanga lezanuse ukuthi zisikhulumele lamadlozi ngoba zona zilawo amasu okuxhumana lamadlozi thina esingelawo.*

(God is the creator of the universe so we revere him so much that we cannot even communicate directly with him. We make use of our ancestors to reach out to him. Ancestors are the one that communicate

on our behalf and ask God to protect us from evil spirits which may attack us through disease or witchcraft if God does not protect us. In that regard, we make use of the spirit mediums and traditional healers because they possess the expertise to communicate with the ancestors, such expertise we ourselves do not have.

In other words, God plays a significant role in making sure that people are protected from bad spirits and communication with him is necessary so as to make sure that this communication is not interrupted to the detriment of humans who are his subjects. They underscore the importance of traditional healers and spirit mediums in facilitating a mutual relationship between God and humans since they have the supernatural gift which makes them have that capacity:

Ndebele traditional society is a monotheistic society believing in *uNkulunkulu* (God), the conduct of religious life is through spirit mediums. There are conflicts between the gods and the people while some conflicts between individuals can be religious in nature. Resolution of such conflicts is done through mediation that can be passive or active like social and political conflicts. In religious conflicts mediation is done mostly by religious practitioners and spirits (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 2012:179).

Apparently, it also came out during the research that though complicated as it might be, witchcraft is a very common method that either is used to settle a conflict or as usual, it can be a source of conflict. The researcher made effort to find out the general feelings about the use of witchcraft to resolve conflicts and interesting revelations were made. The following are some of the responses from respondents concerning what they perceive as positive use of the acts of witchcraft.

Respondent 1:

*Nxa umuntu engafuni ukumela amacala akhe, kuyabe sokudingakala ukuthi kusetshenziswe indlela ezingamenza avume ngoba phela lawo mandla kasilawo thina. Lokhu Kangeke sithi yibuthakathi, yindlela yokulungisisa abantu abahluphayo.*

(If someone does not want to face his crimes, there is need for extra ordinary means which can make him do so. We the ordinary people do not have such

powers. We can not necessarily consider this as witchcraft, we can call it a way of correcting wayward members of the society).

Respondent 2:

*Kuyenzakala ukuthi indoda ihlukuluze umkayo kwesinye isikhathi imbulale kabuhlungu. Nxa kunjalo, kujwayelekile ukuthi abakibo bayalungisa engcwabeni lakhe ukuze avuke azilwele ngoba phela uyabe ebulewe yena engelacala. Lokhu lakho ngeke sithi yibuthakathi, yindlela nje eyokuqondisa umuntu olekhanda elitshisayo kumbe eyokuphindisela ukubulawa komntanabantu ngendlela ezwisa ubuhlungu.*

(There are times when a man ill-treats his wife to an extent that she dies a gruesome death. If that happens, it is common knowledge that the wife's relatives may do some mysterious activities on her grave so that she can come forth and fight for herself and avenge her death. I would not refer to this as witchcraft but a subtle way of correcting someone who is thick headed. It is a way of compensating ourselves for the loss of our loved one who would have died a painful death).

Respondent 3:

*Mina ngeke ngithi yibuthakathi lobu. Nxa umuntu ekwenzele ulunya kumbe sithi wabulala inkomo yakho kodwa abesephika, kuyabe kumele uzame icebo elizamenza abone ukuthi kahlakaniphanga. Le yindlela yokumchaya egcekeni ukuthi amele amacala akhe, nxa kusenza abuye azoxolisa.*

(I cannot call this an act of witchcraft. When someone has done something very inhuman to you, let us say he kills your livestock but denies responsibility, it would be necessary to do something which will show them that they are not clever. It is a way of exposing the person so that they stand and face their crimes so much that if possible, they ask for forgiveness).

Basing on the responses above, one can observe that there are times when local people feel vulnerable and in need of a supernatural force to take care of their affairs

in a manner that seems to have a very thin dividing line with witchcraft. However, such situations appear to be condoned by the society as long as they are an attempt to correct ills and wrongs that some members of the society would have done. In other words, one can argue that there is positive and negative witchcraft of which the latter is not acceptable and has its own consequences. According to Ndlukula (1980:155):

*Nxa ubuthakathi sobungenile ekhaya sekumele kubizwe inyanga izoxotshana labo ize ibukhuphe ngemithi.*

(When witchcraft has entered the home, an *inyanga* is called to fight it until he removes it with his medicine.)

The spirit medium or traditional healer is called upon by the bewitched first to detect or determine the source of the witchcraft as well as the possible solutions to it. This happens after the bewitched would have detected some signs and symptoms of unusual occurrences either on himself or any of his family members in form of illnesses or misfortunes which maybe in form of barrenness, disabilities and mysterious illnesses. When the spirit medium or traditional healer has consulted with the spiritual world using his spiritual powers will determine the source of the witchcraft as well as the reasons for it. He then goes on to assume the role of a mediator between the two parties in order to resolve the conflict. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:181) attest to the role of spirit mediums and traditional healers when they say:

The *inyanga* mediates between the witch and the bewitched to resolve the conflict and enable them to live together without fear or suspicion. The medicine of an *inyanga* removes the misfortune brought about by the witchcraft while at the same time helping the witch to leave the witchcraft. Mediation in witchcraft conflict can only be spiritual; this is so because for a conflict to be resolved there should be confidence that the mediator can resolve the conflict.

In this case, it should be noted that the one who would have been offended uses witchcraft to put a message across to the offender and believes that this is the best method to resolve the conflict that would have occurred between them. In simpler terms, witchcraft, in its various forms can be used as a conflict management strategy

among the Ndebele. Respondents indicated that as far as they are concerned, this method has got very quick results as it forces those who are fond of committing crimes with impunity to account for the pain that they subject other people to.

On the other hand, there is conflict that is triggered by acts, or suspected acts of witchcraft where there is no one who would have offended anyone. Respondents indicated that there are various reasons why members may engage in slothful acts of witchcraft. Some of the responses are as follows:

**Respondent A:**

*Ubuthakathi bubangelwa yinhliziyo embi elomona kumbe efuna ukubhidliza lapho okwakiwe khona. Umuntu wakhona kafuni kubona abantu besidla izithelo zezithukuthuku zabo, ufuna ukubona abantu behawula kuphela isikhathi zonke.*

(Witchcraft is a result of hardheartedness of an individual. This person wants to destroy what others have built and never wants to see people enjoying the fruits of their labour; he/she enjoys people suffering and miserable all the time).

**Respondent B:**

*I consider witchcraft to be a product of evil spirit which possesses an individual and causes them to wake up at night and go about bewitching people while they are asleep. It is a spirit that eats human flesh so that is why witches kill people over and over again. Sometimes the spirit is passed on from generation to generation unless it is exorcised that is why we have families even here that are known to be families of witches.*

Most of the respondents who were consulted believe that this type of witchcraft emanates from outright jealousy, greed and at times it comes from evil spirits which might possess an individual and drive them in the direction of witchcraft. Such individuals are a menace to the society as they are feared due to some powers that

they possess which can only be dealt with by those who have spiritual powers as well. Bozongwana (2000:36) explains how witchcraft works when he says:

Evil spirits do exist and dwell in men and make them vehicles. These are commonly known as witch spirits, and are mostly said to be found in women. They are believed to be possessing supernatural powers at night and can enter locked doors and interfere with the sleeping person in an effort to make him sick or ill.

Witches have supernatural powers and as a result are generally feared especially for their ability to perform acts which no ordinary human being can perform. Even during the deliberations for focus group discussions, the general tone among members was that of fear for the unknown when it comes to witchcraft because members pointed out that witches' supernatural power can attack anyone at any given time. When an individual believes or feels that they have been bewitched, they consult a traditional healer or spirit medium who in turn consults with the spiritual world in order to determine who the perpetrator of that act of witchcraft would be. The gods will then make the revelation to him and he eventually relays the message to the concerned party.

Given the visible fear that society members have for witches and witchcraft, it became apparent that they need a supernatural force to mitigate on their behalf or else they would be consumed. It is in light of this that members indicated that the spirit medium or traditional healer saves as a mediator between humans and the gods for the benefit of other humans. He or she eventually looks for a solution to the problem by using either his own medicine to cure if it is a sickness or to engage the witch to reverse the situation him/herself. It is up to the spirit medium or traditional healer to either expose or keep the identity of the witch concealed. It depends on the demands of the one who would have been bewitched. In essence, the spirit medium or traditional healer uses their spiritual position to help in the resolution of conflict between the witch and the bewitched as highlighted by Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:181) who say:

Mediation in witchcraft conflict can only be spiritual; this is so because for a conflict to be resolved there should be confidence

that the mediator can resolve the conflict. Anyone who tries to mediate in witchcraft conflict without the spiritual power is in danger of being a victim of witchcraft.

Due to the fact that spiritual wars need to be fought by those who have spiritual capabilities, Zimbabwean Ndebeles place high value on their spirit mediums and traditional healers since they are regarded as the source of communication between the physical world and the spiritual world. Whether or not there is a suspicion of witchcraft, spirit mediums and traditional healers are regarded highly among *amaNdebele* just because in most cases people have fear of the unknown and they always want to depend on these spiritual figures that they consider as their only shield against calamities that may befall them. The fact that they are endowed with the ability to see what no ordinary human being can see gives them the advantage and leverage for people to believe everything they say especially when there is a conflict. Snyder and Diesing (1977:10) speak about this when they posit that:

Diplomacy becomes more actively coercive and the emotional climate shifts toward greater hostility and fear. Aims centre on winning the conflict rather than realizing common interests.

Having established the overdependence upon spirit mediums and traditional healers for their safety and security against supernatural forces, the researcher sought to find out why it does not appear as though members show reverence and respect them. Members who were consulted lamented the advent of Christianity which has led to the detriment of the value of spirit mediums and traditional healers. However, they were quick to mention the fact that these institutions have remained alive due to the fact that people still consult them when need arises although in most cases it is done under the cover of darkness. Respondents pointed out that if it had not been for the good work done by traditional healers and spirit mediums such as *otsikamutanda* (spirit medium responsible for sniffing and cleansing witchcraft), people would be living in serious fear and could actually be wiped out by witches. Respondents applauded the role played by *otsikamutanda* (spirit medium) in sniffing out and cleansing society of witchcraft time and again so much that they enjoy peace as a community.

There is evidence therefore, of over reliance upon those members of the community such as spirit mediums and traditional healers to make sure that people live in peace and calm without fear of being attacked by witches. As has been highlighted above, Ndebele people are never safe, secure or at peace as long as their spirituality is not guaranteed just because everything around them is centred on their ability to stay connected to their spiritual world. P' Bitek (1986:18) attests to this when he says that:

Man is not free. Man is not born free. He cannot be free. He is incapable of being free. For only by being in chains can he be and remain 'human'--man has a bundle of duties which are expected from him by society, as well as a bundle of rights and privileges that society owes him.

This idea buttresses the fact that African people, and Ndebeles in particular, are dependent so much on their spiritual world especially in line with the dictates of *ubuntu* which spells out all the necessary codes of conduct for one to be called humane thus making spirituality and spiritual links a pre-requisite as a result making spirit mediums or traditional healers indispensable even in conflict management. As was indicated by some of the respondents during the process of carrying out research, the Ndebele community of Silobela has several ways of dealing or punishing those of their members who are either accused or suspected of engaging in acts of witchcraft. Witchcraft itself is an unwelcome practice which African people in general regard as evil so much that anyone associated with it is regarded as an enemy of the state.

Having established the feelings of the people about witchcraft and witches and what sort of damage it does to the society, the researcher then proceeded to find out what sort of punishments or penalties are meted out on those that are suspected or even caught practicing witchcraft. A number of insights and suggestions came up from the discussions and other means of enquiry. The most outstanding feature was the fact that witchcraft is an evil that is not tolerated in the Ndebele community because it deprives people of their peace so whoever is suspected is dealt with accordingly depending on the damage they have caused.

