

**REPRESENTATIONS OF THE POST-2000 ZIMBABWEAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN SELECTED NDEBELE SHORT STORIES**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for  
the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

in the subject

**AFRICAN LANGUAGES, LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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January 2022

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I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my promoter Dr. S Mandubu and my co-promoter Prof. D.E Mutasa for their constructive criticism, invaluable and thought-provoking discussions in the modeling of this thesis. Many thanks go to them for their tolerance, diligence, commitment and insightful comments and corrections. To the University of South Africa I express my heartfelt gratitude for the Bursary offered to me. Thakazile Tshuma, my wife, you are greatly thanked for your interest and support for my academic pursuits. Special mention goes to my colleagues in the Department of Languages and Communication Studies for assisting me with the reading material, for the discussions, advice and guidance. To my friend Samuel Pasipanodya, I thank you for your encouragement. Dr Thamsanqa Moyo deserves special mention for sharing his vast knowledge of the area under study.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my son Sphamandla and my daughter Nomawethu for their dependable love and resolute support.

## ABSTRACT

The study explores how Ndebele short stories portray political, social and economic crisis in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The post-2000 period is commonly referred to as a crisis epoch where everything collapsed. The study adopts the qualitative research inquiry that utilises textual and narrative analyses of selected Ndebele short stories. Furthermore, the study also uses critical reviews from published and unpublished secondary sources from various disciplines, journal articles and dissertations that are corroborated by data obtained through questionnaires and interviews. The conceptual framework of this research is informed by Historical Criticism and Resilience theories which are significant in the exposition of the theme of crisis in Ndebele short stories. Historical Criticism is engaged in this study to illustrate that literature is responsive to historical, socio-economic and political developments. The Resilience Theory is adopted in order to understand the themes of courage, tenacity and perseverance in the wake of the crisis. The study demonstrated that Ndebele short stories depict the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis as constituted by political, economic and social disasters which had grave repercussions for the nation's stability and development. On the political side of the crisis, Ndebele short stories show that the nation was afflicted by an extraordinary degree of willful political violence and barbarity sponsored by the ruling party in order for it to remain in power. This study also established that the political crisis of post-2000 in Zimbabwe triggered a catastrophic and protracted economic collapse that led to livelihood challenges never experienced before. Many people could hardly sustain their households due to company closures, retrenchment, unemployment, a worthless currency and rampant hyperinflation. The study clearly articulated that the economic crisis and poverty led to the reality of HIV and AIDS pandemic as vulnerable characters, especially women, adopted risky sexual behaviours in order to keep body and soul together. The analysis of Ndebele short stories established that Zimbabweans are resilient people because of their resourcefulness, ingenuity and innovativeness in navigating the multi-faceted crises. The study of the short stories also shows that Zimbabwe reached the nadir of its post -2000 social, political and economic crisis because of the failure of leadership.

## **KEY TERMS**

Zimbabwe, post-2000, crisis, political, economic, social, Ndebele fiction, short story, historical criticism, resilience.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The study explores the literary representations of the Zimbabwean political and socio-economic crisis in selected Ndebele short narratives. The short story in this study refers to Ndebele prose narratives that are fictional, compressed in length and with society as the chief character. These short stories are written in the Ndebele language spoken in Zimbabwe. The study is principally based on short narrative anthologies set in Zimbabwe during the crisis phase spanning the years 2000 to 2009. The period straddling these years is referred to as the crisis decade because of unimaginable proportions of the multifaceted problems the country faced. More than any other literary genre, the short story provides comprehensive representations of the catastrophe of the decade. Tracing the magnitude of the crisis, Muwati (2018: xiii) remarks that “During these years, Zimbabwe plunged into an extraordinary zone of political and economic instability”. Mpofu (2014:09) also opines that crisis refers to several multilayered, interconnected catastrophes that Zimbabwe experienced throughout the 2000s and these can be grouped under social, economic and political crises whose manifestations were a country that, by 2008, was almost on its knees.

The political, economic and social fragility of this era became the main preoccupation of artists of the short story as they attempted to grapple with the causes, nature and consequences of these crises. The act of writing and publishing these stories became an indication of the appreciation of literature as a powerful political, economic and social tool. These short stories should be read in the context of their historical situatedness and the acceptance that they probe the politics of their time. In using the short story genre to depict the multifaceted crises, Ndebele writers concur with critics of African literature that authors use literature as a weapon for confronting political, economic and social setbacks and crisis in their communities (Ezeigbo, 1998, Achebe, 2000, Yakubu, 2001, wa Thiong'o, 2003, Onwuka, 2010).

Guided by the above observation, the distinct intellectual interest in the short story genre is permissible considering that African literature responds to prevailing socio-political realities. This study, therefore, argues that Ndebele short stories are a powerful social tool that engender significant crisis concerns that have political and socio-economic relevance. The corpus of these short story narratives depicts the depth of poverty and suffering in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Many topical issues highlighted in the stories centre on diverse and complex political, economic and social concerns that plagued citizens in Zimbabwe during the period under investigation. The authors of these narratives are all Zimbabweans and are familiar with the challenges that ordinary Zimbabweans faced between 2000 and 2009. Some have a personal experience of the economic, social and political crisis under investigation in this study.

Ndebele authors of short stories raise a subject deserving of attention as it has been inexplicably neglected in Ndebele literary studies. In other words, the literary appreciation of short stories in documenting the political, economic and social crises is glaringly absent in the Zimbabwean literary criticism landscape. Primary texts that are critically analysed include *Vala singafohleli lesi silo* (2006) (Shut this animal out), *Thaph`uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana* (2010) (Harvest Honey: An anthology of short stories, your inheritance), *Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe* (2014) (Where to Now? Short stories from Zimbabwe), *Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma* (2014) (The unfathomable incidents of South Africa) and *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* (2016) (Of what worth are we really?). These anthologies constitute both multiple-authored and individual-authored collections. The short stories are authored by both male and female artists. It is of paramount importance to mention on the onset that *Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe* (2014) was initially published in English with the title: *Where to Now? Short stories from Zimbabwe* (2011). The identities of the contributors in this anthology show that Zimbabwe is a multiracial country and a confirmation that the literary-critical scholarship on the crisis is an issue for both black and white Zimbabweans. This anthology was later translated into the Ndebele language in 2014.

The main assumption is that during the period known as the crisis decade of 2000-2009, Ndebele writers of short stories developed into some of the sharpest critics of the period. Although literary expressions of the crisis period emerged between 2000 and 2009, the trend has continued to burgeon



even to this day. It is also justifiable to speculate that the literary landscape is to witness more fictional works about these turbulent years in the history of the country. Inspired by this hypothesis, the study discusses the particular ways that writers of short story narratives record and remember the crisis decade in terms of its nature, causes and effects.

These short narratives also contest and delegitimise the official narrative on the post-200 crisis. They are counter-discursive and offer us an explanation different from the officially- sanctioned discourses on the crisis decade. This crisis argument also investigates the literary representations of the coping and survival strategies developed by characters against the backdrop of a ravaging decade of multifaceted crisis. The main contention in this study is that these selected stories have contributed immensely to a broader understanding of many facets of the Zimbabwean crisis. What is exciting to readers and critics about these short stories is the engagement with, almost total commitment to, the lived experiences of the characters during the crisis era.

The study focuses only on short stories that use the Ndebele language as the medium of expression because the researcher is competent in the language. IsiNdebele is the first language of the researcher. The researcher has studied and taught Ndebele language and literature modules up to the university level. Furthermore, the teaching and research on current issues in literature at Lupane State University from 2012 up to date has broadened the candidate's interest in the short story genre because of its preoccupation with contemporary societal experiences.

### **1.1.1 Zimbabwean Crisis**

Zimbabwe experienced one of its worst crisis between 2000 and 2009. Some researchers from various disciplines agree that Zimbabwe was a country in deep crisis during this decade (Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2002; Carver, 2002, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003, Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012, Mlambo 2013a, Nyambi, 2013, Charles 2016). The nature of the crisis is seen as a combination of economic , political instability and social upheaval (Makumbe, 2009 and Chari, 2010).This crisis decade was characterised by unemployment, hyperinflation, a worthless currency,company closures and retrenchments leading to an acute degree of human suffering because of economic decline (Bond and Manyanya; 2002). Zimbabwe also experienced an astonishing degree of deliberate and determined political violence and cruelty. Untold savage political violence was unleashed on the perceived opponents of the ruling party. This abdication of political morality by the ruling elite resulted in ordinary men and women being tortured, killed and raped. This state of affairs is attributed to a ruling party that has been in power since independence and that seeks to prolong this stranglehold on power. It is a party whose ideology is to dominate politics by every means and is intolerant to any opposition (Mpofu, 2014). Zimbabwe was also tormented by the deadly plague of HIV and AIDS because of the adoption of risky sexual behaviours as a strategy to ameliorate the effects of economic decay. Others embarked on various journeys into different bordering nation states and the diaspora. These events are very significant in comprehending what is today commonly referred to as the Zimbabwean crisis.

There is a scarcity of consensus on when the crisis commenced. Zunga (2003) argues that the Zimbabwean situation started developing signs of collapse in 1980 when Robert Mugabe became the leader of the nation. However, this study is guided by the observation that socio-economic and political collapse began when the government embarked on a knee-jerk, untidy and vicious land reform (Chari 2010:134). Although the crisis that took place in Zimbabwe in 2000 is a fact of history, there are also two competing major views on the causes of this crisis. The ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), blames the West for sabotaging the growth of the nation by imposing illegal sanctions on Harare as part of a regime change agenda (Tarisayi,2009). Some scholars like Davidson and Purohit (2014:14) argue that Zimbabwe's isolation by Western countries is not the only explanation for the crisis. They further note that internal problems like policy inconsistency, populist and untenable decisions, corruption and egregious mismanagement are to blame for the economic, political, and social damage. Emenyonu (2014) blames leadership failure when he says that a country like Zimbabwe is not in short supply of leaders; what is lacking is leadership with vision and integrity, leadership that has the interest and welfare of the people at the centre of its policies and actions. Brett (2006) also notes that Zimbabwe is in a parlous state because its leadership has mournfully failed to prioritise public interest, thereby creating a post-2000 nightmare for its ordinary citizens.

As the scholars reveal, Zimbabwe is a country where incompetence, greed and the lust for power are to blame for her predicament. While it is true that the political elite is to blame for the crisis, the contribution of external forces is not ignored in this study.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The purpose of this study is to examine the literary depictions of socio-political and economic crises in Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Literary representations of the period are a site of archival contest that necessitates an in-depth study, especially in Ndebele short stories because there is very little scholarly research on the short story genre in Zimbabwe even though the country has seen a phenomenal growth in the publication of short story anthologies that are both multiple- authored and individual- authored. Mushakavanhu (2013:127) observes that:

Critics and commentators in the Zimbabwean literary discourse have paid scant attention to the short story and have treated it as a footnote to the novel, some kind of practice ground for the more serious business of writing novels. And yet this short story engenders vital issues that have contemporary relevance.

Nnolim (1982:51), a critic of African literature, remarks that this is not a problem restricted to Zimbabwe alone as she notices that as African critics:

We all have, up to now, neglected the short story as a genre worthy of critical attention, even though there is already a respectable body of short stories written by our most celebrated writers. Whatever the case

may be, our critics must be reminded that the short story as a genre is stillborn in Africa.

The general trend is that short stories have long been neglected in African literature.

The study also observes that there is a dearth of literary analysis on the Ndebele short story narratives, especially those that attempt to fictionalise the period between 2000 and 2009. It is the assumption of this study that if these short stories receive the deserved critical appreciation they can be essential to researchers who intend to use fiction to understand the deep depression that Zimbabwe experienced in the 'lost decade'. Besides reading history, economics and political science, researchers can enhance their understanding of the horrific crisis period by reading writers of short stories. Their significance is found in the argument that they mount about the evolution of the Zimbabwean crisis. Short stories have the power to convey myriad insights and to inform the context in which the crisis took place.

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

This study aims to analyse the representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. It seeks to examine how male and female writers construct the nature, character, causes and effects of the crisis. This research endeavours to unpack the literary portrayal of the crisis in stories set during this

challenging decade. The study also seeks to unravel how the crisis-burdened characters employ old and novel survival and coping strategies as ways of mediating and ameliorating the effects of the crisis. This study is done in the context of the political, economic and social historical reality of the crisis era as it contributes fresh perspectives and dimensions to the already existing knowledge about the literary rendering of it.

### **1.3.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Discuss the representations of the nature of the crisis
2. Discuss the causes of the crisis as outlined by literary texts
3. Analyse the representations of the effects of the crisis
4. Explore the literary representations of various survival and coping strategies adopted by characters to mediate the crisis
5. Scrutinise whether or not writers represent the crisis differently.

### **1.3.2 Research questions**

1. Do writers correctly conceptualise the nature of the crisis period?
2. How do writers of Ndebele short stories portray the causes of the crisis?
3. How do writers of Ndebele short stories portray the effects of the crisis on the welfare of Zimbabweans?
4. How do short stories portray old and new survival and coping strategies in the context of the crisis?
5. Do writers of Ndebele short stories represent the crisis differently?

### **1.4 Justification of the study**

Zimbabwe's multi-layered crisis has been a subject of extensive scholarly debate. However, much of this engagement has flourished in the field of literature that uses English as the medium of expression. The following researchers have given their thoughts on the literary depictions of the socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwean literature in English: Vambe (2010); Muchemwa (2013); Mlambo (2013a); Manase (2014); Mlambo, Kangira and Smit (2015); Mlambo (2015 ); Nyambi 2013; 2014); Chipfupa (2016) and Siziba (2017). These scholars constitute a sizeable number of local academics who have taken their time to critique the crisis era concentrating on its nature, causes and effects. They also explore how writers, through various literary productions, have recalled, recorded and constructed the survival and coping mechanisms to ameliorate the devastating and crippling effects of the crisis. Unfortunately, virtually nothing exists in Ndebele literature. It is therefore envisaged that this study will

redress the imbalance, participate in knowledge creation and dissemination, and offer a sustained literary insight into the Zimbabwean crisis period.

This study is significant in that it will explain the kinship between literature and society. It is through short stories that writers have found the platform to engage in the dialogue on the crisis episode. African seminal critics of literature have argued that the African writer must play a functional role in society; he/she should be the voice of the voiceless and the visionary of his/her time. According to Soyinka (1969), a writer should be a forerunner in telling the truth about his or her society, especially on issues that hinder it from living happily. Zuhmboshi (2014:12) is also of the view that a writer should be a:

Harbinger of truth and a firebrand crusader against social injustice and all forms of exploitation of his people.

Thus, every literary text should display commitment by exploring topics that are relevant to its audiences. Drawing on these insights, this study seeks to engage in critical discourse with Ndebele short stories to show how writers make post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-political and economic crisis their chief character. This study argues that a close textual analysis of these Ndebele short stories allows for an opening of an alternative discursive debate on the nature, causes and effects of the Zimbabwean crisis including innovation as a survival strategy.

In addition, the other reason that accounts for the significance of researching how Ndebele short stories represent Zimbabwean socio-political and economic crisis is the neglect of the genre in Zimbabwe's literary studies



(Chirere, 2013 and Mushakavanhu, 2007). The consequence of this is that scholars and researchers have not been able to harness the power and utility of short stories in articulating human experience. This lack of scholarly attention on the short story genre about the Zimbabwean crisis has created a knowledge gap. It is this vacuum that this study attempts to fill by providing space for the Ndebele short story analysis and understanding of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. Finally, like all academic researches, this study is an effort to create and disseminate information on the Zimbabwean crisis. The findings of this study will be a useful reference tool for all students of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis.

## **1.5 Definition of key terms**

The following important terms must be demarcated and explained as they form and shape the treatise of the study.

### **1.5.1 Crisis**

According to Habermas (1988:14), “crisis is widely deployed today as a social concept, but was originally employed in the medical field about a phase in an illness when decisions had to be taken about whether or not there were possibilities of recovery.” This implies that the word crisis can be understood as a time of intense difficulty.

### **1.5.2 Poverty**

Although a highly contested term, poverty generally refers to deprivations of basic human needs. Poverty is a human condition characterised by severe lack of income, access to social services, human rights and undignified existence.

### **1.5.3 Survival**

Survival is the ability to outlive difficult circumstances in one`s life. Spicker, Leguizamon and Gordon (2007:202) define survival as the ability, creativity and resourcefulness of the poor despite difficult times. In other words, survival is endurance, competencies and the ability to adapt and manage to cope in harsh conditions with the sole aim of outlasting the crisis. These abilities, strengths and responses are called survival and coping mechanisms.

### **1.5.4 Ndebele short story**

The short story in this study refers to Ndebele prose narratives that are fictional, compressed in length and with society as the chief character. These short stories are written in the Ndebele language spoken in Zimbabwe.

## 1.6 Literature review

This subdivision of the chapter is an evaluation of the literature that is related to the research topic. The objective is to acknowledge what has already been written about the Zimbabwean crisis and to highlight the gaps this research will fill. No study, to the knowledge of the present researcher, has attempted to link the Zimbabwean crisis to the study of post-2000 Ndebele short stories. However, this study acknowledges that various critical studies have been published on the depiction of the crisis in literature in English and some scholarly reviews from the media studies, political science and migration studies.

Kaasholm (2005) explores the role played by literature in documenting the subject of violence in Zimbabwe. His study focuses on how writers of Literature in English, Shona and Ndebele endeavour to depict the violence of the liberation struggle, post-independence *Gukurahundi* violence and the violence of land invasions in 2000. His findings are that creative imagination through literary texts can articulate the contradictions of violent history. Kaalshom's (2005) research is almost similar to what the current study seeks to achieve, especially on violence during land reform and the electoral violence perpetrated by ZANU PF to stifle alternative narratives on the Zimbabwean crisis. While his study explores the representation of violence in literary productions in pre-independence and post-independence Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, this study does not grapple with the rendition of liberation war violence and the violence experienced by the people of Matabeleland in the 1980s. The current study is limited to post- 2000 Ndebele

anthologies of short stories whose focus is on the 2000-2009 crisis decade in Zimbabwe.

Vambe (2010) analyses the representation of the Zimbabwean crisis in English and Shona literature between 1980 and 2009. In his study, he highlights that Zimbabwe is under a traumatic crisis as the country is experiencing severe collapse and lack of rule of law, confused governance, poor service delivery and state violence. His study reveals that Zimbabwean artists tackle the crisis in courageous ways in order to interrogate its sources. His major findings are that when depicting the Zimbabwean crisis problems arise due to patronage, enforced partisanship to ZANU PF and MDC and self-censorship (ibid). He goes on to point out that literary representations of the crisis suffer from the poverty of theoretical paradigms. His views are very essential as they inform this research in various ways. Vambe's work, however, looks at literature concerned with different historical periods of the post-independence Zimbabwe while this research is specifically concerned with the rendering of Zimbabwean crisis in Ndebele short stories set between 2000 and 2009.

Nyambi (2013) also discusses the portrayal of post-2000 Zimbabwean economic and political crises in English texts. The main thesis in his study is that some literary texts in English published after 2000 provide a different representation of the crisis decade when compared to the government's preferred narration of the causes of the crisis. Nyambi's incisive analysis of the crisis decade is very helpful in my research because the Ndebele short

stories that are critiqued in this study show a preoccupation with the causes of the crisis and how they differ from those foregrounded by the political elite. What Nyambi does not explore, and which this study attempts to investigate, is the literary representation of the coping and survival strategies employed by Zimbabweans to keep body and soul together.

Liswaniso (2016) critically explores how the novels *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2007) and *Dust* (2014) depict political violence. Her focus is on how the two novels portray the causes, manifestations and effects of political violence. Her study recognises the fact that political and electoral violence is a survival tool by ruling governments whose support base is on the wane. This study also seeks to discuss the representation of political violence in Ndebele short stories especially the causes, nature and effects. The current study further explores how these stories map out strategies employed by victims of political violence.

De Jager and Musuwa (2016) explore the reasons why Zimbabweans flee into South Africa. Their focus is on the motives for migration and they make a significant observation that Zimbabweans are crossing the Limpopo River because their country is in deep crisis because of misrule. They assert that poor policies implemented by ZANU PF are responsible for the multi-faceted catastrophes. The picture painted by these researchers is that the country's trajectory is bleak as witnessed by hyperinflation, unemployment, deteriorating health and social services, human rights violation and political coercion. Despite the fact that their study is in the field of political science,

this study is in agreement with their scrutiny that Zimbabwe is in crisis because of policy blunders by the ruling party.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003) also observes that during the period between 2000 and 2009, Zimbabwe experienced one of its most horrible catastrophes since the attainment of independence in 1980. He sees the government's explanation of this crisis as biased towards external forces at the expense of internal dynamics. He argues that the country is beset by political, economic, social and humanitarian implosion because of the serious crisis of governance. He blames the leadership for their bankrupt and selfish nationalist ideology. Ndlovu-Gatsheni concludes by stating that the leadership has decided to superintend over the demise of the country through misguided and populist policies. Equally, the Ndebele short stories under study depict the economic, social and political crisis and the liability of leadership for this calamity.

## **1.7 Methodology**

Every study involves a procedural and precise methodology for the gathering and examination of data and the explanation and presentation of outcomes. Research methodology is either quantitative or qualitative. This study employed the qualitative research paradigm to analyse the portrayal of the Zimbabwean crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. Qualitative research comprises a considered usage and gathering of an assortment of observed readings, dialogues, life narratives and reflections of peculiar human

experiences in artistic documents and creations, by means of historical interactions with literary texts that expose everyday challenges. Marvasti (2004:07), cited by Mandova (2016), offers an understanding into the nature of qualitative research when he states that:

Qualitative research provides detailed description and analysis of the quality or the substance of the human experience.

Walliman (2006:129) also opines that:

Qualitative research does not involve counting and dealing with numbers but is based more on information expressed in words-descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings...

The above definitions demonstrate that qualitative research pays more attention to its narrative nature and the analysis is based not on figures and statistical data, but the interpretation of a social phenomenon. In this study, the social phenomena under investigation are the various crises that are creatively imagined through literature. Since literature as a field of study cannot be statistically analysed, the critics are persuaded to qualitatively analyse how Ndebele short stories explain the nature of the crises. As a means of collecting data three methods of data collection in qualitative research were used.

Firstly, the study is based on a close and in-depth textual analysis of five anthologies of Ndebele short stories that fictionalise the Zimbabwean crisis.

McKee (2003:1) defines textual analysis as:

A way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world.

A narrative method of research was also adopted in carrying out the research. Creswell (2013:70) notes that narrative inquiry is a “method used in a study, such as the procedures of analyzing stories told”. Chase (2011:421) notes that in narrative enquiry researchers “usually emphasize what people’s stories are about- their plots, characters, and sometimes the structure or sequencing of their content”. These also note that narration is seen as a practice of constructing identities and realities (Chase, 2011).

Under these procedures, data was collected through critical reading and analysis of the short story narratives through the lenses of historical criticism and resilience critical approaches. This data collection tool is suitable for this study since it permits the student to make a scholarly interpretation of the depiction of the socio-political and economic crisis in the selected short stories. These literary texts were purposively sampled because they were the only published Ndebele anthologies on post- 2000 Zimbabwean predicament at the time of writing this thesis.



The interview method of collecting data was also used in this study. Kumar (2005) says that an interview is a voiced exchange concerning two or more people with a precise drive in thoughts. The main purpose is to facilitate an interchange of ideas amongst two or more persons on a subject of shared concern (Magwa and Magwa, 2015). The interview is consequently an effective means of locating data and gaining insights into individual perceptions, opinions and outlooks regarding a particular subject. This research tool is appropriate for this study as it elicits respondent's views about the depiction of the crisis in Ndebele short stories. In-depth or semi-structured interviews were used to solicit data from authors of Ndebele short stories and academics who are familiar with Ndebele literature on the Zimbabwean crisis. These interviews were recorded.

In addition, the study engages secondary sources such as books, monographs and journal articles, research papers and academic presentations on literature that have focused on the crisis as depicted in literary texts of various genres. The other secondary sources are drawn from political science, economic history and other disciplines that attempt to unpack the crisis period. These publications by Zimbabwean, regional and international scholars will be used to complement the data gathered through interviews and textual analysis of the selected short stories. These research instruments assisted the researcher to produce a novel, well-informed and balanced thesis on the notion of crisis.

## 1.8 Conceptual framework

This study combined Historical Criticism theory and the Resilience theory in an attempt to better explore the representation of the Zimbabwean crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. Historical criticism is an ideology that believes in a symbiotic or inextricable relationship between literature and history. Brink (1996) argues that writing works of art is the beginning of probing history. Literary critics of different persuasions like wa Thiong'o (1972) Gakwandi (1977), Achebe (1975), Amuta (1989), Tilak, (1996) and Ayinde, (2014) have also noted that no literary text can exist without the context of the time in which it is written.

The emphasis on the interconnectedness between literature and history underscores the significance of a historical setting in time and space for human experiences depicted in the works of fiction. Historical Criticism as literary theory is predicated upon the belief that literature is historical as it endeavours to record and remember human experiences in an imaginative and fictional way. Its major tenet is that literature tends to attempt a representation or reflection of the past and the present life as lived in society. Put differently, historical criticism enthusiasts trust that literature is meaningful to its readers if writers can picture truthfully the life of a given society environmentally and contextually. This study therefore argues that the writing and publishing of Ndebele short stories is a demonstration of the textualisation, fictionalisation and reimagining of the historical figures and the order of happenings of post-2000 Zimbabwe.

The study is also grounded on Resilience theory. According to Richardson (2002:308):

Resilience is the process of coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors.

Walker, Holling, Carpenter and Kingzig (2004:05) write that:

Resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while changing to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedback.

The concept of resilience is elucidated and deliberated upon in the framework of a binary dimensional hypothesis regarding the experience of difficulty and constructive transformation of hardship. Various definitions of resilience emphasise the fact that the responses to problems or crises have to be positive adjustments. However, in this study the features of resilience are expanded to include negative adjustments like crime, prostitution, corruption, black-market trading and illegal migration. These are coping or survival strategies adopted by characters that are experiencing different levels of crisis in Zimbabwe. Survival in the text under study can be compared with human agency which entails the struggle to defend and perpetuate life in the face of crisis-ridden Zimbabwe.

## 1.9 Scope of the study

The focus of this study is the critical analysis of the literary representations of the Zimbabwean political and socio-economic crisis in selected Ndebele short stories drawn from five anthologies. It examines the depiction of the nature, causes and effects of the crisis. This study also investigates the portrayal of different survival and coping strategies adopted by characters to alleviate the effects of the crisis. A study of this scale demands that several short story anthologies be read as primary sources of data and subjected to critical criticism. Whatever the findings or conclusions the study arrives at must be reinforced by close reference to the primary texts under investigation. The primary texts that will be critically analysed in the study include: **Vala singafohleli Lesisilo** (2006), **Thaphu Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana** (2010), **Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe** (2014), **Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma** (2014) and **Kambe sesingabantu Bani?** (2016). These literary texts are post -2000 Zimbabwean short story anthologies in IsiNdebele and narrate what has been called the Zimbabwean crisis.

The study has six chapters. Chapter One is the introductory part which amongst other things, outlines the aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and justification of the study, definitions of terms, theoretical framework, ethical considerations and research methodology. Chapter Two explores earlier literature related to the Zimbabwean crisis period under study. It also highlights the gaps this study fills. In Chapter Three, the researcher presents the theoretical framework which is the philosophical

lens guiding this study. Chapter Four outlines the qualitative research methodology used in the study. Chapter Five discusses the literary representations of the Zimbabwean socio-political and economic crisis. This chapter has subtitles that dwell on the nature, causes, effects of the crisis and appraisal of the depiction of the old and new coping mechanisms and survival strategies devised by characters to survive in a crisis-ridden Zimbabwe. Chapter Six is the conclusion that also provides a summary of the findings and recommendations for future practice and future studies.

### **1.10 Ethical considerations**

In conducting research, there is a need to observe ethical norms. This element of research is key to achieving the aims of the study. Ethical standards are critical because they create an environment of trust, accountability, confidentiality and mutual respect between the researcher and informants. The major ethical issue in conducting research is informed consent. Informed consent is one of the ways a participant's right to autonomy is recognised, respected and protected. Since the informants are human beings, the researcher ensured that before obtaining their informed consent to participate, he gave clear, detailed and factual information about the study including possible risks and benefits. Participants were well-informed that they are permitted to pull out from the project at any time. Ethics approval was sought from the institution's ethics committee.

## 1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has explained that, despite the proliferation of Ndebele short stories, no scholarly studies have been keen to register the significance of these stories. It has been noted that there is a link between Ndebele short stories and the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. Through textual analysis of selected short stories from **Vala singafohleli Lesisilo** (2006), **Thaphu Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana** (2010), **Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe** (2014), **Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma** (2014) and **Kambe sesingabantu Bani?** (2016), the study contends that the Ndebele short story genre has captured the turmoil in the country between 2000 and 2009. This chapter also outlined the aim of the study, the objectives and the research questions. The literature review section established the relevant scholarly studies that have been published on the research problem. In addition, the chapter discussed the research methodology and the theoretical framework of the study. The key terms were defined concerning how they are used in the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a review of the literature related to the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe. Several significant pieces of literature have been responsive to and insightful on this topic. The researcher, therefore, does not claim to be a forerunner in the area under investigation but recognises the numerous input of other scholars but aims to present points of departure and fill in certain recognisable gaps. The literature review is anchored on similar studies that have been published on the African continent and globally. This study further reviews Zimbabwean literature to differentiate the focus of this study from what previous studies have already explored or researched. Much of the Zimbabwean literature that is reviewed comprises material from the analysis of short stories written in Shona and English because there is very little research on Ndebele short stories.

#### **2.2 Literature review of related studies on the globe**

Ahmad and Sheerez (2013) analyse the representations of socio-political conditions in pre-and post-independence Pakistani. The two scholars analyse writers of short stories who use indigenous Pakistani languages, including authors who use the English language. They argue that short

stories in Pakistani have been labelled as a reflection of life. Literature in the form of a short story in most cases has documented the history and the bleak truth of the nation and some short story practitioners have been detained, persecuted and jailed for their ideas. They also argue that Pakistani is blessed with progressive writers who are passionate, truthful and faithful to the plight of the masses as they document “the dark suppressed face of society, harsh hidden realities about its inhabitants and bitter tabooed truths”. These writers have been in close touch with the horrible and ugly realities of their communities as their criticism is realistic. Some have experimented with form and language to capture the socio-political hypocrisies, vulgarities and obscenities in Pakistani. They have ignored the better side of lived experiences which is popular with the political elite in the country. The arguments presented above are essential for the current study as the thesis explains how Ndebele short stories have captured the brazen and bitter social, political and economic realities of post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Paspisilova (2017) focuses on the literary depiction of immigrant life in selected short stories in the collection *Ways of Sunlight* (1961). The anthology covers post-colonial literature that fictionalises the history of immigration from the West Indies in Trinidad to Britain. She argues that people from Trinidad migrate to London because of high hopes of attaining a better future, getting meaningful and paying jobs that can lead to a comfortable life. Her analysis of the short stories also unpacks the challenges they face in all spheres of life in finding a new home in a foreign land. These challenges include accustoming to a new climate, marginalisation, and difficulties in accessing public services, unfavourable working conditions,



racial prejudice and hostility from the white population. Immigrants are also stereotyped as generally disruptive people who disturb the peace of the natives. All these injustices lead to frustration, alienation, loneliness and identity crisis on the part of immigrants. Paspisilova (2017)'s arguments are critical in explaining Ndebele short stories that depict migration.

### **2.3 Review of related literature in Africa**

Diala-Ogamba (2013) discusses how black South Africans have suffered a great deal of social, economic and political oppression. His analyses of Alex la Guma's short stories set during the apartheid era in South Africa show how writers have responded to factors that subjugate them and the masses whose interest they champion. The selected short stories deal with the theme of abject poverty, violence, discrimination and dehumanisation that inhibit the growth and progress of black people. These inhuman conditions have given room to literature in the form of short stories to protest, reflecting the exact happenings in their homeland. These short stories are viewed as an all-set path for documenting and circulating messages about human suffering in apartheid South Africa as these writers are bent on exposing the evils of the system realistically. The research findings by Diala-Ogamba guide the current study in sketching the themes from Ndebele short stories and in indicating how and what writers are responding to.

Emenyonu (2013) complains that there has been little attention on African short stories. He notes that African critics have neglected the short story

despite large volumes of individual and multi-authored collections. According to Emenyonu, all this deplorable neglect takes place when artists both old and new continue to comment on African problems like corruption and all forms of injustices meted on the powerless on the continent. Emenyonu (2013) further argues that the norm is to put the novel, drama and poetry at the centre of African literature, abandoning the short story genre. His observation is that African scholars have failed to intellectualise the short story at the level of domestic and global seminars and symposiums. This has also cascaded down to the teachers, educators and even publishers who shun the short narratives. His suggestion on the way forward is that critics need to have “a close look at the African short story to redefine its peculiar pedigree, chart its trajectory, critique its present state and examine its creative possibilities” (Ibid:1). Any wide-ranging study of Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe should be inspired by the above observations especially the short genre’s utility in narrating the past and present.

Mordaunt (2015) notes that although the short story has gained ground in the past 40 years, African critics have paid little attention to the creation and publication of the genre in indigenous languages. These short stories were published in popular magazines which are viewed by reputable scholars as sites that should not be taken seriously as they lack literary sophistication. Mordaunt (2015) further argues that these stories were classified under literature written by amateurs who are still learning the rules of the game. He asserts that when African critics commenced literary appreciation of short stories, they began by analysing short stories written in English. Mordaunt

thus concludes that despite the lack of scholarly engagement, short stories are rooted in reality as they capture the needs, hopes and aspirations of a particular community. These observations and opinions are important for the present investigation because they brighten the opinion that short stories narrate the history of the nation. This reinforces the views of this study that Ndebele short stories depict the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis.

Victor (2013) considers the utility of short stories by La Guma in depicting the suffering of Blacks during the apartheid era in South Africa and for world leaders to take action against supporters of the white minority. Apartheid as a system of governance established an unfair and lopsided white economic and political domination in the country. He argues that the short story is often compressed but very useful and rich in capturing human-inspired black degradation and violence. The short stories reveal that apartheid is oppressive to the black race as their lives are burdened with miserable wages, poor education which makes them harbour criminal tendencies like smoking dagga, gangsterism and prostitution. Victor (2013) further argues that the short stories show that La Guma is a committed writer who is relevant to his society because the theme of apartheid is a reality that is a burden to the black majority. This study agrees with the above view that literature must strive to reflect the urgent issues that trouble society like Ndebele short stories that interpret the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe.

Zengethwa (2014) discusses South African short stories written in the Xhosa language that have been published since 1994. The main aim of his study is to analyse the representations of socio-economic challenges of post-

apartheid South Africa. His study explores the depictions of HIV and AIDS, corruption, crime, unemployment, moral degeneration and poverty. Zengethwa (2014) argues that his study is inspired by the realisation that every writer must be a social commentator, engaging with current circumstances in South Africa, whether positive or negative. He also states that authors must respond to new challenges in a new democratic South Africa without fear or favour. This study concurs with Zengethwa's observations that literature has a duty of remembering, narrating and documenting human experiences especially the contemporary circumstances that stifle human progress. The current study also observes that authors of Ndebele short stories in Zimbabwe have responded favourably to the post-2000 crisis thereby rendering them relevant to the society they represent.

Gaylard (2008) studied South African short stories where he provided a careful and attentive analysis of short stories by black South Africans set between 1934 and 1980. His study pays more attention to the historical and cultural contexts of the literary texts under investigation. He notes that it is vital to consider the context of the literary texts as the guiding element in literary criticism. Gaylard (2008:1) argues that "Any attempt to isolate texts from their contexts is at best misconceived, at worst futile". His central concern is that literary texts are historical and political and influenced by issues and concerns of the period. The significance of the literary context is further explained by an observation that extra-textual elements have to be considered when critics investigate literary pieces. The main contention is that literary texts have to be viewed as events or episodes of human

experience at a particular historical moment in which they are located and interpreted. This perspective informs this study as the historical contexts of the Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe are necessary for an informed and scholarly analysis.

Zuvalinyenga and Muvindi (2013) explore the literary representations of the crisis brought by colonialism to the colonised in Mozambique in the anthology *We Killed Mangy-Dog and other Mozambique Stories* (1969). All the seven short stories in this anthology lament the brutality, violence and victimisation that is perpetrated by the coloniser on the colonised. Zuvalinyenga and Muvindi (2013) note that colonialism brought suffering to the masses as they were paralysed, crippled and denied basic human rights by this system of governance. They argue that the characters in all the short stories in the collection are traumatised and left psychologically fragmented resulting in no sense of direction and identity. Their findings further reveal that the impact of colonialism sometimes leads to self-oppression and internalised oppression by weaker victims of this era. The coloniser assumes a superior and authoritative attitude as the victims of colonialism are left dejected, helpless and passive. Zuvalinyenga and Muvindi (2013) further argue that the survival and coping strategies that can bring hope for the colonised is the one adopted by the youths as they respond meaningfully to the effects of colonialism. They conclude that the male youths in the text analysed resist brutalisation and dehumanisation as they call for direct confrontation with their colonisers. This study departs from the above arguments that focus on the evils of colonialism and engages with the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis

as narrated in Ndebele short stories. The arguments raised in this study remain significant for the current study.

## **2.4 Literature review on studies carried out in Zimbabwe**

The present study acknowledges that various scholarly researches have been undertaken on the literary representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. These scholars have grappled with the nature of the crisis, the causes, effects and the human agency in finding survival and coping strategies. Some of these studies do not limit themselves to short stories, but they also investigate Zimbabwean novels that attempt to document the period of crisis.

Veit-Wild (1992) has done some research on Zimbabwean literature including Ndebele literature. She categorises the writers into different generations by looking at the trends in the literature as well as the background that influences the authors' choice of themes and the style of writing. Her study is important as it traces the development of Zimbabwean literature as well as the trends in that literature. The socio-historical approach utilised by Veit-Wild (1992) is crucial as it contextualises literary texts. Her findings are that every literary text is influenced by the social, economic and political circumstances of the time. The findings of her study will assist the present study in the interpretation and criticism of Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. However, this study departs from Veit-Wild by

concentrating on the portrayal of the post-2000 social, political and economic crisis in the Ndebele short story not trends in Zimbabwean literature.

Chiwome and Mguni (2012) analysed Shona and Ndebele creative works of the post-independence era, focusing on novels, poetry, and drama. Their critical essays examine how various authors grapple with central concerns and issues that trouble the Zimbabwean masses. They assert that their task is to demonstrate that “Literary creativity is not isolated or pastime exercise as it is closely linked with power relations”(Chiwome and Mguni 2012). This observation is motivated by the realisation that literary productions are closely connected with the dominant ideology of the day. Chiwome and Mguni champion the idea of writing on behalf of the majority. In their work, the two prominent Zimbabwean scholars highlight the fact that literature is expected to take sides with the interests of the ordinary people or writing on behalf of the subjugated. Their work is very crucial in this research and has influenced it in various ways especially on how writers speak about the crisis. It is therefore important to establish whether writers speak with one voice and on whose side they do so. Although the critics recognise the importance of African languages in articulating various Zimbabwean people’s concerns, they have neglected the short story genre in their critical analysis.

Mushakavanhu (2013) claims that critics pay little attention to the short story over the novel yet it is a literary genre that produces vibrant topics that have present-day significance. Tracing the major trends in short story writing, Mushakavanhu observes that the Zimbabwean short story in English is

responsive to and reflective of the historical developments which affect society as a whole. He traces the history of the short story to the seasoned writers who include Stanley Nyamfukudza's *Aftermaths* (1983), Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger* (1978) and Charles Mungoshi's *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972). He notes that Zimbabwe experienced drought in short story writing and publishing in the 1980s as the nation was celebrating the coming of political independence. Mushakavanhu further argues that between 1980 and 1999 Zimbabwe published very few short story anthologies. The tendency was to publish single-authored collections, especially those sponsored by Budding Writers Association of Zimbabwe (BWAZ) and Zimbabwe Women Writers (ZWW). Mushakavanhu (2013:129) observes that in 2000, Zimbabwe started witnessing more publications of the short story by "new generation of young writers with both the talent and technical ability to produce well-crafted stories". Various multi-authored texts were published with post-2000 as the chief setting. His findings on writers of today are that they have shifted their interest and attention to the current milieu, the crisis period. There is a similar effort in the current study to establish the presence of a durable connection between history and literature. In the Ndebele example, the post- 2000 historical experience sheds considerable light on the thematic preoccupations of the narratives. It is in this light that the post-2000 Zimbabwean short story narratives in Ndebele have been singled out for narrating, recording, explaining, and reflecting upon the Zimbabwean crisis thus connecting history and fiction.

Mupondi (2013) examines the portrayal of the marginalised in post-colonial Zimbabwe in selected stories in the short story collection titled *Somewhere*



*in this Country* (2006). He focuses on the downtrodden members of society and their daily struggles for survival in a context where the political elite have betrayed them. The peasants, workers, squatters and street kids are living miserable lives characterised by joblessness, starvation and deprivation, dehumanisation and oppression. Most of the stories analysed blame the post-independent leadership for this crisis. Mupondi (2013:94) argues that “The marginalised masses feel betrayed by the black leaders because they hoped for better living conditions after independence, rather than a life of deprivation and penury”. This leadership is also castigated for pursuing self-aggrandisement at the expense of the welfare of the majority. They preach socialism during the day and practise capitalism at night. Socialism was not adopted and implemented despite much hype about its efficacy as a mode of production in 1980. To the masses and those who fought in the liberation struggle, independence is meaningless as it bypasses them. Mupondi (2013) further argues that some short stories in the anthology applaud and celebrate the fast-track land reform in Zimbabwe which they anticipate will uplift the lives of the suffering and landless people. However, his assessment of the land reform as captured in the short stories is problematic as it fails to mention the challenges of the land reform process. This study is different from his in that it studies post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis in short stories in Ndebele in six short story anthologies.

Mlambo (2013a) discusses the depiction of endurance and survival mechanisms throughout the so-called crisis epoch in Zimbabwean literature that uses the English language as its medium of expression. His study focuses on how Zimbabwean literary texts, principally the short story

narratives, succeed in capturing the numerous pioneering and adaptable ways used by characters living in the city during the turbulent times. Mlambo's study notes that literary characters inhabiting the city space creatively face their social, economic and political trials with varying degrees of success. Many characters in the Zimbabwean short stories explored in this study fearlessly and spiritedly reconstruct the urban cosmos to make it a liveable place of their own. Furthermore, the study recognises that to endure and acclimatise to new conditions, the characters in investigated short stories reflect what was happening during the crisis period as they resiliently change their cultural identities and transform into unstable lives. Mlambo observes that one of the ways of negotiating the crisis is migration. Several short stories reveal the significance of the diaspora and remittances as critical strategies to ameliorate the ruinous economic conditions. His study is crucial to this research as it corroborates the major arguments in this undertaking. Influenced by Mlambo's findings, this study analyses the representations of the crisis period and the survival and coping strategies adopted by characters to reduce the impact of the crisis. This study also diverges from Mlambo's research in that it investigates Zimbabwean short stories in isiNdebele.

Mlambo (2011) explores the literary depictions of the multifaceted, diverse and continuously changing socio-political undercurrents of Zimbabwean human survival in three short stories set in the city. Through a textual analysis of the "Last Laugh", "A Land of Starving Millionaires" and "Minister without Portfolio", the writer argues that the post-2000 period gave birth to tempestuous changes that forced the city dwellers to adjust, negotiate and

innovate to survive the effects of the crisis. The motive to transform lives is determined by the unstable economic environment that city people find themselves in. The findings of his study demonstrate the challenges of a nation in crisis. He argues that urban Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2009 was characterised by high unemployment and hyperinflation. Despite the various economic upheavals that seriously threaten the lives of characters in the urban setting, the writer notices that there is a constant revision of their mode of livelihoods so that they can be active participants in the new and abnormal economic setup. This ability to adapt results in shifting trajectories of the self since what matters now is individual survival. Most of the female characters join the economy of commercial sex. The main motive for commercialising sexual relationships is to improve their economic standing by selling their bodies for gain. Those in business as entrepreneurs abandon the conventional principles of buying and selling. Male characters are compelled by the economic meltdown to work extra hard to fend for their families as traditional masculinities are under threat. Although Mlambo analyses English short stories set in the urban area, the issue of economic crisis and survival is relevant in this study though it deals with the post-2000 Ndebele short story viewpoint in the rural areas.

Mlambo (2013b) explores the role of Zimbabwean short stories in providing insights into various peace-oriented conflict resolution methods. His study is inspired by the observation that between 2000 and 2009, Zimbabwe was a nation in extreme economic and political difficulties. The writer aims to show that these stories can be classified as protest literature and how relevant there are in times of crisis since they reveal protest and rebellion against

oppressive institutions in the country. Almost all the short stories caution that to survive the political mayhem and economic collapse, the masses have to register their displeasure, take the lead and control their fate and fearlessly defy the system. Furthermore, the short stories advise that apathy will not help the situation. They also emphasise that Zimbabwe is in crisis because of the failure of leadership and it is their plea that competent, able and committed individuals be part of the governing structures to bring meaningful change. The three stories that are analysed in his study depict the Zimbabwean crisis as a form of dystopia where there is a dictatorship, dehumanisation of the ordinary people and the oppression of the weak (ibid). The findings of his study show that writers of these stories artistically envision versatile coping tactics which are serene, non-violent and sophisticated. Their vision is that of utopian hope; that beyond the gloom, or despite the outrageous and horrific realities, they believe that Zimbabwe is a nation jam-packed with possibilities and therefore encourage Zimbabweans to explore this route. The short stories encourage the masses to avoid a violent conflict but to engage the power of group effort in dismantling the systems that hinder their progress. The current study also analyses Ndebele short stories that nurture novelty and transformations that are nonviolent as survival and coping mechanisms. Any progressive study of literature should be optimistic, full of hope and courage and should inspire society to see its efforts as progressive and awakening.

Nyambi (2014) discusses the depiction of female characters in an urban setting to understand the condition of women caught up in the post-2000 crisis. Although his research is in short stories written in English, almost all

the issues raised in his study are relevant to the current study, particularly the subtle connection between the post-2000 socio-economic and political struggles and the gender dimensions. The gender issue is relevant in that the socio-economic and political upheaval of the post-millennium is characterised by huge challenges for women . He argues that critics tend to generalise the effects of the crisis without studying specific social groups, especially women. However, the literary depictions of these stories reveal that the impact of the crisis is not uniform and universal. Women characters are engaged in what is termed a “struggle within a struggle”. The main argument is that the generalisation of the effects of the crisis overshadows the broader social, political and economic struggles against exclusivist and masculine imaginations of the crisis period. Equally, the Ndebele short stories under study depict female characters as victims of the dominant voice of patriarchy that further worsens their condition in the crisis.

Ncube (2016) writes about the literary depiction of the socio-economic and political crises that engulfed Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2009 in selected short stories from the anthology *Where to now? Short stories from Zimbabwe* (2011). Ncube contends that these short stories should be seen as a socio-economic tapestry of hardships where the country is experiencing acute food shortages, high levels of unemployment, deepening levels of poverty, family disintegration and a high prevalence of the ravaging HIV/AIDS pandemic. She also argues that the textual analysis of the short stories shows that poverty has left many households unable to access basic services such as water, sanitation, education, health, electricity and nutrition. Ncube (2018) further notes that the writers of short stories reveal their intense engagement

with politics by taking a swipe at ZANU PF's tyrannical misrule. She argues that political violence is deployed by the ruling party as its main resource of remaining in power, defending its engagements and legitimising its authority. Most of the short stories analysed in this study show the use of violence as a tool of intimidating perceived political opponents and 'traitors' and this tends to stifle pluralism, democracy and human rights thereby creating a great state of despair and hopelessness on the part of the masses.

Magosvongwe (2013) focuses on the representation of the fast-track land reform in white and black-authored texts in Zimbabwe. She views the land as the main resource for development which inspired those who fought in the liberation struggle. Her observation is that the government took too long to address the land imbalances in post-independent Zimbabwe. Magosvongwe (2013) supports land reform because the masses are ready to exploit it for sustainable development. She also laments the chaos, violence, and corruption that characterised the land reform process. The land reform process was hurried, unplanned and poorly implemented to an extent that it failed to achieve its objectives. Most of the beneficiaries lack the knowledge, expertise and farming inputs and machinery to effectively utilise the allocated piece of land. Magosvongwe (2013) argues that some of the challenges of the reform process include environmental degradation and hunting of wild animals by newly resettled farmers. Furthermore, she notes that corruption by the political elite in allocating themselves and their relatives multiple farms greatly undermined the effort to resettle the landless majority. Despite all these challenges, Magosvongwe (2013) believes that Zimbabwe can learn from these mistakes and review the land reform process for the

success of agriculture and food security in the country. The findings by Magosvongwe (2013) orient the current study especially on how the chaotic land reform process contributed to the economic meltdown between 2000 and 2010.

Vambe (2005) focuses on the portrayal of the land question in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. His study concentrates on short stories set in two Southern African countries to explore their strength in debating the land issue in colonial and post-colonial Africa. Vambe (2005) notes that the anthology *We Killed Mangy-Dog and other Mozambican short stories* (1969) shows that black Africans do not own land but are underpaid, powerless and humiliated labourers in farms owned by white Portuguese. According to the short stories, most local people have been forced out of their ancestral land, the main resource which they can exploit for economic prosperity. Those few black farmers who are competing with white farmers are depicted as marginalised by capitalist markets that do not support black economic empowerment. Vambe (2005) also argues that Zimbabwean short stories that fictionalise the land debate show the joy and jubilation by the black masses for owning, controlling and farming fertile soils when the government started the fast track land reform programme in the year 2000. He also laments the corruption and nepotism that characterised the post- 2000 land reform process. While Vambe (2005) highlights the importance of land in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, he deliberately ignores the short stories that depict violence in Zimbabwe. This study intends to link the unplanned and hurried nature of the land reform programme to the genesis of the economic crisis in post-2000 Zimbabwe as argued by writers of Ndebele short stories.

Nyambi (2017) analyses the representations of the land issue in the anthology *The Trek and Other stories* (2009). His overall assessment of the stories is that their depiction of the land question is different from the narrative circulated by the ruling party, ZANU PF. He observes that these short stories challenge the nativist narrative. The ruling party argues that the land reform process must be viewed as a pinnacle of freedom and a grand act of decolonisation. Although the ideology is proper, the state historiography neglects the gloomier side of the fast-track land reform process. Nyambi (2017) argues that the stories capture the racially and politically charged violence and chaos that characterised the implementation of the programme. He further notes that productive land has been distributed to unproductive people who lacked the zeal, expertise and inputs. This study agrees with Nyambi's findings that the land reform was a noble idea but its implementation was poor to an extent of contributing to economic collapse in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Mangena (2018) explores the depiction of the journeys of illegal migrants from Zimbabwe to South Africa and America in selected short stories in English. The reasons for illegal migration narrated in the texts are both economic and political. Her main aim is to explain various survival and coping strategies employed by illegal migrants in evading the immigration laws of the host countries. The protagonist uses the route of 'jumping the border' to escape the effects of a multidimensional national crisis. Mangena's analysis of the short stories reveals that border jumping has two versions. The first version is that of bribing emigration and customs officials to be allowed to



cross into South Africa through the official border. The second version involves illegal crossing into South Africa through the crocodile-infested Limpopo River. She also argues that those who are successful in crossing illegally into the host country have to devise survival tactics to avoid deportations. The survival strategies include identity-masking. Some forms of identity masking include changing names, purchasing identity cards and marriages of convenience. The findings of her study are invaluable and critical in exploring Ndebele short stories that thematise illegal migration.

Mangena and Mupondi (2011) provide a critical analysis of the literary depictions of out-migration by Zimbabweans. They note that the young and the old are leaving Zimbabwe with the aim of seeking economic empowerment in foreign countries. Most of the characters in the stories that are analysed mention the need for economic survival, poverty and repression as the major reasons for migration because their country has economically stagnated. Mangena and Mupondi (2011) further observe that Zimbabwe is now associated with the millennial crisis or confined space and the process of migration is an endeavour to find enabling spaces where their future is guaranteed. However, the short stories that they examined reveal that it is those who move out of Zimbabwe who make it in life. The short stories show that some benefit by leaving the country for greener pastures as they accumulate properties and other material things. Some face difficulties in host countries which include xenophobic attacks, family disintegration and racial discrimination. They conclude their study by noting that out-migration can bring both negative and positive outcomes. Their study intersects with the current study in that both examine the literary

representations of out-migration as one of the survival and coping strategies. The point of departure is that the current study is restricted to Ndebele short stories.

Ndlovu (2017) argues that a percentage of Zimbabwean literature offers another form of recalling and envisioning the nation, especially the period after 2000. According to Ndlovu, this is the type of fiction that challenges the ruling party's exclusivist imaginaries of belonging during the post- 2000 crisis decade. Ndlovu (2017:1) recognises that Zimbabwe lacks "the ideas of tolerance, reconciliation, inclusivity and human diversity". He makes a critical observation that Zimbabwean writers have managed to give the world a different version of what transpired in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. Their version is different from what the ruling party has propagated to be the cause and effect of the post-2000 crisis. In other words, Ndlovu (2017) is saying that these writers have been able to write back to the ruling elite, using different lenses in observing and narrating the nation. This study seeks to investigate the representation of the post-2000 Zimbabwean political, economic and social crisis and to explain why we have different versions of the crisis. This study agrees with Ndlovu by noting that there are different versions of the crisis depending on whose lenses the writer uses. However, this study is different from Ndlovu's study in the sense that it only analyses short stories written in IsiNdebele.

Sibanda and Dube (2018) examine the naming and naming patterns in *Short Writings from Bulawayo* (2003), a short story anthology where the city of

Bulawayo is the focal point. The text is analysed to establish the significance of literary onomastics in outlining the socio-historical experience of Bulawayo and its inhabitants. The art of naming characters reveals that the community of the second-largest city in Zimbabwe has had to negotiate and renegotiate its existence in the face of life-threatening social, economic and political malaise in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. For example, the authors of these stories use names to criticise the economic meltdown which has resulted in immense suffering where there is a shortage of basic commodities and the everyday spectacle of winding queues for fuel and other necessities. Like all other cities in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo is facing economic decline and stagnation with major manufacturing companies closing and retrenching a large proportion of both skilled and semi-skilled workforce resulting in loss of income due to unemployment. Naming patterns also comment on the changing political terrain in the country. This is represented by the existence of war veterans who refuse to listen to the new generation because they lack war credentials. The young generation blames the former freedom fighters for the crisis because they spend most of the time narrating what they did during the struggle instead of developing the country. The same generation is seeking political change but the older generation shuts them out of the political space resulting in mass out-migration of youths to neighbouring countries in search of a better life. Sibanda and Dube (2018) observe that short stories depict an ailing city in all social, economic and political facets. However, the citizens of Bulawayo show great resilience and agency by adopting novel initiatives, innovation and creativity to mitigate the effects of the crisis. While Sibanda and Dube focus on the depiction of the crisis in Bulawayo, the thrust of the current study is to explore the same subject but

paying attention to the whole nation using short stories of Ndebele expression.

Mpangi (2019) investigates the depiction of youths in the selected short stories drawn from the short story collection *Dancing with Life: Tales from the Township* (2008). She focuses on the economic challenges faced by various characters within the text paying closer attention to those in the youth category within the township. These challenges include unemployment, poverty, and a high cost of living. The study further explores survival strategies adopted by these characters in an attempt to ameliorate the effects of the economic meltdown and these include prostitution, migration, and crime. Amid all the above-mentioned challenges, youths find a way to mitigate their problems. Their survival and coping strategies show dedication and lack of fear that they have such that even in their disillusioned state they fight to have jobs and to better their livelihoods.

Sibanda, Hadebe and Maphosa (2017) discuss the treatment of violence in selected Zimbabwean short stories in English. They argue that violence has been used as a tool of choice in the social, political and economic spheres in the country. Their study is motivated by the realisation that literary texts, especially the short story narratives, have been at the forefront in capturing violence in its fictionally historical context that spatio-temporally covers the colonial and post-colonial periods as well as the economic and political crisis of the year 2000 and beyond. Violence in their study takes the form of intense force on individuals, groups, or the whole nation and this force can be overtly

physical or covertly psychological. They conclude by noting that short stories have been faithful and committed to documenting this bleak period in the history of the nation. Most of the short stories that are analysed reveal that violence tends to interrupt, disrupt and terminate political, economic and social relations and, in the process, increase antipathy and acrimony in the country. Through the interpretation of the short stories, it is shown that violence has been employed by the political elite to pursue economic, political and social exploitation of the masses. During the liberation struggle, the use of violence against the enemy and sell-outs is celebrated. Violence is also used to deal with the dissidents during the *Gukurahundi* killings amongst the people of Matabeleland between 1982 and 1987. The reason for the state-sponsored violence in the post-2000 era is that the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), has been in power for too long and hence the use of violence to silence the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). ZANU (PF) felt they had a mandate to rule the country to eternity and the MDC represented a threat to this narrative and so they had to be whipped and machine-gunned into docility. They further note that the violence during the crisis period of 2000 affected women, children and men at several levels and impacted negatively on the progress and growth of the family both at household and national levels. This research shares the above views on the use of political violence and finds this vital in explaining the literary representations of the political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories.

Joseph (2018) examines how authors of short stories engage with the post-2000 socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. He argues that the

writers of these short stories are brave in their attempt to interpret, explain and call for change as a way of awakening people's critical consciousness about the crisis. In his analysis of the selected short stories, the period 2000 to 2009 can be best summed as the lost decade because the period was characterised by acute shortages of basic commodities, erratic supply of water and electricity, hyperinflation, unemployment and closure of companies. He further reveals the immense suffering of the ordinary people as the economy is tanking, civil liberties curtailed and the democratic space closed. The above scholar argues that despite the turmoil and chaos, the writers of these short stories have incorporated humour as a way of challenging, resisting, condemning and publicly criticising those responsible for the crisis without inviting censorship from the government.

Moyo (2017) explores the literary depiction of the socio-economic challenges and survival strategies in the anthology *Grace and other stories* (2016). This is a single-authored collection of short stories set in rural Matabeleland South in Zimbabwe. Her study is informed by the sociological approach to literature which stipulates that literature is essentially social and contains metaphors directly applicable to the existing society at the time of its creation. Moyo (2017) notes that poverty is the major challenge confronting the characters in this literary piece. The community is experiencing various forms of deprivation ranging from the lack of food, clothing, proper housing, and social amenities. The main cause of poverty is unemployment, low education and economic marginalisation of the region by the government. She further observes that despite the hardships, the need for survival is imperative. Some characters resort to out-migration to South Africa and Botswana and

those who are working in these countries are considered to have made it in life. The other positive and innovative management of the hardships is the informal sector. Religion is also employed by characters to comfort, soothe and distract themselves from the dystopic conditions with the hope for a better life in heaven. Moyo (2017) concludes that the entertaining moments during sermons and prophesying make characters temporarily forget, at least for a while, their empty and miserable lives.

Nyathi (2018) analyses the representation of women in the anthology *Where to now? Short stories from Zimbabwe* (2011) in the context of post- 2000 socio-economic crisis. She discusses the place and role of women in responding to economic challenges, especially the coping and survival strategies they adopt to keep the family together in a patriarchal society. Nyathi (2018) examines the changing of patriarchally-determined sex roles, the unpleasant problems of the realities of HIV and AIDS, survival, moral and ethical issues. Her study ousts the assumption that men are always breadwinners as women characters take the lead in the informal sector. Male characters are emasculated by the closure of manufacturing companies that renders them jobless and with no means of providing for their families. Nyathi (2018) concludes that women are the most resilient group in absorbing the effects of economic crisis. These women sometimes sacrifice their lives and health as they engage in prostitution and culturally unacceptable behaviours to provide food and other basic needs for their families.

Wasosa (2014) examines the portrayal of deviant behaviour in Shona short stories and novels. He argues that his study is carried out in the context of moralisation in selected Shona fictional works set during the post-independent crisis in Zimbabwe. His study shows that prostitution, crime, homosexuality, violence and neglecting the family are some of the behaviours that are classified as deviant. Such behaviours, according to Wasosa (2014), have their causes and solutions. He notes that deviant behaviour is not an inborn trait but a contested issue that has to be understood within cultural and historical contexts. His study argues that deviant behaviour is caused by socio-economic and political crisis in the country. These deviant behaviours are survival and coping mechanisms adopted by crisis-ridden citizens because of poverty and frustration. Wasosa (2014) further notes that some Shona writers tend to blame characters for being deviant without exploring the underlying causes of such deviant behaviour in literary texts. While Wasosa (2014) trains his attention on the depiction of deviance in Shona short stories and novels, part of this current study concentrates on the portrayal of survival strategies in Ndebele short stories.

## **2.5 Literature review that relates to Ndebele short stories**

Three scholarly studies to the knowledge of the current researcher have endeavoured to principally establish the connection between the post-2000 crisis and the Ndebele short story.



Sebele (2018) assesses the anthology *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* (2016) in light of its depiction of poverty and survival and coping mechanisms in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. The causes of poverty as depicted in the selected stories include failure of national leadership, failure to increase productivity, vicious cycles of unemployment due to lack of investment, corruption and lack of accountability. She contends that the economic crisis of unemployment and hyperinflation pushes characters to adapt to the crisis by resorting to crime, corruption, vending, prostitution and out-migration. The need for survival takes precedence to different characters leading them to curve out different survival strategies to ride the tide of the crisis decade. Her study further discusses the effectiveness of these strategies in successfully ameliorating the effects of the economic downturn in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2009. Sebele (2018) argues that these survival strategies have presented more problems than development in society. For example, crime and corruption promote individualism thereby impairing development in communities. Furthermore, prostitution has led to the spread of HIV and AIDS. Sebele's research is relevant to this study as its findings help to substantiate some of the opinions raised with regards to how the post- 2000 socio-economic crisis is portrayed in various Ndebele collections of short stories.

Msipa (2018) analyses the literary depiction of homosexuality in Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. In her study, she argues that the Zimbabwean community is not receptive to lesbians and gays and this sexual orientation is criminalised in the constitution of the country. The writers of the stories analysed in this study depict homosexuality as a loss of *Ubuntu*, as un-African, unethical and anathema to African celebrated ethos of

procreation and clan continuity. Msipa (2018) further observes that the Zimbabwean society views homosexuality as a foreign culture that celebrates unnatural sexual perversions which are not only a sin but a taboo in traditional cultural worldview. She notes that the findings from the textual analysis of the short stories show that gays and lesbians are stigmatised, marginalised, discriminated, persecuted and, as a result, they are isolated and humiliated for expressing or displaying their sexual orientation in public. Those who are psychologically affected because of this homophobic behaviour migrate to South Africa where homosexuality is legal. She observes that there is a need to explore the subject of homosexuality without unqualified cultural talk and respond to the subject with respect for lesbian and gay rights. The current study agrees with Msipa by arguing that Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe see homosexuality as a human rights issue.

Moyo (2018) makes a critical reflection of the significance of literary onomastics in the anthology *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* (2016). Her study focuses on the titles of short stories in the text to show the intricate relationship between the names of the short stories and their major themes. The naming of the short stories shows the social, political and economic crisis, turmoil and tenacity in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Moyo (2018) further notes that analysing the semantic significance of names of titles in literature assists in finding the divergent socio-political realities of post-2000 Zimbabwe. These names are linguistic or semiotic signs that play a crucial role in the overall meaning of the text or its signification. Decoding of the titles, therefore, becomes an important critical engagement in deciphering the meaning of the text being interpreted. She contends that writers do not

just name their short stories but they are meticulous in bestowing names to give meaningful and fictive titles that are dialogic. Most titles pre-empt the main arguments of the story which include poverty, unemployment, starvation, dehumanisation, diabolic living conditions and the scourge of HIV AIDS. Like Moyo, this study observes that naming in post-2000 Zimbabwean short stories in IsiNdebele show the nature of the political, economic and social crisis.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter interpreted and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the body of literature linked to the topic under study. The chapter also indicated its points of departure from other scholars who have attempted to analyse short stories on more or less the same subject. Although this review of literature is not exhaustive it, however, establishes predominant trends that help to evaluate, locate and connect scholarly publications that are relevant to the political, economic and social crisis in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. The general overview of the literature reviewed demonstrates that literary scholars and writers tend to deploy the short story genre in documenting their social, economic and political experiences. As a brief and compressed form of literature, the short story is viewed as an effective genre in expressing complaints without meandering. The chapter has also demonstrated that few critical works have been produced on the Ndebele short stories. Only three scholars namely Sebele (2018), Moyo (2018) and Msipa (2018) have attempted to analyse one Ndebele anthology of short stories. It has been noted that Zimbabwean scholars have concentrated more on the analysis of

short stories that use the English language as a medium of expression in depicting the post- 2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis. These researchers include Vambe (2005),Nyambi (2014), (2017), Magosvongwe (2013) Mangena (2013), Mlambo (2013), Mpondi (2013), Moyo (2017), Ncube (2017), Ndlovu (2017), Nyathi (2018), Joseph (2018), Mpangi (2019), among others. These writers agree that Zimbabwe experienced an economic, political and social crisis in the calendar of 2000 to 2009 due to the failure of leadership. They blame the unplanned, hurried, chaotic, and violent land reform of 2000 for bringing the nation to its worst crisis that forced the masses to adopt various survival and coping strategies to keep the soul and the body together.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter reviewed the existing body of literature related to the current study. This chapter concerns itself with the theoretical framework adopted in realising the intended aims of the study. Historical Criticism and the Resilience theoretical paradigms are employed in this study. The section outlines the major tenets of the two literary approaches to justify their relevance and applicability in the textual analysis of Ndebele writers of short stories and their representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis.

#### **3.2 The Significance of Theoretical Framework in Literary Criticism**

In any serious and advanced critical appreciation, investigation and analysis of literature, the theoretical framework is indispensable because it forms a model that pivots a research question. The theoretical context is the base upon which research is fashioned. For scholars of literature, the theoretical framework is viewed as a body of concepts and constructs that form a theory and its tenets that guide a researcher in literary criticism (Ravitch and Carl (2016). The theoretical framework is built on present literary theories and their tenets which have been designed, verified and authenticated by other scholars. An educated analysis of literature is often informed by a literary

theory because there are body of viewpoints, philosophies and paradigms we use in establishing the ideological insinuations of literary texts.

Literary theories are intended to construe and appraise literary productions to unpack the meticulous implications of such literary texts. As is the norm in advanced literary criticism, analysis should be grounded on literary theory as writers themselves are also motivated by certain theories which are, in one way or another, clear in their literary productions. In the same vein, this study deploys Historical and Resilience theories in approaching Ndebele short stories that fictionalise the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. This study concludes that there is a durable kinship between literature, literary criticism and literary theories.