Some of the respondents said that when someone is caught practicing witchcraft in the traditional society, there were several options taken against them for instance they could be asked to make a public confession in the presence of everyone as a way of embarrassing them so that they may desist from it. At times, when one was caught red-handed in the act of practicing witchcraft, the one who caught them could do what is called *ukubethela isikhonkwane* (a traditional act of piercing and placing a wooden peg) on the central part of the head or in between the buttocks as punishment. This peg served as a sign to the rest of the community that the particular individual was caught in the act of witchcraft so that other members might know that he or she is a danger to the community. However, with the advent of modernity and civilization, some of these punishments can no longer be exercised because there are new laws governing the conduct of societies. (Ndlovu et al., 1995)

Witchcraft by its very nature is an evil practice which society regards as an anathema and as such would do its best either to protect itself against its perpetrators or do its best to eradicate it that is why there is a common proverb which says "*ukwanda kwaliwa ngabathakathi*" (population growth is hindered by witches). This proverb is used when one is expressing gratitude to another who would have done something good to them as an expression that people should always assist each other and the more we are in number, the more we can continue to assist each other. The only hindrance to our population growth is the witch who always fights this increase by killing innocent people who should be helping the community.

As has been demonstrated above, *otsikamutanda* (spirit mediums) are always called upon once in a while to make a public cleansing ceremony where they name and shame witches in public before cleansing them of their spirits of witchcraft. *Otsikamutanda* are endowed with an extra eye which makes them to be capable of detecting witches and even take away their powers and destroy all the things that witches possess. The researcher wanted to establish what sort of activity is carried out by *otsikamutanda* which makes them so popular among Ndebeles. *Tsikamutanda* is a term borrowed from Chishona language of Zimbabwe and emanates from the act of making people jump over a piece of wood which is used to detect if one is a witch or not.

When an individual is innocent, they easily jump the piece of wood but if they are guilty, they cannot jump; they lose power immediately. Failure to jump over the piece of wood is interpreted to mean that one is guilty of witchcraft and then cleansing processes follow. The cleansing is not done for free; those who are caught have to pay a certain amount of money or even herds of cattle. After the cleansing ceremony, the affected members are considered to be clean and eligible to live in the community with others.

It was also discovered that, regardless of all attempts to rid the society of evil doers or particularly witches, some members would still not give it up. When all attempts to stop or discourage a member from practicing witchcraft in the community have been tried and yielded no positive results, extreme cases result in the individual being sent away from the village to go and find a place to stay elsewhere. It is believed that witchcraft is a generic disease which affects at times the whole clan. As a result, when an individual is sent away from the community for cases involving witchcraft, he or she may be told to take with him all the family members as a double portion of punishment plus ensuring peace in the community. When this individual or family has been sent away, he or she goes to a faraway land where they live like strangers and may only return after the community members have been satisfied that they are repentant.

In a nutshell, traditional healers and spirit mediums were found to be indispensable in issues of peace and conflict management in the Ndebele communities as they play the role of restoring broken relationships as well as punishing those who are a menace to society's peace. The researcher was convinced that Ndebele people have a well-knit mechanism of making sure that they deal with problems associated with various forms of conflict which are all embedded in their culture without the need for external interference.

It should be noted that, in all these methods, there is no reference to modern legal systems. People are the ones, through their cultural systems who have designed methods to deal with their day to day issues and from the research, it was established that members concerned trust that their methods are effective and have been tested and tried. Members underscore the significance of home-grown

solutions because they argued that even when a conflict has arisen, their solutions ensure that they live together harmoniously afterwards. In the next section, the research discusses the place of oral literature in peace and conflict management among Ndebeles.

### **6.9 Oral literature as a conflict management strategy.**

Communication, in both its verbal or non-verbal state, is a very essential element in the Ndebele community. Communication starts from as low a level as the time when a foetus is still in the womb and does not end even after the same has died. Oral literature has been one historically sustained method of communication of the society's ideals and expectations in African societies and even in the Ndebele society. Most of the socially accepted values and norms are produced, stored and transmitted through oral literature such that a study of the same can give enough information about the life of the people. Turin (2012: xviii) introducing the book by Finnegan (2012:16) on oral literature in Africa has this to say:

The study and appreciation of oral literature is more important than ever for understanding the complexity of human cognition. For many people around the world – particularly in areas where history and traditions are still conveyed more through speech than in writing – the transmission of oral literature from one generation to the next lies at the heart of culture and memory. Very often, local languages act as vehicles for the transmission of unique forms of cultural knowledge.

As indicated on the appendices below, all the research instruments were designed in such a way that they would solicit information regarding the place and impact of oral literature in issues of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. The motive was premised on the realization that communication itself is done mostly through verbal means and as such, most of the values, norms and principles that society intends to communicate to its members are done through verbal communication. In that regard, examining various oral forms of communication would provide an opportunity for the researcher to assess their contribution to the subject under study especially the communicative aspect.

Responses received from various research instruments as indicated in the previous chapter were very positive as they reflected over reliance by the people on their oral literature particularly proverbs and wise sayings. All respondents concurred with Finnegan (2012:17) who says that “the literary relevance of these short sayings is clear. Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw.” There was outright consensus on the fact that oral literature plays a significant role in making sure those cultural values and norms are communicated from one generation to the other especially those that relate to peace and conflict management. Respondents also indicated that Ndebele people never tolerated violence of any nature as can be observed for the various forms of oral literature that they created in order to safeguard themselves against it. The section below makes a critical consideration of proverbs as well as wise-saying which are commonly used as weapons for addressing conflict situations by the Ndebele people.

### **6.9.1 Proverbs and wise-sayings.**

The researcher restricts this study to proverbs as well as wise-saying as representatives of a plethora of Ndebele oral art forms such as songs, folktales, and myths which are effectively represented by the former. Incorporating all oral art forms would be repetitive and unnecessary since these also fulfil the demands and objectives of this study. The following is a discussion and examination of the various proverbs that were collected during the research using instruments such as questionnaires, interviews as well as focus group discussions.

The major objective was to examine the role played by these proverbs or wise sayings in making sure that people live in peace as well as to assess how they transmit cultural strategies for peace and conflict management. Through them, the researcher makes an assessment of how Ndebeles have and continue to use proverbs as a means of inculcating good values among their members of the society especially the children whom it is believed that once they are trained at a tender age, they would grow up to be responsible non-violent citizens.

Respondents pointed out that the process of child socialisation plays a key role in making sure that children appreciate what the society values from a tender age such

that when they grow up, they become responsible citizens who are prepared to live and abide by the dictates of the entire society. In doing this, they are informed and guided by the proverb which says “*isigogo sigoqwa sisemanzi*” (the animal skin is processed while it is still fresh) which is evidence that children need to be groomed while they are still young so that less effort will be needed to direct them in the right path when they are old. Nketia (1958:21) elaborates on the significance of the proverb as a rich form of communication which reveals how sophisticated the Africans are in manipulating language for their own benefit saying:

The value of the proverb to us in modern Ghana does not lie only in what it reveals of the thoughts of the past. For the poet today or indeed for the speaker who is some sort of an artist in the use of words, the proverb is a model of compressed or forceful language.

Respondents argued that among Ndebele people, conflict management does not necessarily start when a conflict has erupted. It is in the best interest of the society to make sure that it emphasizes the aspect of conflict prevention wherever possible. The indispensable utilisation of oral literature as a peace and conflict strategy is underscored by Moyo, Dhlamini and Ncube (2011:123) who argue that all societies have a way of making use especially of the proverbs in dealing with conflict. They observe that “an interrogation of the Ndebele proverb proves that all societies had their own idiosyncratic ways of maintaining peace and resolving conflicts rooted in their histories, traditions and predispositions”.

It should be noted that conflict management is not an event but a process which involves so many dynamics. A given society has to effectively manage its conflict situations in order to avoid problems that are associated with either unresolved or wrongly resolved conflicts. Africans in general and Zimbabwean Ndebeles in particular, are influenced by their historical experiences in dealing with various situations of their life. These experiences have a very serious bearing in how they view and deal with reality because in most cases, these experiences become part and parcel of their culture. Zezela (2004:36) makes an emphasis on the peculiarity of Africa saying that “Africans have their own histories of struggle and human rights

preoccupations that, in very complex ways, are linked to, but also distinctive from, struggles and pre-occupations in other parts of the world.”

Apparently, it came out clearly during the various research proceedings that Ndebele people understand conflict in a holistic manner. When members of the community have faced a conflict situation, the whole community is affected and as such it is the responsibility of the whole community to make sure that all conflicts are resolved amicably. There are a number of wise-sayings which serve as a reminder to all members of the society that they should accept that conflicts are part of life but it does not have to be a permanent scar which brings life to a standstill. One wise saying cited by most respondents says “*ginyilitshe*” (swallow a stone). This saying is applicable in a conflict situation where a member of the community is offended by another who may or may not even be aware that they have offended the other. No one in their rightful senses can be able to literally “swallow a stone” but the symbolism associated with the saying is meant to show that regardless of having been offended, one should just swallow the bitter pill and allow life to move on as normal.

Asked about the possible etymology of this saying, some of the respondents said they were not aware; they just grew up knowing and using it just because their elders used to use it. However, some gave a relevant explanation which is based on the characteristics of both a stone and an act of swallowing. A stone ordinarily cannot be swallowed because it is solid and not edible. The act of swallowing it is in itself very difficult and unpalatable if it has to be done. So, in essence, when one is instructed to swallow a stone, they are being encouraged to put up with a difficult situation and accept it as normal. Such a member would have been offended in such a way that under normal circumstances they would fight even physically, but, the Ndebeles would never want permanent animosity and hatred among its members. Some of the respondents emphasized the significance of swallowing a stone suggesting that this is a wise-saying which is meant to discourage people from permanent conflicts.

Zimbabwean Ndebeles appreciate the fact that conflict is sometimes caused by failure by one party to accept the views of another party. There are times when an individual or a group of people express divergent opinions but both sides struggle to

make the other accept their side at times to no avail. Such scenarios sometimes can deteriorate to verbal exchange of harsh words or fist fights and at certain extremes to the extent of a full war. When the Ndebeles say “*kayilale ngenxeba*” (let it lie down on the wounded side), they would be referring to such situations where people need to agree to disagree without having to fight. Explaining some of the causes of conflict, Synder and Diesing (1977; 15) state that:

Conflict is precipitated by a conflict of interest, if one party to the to the conflict or crisis challenges and the other resist, a conflict or crisis ensues. the intensity of the challenge and counter resistance can raise the conflict to confrontation, active mediation is employed by the Ndebele at this stage to avoid fighting

The researcher went on to seek explanations of this saying in order to establish its effectiveness in day-to-day communication. Respondents suggested that this saying (*kayilale ngenxeba*) emanates from the traditional way of curing a wounded animal particularly an ox or a cow. If their animal was wounded, one way of curing it was to make sure it lies on the side which is wounded so that flies cannot have access to the wound. Ordinarily, this is a painful exercise, but for the sake of making sure that the animal recovers, it just had to lie on that side.

In most cases, the trick worked and the animal would be healed. In other words, when people cannot agree on an opinion, one of the sides is encouraged to give in and allow the other to take precedence as a way of making sure that the disagreement does not degenerate into a full-scale war. It should be realized that, just as painful as it was for the animal to lie on its wounded side, so it is when one side has to accept defeat and bow to the views of the other, yet that is supposed to be normal. No one is expected to argue endlessly among community members since they know that at some point, one must either swallow a stone or allow their animal to lie down on the wounded side.

Some conflicts emanate from petty issues which if not given too much attention could save a lot of strain and grief that conflict is capable of causing. In some cases, when people hear rumours, they take them seriously and make issues out of them to

the extent that those rumours end up causing so much social damage to the community. On the other hand, there are members in the community who specialize in spreading lies about other people as a result they cause so much alarm and despondency among members of the community. When the source of the conflict is traced, it can be realized that it was initiated by a simple lie or issue which could have been dismissed from the start in order to avoid chaos.

As a result, the Ndebele do not encourage their members to make a follow-up on every piece of information that they hear or to pursue petty issues and balloon them to become serious issues. The saying which came out during research in light of this says "*ubotshaya indiva*" (learn to ignore some of these issues) and is used effectively to address such conflicts. It is taboo among the Ndebele to pick a fight over a petty lie that you might have heard flying in the air because the society implores its members to always learn to ignore some of the things that they hear.