### **3.3 Historical Criticism**

This study adopted view points expressed in Historical criticism. Historical criticism as a literary theory that started in Greek literature and was used in understanding the Old and the New Testaments in later years (Marshall 1997). In Greek literary analysis, Historical criticism was used to analyse any narrative which claimed to express historical evidence to determine what happened. From a historical point of view, it is indispensable to conduct a study on the literary representation of post-2000 Zimbabwe in Ndebele short stories because it is anticipated to determine whether these short stories approximate the post-2000 historical reality. If they do not, it is pertinent to ask why not and if they do, it is similarly thought-provoking to determine why

and to what magnitude they do. Historical criticism is used to throw light on the uncertain story by determining more exactly the nature of the actions to which it bears witness. Furthermore, Historical criticism investigates the historical accuracy of texts that purport to be historical narratives. Historical criticism is a literary method that identifies, analyses and interprets literary texts that are informed by their historical connections and contexts. Ndebele (1984), a leading South African writer and critic, observes that the art of imaginative writing tends to portray or recount daily experiences of a country and era as writers are the eyes, ears and the pulse of the nation.

According to Ayinde (2014), historical criticism is a form of fictional approach that champions the theme, time setting, place setting and their resonance with a particular recognisable historical age of a certain nation. This loyalty to theme, setting and historical context pushes authors to write fictional stories that document contemporary or the earlier history of their communities. Mapara (2007:62) argues that:

Historical criticism assess the relative reliability and validity of different kinds of historical evidence and to determine the ordering of events, whether they are proper or anachronistic.

The above scholars point out that history is a persuasive tool for recording and interpreting the literary text. This study therefore argues that for Ndebele literature to be relevant and committed, it must reflect the historical context of its production. History has also served as a useful tool in the hands of prominent Ndebele creative writers like Ndabaningi Sithole, Canan Banana,

Ndabezinhle Sigogo, Barbra Makhalisa, Sithembile Mlilo, and Cont Mhlanga to mention but a few.

To appreciate the need for the juxtaposition of history and literature, it is proper to comprehend what is intended by the use of the word history. According to Mapara (2007: 58) history refers to the:

Actions of humankind that relate to what she has done in the past and how the past has influenced the present and is likely to influence the future.

These actions form part of historical evidence which is captured through works of fiction. The significance of history in literary studies is to establish whether these texts tell the truth or not. The other reason why history and literature are in a soulful and intertwined relationship is the fact that they both study the economic, social, religious and political issues of their times. This kinship of literature and history is demonstrated by writers of Ndebele short stories when they fictionalise the post-2000 historical period to record the era. The idea to adopt historical criticism in this study is predicated upon the assumption that Ndebele short stories in various short story anthologies are historical. This is true because since time immemorial, African authors have been responsive to key historical experiences of slavery, imperialism, the struggle for independence, post-independence economic, political and social challenges.

The history of Zimbabwe which largely informs most Ndebele literary productions is the history of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence



epochs. In this study, the history of post- 2000 independent Zimbabwe and its connectedness to Ndebele short stories cannot be overlooked and finds reverberation in any effort to study these short stories. Collingwood (1956:352) concurs with the above opinion when he avers that “One can only understand a text when one understands the questions which it answers”. Therefore, historical criticism has the advantage of permitting this study to consider that Ndebele writers are recreating post-2000 Zimbabwe through imagination. This creativity is a product of an endeavour to expose socio-historical experiences through the Ndebele short story.

This observation is supported by Wellek and Wellek (1960:3) when they state that in literary history, literature is conceived as involved in a period, judged only relative to the period. This is so because all information about literature has its residence in history, and fiction cannot be separated from historical relations. It is therefore undeniable that works of literature are steeped in historicity (wa Thiong’o, 1981 and Achebe, 1988).

Given the above, it is correct to say that literary texts are predicated on socio-political events. It is therefore argued that Ndebele short stories carry the weight of their history and the history of the nation. It is also imperative to recognise the secondary value of historical information in the analysis of short stories. As a genre of literature, the short story represents social, economic and political reality.

Wellek (1982) cogently argues that literature can be understood only in the light of history and that relegation of or obliviousness to history distorts an analysis of a literary text. Chiwome and Mguni (2012:12) note that:

History is the reality that artist grapple with and are shaped by. It is the landscape around which creativity unfolds.

Since literature is composed out of the experience, history is recorded in it. This is so because in the African literary landscape all genres are believed to be “abound in historical illusions about people, events and places” (Miruka, 1994:122). The above arguments demonstrate that there is a robust interplay between Ndebele short stories and post-2000 Zimbabwean political, economic and social contexts from where they are produced. It is impossible to separate these short stories from the post -2000 crisis because the two are profoundly co-existent. They have an intertwining relationship that cannot be taken apart. This is further strengthened by the fact that the elements of post-2000 Zimbabwe are found in these short stories. It is observed that Ndebele short stories examined in this study are both fictional and factual, they are connected by the prevailing circumstances where they are shaped (Ogundokum, 2014). What these short stories allow here is historicised, place-specified and individually-focused analysis of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis so that the term post-2000 does not remain an unproblematised period. The connection between history and literature occupies a central position in the present study. Of importance is Zimbabwe’s turbulent period of post-2000 that is characterised by the economic downturn, political turmoil and social upheaval.

Gray (1992) argues that authenticity and validity are central in the elucidation of historicity. The noun authenticity is from the adjective authentic which, according to the Hornby (2012), means trustworthy or genuine. Authenticity is defined as entitled to acceptance or belief because of agreement with known facts or experience, not false or copied; genuine; real, (The Random House Dictionary 2000:84). When something is considered authentic, it is accurate and real. In light of the above definitions, it can therefore be argued that Ndebele short stories under investigation are dependable or accurate literary productions of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. These short stories give a genuine depiction of life experiences that characterised the period. Furthermore, their authenticity is enhanced by the time and place setting which is post-2000 Zimbabwe and its urban and rural areas. The word is valid as an adjective is defined by Mapara (2007:73) as something “compelling, convincing and authoritative”. It is therefore argued in this study that an attempt to find evidence of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis in selected Ndebele short stories reveals valuable and sound information about the crisis period.

Related to historical criticism is faction. The term faction is a combination of two words, fact and fiction (Cuddon, 1998 and Tulloch, 2002). The term faction is therefore used in literary studies to refer to a type of criticism that holds that literary texts should be examined in the social, political and economic context of their production and consumption. Its basic argument is that there is a special relationship between the author and the society that he writes about. Hence, to better understand a text, it is vital to establish how societal experiences are depicted since it is believed that society is the chief

character in works of literature. The fiction as a key element of historical criticism is the aptest approach to inform this study because it considers everything within post-2000 Zimbabwean society and how it informs the content of Ndebele short stories in this study. Put differently, these short stories are not closed, autonomous, or self-contained but there is a link between them and the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe.

A caution needs however to be signalled on the fact that literature is a record of history, not history. History concerns itself with intricate details about causation and effects. It is a record of events in their sequence. A historian should present and understand events as truthfully and impartially as possible. However, literature is art and art does not function systematically and rigorously as history. Literature chiefly remarks on events and offers multiple meanings and invites various elucidations because it reenacts history according to the vision of the author.

Works of art also allow critics to observe situations from many diverse points of view. In this study, Ndebele authors of short stories fictionally represent the post-2000 Zimbabwean historical age from a literary standpoint. This study is not interested in the discovery of novel truths and evidence as history does, but in the depiction and understanding of events through an artistic exploration of the insights of authors about the post-2000 crisis. In this thesis, the researcher does not support the re-telling of the post-2000 period with an outsized dose of creativeness to an extent of obscuring the credibility of historical facts.

Ndebele short stories, as the subsequent chapters demonstrate, attempt to re-imagine and rewrite post-2000 Zimbabwean history as a way of representing the past. They do not write in a vacuum. This means that these short stories qualify to be historical short stories. A historical short story is a short story that is set in a historical epoch. The historicity of the selected short stories studied is further enhanced by the fact that they capture the agony that the masses endured as a result of the crisis. The historicity of the short stories is further reinforced by an observation that they are based on national experiences, events and personalities that affected a good part of the country's population. These experiences are not individual but national and widely researched in various disciplines in Zimbabwe.

### **3.4 Resilience Theory**

In this study, the researcher also deployed the Resilience theory to interrogate the literary depictions of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. The principal advocate of what is now called Resilience theory is an American developmental psychologist Norman Garmezy. He started his research on resilience in the 1970s, concentrating on children who demonstrated resilient qualities regardless of adverse childhood surroundings. His empirical works have contributed immensely in defining, developing and operationalising resilience frameworks (Rutter, 1985; Masten and Coatsworth 1998). Today Resilience theory is used in various fields, including literary studies though still nascent. Amongst other early researchers who have played an important role in developing,

solidifying and propagating the theory are the following: George Bonanno; Ann Masten; Steven Southwick; Catherine Ann Cameron; Rachel Yehuda; Catherine Panter-Brick; Linda Liebenberg; Cindy Lau; Nora Didkowsky; Douglas J. Coatsworth; Michael Rutter; Emmy R. Werner; Ruth S. Smith; Edith Grotberg; and Michael Ungar. These pioneering researchers knew each other and they networked with one another and many other contemporaries and learners, disseminating their thoughts through research, books, partnership, seminar and conference expositions. However, as Masten (2018:14) notes, resilience as a concept is inundated with contests of its definition because it is a theory that is found in multiple disciplines. This observation is further buttressed by Van Breda (2018:14) who opines that the definition of resilience is plagued with challenges of its demarcation because it inhabits multifaceted fields of study.

According to Davodi (2013), resilience means a positive adaptation to turbulences that threaten someone's survival. Garmezy (1993:129) defines resilience as the aptitude to recuperate enthusiastically from sickness, hopelessness and hardship. Furthermore, Saleebey (1996:298) states that resilience refers to the capacities, capabilities, information, and acumen that people accrue over a period as they struggle to triumph over harsh living conditions., VanBreda (2018:4) avers that resilience is:

The multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity.

Based on the above definitions given by various scholars, Resilience theory is explicated as a vibrant progression where people display constructive

adaptation despite adversity and experiences of hardship and distress. This theory does not denote a personality attribute or a feature of an individual, rather, it is a dualistic dimensional hypothesis that infers exposure to adversity and the index of positive aftermaths. Mlambo (2014) summarises that resilience underlines the strength that individuals have, rather than their susceptibility, through discovering the survival mechanisms that they embrace.

Since resilience is the ability to rise above difficult situations, a fundamental requirement of resilience is the existence of significant adversity and constructive adaptation. The word adversity is conceptualised by Jackson, Firtko and Endnborough (2007:286) as “Any hardship and suffering linked to difficulty, misfortune, or trauma”. Shapiro (2017:39) shares similar sentiments with Jackson, Firtko and Endnborough (2007) when he states that adversity is “Any event that has a lasting negative effect upon self and psyche”. Adversity as a precondition of resilience is sometimes referred to as a lived experience of risk, (van Rensburg, Theron and Rothmann 2015). Adverse challenges in this study include the economic, political and social crises. During the period spanning the years 2000 to 2009, Zimbabwe was plunged into political, economic and social instability which is commonly referred to as the Zimbabwean crisis, a decade of crisis, or the lost decade. Thus, an important component of resilience is the presence of calamitous events, hazardous, exceptional hardship and threatening life circumstances that result in individual vulnerability and conscious determination to convalesce.

According to Kennedy cited in Mlambo (2015:49), in the Chinese language the word crisis means two things; danger and opportunity. On the other hand, positive adaptation emphasises the strength that those who are afflicted possess over their vulnerability. This is done through exploring the coping and survival tactics that the affected individuals display in the focal texts. The emphasis is on endurance, how to live in adversity through resourcefulness and innovation. In other words, positive adaptation emphasises the capability to tactically absorb turbulences and trials of life to make it beyond survival.

The existence of helpless livelihoods motivates the victims to embark on a survival trajectory that gives them optimism, positive attitude and sustenance. The conceptualisation of positive adaptation is similar to that of human agency as explained by the writings of Baker (2000), Bennet (2011) and Asante (1998). Human agency is seen as a strategic capacity in the search for life affirmation and life-furthering. It is also essential to note that before challenges transpire, it is hypothetically awkward to measure the aptitude for responding meritoriously to instabilities. The main tenets of Resilience theory are the best to guide and orient this study because their perspectives on literature resonate well with the objectives of this study. My principal thesis is that selected Ndebele short stories can record, document and interpret the post-2000 adversity characterised by social upheaval, economic collapse and political malaise. This was a period of pain and suffering for the ordinary citizens.



In light of the above observation, this study discusses the nature and diverse aspects of the Zimbabwean crisis. Writers of these Ndebele short stories capture artistically the economic, political and economic crisis. The resilience paradigm is, therefore, the most relevant and best lens in a study that examines how writers of these short stories capture the responses of characters to the economic, political and economic crises.

Agency as a tenet of resilience theory is fundamental in this study. Moyo (2018:226) observes that:

Agency is an important survival strategy without which life degenerates into an amorphous and meaningless experience.

According to Mandova (2016:59), agency is the capacity to provide the psychological and cultural resources essential for progression despite the presence of acute adversity. The main argument is that the agent, the human being, must be capable of acting individually in his or her interest. A person affected by adversity should not show hopelessness, helplessness, meaninglessness, resignation and above all, the negation of action and creation (Muhwati, 2005:2). According to Moyo (2018:228), Ndebele writers have appropriated optimism as the panacea for tackling the challenges of the post-2000 crisis. Any passive action against life-threatening conditions of living is not celebrated because it perpetuates the Eurocentric view that Africans lacked the aptitude to direct the cycle of life both as a progression and project (Luthar and Zelazo, 2003). The above explanations of human agency as a key element of resilience support the selection of Resilience theory as the appropriate literary approach to critique the literary

representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis in Ndebele short stories. Many characters in selected short stories aggressively partake as free agents in the socio-economic and political crises that threaten their future, hence bringing constructive transformation in their communities.

This research regards Resilience theory as useful in analysing issues that relate to the portrayal of post-2000 crisis in Ndebele short stories because it celebrates local and indigenous knowledge. Cultural practices like spirituality, kinship and interdependence are viewed as cultural expressions of resilience. Put differently, Resilience theory draws on responsiveness to the practices that are entrenched in African philosophy or indigenous world views and morals for the good of the community. Spirituality, interdependence and kinship facilitate better strategies of coping and survival by linking the victims of the post-2000 crisis with tradition combined with current household and public linkages (Theron and Phasha, 2015:21). Finally, the Resilience theory is the best literary approach for this study because considerable research on resilience is qualitative. This characteristic allows characters and participants to give voice to their experiences and how they navigate tough times brought about by the socio-economic and political downturn of post-2000.

Like any other literary theory, Resilience theory has its weaknesses. The first challenge lies in the definition of resilience. There is no single definition that satisfies researchers from various disciplines; different writers craft different meanings for the term. It is therefore exceptionally difficult to have harmony

on the definition of the construct so that researchers can dialogue with congruence. In literary studies, the application of the term is new and very little has been researched on the relevance of the theory in the art of literary criticism (Mlambo, 2015). According to Van Breda (2018), Resilience theory has received a barrage of criticism for its failure to accept antisocial actions as confirmation of resilience practice contributing to resilient aftermaths when scrutinised from an emic perception. Anti-social activities like prostitution and criminal activities are dismissed as behaviours that bring more harm than good. But to Ungar (2011:18), these disruptive engagements should be viewed as hidden resilience behaviour meaning “functional but culturally no normative substitute adaptations”. By recognising the motive and value of this culturally unacceptable resourcefulness, society is being inclusive and admitting that there are ostracised and socially omitted persons striving to overcome hardship by all means necessary. Although agency reflects the authority that characters exercise over their lives and social setting, the economic structure is the most important element which determines the choices and prospects of individuals. Some of the characters are constrained by the macroeconomic, social and political structures from adopting positive alternative livelihoods in the wake of the crisis. However, these flaws are not intended to alienate the adoption of the literary approach but they make scholars aware of the limitations of the theory. Notwithstanding these flaws, this literary approach is still useful as a tool with which to approach Ndebele short stories that are set in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed Historical criticism and Resilience theories as literary approaches that guide this study. The chapter has explored the origins, tenets and the applicability and relevance of these literary theories in the critical appreciation of Ndebele short stories that document and fictionalize the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. Initially, the chapter outlined Historical criticism and established that African literature shows a profound kinship of literature and history. Thus, literature is responsive to socio-historical developments in various spaces. History is also a regular measurable material for African creative writers. Literature, therefore provides a podium for history to be validated and refashioned. This chapter also discussed the origins, tenets and the relevance or applicability of Resilience theory. Resilience theory is used to understand the theme of courage, resilience and perseverance in the wake of the crisis. The outline of Resilience theory established that the existence of a multifaceted crisis forces its victims to embark on survival and coping strategies that give them positive attitudes to ameliorate the effects of the crisis. It is therefore fundamental to note that Resilience theory makes endurance, resourcefulness and innovation central in confronting adversity. The final submission of this chapter is that understanding the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis as fictionalised in Ndebele short stories is understanding the socio-economic and political crisis that characters face, and the history and context of the crisis. But there is more to characters than just their pain and suffering, and thus a good literary analysis should not just explore the crisis, but also the strengths, coping and survival strategies adopted by characters to deal

with the effects of the crisis within a historical context. The next chapter outlines the research methodology used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter Three identified and discussed Historical criticism and Resilience theory as conceptual frameworks adopted in this study. This chapter presents the research methodology embraced in the analysis of Ndebele short stories that depict the post-2000 socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. The research paradigm utilised in this research is the qualitative inquiry as it is both descriptive and inductive. The chapter therefore outlines the main components and concerns of the research methodology used in data gathering. To understand the efficacy of Ndebele short stories in reflecting the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe, the study relied on primary sources, secondary sources and interviews. The chapter thus focuses on various data-gathering strategies and techniques and analytical tools to collect and interpret data, including outlining the strengths and weaknesses of each to illuminate the subject of post-2000 Zimbabwean crises.

#### **4.2 Qualitative Research Method**

This study adopted a qualitative approach as its research paradigm in interpreting the literary depiction of the post-2000 crises in selected Ndebele short stories set in Zimbabwe. Chilisa and Preece (2005:44) note that qualitative exploration means a category of investigation in which the

investigator conducts inquiry around society's experiences, in normal locales, through various procedures such as stories, observations and interviews using words rather than figures. In agreement with Chilisa and Preece (2005), Creswell (2012:19) notes that qualitative research does not use figures, statistics and numbers in evaluating the data. It is a research methodology that analyses meanings of words from literary texts and interviews on a particular theme.

The researcher's choice of the qualitative method is predicated on the fact that this study focuses mainly on evaluating and understanding data that is not in the form of numbers. This study argues that the representation of the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe as depicted in Ndebele short stories cannot be enumerated as it is difficult to subject human experience to quantifiable techniques. The textual analysis of selected short stories is grounded on data communicated in word descriptions, outlooks, feelings, interpretations and opinions which are often subjective and not amenable to quantification. Furthermore, the qualitative approach champions the method where the researcher reflects introspectively and historically with his or her study structured around categorising the economic, political social, political setting of the topic under scrutiny (Creswell, 2009).

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) observe that as qualitative researchers pursue responses to questions that worry about how political and socio-economic human experiences and events are fashioned and given meaning, their investigation becomes significant in understanding a particular society. This helps the researcher to examine human circumstances as they develop, (Bogdan and Biklen 1982:28). The emphasis is that qualitative research is

grounded on lived human experiences and the investigator's individual familiarity, therefore making it practical and explanatory (Patton 2000, Marshall and Rossman 2006). This approach enables the researcher to expand his or her comprehension of the post- 2000 crises in two ways. Firstly, it assists in gaining the writer's perceptions of the economic, political and social crises in the post-2000 period. Secondly, the approach allows the researcher to comprehensively appreciate the complex period between 2000 and 2010 through secondary sources and interviews. It can therefore answer descriptive, explanatory and causal questions relating to the representations of the post-2000 crises in the Ndebele short story. The reliability of results is proven through triangulation methods in which various forms of data are collected and critiqued.

A qualitative approach was relevant for this study because the research problem and objectives permitted the Ndebele short stories to be understood in the context of their idiosyncratic re-creation of the realistic world of the writer. According to Moyo (2018:17), the qualitative approach is principally significant for this study because it:

Allows the researcher to situate the research in its spatial and social context and, in the process, tease out subjective life worlds. It is also amenable to studying the mosaic of experiences, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs. Besides, the approach allows for the intellectual intervention by the researcher through his/her knowledge of the selected society's history, values and his/her own lived experiences.

This is an acknowledgment that the writer's and researcher's subjective experiences and perceptions play a key part in the probe and are critical to



understanding phenomena under investigation. Furthermore, the participants may offer a different interpretation of the issues raised by authors of these Ndebele short stories, thus producing multiple views on the Zimbabwean crisis. It is, therefore, important for the researcher to interactively relate with the participants since their input is influenced by their upbringings, environment, history and their previous understanding of the problem. The main feature of qualitative research that is related to the above observation is the realisation that the holistic account is used in the presentation of data. The holistic approach, according to Creswell, (2009:176) is where:

Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges.

It is the aim of this study to explicate the literary representations of the post-2000 crises as portrayed in Ndebele short stories using different dimensions and angles adopted by the authors, readers and the researchers of the short stories. This was achieved by using various tools of data-gathering that included textual and narrative analysis, secondary documents and interviews. Data gathered through these research instruments was organised into sections informed by themes, research objectives and questions of the study.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the research approach of this study was biased towards research instruments that discouraged face-to-face encounters but rather encouraged social distancing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt

in research topics that depend on contact with participants to an extent that some studies have been “delayed, postponed or stopped, at least temporarily”, (Pepper and Burton, 2020:01). Data gathering for this study was conducted during the pressure imposed by the ravages of the corona virus. In view of the lockdown measures and social distancing, this study relied on online research instruments. Despite the challenges brought by the Corona Virus, this researcher was able to gather data that is reliable and not based on misrepresentation.

### **4.3 Primary Sources**

This study is grounded on a body of Ndebele literary texts, therefore the applicable method of enquiry must begin with a thorough critical appreciation of the texts which are treated as primary sources. These texts are acknowledged as a rich source of data, as narratives of significance to the critics of the post-2000 crises in Zimbabwe. The primary sources of data in this study comprise selected short stories and they are the principal source of information in this research. The focal short stories of the study are anthologies set in post-2000 that fictionalise or reflect the topic under investigation. All these anthologies use the Ndebele language that is spoken in Zimbabwe as a medium of expression. The primary texts are *Vala singafohleli lesi silo* (2006), *Thaph`uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana* (2010), *Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe* (2014), *Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma* (2014) and *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* (2016). These anthologies constitute both multiple-authored and individual-authored collections. The short narratives are written by both male and female writers. Some of the contributors in these collections of short stories reside in

Zimbabwe while others are writers from the diaspora. It is of paramount importance to mention from the onset that *Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe* (2014) was initially published in English with the title: *Where to Now? Short stories from Zimbabwe* (2011). This anthology was later translated into Ndebele in 2014. I chose these anthologies as the main texts of this study because they offered stimulating depictions of the intricate ways in which characters feature as both targets and agents in the fictional circumstances of post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Through a textual analysis of the selected collection of short stories, the researcher assessed the author's examination of the post-2000 economic, social and political crises in Zimbabwe within the same historical milieu. Textual scrutiny of designated short stories was done through using the Historical Criticism theory together with Resilience theory. Historical criticism was adopted to determine the historicity of the information on the post-2000 crises. Resilience theory was used to show that the victims of the crises were active in combating its effects.

Apart from textual analysis, this study employed a narrative enquiry in the analysis of Ndebele short stories. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:421) note that in a narrative enquiry, through storytelling the narrator utilises the rudimentary story configuration to organise happenings or experiences to bring forward what is thought as vital and significant for the writer and the audience. Narrative research, therefore, permits the examination of personal stories that people tell to make sense of experiences lived. This study concentrated on analysing Ndebele short stories, especially their central issues, from the perspective of the narrators. The researcher delved into the

complexity of the multiple layers of Ndebele short stories by local writers set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The main aim was to “tap into their usual ways of expressing themselves” (Ismail, Berman and Ward-Griffin 2007:461). Through critically appreciating the lifetime experiences of characters in Ndebele short stories set between 2000 and 2009 the researcher used explanatory techniques to navigate the challenging themes about the post-2000 crises. Written literature, including short stories in general create imaginary life-worlds in which characters narrate and understand their personal observations of the communities they reside in. Through characters, the narrations by the Ndebele authors of short stories, therefore, provided valid and useful information about the study.

#### **4.4 Secondary sources**

This study also utilised secondary sources as a data-gathering tools. The data collected from secondary material aided the researcher to pass informed judgements on selected short stories under investigation in this study. Secondary sources were defined in this study as critical works that are closely linked to the post-2000 crisis era in Zimbabwe. Some of the published and unpublished secondary documents were read during the preparatory stages of the study through the internet. Zimbabwe is rich in secondary sources in the form of critical texts on various aspects of the post-2000 crises and these have a connection with the thematic concerns of the Ndebele short stories under investigation. Works such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya (2011), Bourne (2011), Makumbe(2009), Campognon (2011), Masunungure (2009), Crush and Tevera (2010),and Chiumbu and

Musemwa (2012). Although these critical and scholarly researches do not fall under literary productions like this study, they nevertheless provided useful information and historical background of how authors of Ndebele short stories engage the multifaceted dimensions of the crisis. Furthermore, the above corpus is relevant to this research as it serves to corroborate some of the arguments raised with regards to how the crisis period is depicted and applied in the Zimbabwean short story of Ndebele expression.

Some critical dissertations and theses on Zimbabwean literature and the post-2000 crisis assisted to strengthen and authenticate the opinions raised in this study. These critical works include Charles (2016), Nyambi (2013), Muchemwa (2012) among many others that provide important arguments that enrich and widen the locus of this study. These dissertations' findings were corroborated by journal articles. This study referred to numerous journal articles on literary representations of the Zimbabwean crises to validate the arguments raised.

#### **4.5 In-depth Interviews**

In this study, the qualitative interview was used as a way of collecting data in the research process. Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003:139) define an interview as a form of conversation. While Webb and Webb (1932:130) view the technique of the interview as a “conversation with a purpose”. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: xvii) also concur that the purpose of an interview is to hear participant’s “views and opinions in their own words”. In other words, an interview is a way of collecting data through individual connection and interaction between the investigator and the interviewee as they exchange

views on a particular subject (Miller and Glassner 1997). Qualitative interviewing used in this study refers to semi-structured types of interviews where the researcher designs the interview guide ahead of time. The researcher came up with clear and relevant questions with a list of key themes and issues to be covered. In this engagement, the interviewer saw it as an opportunity for gathering data and knowledge construction.

There are varieties of qualitative interviews. These categories of interviews are distinguished according to contact and the types of questions asked, (Collins, duPlooy, Grobbelaar, Puttergil, Terre Blande, van Rensburg and Wiston, 2000). Qualitative contact interviews can vary from telephone, email, skype and face-to-face interactions. Telephone interviews are described by these researchers as conducted over the phone generating space for probing since respondents are not afraid to respond to delicate questions. Face-to-face interviews include in-depth and focus group interviews. In this study, telephone interviews were done to gather information from Ndebele writers because of the realisation that some of the key informants were geographically located far away from the interviewer. This type of interview was conducted because it helped to enable individuals to talk about their personal feelings and opinions about a particular topic under investigation. The main shortcoming of using the telephone interview was that the interviewer has no room to read non-verbal communication and has no access to a deeper interaction with the participants( Hesse-Biber and Griffin, 2012).

E-mail interviews were also used in gathering data on the representation of the post-2000 crisis in Ndebele short stories. These e-mails are technology-

based since they involve computer-mediated interviews. Although e-mails are well-established research instruments and provide faster responses than traditional paper and pencil methods, they require money to buy gadgets and data for sending and receiving messages. Internet connectivity is also crucial for this type of research tool. The main disadvantage of e-mail interviews is the non-delivery of e-mails, inconsistency in responses, lack of nonverbal cues and lack of motivation in participating in the interview. However, COVID-19, a novel virus, has reshaped research with online research instruments like e-mail interviews enhancing research in the context of this devastating pandemic.

#### **4.6 Population sample**

The people who were interviewed in this study were authors of the short stories, managers of the various publishing companies and academics in the field of Ndebele literature. The main reason for interviewing an author was to assist a researcher to interpret the context of the text and why writers present their plots, characters and themes the way they do (Granello and Wheaton, 2004). The purpose of interviewing writers of Ndebele short stories was to establish why their fiction depicts the post-2000 crisis in “the manner they did, and one of the best ways to do it was to seek explanations from writers themselves as well”, (Chigidi 2009:6). Sharing the above sentiments is Magocha and Makaudze (2010:01) who observe that:

One implication is that we cannot separate a work of art from the artist who produced it. In fact, a novel, play or song is a reflection of the artist. By studying the work, one would inversely be studying the writer. So, for a reader to have a better understanding of any work of art, they also

need to understand the artist who produced it. This is a case where readers are urged to first understand the historian before studying the facts.

In this study, the researcher also interviewed managers of publishing companies to find why they preferred the themes of post- 2000 crises. Most publishers of Ndebele short story anthologies are new, small and independent houses that are funded by donors. In other words, this study recognises the influence of the editorial policies of these entities with regards to the acceptance of manuscripts that make post-2000 Zimbabwe their chief motif. The researcher also solicited data from academics who lecture and research on Ndebele literature. These academics were identified as key informants because they were also students of Ndebele literature. Semi-structured interviews are flexible in the sense that they can be modified to suit each participant. All interviews were recorded and permission from participants was sought. These recordings were also transcribed. Furthermore, after transcription data documents were analysed using textual and narrative analysis.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined and explained the research approach employed in discussing the representations of the post-2000 social, economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe using Ndebele short stories. It established that the qualitative research technique is a relevant approach for a study of this nature. The chapter also defined the qualitative research method and outlined its key elements to justify its suitability to the study. A qualitative



inquiry was deemed suitable for this study because it is characterised by objectives which accommodate subjective facets of social life and its methods produce words rather than figures. Furthermore, this chapter defined narrative analysis and in-depth interviews as data collection instruments where their advantages and disadvantages were discussed. Data gathered through primary sources and secondary sources were utilised to corroborate or validate the data gathered through narrative analysis and interviews.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained the research methodology adopted in investigating the representation of socio-economic and political crises in selected Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Using Historical Criticism and Resilience theories and a qualitative methodological approach, this chapter analyses the literary representation of the post- 2000 Zimbabwean crisis in Ndebele short stories. The thesis advanced in this chapter is that Zimbabwe experienced a deep socio-economic and political crisis that virtually pushed the country to the brink of a precipice. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the literary representations of the crisis in Ndebele short stories. The evidence assembled from a literary scrutiny of the short stories is supported or refuted by data and information from questionnaires, interviews and secondary sources. The chapter narrows down the focus of this study to the main aspects of the Zimbabwean crisis. It has to be acknowledged that the dimensions of the crisis are multi-faceted. Mlambo (2006:1) notes that:

Zimbabwe has been in economic, political, and social crises since the turn of the 21st century. The crisis is the result of the combined effects of misgovernment, political, economic mismanagement by the ruling

élite, a virulent HIV/AIDS pandemic, and a severely deleterious economic meltdown.

According to Ogenga (2010:13)

Since the year 2000 Zimbabwean society has been facing enormous problems of a political, economic, and social nature which collectively constitute the crisis. The major issues include; misgovernance, economic meltdown, a disputed land reform process, drought and hunger, HIV and AIDS pandemic, an exodus of professionals, and a determination for regime change locally and internationally.

Also commenting on the extent of the post-2000 crises, Mlambo and Raftopoulos (2010:1) further posit that:

Once a vibrant and dynamic society, Zimbabwe has since the turn of the millennium gone through a complex multi-layered, and pervasive series of catastrophes. Political instability, lawlessness, misgovernment, and a relentless economic meltdown have transformed this leading southern African nation into an international pariah and a proverbial basket case.

The above observations point to an agreement that the Zimbabwean crisis should not be framed in singular terms but in its complex, complicated and multi-layered nature. Most researchers group this phenomena under political, economic, and social crises. These crises are entangled and they feed off each other. As explained in Chapter One of the study, the Zimbabwean crises of 2000 to 2009 meant that the nation experienced several and often exceptional crises which led to the near-collapse of everything. During this period, scholarly studies also saw the utilisation of doomsday expressions and terms such as 'point of no return', 'meltdown',

'chaos' and 'anarchy' to designate the levels of the crises (Mbiba, 2005). The political, economic, and social instability invariably became part of the cache of themes of Ndebele short story writings. Thus, the focus of this chapter is to dissect the nature, causes, and effects of the crisis as framed in the selected Ndebele short stories. This study further explores the literary representations of innovative and resilient coping and survival strategies in combating the harmful effects of the crisis.

One may ask: what have Ndebele short stories got to do with post-2000 Zimbabwean crises? Six Ndebele short story anthologies analysed in this chapter are intricately interwoven with the crisis period because their short stories reflect and refract the post-2000 crisis. It is suggested that the major themes in these short stories can roughly be designated to be the history of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crises. Short stories, like other genres of literature, are written by writers to capture human experiences. It is, therefore, argued in this chapter that those who want to know about the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis can do so by reading, understanding, and analysing Ndebele short stories. Literature by major writers tends to give out more history than history texts. Hove (2002:85) avers that "The true history of Zimbabwe is found in the heartbeat of Zimbabwe's writers". Nyambi (2016:138) concurs when he notes that imaginative texts are not fundamentally historical stories "but that fiction has a way of creating imaginative worlds that relate, and influence us to relate, to history in new and fascinating ways". These observations gesture towards the fact that the historical growth of artistic writing means that significant historical happenings of a nation are documented and explained. Thus, this chapter argues that writers of Ndebele short stories have taken up the community

responsibility by being at the forefront of timely capturing the post-2000 historical crisis moments and the coping mechanisms adopted to ameliorate its effects.

## **5.2 Crisis: Definition and conceptualisation in this study**

Crisis as a concept started in the medical field and meant the whirling point in the progression of an illness, especially whether the patient will recover or die (Tangjia 2014:256). Most of the dictionary definitions trace the origins of the word to the Greek word *krisis*, also used in medical science to mean deterioration beyond recovery (Hoad,1993). Further research on the crisis concept reveals that it is used interchangeably with terms like chaos, disaster, stress in explaining disturbing, threatening, and extremely critical situations that cause destruction, despondency, and death (Koselleck and Richer 2006). In this respect, it is safe to say post-2000 Zimbabwe experienced puzzling and threatening political, economic and social crises with grave repercussions for its stability and development. Sachikonye (2002:14) observes that:

Instead of expanding, the economy had begun to contract; from being a breadbasket, the country had become a basket case. Instead of providing an anchor of stability in the Southern African region, Zimbabwe was now a potential source of both political and economic turmoil thereby undercutting the region's efforts to lure investment for growth. Authoritarianism found expression partly in growing levels of political violence, particularly during election campaigns.

With this state of affairs in Zimbabwe, it is hardly surprising that crisis became a favourite subject with Ndebele writers of short stories. The applicability and usefulness of the crisis concept in this study is emphasised

by the authors. Through interviews and questionnaires, writers unanimously agree that the concept of crisis in their short stories must be understood as relating to the post-2000 period in Zimbabwe which reduced the nation to a pariah state through self-induced approaches like intolerance of the opposition parties, land invasions, bad economic policies, corruption, and the neglect of the health system. One respondent, an academic, emphasises that the Ndebele short stories depict the crisis period:

As a political crisis occasioned by the ruling party's exhausted nationalism and loss of support base due to the disenchantment of the ordinary people. In a bid to win back that support, the ruling party resorted to the scorched-earth policy that alienated them from the international community, the ordinary people and drove them further towards the opposition. Violence, psychological, physiological, spiritual, and mental problems ensued.

The view is that the Ndebele short stories can be viewed as literary productions in the crisis era. A response from a questionnaire administered to a university lecturer was that:

All literature is a product of its era and responds to the pressures of its time. The crisis presented writers with topics that resonated with the people of the crisis period. Ndebele writers are no exception. They grapple with the politics of survival during economically, politically, and socially fraught times, and how human beings had to dig deep into their existential reservoirs to navigate the crisis.

The main argument is that Ndebele short stories are literature about the crisis. Their content is inspired by the environment that the writer exists in. Some authors show that they write about their own life experiences during that traumatic period when the Zimbabwean economy, politics and social

institutions started to atrophy, and the ensuing chaos that followed as people suddenly found themselves struggling to put bread on the table for the family while the fat cats in ZANU -PF were living lavish lives. Imaginative literature of the crisis tends to dialogue on themes like unemployment, poverty, political violence, and the scourge of HIV and AIDS which are signs of a nation in very serious strain. Put differently, one may say that Ndebele short story writings are more like a 'scream' that serves to alert us that the nation has taken a detour from the road it was meant to travel. Many of its citizens have shelved their dreams and are now content with just surviving. The major arguments presented in this part of the chapter are used to test the applicability and usefulness of the term crisis in understanding the social, political, and economic predicament of post-2000 Zimbabwe as depicted in Ndebele short stories.

### **5.3 Depiction of the political crisis in selected short stories**

Creative literature has a significant role to play in the political, social and economic conditions of a particular society. It is expected to unravel the good and evil sides of national institutions and unpack particular behaviours that make and unmake a nation. wa Thiong'o (1997) argues that writers always find themselves ensnared in the political topics of the day one way or the other. He stresses the fact that authors of literature, in whatever form, must concern themselves with political reality because politics determines the performance of economic and social institutions. Stimulated by wa Thiong'o's arguments, this section of the study is based on the reading and analysis of Ndebele short stories that narrate the post-2000 political crisis from the fictional-historical perspective. Writers of short stories under study

show a penchant for overt political issues that have dominated the public sphere. This preoccupation with big political themes is a sign that writers are journeying “out of the political cocoon of domesticity and covertness” (Muwati (2018:12). Most of the ordinary people and the opposition parties in Zimbabwe, chiefly the MDC, have perceived ZANU-PF as adversaries of fairness and backers of viciousness (Sibanda, Hadebe and Maposa, 2017). Therefore, the inclination by authors to write about the political challenges is a testament that the country is in deep crisis. There are many faces of the political crisis that are explored in various short stories. The main argument presented in the short stories is that ZANU-PF and its leader, Robert Mugabe, have reached the end of their political tether and must cede power to the opposition if the country is to move forward. The other dimension of the political crisis is that Zimbabwe has become an authoritarian state inclined to using of politically-motivated violence in dealing with the opposition or any form of dissent. To this end, Davidson and Purohit (2014:109) aver that “Zimbabwe is a classic case of an authoritarian government clinging to power and using whatever methods it considers necessary to ensure its continued survival”. The above observation indicates the politics of staying in power for as long as possible oblivious of the challenges faced by the people and the ruling party’s inability to provide solutions to the various forms of difficulties. Masunungure (2009:3) writes that post-2000 Zimbabwe has had elections “but fail to meet one of its crucial requirements: a sufficiently fair arena of contestations to allow the ruling party to be turned out of power”. This is evidence that the government of post-2000 Zimbabwe is an administration grounded on thuggery. This study, therefore, argues that Ndebele short stories contest the ruling party’s



hegemony and satirically castigate the autocratic and kleptocratic tendencies.

### **5.3.1 Portrayal of authoritarianism and electoral violence in Ndebele short stories**

In appreciating the representation of authoritarianism in Ndebele short stories, a particular focus is placed on *Bayeza* (They are coming), *Ubuqhawe thutshu* (The accidental hero), and *Izigojwana zamatamatisi* (Tomato stakes). The short story, *Bayeza*, found in the anthology *Sinqondephi Manje? Indatshana zaseZimbabwe* (2014) is written by Christopher Mlalazi, a popular migrant writer, poet, and playwright who has won many literary awards. In this short story, Mlalazi problematises how the ruling party, ZANU-PF, and its political elite have sought to lock out the options for transformation through the democratic means of holding free and fair elections but, instead, adopted violence as a political tool and therefore undermining the possibilities of democracy in the country. Although the short story is written in a simple and easy-to-read Ndebele language, it foregrounds the volatile political landscape in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The story is entertaining, full of humour and sadness in an attempt to reflect state-sponsored violence that is unleashed on the hapless electorate as a way of manipulating the electoral field. Set in one of the townships in Bulawayo, the second biggest city in the country, the story highlights political violence through the main character Mr. Nkani. Mr. Nkani is a teacher at a local school and is the parliamentary candidate for the opposition in the coming parliamentary elections. Teachers are hated by the government because of the ideas they hold about what is happening in the country (Hove,

2000). They easily became the prime target of attack during the many elections after 2000 because their analysis of the situation is trusted by the community they reside in. Sachikonye (2011:71) further stresses that:

Teachers were distrusted by ZANU-PF and its militia for their political pluralism and enlightenment and revulsion at conditions of authoritarianism and obscurantism. They were viewed as supportive towards MDC and thus 'guilty by association'; hence the ruthless campaign against them.

The story begins with the appearance of Mr. Nkani running for dear life as Green Bombers (a derogatory name given to ZANU-PF militia because of the colour of their uniforms), who are the foot soldiers of the ruling party, are chasing him. His clothes are torn and blood is oozing out of his body which is a sign that he has been brutally clobbered by the Green Bombers. The narrator says:

*Indoda le igqoke iyembe emhlophe esiyimitshwezutshwezu ngokudabuka. Sekungathi iyembe ibengiwe. Nxa egijima kanje imichilo yeyembe isiphapha emoyeni njengeyembe yesithombe esafakwa ngunina ekwethusa inyoni emasimini abo angemuva kwelokishi. Ingani nguMnunzana Nkani bantu, umbalisi wakhe kaGrade 7A.(111)*

(This man is wearing a white ripped shirt. It is as if the shirt was cut into long stripes using a knife. When he is running like this the ripped ropes of the shirt will be flying like a statue put in his mother's corn field that is behind the city to scare birds. He is Mr. Nkani, his Grade 7A teacher.)

The narrator further says: *Abantu bathi ngowebandla eliphikisa elibusayo njalo bazamvotela kuviki elizayo ngesikhathi sokhetho* (p.111) (People say

he belongs to the opposition party and that they will vote for him in next week's elections). The above two extracts from the short story reference not a pretty picture but a sad political history where gross violence is inflicted on citizens who are members of the opposition. The author says the political terrain is volatile especially during elections. The protagonist, Mr. Nkani, is assaulted and beaten in politically motivated violence because he supports the opposition. He experiences intimidation, violence, and arson because he opposes the ruling party. Through the portrayal of horrific violence that Mr. Nkani is experiencing, the writer is satirising the ruling party for deploying political violence as its main weapon of choice in eliminating its rivals, extending its shelf life, and legitimizing its rule.

While their main target appears to be Mr. Nkani, the short story shows that the dwellers of the township are generally afraid of the militia. Ordinary citizens are encouraged to hide from the government-sponsored militia when Mr. Nkani says: "*Catshani, bantu*"; *Bayeza*" (p.111) (People, hide; they are coming). As a writer, Mlalazi successfully manages to register the fact that the militia is feared, distrusted, and hated by urban people. The call by Mr. Nkani for everyone to run and hide because the militia is coming shows the intolerance of political views by the government. Their concept of nationalism is biased towards patriotism to the party and loyalty to Robert Mugabe. Those who support the ruling party are figured as true patriots while those for the opposition are constructed sell-outs. This means that to the members of the youth militia and police, all citizens fall under this category of sellouts. Members of the township are considered enemies of the state or sell-outs because they support the opposition. The level of violence that is meted on

Mr. Nkala and the couple wearing MDC t-shirts is meant to be 'correctional' violence for the citizens so that they rethink their political affiliation.

Mlalazi also uses the literary device of repetition to emphasize the danger that is posed by the presence of the militia in the township. The expression *Bayeza* (They are coming) is repeated twice to warn people about the brutality of the youth militia. The same story further shows that violence has been woven into the intricate fabric of Zimbabwean history to an extent that even young children like Lungisani and Tatenda are frustrated by the political violence that is around them. Lungisani and Tatenda become active stone-throwing participants when Mr. Nkani and his supporters embark on defensive violence. They have no option but to try to eradicate the violent and brutal nature of politics institutionalised by the elders in post-2000 Zimbabwe. This means that children are mindful of the political fierceness and abuse in the country. As children, they apprehend the plight of others and parade *Ubuntu* since they empathise with the pain of others. Furthermore, Mlalazi notes that political violence is so irresistible to an extent that useless dogs like Ginger participate in chasing away the militia. In other words, Mlalazi, through pungent humour, is saying that even dogs are better than the militia and their sponsors as far as the spirit of *Ubuntu* is concerned.

The author also artistically reflects the nature of elections in post-2000 Zimbabwe. His submission is that ordinary people, especially those suspected to be supporters of the opposition, experience electoral violence and coercion in the period leading up to the elections and in the post-election stage. Heywood (2002:205-206) observes that in democratic countries:

Elections are adopted as the best possible way of measuring democracy and the best way of giving people their political rights to choose a leader or government of their choice. Elections are necessary for establishing governments, providing representation, influencing policy, educating voters, and building legitimacy.

The above citation shows that elections are an essential process for ensuring the correct demonstration of citizens' wellbeing and the acceptability of the political organisation. Accordingly, autocracies or dictatorships are chiefly defined by the failure or non-existence of free and fair elections. Traditionally, elections are viewed as the utilitarian instrument at the very core of democracy. The persuasion that goes with obtaining authority through an election is ordinarily anticipated to make a government answerable to its citizens and, therefore, conferring legitimacy. In other words, a government is authentic when populations in society, including members of the opposition, accept its authority, which is proof that legitimacy is about where the government derives its moral authority. This means that legitimacy is indispensable for political stability.

In Zimbabwe, elections are regularly conducted but are invariably marred by electoral violence. Writing on post-2000 electoral violence in Zimbabwe, Magaisa (2010:3) notes that:

Those elections have delivered absolutely nothing of substance, confirming the view that elections are not necessarily indicative of democracy. Instead, elections have been synonymous with rigging, unfairness, fear, extreme violence, and everything negative about politics. Going by what transpired in the last decade, it will be difficult to convince those who do not believe that elections can be an agent of

change for as long as one of the contestants also plays the role of the referee and an enforcer of the rules.

Electoral violence as depicted in *Bayeza* (They are coming) consists of acts of intimidation, physical bodily harm, and coercion executed to influence the election outcomes or results. According to Sachikonye (2011:17), the use of violence during elections is a reflection “that the ruling party has lost popular support, hence the resort to terror and violence to compel voters to vote for them”. Thus, the ruling party uses violence to counter its diminishing popularity in the urban setting and this is a sign of democratic deficit on its part. The party’s idea of nation-building and consolidation involves the over-reliance on strong-arm tactics which include violence. The main argument is that ZANU PF, dating back from the war of liberation, has embarked on “traditions of violence, partisanship, a cult of personalism and a peculiar narcissism that equates Zimbabwe to Mugabe’s ZANU PF and vice-versa” (Moyo, 2017:206). The tragedy that Mlalazi is bringing out is that the post-2000 ways of mobilisation and politicisation are intolerant and have the tendency of giving rise to the politics of intimidation and fear. One character complains and says:

*Ukhetho lolu lwaseza. Yikho ngilizonda. (115)*

(This election has caused us problems. That is why I hate elections).

The main reason for this attitude towards elections is the government’s lack of tolerance for political diversity and adherence to democratic politics. Mlalazi rightfully points out that the political space is poisoned. Through the representation of the masses, the writer seems to suggest that the

government's approach to elections is that of war where opponents are to be annihilated. The opposition party and its supporters are viewed as enemies of the state rather than political contenders or competitors.

The same short story also notes that the opposition is also guilty of indulging in fighting back the ruling party with violence. Due to violence perpetrated by the government, the opposition is forced to be a participant in this toxic political culture. In the short story, Mr. Nkani is assisted by his supporters to fight back the Green Bombers. Members of the opposition and their supporters organise themselves to combat the militia that the ruling party has unleashed on Mr. Nkani. To this end, Chung (2017:206) argues that political intolerance has resulted in a "sorry episode of mutual violence". Inter-party violence depicted in the short story shows that post-2000-Zimbabwe suffers from deep and internal institutionalised and systemic violence. This results in a political culture of merciless cyclical violence within the community which can be passed from generation to generation.

The victims of this political violence display profound awareness of the ruling party and its President as the authors of this violence. Sachikonye (2011:17) notes that some of the election-related violence "has been state-organized and sophisticated violence orchestrated by the ruling party taking advantage of its levers of power". When characters are debating about the existence, cause, and effects of violence in their township one character clears the confusion by saying:

*Lokho ungabuza uMongameli welizwe. (115).*

(You may ask the President of the country about that).

Although the author does not name the President, his identity is easy to predict because post-independence Zimbabwe has had one President, Robert Mugabe, at the time of writing and publishing these short stories. The mention of the President by the author maybe read as a strategy that compels the critics of the short story to interrogate the role, place, and significance of Robert Mugabe in the Zimbabwean political crisis between 2000 and 2009. Those writers who are inclined to interpret the political crisis from the standpoint of ZANU-PF and the leadership of Mugabe include Murenga Joseph Chikowero. In his short story, *Ubuqhawe thutshu*, Chikowero argues that there is something desperately wrong with the political landscape in post-2000 Zimbabwe. He believes that the Zimbabwean situation could be remedied only by changing the political system and space that has been dominated by ZANU-PF and Mugabe in the past 28 years. The narrator says:

*Hawu, ibandla lombangazwe elaselibuse iminyaka engamatshumi amabili lasitshiyagalombili, liyibambe esidukwini...ibandla elibusayo, lona kanye elamaxhegu ayetshela loba ngubani olesikhathi sokulalela, ukuthi wona alifela ilizwe. (125)*

(Ouch, the political party that had ruled for twenty-eight years is still in full control... the ruling party, the very party of geriatrics who had told whoever cared to listen to them, that they died for this country)

An allusion to the ZANU-PF tenure in power is a deliberate attempt by Chikowero to expose their failures and the reasons why they employ all tactics available to remain in power. The fact that they have been in power for many years and have become geriatrics (*amaxhegu*) is an indication that



the country is in crisis because of misguided policies and lack of future-oriented leadership. The above extract demonstrates the nexus between age and the ability to pursue programmes that bring development. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that Zimbabwe is in political crisis because of the liberation movement that has been in power for far too long without renewing its leadership.

The author's conception of the political crisis is that the liberators and heroes have degenerated into dictators and tyrants. The writer further writes that:

*Umfanekiso kamongameli webandla wawungowakudala. Kade sasiwubona; kusukela sithola uzibuse.*(130)

(The portrait of the party's president was ancient. We have been seeing it for many years: from the day we attained political independence).

This points to the fact that it's not only the ZANU-PF government that has been in power since independence in 1980, but its president, Robert Mugabe, has unacceptably ruled Zimbabwe for too long, first as Prime Minister between 1980 and 1987 and President in 1987 to 2017 when he was removed from power through a coup. This shows that Mugabe dominated the political landscape for approximately four decades. He is a controversial political figure who is blamed for human rights abuses, intolerance, corruption, and widespread economic mismanagement in post-2000 Zimbabwe. It is therefore insinuated that the political quagmire in post-Zimbabwe was presided over by ZANU-PF, a political party that has ruled the country from 1980 and the lengthy presidential tenure of Robert Mugabe. When confronted with a glut of national problems , including the loss of

popular appeal, ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe turn to the exhausted liberation narrative *salikhulula lelilizwe* (we liberated this country). As a short story writer, Chikowero has succeeded in hinting at the fact that Zimbabwe is experiencing a political crisis because it is captured by a clueless ZANU-PF party.

### **5.3.2 Representations of the youths and their role in political crisis in the short stories**

Significant in the *Ubuqhawe thutshu* is the framing of the youths in post-2000 political violence in Zimbabwe. The short story opens with an introduction of Marimo Marimo, a representative of many unemployed youths who is depicted as the leader of the youths in an unnamed township in Harare. His colleagues in the youth militia call him Comrade Advance. Marimo is a leader of the youths who work as the foot soldiers for the ruling party in instilling fear on members of the opposition and white commercial farmers. Marimo and other party youths have been indoctrinated and brainwashed to an extent “of crippling their sense of cohesion and how to deal with the difference in society” (Moyo, 2017:212). Every person who is not part of the ruling party is an enemy and sell-out. The narrator notes that:

*Wezwakala ekhonona nga-‘bathengisi’ le ‘zitha’ okomuntu ongabasukela ngasikhatshana abathengisi labo kunye lezitha. Wayesegxile impande kuYouth yebandla elibusayo.(125)*

(He was heard muttering about sell-outs and enemies like someone ready to deal with them. He had drifted towards the ruling party’s youth movement.)

This quote reveals that the ruling party has deployed the youth to fight those who do not agree with its policies. In the short story, civil ways of convincing supporters like persuasion, patience, and consensus-building are replaced by coercion, intimidation, threats, and violence. According to Moyo (2017:210), this “has been passed onto the youth and, in the process, poisoned the present and the future of the country”. Commenting about the portrayal of the youth in Ndebele short stories, a lecturer at Midlands State University notes that:

There is something compulsive about a ruling party generating violent youth militia. Youths as a future generation of leaders in Ndebele short stories are depicted as violent because they have been socialised into all forms of political intolerance. Major characters reveal the annexation of the youths to ensure the political survival of the ruling party.

*Ubuqhawe thutshu* also illustrates vividly what happens when the ruling party deliberately manufactures poverty to tape on distressed and malleable youths who are easily hired for promises of jobs. The writer points out:

*“Singanqoba kule impi, ngitsho kukhetho phela, ayisiwo nje imisebenzi ezavuleka kubutho lesizwe. Sikhangelele ukuthi intsha yethu ithole imisebenzi le”.*(127)

(If we win this war, I mean in this election, more employment opportunities will be opened in the army and the nation at large. We expect our youths to take up those jobs).

This demonstrates that the government targets the destitute among the youths for manipulation because they are desperate for employment. Those

who have faith in the government and its programmes are bought with alcohol to cause further destruction. Towards the end of the story, Marimo drowns in a bowser full of opaque beer (*amasese*) and he is declared a hero by the ruling party. This event is significant in comprehending the role of the youths in politically-motivated violence. The writer is insinuating that the ruling party rewards hooliganism and thuggery in politically fraught times. Thus, more youths will be encouraged to participate in any form of youthful violence knowing that their avant-garde wakefulness will be compensated. With violence and animosity ingrained into the psyche of the youth, writers cry out loudly that the present and future of Zimbabwean politics are in serious danger. In short, they argue that the nation is in danger of perpetuating the tradition of violence. Therefore, they foresee youths with mutilated and misshapen minds that champion violence and exclusion at the expense logic and persuasion. Moyo (2017:214) also warns that “the heritage and legacy of this kind are too poisoned to be handed down to posterity”.

### **5.3.3 Naming in the context of political crisis in Selected short stories**

On reading and analysing the short story *Siphepheli (Refugee)* by NoViolet Bulawayo in the anthology *Thaph' Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana, Ilifa Lakho* (2010), one is struck by the writer's careful selection and usage of names of characters. Various scholars argue that literary onomastics, which is a scientific study of names and naming in literary studies, cannot be insulated from the message, theme, and content of the text (Buttler, 2012, Chilala, 2016, Dvorakova, 2018, Mangena, 2015, 2016, Mushati, 2016, Nyambi,

2016, Wakota, 2016, Zhou, 2016). Wamtila (1999:35) is acquainted with the utility of character naming in literary texts:

In reading creative works we tend to identify characters basically by the names given to them. It is on this basic premise that some character analysis methods tend to define characters by taking recourse to their names and sometimes identifying them in metaphorical terms or as speaking names. Names play a very central and important role in any reading exercise and so would certainly the names given to characters be of importance to us. These are linguistic or semiotic signs that play a crucial role in the overall linguistic structure of a literary text or its signification. Decoding of the names, therefore, becomes an important critical engagement in as far as it helps the reader in his deciphering of the text in which the names are.

The above quote emphasises the importance of the names of characters in the creation of literary productions and in their criticism. About naming in Zimbabwean crisis literature, Ncube (2016:217) notes that:

It is initially argued that there exists an intricate relationship between the names of literary characters and the ideological implications addressed by the texts. It is further contended that the act of naming is not only involved in identifying and categorizing literary characters but it is also a socio-political praxis for re-imagining social relations in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 period that was characterized by socio-political and economic turmoil and crisis. Venturing beyond a semantic analysis of names, it is shown that naming practices by these writers should not be treated in isolation but as one of the several strategies that create a palpable socio-political and cultural literary universe.

Directed by the above conception of literary onomastics in the post-2000 crisis, this study argues that names of the protagonist's children in *Siphepheli*

overtly exude names associated with the crisis period. Bulawayo gives unusual character names that denote the political and electoral features of the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe. It is bizarre for parents in their stable psychological states to name their children Election, Run-off, and Vote because such names depart from conventional standards of conferring personal names. However, literary onomastics compels readers and critics of the story to explore the link between the names and the discourse in the text. To name a child Vote is a repatee that voting as a process of calling the leaders to account in Zimbabwe is of no purpose. Voters are not the people who decide the outcome; it is those who count the votes. Elections, especially those conducted in 2000, 2005, and 2008, were characterised by violence resulting in numerous deaths, destruction of homes, displacement of people, and loss of limbs. Democracies elect leaders through elections but in Zimbabwe they are not necessarily indicative of the will of the people (Masunungure, 2004, 2011, Wilkins, 2013, Bratton, 2014). Magaisa (2010) argues that polls in Zimbabwe have been synonymous with allegations of rigging, unfairness, fear, extreme violence, and general negativity. The word elections is consequently a prompt reminder to the voters that ballot vote cannot be a means of transformation as long as ZANU PF, the ruling party, plays the role of adjudicator and enforcer of electoral guidelines. A case in point is the run-off on the second round of voting in the Zimbabwean presidential elections of 2008 which was characterised by violence against and the bullying, coercion, and intimidation of the electorate (Badza, 2008 Sachikonye, 211, Oosterom and Paswarayi, 2014).

The use of literary onomastics to discuss political crises should also be seen as an indirect strategy by the writer to avoid censorship. Harris (2021:2)

writes that “literary and cultural forms adapt and mutate in direct response to the pressures applied by repressive state institutions, legislation and representatives”. During the post-2000 period, due to censorship, artists were forced to find other modes of expressing themselves, hence the use of literary onomastics as a technique to reach the readers without the dire consequences of overtly challenging the ruling party. Those familiar with the meaning of these names can grasp their political import.

The authors are disdainfully arguing that a state that grounds its politics on such levels of extreme violence, brutality, and intolerance cannot be projected to be a democracy for its all citizens. Their major thrust is that all these forms of political malaise are meant to force the ordinary person to accept and conform to the ZANU-PF modus operandi that deforms and cripples the opposition and all other dissenting voices. These short stories are a historical verdict that traces the political crises and apportions blame on ZANU-PF and its leader Robert Mugabe. Considering the views presented above, writers of Ndebele short stories argue that Mugabe, blinded by his liberation credentials, has governed the nation tyrannically. His leadership and policies have been a disgrace and a disaster for Zimbabwe. For example, the land reform process that started in 2000 resulted in an economic meltdown which is discussed in the following section of the chapter.

#### **5.4. Images of the land reform and the commencement of economic crisis in Ndebele short stories**

While Zimbabwe's economy was showing signs of decline in the late 1990s, the land reform programme, popularly known as the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), further hurt the economy. Although scholars agree that there was a need for land reform to redress colonial imbalances, a variety of divergent views on the reasons for embarking on the programme and its outcomes exist in academic scholarship. Chipenda (2020:498), discussing the competing narratives, states that "This was due to divergent ideological and epistemological approaches used by the different scholars as they tried to understand the origins, processes, and outcomes of the FTLRP". Scholars like Moyo (2011), Scooners, Marongwe, Mavedzenge, Mahenehene, Murimbarimba and Sukume (2011) and Tarisayi (2019) see it as a genuine attempt by the ruling elite to right racially skewed land imbalances. They further note that the land reform empowered many black families, leading to social change and improved livelihoods. Using statistics provided by Moyo (2011), (2010), and Murisa (2013), Tarisayi (2019:94) argues that the land restructuring has been accomplished to redress the land complaints amongst the deprived and dispossessed majority of black individuals in Zimbabwe. However, such analysis is criticised for providing one facet of the land reform without an objective analysis of its detriments.



An unfortunate outcome of this land reform is that all sectors of the economy that directly or indirectly depended on commercial agriculture were adversely affected. The following scholars have researched the nexus between post-2000 land occupations and the subsequent multi-layered economic and socio-political crisis: Sachikonye (2005); Alexander (2006); Muzondidya (2007); Groves (2009); Mlambo (2005), (2010) and (2015); Mujeyi (2010). Their assessment of the impact of the land reform is that it destroyed developed businesses dependent on the farming sector for inputs and the market. The general view is that the destruction of the agricultural sector had its fair share of unintended effects on the domestic economy, resulting in factory closures, decreased productivity and foreign currency earnings, and an escalation in joblessness. As Mlambo(2017:17) observes:

The negative impact of this controversial land-redistribution program stemmed, first, from its disruption of agriculture which has traditionally been very closely linked with the manufacturing sector, both as a supplier of raw materials and as a consumer of finished products. Second, it earned the country a bad image which resulted in international condemnation, ostracism, and sanctions by some Western countries and which, as argued above, made the country less attractive to investors. Lastly, the land reform led to the collapse of the agriculture industry which, in turn, led to the inevitable decline of the national economy as a whole and, inevitably, to the decline of the manufacturing sector.

Richardson (2005:80) also emphasises that:

Seven hundred companies shut their doors by late 2001. Tobacco and cotton had once provided for much of Zimbabwe's hard currency, so

necessary for imports like fuel, machinery, and medicine, but no longer. Zimbabwe's payments on loans to the World Bank, already overdue, increased even further its payment arrears. Inflation reached 600% at the end of 2003, and by 2005, a 20,000 Zimbabwean dollar bill was worth about 33 cents. Food and basics had simply disappeared from shelves and widespread fuel shortages paralysed the country's autos and planes.

Still remarking on the effects of the land reform, Mpofu (2017:115) adds that:

The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front's (ZANU PF) 2000 Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FRLRP) severed the strong supply linkages between commercial agriculture and manufacturing, leading to the collapse of industrial production. That is, the decline in agricultural production crippled clothing and textile manufacturers, leather goods manufacturers, milling companies, bakeries, and other industries that relied on agricultural products.

The above views show that the adoption of the radical land reform steered Zimbabwe into post-2000 political, economic, and social decline. In short, these critics do not "write in celebratory tones about the so-called empowering benefits of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform" (Gonye 2020:27-28). Similar sentiments are raised by Ndebele short story writers who lampoon the same programme for intensifying poverty, inflation, involuntary dislocations, relocation, and the ostracisation of average citizens. They do not perceive the land reform process and its outcomes as a majestic action of ultimate decolonisation whose aim was to empower dispossessed black communities.

The debate surrounding the conceptualisation of and consequences of the crises also reverberates in the evolving literary texts on Zimbabwe's land

issue (Manase 2014a; Gonye, Moyo and Wasosa 2012; Magosvongwe 2013; Tagwirei and de Kock 2016; Chidora 2017; Moyo 2018; Gwekwerere, Mutasa and Chitofiri 2018; Mutekwa 2019; Gonye 2020). In Ndebele literature, writers of short stories have engaged with various aspects of this topic, with some writers underscoring the fact that the land reform resulted in profound economic damage. This is the background against which this section of the study seeks to analyse the short stories “*Izigojwana zamatamatisi*”, *Ubuqhawe thutshu*, and “*Ilungelo lesilo ligabhela elomuntu, yebo?*” (The right of an animal is greater than that of a human being, really?). Firstly, the short story *Izigojwana zamatamatisi* is primarily about post-2000 land reform told from the point of view of a white writer, John Eppel. His short story was initially published in English in the anthology *Where to Now? Short stories from Zimbabwe* (2011) which was later translated into the Ndebele language in 2014. The short story, using the flashback literary technique, explores Lofty Pienaar from childhood up to the time his farm is invaded by marauding war veterans and jobless youths during *Third Chimurenga* (The war to get back the land). Eppel narrates the story of Lofty Pienaar from a poor family in Rhodesia, his school days, his forced involvement in the Rhodesian Bush War to protect the interest of the white people. After independence, he studied agriculture and worked on several farms before he put down a deposit on his farm in Mgusa near Bulawayo. He does this with financial assistance from his nuclear and extended families.

Eppel’s storyline depicts the ZANU-PF administration endorsed post-2000 land invasions as troubled with violence and chaos whose characteristics were disturbance of farming activities, looting of farm equipment,

environmental degradation, deforestation, and the partition of large farms into smaller plots. Eppel stresses that:

*Sisalibele kwaqala ukuthathwa kwamapulazi okwakuthiwa yi Third Chimurenga. Abakuqala ukungena emapulazini ngababesempini, amawoveti, labontanga ababengasebenzi. Badlisa kaluklubhu izisebenzi zikaLofty besithi zingabathengisi. Bebethusela ngokubaquma intamo. Abangena epulazini likaLofty okokuqala babehlala bedakwebutshwala kumbe imbanje. Babethwala amahlaka lenduku, batshaye amagabha lezivalo zamabhimu, bememeza iziligani, behlabela lengoma zenkululeko. (149)*

(Suddenly the farm invasions began, the so-called Third *Chimurenga*. The first invaders were disgruntled war veterans and unemployed youths. They terrorised Lofty's workers by calling them *sellouts*, and threatened to cut their throats. They were often drunk or high on *mbanje*; they carried axes and knobkerries; they banged tin cans and dustbins lids, shouted slogans, and sang songs of liberation war.)

This depiction reveals that the ZANU-PF-sanctioned farm invasions are characterised by violence towards white farmers and their farm workers. All this violence takes place without police action, showing lawlessness and lack of property rights. Eppel also points out that with the non-existence of property rights, invaders dug up, stole, and sold farming equipment which included irrigation pumps; they also feasted on Lofty's Jersey cows every month. The short story is punctuated with violence, chaotic and disorderly behaviour which cannot be associated with final decolonisation and empowerment, but with a tomfoolery that exposes them as average hooligans and fools pursuing the temporary pleasures of stripping and possessing (Nyambi, 2017:22). No energy is directed at farming, the invaders, merely concentrate on economic violence against Lofty's family

until they are evicted by some powerful party member. According to Richardson (2005: 77), post-2000 land invasions occasioned a decline in foreign investment and a massive nosedive in agricultural production as investor confidence in business undertakings was shattered.

Eppel demonstrates that the war veterans, as main players in the land expropriation, retrieved the militant and anti-imperial discourses from the liberation war and thus framed the annexations as the final war to liberate the land from colonialists and their sympathisers. They also mimicked the discourses of mass militancy and mobilisation through songs and slogans from the past as they consolidated their occupation of Lofty's farm. As a result, farm workers were deemed sell-outs. An example is the elderly migrant, Tobias Banda, a worker at Lofty's farm who is beaten and murdered. Some of the workers are lucky as their lives are spared but are dumped along the Victoria Falls road. In other words, the author is blaming disorderly and haphazard land invasions for the growth of unemployment in the country. Furthermore, without a labour force, farming activities grind to a halt rendering Lofty's farm derelict.