This technique is well calculated because naturally, members of the community are bound to hear a number of things being said about them or about their relatives so much that, if they were to pursue all of them to the bitter end, there would definitely be no time of peace in the community. P' Bitek (1986:174) emphasise the role of institutional structures created by our societies as a way of dealing with situations that affect us directly and indirectly when he says:

Human beings do not behave like dry leaves, smoke or clouds, which are blown here and there by the wind. Men live in organizations called institutions; the family and clan, a chiefdom or kingdom ... and all these institutions are informed by, and in fact built around the central ideas people have developed, ideas about what life is all about ... their world view.

In other words, when the community has put in place its social structures for conflict management, there is no one who is allowed to either question them or even violate them because these are set down using the worldview of the same society. In that case, if the Ndebele society prohibits its members from making a follow-up of each and every rumour that speculates, it is a conflict management strategy which, if obeyed, can help in making sure that members live in peace and harmony. The use

of oral literature in dealing and addressing various conflict situations among the Ndebele was observed to be a well-organized cultural system which helps the community deal with its local problems in its own way.

It was observed that the effectiveness of this system is heavily dependent upon the members' adherence to their cultural traditions because it only makes sense if interpreted from the same. Most respondents indicated that oral literature is useful and used almost on a daily basis and as such the researcher concluded that it is an effective strategy in dealing with conflict among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. The following section focuses on the significance of reconciliation as a concept of peace and conflict resolution.

### **6.10 Reconciliation**

This research would have been incomplete if it would not examine the aspect of reconciliation as a conflict management strategy because, whatever other strategy is used, its ultimate goal should lead to conflict resolution and mending of differences for posterity. The bottom principle underlining the issues of conflict management is the very admission that conflict is not only inevitable in any society but it is also retrogressive if left unattended. According to Kazeem (2009:062):

Conflict is ubiquitous in all societies. It is a phenomenon that is inevitable in all human society due to differences in interests, goals, values and aims among people. Most conflicts arise in the basic units of society such as within families, clans, villages, locations or other small units. Amongst most African communities there are frameworks that are in place for the resolution of conflicts and for preventing their escalation into violence, thus threatening the social fabric.

It should be noted that whatever cultural frameworks are designed in order to tackle conflict, the motive is to make sure that the social fabric is never broken but maintained as much as possible so that society can forge ahead without problems. It was highlighted during research proceedings that conflict get complicated depending on the individuals involved and thus strategies for addressing it also depend on who is involved and to what extent the conflict can be stretched.

When parties are engaged in a conflict, there are several issues at stake especially if the conflict involves people from the same village who are likely to meet occasionally. The conflict is even more disturbing when it involves parties who are neighbours or even relatives. Conflicts, by their very nature, are not healthy for any society, let alone a community which has so much historical, social, religious and political connections which are necessary for the development of the same community.

Having established the various causes of conflict, the various methods used or employed to deal with different kinds of conflict, the researcher sought to establish the extent to which Ndebele people make use of the concept of reconciliation as a conflict management goal. Kelman (2010:3) argues that:

... an agreement emerging from a process of conflict resolution within an interactive problem-solving framework and the new relationship it promotes are conducive to stable peace, mutually enhancing cooperation, and ultimate reconciliation.

As such, both research questionnaires and research interviews had a section dedicated to capture issues pertaining this aspect so that respondents could express their views as regards its use as well as effectiveness. Evidence from the research instruments demonstrated that, not only do society members appreciate the role played by reconciliation in mending broken relationships; they also understand that it is a complex process which is as delicate as the conflict itself. Most of the respondents pointed out that most of the indigenous strategies that are employed by the Ndebele in dealing with conflict already have undertones of reconciliation as a goal right from the beginning just because they believe that any strategy which does not result in reconciliation is a failure. Kelman (2010:5) also supports this notion when he says that:

Thus, reconciliation, in this view, is a consequence of successful conflict resolution. It comes at the end of the process, with time: The test of a good agreement, and of the process that generates it, is its conclusiveness to ultimate reconciliation. This does not mean that reconciliation comes into play only after an agreement has been reached. Reconciliation is, after all, a process as well as an outcome; as such, it

should ideally be set into motion from the beginning of a peace process and as an integral part of it.

Since reconciliation is understood, even by the respondents who took part in this research, it does not come as a surprise therefore that most of the respondents argued that all members of the society, particularly those that would have been involved in a conflict should prioritise reconciliation no matter what the circumstances are. Those who fail to toe the line stand to face the wrath of the community and can be subjected to extreme measures as will be demonstrated through the sections that follow.

Full reconciliation should culminate into a full restoration of broken relationships so much that those parties which would have lost communication can now start talking once again. Moyo et al., (2011:124-5) argue that “the concept of *“idale”* (traditional court) shows that the Ndebele society placed a high premium on solidarity, oneness, tolerance and cooperation”. This implies that the community was responsible for the creation of any mechanisms they could find in order to safeguard their community from external or internal forces that could threaten its oneness.

Zimbabwean Ndebeles do not subscribe to the idea that there can be permanent conflicts which can neither be reversed nor redressed because that is disastrous to the development of society. It is not a surprise therefore; that there is a common Ndebele proverb which goes *“akugobo lingeqondiswe”* which means there is no wrong that cannot be made right. This stance on itself is a positive recipe for making sure that there is no room for any type of conflict which cannot be resolved even when murder is involved.

One can argue that, according to the Ndebele, for any conflict that ensued there was already an avenue for its resolution and no one could be adamant and claim that the conflict that they would have been involved in should or cannot be resolved. Heyns and Stefiszyn (2008:264) point out that whenever talks to resolve a conflict between two people were involved, “... the attitude of reconciliation will be promoted as far as possible” as the ultimate goal of the negotiations otherwise anything less than that would be regarded as a waste of time and energy.

It has been stated several times above that the Ndebele people just like all other African people appreciate the inevitability of conflict among their societies and as such, they are always prepared to deal with whatever type of conflict that can arise. Heyns and Stefiszyn (2008:26) point out that Africans believe that when a conflict has arisen, "... a solution can be found and needs to be found within the institutionalized and structural framework available" so that there is no conflict which is left unattended to. Burton goes on to echo similar sentiments pertaining resolution of conflicts when he says that "a conflict is settled when it is managed, negotiated, or suppressed" thus the Ndebeles never leave conflict unresolved.

As children are growing up, they are made to internalize the idea that in life there are times when things may not always go the right way, but be that as they may, there must always be a way of making sure that the wrongs are righted. When people have had a conflict, there must always be a way of making sure that they make peace at some point so that they may move on with life. This idea is synonymous with the idea brought about by the following proverbs:

*Akugeza lingelasiyinga* (there is no young lady without a dark patch)

*Akusoka lingelasici* (there is no suitor which does not have a fault).

(Nyembezi, 1954:27)

In principle, *amaNdebele* always acknowledge the fact that there is, and can never be, a person who is immune to fault and mistakes. Everyone is liable to making mistakes one day or the other. If no one is perfect, then there is no one who is qualified to judge the other and claim that the mistakes that have been done by another cannot happen to them. In principle, failure to acknowledge that humans make and will always make mistakes leads to self-righteousness, an unacceptable character trait among *amaNdebele* because it is a hindrance to any attempts to resolve conflicts which may befall anyone. If a member does not believe that they themselves can make mistakes, they cannot accept when another has wronged them and that is a recipe for disaster.

In order to guard against any of their members developing this false sense of righteousness, the Ndebeles have a saying which says “*kusasa kuyizolo*” (tomorrow is yesterday).

These are strong words of warning which are meant to discourage people from developing a sense of holier than thou as well as a wrong feeling of thinking that what would have befallen another person cannot befall them. In other words, this saying is meant to remind all members of the society that they are never immune to committing wrongs against other people so much that, when they have been wronged themselves, they must always give room for negotiation and restoration of relations.

Good relations are at the centre of the survival of the society and as such, it is imperative for the society to always put in place some solid structures to guard against damaging relations. When the Ndebeles use the proverb “*inxeba lendoda kalihlekwa*” (do not laugh when a man is wounded), they intend to discourage people from treating those who would have made errors with disdain just because tomorrow, the same may happen to you. In fact, this proverb is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it points out the fact that no one is perfect yet on the other it sows seeds for tolerance and reconciliation simply because if one feels that they have been wronged by another, they can always give them the benefit of the doubt thereby opening avenues for communication. As children grow up, they are socialised to accept that mistakes among humans are a common feature such that no one can stand up and claim that they would never wrong another person as long as they live in the society.

Since there is evidence that no one is perfect, there is also evidence that mistakes are common and are part of life, it is important to realize that Ndebeles do not tolerate violence as a solution to conflicts. Violence has always been discouraged among Africans generally since it can leave a trail of disaster like what happened in Rwanda and Burundi where genocide left close to a million people dead. Zimbabwean Ndebeles alike also guard against acts of violence and dispatch all systems at their disposal to deal with possible incidents of violence. Proverbs, as has been indicated, are a widely utilized weapon to fight against violence is the

community since everyone is socialized to accept them as a code of conduct from culture.

The proverb which says “*koniwa ngomlomo kulungiswe ngomlomo*” (any wrongs which emanate from what is said through word of mouth should be solved by the word of mouth) is a direct instruction for every member of the community not to invoke a spirit of violence as a way of finding solutions in case they are wronged. When people have had a conflict, they are implored to negotiate and come up with a solution without having to take things to the physical world of fist fights. Ndlovu et al., (1995:127) underscore the need to always solve things through negotiation when he says that:

*Amadoda axabeneyo la azakuthi angehlulana ukuthi alungise ingxabano ephakathi kwawo athathe udaba lolo aluse kunhloko yomuzi. Inhloko yomuzi isizabiza amadoda amabili kumbe amathathu ukuthi azeyilalelisa udaba lolu. Ngemva kokuchwayisisa udaba lolu bazazama ukuluqeda ngokweluleka amadoda la ukuthi axolisane nxa kumbe belwile bagezelane babuyele emakhaya abo sebhleka njalo. Sonke isikhathi injongo yikuthi ababili laba bangabophelani findo ngoba ukubophelana ifindo kudala enye ingxabano njalo.*

(These men who have conflicted if they fail to solve their problem will take their issue to the head of the family who in turn will call to or three other men to come and help him listen to the story. When they have listened to the story, they try to advise these men and make them forgive each other. If these men had had a physical fist fight, they wash their wounds and drink each other’s water so that they forgive each other fully because if they hold grudges, it creates another problem again).

Research showed that Ndebele societies have no room for violence or for conflicting parties to engage in physical fights during the process of resolving the conflict or any stage of the conflict for that matter. In fact, it is evident that when two people have failed to solve their conflict, they should approach a third person who will also use their discretion to include other people so that a solution is found. It is generally believed that when the matter is placed in the hands of two or three other people, there is no way they can fail to come up with a solution. Among them, there is

absolutely no room for physical engagement; it is only negotiation until the matter is put to rest.

*AmaNdebele* (Ndebele people) always encouraged dialogue as the best way of finding a solution to a problem since it would give both parties room to argue their cases out until they are satisfied that their opinion has been heard. The major functions of the traditional “*idale*” was a platform for open discussion because already there is a proverb which promote dialogue which says “*okwehlula amadoda kuyabikwa*” (whatever cannot be handled by men needs to be reported). Teodros (2001:5) posits that:

Communalism ... provides instruments for building consensus through compromise and extended negotiations that come to an end when a working consensus is reached. Constructive consensus ... is not a mechanical process but a deliberate activity of reason, nor does it lead to the suppression of disagreements, as is often mythologised. Consensus building is always propelled by practical reasons which attempt to sway the dissenters. All participants can persuade each other by the force of their words, wisdom and eloquence.