Eppel also exposes the lack of guarantee for the ownership of land after the farm invasions. In the short story, the first invaders led by the war veterans and the youths lose their spoils (land) to the powerful, politically connected civil servants. The writer bemoans this land drama when he narrates that:

*Ixuku lesibili epulazini ukungena epulazini kwakungamapholisa ayethwele imibhobho, eqhatshwe nguDeputy Director wama Youth Brigade. Wayelawo amapholisa, ephethe ezungeza esandleni incwadi eyayivela komunye umkhulu kugatsha lwezokulima. Incwadi le*

*yamimupha ilungelo lokuthi athathe ipulazi likaLofty.AbakoPienaar baphiwa amahora angamatshumi amabili lane ukuthi baphume baphele epulazini nxa bengafuni ukubotshwa.(149-150)*

(The second wave of invaders were rifle-wielding policemen hired by the Deputy Director of the Youth Brigade, who accompanied them waving a letter from someone very high up in the Ministry of Agriculture. This letter gave him the right to take over Lofty's farm. The Pienaars were given twenty-four hours to vacate the property or suffer arrest and imprisonment).

This charade happens in front of the first invaders who are left bemused:

*Ngelanga lokuza kwamapholisa babengabuzanga elangeni. Imiphongolo yemibhobho eyayikhombele abakoPienaar yaphenduka yavulela bona amehlo. Bamangala, bakhonona, kungelamasiza.Batshelwa ukuthi baphume baphele khonokho-khonokho. Nanko lamapholisa edubula phezulu etshengisela ukuthi uDeputy Director wayengadlali. Injalo impilo; yisiphansi-phezulu. (150)*

(Their smoke-stained eyeballs widened in shock and indignation when the policemen's rifle barrels swiveled away from the Pienaar family and rested on them. They were ordered to vacate the farm immediately. Several shots were fired into the air to show that the Deputy Director meant business. Such are the vicissitudes of living history).

The above quotations demonstrate the practices of exclusion and inclusion in the allocation of land. This further demonstrates that the chaotic land reform gave preferences to the political elite and excluded members of the public. Towards the end of the short story, insecurity and lack of tenure are again stressed when the Deputy Director of Youth Brigade is evicted by the Deputy Minister of Youth Brigade who is also sent packing by a nameless character waving an offer letter with a stamp from the highest office in the land. This incident makes it clear to the reader that the land reform is chaotic,

unplanned, and haphazard to an extent of destroying agriculture, the backbone of the economy. Therefore, the fast track land reform is represented as a deceptive programme where promises of empowerment do not materialise for the ordinary people. In addition, the short story suggests that characters grieve economically as they spend most of their time moving from one farm to the other.

Eppel in his short story, *Izigojwana zamatshe* further depicts the Fast Track Land Reform as having dislocating effects. He captures the physical displacement and the ensuing mental fragmentation of Lofty which force him to commit suicide through hanging. His family is depicted as homeless and they are compelled by circumstances beyond their control to be squatters at the narrator's home. They are further portrayed as helpless, traumatised and panic-stricken because of the violence they witnessed during the invasion of their father's farm. The most affected are the children who are represented as overwhelmed by panic to an extent that they are made to seek counseling services. After recovering from the fracturing experiences of the land invasions, the remaining members of Lofty's family immigrated to New Zealand. Writing about the displacement and imposed migrations in Zimbabwean literature of post- 2000 land reform, Moyo (2021:16) notes that:

A number of white farmers were forced to abandon their farms and to move to cities in Zimbabwe and even to foreign countries, including South Africa. The farm invasions thus bring in a twist of forced local and international migration into Zimbabwe's early-twentieth-first-century postcolonial condition. This complicated postcolonial condition has subsequently led to the creation of restless, dislocated and fugitive identities in a number of displaced white commercial farmers, their workers and some ordinary black Zimbabweans.

The dislocation and involuntary removal of white farmers represented by Lofty's family in this study is symbolised as a household misfortune and one easily commiserates with their predicament because there are described as:

*“Ngiyisizukulwane sesine sabelungu balapha e Africa. ULofty yena singatsho sithi ubengumlungu-umAfrica okweminyaka engu 350”.*  
(152)

(“I am the fourth-generation European-African. Lofty was a three hundred and fifty-year European African”).

This indicates that some of the white people that are persecuted consider Zimbabwe as their land of birth. Instilling fear on white commercial farmers in the name of empowering blacks is framed as retrogressive and cruel in the twenty-first century. The murder of Mr. Banda and the carving of the word BLANTYRE depicts the undesirable construction of the migrant community in post-2000 Zimbabwe. He is called BLANTYRE because the local community has, since independence, viewed, Malawians derogatorily as *mabhurantyre*, meaning a people from Blantyre, the capital city of Malawi. It is therefore argued in this study that Zimbabwe is xenophobic. Moyo (2021:18) also acknowledges that post-2000 Zimbabwe is “perpetuating stereotypical, xenophobic hatred of these people in a nation fraught with manifest fissures, prejudices and arbitrary exclusions that need to be transgressed”. Eppel is complaining that racism and xenophobic tagging perpetrated by the formerly colonised on later generations of those whites who benefited vicariously from the willing colonisers and migrants is toxic to the postcolonial national politics, identities, and relations.



The story also narrates that these invaders were not interested in farming but were eking quite a living selling firewood and bush meat. This observation by Eppel is also a major theme in the short story entitled “*Ilungelo lesilo ligabhela elomuntu, yebo?*” by Florence Green drawn from the anthology *Thaph’ Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana, Ilifa Lakho* (2010). She is categorically clear in her representation that:

*Abakonyamazana bona kababonakali ngoba selokhu kwadatshulwa imizi emitsha lapha kuma resettlement, inkululeko seyaphela. ...Insuku zakuqala kucandwa imizi yeNtabezikude, kakho owayetsheba ngemibhida ngitsho lomahlalayedwa, uMandiya. Omvundla, othendele, ompala...Kwakuyiso sitshebo sakhona. Ngokuhamba kwensuku amabhalabhala anyamalala kwasala impondo ezazilenga eziphaleni zifakaza ukuthi kwake kwabalenyamazana ezinjalo. (69)*

(The wild animals have disappeared ever since the establishment of homesteads in the resettlement area. All the freedom has disappeared ... In the early days of the establishment of Ntabezikude homesteads, no one was eating vegetables anymore, including Mandiya the bachelor. Hares, Guinea fowls, and aepyceros melampus ... were the relish of the day. Over time, tragelaphus strepsiceros disappeared and their horns that were hung in granaries remained as an exhibit that such animal species once existed.)

Green’s representation of the invasions shows that the government-sanctioned land invasions led to major environmental devastation. Her description of the invasions’ effects on the environment undermines the celebratory nature of the discourses on the invasions and the environment. As the narrators discover, some of the invaders merely turn out to be too fascinated by the sadism of depriving white holders of the land than caring

about the economic importance and worth of the land and wildlife to their livelihoods. As such, Eppel and Green illustrate the government's failure to control the farmland seizures and prevent resultant environmental and wildlife destruction.

The short story *Ubuqhawe thutshu* by Murega Joseph Chikowero from the collection *Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zaseZimbabwe* (2014) also focuses on the theme of land reform and its inadequacies in improving the economy of the country. Chikowero is cynical about the success of the Fast-Track Land Reform, hence his use of a humorous and satirical narrative tone. He lampoons the post-2000 land reform plan, consequently disrupting the government's grand narrative of a historic event meant to empower the masses. The level of education factor manifests itself in the narrative standpoint since the short story is mostly narrated by a university student, Chiko, whose sarcasm exposes his skepticism in the perceived benefits of the land reform as narrated by his cousin Marimo Marimo, a Zanu PF youth league member. The cynicism is evident in the depiction of the various challenges faced by the protagonist as he gets mired in the burdens of the farming industry.

By and large, the short story is satiric of Marimo and his unedifying experiences which mirror the ineffectiveness of resettlements as a way of economically empowering Zimbabweans. Marimo is portrayed as a naïve person who believes in land reform. According to the narrator, Marimo is idealistic to believe that the land reform will empower him and other members of the youth league, and his belief is proved wrong and laughed at. In *Ubuqhawe thutshu*, the writer shows that Marimo is a person born and bred

in town and has never used a hoe. Furthermore, the story reveals that Marimo has been resettled on virgin land in an obscure and strange place called Jompani. Marimo is expected to start by clearing the bush, as captured by the writer who says:

*Kodwa ngizwa kuthiwa indawo yakhona ligusu elilenkalakatha yezihlahla ezingasukumiyo. Usitshiyile omunye webandla lethu elibusayo emva kokuzama ukugamula inkalakatha yesihlala ngehloka.(126)*

(But I have heard some trees are as fat as drums on some of those uncultivated lands. A party cadre died recently after chopping down one of those trees with an axe).

Furthermore, Marimo wishes to be resettled on farms owned by white farmers which the youth league has invaded. He remarks that:

*Bengilesifiso sokuthola umhlabathi kulamapulazi esiwathathela amabhunu.(126)*

(I wish they had given me a piece from one of these farms we are acquiring from the whites.)

The above quotation shows that instead of these recently acquired farms benefitting the youth and ordinary citizens by alleviating their poverty, the political elite and their cronies are the only ones occupying productive land and reaping the benefits of this land reform programme. Through this story, writers show that the land reform is not about empowering the landless, but the political elite who occupy the best farms. The short story also shows that it is the selected elite who profited the most from this process because

characters like Marimo are ill-equipped and financially unsound to grapple with the challenges of life as a new productive farmer. Besides Marimo's lack of basic money-making farming knowledge, he cannot raise money for the bus fare to go and see his new farm. He is forced to sell the farming inputs allocated to him by his party to raise the bus fare, but there is no joy for him as the money is not enough for the trip due to inflation.

Despite feeling nostalgic about the land reform, the narrator is disappointed about the unfulfilled promises and the outcome of the process. After being laughed at, criticised, scorned, and ridiculed many times by the narrator for his "forward-looking optimism"(Pandurang 2010:7) about the success of the land reform, Marimo starts to review his cheerful views and perceptions about the whole process. He develops a sense of unease, despair, and disappointment about the supposed benefits of the land reform to people like him who have no expertise and financial resources since the country is ravaged by hyperinflation. Marimo adopts the position that it is retrogressive to adhere to the government propaganda that land reform is for the landless. Abrams (1981:83) asserts that the significance of satire is that it "is corrective of human vice and folly", hence Marimo's sense of self-doubt and betrayal about the promises of the land being given to the masses. The land reform is attacked because it is depicted as a dishonest initiative with no assurance of empowerment and sustainable economic success in the post-land invasions period.

Despite once being held as one of the most successful nation-states in sub-Saharan Africa, Ndebele short stories set during the period demonstrate that Zimbabwe finds herself amid a most awful economic disintegration locally,

regionally, and globally due to the negative consequences of the agrarian reform of 2000. However, this simple and singular narrative on post-2000 land reform is inadequate (Cousins and Scoones, 2010). These short stories largely focus on the negative effects of land occupations on the economy without mentioning anything in support of the principle of land reform. They lack a balanced appraisal of the land reform and its material benefits.

It is, perhaps, important to state that the short stories analysed are a creation of their period and that they remember, record, document, and archive the post-2000 land reform process and its outcomes. These short stories show commitment to representing the historic experiences of society. It is, therefore, argued in this section of the chapter that Ndebele authors have tried to re-count this significant period in Zimbabwe and how it immensely contributed to what is today referred to as the post-2000 crisis.

### **5.5 Literary representations of inflation, poverty and desperation in selected short stories**

The Fast Track Land Reform process depicted above negatively affected the performance of the economy. Thus, this section of the chapter identifies how Ndebele writers use the short story to depict economic hardships in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Many short stories show that the economic crisis period was characterised by retrenchment, unemployment, and a shortage of basic commodities. Against this turbulent background, writers of Ndebele short stories could not afford to overlook pertinent economic issues of the period

but became active in documenting and reflecting this severe crisis. According to Chitando (2016:176), during the crisis period:

Zimbabwe's economy simply imploded, inflation soared to astronomical figures. Consumers were introduced to hitherto unknown figures such as quintillions and sextillions of the Zimbabwean dollar. In many instances, prices could be changed three times in a single day. Unemployment reached new depths, retrenchments worsened and life became a hard grim struggle for survival.

The collapse of the Zimbabwean economy is another theme in Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The target of this section is to examine the views of the writers concerning the socio-economic conditions in the post-2000 era as represented in their short stories. The aim is also to establish how these authors respond to crises concerns such as infrastructure decay, the HIV/ AIDS pandemic, education and health challenges as a result of poverty brought by the economic collapse. This analysis is undertaken within the context of the role of the author as a social observer and commentator.

Most of the writers display a profound awareness of the horrendous economic meltdown during this period. In his short story entitled *Izigigaba zika2008* (The unfathomable incidents of 2008), Eventhough Ndlovu, a lecturer of African languages at the University of Zimbabwe, tells a story of economic meltdown in Zimbabwe which “went into a tailspin that was to reduce it to a proverbial basket case by 2008” (Mlambo2013a:191). The year is characterised by a depressing story of unemployment, hyperinflation, a worthless currency, poverty, and starvation. MaDawu, an unemployed

woman who has been abandoned by her husband because he failed to provide for the family, narrates how the economic downturn negatively affected the people of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. The thrust of the short story is looking at the year 2008 and how the writer casts characters as victims of the subversive Zimbabwean economic condition. What is attention-grabbing in this short story is the fact that the year 2008 constituted the nadir of economic decay in Zimbabwe. The author graphically explores the devastating and dehumanising economic impact of the year 2008:

*Ibingamnandi impilo, ibilumela sadla ezilamatshe. Ubusithi ungambona umuntu uzibuze ukuthi kambe ulokhu esemi kuhle kumbe amatsotsi asezenzela santando? Umnyaka ka2008 uke wasibonisa okukhulu umama sibili! Kube leziphithiphithi lembedumehlwana ezitshiye inengi likhexe owangezansi. (214)*

(Life was not good at all, it was tough. You would see a person and just suspect that maybe they are now HIV positive. The year 2008 presented a plethora of problems to us. There was chaos and unheard-of scenarios that left people perplexed.)

The desperation painted in this extract is further explained when the narrator outlines various economic problems that characters come across during the year under investigation. Characters are depicted as stressed people because there is an acute shortage of basic goods like meal-meal and sugar. MaDawu complains that all basic goods are no longer available in conventional supermarkets. Many people took the option of trading on the black market. Whenever basic commodities are available in these shops, characters have to endure long hours queuing for these basic goods. The magnitude of the economic situation is compounded by the retrenchment of able-bodied people, thus causing unemployment. Some of the non-working

class resorted to vending. Most of the characters in this short story are presented as hungry, malnourished, and dirty because of high levels of poverty.

The short story depicts the stressful life that has become typical of the majority of Zimbabweans because of economic hardships. Although there are some stressed citizens because of economic problems experienced in 2008, the author notes that there is an ever-widening gap between the opulent and the deprived. He paints vivid descriptions of the overfed driving aimlessly in expensive cars oblivious of blind beggars in many corners of the streets and avenues.

The short story *Izigigaba zika2008* is very interesting in the context of the post-2000 crisis because it is silent on the political side of the crisis. The writer decides to concern himself with the economic meltdown without acknowledging the role played by politics in the crisis. The expression *izigigaba* points to unprecedented, unmatched, and extraordinary events that threaten the welfare and future of a beleaguered nation. Politically, the year 2008 was characterised by considerable political repression where many freedoms were suppressed or suspended. People could not express themselves because everything had become politically wrong. In the political sphere, politicians and political parties were also given to mudslinging in the tenacious fight for dominion. The argument is that in tandem with the economic predicament, Zimbabwe also encountered severe and protracted political catastrophe that reached its zenith in 2008. Firstly, elections were held and ZANU-PF lost for the first time to the opposition MDC. Secondly, the elections were not conclusive and there was a constitutional clause that



pronounced a run-off in a case where there was no outright winner. The period leading to the Run-off was characterised by massive violence that led the opposition MDC to pull out of the election. The political drama saw many voters boycotting the elections and Robert Mugabe being declared and confirmed as the president of Zimbabwe. His victory was not recognised by the opposition and ordinary people which was further worsened by an unparalleled acceleration of economic implosion which forced ZANU-PF to share power with MDC as an inclusive government.

However, an analysis of the above short story shows total silence on these political dimensions. During the interview with the writer, he revealed that the lack of fictionalisation of the political drama of 2008 is due to self-censorship because of the fear of threats, harassment, and vengeance from the government. His difficult position as a writer shows that literary productions are worryingly policed by the state. He further notes that only those outside the country with no motivation to come back to Zimbabwe are free from self-censorship. The writer's defense suits Gwande (2017:94)'s reflection that.

Such a reality thus has seen most fictional works which are more overtly critical of the Zimbabwean government being produced by writers who are non-citizens or based in the diaspora but with strong previous connections with the country. More often, these works are published outside of the country and have very limited open circulation and readership in Zimbabwe due to either censorship or outright banning by the state.

This explains the dearth of a vivid depiction of lived topical political experiences in some of the Ndebele short stories. The problem of censorship was also raised by the amaBooks publishers who published the collection

*Sinqondephi Manje? Indatshana zaseZimbabwe* (2014). The editor of the anthology argued that their publishing house has been labelled anti-government because they are said to be publishing texts that disparage and scoff at the government with the agenda of instigating the masses to rise against ZANU-PF. Those who publish them have been castigated as sellouts, saboteurs, and agents of imperialism pushing the regime-change agenda. Those who have chosen to be muzzled can learn from Ngugi's (1997:81) brave statement that:

There is in fact not a big difference between the condition of the artist and that of the majority. I always remind myself that the possibilities of prison, exile or death have always been part of the occupational hazards of the artist. To take a pen is immediately to confront those possibilities. It has been so in history.

He argues that freedom of expression in literary arts has been curtailed by those in political office. The challenge is on writers not to allow self-censorship to prevail but to be relevant to their communities. In *Lokhu lalokhuya-yimpilo leyo* (Snapshots), NoViolet Bulawayo presents a story about the economic plight of the child narrator and her family in an urban set-up. From the beginning of the short story, it is evident that the characters are experiencing a massive economic meltdown. The nameless child narrator is sent to go and buy bread and milk for breakfast but she returns home with nothing because prices went up overnight. Newspaper headlines of daily papers are screaming that *Sudden Inflation Rocks the Country* (46). This headline explains why the narrator is unable to buy the same things that cost less than the twenty-dollar note that her mother gave her. Even the

storekeeper is angry and frustrated by customers who insist on buying items using the worthless Zimbabwean dollar:

*Uyidobha akujikijele ngayo ebusweni imali yakho, athi uyithathe uyetshetshela ngayo, kumbe uyedinga eyinye yokwengezelela. Aqede ngokuthi ubomtshela unyoko afunde ama fakheni nyuz'phepha. (47)*

(S/he takes the money and throws it in your face, and says go and wipe out your piece of shit with it, or go and look for top-up money. And she/he will end by saying tell your mother to read the fucken newspapers).

The storekeeper refers to the Zimbabwean currency as toilet paper as emphasis for its lack of value. Calling it toilet paper is defining it as a failed currency and a way of satirising the economic failures of the authorities that allow it to be used as a legal tender in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The above extract shows the high rate of inflation which was at more than 10 digit, figures in post-Zimbabwe. Also during the post-2000 period, the same short story notes that the country experienced high prices and severe shortages of basic commodities:

*Kwabayikuqala kokuwa kwezinto, zicacadeka zisiba yizicucu. Khonokho nje intengo yezinto yaqonga kwangabambe lutho. Kwangabi lalutho emashelufini esitolo sikaMaplanka lakwezinye izitolo. Izitolo kwaba yizitolo ngebizo nje, phakathi kutshaya ibhungayezi. Kwakuyikumotsha isikhathi ukuya ezitolo. Ungaze uzithole izinto, ungazi thenga ngani? (48)*

(That was the beginning of the fall of things, breaking into tiny pieces. Suddenly prizes of basic commodities skyrocketed and nothing became affordable. The shelves became empty in Mr. Maplanka's store and other stores. The shops became useless because the shelves were empty. Going to the shops was a waste of time. Even if

you find the basic commodities on the shelves, where will you get money to purchase them?)

This is evidence that the economy is in deep trouble. Hyperinflation led directly to the collapse of the economy and the consequent price increases of goods and shortage of necessities.

Inflation and the shortage of basic goods was further heightened by the breakdown of provision of services:

*Lina lodadewenu uRose alisayi esikolo ngoba iskulifizi sesidula kakhulu. ....Phezu kwalokho amanzi avalwa isikhathi eside lamagesti ayacitshwacitshwa. (48-49)*

(You and your sister Rose are dropping from school because school fees are now very outrageous ... On top of that water rationing periods are stretching for a long time and there are erratic power cuts).

She argues that poverty has become a major economic challenge in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Poverty in this study is defined as “denoting a lack of necessities like food, health, shelter and clothing” (Mpofu, 2011:1). The narrator’s father who is a pensioner and struggling to feed his family exemplifies the economic crisis in the short story. The father of the family fails to send her three children to school because he cannot pay school fees. Very few households afford to have a decent breakfast, which is demonstrated through the character Mgcobha who is a famous beggar. She tends to move around the township looking for children who have been sent by their parents to buy bread, eggs, and milk. Whenever she sees someone coming from the shops, she makes it a point that she visits the family during breakfast time. Furthermore, the short story shows that the narrator’s family

is poverty-stricken through lack of shoes. The narrator complains that her father and the whole family use her only form of shoes, *amapatapata* (slippers) as footwear. Her mother is also using a second-hand bra donated to her by a relative. She also wears her husband's only pair of shoes *amamokhasini*(moccasins) on special occasions.

In the short story, *Imihlola iyahlololana* (A bad situation often leads to another), the author uses the historical person Gideon Gono, the former Reserve Bank Governor, to highlight economic challenges facing ordinary citizens. The story is set in Bulawayo inside a commuter omnibus where passengers are debating the issue of bearer cheques and their loss of value. This debate is started by a conductor who announces that he is not accepting bearer cheque as bus fare because it is now worthless and he prefers the South African rand. He argues that the bearer check is *umsuzo* (fart) and it is best to use it as '*iphepha lokutshetshela*' (tissue paper ) (p.13). Passengers respond by complaining that his observation about the worthless currency should be directed at Gideon Gono. They remind the conductor that:

*Ngu 2008 lo. Tshela uGidiyoni ukuthi ....(13)*

(This is 2008. Tell Gidiyoni that .... )

The name Gidiyoni is the Ndebele equivalent of Gideon in English. It is therefore apparent that the writer uses historical persons to explain the collapse of the Zimbabwean currency. The short story is punctuated with topical issues that are associated with the historical Gideon Gono. These issues include the crumbling economy, useless currency, and hyperinflation in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Gideon Gono as a fictive character is significant in

explaining the nature, causes, and effects of the economic crisis because the short story effectively connects his name with what he did in real Zimbabwean life.

The economic crisis is also very briefly portrayed in *Ijwabu lakhe lisamephu* (Her skin is like a map), a short story by a prominent Zimbabwean writer of fiction, Raisedon Baya. *Ijwabu lakhe lisamephu* is primarily a story about the plight of the narrator's family. The writer argues that Zimbabwe is now a country of loss and decline. Families are struggling to survive and teachers are on strike for better salaries. Everything is collapsing and the writer uses environmental imagery of Bulawayo park to emblematically represent the level of economic meltdown in the country. The writer observes that the park used to represent life and cleanness, but today it represents decay and death. The author argues that the park has transformed into a desolate area that is no longer frequented by happy people, but desperate job seekers:

*Sekubuya abangela msebenzi abalethwa yindlala lamadino okubhudula idolobho lonke bedinga imisebenzi. Yibo obathola behlezi, belele kumbe becambalele lapha ephakhi, becatshele amehlo abantu.*  
(61)

(The people that come to the park now are not lovers with spirits, they are not families that want a day out, but unemployed people who are hungry and tired of hunting for jobs and are here to rest and hide from prying eyes.)

The economy has also decayed to an extent that it is now a struggle to find basic commodities and social services like electricity:

*Akula sitolo engingasingenanga. Ngingene zonke izitolo ngidinga irayisi, itshikheni lesaladi khrimu. Ngitsho ulutho olulodwa emashelufini. Akuzange kungimangalise lokuthi abathengisi bebezamula, ngitsho lokuthi bangikhangele ngingena kumbe ngiphuma ezitolo zabo. Ngicine ngikuthola ngomkoto lokhu kudla, kungaduli nje kulomuntu phansi. Akusaphekekanga lakuphekeka futhi. Lokhubekungenzeka njani amagetsi akhona ezenzela santando-ecitsha, alayithe, acitshhe..... Isicitshecitshhe samagetsi sekuyinhlalo yakhona. (63)*

(There is no shop that I didn't enter. I looked for rice, chicken and salad cream in all the shops. Not even a single thing on the shelves. It didn't surprise me to see the till operators yawning, not caring to even look at me getting in and out of their shops. I got this foodstuffs from the black market at exorbitant prizes. The food was not properly cooked. How was I going to cook it properly while electricity was erratic – it was going off, on, and off willy-nilly ... the erratic power cuts are now a norm?)

This extract emphasises economic disarray where shops are empty because business people cannot continue being viable if they use the local currency, the Zimbabwean dollar has lost its value. Utility sectors like the energy sector are also experiencing challenges in providing electricity.

Lindiwe Ndlovu is one of the contemporary Zimbabwean authors writing in isiNdebele who uses the short story genre to portray the economic malaise in post-2000 Zimbabwe. In her debut collection of short stories *Kambe Sisengabantu Bani?* (2016), Ndlovu dwells on the lives of ordinary people showing their economic misery and extreme anxiety. At the centre of each story is the life of desperation and impoverishment. The lives of her characters in the literary texts depict the pain and oppression in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Ndlovu's *Uxolo masitanda* (My landlord, I beg for forgiveness),

the reader and critic witness a time of destitution and deprivation of the ordinary people. Sidubekile, the protagonist experiences economic injustice, poverty, inequality, and dehumanisation. She is widowed by HIV/AIDS and is a tenant in a house without water and electricity. Her economic desperation is vividly portrayed:

*Le yindlu yokulala, yokuphekela, kanti nantiyana legabha lokuchemela duzane lomnyango okutshukuthi lindlu ibuya ibeyisambuzi. ...Ngale ngasemsamo kuzwakala umsinjwana wezinto ezihambahambayo emganwini, ngamawuwu lawa. Awalapha akhanya acakile kakhulu. Kusafanele acake ngoba kulakho ukuhlala insuku ezimbili ingangenanga esitofini loba emlilweni imbiza. Uphumputha nje ludade kumnyama lapha endlini, akekho amadla kagetsi, useze evule lekhetheni ukuze abone kahle. ... Kumele aphantise aphume ngoba engaphuza udwendwe azaluthola esikotshweni luyabe lusesabeka. Sekulenyanga ezintantu bacina ukubona ithonsi lamanzi liphuma empompini, kanti lobachasiselayo ngokuswelakala kwamanzi akekho. (1-2)*

(This is the bedroom, kitchen, over there near the door is a portable chamber which means this room is also a toilet. Towards the back of the room, there are faint sounds of things that are moving on plates, these are cockroaches. The cockroaches in this house are very gaunt. Surely they must be gaunt because two days can pass without anything being cooked in this house. The lady is groping in a dark room because there is no electricity. She has opened the curtain so that she will see nicely ... she must be early because she will find the water queue long and winding in the borehole if she delays. They last saw a drop of water coming from the tap three months back and no one explains to them about the unavailability of running water.)

The depiction of the terrible state of the protagonist's material circumstances shows that life is difficult in Zimbabwe. Considering the socio-economic backdrop illustrated above, it becomes easy to appreciate why the writers



portray Zimbabwe as a nation in an abysmal crisis. Sidubekile and her two minor children will grow up having known only poverty. Zimbabwe is figured as having a comatose economy characterised by hyperinflation, unemployment, and the collapse of utility services. Similarly, in *Kambe sesingabantu bani?* Ndlovu continues with the theme of economic implosion and poverty. The short story focuses on the plight of the poor in Makhokhoba township, especially on the underfed children in tattered clothes. Commenting on the physical appearance of malnutrition, Ndlovu remarks that:

*Nxa ubakhangele lababantwana uzwa usizi. Nanzi izisu zinkulu kanti njalo ziyacazimula. Nanku lokhu kuyehluleka lokudobha ibhola. Kuzalidobha njani njengoba isisu sisikhulu kangaka kanti lekhandalalo likhulu kodwa inyawo zincane okubuhlungu. (24)*

(You feel pity for these children when you are looking at them. They have big and shiny stomachs. Here is the other one, he can't even pick up a plastic ball. How will he manage to pick up the ball since the stomach and the head are this big while the legs are painfully tiny?).

Through the depiction of malnourished children, the writer shows how economic want dehumanises children in the post-2000 era. One asks the question of where the government is, through its welfare department, to provide feeding schemes for these children. The children also lack proper clothes as there are clad in rags: *ibhulugwe selacutheka laphela sekusele intambo nje* (the cloth of the trousers is worn out, only strings are remaining). Characters in this short story are framed as victims of economic collapse especially after the closure of the once viable industrial park in Bulawayo. Mbizo, the main character, is unemployed because local companies are

forced by circumstances to close down, leading to the retrenchment of breadwinners. The closure of companies throws everyone into the streets to be vendors:

*Ngumsindo wabantu abathengisayo. Kusempini lapha. Abantu bathengisa ngolaka. Kuhlange amaxhegu lezalukazi, intombi lamajaha, kanti nampa labantwana abancane. (25).*

(This is the noise of the vendors. This is war. People are selling furiously. Old men and old women, young ladies and young men, little children are all vending)

Zimbabweans of all ages find themselves selling different goods and items to help fend for their families. Because of overtrading and flooding of streets, vending is now a laborious task where vendors have to shout to attract customers. This results in fierce competition among vendors as the author compares these vending sites to war zones. Although characters toil every day to feed their families, it is not all who are into the informal sector. Some are devastated by stress leading to madness as the writer remarks:

*Sezizinengi inhlanya koBulawayo ngisitsho labantwana abazinhlanya sebegcwele. Udinga uswele ukuthi kubangwa yini. Kodwa ngekebekele abantu laba ukuhlanya ngoba ukuphila kumumo esikuwo kuvele yikuhlanya. (29)*

(There are many mentally challenged people in Bulawayo, even mentally challenged children are now many. You ask yourself the trigger of this problem. However, these people can't be normal because living in this environment is utter madness).

Through the use of the madness metaphor, the writer offers the clarification for why life in post-2000 Zimbabwe is manifested by adversity and

irrationality. Predominantly eye-catching in this passage is the way the harsh economic context characterised by the high cost of living is juxtaposed with the madness displayed by the desperate and impoverished society. According to Muwhati (2006:4), characters living under such economic conditions are “trapped people who are irretrievably wallowing in mass neurosis, closure and entrapment”. Though individuals may see the madness in the poverty-stricken characters, the writer is also asserting that it is not them who are mad, but, on the contrary, everyone staying and living in post-2000 is soaked in insanity. This central communication is repeated during the short story. Characters are forced into mental collapse because their hopes are crushed by an unprecedented economic implosion and poverty. The core message from the writer and her community is that as long as ordinary people continue to tussle, continue to be deprived, psychological derangement will continue to be part of life in Zimbabwe.

## **5.6 The collapse of infrastructure as reflected in *Kwandlela ziyaphambana***

In *Kwandlela ziyaphambana* (At crossroads), Novuyo Rosa Tshuma unpacks Zimbabwe’s economic decay through the journey motif. In the story, a nameless character is forced to flee the country’s economic crisis in search of perceived greener pastures in South Africa. According to the short story, Zimbabwe is experiencing challenges in providing electricity and water to its citizens. Furthermore, the short story shows that employment opportunities are shrinking every day. These frequent and long-lasting power outages and lack of access to water is a sign of the collapse of social services in post-

2000 Zimbabwe. Water and electricity are very important in the survival and performance of the country's economy. However, the short story highlights that the power and water sectors have passed out as the majority of the population stays in darkness and is deprived of water the main source of life. The narrator observes:

*Nxakuqondane lokuthi mhlalokho akula magetsi, uzaphumphutha emyameni. Kwesinye isikhathi lamanzi kawakho, kusiya ngokuthi izihlobo zakho zihlala ngaphi kwedolobho. (76)*

(If it coincides with load shedding on that day, you will grope in darkness. At times there is no water depending on which part of the city your relatives are staying in).

Despite this seemingly difficult way of living, the nameless character embarks on a journey by bus from Harare to Johannesburg. The journey is significant in understanding the socio-economic crisis troubling the nation because it gives the narrator the opportunity to compare the quality of life in Zimbabwe and that of South Africa. One feature of the Zimbabwean lifestyle depicted in the short story is that of queues which shows that life in this country is painful and is characterised by uncertainty. Harare, the capital city of the country, is depicted as a space lacking progress and modernity (Morreina 2010). Those who want to make it in life like the narrator and other characters have no alternative but to flee.

The literary description of the Zimbabwean border post shows the one-sided movement of people and cargo. Morreina (2010:255) concurs with this observation when she notes that:

On the South African side, cars and open trucks were loaded to the limit with goods, including containers of cooking oil, rice, maize meal, canned foods, blankets, and clothing. At the border post, and on the Zimbabwean side, the patterns of movement diversified: goods went one way and large numbers of people tried to go another.

This attests to the fact that Zimbabwe is heavily dependent on the magnanimity of South Africa for food items. Zimbabwe is portrayed as a basket case that is chiefly dependent on its neighbour to keep the souls and the bodies of its people together. In the short story, Zimbabweans are humiliated through a poster displayed in the cubicles of the public toilets on the South African border side. The notice warns Zimbabwean travellers not to use cardboard, cloth, newspapers, and Zimbabwean dollars as toilet paper. However, the narrator points out that the pain and humiliation are temporary as the moment they cross the border into South Africa, their exhilaration and excitement become visible, especially when they reach Musina, the first South African town after crossing the border. The narrator remarks that:

*Lamalayithi ngapha komngcele ungathi akhanya ukwedlula aweZimbabwe, futhi ungathi achelesile. Kwesinye isikhathi ujabuliswa yizinto owawungakaze ucabange ngitsho langelanga elilodwa ukuthi zingakujabulisa. Ngapha akucitshwa magetsi, akulamanzi avalwayo, akula malayini. (73-74)*

(Even the lights on the South African side are brighter than on the Zimbabwean side, and they are lively. At times your happiness is brought by things that you never thought even one day will make you happy. On this side, there are no power cuts, no water rationing, and no queues.)