In other words, this is an open platform for each of the conflicting parties to express their views with the assistance of listeners who will then help come out with a verdict on who needs to apologise or pay restitution to the other. The process is meant to attain justice as much as possible so that there is no one who can go away aggrieved and angry at the other. However, there is also a chance that conflicting parties can fail to reach a compromise even when they have taken their matter to other people. Such a scenario would require desperate measures such as separating the two for a time or even permanently depending on the gravity of their point of conflict. Ndlovu et al., (1995:128) highlights this when he says:

*... luzakhulunywa lolodaba kuzanywe ukwenza amadoda la axolisane. Uma kubonakala ukuthi ukuxolelana kwabo kakusuthisi induna yayilamandla okuthi ibehlukanise. Omunye usezathutha lapha akade akhe khona ayekwakha kwesinye isigaba. Kwakukholwa ukuthi uma sebekhatshana lakhatshana inhliziyo zabo zizaxola bacine sebekhohliwe ngaleyo ngxabano.*

(The matter will be discussed at length as they try to reconcile these two men. If it was clear that they are failing to agree, the chief had power to separate them. One of them would have to relocate to another village. It was believed that once they are further apart, their hearts would melt and find it possible to forgive each other and reconcile).

In all these processes, it should be noted that negotiation or dialogue takes precedence among those who would have had a misunderstanding. Culturally, a chief is mandated to have the final say since it is believed that as a custodian of tradition and culture, he gets his guidance from the ancestors and as such, his decision cannot be wrong. Whatever he decides is for the good of the conflicting members as well as the good of the community at large. In this strategy again, it can be observed that reconciliation is at the centre of the whole process and where it would have failed, the individuals have to go separate ways so that eventually they may come to their senses and reconcile.

#### **6.10.1 Ukumuka (Elopement)**

Married people are a focal point for every society since it is from their survival where the future of the society is hinged. When married people procreate, Ndebeles say “*amhlophe*” (congratulations) upon the birth of a child because every baby that is born brings hope to the society that it is still going to be existent in future. In light of that, the society takes special interest in making sure that those that are married stay together and avoid threatening the future of the society with possible extinction by engaging in endless conflicts. The Ndebele society therefore has a number of instruments designed to make sure that conflicts among married couples does not in any way threaten the future survival of their community.

When people are getting married, they do so with and in love. This does not in any way suggest that things would always be rosy, there are bound to be challenges as life continues, but this does not mean that people should stop getting married. Right from the start, Ndebeles warn any couple getting married about these challenges but encourages them to solve them amicably. Some of the songs that are sung at a wedding ceremony when two individuals are getting married speak volumes about both the expectations of the society as well as those individuals that would be getting

married. Ndlovu and Sibanda (2017:53) underscore the role played by wedding songs as a way of disseminating relevant information to those getting married so that they can stay together peacefully without having to fight emotionally or otherwise. They cite the song which goes:

*Londolozela, londolozela*, (Persevere, persevere)

*Londolozel' umama* (Persevere for your mother)

*Angakutshay' ubaleke* (If he beats you, run away)

*Uzoceba kumama* (run and report to your mother)

*Angakwehlula umlethe* (If she gives you problems bring her back)

*Sizomlaya kabili* (We will give her counselling for the second time).

The above-mentioned song predominantly promotes perseverance in marriage as an open acknowledgement to the fact that marriage is characterized by various challenges for which the couple that is getting married ought to be prepared to face with patience and perseverance. It is an open preparation for both the man and the woman to already prepare themselves for the various challenges that they will surely encounter in their life as a married couple. This song is in sync with the common Ndebele proverb which was cited by some of the respondents and it says “*akula muzi ongathunqi ntuthu*” (there is no home which does not exude smoke) meaning that there is no home which is conflict free. It would be foolhardy for anyone to enter into marriage and suppose that theirs will be a conflict less marriage which will be different from every other.

Moyo et al., (2011:127) emphasise that fact that conflict is inevitable and therefore every member of the community must be prepared to face it and deal with it in a sober manner when it comes. They explain the meaning of the above-mentioned proverb saying:

... no matter how peaceful a home might look like at some point in time a fire has to be made for cooking and at that point smoke will be seen bellowing from the huts. People might try to put a lid to the quarrels that happen in the home but sooner or later their existence become common knowledge. No one can stop smoke from being seen by outsiders. The analogy explains the existential presence of

conflicts in life. Symbolically, therefore, it demonstrates that the hallmark of human society is the presence of conflict, as people will clash over values and interests.

The newly-wed is prepared to face all the conflicts in marriage with vigilance and understanding that conflicts are part of life and everyone has to deal with them when they come.

It should be noted that Ndebele people never entertained domestic violence between married couples as demonstrated by the responses to the question on the research questionnaire which solicited respondents to mention a proverb in that regard. One of the most cited proverbs concerning married couples was the proverb which says “*induku kayakhi muzi*” (a knob-kerry does not construct a home) meaning that anyone who engages in violence as a way of solving differences is despised as a failure. The same sentiments are echoed in the song in question which is mentioned above where the singer advises the bride that in case her husband resorts to violence and beats her up, she should not hesitate to run away and come back home to report him to her mother.

At the same time, the husband is also advised that, should his wife-to-be give her unbearable problems, she is free to bring her back to her parents who will in turn take their time to give her the requisite counselling once again. In this case, one can mention unequivocally that this as well as a lot of other songs act as evidence that Ndebele people take all necessary measures to make sure that they open lines of communication for conflict management among their members. Of note once again is the emphasis placed on zero tolerance to domestic violence and spousal abuse as these are regarded as cancers that destroy the social fabric which comes about as a result of marriage relationships.

The fact that the woman is usually the most vulnerable party in a marriage arrangement means she is given more latitude to make sure that she does not stay with an abusive husband. If problems arise and it happens that her husband seems to not to be interested in solving issues through dialogue, the song points out clearly that she should not allow herself to be abused physically but return home and make

a formal report to her parents. The act of a married woman running away from an abusive husband is a common feature among the Ndebele people as discovered during the process of carrying out this research. This process is referred to as *ukumuka* (eloping/elopement).

Upon enquiry, this researcher discovered that *ukumuka* (elopement) is a very effective indigenous strategy that was designed traditionally by the Ndebele as a way of managing conflict among married couples in cases where they seem to have serious conflict. It was also discovered that a married woman does not resort to this method each and every time she and her husband have an argument, it is a method reserved for serious conflicts which are mostly likely to threaten the survival of the marriage such as open infidelity or unrestrained physical violence.

When a husband continuously engages in extra marital affairs yet promises to repent yet he never does so, the wife is allowed to pack her belongings and return to her parent's home as if she is visiting. She may decide to take even the children depending on the ages and circumstances but she however, does not take all her belongings since this is a temporary visit which is just an avenue created to open dialogue between, she and her husband in the presence of her parents.

When the woman gets back to her parents' home, they ask her saying "*kuhle*", (is all well?". She will answer and tell them that not all is well before she narrates the whole story to them. If the parents feel that the reasons that she is giving them are not very valid, or they discover that she is on the wrong, they do not allow her even to spend the night at their home. They may send her back to her husband alone or they ask her aunt to accompany her so that she can get there and apologise on their behalf for a daughter who has embarrassed them. On the other hand, if they are convinced that her story is authentic or that her husband is a violent man, they will then allow her to stay and wait for the husband to come looking for her within a couple of days.

Various respondents highlighted that while the woman is away, it is envisaged that the husband will eventually realize how important his wife is and at times he may decide to change his way of doing things especially if he was violent or he was cheating openly or privately. Apparently, the principle of the *ukumuka* (elopement)

method of reconciliation has got stringent conditions for the male party whose wife would have eloped because it is meant to purge all forms of abuse as well as impunity on him.

For instance, the concerned husband is not allowed to go and look for his wife at her parents' home all by himself. He is supposed to be accompanied by his *sodombo* or at least an older person who will go and apologise on his behalf. During this episode, new terms of reference are spelt out to the husband who is made to make a strong promise that he would not be violent again towards their daughter. He may even be made to pay a certain amount of money as restitution before he can take his wife with him. When the necessary transactions have been completed, the parents will then ask the wife if she is still willing to go back with her husband or not. In the majority of cases, the women are always willing to go back as long as they are satisfied that the promises made by the husband are satisfactory.

According to the respondents consulted, depending on the degree of the conflict, the husband would be asked to pay a fine as restitution for having offended his wife to the extent that he would have done. This payment is not necessarily an amount that he may not afford because the idea is not to destroy his marriage but to make sure that he takes responsibility for his actions. When he has done this, his in-laws will then spell out an array of expectations and conditions for his which they feel would deter him from violating their daughter and cause her to elope again in the future. In other words, the man is made to commit himself to a new set of rules which carry a punitive effect on him for the sake of his marriage.

This researcher found out that this strategy is very effective in resolving conflicts among married couples just because it acts as an avenue opened up for negotiation between the would-be enemies. It also gives time for the conflicting parties to think seriously about their relationship as well as what they are likely to miss or lose should their marriage arrangement collapse completely. Respondents acknowledged that this strategy has salvaged many marriages from a possible collapse and restored broken relationships thereby sustaining families which would have gone separate ways. The same strategy has also worked as a way of maintaining unity

between two or more families or even villages which would have been joined together by the various marriage arrangements.

The effectiveness of this strategy seems to be tangible from the way the respondents expressed confidence in it and lamented why and how modern societies have discarded or abandoned it to the detriment of the marriage institution. In other words, this strategy is an indisputable avenue for reconciliation which after all is the aim of all the strategies that are used in peace and conflict management. In any case, Kelman (2010:4) points out that “reconciliation presupposes conflict resolution ... the development of a working trust; the transformation of the relationship toward a partnership based on reciprocity and mutual responsiveness; an agreement that addresses both parties’ basic needs”. In other words, the *ukumuka* (elopement) reconciliation method provides the opportunity for the redefinition of the relationship and makes the conflicting parties recommit to their marriage. It also provides the society with an opportunity to control and purge wayward members thus making life easy for the rest in the community.

#### **6.10.2 Ukukhumisana Umlotha**

One other strategy or traditional practice which respondents cited as a practical and effective way of making sure that conflicting parties reconcile regardless of whether they are married or not was the traditional rite called *ukukhumisana umlotha* (licking of ashes by both conflicting parties face to face). It is natural that there are some conflicts which become very difficult to handle between individuals, families or even villages. In most cases, conflicts that have to do with spousal infidelity, murder or witchcraft are very difficult to manage and at times they call for very drastic measures to make sure that all possible solutions are invoked so as to mend relations. Ndlovu et al., (1995:127) states that:

*Kwakusithi kungaba lengxabano phakathi kwabantu ababili baxoxe ngodaba lolo bezama ukuxolisana. Injongo kuyikuthi baqhubeke bengomakhelwana besokhelana umlilo njengakudala... amadoda amabili la azathi angehlulana ukuthi alungisise ingxabano ephakathi kwawo athathe udaba lwawo aluse kunhloko yomuzi.*

(Whenever a conflict ensured between two people, they would discuss the issue trying to solve it. The aim was always to make sure they continue as neighbours who even share firewood like

before ... if these men would have failed to resolve their issue, they would refer it to the kraal head.

The point to note from the quotation above is that the process of resolving conflict among the Ndebele is not haphazard but organized from one level to the other depending on the level of the conflict. Conflicting individuals are supposed to make attempts to solve their problem all by themselves before they decide to involve third and fourth parties. This is in sync with some of the Ndebele proverbs that was cited by some of the respondents to questionnaire questions; the one which says "*iqaqqa kalihlinzelwa ebandla*" (a scoundrel cannot be skinned in the public arena) which discourage members from shushing to try and solve their issues in the public arena. Some of the sources of conflict are embarrassing and cannot easily be discussed in public and as such they need to be kept a secret between the conflicting members and as much as possible never to be brought to the open forum where everyone can make a feast about them. Doing so is synonymous with skinning a scoundrel in public yet everybody knows that it stinks and cannot make people comfortable.

In all circumstances mentioned above, one point comes out clear; no conflict should either be permanent or un-resolvable. Reconciliation is the ultimate goal for every conflict resolution method that is applied in dealing with conflict among members. There are instances when members of the same family, neighbours or members of the village get engaged in a conflict which degenerates into a serious thing which results in them evoking a spirit which is called "*ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*" (taking an oath of hatred and enmity). Hadebe (2001:122) defines "*ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*" "*isifungo esilukhuni kakhulu njalo esiyingozi okuthi ungaseqa wophe igazi ngamakhala*" (it is a strong oath which is dangerous such that if violated, one bleeds through the nostrils). In essence, this is a situation where the conflicting parties can no longer see eye to eye or even talk to each other no matter the circumstances. In a conflict which involves people who are related, such individuals can go to the extent of not visiting each other's homesteads.

One of the questions asked during the process of undertaking research was the issue of common types of conflicts experienced in Silobela district. It was mentioned in the responses that conflicts among neighbours are the most common ones in

Silobela among Ndebeles just because neighbours are geographically located close to each other thereby increasing their chances of meeting and colliding time and again. Sometimes neighbours clash over *imingcele* (field boundaries) of their fields where one may encroach into the other's territory resulting in a conflict. There are times when neighbours clash because the other's livestock would have strayed into the field of another and destroyed most or all the crops in that field. In any case, as mentioned before, respondents emphasised their understanding of the fact that conflict is part of life and there are so many reasons why members of the community may find themselves in a conflicting situation actively or passively.

Respondents also highlighted that sometimes it is dangerous to rank a certain type of conflict as minor because it has a potential to transform into a huge issue which at times may lead to permanent damage or injury to both property and human life. The most highlighted fact was that there are conflicts whose magnitude deteriorates to the extent that the conflicting parties end up engaging in a traditional practice known as "*ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*" (swearing or taking an oath of hatred of the red nostrils). This traditional practice is referred to as "an oath of the red nose" because the conflicting members take certain herbal concoctions which have got strict rules which they ought to follow as a way of making sure that they have cut all forms of communication or interaction until necessary conflict resolution steps have been undertaken.

It was emphasised during discussions with the respondents that those conflicting members who would have taken this oath should always be careful not to engage in any kind of communication verbal or otherwise including their children and livestock; it is a serious oath of hatred which is not easy to reverse unless some traditional procedures are done. In the event that they find themselves talking to each other deliberately or otherwise, the one who is older will be the first to die from bleeding through the nostrils followed by the younger in fulfilment of the name of "the oath of the red nostrils". This happens because they would have violated the rules that govern the principle of "*ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*" among which is the rule of not communicating at all until necessary reconciliation procedures have been followed.

Sibanda (1998:23) attests to the devastating effects of “*ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*” which he says requires the conflicting individuals to chew some traditional concoctions which are meant to make sure that they have fully declared that they are now sworn enemies. In essence, these herbs or concoctions are the ones which make the oath of hatred to be effective such that without having taken them, even if individuals claim that they have sworn enmity, nothing happens to them even if they talk to each other by mistake. But, as has already been highlighted above, if those parties who have taken the oath are to communicate prior to following procedure, the other is a danger to their lives and can kill both of them or their children.

Since the oath of red nostrils has such devastating effects, the researcher had to probe respondents to establish the traditional way out of a situation that would have been created by it and several observations emerged. Evidence shows that having realised the detrimental effects of conflict among their members especially when such conflict has reached serious levels of “*ukufungelana ijoyi*” (taking an oath of hatred), the Ndebele provided a way out of the quagmire. Once conflict has occurred, the next step is to resolve the conflict but, central to those efforts, is the principle of reconciliation. Capalletti (1992:34) posits that “the parties in African counselling are interested in mending rather than terminating relationships”. Therefore, in order for the two parties that are conflicting to reconcile, there is need for them to undertake the traditional ceremony known as “*Ukukhumisana Umlotha*” (reconciliation rite) which has been referred to above.

According to respondents asked through both questionnaires and interviews, “*Ukukhumisana Umlotha*” is a traditionally accepted process of bringing together two or more individuals who would have been engaged in a bitter conflict which is tantamount to loss of lives through “*ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*”. According to informants, this process has a laid down procedure that is supposed to be followed for it to be effective or else if not done according to prescriptions, it can lead to dire consequences than before. One of the respondents actually said “*nxa kungasenziwanga kuhle, kulengozi yokuthi kufe umuntu sibili ngoba ngumkhuba omele uphathwe ngobunono obukhulu*” (if not done properly, there is a danger that it can lead to death of an individual just because it is a very delicate rite which must be handled with due care).

The process of *Ukukhumisana Umlotha* is not done by any Jack or Jill but by elderly members of the community who have had enough experience in dealing with conflict particularly complicated conflict. Sibanda (1998:149) states that when adults realised that there were individuals in the community who have engaged in a bitter conflict and have even engaged the spirit of *ukufungelana ijoyi lamakhala abomvu*, they would take the roots from a tree that is used to reverse the situation and throw it in a container of water. In doing this, they would be trying to reverse the situation without the knowledge of the concerned parties so that they do not die in case they talk to each other by mistake.

According to informants, it is difficult at times to tell when individuals have had a serious conflict especially if they choose to be secretive about it and as such, they expose a lot of people to danger because as has been highlighted above, *ijoyi* does not only kill the particular individuals but can affect any member of their family. Sibanda (1998:73) states that in such a situation, indigenous people would use infants to detect if there was a problem. When an infant in the company of an adult would get to a homestead and cry uncontrollably, it could be interpreted as a sign that a member in that family has done the tradition of *ukufunga ijoyi*. They would then ask each member until the culprit confesses leading to the commencement of the processes of reconciliation through *ukukhumisana umlotha*.

Once it has been established that there is someone who has committed themselves to anger to the extent of *ukufunga ijoyi* (taking an oath of hatred), elders would come to his/her homestead very early in the morning and stand at the gate. In doing so, an individual referred to as "*umlamlankunzi*" (mediator) would be present to facilitate the proceedings of reconciliation. He would then stand in-between the two conflicting individuals carrying "*udengezi*" (a wooden plate) which would be containing ashes collected from the rubbish pit. The one who is younger between the two conflicting parties would then take this container and give to the elder one to lick the ashes first. In return, the elder one will then take the container and hold it for the younger to also lick the ashes. When they have done this, the two of them will then spit ashes onto the ground before throwing away the wooden container. Alternatively, Koka (2003:24) says that "the parties are asked to lick ash from each other's right hand

and spit it to the ground” as a symbol that they have done away with the conflict that was between them.

The proceedings for *ukukhumisana umlotha* are done in silence since the conflicting parties would have had a long time of not communicating verbally and up to this time it is not yet known how each will react afterwards. All the procedures are followed in silence because they are traditionally familiar to both parties since they are part of their culture. Once the proceedings have been completed, the younger member gets into the yard through the gate and then greets the elder member as a sign that the two have forgiven each other. Apparently, it is culturally a taboo for these, or any other member of the community to ever discuss or mention anything that has to do with this conflict. These two can now start on a fresh page and live a normal life as if nothing ever happened. Nolte-Schamm (2006:125) notes that:

The shaking of hands signifies that parties are now fused into “ONENESS” which is a symbol return from separation to cement all fabrics of humanity together, individual families and communities. This is emptying of bad feelings and evil spirits from their bodies and minds.

Having outlined and followed closely how the reconciliation rite is performed, the researcher came to an appreciation that this is a scientifically engineered technique which was designed with so much apt and precision to make sure that nothing goes wrong when a conflict has arisen. This practice or rite clearly stands as an open symbol to show that Zimbabwean Ndebeles do not subscribe to an idea of keeping grudges permanently because they believe that when a conflict has arisen, it should be solved amicably so that life can continue to move smoothly. The Ndebele traditional practice of *ukukhumisana umlotha* is similar to the one performed by the Acholi tribe of Northern Uganda which performs the "*Mato Oput*" ceremony for reconciliation. Speaking about this, Brock-Utne (2001:6-7) says:

The reconciliation process he describes is called the "*Mato Oput*" process (*Mato Oput* - an Acholi vernacular meaning drinking the herb of the Oput tree) because it ends in a significant ceremony of "*Mato Oput*", the traditional drinking of a bitter herb of the Oput tree. *Mato Oput* is not a

happy ceremony; the mood of all present expresses the seriousness of the occasion. The process involves:

- The guilty acknowledging responsibility,
- The guilty repenting,
- The guilty asking for forgiveness
- The guilty paying compensation
- The guilty being reconciled with the victim's family through sharing the bitter drink.

Just like in the Ndebele tradition, the bitter drink has no medicinal effect. It only symbolises the psychological bitterness that prevailed in the minds of the parties in conflict situation. It is just meant to make sure that conflicting parties come together and solve their problem in public.

It should be noted that the Ugandan and Zimbabwean experiences resemble each other and have a lot of similar characteristics which are informed by the same motive of making sure that people live harmoniously and solve their problems amicably. In qualifying the authenticity of the practice of *ukukhumisana umlotha* as an effective culturally designed peace and conflict management strategy which cannot be equalled by any other, especially foreign strategies, respondents pointed out that it is based on the common Ndebele proverb which says “*izolo liyembelwa*” (yesterday should be buried). The act of burying one’s yesterday is acknowledgement that conflict itself is retrogressive and counter-productive so much that it affects societal progress and development.

When the reconciliation rite has been performed, surely, one has to bury their yesterday and allow life to move forward for the benefit of him/herself as well as the entire community. Thus, members who might have been embroiled in conflict must bury the past and move forward so that they do not become slaves to their past conflicts. It was also highlighted during the various discussions that once the practice of *ukukhumisana umlotha* has been completed, it is believed that the affected members have buried their hatchets and as such, none of them is expected to even make reference to the conflict. If any does, they face retribution from the whole community.

In all fairness, the researcher discovered that Zimbabwean Ndebeles have their own scientific approach to conflict and have the requisite methods and apparatus to deal with and eradicate it. The whole science involved in the process of making members reconcile reflects some intelligence which is only understood and appreciated by those who share in the particular culture. It would not be an understatement to mention that Zimbabwean Ndebeles are well prepared and well equipped to deal with their socio-political problems including conflict and as such, the practices such as *ukumuka* (elopement), *ukukhumisana umlotha* (conciliatory rite) are evidence of this state of preparedness.

There is ample evidence which points out to their prioritisation of the concept of reconciliation in their conflict management processes since their approach places conciliation at the fore and makes conflict management complete and meaningful. The following section focuses on the role of traditional leadership in issues of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. Traditional leaders are key figures in the social life of Africans and as such the next section examines their role in peace and conflict management.

### **6.11 Role of traditional leadership in conflict management**

One of the research instruments that were used in this research was dedicated specifically to solicit information from traditional leaders among Ndebele people as a way of appreciating how conflict is dealt with by the local traditional leadership. Interviews were done and a number of issues were raised pertaining the role played by traditional leadership in issues of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. Evidence outlined in the previous chapter reveals so much about the role of traditional leaders in making sure that society lives in peace and harmony and the following sections make an analytical discussion of those issues raised in the previous chapter.

Ndebele societies are governed by the system of traditional leadership in form of chiefs, sub-chiefs, headman, village heads and kraal heads who have designated duties which complement each other in the local governance system. The local traditional government system is basically designed in such a way that it operates as

a traditional judicial system which deals with local dispute cases which are in their jurisdiction before they recommend those that are outside their jurisdiction for further administration at the modern courts of law. In their execution of duties, traditional leaders are guided by their local traditions and cultures which serve as an unwritten constitution which determines what is considered as an offence and how it is to be dealt with. Achieng (2010:1) makes reference to the role of traditional leaders in Africa with particular reference to Kenya saying:

Traditional leaders have long been involved in mediation by creating a balance in the process of mediation and tribal disputes and in some cases led in restoring peace and reconciliation ventures. Traditional leaders have been given prominence in mediation of disputes especially in Africa and Asia and are often perceived as leaders with wisdom to navigate negotiation process, they are also highly valued and regarded in our African institutions as important part of the African culture.

As indicated in the responses collected through research interviews, traditional leaders indicated that they are aware of their role as custodians of local traditions and values which they seek to promote, preserve and implement for the benefit of society. Commenting on their role as custodians of traditional culture and values, one of the respondents said:

*Yithi esilomlandu wokubona ukuthi abantu esibakhokhelayo bayawalondoloza amasiko esintu ukuze singaxabani labaphansi ngoba lokho kungenza sitshaywe ngoswazi olubuhlungu esingeke silumele. Yithi esihlanganisa abantu lamadlozi abo ngoba nxa ungumkhokheli wabantu uyabe ufakwe wavunywa yiwo amadlozi.*

(We are the ones who have a duty to make sure that people respect and revere traditional cultures so that we do not anger the ancestors because angering them would cause them to whip us with a whip that we cannot even bear. Yes, we are the ones who act as a link between the people and their ancestors because when you are a traditional leader, you are put there by the ancestors and they would have blessed you.