The quote above shows that Zimbabweans travelling to South Africa are mesmerised by the quality of life in the neighbouring country. The existence of key social services awakens the narrator to the realisation that her country is in decline. Furthermore, the short story shows that South Africa is a country on a trajectory of sustaining modernity. When the bus is approaching Pretoria at night, the narrator is surprised by its modern architecture landscape. The city is glittering with lights, making everything beautiful.

This is illustrated when the narrator describes the high levels of infrastructural development to an extent that there is no bush separating Pretoria and Johannesburg. This is in contradiction to Zimbabwe where cities are separated by wide stretches of bushes. In Johannesburg, the narrator marvels at a natural landscape that has been reshaped by metropolitan structures and sophisticated engineering:

IGoli. Igcwele imigwaqo ephambanayo. Kuleminywe ehamba phezulu kweminye. Le ephezulu ilezisekelo zekhonkili eqine saka. Uthi nxa ungena enzikini yedolobho, uhlaza lwezihlahla obulubonela khatshana lukutshengise ukuthi belufihle izindlu, amafekithali, amahotela lama wofisi. Zonke lezi zakhiwo zimi zaqina, engathi sadalwa lomhlaba.(p 74).

(Johannesburg. A labyrinth of winding highways that crisscross each other elevated on the architecture of firm concrete. As you approach the city centre, buildings emerge from green landscapes, factories, hotels, and office buildings protruding as though they have been always there, since the beginning of time).

The writer depicts that South Africa has been in respectable economic growth as compared to Zimbabwe. The South African landscape is depicted as a cosmos of innovation and progress while Zimbabwe is experiencing

accelerated decline and decay. The comparison of the two nations seems to be deliberate strategy by the writer in order to show that Zimbabwe is moving backwards, taking back its citizens to the Stone Age in the new millennium when other nations are on a forward-looking trajectory. Zimbabwe is depicted as a nation in stasis when other nations are part of the economic growth of the present.

### **5.7 Literary criticism of the Look East Policy in the context of the crisis.**

Lindiwe Ndlovu, through the short story *Lapha libhele, Laphaya lizhingasi* (here is the bale, over there is the Zhingas) in her collection of short stories entitled *Kambe sisesengabantu Bani?* (2016), explores the fictional recreation of Zimbabwe-China relations and how these relations have affected the economic performance of Zimbabwe. Zhingas is a coinage peculiar to Zimbabwe used to refer to cheap and undurable Chinese products. Ndlovu brings to light the fact that ordinary citizens have no confidence in Chinese presence in the economic landscape of the country as she assesses Chinese products sold in the country. Chinese products made for Zimbabwe are constructed as very cheap, fake, and sub-standard:

*Zona ziyathengeka into zakhona ...Kodwa ke qaphela. Yonke lemfucu oyibutha usiyayigcwalisa endlini yakho ngeke iqede umnyaka. Okutsho ukuthi uzobe ubuyele uyobutha futhi. Ezinye zezinto zakhona azithintwa. Ukuthinta nje sekunqamukile. Izicathulo zakhona uhamba unyenya. Nxa ungasenyenyanga ungavuka phansi ngokutshelela loba uzibone usubhada ngezikaAdam sokudabuke kwaya le. Inkomitsho yakhona qaphela nxa uyiphakamisa, iphakamise yonke ngoba ungasala usubambe isibambo kuphela yona isiwile phansi.(56)*

(These are affordable ... But beware. All this chaff that you are hoarding to fill your house won't even last a year. This means you will come again and hoard the same things. Some of these things are very fragile. If you touch them they break. As for these shoes, you need to walk carefully. If you don't walk carefully, you may slip and fall or the shoe will be worn out and you will find yourself walking on bare foot. Be careful when holding the cup, it may break and you may find yourself holding the handle only with the rest of the cup lying on the ground)

In the above quote, Ndlovu challenges and destabilises the ruling party and government position that Chinese investors are 'all-weather friends' committed to assisting Zimbabwe in her developmental trajectory. As a voice of the voiceless in the country, Ndlovu makes a public, commercial and political interpretation and mockery of the deluge in the Zimbabwean marketplace of low-grade and counterfeit goods which have carelessly shattered home-grown businesses and markets (Musanga, 2013, Moyo, Mdlongwa and Hlongwana 2014). This impression is delicately referenced by the author's indication that major companies like Edgars and Truworths will be forced to downsize or shut down due to the flood of cheap and fake Chinese goods. Furthermore, Chinese goods are labelled *zhing zhong* (fake) in comparison to genuine and original Zimbabwean products that are durable. To call Chinese products *zhing zhong* in the short story is not the writer's creation but a fitting description of contempt and disdain for Chinese presence in Zimbabwe as Mangena (2016:197) opines that:

In general Zimbabwean street talk, 'zhing zhong' is a term used to mock Chinese products and the mockery can easily extend to a mockery of the Zimbabwean Look East Policy.



The labelling of Chinese products as fake can be viewed as a judgement that the Look East Policy is an inferior and fake relationship where there is no mutual benefit. The nature of Zimbabwe's economic relationship with China is "partisanship, not a partnership" (Chivaura, 1998:2). There is no equality but a perpetuation of the grand colonial setup where Zimbabwe is the consumer overly reliant on China as the producer of cheap and fake products. China is portrayed as an exploiter whose friendship with Zimbabwe cannot achieve development, but ordinary and temporary survival imperatives. As a policy adopted by the political elite to free Zimbabwe from Western dependence, the approach has fast-tracked the republic to Chinese capitalism and imperialism that even the architects of the mantra should not be proud of. The short story argues that the relationship is deadly, calamitous, and incapable of charting a progressive pathway to sustainable development:

*Lokhu kuyasilulazisa impela. Impilo isuka ibe ngumdlalo ngiqinisile. Kambe bona khonale bayazisenzisa yini lezizinto kumbe babuya bezolahlela e-Africa bathathe yonke imali besazi mhlophe ukuthi ngemva kwamalanga uzafuna okunye. Yikho singathuthuki. (56)*

(This is surely taking away our dignity. Life becomes a child's play honestly. Do they use these things in China or they come and dump them here in Africa and take all the money fully knowing that after a few days you will want to buy the same things again. That is why we are not developing in Africa).

The exploitative relationship depicted in the above passage indicates Zimbabwe's humiliating dependence on China which strips the nation

and its citizens of the little respect they remain with. The above excerpt also underscores the manipulative relationship between Zimbabwe and China which results in the downgrading and underdevelopment in the former jewel of Southern Africa (Friedrich, 2004, Younde,2007, Mudavanhu, 2014, Moretti, 2017). The basic argument in the short story is that the Zimbabwean government and other African countries should learn from the African proverbial wisdom that those who are carried on someone's back have their anuses exposed and that beggars are not the proudest of all people. Ndlovu illustrates that Zimbabwe is in an economic crisis because it is charitable with its resources; it gives away without necessarily receiving any value, a detrimental matrix for development of any kind since mutuality is essential to collective advancement. However, the literary depiction of Zimbabwe-Sino relations is problematic. Reliance on foreign economic giants is not a new problem for Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. Since the colonial days, with the introduction of capitalism as a mode of production which is largely exploitative and enslaving, Africa has been a continent of Western plunder and strings-attached-aid. Instead of censuring Zimbabwe, progressive cultural productions like literature need to uncover exploitative schemes that diminish and ensnare the Third World. Zimbabwe's relationship with China may impede her economic sovereignty but it remains a necessary evil at the present moment.

In these short stories, the Zimbabwean economy is portrayed as failing and dysfunctional. The country's economy is collapsing, the currency has lost its value because of inflation, and citizens in the country are

subject to impoverishment. The characters in the text embody a feeling of despondency and helplessness as they are burdened with severe poverty, hunger, and unemployment which expose them to HIV and AIDS.

### **5.8 HIV and AIDS crisis in selected Ndebele short stories**

Writers of Ndebele short stories have also taken it upon themselves to dialogue on HIV/AIDS in the context of the post-2000 economic crisis. Even though the epidemic has been a national issue before the year 2000, Musanga and Makhuba (2021:1) argue that the economic collapse experienced in the post 2000 era has driven the HIV and AIDS epidemic. HIV and AIDS scholars who have researched on the disease especially during the crisis period provide evidence that economic meltdown, food insecurity and poverty are allied with HIV prevalence (Bindura-Mutangandura 2000, Lopman, Lewis, Nyamakupa, Mushati, Chandiwana and Greyson, 2007). Metaphorically, HIV/ AIDS and poverty are not just connected constructions, they are a single edifice. In other words, scholarly views conclude that poverty is HIV/AIDS.

Poverty is seen as a major factor that push poor people, particularly women and girls to adopt risk sexual behaviours like transactional sex in order to feed their family members. This economic implosion led to poverty which created “sex for basic needs” (Stoebenau, Heise, Wamoyi and Bobrova, 2016:186) representing the intersection of HIV/AIDS and the economic crisis in the post-2000 period.

The theme of sex for basic commodities is best illustrated in several short stories in the short story collection *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2006) and *Thaphu Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana, Ilifa Lakho* (2010). Drawing upon the experiences of society, authors depict important contextual economic forces that render characters powerless in practising safe sex. Various male and female authors in these anthologies disclose that women who turn into prostitution are not intrinsically immoral, but are coerced by the harsh economic life they face every day. Women and girls get into sexual relationships because they want to keep deprivation at bay. In other words, writers of Ndebele short stories argue that poverty pushes female characters into transactional sex. Characters in situations of poverty are portrayed as diseased, extremely vulnerable, and at high risk of being infected with HIV. Writers use HIV/AIDS as a metaphor for economic meltdown and the betrayal of the masses in the post-2000 period. In B V Dakamela's *Lolungileyo liyamtshonela Ilanga* (Even the just fall into trials), Tina is depicted as a victim of the government's failure to fund university students doing their studies in Zimbabwe. As a female student, Tina is forced to prostitute herself because:

*Ngelinye ilanga kwenzeka ukuthi ukudla kuswelakale ediningiholu lapha abafundi bekolitshi ababephiwa khona ukudla. UTina wasuka lapha ngokudana okukhulu ngoba wayetshone elambile. Wathi ethi udinga imali yokuthi athenge okokulahlisa umoya, wasecabanga ukuthi wayeyiqedele ekuthengeni ingwalo zesikolo. (4)*

(It happened one day that the college dining hall ran out of food. Tina left the dining hall in sorrow because she had spent the whole day hungry. She thought of getting some

money to buy something small but she remembered that she had finished all the money on exercise books).

The above quote shows the desperate state of university students who are not financially supported by the government. Tina as an upright person writes to her peasant father narrating her financial incapacitation with the hope that her problem will be solved. The reply is devastating to her as her father indicates that he is also broke since he failed to sell his ox at a local cattle sale. Distressed by the reply from her father, Tina makes her mind to join her two college mates Tambu and Nyasha who frequent drinking places with the aim of sexually entertaining older men in exchange of a good life at college. Her first night out is disastrous to her health and future as she is raped by Joe who also infects her with a sexually transmitted disease that later develops into HIV/AIDS. The author of this short story recreates the history of HIV/AIDS as similar to the economic decline and betrayal of university students in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The main theme in the short story is that there is a parallel link between poverty and the spread of the epidemic. HIV/AIDS is depicted as the aesthetics of poverty and an institutional perpetuation of post-2000 Zimbabwe. Post-2000 is thus a motif of political failure expressed in the poverty and dehumanisation of young people at various institutions of high learning. As Mlambo (2013b: 186) argues, it is imperative to read and analyse student conduct and movements in the context of the nation's changing socio-economic historical environment. Writers, therefore argue that the worsening economic milieu and its adverse effects on students and their vulnerability to

HIV/AIDS in their daily lives of struggle should be prominent in assessing their characterisation.

The economic environment that exposes female students to HIV/AIDS at tertiary colleges is further illustrated in the short story *Ukudlala Ngomlilo* (Playing with fire) written by Trezia Ndlovu. Ndlovu's story shows that some female students, represented by Thoko, graduate when already infected with HIV or with fully blown AIDS because of indulging in sexual intercourse with various men. The narrator observes that:

*Baphumelela yebo ezifundweni zabo kodwa abazange baphile okuyangaphi ngoba basuka ekolitshini sebelawo umkhuhlane wengculaza. (166)*

(Yes they did excel in their studies but they didn't live long because they were HIV positive when they graduated from college)

However, the writer also captures that these female characters live under typical economic circumstances:

*Wakhumbula ukuthi abanengi emakolitshini basila ngokuthandana labaqeqetshi ukuze impilo zabo zibelula. Zazizinengi izinto ezidingakalayo ukuze umuntu aphumelele ezifundweni zakhe, njalo abafundi babesiba banengi okokuthi lendawo yokuhlala yayisihlupha. Amanye-ke amantombazana akhetha ukukhomba loba yiphi indoda engabahlawulela izimali ezifunwa ngabanikazi bezindlu lapha ababehlala khona. Abanye njalo ngababekhetha ukuhlalisana lamadoda alabafazi abahlala emakhaya.*

*Bathola sekungani eyabo impilo iyabe isilula bengazi ukuthi ekucineni kulomvuzo owesabekayo.(p.166)*

(She remembered that a lot of students at college survived by falling in love with their lecturers for their lives to be decent. There were a lot of things that were needed for them to succeed in their studies, and the student population increased, resulting in an accommodation crisis. As a result, some ladies fell in love with any man who could foot rental bills required by the landlords. Some chose to move in with married men whose wives were in rural areas. They thought their lives would be better, not knowing that the results would be horrible).

The above quote shows that women manipulate various kinds of sexual relationships to maximise their economic security in a failing economy. The author challenges the view that female characters are after pleasure since there is no direct payment for sexual services, but they have to contend with a rapid economic decline for them to survive. They demand to be assisted on bread- and- butter matters like rent, food, and other essential requirements for their studies. The central argument in this short story is that tertiary students, especially females, are disempowered economically to an extent that they cease to think about morality but concentrate on the urgencies of survival. Mdlongwa (2015:20) remarks that “morals fall away in the adverse of poverty and hunger”. This observation is supported by Chitando (2011:66) when she opines that “Poverty dehumanises individuals, who, in the end, fail to pause and reflect on their actions”

Buhle, a female secondary school pupil in Jonah Moyo's *Nga Ngangisazi* (Had I known), is forced into transactional sex with Mlingi, a wealthy man older than her father, because of poverty in her family. She remarks that: "*Ngiyakhumbula insuku lamaviki kudlula siphila ngombhida lesitshwala* (169) (I remember vividly when days and weeks would pass eating vegetables and pap). Mlingi spoils her by taking her to fancy hotels. He also gives her a lot of money which she puts into good use through buying food, clothing, and other essential needs for her struggling family. Mlingi is portrayed as a donor who gives food aid to Buhle's family in exchange for sexual favours. Buhle is also forced to lie to her parents about the source of the money that she brings home. When she is quizzed by her parents she tells them that one of her friends, Lydia who left for the diaspora together with her parents, is the one sending her the money. She provides for her family up to the time she is caught by Mlingi's wife having sex in their matrimonial bed. She is thoroughly beaten to the extent that she is admitted at a local hospital and medical tests done on her show that she is pregnant and HIV positive. The story is significant in that it captures the abuse of schoolgirls in the context of "economic conditions that create the sexual exploitation and children's violation" (Mangena,2011:210). The strength of this observation lies in the fact that it is not blaming the girl child per se but establishing a link between abuse, sexual exploitation, and the underlying economic poverty that pushes young girls into sex.

It is the researcher's impression, gathered from the above short stories about HIV/AIDS, that female characters engage in transactional sex



when they are in great need of money to sustain themselves in volatile economic situations. Mlambo (2013b: 194) raises this pertinent point when he argues that:

For many of those who struggled on, life meant having to make some difficult moral compromises, such as female students having to resort to prostitution to make ends meet...”

The situation was so dire to an extent that sugar daddies frequented college campuses in search of girlfriends to spread HIV/AIDS. In some of the short stories, sexual relationships with older males are depicted as financially fulfilling. This is conveyed by the lavish lifestyles of Nyasha and Tambu in the short story *Lolungileyo Liyamtshonela Ilanga*. Male characters like Joe are used by the author to reflect sex and material expressions of love by rich older men who are responsible for infecting university students with HIV/AIDS. Munyoro (2018:88) argues that during economic crisis female characters “are more prone to getting HIV and AIDS not because they are immoral but because they come into contact with irresponsible masculinities that use the power of money and the female figure’s desperation to demand unprotected sex”. Male characters like Joel and Mlingi are representatives of the male economic elite who are in positions of authority but ethically and morally ruined. By exposing this reality, writers of Ndebele short stories portray that the moral honesty of female students has fallen prey to a depraved economic snobbery which leaves them with the obnoxious HIV/AIDS virus.

Margaret Thatcher Ncube's *Ulwazi ngumthombo wempilo* (Knowledge is the cistern of life) alludes to poverty and the economic meltdown that push young men like Mandla to migrate to Johannesburg in search of a better life. The story shows that Mandla's bold decision to escape Zimbabwe's economic woes is fruitful as the narrator notes that:

*Ukuya kukamalume eGoli kwaletha inguquko enkulu empilweni yethu lapha ekhaya. (33)*

(The migration of our uncle to South Africa brought about a remarkable change in our lives at home.)

Mandla empowers her household with goats and cattle. Owning these domestic animals in Ndebele society is considered a huge economic achievement that can only be attained by earning the South African rand. The writer of the short story also attempts to draw the attention of the readers to the link between migration and HIV/AIDS. Mandla returns to Zimbabwe infected with HIV. The story is insinuating that if life was good in Zimbabwe with employment opportunities, Mandla would be HIV-free. In other words, the short story is appealing to the political leadership to fix the economy of the country to avoid HIV/AIDS. In *Isinqumo esinzima* (A difficult decision), Audrey Chihota exposes the predicament of young girls who are vulnerable to sexual abuse by their relatives and exposing them to HIV/AIDS. Jenny Ntini is raped and infected with HIV by her aunt's old husband, Msimanga, because the aunt is always absent from home as a result of being an informal trader who sells goods on farms:

*Ngalolosuku umaNtini wayeselamalanga amabili eyethengisa emapulazini, ezama phela ukwenelisa imali yabantwana eyesikolo. (9)*

(On this day Miss Ntini had spent two days away from home vending on the farms trying to raise children's school fees)

In yet another short story, *Ingoma eyehlula amagabazi* (The song that vexed the experts) by SehliSelwe Ndlovu, Sisonono, a young girl, is forced by her parents to marry an old man because of poverty in her family:

*Ilizwe lonke labhekana lendlala, abanye baze bakholwa ukuthi yayesedlula? eyezikhumba eyake yabakhona. UZondo wayeqale eboleka amabele kubomakhelwane ethi uzabhadala. Indlala yanda ekhaya afa amawuwu. Baqala abanikazi bamabele ukufuna imfanelo zabo. Waqala esaxolisa wacina esebhadala ngokuzinkukhu ayelakho. Umuzi wasala ubetha umoya. (54)*

(The whole country experienced drought. Others even believed the drought was worse than the one where people ended up eating hides. At first, Mr. Zondo was borrowing corn from his neighbours promising to pay them back. The drought worsened and cockroaches died. Those who had lent him corn demanded it back. At first, he would apologize and give excuses but he later gave them the few chickens that he had. He was left with no chicken in his homestead).

The above description of the economic challenges in the country force Zondo to plead with Mr. Bhebhe, a local businessman, to marry Sisonono in exchange for a few bags of maize. As a poverty-stricken household, they see the potential of poverty alleviation coming into their home from such an arranged marriage. However, the union is disastrous

for Siponono as she is given HIV by Mr. Bhebhe. What is striking in the narration of the events is that her parents are reacting to the compulsion of monetary and material safety.

However, the worrying trend is that there are some writers like Sisa Khumalo in her short story *Usathane Kalahlonipho* (The devil is disrespectful), who seem not to be sympathetic to the victims of the economic decay and are therefore susceptible to the HIV/AIDS infection. The writer remarks that:

*Izwe lisakhile, intombi bezikwazi ukuziphatha, zibukhwabitha ubuntombi bazo, zilesimilo lesizotha, zikwazi ukuhlonipha, zikhuthele njalo. Sedlule isikhathi samaqhikiza. Sedlule lenhlonipho lokuziphatha. Abantwana abasakhulayo ukuziphatha bakujikele le. Bangenwa ngumoya wobunja. Ufica intombi zihambaze ezitaladini, uthi bhode ngale uphambane lenye ithandelane lekhehla, ithi lijaha. Isikhathi sabathakathi sesiguqukile sabangesenjabulo, ufica izintombi zidiyazela phakathi kwamabili zidinga amadoda. Buyephi Ubuntu bo? (25)*

(When our traditions and culture were still intact, girls were well-behaved, proud of their virginity, they were upright and full of dignity, they were respectful and industrious. The time of the senior girls has passed. The time lapsed together with respect and good behaviour. The contemporary youths have discarded good morals . They are possessed by the doggish spirit. You find girls walking naked, and you bump into a girl intimate with an old man saying it's her boyfriend. The late hours that were for witchcraft have become time for joy where you find ladies strolling searching for men. Where has morality gone to?)

Conditions that lead to compromised lifestyles of young women are not interrogated in the above excerpt. The writer uses the derogatory image

of *inja* (dog) to dismiss their economic reasons for engaging in transactional sex with older men. This tendency to adopt abusive language fails to appreciate that this behaviour by young women cannot be separated from extreme lack of economic resources and life-threatening poverty. The problem of preaching morality without exploring material poverty that makes the ordinary Zimbabwean population vulnerable and at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS is further shown in the short story *Udokotela Omkhulu Nguwe* (You are the chief doctor), drawn from the anthology *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* by Lindiwe Ndlovu. Although she illustrates the intense poverty that is likely to push her characters to commercial sex work, Ndlovu still trusts that it is out of the character's volition that she falls prey to the devastating epidemic. Her message is quite simply that *Isiqokoqela yikuziphatha*. (73) (*What is important is to uphold strong morals*). A larger part of her depiction of HIV/AIDS is comparable to a "homily, packed with didactic sermons and religious warnings conveyed with righteous anger" (Shava, 1989:17). In other words, Ndlovu's didacticism holds out that economic victims are supposed to uphold high moral values despite, and even in the face of, economic poverty and deprivation. Such a slant on the sexual facet of the pandemic creates a moral sermon that calls on characters to be upright when, in most cases, these female characters have no agency to sway certain socio-economic structures entrenched in the national fabric. It is for this reason that the study concludes that Ndlovu's short story decontextualises her characters, making them ahistorical and unreal. Such sanctimonious approaches fail to do justice to intricate dynamics that interface with exposure to HIV and AIDS.

According to Chitando (2011), lack of basics dehumanises personalities to an extent of failing to pause and redirect their engagements and thoughts. It is, therefore, proper and contextual that writers should not portray HIV and AIDS as simple illnesses borne of decadence but as indexes of a failing state or as fragments of a domestic catastrophe. Female characters depicted in the narrative should be seen as people engaged in a struggle for survival against poverty and poor governance. The exoneration of the designers of defective policies which burden and make poor the ordinary person on the streets is retrogressive. Through the challenges encountered by characters in the short stories, it is best to argue that their plight is the story of all Zimbabweans that are experiencing unparalleled economic decline.

Guided by the above observations, short stories analysed in this section concur that the deterioration in the quality of life of tertiary students should be blamed on the post-2000 economic crisis. Christiansen (2013:520) also subscribes to the thought that the best way to explain female unfaithfulness in post-2000 Zimbabwe is to attribute it to economic adversity. Similarly Chitando and Chitando (2008:67) argue that:

Poverty nourishes HIV and AIDS. It is the fertile soil in which the pandemic enjoys remarkable growth. Any lament in the time of AIDS and HIV needs to challenge poverty.

This is a fresh development in the Ndebele literary landscape because previous fictional works tended to associate HIV/AIDS with immorality

and promiscuity (Gambahaya and Muhwati, 2007). However, short stories analysed in this study challenge this stereotype and the pandemic is framed as a crisis that engulfs the entire Zimbabwean society.

Vambe (2003:487) notes that Zimbabwe literary texts reflect medical disaster in the form of HIV/AIDS because of failure of leadership. This observation is also buttressed by Munyoro (2018:88) when she argues that the frequency and high rate of HIV/AIDS in the “narratives is not about immorality, but a national tragedy of a failed state”. These observations suggest that as long as there is poverty in the country, the pandemic will continue to spread. All the authors “highlight the political betrayal of the masses and economic poverty as vectors in the spread of HIV/AIDS” (Vambe, 2003:486). According to these writers, the crisis story of post-2000 in Zimbabwe is incomplete without the mention of socio-economic dynamics that magnify society’s risk to HIV contagion. Zimbabwe, with its poverty and economic ruin, makes available a salutary environment for the rapid spread of HIV and AIDS.

Also critical to discern in this study is that the fictional story about the post-2000 political, economic, and social situations has its authors. There are several short stories scattered in different anthologies that blame the government for the above multidimensional crises. In the next section of the chapter, we critique how writers exemplify and depict disillusionment as a result of the failure of leadership.

## 5.9 Literary depictions of the causes of the crisis in Ndebele short stories

This section analyses the depiction of the causes of the post-2000 crisis by Ndebele writers of short stories. The post-2000 government in Zimbabwe, led by Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF, blame external forces as responsible for the crisis, ignoring endogenous dynamics such as corruption, misguided policies, self-aggrandisement, and use of violence by the political elite (Macheka 2014 and Zamponi 2005). The ruling party's interpretation of the causes of Zimbabwe's post-2000 crisis has the propensity of minimising the role of the ruling party and government. The country has, indeed, experienced seasonal droughts and the imposition of economic sanctions. However, Moyo, Mdlongwa, and Hlongwana (2014:6) argue that:

Zimbabwe has witnessed an unprecedented economic, social, and political turmoil occasioned by hit-and-miss political decisions that brought about what has come to be known as the Zimbabwean Crisis.

An analysis of Ndebele short stories reveals that the emergence of the crisis should be understood in the context of gerontocracy, kleptocracy, policy inconsistency, maladministration, and corruption by the government of the period. There is a growing consensus that the source of Zimbabwe's crisis is its leaders. According to Chitando (2016:283)

There is no need to look for goblins (*zwickwambo*) or to ascribe misfortunes to evil spirits when it is clear that the government of the



day continues to run the economy into the ground. No spiritual cleansing was needed when the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe continued to print the Zimbabwean dollar amidst galloping inflation and incessant devaluation. No deliverance session was required when state enterprises paid their executives “the salary of angels” when the same enterprises were making mega losses. No man of God should have been asked to give a pro one prophecy when the extent of the looting of national resources showed only one possible outcome: increasing decline.

In general, Ndebele short stories concur with the above assessment of political leadership when discussing the causes of the crisis. After having earned international accolades for its pro-people policies in the 1980s, especially in the provision of health and education services, the Zimbabwean government then presided over the progressive decay and near collapse of the very same sectors, despite continuously presenting itself as a people’s government. They have become technocrats of incompetence thereby pushing, dragging, and bullying the nation into desperation.

### **5.9.1 Images of Robert Mugabe in the context of post-2000 crisis in the Ndebele short story**

The short story *Kwesinye isikhathi uqondile lumuntu* (At times this person is right) is set in post-2000 Zimbabwe where the author praises a nameless leader for empowering the masses through the land reform process. The story centres on the good deeds of the leader, including his position on homosexuality which he dismisses as unAfrican. However, what is significant in this story is its title that indirectly comments on the possible causes of the

crisis in Zimbabwe. The naming of the short story is deliberate as the writer aims at studying the meaning of the title and how it resonates with the causes of the crisis. In *Kwesinye isikhathi uqondile lumuntu*, the writer adopts the strategy of naming called “refusal to name historical or public figures”, (Mangena, 2015). Through this literary onomastic technique, the writer avoids naming the character for political reasons to avoid censorship. A critical appreciation of the whole short story by a local critic or by anyone familiar with Zimbabwean history, politics, and policies on land and homosexuality will discern that the nameless leader is Robert Mugabe. Mugabe is the former president of Zimbabwe who was in power when the country embarked on the historical Fast Track Land Reform process including the criminalisation of homosexuality in the constitution of the country. The main argument presented in the short story is that Mugabe is responsible for the post-2000 mess in Zimbabwe. The style of not naming Mugabe reflects the writer's experience and attitude towards his reign. The short story is propagating the belief that the nation experienced a devastating political and economic crisis because of the authoritarian rule of Robert Mugabe. The story is adamant that Mugabe is at the centre of the crisis. The leadership of Robert Mugabe and the policies of his government is further shown in the short story *Uxolo Masistanda* where Sidubekile fails to give a clear response to the landlord's question as to why she is always late in paying rentals. Her response force the landlord to say:

*Yindaba ukhuluma ulimi olungazwakaliyo njengohulumende wakho.(2)*

(Why do you speak an unintelligible language like your government?)

This extract places emphasis on the behaviour of the ruling party. In portraying the government as lacking clarity in articulating the growth and development of the nation, the writer is examining the underlying operational flaws of the ruling party in terms of planning and policy formulation. Practically, the ruling party has no coherent policies that have been implemented fully and with tangible benefits to the general public. It is a government that is figured as chaotic because of a lack of direction. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:15) summarises this crisis of thought within ZANU PF when he notes that “It is snared in a nest of contradictions that often make it appear as nothing but part of politics of survival and opportunism”. Those characters who are frustrated by the government’s lack of response to growing unemployment, poverty, collapse of infrastructure and political intolerance turn their dissatisfaction into insults. In the short story *Lokhu lalokhuyana-yimpilo*, the narrator says:

*“Uyihlo uvuka ekuseni nsuku nzonke athi fuck the fuckin’ gavment. (49)*

(Your father works up every day in the morning and say fuck the fucken’ government).

*Akelimlalele limlalelisise. Ngiyazi abanye benu alifuni kuzwa ngaye. Lubaba kwesinye isikhathi uqondile. Kambe sesingabantu bani? (40)*

(Listen to him and listen carefully. I know some of you don’t want to hear anything from him. At times this man is right. Of what value are we honestly?)

Many writers are adamant that Zimbabwe deteriorated due to the political dictatorship of Robert Mugabe. However, it is not sufficient to reduce the

complex situation in Zimbabwe to personalities. Such reductionism limits the opportunity to look at various other factors that also played a key role in the crisis that engulfed Zimbabwe. .

### **5.9.2 The literary representations of gerontocracy in short stories**

The Ndebele short story also blames gerontocracy for the existence of the multi-layered crisis in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. According to Jaji (2020) gerontocracy in governance is a form of command rule in which a country is ruled by privileged leaders who are considered of age than most of the adult inhabitants. Gerontocracy is a political term that has found space in many African communities because it is viewed as part of the African worldview where old age is associated with maturity and wisdom (Dei, 1994, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008, Sesanti, 2010). This has led to the creation of a restrictive political culture in a wider regional setting in which the mainstream of young people is politically relegated.

In observance with the main tenets of gerontocracy, Chikowero in the short story *Ubuqhawe Thutshu*, notes that the Zimbabwean ruling party is dominated by *amaxhegu* (old men) (125) who are monopolising the political space. *Amaxhegu* is a derogatory term in the Ndebele language for very old men. He argues that older politicians are clinging to power because they claim to have liberated the country from British colonial rule. Jaji (2020:180) reiterates that:

Political parties, especially the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), are organized around gerontocracy, and

perceived legitimacy deriving from having participated in the war of liberation which ushered in the country's independence on 18 April 1980. The youth in the ruling party narrow the generational gap and seek relevance by subordinating and aligning their interests with of the old generation.

In the same story, the party youths are seen campaigning for an old politician with grey hair who has been in parliament since the colonial era, in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia:

*Ngadonda ukumkhumbuza ukuthi lundoda ababemkhankasela wayeseliminyaka engamatshumi amabili lanhlanu elilunga lePhalamende, nxa sesingasabali eminye iminyaka lapho ake waba lilunga lePhalamende yeZimbabwe-Rhodesia, esebenza labancindezeli. (127)*

(I hesitated to remind him that this man they were campaigning for has been a member of parliament for the past twenty-five years if we exclude the years that he was a member of parliament of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia where he was working with colonialists).

This observation by the author confirms that Zimbabwe is a gerontocratic state characterised by the maintenance of old politicians. Adebayo (2018:170) argues that Zimbabwe is among the African states where positions of authority are “occupied mostly by septuagenarians and octogenarians”. The youth who are marginalised are also depicted as hopeless characters who embrace and espouse gerontocratic assertiveness without questioning its failures. They attempt to claim political space in a choked gerontocracy by legitimizing the status quo as foot soldiers of old politicians. Young people represented in the short story by the chairperson of the youth league, Marimo Marimo, rally behind gerontocracy as they are

assured of leftovers and employment opportunities in the civil service. It can, therefore, be argued that Zimbabwe is in crisis because of its dependence on old politicians who have outlived their efficacy in terms of charting a way forward to end the crisis. The clarion call from the writer is that the leadership is overwhelmed and mentally incapacitated by the national challenges and therefore the ordinary people are expected to rely on themselves to escape the political, economic, and social hardships.