In light of the way traditional leaders viewing themselves as both custodians of culture as well as the link between people and their ancestors, it is interesting to observe that traditional leaders play a physical and well as a spiritual or religious

role. The religious inclination that they possess puts them at a vantage point as regards the respect that they are supposed to receive from their subjects who look up to them as appointees from the ancestral world. This quality is crucial in making sure that their subjects regard them with superiority so much that when they act as arbitrators, people are bound to listen and adhere to their voice. Rukuni, Machingambi, Musingafi, and Kaseke (2015:75) underscore the role of traditional leaders in conflict management when they say that:

Traditional leaders play a pivotal role in settling community disputes across rural Zimbabwe. They are regarded as custodians of traditional law and receive the bulk of the cases dealing with violence which might be political, domestic or antisocial behaviour.

It came as no surprise then that even some of the members of the community who were interviewed for their views on the role of traditional leaders in issues of conflict management also demonstrated that they regard them in high esteem and as such they are always willing to listen to them. The research sought to establish some of the types of conflicts that are presented to and dealt with by the traditional leaders in Silobela community and some of them were as follows:

- a. *Ukuxabana kwabathetheneyo ezindlini* (Domestic issues including domestic violence)
- b. *Ukumithiswa kwamantombazana ngabafana babe sebesala izisu* (cases of boys who impregnate girls and go on to deny responsibility)
- c. *Amadoda afohlela emizini yamanye amadoda* (men who fall in love with other men's wives).
- d. *Indaba zelifa elibangwayo* (issues of inheritance).
- e. *Ukuntshontshelana izifuyo lezifuyo ezifohele ezingadini zabomakhelwane* (livestock theft or livestock which would have strayed and destroyed neighbours' fields).
- f. *Ubuthakathi* (witchcraft and its associated accusations)
- g. *Imingcele lamasimu kanye lamadlelo* (field boundaries, disputes about ownership of land as well as pastures).

- h. *Ukubulalana kwabantu ngokugwazana kumbe ukugongodana kumbe ngengozi* (murder through knife stabbing or any other form of force or even accidentally).

A close analysis of the types of conflict that were said to be common among Zimbabwean Ndebeles reveals that in most cases they are triggered by sociological factors or they emanate from the very fact that people are living in the same vicinity and they cannot avoid some of the clashes. A close analysis of the types of conflicts mentioned above shows that most of the conflicts among the Ndebeles are in tandem with the aspects outlined in the conflict theory. They are mostly based on issues to do with sharing and management of resources. Traditional healers pointed out that most of the conflicts that are mentioned above are within their jurisdiction and in most cases, they can handle them without having to resort to modern legal institutions save for the last one which is murder and killing using extreme force. That they were clear that they do not preside over such cases but they refer them to the magistrates' courts because of their complicated nature.

Asked in connection with the amount of labour that should accompany their duties since some of the conflicts appear to possibly be experienced time and again, the traditional leaders pointed out that they do not even have a serious task in their hands because conflict management is decentralised. There are certain conflicts which are best handled at family level first such as those that pertain to domestic and family matters. In most cases, the family is better placed to deal with such cases because they would be having full background knowledge of both the disputants as well as the source of the conflict. The role of the family in conflict management was reiterated by several traditional leaders who mentioned the common proverb which says "*eyomndeni kayingenwa*" (domestic disputes may not require external interference) as a guiding principle to their approach to conflict. One of the traditional leaders had this to say concerning the value of using the family in solving domestic disputes:

*Vele impi yomndeni iyahlupha ngoba ungayingenela kuyenzeka ukuthi kusasa zilale ngawe ngoba phela bona laba bantu bayabe behlanganiswa ligazi. Isikhathi ezinengi, abantu bomndeni munye bangalifihlela iqiniso kuthi lanxa selisenza isinqumo kulixake ngoba liyabe lingela lwazi*

*olwaneleyo ngendaba yakhona. Lokhu yikho okwenza sikhuthaze abomndeni ukuthi balungisise indaba zabo babe sebebuya kithi nxa sebehulene.*

(It is true that family disputes are a problem because if you interfere it is possible that tomorrow you will be the one to blame since they themselves are bonded by blood relations. Many a times families are not at liberty to disclose all truths so much that when you make your final verdict, you do so, basing on limited or even wrong information concerning the dispute. This is the reason why we encourage families to try and resolve their differences on their own before they come to us. They should come to us only when they have failed to reach a consensus).

In that case, by decentralizing the conflict management activities to family levels, it was discovered that traditional leaders make sure that everyone is involved in conflict management. It cannot be disputed that if everyone is involved in resolving disputes, it means they would not be keen on causing conflicts amongst themselves and as such, conflict prevention becomes a priority. The role of family involvement in issues of conflict management is also highlighted and elaborated by Brock-Utne (2001:5) who says that:

... it is only when potential and actual conflicts in Africa are understood in their social contexts that they can be solved. Values and beliefs, fears and suspicions, interests and needs, attitudes and actions, relationships and networks have to be taken duly into consideration. Origins and root causes of the conflicts need to be explored, so that a shared understanding of the past and present is developed.

It then follows that there are some conflicts which may not be fully resolved by and at family level due to their complicated nature or some which may not necessarily be family oriented since they would be involving outsiders. Cases such as those that emanate from boys impregnating girls and eventually denying responsibility ordinarily may not be resolved at family level because they involve people who come from different families. Yes, there are times when the two families may resolve the issue, but in most cases, it ends up spilling to the traditional leaders' courts.

Respondents cited a number of examples where families fail to agree and end up taking their issues to the traditional leaders to seek solutions. In doing so, they

entrust their lives on the wisdom and experience of the chief who presides over the issue and passes a judgment which in most cases cannot be contested. Ndlovu et al., (1995:127) points out that when a conflict had failed to find resolution at a lower level, it was taken to the kraal-head who in turn referred it to a higher office of the village head or chief depending on the gravity of the matter. Respondents to questionnaires also highlighted that traditional leaders are involved in a dispute guided by the proverb which says “*okwehlula amadoda kuyabikwa*” (what a man has failed to solve, he reports it to other men) hence:

*Amadoda axabeneyo azakuthi angehlulana ukuthi alungise ingxabano ephakathi kwawo athathe udaba lolo aluse kunhloko yomuzi... Nxa Inhloko yomuzi yehlulekile ukulungisa ingxabano le yayithatha amadoda la womabili ... ihambe lawo enduneni kumbe umsekeli wenduna, induna layo ilawo amadoda ayincedisa ukuthetha amacala.*

(Men who would have had a misunderstanding and failed to fix it would take that case to the kraal head ... if the kraal head also fails to solve the issue, he would then take both these men to the chief or sub-chief where these would help him to find a solution to the conflict).

When a case has been brought to the attention of the chief, it is up to his discretion to assess and see whether or not he may seek advice from other elderly members of the community or he can make a ruling on his own. Traditional leaders who contributed to the research through various research instruments indicated that they prefer working with other people as advisers as this gives them a chance to hear alternative views which are essential before passing judgment. This explains the reason why it is always encouraged for people to try and first resolve their differences as a family before they can bring the issue to the chief because this is a public forum. Once the matter has been brought to this arena, the chief first makes an assessment of whether it is a matter that needs public opinion because there is a proverb which says “*iqaqqa alihlinzelwa ebandla*” (a scoundrel cannot be skinned in public) which means that the chief should once again advise the disputants, if they are family members, to try and resolve the matter in private though in his presence.

When the traditional leader is fully convinced that the disputants would have failed to reach a compromise or consensus, he then calls the rest of the community members to come and assist him. The idea behind calling other people to come and take part in the proceedings at the chief's court is to provide an opportunity for both parties to give their sides of the story while everyone is listening. This technique is hinged on the principle of dialogue which is the basis for all conflict management or resolution efforts among Ndebele. Dialogue allows everyone to express themselves exactly how they feel about the conflict so that those who are listening can make a fair judgment basing on the facts that they would have picked as the conflicting parties are discussing. What is most important to note in the whole process is the fact that everything is done in transparency in line with the traditions of the people concerned. Rukuni et al., (2015:76 &77) underscore the power of dialogue when they point out that the process brings the conflicting parties in conflict together to discuss the cause of the conflict, find a solution and reach a settlement.

One major element which the researcher sought to establish especially through the interviews was the question of how traditional leaders view the concept of reconciliation. Several responses as evidenced in the previous chapter pointed out that any conflict management process which does not target reconciliation is a considered as a futile exercise and would rather not be taken seriously. One member of the traditional leadership had this to say concerning reconciliation:

*Nxa singasazamanga ukuthi abaxabeneyo babuyisane pho siyabe sisithi senzani? Phela injongo yokuxazulula ingxabano yikuthi labo abaxabeneyo babuyisane baxolelane, bazwisisane ukuze babuye baphile ndawonye njengoba bevele behlala ndawonye. Zinengi indawo lapho okuzadingakala khona ukuthi babambisane indlela njengezimfa, imithimba, amalima lokunye okunjalo kungakho ngeke bahlale bezondelene ngoba lezizukulwana zabo zingaba lenzondo engapheliyo.*

(If we do not target reconciliation for those that would have been embroiled in a conflict then what is the point of making such efforts. The main objective of resolving a dispute is to make sure that those who have had a conflict get back together in a normal, forgiving and understanding relationship because there are so many places where they will need to cooperate as family, clan village or community such as funerals, weddings, communal cooperatives since they live in the same area. There are so many times when they will have to travel using the same road so it is important for them to resolve their differences even for the

sake of their future generations who may also develop hatred for each other endlessly).

Most respondents were of the opinion that just the institution of the traditional leadership structure acted as evidence that society would not tolerate conflicts which are not resolved because that would disturb societal socio-political and physical development since people would be pulling in different directions. Some even suggested that there are times when the chief or any other traditional leader can stamp his/her authority to force conflicting members to reconcile even if they seem not to be agreeing. Those who supported this view were basing on the common communicative Ndebele wise-saying which says "*ilizwi lenkosi yilizwi lesizwe*" (the voice of the king is the voice of the people) so it means what the chief says is representative of what the people want. No one is allowed to go against the voice of the chief because doing such is as good as going against the voice of the people themselves and as such, for the sake of peace, the voice of the people prevails.

Choudree, (1999) states that traditional conflict management practice is part of a well-organized social system that has been proven over time to be efficient in reconciliation since it improves social relationships by restoring balance, settling disputes and managing conflict because it is deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of Africa. Conflict management involves a healing process which should involve all stakeholders to rebuild the social harmony that was lost during the conflict understanding that life cannot come to a standstill because of a conflict. Such an approach was recommended in the UN Charter, of June 1945 Chapter 1 Article 1, which states that the duty of the UN is:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.

The regional organizations such as African Union (AU) and SADC are as such mandated to solve regional conflicts to maintain international peace and security. In that case, as an institution of conflict management, member nations of the UN need to incorporate traditional leaders in mediation to maintain peace among communities, at the national and international level.

Apparently, the major reason why traditional leaders strive to attain reconciliation is because a single conflict, if not handled very well has a potential of tearing the whole community apart thus threatening peace and development because there are so many programs that the community does together which makes unity an indispensable aspect. According to Van der Merwe (1999:48) reconciliation is important for the creation of a unified moral order so much that the feeling of correcting the wrongs has to be mutual for both conflicting parties mainly for the sake of the larger community.

While reconciliation is a virtue, it is not always the case that every effort yields positive results because naturally there are instances where conflicting parties fail to reconcile. Rukuni et al., (2015:76 &77) states that traditional leaders' role in conflict resolution is that of mediation and arbitration. Forgiveness and reconciliation are not easy to attain in all conflicts as memories of certain past incidences are not always easy to live with or forget especially for those who would have been victims of such things as rape and murder. Be that as it may, the process of dialogue should allow disputants to agree that to some degree justice has been done.

It should be noted that even among Ndebele communities, there are some conflicts which fail to lead to reconciliation no matter how the chief tries to reason with disputants, however, a solution is always found because the storehouse for traditional conflict resolution, which is the culture of the people, is always rich with techniques to handle such eventualities. Pickell (2000) in Morgenmen (2003) posits that reconciliation does not necessarily mean that the conflicting parties must get back together at all costs, but it simply means helping them to negotiate a workable way of living together. Ndlovu et al., (1995:129) states that:

*Uma kubonakala ukuthi ukuxolelana kwabo kakusuthisi induna yayilamandla okuthi ibehlukanise. Omunye usezathutha lapha akade akhe khona ayekwakha kwesinye isigaba. Kwakukholwa ukuthi uma sebekhatshana lakhathshana inhliziyo zabo zizaxola bacine sebekhohliwe ngaleyoy ngxabano. Isikhathi ezinengi onguyena owayethuthiswa kwakusiba nguyelowo othe ekukhulunyweni kwendaba wabonakala enguye owonele omunye.*

(If it was discovered that they are failing to fully forgive each other, the chief had powers to separate them. one would then relocate from the area to go and stay in another area. It was believed that when they are further apart from each other, they will eventually forgive each other because they would forget about the conflict. In most cases the one who would have been seen to have wronged the other was the one to relocate).

Evidence gathered showed that *ukuthuthiswa* (relocation) as a conflict management strategy is arrived at as a last resort but as usual, the objective is attainment of peace for both the conflicting parties as well as the community so “the end justifies the means”. In other words, there comes a time when the community has to go through the excruciating pain of parting ways with a member and his entire family because he or she has failed to abide by the dictates of the community.

The research also established the fact that there are times when a conflict arises and the offended party suffers loss socially, economically, physically or otherwise. Conflicts such as those that involve men who are caught cheating with another man’s wife can sometimes present problems even when a solution has been found. The man whose wife would have been taken by another feels socially violated and despised even though nothing physical would have been taken away from him personally and as such, whatever solution is reached, it has to take into account his social loss. In that case, one way of finding a solution would require that the offending party pays a fine as restitution either to the chief or even to the offended party.

Asked about the amount of money that can compensate such a loss, one of the various respondents was quick to point out that:

*Akulani lemali lokho. Kasiyombadalo efana lomuntu othenga esitolo. Yikuvuma icala umuntu abesehlenga isithunzi salowo ayabe emphambanisele. Le yindlela youkuveza ukuthi uphambanisile njalo kawuseyi kuphinda ukwenza lokho. Indoda le ephanjaniselweyo layo kayivunyelwa ukwala umkayo ngoba iyabe isisthetho imbhadalo le.*

(This has nothing to do with money. It is not the same as paying for an item bought from the shops. It is a way of accepting responsibility and restoration of the dignity of the offended party. It acts as a way of acknowledging that you have wronged another man but you will never do it again. The offended man is also not allowed to divorce his wife once he has accepted this restitution)

There are a number of interesting factors that can be drawn from this conflict management strategy. Just the idea of making sure there is a way out of a conflict of this nature needs to be appreciated especially given the magnitude of the consequences which could emanate from it. In this case, Ndebele culture needs to be commended for providing an amicable solution which would otherwise be detrimental to the survival of families and especially affect innocent children. One can also note that the idea of making the offender pay restitution is reconciliatory in nature since it provides an opportunity for a fresh start for the offended man, his wife and the offender.

It is also interesting to note that the issue of payment of restitution was not left uncontrolled as this would lead to its abuse and distortion. As evidenced for the responses made, the chief is the one given the prerogative to determine what kind of restitution should be paid by the offending party as this depends with the type of offence. During the focus group discussions, it was discovered that different offences attract different penalties for example, when a man is caught in adultery with another man's wife, he may be asked to pay as much as three beasts for "*ukufohla uthango lwenye indoda*" (trespassing another man's fence).

Apparently, it appears there was another rule designed to avoid further conflict as regards the livestock paid as restitution. The offended man, to whom these three beasts are paid as restitution is obliged by laws of the society not to keep these

beasts in his own kraal or under his ownership. He can either sell them immediately or exchange them with another man from another village. When the researcher made enquiries as to why this is done, a respondent said:

*Lokhu kwenzelwa ukuthi ingxabano ingaze yaqhubekela phambili. Umnikazi wenkomo angabe elokhu ezibona, kuzamzvisa ubuhlungu aze acine ephambanisa ngamandla kukanti laye lo umaziphiwa angabe ezibona kuyamenza ahlale ekhumbula isenzo sikamkakhe abe sephuza ukumxolela kumbe aqalise ukumthethisa ngazo.*

(This is done so that the conflict may not be perpetuated. If the original owner of the beasts continues to see them, it pains him so much that he may end up even committing another crime. On the other hand, this other man to whom the beasts have been paid, if he continues to see them, it continuously reminds him of his wife's previous actions such that it delays his attempt to forgive her. At times he may even start name-calling her because of the beasts).

Some of the lighter offences which require payment of restitution attract lighter charges but the principle is the same. The traditional method of compensation that traditional leaders employ finds meaning what Merry (1982:79) says when she argues that the penalties focus on restitution and restoration of the status quo rather than punishment. In view of such a wise technique, it is not an understatement to say that the role of traditional leaders in resolution of conflicts has been referred to as the most uniting factor in the whole community. It cannot be gainsaid therefore to mention that Ndebele people have a very well-crafted or well-engineered social structure which extricates them from complicated conflict situations which ordinarily would have made life very difficult for them.

When one looks at the role played by traditional leaders in conflict resolution, they will discover that it is not only the traditional leader who wields power over the subject but even his people assist him in executing his authority. The fact that he bases his judgment on the views of those who would have been present as the issue was being discussed makes his judgment system to be considered as transparent and fair. It should be realised that the traditional leader, as well as the people who

assist him, derive their power from the ethos of *ubuntu* that are spelt out in the cultural traditions of the people. No one can go against his/her culture because doing so is tantamount to poking a hornet's nest, which is provoking the world of the ancestors. One can therefore, argue that a people's culture is their source of authority. Ndlovu and Ndlovu (2012:182) posit that:

A culture of a people can be an agent in the resolution of conflict. Culture is the philosophy of life of a people, their beliefs, shared values and norms. It is these shared values within a society that govern social relationships.

The researcher discovered that the process of conflict management is not an individualistic activity but a communal activity which derives its relevance from the cultural and religious beliefs of the same people. It is also heavily dependent upon the concept of *ubuntu* which forms the basis for shaping communal behaviour and attitudes. It was also established that local people consider traditional leaders as an extension of the ancestral world such that respecting them is synonymous with respecting the ancestors themselves. Above all, traditional leaders are the epitome of most if not all locally designed strategies for peace and conflict management.

## **6.12 Conclusion**

This chapter focussed on presenting a discussion and analysis of data that the researcher gathered using questionnaires, interviews, focus discussion groups as well as that which is already documented about indigenous knowledge and communicative strategies for conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. It was discovered that Ndebele people specialize in mediation processes for both conflict prevention and resolution as can be observed from the role played by the *sodombo* in marriage negotiation as well as arbitration by traditional leaders in their various capacities. It was also discovered that the family, whether nucleus or extended, has a big role to play in conflict management as it provides opportunities for dealing with conflict at that level through the use of socially designed sources of authority such as age, family positions such as those who are aunts, uncles and the like.

It was also noted that there are deliberate structures put in place as conflict management structures such as in-law relations which distinguish and regulate different cultural roles for each and every individual involved as a way of making sure that safe physical, social and moral distances are maintained thereby reducing chances for conflict. Communicative strategies in form of proverbs, songs, wise sayings are also an essential part of conflict management strategies among Ndebele people as they play a part in making sure that everyone adheres to a certain code of conduct so that they avoid conflicting with others.

When a conflict has occurred, the same communicative pieces offer a guideline on what measures to take depending on the situation for instance, it was noted that the foundation of everything is hinged on the fact that there is no conflict which should be taken as too minor and therefore, not be resolved. As a result, it was also observed that dialogue and reconciliation is the ultimate goal for every conflict resolution strategy that one can engage in. Conflict management among Ndebele people is not an event but a process which is the reason why right from childhood, one is socialized into conflict management so that when they grow up; they would not cause problems for the society. Above all, it was also discovered that culture, as well as the spirit of *ubuntu*, is at the centre of the success of all conflict management and resolution efforts since it is the same culture which prescribes the way to follow when need arises.

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter of this research was an analysis of the research findings which were outlined in the fifth chapter. It also discussed and interpreted a variety of issues that were raised during the process of carrying out the research. This current chapter gives concluding remarks on the whole research from beginning to end. The first chapter outlined various aspects of the research such as research aims, objectives and research questions. It also gave a discussion on relevant literature as well as justification and scope which explained the parameters which the research was following. The second chapter focused on literature review in detail by showing the links and points of departure between past studies and the current one. The third chapter went on to elaborate on the theoretical frameworks that were guiding the researcher as well as linking them with the anticipated results of the research. The fourth chapter dealt with the research methods that were used in gathering data for this research. The fifth chapter then presented the research findings which were later analysed in the sixth chapter.

### **7.2 Research findings**

This research set out to explore and examine the various indigenous strategies and communicative strategies for peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles. The study was necessitated by the realisation that African nations are reeling under crises caused by various types of conflict ranging from physical to emotional and otherwise. The study therefore, sought to examine the role played by African indigenous knowledge as far as peace, conflict management and resolution is concerned. This approach emanates from the realisation that the world itself through organisations such as the United Nations has begun to place an emphasis on the utilisation of local or home-grown solutions in dealing with socio-political challenges that people encounter every day. It was therefore, one of the objectives of this research to examine the extent to which Ndebele people of Silobela still make use and rely on indigenous knowledge in handling and dealing with issues of conflict among themselves.

Respondents, as shown in various questionnaire and interview responses, mentioned a number of methods that are used at various stages of conflict ranging from preventive, management to resolution. Some of the common causes of conflict that were mentioned include those surrounding field boundaries, theft, murder, acts of witchcraft, domestic violence, adultery and other such related issues. What came out in the discussions held by focus groups was the fact that society does not subscribe to the notion of minor or major conflict; all conflicts are treated as a problem which needs to be addressed properly using the right channels which are always ready to be deployed as need arises.

The research also intended to examine the role played by communicative or oral literary forms such as proverbs, wise-sayings, myths and related aspects in dealing with conflict in the Ndebele societies. Respondents pointed out that value placed upon the role of proverbs in dealing with conflict as they work as a catalyst in inculcating a sense of peace in the minds of the members for as long as they hear the proverbs being mentioned repeatedly. Common proverbs such as “*induku kayiwakhi umuzi*” (A knobkerrie does not construct a home), “*koniwa ngomlomo kulungiswe ngomlomo*” (What has been done wrong through the word of mouth is solved through the word of mouth) were cited as evidence to this effect. As much as members of the society are exposed to this proverb, they are compelled to detest domestic violence to the extent that when they finally grow up and get married, they already are aware that domestic violence is not an option in solving marital challenges.

Evidence gathered through research questionnaires and interviews as well as through focus group discussions revealed that Ndebele people strongly rely on the use of communicative strategies for peace and conflict management. Most respondents were citing some of the wise-sayings such as “*kayilale ngenxeba*” (let it sleep using the wounded side), “*ginya ilitshe*” (swallow a stone/rock) as deliberate communicative but loaded statements designed to instil a sense of peace and conflict management among members.

The research established that indigenous religion plays a very important role in issues of peace and conflict management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles of Silobela.

From the study the researcher found out that Africans in general, and Ndebele people in particular, have a strong religious inclination which dates back to the era even way before the advent of colonial masters. This strong religious inclination makes them view much if not all of their life activities from a religious perspective such that most of their decisions are based on their view of what they believe will occur if they wrong those of the “other” world; the living dead.