### **5.9.3 The portrayal of a clueless leadership dependent on aid in *Impilo Yokukhongozela***

The storyline of leadership in Zimbabwe, as outlined in *Impilo yokukhongozela* (The life of begging) is one of a clueless leadership that is dependent on aid for survival. According to the story, the political elite is always globe-trotting begging for foreign aid. This shows that the political leadership is clamouring for more foreign aid yet little economic and social growth is being achieved. The writer complains that as a nation, Zimbabwe has become a basket case, with politicians not seeing that being an aid addict is an embarrassment:

*Yona vele into yokuphiwa iyayangisa iyehlisa isithunzi. Iyenza abantu banqunuleke bahlambazeke impela (64). Sebathatha ukucela bakufaka emthethweni. Ufica amadoda amakhulu, eqhuba imikhaba egqoke amasudu ekhwela indizamsthina echapha ulwandle esiyacela.(64)*

(This thing of being given handouts is a disgrace and it strips one of their dignity. It surely strips people and leaves them naked and insulted. They have taken begging and made it law. You find great men

pushing big bellies, wearing suits and boarding airplanes going overseas to beg).

The description of the beggars in the story is worth noting. Zimbabwe has become so dependent on Asian countries to an extent of failing to produce and manufacture simple goods. The Look East Policy must learn from Malcom X's (1970:48) stern warning that:

An outsider can't clean up your house as well as you can. An outsider can't take care of your children as well as you can. An outsider can't look after your needs as well as you can. And an outsider can't understand your problems as well as you can.

The conceptualisation of friendship as demonstrated in Zimbabwe-Sino relations is not beneficial for sustainable development. Leadership is reminded that to defend Zimbabwe's independence and sovereignty they should spurn self-denigrating enslavement. This dependency syndrome is responsible for economic decay and development miscarriages.

The analysis of the short stories shows that Ndebele writers blame political corruption for the crisis in Zimbabwe. The dominant image emanating from the literary appreciation of these short stories is that Zimbabwe found herself in crisis because the leadership is incompetent and corrupt. The focus of these short stories is on uncovering the causes of the crisis, especially refuting the ruling party position that Zimbabwe is in crisis because of drought and economic sabotage by various enemies both local and international. The narrative of failed leadership is also attributed to the fanatic obsession with

idea that they liberated Zimbabwe. One academic respondent in a questionnaire gave a long observation:

The crisis is a result of misguided policy implementation. In particular, the land invasions which were done in early 2000 under the guise of the fast track land reform program brought untold suffering to the ordinary citizens. Remember, the farms that were invaded were mostly the ones that guaranteed the 'food basket' status of the country. With the settler farmers evicted, food and other viable by-products became scarce in the market resulting in the country importing. Another view is the issue of a political crisis that ensued with the coming in of strong opposition at the turn of the millennium. The ruling party used unfriendly means to remain in power thereby tarnishing its image internationally. All these factors combined, brought animosity between Zimbabwe and the international community. Hence, Zimbabwe became isolated and in our cultural understanding, isongo alisoze lakhala lilodwa (the metal cannot produce a sound on its own).

The above argument shows how national politics became toxic in the post-2000 period. The ruling party antagonised everybody, nationally, regionally, and internationally, leading to the ostracisation of the country and the flight of foreign direct investment. As a result, the economy ceased to function.

#### **5.9.4 The depiction of war veterans and the betrayal of independence in Ndebele short stories**

The ZANU-PF political elite and self-interest groups like the nation's former freedom fighters are blamed by writers of short stories for controlling the running of the country absolutely for their selfish paybacks (Davies, 2004). For example, the politicians and war veterans have marginalised the voice



of the majority in narrating the nation. Both groups have benefited from empowerment projects to the exclusion of the historically disadvantaged majority citizens who are desperately in need of empowerment. Empowerment in post-2000 Zimbabwe is black elite-enrichment as it has served the interests of the political-administrative- high-class from the ranks of the former liberation movement. As a result, writers of short stories argue that the former freedom fighters liberated mainly themselves and have enjoyed access to the nation's resources through patronage. Commenting on the role, place, and significance of the war veterans in causing the post-2000 crisis, the author of *Imbongi yodumo* notes that:

*Kwakungakhathekile ukuthi yini ehaywa zimbongi emdangweni. Kodwa inkondlo zika X ezinengi zazimayilana lempi yenkululeko. Wayesola indlela injongo yalempi eyasuka yaphithikezwa ngamagola asebusweni- inkokheli ezathi ngokungena embusweni zaba ngamahaga, zadla zodwa. Wayevuma uX ukuthi yebo, impi yenkululeko yayiqakathekile sibili. Kodwa wayesephakathi kwempi enzima ukwedlula eyenkululeko; eyakhe kwakusekuyimpi yokuphila, mihla lemihla. Wayecaphula uyise ngokuthi wayengasiboni isizatho sokube kukhulunywa ngempi eyayisileminyaka engamatshumi amathathu yedlula. (88)*

(It didn't matter what the poets were presenting on stage. But most poems of X were about the war of liberation. He was criticising the way the objective of the war was confused by the wild cats that are in power-the leaders who, upon assuming the reigns, became greedy and feasted all by themselves. X did concur that the war of liberation was really important. However, day by day he was in the midst of a war that is more difficult than the war of liberation. He upset his father by saying that he didn't see the reason for keeping on talking about the war that was fought thirty years back.)

The focus of this short story is on uncovering the causes of the crisis, especially refuting the ruling party position that Zimbabwe is in crisis because of drought and economic sabotage by various enemies both local and international. The narrative of failed leadership is also attributed to the fanatic obsession with idea that they liberated Zimbabwe. This theme is also developed in the short story *Bayeza* where the author blames the government for the existence of political violence during the election period. The masses seem bewildered by the role and place of the government in this chaos and there are forced to declare that:

*“Ukhethe lolu lwasenza. Yikho ngiluzonda mina. Kwakungenje sithola uzibuse “Angithi ngalesiya sikhathi sasilesitha sinye-umbuso wabelungu. Kathesi uhulumende wethu nguyeye osesilwa labantu. Kutshintshe umbala wesitha kuphela”.*(115)

(This election has put us on the slippery plain. That is why I hate it. It was not like this when we attained independence. During that time we had one enemy- colonial rule, is it? Now our government is the one that is fighting the people. What only changed is the colour of the enemy.)

The short story warns that the problems of the post-2000 period have brought great anxiety about the ultimate goal and achievement of the people who claim to have liberated the nation. The characters are worried about the selfish nature of the politicians who use violence to coerce people to vote for them. The coming of independence gave the ordinary person hope that oppressive structures will be demolished. However, their hopes are replaced by the actuality of disillusionment. The sad reality confronting them is that soon as colonialism is defeated, the political elite creates their club of black traitors that is increasingly brutalising the ordinary person. In

*Kwakunjalo, kulokhu kunjalo* (It was like that, it is still like that), the writer intentionally provides a historical juxtaposition of the inferiority of life in both colonial Rhodesia and post- 2000 Zimbabwe. This similarity functions as a cautiously contrived account to represent the noticeable similarity in living conditions of Zimbabweans from the colonial to the post-2000 period. The comparison not only exposes the discriminatory and exploitative nature of the colonial administration but also shows a picture of the same conditions in the post-2000 era that badly impact on the quality of life of ordinary citizens. In the short story, the writer uses the Siwela family to show the evils of colonialism where blacks are arrested for expressing their views about the way they are governed. Characters argue that they have no rights and they are brutalised by the police whenever they demonstrate against the ruling regime. Some of the protesters like Siwela are arrested and detained without a trial. In similarity with the brutality of the colonial government, Siwela's family faces the same problems in post-2000 Zimbabwe as one of Siwela's grandchildren Nkosilathi remarks:

*“Ingaphi inguquko Khulu?”  
Selizibusa mzikulu. Yikho esasikukhalela phela.”  
Kulokhu kunjalo Khulu.”  
“Kwakunjalo mzikulu.”(275)*

(“Where is change grandfather?”  
“You are ruling yourselves grandchild. That is precisely what we were clamouring for”.  
“It is still like that grandfather”  
It is not, grandchild.”

The above excerpt of disillusionment agrees with the observation that the aspirations of the majority remain unsatisfied because the new political elite

is replicating the imperialistic traits of exploitation and repression. The fact that Zimbabweans are suffering during this period is a sign that the liberation struggle has been betrayed. Livelihoods have been destroyed resulting in voices of dejection as seen above from characters who are humiliated and dehumanised by this toxic leadership. Such overt lack of transformation as evinced in this primary text is blamed on the hypocrisy of the political elite who are largely the flip side of the colonialists they purport to have substituted. It is, therefore, argued that *Kwakunjalo, Kulokhu Kunjalo* is an indictment of post-2000 Zimbabwe where nationalists engage in politics of authoritarianism while the masses are denied the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of political independence.

#### **5.9.5 Why are writers of Ndebele short stories silent on economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe as the cause of the crisis?**

All writers of short stories in anthologies analysed in this study are silent on the effects of economic sanctions imposed by United States of America and some Western countries on Zimbabwe in 2003. Data gathered through interviews conducted with academic critics of Zimbabwean literature shows that new unpalatable truths have to be told to those in positions of authority and silence on sanctions is part of the alternative explanation about the crisis; opposition to official metanarratives about the nation. Writers themselves also argue that their major concern is on the leadership that is betraying the masses, turning a former jewel of Africa into stagnation and a perennial economic, political, and social nightmare. As a new generation of

writers, they believe that their predecessors were a bit soft with those in power, hence their resolve that sanctions narrative cannot be allowed to form the bedrock of the post-2000 collapse.

One writer argued that sanctions were invited by the political elite whose behaviours and actions promoted chaos in the country. She highlighted the issue of human rights violations, militarisation of political and economic institutions, and the constricting of democratic space to those who disagree with the ruling party. This supports the assertion that misgovernance and failed leadership, instead of sanctions, are responsible for the hardships endured by ordinary people (Grebe, 2010, Ndakaripa, 2021). The critical analysis of Ndebele short stories demonstrates the view that “many of the current problems are of the government’s making, and even though some come from other sources, there is seldom any remedy offered by the government” (Palmberg 2004: 24). Their assessment of the crisis shows that the country is dysfunctional, , and stagnant and because of the privileged elite’s misgovernance and avowed incompetence, dishonesty and selfishness; the crisis is man-made and there is no external cause. Indeed, an analysis of Ndebele short stories presented in this section of the study shows that Zimbabwe experienced a precipitous political, social and economic collapse because of failure of leadership. The focal short stories expose the pitfalls and perils of post-2000 political leadership in the country. When the researcher put this question to a lecturer of Ndebele literature at Great Zimbabwe University, she had this to say:

My take is that the socio-economic crisis depicted in Ndebele short stories came as a result of the ZANU PF government's mismanagement of the economy through poor policies, corruption, and reckless spending by the government. The political crisis came as a result of ZANU PF's intolerance towards opposition parties and its efforts to hold on to power by all means in the face of a threat to its hegemonic rule. The crisis is a result of misguided policy implementation. It is a crisis of leadership, loss of legitimacy for the ruling party and survival politics by ZANU.

Overall, Ndebele writers of short stories seem to view the causes of the post-2000 crisis as due to the betrayal by the political elite, especially the ruling party and those who support its ill-advised policies. The ruling party has neglected the aspirations and wishes of the majority as it has failed to institute policies that further development. It is the submission of these short story writers that the causes of the post-2000 period should be located locally, with emphasis placed on the internal dynamics created by an authoritarian, clueless, petty-minded, and self-enriching government. Many vices have been pursued by the ruling party to the detriment of the common people. These malpractices include materialistic, deceitful, mercenary, and short-sighted behaviour that has brought the country to its knees.

Confronted with the constantly deteriorating political, socio-economic, and massive crisis of leadership, characters refuse to be passive victims but deploy resilience and agency by devising coping mechanisms to survive the crisis. The next section of the chapter examines various coping and survival strategies examined by writers which ordinary people employ to negotiate and ameliorate the effects of the crisis.

## **5.10 Representations of the survival and coping mechanisms in short stories during the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis**

This section of the study is an examination of the fictional illustrations of survival and coping stratagems throughout the era of economic and socio-political crisis as depicted in selected Zimbabwean short stories in Ndebele. Ganjiwale, Ganjiwale, Sharma and Mishra (2016:3) define coping and survival manoeuvres as “the cognitive and behavioral efforts required to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as exceeding the resources of the person”. Coping involves a rational reassessment of the situation to appropriately deal with it. Coping strategies differ according to varied categories and distinct effects of socio-economic and political crises. The central focus of this section of the study is to explore how fiction, particularly the Ndebele short story, succeeds in capturing the numerous innovative and resilient ways adopted by characters living in Zimbabwe during the turbulent and frustrating post-2000 period.

In analysing the Ndebele short stories on coping and survival strategies, the Resilience theory is engaged as the lens through which conclusions are made. This theory was propounded by Garmezy (1993) and further explained by Rutter (1985), Werner and Smith (1982), and Masten (1989). Hall (2007) cited by Zhou and Landa (2013:406) argues that resilience comprises the capacity to “cope well with adversity” and to “preserve and adapt when things go awry”. Resilience encompasses, therefore, an aptitude of an individual to recuperate from the adversarial man-made or natural risk to human survival. In this study, resilience is measured by how fictional

characters in Ndebele short stories react to adverse economic, political, and social turbulences that Zimbabweans experienced in the post-2000 period. Although the theory is at its infant stage in literary criticism, Resilience theory is relevant in studying the tenacity shown by characters living under dystopian conditions like the post-2000 Zimbabwean setting of life-threatening suffering. The main emphasis is on the ordinary people's capability to survive and adapt to new economic, social, and political circumstances; as well as buoyantly changing their traditional identities and transmuting them into mutable ones. Many of the short stories investigated in this section are set in urban Zimbabwe and South Africa, therefore making the urban space the main site for the staging of survival strategies. Various short stories analysed reveal that survival and coping strategies popular among the downtrodden during the crisis era include migration, resistance, rebellion, commercial sex work, corruption, adaptation to alternative livelihoods among other strategies that are discussed below. However, what is worrying in the portrayal of the coping strategies is that some characters give up on hope. They embrace coping strategies like crime, theft, and commercial sex work which are dangerous forms of survival strategies. According to Bird and Prowse (2009:10), such adversarial forms of coping "may support short-term survival while undermining wellbeing in the medium to long-term". These survival mechanisms tend to damage one's social status since they are regarded as degrading, lacking self-control, and uncultured defilements of the acts of nature.



### 5.10.1 Representations of activism, resistance, and demonstrations as political survival in the short stories

The objective of this section is to examine the literary representations of survival and coping strategies adopted by characters in dealing with the political problems in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The years from 2000 to 2009 in Zimbabwe were characterised by a political crisis that drove the country into intolerance and violence. Life during this decade was coloured by political disenchantment and hopelessness. Subsequently, characters were forced to adopt resilience, resistance, and demonstrations in dealing with political repression and onslaughts from a tyrannical regime. Inspired by the ideas of wa Thiong'o, writers call for productive violence as a tool for liberation. According to wa Thiong'o (1972:26), "Violence to change an individual, unjust social order is not savagery, it purifies man". Precisely, wa Thiong'o instigates the populace to physically face violence from tyrannical régimes head-on. Informed by these ideas, Ndebele short stories under study encourage the general public in Zimbabwe to be proactive in the fight against political marginalisation and persecution that are principally concocted by the leadership in the country.

Writers advocate militant democratisation strategies in whatever form. In the short story *Imbongi yodumo* by Muza, extracted from the anthology *Sinqondephi Manje? Indatshana zaseZimbabwe* (2014) the politically marginalised are encouraged to use protest and what can be termed "constructive violence" (Haque, 2016:2) to open up the political space for everyone. The protagonist in the short story, Mr.X, also called the Poetry

Slammer, is a political activist who frequents The Café where he mesmerises the audience with poetry that centres on ordinary people's struggles in Zimbabwe. Mr. X is always quarrelling with his father, a war veteran, over the government's policy that those who fought for the liberation of the country must monopolise the narration of the country.

Their conversations focus on what the freedom fighters did for Zimbabwe and the belief that everyone should be grateful for their sacrifices. However, the Poet Slammer does not see the value of narrating the past when the nation is in fresh political turmoil as illustrated by a protest rally in Zimbabwe Grounds. Mr. X decides to join the protest and he is shot and killed by the police officers sent by the government to disperse the protesters. Although Mr. X dies without witnessing the political change, he at least died trying to reform Zimbabwe's poisoned political landscape. His death is supposed to inspire the people to be aggressive in the struggle to politically liberate themselves from domination and subjugation. In other words, the writer does not see any virtue in passiveness and compliance in politically marginalised Zimbabweans. He is killed while wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with Malcolm X's portrait at the back as if to symbolise his resilience "by all means necessary", an expression popularised by the black American human rights activist and icon. To use Haque (2016)'s arguments, the writer requests and exhorts the politically oppressed to be vigorous partakers and agents rather than onlookers in the change process so that they can make a new Zimbabwe for themselves. The author's attitude is comparable to Fanon's (1963) belief that if society is governed through violence, its members should respond through violence, or else the oppressor will continue dehumanising them.

The issues of resilience, hope, and agency during times of political crisis are further explored in *Bayeza*. Resilience is depicted in such a way that it is possible to claim some space for political survival. Through the use of literary onomastics, Mlalazi focuses on characters that confront the system to overcome political adversity in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Mlalazi notes that the increasing political mess of the Zimbabwean polity characterised by vote-rigging, violence, and intolerance has orchestrated a bigger sense of urgency to alleviate the effects of this crisis. Resilient characters have a decent understanding of their capabilities in dealing with the perplexing political difficulties and this drives them to act so as to change the existing political patterns. *Bayeza* is a short story that depicts political challenges faced by Mr. Nkani, a school teacher and an aspiring member of parliament on the side of the opposition party. As a member of the opposition, he is harassed and beaten by the members of the ruling party's youth league, assisted by the police. His persecution does not lead to despair and surrender but, motivated by the connotations that his name carry, which, in the words of Mlambo (2013b:36), "means to be unwavering, being stubborn and tenaciously soldering on", Nkani confronts the political situation head-on. As a civil servant wallowing in poverty, Nkani, showing stubborn determination, decides to join politics as a member of parliament to be part of the process of crafting legislation that can bring change. His position as a teacher also reveals that he is an educated person with a potential of salvaging the situation. Commenting on the strengths of Nkani, Mlambo (2013a:37) argues that:

The fact that he is a school teacher also adds another dimension to the author's vision of survival mechanisms—he is not just an ignorant political opportunist but an educated person with some sense of enlightenment. This implies that being a respected member of the community and fairly educated, Mr. Nkani has the potential to lead the people, represent them in government, and courageously transform the political terrain—which is a true mark of democratic processes desirable processes desirable in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa.

Furthermore, Mr Nkani is depicted as a responsible person, not enslaved by his level of education when he engages in defensive violence against the youths from the ruling party. Assisted by the youths from his party, Nkani is seen chasing after his adversaries. What is also outstanding about the representation of resilience in the short story is that members of the community united in support of Mr. Nkani. The writer remarks that:

*Leliqembu lalo liyamemeza, litshaya amakhwelo, liphosa amatshe—khonokho obekusenziwa ngama Green Bomber exotshanisa uMnunzana Nkani. Ixuku leli lilabobaba labomama, labantwana, kuzothi emva kwabo kulomgaxla walapha elokisthini, uGinger. Ezikhathini ezinengi uGinger kakhonkothi, kenzini. Kodwa khathesi, uyakhonkotha, encedisa abaxotshanisa amaGreen Bomber. (113)*

(This is another team too, it is shouting, whistling, and throwing stones - the very thing that was done by the Green Bombers as they were chasing Mr Nkani. This multitude has fathers, mothers, and children, and then behind the multitude there is Ginger, the useless dog of that location. In most cases, Ginger does not bark. But now, Ginger is barking, helping the people who are in pursuit of the Green Bombers).

The unity of purpose against autocratic governance is demonstrated by the downtrodden when they refuse to normalise or naturalise intimidation, thuggery, violence, and coercion in the country's politics. Their activism and

collective efforts are also inspired by the meaning of one the child characters's name in the short story, Lungisani. Lungisani is a popular Ndebele name which is in its plural form meaning fix and carries the implication of a collective effort. Participants in the confrontation with the youth militia are committed to sorting out the political mess through a collaborative act that leads to acceptance of diversity, tolerance, and inclusivity.

As much as the two short stories insinuate that constructive confrontation and violence are critical ingredients in coping and surviving pervasive toxic political culture, it should be noted that violence is effective as short term strategy. If the use of violence as a coping mechanism is normalised, this may lead to a culture where “violence and animosity become ingrained into the psyche of the youths, crippling their sense of cohesion and how to deal with the difference in society” (Moyo, 2017:122). A lecturer of Literature at the University of Zimbabwe also argued that agitating for counter-violence is retrogressive in the development of Zimbabwean literature in African languages because it has the potential of damaging the social fabric beyond repair. However, the ultimate weakness of violence is that it becomes a spiral that is largely inclined to destruction rather than diminishing the problems. His observation resonates with Chirombe (2019:160) when he opines that:

Engaging in violence might multiply and propagate problems that affect the society. Returning violent act with violence multiplies violence. Through violence, the masses might manage the problem but fail to come up with concrete solutions. Violence might also increase hatred, abhorrence and anathema.

Mlalazi has also brought out the subject of dialogue and negotiation as an instrument for attaining transformation in the authoritarian political landscape in Zimbabwe. He achieves this by carefully naming one of the militia members Persuade. The name Persuade is deliberately bestowed on this character to show the benefits of engaging each other to the extent of reaching a compromise. During election times, political parties are instructed to use manifestos that will convince people to vote for them. Moyo (2017:212) notes that there is value in returning to the tenets of *Ubuntu* where a “society is measured by the ways and extent to which they palaver-engage in reasoned contestations as a way of narrowing differences to arrive at a consensus”. In an interview, one academic noted that:

Although it is noble to use protest and violence when possibilities of dialogue are frustrated, forcefulness can be evaded by following political settlements through all-encompassing dialogue. Dialogue is an important tool to avoid wars, coups, and uprisings.

Correspondingly, the street name, *Khumbulani* (Remember) can be viewed as an appeal to the people of Matabeleland to remember *Gukurahundi* atrocities that were coordinated by the ruling party to marginalise the opposition and its supporters in the 1980s. It can, therefore, be argued that through the street name, individuals are advised to cope and survive the post-2000 political crisis with such historical madness in their minds.

The analysis of short stories that portray the coping strategies adopted by characters reveals that the post-2000 period experienced authoritarianism, intolerance, oppression, and the dehumanisation of ordinary people who did not support the ruling party. The existence of bleak political livelihoods forces

victims to embark on political survival tactics that give them, hope that a man-made and harsh system can be supplanted by one that appeals to the majority. Challenging the idea of subservience and silence, the Zimbabwean people are conscious of the political obligation that inhabitants have to restructure the nation's political institutions and mannerisms. The young and the old demonstrate a high level of patriotism that rebels against the failure of leadership. The following section explores the literary depictions of the informal sector and *Kiya-Kiya* actions as resilient coping strategies in the face of the economic crisis.

### **5.10.2 Depictions of kukiya-kiya economy in selected short stories**

Despite the substantial economic ruin characterised by closure of companies, retrenchment, unemployment, and hyperinflation, ordinary Zimbabweans, especially women characters negotiate their perilous economic circumstances through resilience and deployment of agency. This section, therefore, examines Ndebele short stories that bring out the resilience of the ordinary people in the context of the post-2000 crisis. It appreciates the self-confident, vigorous, astute, and self-determining efforts that the ordinary person mobilises and deploys to deal with the tough economic situations. Kabonga (2020:192) argues that Zimbabweans were left with no option but “to innovate, show resourcefulness and ingenuity in generating various forms of capital to survive the scathing crisis”. As a way to mitigate the effects of a failing economy, countless ordinary people venture into numerous informal trading options popularly known as the *kukiya-kiya* economy (Kandenge, 2012, Chagonda, 2015, Kabonga, 2020).

According to Jones (2010), the Shona expression *kukiya-kiya* means manifold practices of economic engagements for survival which replaced the formal economy in post-2000 Zimbabwe. *Kukiya-kiya* in this study refers to endeavors by ordinary Zimbabweans to deal with the chaos of an economy in substantial postcolonial dysfunction. The adoption of *kukiya-kiya* in the short stories under study is valuable in unpacking the agency that is exhibited by characters in trying to survive the treacherous post-2000 economic setting. The strategies of several *kukiya-kiya* sources of revenue which include cross border trade, vending, black market trading of forex and basic commodities, and vending of second-hand clothes are depicted in some of the short stories.

Writers like Bulawayo are aware that it was the deployment of agency that enabled Zimbabweans to survive the volatile economy. This is reflected in her short story *Lokhu lalokhu-yimpilo leyo* where the narrator argues that many people now survive through vending different foodstuffs on the streets of Bulawayo. She remarks:

*Sokuyibu thenga kimi, thenga ngapha. Akusaqedakali. Nank' umumb' ovel' eplazini straight. Hawuuu, Bhoza, thenga phela inhlanzi ezifrayiweyo, fresh from es'bhakabhakeni. (54)*

(Now you hear people shouting 'buy from me', 'buy here'. There is chaos. Here are the green mealies straight from the farm. Oh Bhoza, please buy fried fish, fresh from the sky)

This extract shows that vending as a coping mechanism requires resilience because it is an over subscribed entrepreneurial undertaking. It requires



ingenuity and innovation as the narrator is forced to sing, whistle and hiss with the sole purpose of attracting customers. The narrator notes that vending is also disturbing the flow of traffic as a motorist has to swerve and apply brakes to avoid hitting desperate vendors of all ages who have flooded Main Street. The subject of vending is also mentioned in the short story *Imbongi yodumo*, where the mother of the protagonist and other women are vendors who sell assorted wares to feed their families in the township. However, what is significant in this story is the depiction of the tenacity shown by women against municipality police officers who harass them. Put differently, the author recognises the determination of these female characters in waging an endless struggle with municipality by-laws that criminalise their only source of survival. In *Kambe Sisesengabantu Bani?* (2016) Ndlovu fictionalises the reality of the proliferation of vending as a coping mechanism where the main bus terminus, Renkini, in Bulawayo has become a site for such a struggle:

*Nanti ilanga selitshisa phela. Livele livuka litshisa. Nangulubaba impabanga yakhe isize ijuluka. Yena kamemezi, phakathi kwezinto azithengisayo kukhona ikilogo eyiyo emlwela impi enzima kangaka. Kuyaphithizela ke lapha, wonke umuntu uyathengisa, umangale ukuthi ngubani ozathengela abanye. (25)*

(The sun is surely hot. It scotches as it rises. Here is this father, his baldhead is now sweating. But he is not shouting, out of all the wares that he is selling, the bell is waging a great war on his behalf. There is commotion here, everyone is selling, making you wonder who will buy from who).

The vending mechanism stresses resilience and a never-say-die boldness because it attracts and involves almost everyone, therefore, creating an

oversupply. Thus, vendors use all sorts of strategies to lure prospective customers who also lack the financial muscle to buy items on display. . Ndlovu in *Lapha Libhele, Laphaya Lizhingasi* (Second hand clothes and Chinese products everywhere) also shows that others are involved in vending second-hand clothes and low-priced Chinese household items on the streets and pavements of the city of Bulawayo. *Uxolo masitanda* depicts the economic survival strategies adopted by Sidubekile and other Zimbabweans. Sidubekile survives by withdrawing Zimbabwean dollars from the bank and exchanging them with the South African rand in the parallel market. This creativity assists her to buy basic goods like cooking oil sugar and meal-meal which are sold on the blackmarket. The same short story shows that the collapse of the local currency forces Sidubekile's landlord to demand rentals in forex or in the form of groceries.

The anthology *Thaph' Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana, Ilifa Lakho* (2010) also contains short stories that portray the existence of the black market where ordinary citizens buy basic goods in forex. For example, in *Imihlolo iyahlololana* ordinary people complain about the lack of goods in the formal stores, while the black market is thriving. The same story also notes that commuter omnibus owners no longer accept the Zimbabwean dollar as busfare but prefer to be paid in forex. Through the creation of the black market and a deliberate stance not to accept the worthless Zimbabwean dollar as a legal tender, ordinary and poverty-stricken communities are demonstrating resilience. They refuse to be overwhelmed by the economic situation but devise ways of surviving the economic circumstances that threaten their existence.

In *Xolela Inja Yakho Baba* (Forgive your dog, father), Mpofu portrays the livelihood strategies adopted by the rural teachers in an endeavor to survive the hyper-inflationary economic environment. Rural teachers in Mkhubazi, Nhlanguano, and Mabhandanda schools in the district of Tsholotsho in Matabeleland Province are depicted as civil servants who have abandoned their work stations to engage in some informal sector activities meant to supplement their meagre salaries. Mpofu notes that teachers have lost faith in their employer in as far as their working conditions of service are concerned. As civil servants, teachers are among the underpaid workers in Zimbabwe. The plight of teachers is narrated through Mdluli, a school inspector, who discovers teachers are always absent from school especially the heads of the schools. One of the headmasters argues that he is a modern head teacher with sympathy for the suffering teachers. This has forced him to allow teachers to be absent from work, providing them with the opportunity to explore other avenues of supplementing their income:

*Umpathisikolo, uMnu Nhliziyo ubekade kuthiwa ulokhe wahamba ngempelaviki waya emzini wakhe eNkayi lapho akwakubikwa ukuthi inkabi zakhe ezimbili zazingabonakali. Lotisha Ngozi laye wayengekho esuke kuthangi, ngoMvulo emini, esiya koBulawayo ukuthi ayebona ukuthi umsika wakhe koSekusile uqhuba njani. Kuthiwa ubevele ekwazi ukuthi utitshanhloko kabuyi kuleyoviki, yikho laye wathi kungcono ayokondla izifu zakhe. (1)*

(Mr Nhliziyo, the headmaster, is reported to have gone to his homestead in Nkayi last weekend to seek his two oxen that went missing. Mr Ngozi the school teacher was absent too. He left a day before yesterday on Monday and went to Bulawayo to check progress in his Sekusile flea market stand. It is reported that he knew that the headmaster was not coming that week, that is why he decided to go and nurture his business.

The above quotation shows how teachers respond to their declining conditions of service, especially in terms of remuneration which has negative effects on the education system because they join the informal sector without leaving their profession. Engaging in various money-generating projects like rearing cattle and running fleamarkets demonstrate that there is an informal mechanism that is more lucrative than teaching and receiving a salary in worthless Zimbabwean dollar. Although the response of the teachers reveals a sense of agency in light of the Zimbabwean economic crisis, this type of resilience has the effect of compromising the education system and carries the risk of being dismissed from work due to continuous absenteeism.

Zondo in his short story *Imibhida Yinyama Batwabami* (Vegetables is meat my children) explores the creativity of Halimana's family in managing the difficult economic situation that denies them a proper breakfast with bread and meals served with meat. This family is forced by the twisted economy to be resourceful and make ends meet without some of the luxuries associated with the diet of people staying in urban settings. Halimana is portrayed as a resilient character who manages to survive the food dilemma as we see him opting to substitute meat with vegetables whilst opting for the traditional meal referred to as *inkobe* instead of bread. Halimana goes out of his way to find different innovative recipes for preparing vegetables so that the vegetables become tasty and enjoyable to his children. He buys all kinds of vegetables like *ikhabitshi* (cabbage), *itshomoliya* (green vegetables), *irepu* (rape), *ispinatshi* (spinach), and other traditional vegetable dishes such as *idelele* (okra) and *umfushwa* (dried vegetables). The availability of these alternatives is an indication of a striving urban agriculture where some people in the

urban areas resorted to the cultivation of vegetables for sale as methods of self-sustenance. The author says:

*'Wayethemba imibhida eyayivela ezivandeni zabantu lasemakete'*.(224)

(Halimana trusted the vegetables from people's gardens and those sold by people at the market).

Furthermore, the author dramatises Halimana and his wife, MaKhabo, discussing the benefits of adopting traditional food into their household diet as a coping mechanism since bread that is sold in the black market has become expensive. It also displays the extent of poverty and hunger that the ordinary Zimbabwean experienced during the decade of the crisis. This shows the resilience of the urban population in hedging themselves against hunger as they adopt rural livelihood strategies in urban settings.

The findings on the literary representation of *kukiya-kiya* in the informal sector show that agency is ever-present among ordinary people as they creatively face the economic challenges spawned by the crisis era. The characters depicted in various short stories audaciously and irrepressibly try to rebuild their economic cosmos to make it at least manageable. Nonetheless, *kukiya-kiya* activities are largely illegal, therefore compromising its viability, capacity, effectiveness, and sustainability as a strategy to cope with economic meltdown in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the act of *kukiya-kiya* is depicted as an individual endurance tactic without proper coordination and empathy for the benefit of the majority. For example, teachers who embark on the informal sector contribute towards

the collapse of the educational sector in the country. In other words, the *kukiya-kiya* deals by the downtrodden have terrible aftermaths on the morals and ethics of the population since individuals concentrate on survival by any means necessary. Those who fail to make it the *kukiya-kiya* economy opt to leave Zimbabwe and be economic migrants in the diaspora. The theme of economic migrancy as a coping and survival mechanism is explored in the next section.

### **5.10.3 Migration as a coping strategy in Ndebele short stories**

This section of the chapter is on the literary representation of migration as a coping and survival strategy by ordinary people during the post-2000 economic predicament in Zimbabwe. The central argument in this section is that through migration, characters are able to show courage and resilience to counter a perpetually worsening state of affairs for their survival. Migration is a broad concept but it generally refers to a human phenomenon where people move from one residence in search of better livelihoods (Tevera and Zinyama, 2002, Crush and Tevera, 2010, Dzingirai, Egger, Landau, Litchfield, Mutopo, Nyikahadzoi, 2015). Hiebert (2009) cited in Overvag (2011) argues that migration involves transfer of people from one domiciliary location to another. Although not a new act of survival, migration has been part of Zimbabwean history from the colonial to the post-independence period, especially in the southern part of the country which covers Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. However, migration became topical in various fields especially in academia after the historical post-2000 period as more people pursued a better life outside the country (Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012,

Hammaer, McGregor, and Landau 2010). Since the post-2000 period, migration patterns have become intensive, massive and stretched to unprecedented levels to an extent that scholars have denoted such relocations as an exodus (Crush and Tevera, 2010).