The research established the traditional religious principle behind proverbs such as, “*idlozi liyabekelwa*” (an ancestor is served food) as well as “*akudlozi ladela kwabo laya emzini*” (there is no ancestor who abandoned his own and went to strangers). It was discovered that these proverbs reflect the strong bond that exists between the living and the dead to the extent that the latter have a special role to play in the affairs of the former including peace and conflict management. It was discovered that generally, “fear the unknown” when it comes to their association with the world of the living dead and this fear acts as an ingredient for making them tour the line on issues of conflict management.

In line with the religious belief of the people, the respondents who participated in the research underscored the role of spirit mediums and traditional healers. These are strategically positioned and empowered to provide the process of re engagement between the two worlds when a problem has arisen. It is they (spirit mediums and traditional healers) who have the know-how and expertise of mending broken relations because they are endowed with the supernatural powers to access both worlds without any difficulties.

On the same vein, the study established that spirit mediums and traditional healers are the ones responsible for conducting religious and ritual ceremonies such as “*ukubuyisa*” (returning the spirit of the dead) and “*ukuthethela*” (appeasing the spirits) whose primary motive is to facilitate communication and restore broken relations between the two worlds. The study also revealed that these two ceremonies are a means of managing religious conflicts as a way of avoiding catastrophes especially among the living.

This research established that the concept of *ubuntu* which forms the major theoretical framework for this research plays a major role in shaping human behaviour which is consistent with the expectations of the society. It is the same concept which spells out guidelines and moral unwritten laws that govern acceptable versus unacceptable behaviour as a way of laying a foundation for peace and conflict management is concerned. In that same vein, the research established that the indigenous people are aware of the need to emancipate their own indigenous knowledge by rejecting or modifying western knowledge which has affected theirs. Such an attitude is in line with the objectives of the post-colonial theory whose main thrust as indicated previously, is to help the formerly colonised to reverse the effects of colonialism.

The aspect of reconciliation was cited as the ultimate goal for every effort made towards attaining a peaceful society. In essence, respondents were of the opinion that there is no conflict which cannot be resolved and at the same time, reconciliation should be the prime target of all conflict management efforts. Various respondents mentioned that the traditional ceremonies of *ukukhumisana umlotha* (reconciliation rite) as well as that of *ukumuka* (elopement) are a traditionally designed mechanism to make sure that conflict ends in conciliation for the sake of progress and development in the community.

Apparently, the process of undertaking the current research provided an opportunity for the researcher to discover that there is a lot of wisdom behind the various social kith and kinship relations that connect various members of both family and community alike. Evidence gathered shows that the various titles that individuals or groups are given act as an effective mechanism for social responsibility as well as a strategy for conflict prevention, management and resolution. In essence, conflict management is not an individual effort but a collective responsibility as demonstrated by the way duties are distributed to most of not all members of families and the community at large. No one is allowed to neglect their responsibility as this has a bearing on the ultimate peace and tranquil that must prevail in the society.

In a nutshell, the study established that cultural institutions, structures, values and norms form the backbone for peace and conflict management among the

Zimbabwean Ndebeles of Silobela so much that, if one wants to understand them, they would first have to interact with the same. According to Onigun & Albert (2001:16), "it is quite dangerous to relegate culture to the background in conflict resolution" and as such, Ndebele culture is the basis for their peace and management strategies that have, and continue to be utilised.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

The following section is an outline of the issues that the researcher regards as essential basing on the discoveries made during the processes of data collection and analyses and therefore, is being recommended to various sections of the Zimbabwean community. The research makes recommendations to those sections of society that can benefit from the findings such as the government of Zimbabwe as well as the Ndebele people themselves.

#### **7.3.1 Recommendations for future practice.**

1. The government of Zimbabwe should promote integration of modern and indigenous methods of conflict management through the establishment of an independent vibrant ministry of Culture which will facilitate the dialogue between the two.
2. The government should capacitate rural communities through seminars and traditional conferences where people are conscientised not only about the importance of their culture but also conflict management.
3. Ndebele traditional leaders should occasionally hold cultural functions where issues of peace and conflict management are discussed and as such resuscitated and put into practice.
4. The society should promote the value placed upon the family unit by making sure that they support all efforts made by individual families to solve their conflicts at family level.
5. Issues of respect for cultural positions that impose social responsibility such as in-law relations should be revisited and modernised to make them compatible with the changing socio-economic times so as to promote social respect and thereby preventing conflicts.
6. Children should be given a school curriculum that promotes the use of indigenous languages so that they get exposed to the various oral and

communicative aspects of language that promote respect, ubuntu, peace and conflict management.

7. Ndebele language activists should make efforts to formulate a language and culture association which will facilitate interaction between the people, the language and its culture as this will promote dependence on culture for peace and conflict management.

### **7.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

1. Future researchers should endeavour to examine the effects of modernization on the independence of traditional leadership in dealing with various types of conflict in the face of the modern legal institutions.
2. Future researchers can also find out more on the aspect of *ingozi/uzimu* as a conflict management strategy particularly in issues of marriage or murder since it was not exhausted in the current research.
3. Research still needs to be done around the role of traditional healers and diviners and their contributions to issues of peace and conflict management as they could not be adequately dealt with in this research as they are not the prime focus of the study.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire for Ndebele Language Speakers, Teachers/Lecturers, Students, Language and Culture Practitioners.

My name is Faith Sibanda, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is; *Indigenous Knowledge and Communicative Strategies for Peace and Conflict Management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles: A Case of Silobela District*. Indigenous (traditional) and communicative strategies are those methods/techniques that are culturally designed by the local (especially rural) people in order to deal with, prevent and address conflict (*ingxabano*) situations amongst themselves. The study argues that, indigenous ways of dealing with conflict can help extricate the world at large from its continuous problems because they are rooted in the people’s culture since they are in sync with their way of life. May you kindly contribute to the study by filling in this questionnaire; your views will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. *Please note that your identity and the answers you give are strictly confidential. I will use the information for academic purposes only.*

#### Section A- Bio- data Information (Please tick where applicable).

1. Gender: F  M
2. Age: 20-40  41-60  61&Over
3. Education: O Level  A Level  Diploma  Degree
4. Classification: Student  Teacher  Lecturer   
 Language/Culture Practitioner  Ndebele Language Speaker

#### Section B: Conflict and conflict management.

- Would you support the view that Ndebele people have got their own culturally designed techniques/strategies for dealing with conflict that happens among their community members? Yes  No.
- If your answer above is Yes, do you think these strategies can be applicable/useful in solving conflicts of the world in modern times? Yes  No
- State any **two** Ndebele proverbs that are commonly used as a way of discouraging conflicts among community members.
 

(a).....

.....

.....(b).....

.....

.....
- Mention any **two** Ndebele proverbs that are meant to encourage married couples to live in peace and avoid conflict.
 

(a).....

.....  
(b).....  
.....

**Section C: Reconciliation Strategies in Peace and Conflict Management**

5. Does your community prioritise reconciliation in its conflict management strategies?

Yes

No

6. Mention any wise saying (*isitsho*) which encourages reconciliation among members.

.....  
.....

7. Mention and explain **One** traditional method of practically reconciling members of the community who are in conflict.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Section D: Indigenous religion and conflict management**

8. What are the most common signs/symptoms believed to be a result of angry ancestral spirits among Ndebele communities?

(a).....

.....

(b).....

.....

9. State and describe **One** traditional method that is used in order to resolve conflicts between the living and the living-dead.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

10. Mention any **One** Ndebele proverb saying which encourages harmony between human beings and their ancestral spirits.

.....  
.....

11. If a member is accused of practicing witchcraft, what steps can be taken by the community against that member?

.....



## **Appendix B – Interview guide for Traditional Leaders.**

### **Dear Respondent**

My name is Faith Sibanda, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is; ***Indigenous Knowledge and Communicative Strategies for Peace and Conflict Management among Zimbabwean Ndebeles: a Case of Silobela District.*** Indigenous (traditional) and communicative strategies are those methods that are culturally designed by the local (especially rural) people in order to deal with, prevent and address conflict situations amongst themselves. The study argues that, indigenous ways of dealing with conflict can help extricate the world at large from its continuous problems because they are rooted in the people's culture so much that they are in sync with their way of life. The study excludes of the modern methods of solving conflict. May you kindly contribute to the study by responding to the questions. Your views will immensely add value to the research in substantiating the arguments raised by the researcher. *Please note that your identity and the answers you give are strictly confidential. I will use the information for academic purposes only.*

1. What kind of conflicts are common in your community?
2. Is it true that as a traditional healer you are a custodian of Ndebele traditional culture?
3. How do you normally deal with conflicts that involve family members?
4. Do you prioritise reconciliation among conflicting members in your community?
5. What methods do you use in order to make sure that reconciliation takes place among conflicting members in your community?
6. State any two common proverbs that you commonly apply in dealing with conflict in your traditional court.
7. How do you handle conflicts which are spiritually invoked for instance those that emanate from suspicions of witchcraft?
8. As a traditional leader, what do you do as an outward expression of your allegiance to the ancestors?
9. What role does the concept of *ubuntu* play in the processes of peace and conflict management in your court?
10. Would you say that Ndebele conflict management strategies are applicable in resolving modern conflicts in the wider community?

### **Appendix C – Interview guide for Traditional Healers.**

#### **Dear Respondent**

My name is Faith Sibanda, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is; ***Indigenous Knowledge and Communicative Strategies for Peace and Conflict Management Among Zimbabwean Ndebeles: A Case of Silobela District.*** Indigenous (traditional) and communicative strategies are those methods that are culturally designed by the local (especially rural) people in order to deal with, prevent and address conflict situations amongst themselves. The study argues that, indigenous ways of dealing with conflict can help extricate the world at large from its continuous problems because they are rooted in the people's culture so much that they are in sync with their way of life. The study excludes of the modern methods of solving conflict. May you kindly contribute to the study by responding to the questions. Your views will immensely add value to the research in substantiating the arguments raised by the researcher. *Please note that your identity and the answers you give are strictly confidential. I will use the information for academic purposes only.*

1. What is your source of inspiration or where do you draw your spiritual powers from?
2. What kind of conflicts do you deal with as a traditional healer in this community?
3. As a traditional healer, what role do you play as a custodian of Ndebele traditional culture?
4. Do people openly seek your services or you also go around seeking to assist them?
5. Do you prioritise reconciliation among conflicting members who seek your assistance and what methods to you use in that regard?
6. What is your role in maintaining peace and harmony between the people and the ancestors?
7. How do you handle conflicts which emanate from suspected cases of witchcraft?
8. As a traditional healer, what do you consider as impediments to the smooth execution of your duties in the community?

**Appendix D – Interview guide for elderly Ndebele Language Speakers.**

**Dear Respondent**

My name is Faith Sibanda, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is; ***Indigenous Knowledge and Communicative Strategies for Peace and Conflict Management Among Zimbabwean Ndebeles: A Case of Silobela District.*** Indigenous (traditional) and communicative strategies are those methods that are culturally designed by the local (especially rural) people in order to deal with, prevent and address conflict situations amongst themselves. The study argues that, indigenous ways of dealing with conflict can help extricate the world at large from its continuous problems because they are rooted in the people's culture so much that they are in sync with their way of life. The study excludes of the modern methods of solving conflict. May you kindly contribute to the study by responding to the questions. Your views will immensely add value to the research in substantiating the arguments raised by the researcher. *Please note that your identity and the answers you give are strictly confidential. I will use the information for academic purposes only.*

1. Do you believe that conflict can be completely eradicated from the society?
2. As an elderly person in this community, have you had an opportunity of dealing with conflicts and what kinds of conflict have you encountered?
3. Does the Ndebele traditional culture have structures in place which are meant to deal with conflict among its community members?
4. Do people openly seek your services or you also go around seeking to assist them or you go out of your way to assist them when conflict has arisen?
5. In dealing with conflict, do you prioritise reconciliation among conflicting members who seek your assistance and what methods to you use in that regard?
6. To what extent do you make use of proverbs and wise sayings in dealing with conflict and which of those do you commonly make reference to?
7. Is *ubuntu* an important element in conflict management?
8. Can we safely apply Ndebele traditional structures of conflict management in dealing with conflict at global level?