The scattering and dispersal of Zimbabweans is attributed to many dynamics. According to Madebwe and Madebwe (2017:27)

Migration was caused by inter-related factors ranging from political and economic instability, poverty, low returns to labour, unemployment, increased informalisation of the economy, fluctuation in prices of basic commodities and their erratic supply.

Chipfupa (2016: 58) also argues, in this respect, that:

In post-2000 Zimbabwe, migration has been necessitated by the search for the proverbial pastures in neighboring countries and overseas, in a bid to escape untenable socio-economic and political problems.

The above quote demonstrates the suffocating situation in Zimbabwe that forces many people to run away to other spaces that promise to deliver remedy for their needs and wants. On the Ndebele short story of the same period, the observation is that migration as a social occurrence has been deployed by fictional characters as an act of vacating spaces of poverty. Writers observe that political, economic, and social difficulties make Zimbabwe a restricted space while migration to the United Kingdom, South Africa and other countries offers them an opportunity to live in empowering spaces.

Historically, migration in Zimbabwean literature has tended to concentrate on the movement of male characters. Yet, since 2000, owing to the economic meltdown and shrinking employment opportunities in the formal sector, it has been realised that migration is no longer gendered, with women characters demonstrating resilience and agency by leaving Zimbabwe. A thoughtful understanding of migration as an act of political and economic emancipation is captured in the short stories *Siphepheli*, *Wafa-Wafa* (Sudden death), and *Kwandlela ziyaphambana*.

Bulawayo in *Isiphepheli* explains how the female character decides to be an illegal immigrant without rights because of economic and political desperation. Bulawayo is honest to mention that life in the host nations is not rosy. The protagonist is de-skilled, racially abused, and ill-treated in demeaning and degrading employment because she is an illegal immigrant. As a mother, despite harsh conditions directed at her, she remains resolute because she has a family to provide for back home. Her husband remains in Zimbabwe to take care of their two children. Without a husband in the diaspora, the protagonist remains faithful to her husband only to discover later through a telephonic conversation with one of her children that the husband has a girlfriend who sleeps with him in their matrimonial bed.

Blessing Masariri's short story *Wafa-Wafa* plainly and adeptly captures the sad economic memories of the post-2000 period in Zimbabwe which force people to migrate to the diaspora. This period is personally painful for Rossana and her husband Simba. Rosanna is forced to leave her respected profession as a teacher and assume a new identity as Agnes in the care-giving day centre. She assumes a new name because her visa makes her



a visitor who is not allowed to work during her stay in England. Her deliberate action of changing her name is a survival strategy to assimilate, assume multiple identities or dual identities so that she is able to maneuver in a local economic and social environment without fear of losing her job and of deportation. According to Vertovec (2001), there are challenges in living in two worlds where prohibited migrants in some cases are forced to change their identities to fit in economic structure of the host countries. As an illegal economic refugee, Rossana has no option but to tactically mask her identity, making her obscure to circumvent immigration regulations of the host nation. Identity masking in the short story is portrayed as a deviant and criminal act, but, at the same time, a coping ploy adopted by characters running away from a collapsing economy.

Novuyo Rosa Tshuma's short story *Kwandlela ziyaphambana*, elucidates the challenges and misfortunes encountered by an unnamed Zimbabwean migrant starting from visa application to arrival in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the hunt for greener pastures. The story focuses on the resilience displayed by those characters who are determined to escape Zimbabwe's poverty. In *Kwandlela ziyaphaphambana*, the writer crafts a colourful image of the processes of migrating through a young lady's journey from Zimbabwe to South Africa in anticipation of getting employed and saving up money for university studies. The process of acquiring a visa to legally travel to South Africa is depicted as burdensome. The protagonist is forced by circumstances to seduce a police officer by giving him her contacts so that her fingerprints are processed on time. The act of giving her contacts to the male police officer is a fake assurance for a sexual relationship. Furthermore, the migrant has to face an endless queue at the South African

Embassy where her visa application is dropped. Out of desperation, she is forced to buy position five from resourceful persons that hawk their spots in the queue. As a first-time visitor to South Africa, the nameless character, through the journey motif, discovers that out-migration is a challenging task. With endless queues, discourteous and uncaring immigration personnel, she is forced to build a temporal sisterhood with Tari, a clever cross-border trader who is familiar with the hustles at the immigration points for her to successfully cross into the Promised Land. Mlambo (2013a:140) notes that the nameless protagonist can migrate and cope with the tiresome process of migration because of her “wisdom, wit and cunning mind”.

*Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma* (2014), written by Ndebele migrant writers who call themselves Abalobi Bakithi, is, up to date the most contemporary anthology of short stories on migration by Zimbabwean authors using the medium of Ndebele language. In their first anthology of short stories under one collection, with its setting in Johannesburg, various contributors focus on how ordinary people leave Zimbabwe. All the authors in the anthology concur that Zimbabweans who flee to South Africa are victims of economic, political, and human rights abuses in their motherland. According to the writers, life in Zimbabwe is characterised by grinding poverty due to the failures of leadership. This is what explains why the anthology conveys the story of migrating illegally to South Africa through border jumping. One response from a questionnaire noted that this collection should be read:

As a collection of short stories that depict the dilemma of individuals who fail to raise money to obtain a passport and the visa to legally cross into South Africa. Some are illegal immigrants because they are

waiting for their documents to be processed by the government of Zimbabwe.

Mlambo (2013:137) concurs with the above view when he argues that:

During the crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwe, affording and obtaining a passport was a nightmare to many people as the printing paper for the passport was almost always out of stock. To make matters worse, even if one was fortunate enough to acquire a passport, another stumbling block was the South African government's conditions to get a visa which were prohibitively stringent. Therefore, the surest escape route available was through the act of border jumping.

For one to legally migrate to South Africa, the main entry point is the Beit Bridge border post located near the Limpopo River. This is the official crossing point where travellers are expected to use their valid passports to exit Zimbabwe and enter South Africa. Furthermore, during the crisis period, the South African authorities changed their immigration laws such that Zimbabweans were expected to have a passport with a visa for them to enter their country, except civil servants. Since acquiring a passport and visa was difficult during the crisis decade, many desperate people resorted to border jumping as an escape route. Commenting on the depiction of border jumping in Zimbabwean literary texts of the crisis period, Mangena (2018:278) notes that such border jumping had two varieties; either inducing immigration and customs officers to be permitted to cross the official border or exiting through the crocodile-infested Limpopo River. The reasons for migrating are depicted in the short story *Engakubonayo* (What I saw) by Sibindi when he remarks:

*Balapha nje KwaNdonga Ziyaduma ngenxa yokuwakomnotho welizwe. Isizukulwane sikaMzilikazi loMambo sacabanga ukuyaphephela kwelika Tshaka. Ngubani ongakumela ukulumela ngokhuni.(64)*

(They are here at Ndonga Ziyaduma due to economic meltdown which forced the descendents of Mzilikazi and Mambo to seek refuge in Tshaka's nation. Who can withstand this hardship?)

Dube's *Ayingango mlomo* ( Frightening experience) also depicts the nature and levels of poverty that force people to illegally cross into South Africa. Zimbela is forced by the economic situation to be a border jumper:

*Umangoye ubesethanda ukulala eziko lapha ekhaya, sekusatshelwana ingqweqwe zomlomo.Okwamanje sekuyindinda ngoba sewaze wephukela khona eziko lapha. Umlilo awusaphenywa.(21)*

(The cat had developed a habit of sleeping in the fireplace in this home, people sleeping on empty stomachs. As of now, the situation is even dire, there is absolutely nothing to cook in this home. No one even bothers to make fire).

The above quote reconstructs a family that is suffering from hunger as a result of economic challenges. Zimbela, as the father, decides to escape the country with the hope of chancing upon an alternative and better life. However, his demonstration of agency to South Africa is through the illegal point since he has no passport.

*Kwaqala ukwenyukela besehliswa emoteni kuthiwa bawele uNgulukudela ngezinyawo, bevikana lezingwenya zikaLimpopo. Kwakukhona lalezi ezingabantu ingonyama, laba asebehlala ehlathini belindele ukubamba abantu abahluphekileyo, abachapha umfula bewela kwelase South Africa. Babebabamba inkunzi, babemuke omakhalekhukhwini, imali, impahla zokugqoka okuhlanganisa*

*lezicathulo. Uma kukhona amantombazane babande ukubabamba babadlwengule, kwesinye isikhathi baze bababulale. Uzwe sebebizwa kuthiwa zimpisi lamagumaguma.(22)*

(Trouble started as they were made to disembark from the car and cross Ngulukudela on foot, navigating the crocodiles of the Limpopo river. And there were these beast-like people, who now abide in the bush waiting to rob poverty stricken people who cross the river on foot heading to South Africa. They were robbing them of cellphones, money, clothes including shoes. If there were any girls, they usually rape them and at times murder them. That is why they are being referred to as hyenas and amagumaguma/border touts).

The resilience to cross the crocodile-infested river is not enough as he has to brave the poverty-stricken Zimbabweans commonly referred to as *amaguma guma*, people who make a living by robbing border jumpers. Using the experiences of characters who out-migrate as border jumpers, the author emphasises the point that illegal crossing into South Africa is unsafe, indeterminate, and life-threatening.

Despite its unlawfulness and roughness, border jumping takes Zimbela to Johannesburg where he gets a job and is able to support his young wife, maNxeleni back home. However, the infidelity and the pregnancy of maNxeleni in his absence pushes him into a life of alcoholism and numerous sexual affairs with South African women. He finally settles down with Thobekile Mbatha who claims to be from KwaZulu Natal. Because of hunger at home, maNxeleni pleads with Ngcotsha, a *malayitsha* to assist her and her newly born child Cabangani to cross into South Africa to reconcile and unite with Zimbela. MaNxeleni and other border jumpers are assisted to cross the Limpopo River without passports

The writer also shows that border jumping has its challenges considering that Limpopo is a deep, wide, and crocodile infested river. Metaphorically, the Limpopo River is significant in many ways for border jumpers as illustrated in the short story. Firstly it marks the frontier between crisis-ridden Zimbabwe and South Africa, the place of opportunities, and therefore making it an exit space where border jumpers can plunge and find themselves away from Zimbabwe. Secondly, as a gateway to South Africa, the Limpopo River is ambivalent in the sense that it is not all who attempt to swim across who make it to South Africa. This is demonstrated by the 'safe' crossing of many border jumpers and the drowning of maNxeleni and others who lost their lives inside this river. Like other wide, big, and deep rivers, Limpopo can be a connection and at the same time an obstruction or an impediment in individual and group excursions. Although maNxeleni is picked up by white people who hunt crocodiles in the Limpopo River, her near-death experience makes everyone aware of the dangers of crossing it. Despite the existence of the river, writers note that as long as Zimbabweans are consumed by poverty and hunger, border jumping by whatever means available remains the main route to South Africa.

Those who make it to South Africa find it difficult to get employment. The narrator says that:

*IGoli yalamhla ayisafani leyayizolo kusadliwa idanga lomhlaba. Umsebenzi ubutholakala kalula, abantu bekhetha imisebenzi abayithandayo bayekele abangasathandi khona. Okwamanje akusela lethutshana leli elokuthi uvuke uyebambabamba uthole okuzindibilitshi akungatheni. Amathuba asencinta iso lentwala. (32).*

(The present day Johannesburg is different from that of yesterday where people were enjoying the fruit of the land. You could easily get a job and people were choosing the jobs they liked and leaving the ones they disliked. Now there is no chance of being employed and get a few cents. The chances are so minute).

The above extract suggests that surviving in Johannesburg is now an uphill task because of limited employment opportunities. A significant number of characters in other short stories from the same collection have no reliable sources of income and livelihoods which push them into crime and commercial sex work as coping strategies.

An examination of migration as a survival strategy in the above short stories shows that the economic crisis as adversity did not give birth to hopelessness and resignation, but, on the contrary, characters aggressively partake in out-migration against the constricting economic space as a coping strategy. Their attempts to escape the economic meltdown require a great skill of resilience starting with the process of acquiring the travel documents, the process of migration, and stay in the host countries. Those who migrate to South Africa risk their lives by crossing the Limpopo, a river that does not guarantee safe passage to the imagined greener pastures. Some make it to Johannesburg, the economic capital of South Africa, where the livelihoods of the migrants are threatened by unemployment, forcing them to hastily adjust through other alternative survival mechanisms. Evidence from the short stories shows that economic desperation inspires individuals to make resilient decisions for their survival and the survival of their dependents. Most characters resort to anti-social behaviours like crime and prostitution

for coping with the demands of life in the Diaspora. This sub-type of resilient behaviour is explored in the next section of the chapter.

#### **5.10.4 Depiction of Crime as a survival strategy in short stories**

Gleaned from the Ndebele short stories is the view that since the commencement of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe in 2000, a rising number of male and female characters have adopted crime as a survival strategy. An all embracing definition of crime is difficult to determine because criminal behaviours fluctuate through time and values (Henry and Lanier, 1998). Criminology scholars trace the origin of the word crime to a Latin word *crimen*, which refers to an offence considered anti-social and therefore banned and prohibited (Sowmyya, 2011). Crime is viewed as anti-social because criminals profit from exploiting others through deception, craftiness and force. Crime is seen a vice where people gain via wrong-doing. Also significant is criminology is the observation that situations and environments create and nature criminals. In other words, individuals are not born criminals, but economic and geographical locations make them criminals. Guided by the above insights, this study defines crime as deeds that contradict predominant concepts of positive normative behaviour in the African context.

This section of the study scrutinises the role played by crime as a way of life for male and female characters to meet short and long-term objectives. Criminal life became an attractive source of revenue to the unemployed because the post-2000 Zimbabwean economic landscape experienced a



“socioeconomic crisis which culminated in world record inflation rates, widespread poverty, high unemployment, food, and cash shortages” (Kapodogo, Chiweshe, and Muparamoto, 2019). Thus, a proper appreciation of crime should view its existence and prevalence as arising from the prevailing socio-economic climate characterised by fear and hopelessness.

Crime has a long history in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe but the post-2000 period calls for a more nuanced examination of how this way of life spiralled as a direct consequence of the downward ever-changing economic setting. Male characters are not born into crime but rather a nation that is moored in unfair distribution of key resources of life push them into criminal activities. Thieves, pick-pockets’, scammers, robbers, murderers, and commercial sex workers are not economically fortunate enough to shun crime. Put differently, crime reflects the marginalised people’s response to a progressively, disgruntlement- nurturing milieu. Criminal acts illustrated in Ndebele short stories range from petty crimes such a pickpocketing, shoplifting and scams to more serious criminal acts such as murder and robberies. These short stories reveal the relationship between criminality and survival. This approach to the understanding of criminal behaviours resonates with Marxist thought that the instinct for survival takes priority over ethical considerations. Makombe (2011:20) concurs when he observes that:

So when the instinct for survival goes ahead of every other consideration, it follows that questions of integrity, decency and morality are overtaken if not replaced by that need to survive.

The figure of the emigrant as a criminal is underscored in the anthology *Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma* (2014). Zimbabwean male immigrants are constructed as criminal elements involved in sophisticated crimes, theft, and as crooks who deceitfully acquire South African national identity cards as a way of legalising their stay there. In *Engakubonayo* (What I saw) Sibindi presents Mfanyana as a *Malayitsha* (Cross-border transporter), who is a fraud star, and a swindler and who manipulates people into believing that he is selling *khuphafaka* fake identity documents. *Khuphafaka* is a skill where crooks and criminals obtain an authentic identity card of a South African and remove the photo of the rightful owner and replace it with that of an undocumented migrant. This act of resilience can be seen as agency to “establish a sense of belonging, a space where one feels at home and where diasporic identity can be negotiated” (Tsagarousinanou, 2001:170). Khumalo and Danyela approach Sibindi with the aim of ‘transferring’ themselves from Zimbabwe to South African. Their new identities will assist them to be at home in their host community, thus evading detection and deportation. The criminal act of acquiring forged legitimacy reflects that most of these Zimbabweans do not have proper official documents allowing them to live and work in South Africa.

Crime in the form of stealing, robbery and killing is also presented as a coping mode by immigrants in the Diaspora. This shows that Zimbabwean immigrants resort to crime as a survival strategy. Meluleki Sibanda’s short story *Uzulu uphelile ngenkafulakufa* (People are killed with guns) traces the theme of crime where economically-deprived Zimbabwean migrants led by Zakes are robbing and killing people, especially the opulent ones, mostly whites. In the text, the narrator says:

*“Bhudi Zake mfowethu, lamhlanje kumele siyezingela madoda. Azilolwe izikhali lamuhla siyahlasela sicakaze kubondlebezikhanya ilanga eBrynston”.*(138)

*(Zake my dear brother, today we must go hunting. Let us sharpen our weapons and go to Brynston and cause havoc in the whitemen’s territories).*

Brynston, an affluent suburb in Johannesburg, is depicted as a hunting ground because it is a residential place for the opulent white population. The hunting metaphor shows these Zimbabweans have perfected the art of criminality to the extent of knowing the area to be targeted and the weapons to be used. By investigating the metaphor of hunting, we discern that Zimbabwe is now desolate, without a sustainable future, a condition that forces its citizens to find solutions in the foreign lands.

The analysis of Ndebele short stories also shows poverty can be perverted into a subculture of corruption as a coping strategy. Corruption is a slippery concept with no single meaning as it differs from area to area and remains mostly contextual. Dube (2011:31) avers that:

The term corruption originates from a Latin verb *corruptus* which means to break, but as a concept, it is a form of behaviour which departs from ethics, morality, tradition, law and civic value. It is that behaviour of persons and their actions that is immoral, depraved or dishonest especially portrayed through the offering and taking of bribes.

Many literary studies have concentrated on the political corruption inherent among the political elite (Marongedze and Chinouriri 2018:34). However, this

study focuses on the literary depiction of dishonesty, also known as corruption, that has become a lifestyle for many Zimbabweans in the post-2000 era. The corruption displayed by the general populace in the Ndebele short stories is viewed as a reaction to plummeting economic realities of the country. Civil servants who are paid by the government, especially the police officers, are depicted as taking bribes from prostitutes in the short story *Ayivikelwe iBulawayo Sun* (Lets Protect Bulawayo Sun). By presenting individuals who are expected to maintain law and keep society safe degenerating into criminals, the writer is making the point that workers who are generally underpaid and in a worthless currency continue to report for duty as long there are unorthodox openings for coping and surviving in a ruined economy. The dire economic situation in Zimbabwe is displayed as breeding ground for pursuing vices for personal gain. Various government workers represented by the police officers “engage in subversive criminal activity with a clean conscience and a sense of self-justification” (Makombe, 2011:21). The allure of corruption because of poor financial circumstances is further depicted in the short *Uxolo Masitanda* where the protagonist Sidubekile fails to withdraw her money because bank bosses channel the money to the black market. The point is that these bank officials are not disposed to moral debauchery but taking money to the parallel market makes economic sense for their survival.. The clarion call from writers who have the license to judge their communities is that desperate situations call for desperate actions. The corruption that police officers and bank officials are engaged in purifies men as Makombe (2011:24) argues that:

When you live under repressive regime, and all avenues of survival are tightly closed (as all repressive regimes are capable of doing) an opportunity like that simply ceases to be corruption. It becomes a matter of choosing between life and death. It becomes an opportunity to survive.

Commercial sex work or transactional sex in Ndebele short stories is depicted as a noticeable criminal survival tactic adopted by female characters as a way of ameliorating economic malaise. Although commercial sex work has a long history, starting from Rhodesia to post-independent Zimbabwe, the analysis of Zimbabwean short stories set during the post-2000 multi-layered socio-economic problems reveals that the oldest profession is employed by female characters as a viable means of coping of available to them (Nyambi, 2015; Munyoro, 2018; Manyarara, 2014; Mdlongwa, 2015; Kapodogo, Chiweshe and Muparamoto, 2019). According to Magaisa (2001), commercial sex is where women resort to the sale of sexual services for their economic gain. Gardner (2009:329) avers that commercial sex work means “to engage one’s body purely for commercial purposes by providing another with sexual gratification”. Commercial sex work takes a variety of forms in the sense that sex is traded for school fees, accommodation, and any amount of money. It is therefore argued in this study that women are pushed into sex work because of poverty.

Guided by the above observation, this study argues that commercial sex work means women engaging in sexual affairs with men in exchange for assistance in such areas as clothing, accommodation, rentals and food, and any other form of compensation. Furthermore, it is observed that there are certain push factors that prompt individuals to engage in sex work. In

Zimbabwe, the economic meltdown is the chief culprit since sex work is linked to economics. As will be demonstrated in the analysis of the Ndebele short stories, in the absence of income-generating and employment opportunities, commercial sex work offers the poor female characters the prospects to make a living. It is also significant to note that commercial sex work practice among African communities, including Zimbabwe is discouraged. Those who engage in commercial sex work are ostracised and persecuted because their trade is viewed undignified. Nyambi 2015:1) remarks that:

In Zimbabwe, as in most traditionally conservative, patriarchal, and Christian-dominated countries, female sex work is abhorred on moral grounds as an unbecoming means of livelihood which takes away the practising women's social respectability.

Reasons given to dismiss this sexual practice is that it is deviant and immoral (Wojcicki, 2002). However, advocates of commercial sex work argue that although morality is a human attribute for everyone to endeavour to uphold, sex work is a sign of female agency in a society suffering from a severe economic crisis. The argument is that life in post-2000 Zimbabwe is not normal, life operates at an abnormal level where characters have to strive to survive by all means necessary, making sex work a contextually pragmatic way of fending for the self and others. According to Manyarara (2014:15) characters in literary texts who turn into sex work:

... generally display awareness of the cardinal virtues of life; that is, they have a strong sense of *ubuntu* but find themselves compromising ingrained ethical and moral values for the survival of their families and communities.

The reality of flourishing commercial sex work as a coping mechanism against poverty is depicted in the short story, *Ayivikelwe iBulawayo Sun* where Nono and Dudu are portrayed as commercial sex workers who frequent a popular hotel in Bulawayo. The push and pull factors in sex work by these two characters are revealed when the narrator points out that:

*Lelolanga ke kwasetshenzwa okwamagama. Bayithola eyokubhadala irenti njengoba nje inyanga yayisiphela. (23)*

(On that day the job was done to the fullest. They got money for paying rentals since it was towards the end of the month).

The lucrative nature of commercial sex work is portrayed in the same story when Nono remarks that they had a fruitful weekend:

*Tshomi sikesasebenza impela. Mina phela izikwelede besezingihlasele. Langale ekhaya besebefile ngendlala.... (23)*

(We really worked. As for me, I was deep in debt. Even back home hunger had taken a toll on them).

In *Ayivikelwe iBulawayo Sun*, we read about the female characters caught in an economic quagmire that leaves sex work as the only means of sending their children to school, feeding their families, and paying rent.

Despite good financial benefits, the author notes that the sex industry is flooded, and sex workers have to fight for their turf. In the story, Dudu and Nono engage in a successful fight with a rival group called the Street Virgins to secure their territory. Nono and Dudu's determination, dedication, and

self-sacrifice to fight and protect their territory is a performance of desperation for survival. They are prepared to endure physical violence from rival sex workers. For Dudu and Nono, commercial sex work is a do-or-die state of affairs from which the survival of their family depends on. The brand name of the rival gang of commercial sex workers, *Street Virgins*, is ironic in that they have slept with many clients over a period of time. However, the meaning of the brand name should be seen as an entrepreneurial strategy of luring prospective clients with a promise of sexual pleasure that is associated with virgins in an industry that is oversubscribed. It is also a way of manipulating and taking advantage of masculinist society's belief in virginity that almost seems to border on the absurd.

The writer's depiction of commercial sex work shows that it is an illegal occupation with many risks. Initially, Nono and Dudu have to bear with police harassment because sex work is a criminal activity as outlined in the Zimbabwean constitution. Their survival in this unlawful form of hustling is dependent on complex networks of bribes that they give police officers to avoid arrest. Sometimes they are forced to provide sexual entertainment to police officers for them to operate without any hindrance. Secondly, they have to endure physical violence by male clients who are personified by the politician called Senator in the short story. Nono recalls an incident where she is hired by the politician who refuses to pay her after a night of providing sexual indulgence:

*Ekuseni sengicela imali yami kuqale ukungitshela umbhedo, kuthi kuzabiza amapholisa loba abafana bakho bangitshaye. Ngahle ngakutshela ukuthi mina kangidliwa mahala,ngiyaphuma egedini*



*nginqunu uzulu wonke angibone, kangilasithunzi okumele ngisivikele.*  
(20)

(In the morning when I demanded my dues, he started telling me senseless stories, saying he will call the police or his boys to come and bash me. I told him point blank that I cannot give him sex for free, I will storm out of the gate naked and be seen by all and sundry, I have no dignity to protect).

Despite the challenges, sex work, according to the writers, is a rational choice for the economically marginalised female characters.

The subject of commercial sex work is further explored in short stories through female characters who keep numerous boyfriends or extra boyfriends for economic reasons. For example, Taboka in *Indlu encane yisambuzi* (Small House) from the anthology *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* (2016) depends on multiple boyfriends for economic succour. The writer notes that she has sexual relationships with Moyo, Ncube, and Nsingo. These three boyfriends fulfill an entirely economic function in Taboka's life. In *Lolungileyo liyamtshonela ilanga* (Even the innocent die) from the anthology *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2009), Dakamela fictionalises the story of female university students who rely on boyfriends for survival due to the government's failure to fund their studies. Tina, Nyasha, and Tambudzai are students at the University of Zimbabwe who frequent nightclubs where they hookup with older, rich multiple boyfriends for economic support. These sugar daddies help them with money for food and clothes. Buhle in *Ngangangisazi* drawn from the short story collection *Thaph' Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana, Ilifa Lakho* (2010) is also engaged in frequent exchange of sex for money with Mlingi because of poverty in her family. In yet another

short story *Ukudlala Ngomlilo* (Playing with fire), from the same anthology, Hillside Teacher College female students take men for one night stands and long term sexual liaisons in order to be assisted with college fees and accommodation. What is significant in the above short stories is that commercial sex work is not an occupation to be proud of, it is framed as demeaning but female characters manipulate different transactional sexual engagements for economic security and survival. Suffice it to say that commercial sex work is dangerous as female characters expose themselves to HIV through sleeping with multiple clients.

Abalobi Bakithi are some of the contemporary short story writers who thematise commercial sex work in their fictional productions. Various contributors focus on undocumented female migrants who resort to selling their bodies for survival. This is after coming to the recognition that the city of Johannesburg is not as green a pasture as is usually imagined, especially by people from Matabeleland region in Zimbabwe. Most female characters realise that employment opportunities are shrinking and this reality calls for new survival and coping strategy. . Muzondidya (2008:7) notes that “the new migrants have struggled to secure jobs on the South African job market which has, over the years, not been generating enough jobs to absorb both the domestic and foreign supply”. These characters have no wish to return to the ever-worsening situation in Zimbabwe and they settle for selling their bodies for food, accommodation, and money to send home as remittances.

In the short story *Ayimbiwa ngomlomo* (It is easier said than done), Soneni indulges in commercial sex work to earn money so that she can support her family. In the story *Okunje akuzange kubonakale* (We have never seen such)

from the same anthology, Senzi changes her name to Pamela so that she is marketable in the business of selling sex. As a victim of the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe and due to unemployment, Soneni is hardened to an extent that she survives through selling her body. Her determination is inspired by the fact that she has a body part, the vagina, that she can exploit for survival. She tersely articulates her persistent resolve to survive through selling sex when she declares that:

*“Eyethu imali sihamba siyiphethe, siyidla ngesikhathi esifuna ngaso...zonke”.*(121)

(As for us we move around with our money everywhere we go, we spend it as and when we want to, ... all of it).

This is a realisation that, equipped with a vagina and the will-power to survive in Johannesburg, poverty and hunger could not claim her body. In the story by Ncube titled *Ngalubhada*, commercial sex as an experience and a survival strategy is revealed by the character SisiKate who has turned her house into a brothel where Zimbabwean women sell their bodies for material things and money.

Inferences gleaned from the short stories show that crime as a mode of earning a living is a reflection of the desperate economic positions that ordinary migrants find themselves in. Poverty has rendered them insensitive and heartless. They are hardened by the dog-eat-dog system to an extent that their lives grow into a ceaseless struggle for survival based on trickery and immoral engagements. Writers of these short stories display an acute awareness of the material deprivations of male migrants. Instead of

disparaging and being contemptuous of their deviant activities like murdering, stealing, and swindling, they view these actions sympathetically as the function of economic desperation and the will to eke out a living. It is also revealed that crime is popular with male characters while female characters resort to commercial sex work. The emphasis in short stories on female characters is that they are into sex work not as a hobby but as a necessity for their survival. Although towards the end of every short story female characters are either infected or dying from HIV and AIDS, the economic significance of commercial sex work is nevertheless emphasised. Writers underline the fact that commercial sex work is necessitated by poverty and economic obligations.

#### **5.10.5 Representations of coping and survival in the context of HIV and AIDS in *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2006)**

Data from short stories by female writers from the anthology *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2006) show that post-2000 Zimbabwe is a nation plagued by HIV and AIDS where female characters are the most affected. These short stories respond to the threats to society's health and well-being because the disease is killing many people. Also significant in almost all the stories in the collection is the resilience and agency demonstrated by these characters to survive and cope even when infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. Various writers do not simply reflect the fact that the pandemic has no cure but they also seek to empower and equip the communities to cope and survive the scourge of AIDS. This section, therefore, draws and evaluates coping and survival strategies employed by

women characters in alleviating the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS as delineated in various stories. Among the chief coping strategies are disclosure, family support, hope, access to medication, and reconstruction of the infected body.

Ndebele writers who have chosen to write about HIV and AIDS contest the idea that the disease is associated with quick destruction of the body, leading to death. Constructive engagement with HIV and AIDS is exemplified in the short story *Lolungileyo Liyamtshonela ilanga* where Tina, a female university student is forced to defer her law studies because she is infected with HIV. The message in this story is that being infected with the disease does not mean certain death, but the author propagates the necessity of disclosure that leads to family support which, in turn, brings hope to the infected person. Because of disclosure, Tina is supported by her nuclear and extended family to respond favourably to the disease. She receives counselling from her aunt, MaNtini, which inspires her to develop a positive attitude towards her status. Towards the end of the short story she returns to college to finish her law degree.. The writer remarks:

*Ngikhuluma nje, ngenyanga kaNcwabakazi uTina uyabe esamukela isicoco sakhe seBachelor of Laws. Wena ungambona ungala ukuthi uhlezi legcikwane. (8)*

(As I speak, Tina will be graduating with a Bachelor of Laws in August. You can't tell that she is living with HIV and AIDS when you see her.)

The above figuration of Tina ought to be understood within the framework of evolving acceptance that the epidemic is a disease like others. Her determination to live positively and healthy with the disease is shown when

the narrator points out that, “*wasonga ukuthi wayengasoze afe*” (7), (She swore that she would not die), thereby revealing how society is productively engaging with the disease. Her declaration that her top priority is to live longer with the disease “encourages people living with HIV and those affected by the pandemic to hold on in anticipation of a brighter future” (Chitando and Chitando 2008:69). Her stubborn determination is meant to erase the reality that many young people of her age had already succumbed to the pandemic. Chitando and Chitando (2008:66) assert that:

The havoc caused by HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe and other countries in the region has been, and is, staggering. Death has become a way of life. Young people- those who should be most productive and in the prime of life— are being buried with frightening regularity. The pandemic has suffused the African soundscape with unsettling cries of pain. A young professional, a homemaker, a teenage child: the hand of AIDS scoops them up with chilling accuracy.

Tina refuses to be a helpless victim and part of the statistics as she receives care and compassion from health care workers at the university clinic. Her depiction and the portrayal of those characters who care for her in the short story is a progressive in that it insists gazing at the future with hope and not resignation.

In the short story *Isinqumo esinzima* (Hard decision), the author reveals that being HIV positive is not a permit to the graveyard. MaMsinga, in a conversation with her brother, discloses that she has been living with HIV and AIDS for the past six years. Furthermore, she has given birth to a child, Beke, while on anti-retroviral treatment. Her body is still healthy without any signs of destruction by the virus because she has been empowered by health

care workers through various forms of awareness about the pandemic. She is resilient to an extent of reporting her husband to the police after raping her niece, Jenny. She is left to fend for her family after her husband is jailed for raping and infecting Jenny with HIV. This short story is important in two ways. Firstly, it shows the significance of disclosing one's positive status as an act of coping with the disease. Ngoshi and Zhou (2010) argue that narrating inexpressible stories by the wounded has a massive therapeutic and empowering consequence on the victim. Secondly, it demonstrates the resilience of female characters who report their spouses and relatives who are spreading the pandemic through rape. The act of reporting and the subsequent incarceration of the breadwinner is a display of bravery and commitment to making society safe from undesirable characters.

The collection also demonstrates that disclosure of one's status is a common theme in many short stories. In *Nceda abanye mtakamama* (Help others my sibling), the narrator explains that *Kwakukhona okunye okwakuyimfihlo, kodwa ekuphileni kwethu kwalezi zikhathi, kumele nje izinto zichaywe mgceke* (89)(There were some secrets, but in our present day life, we ought to be open about our situations). A similar observation is raised in the short story *Ulwazi ngumthombo wempilo* where the narrator focuses on the life of her uncle who comes back from Johannesburg infected with the pandemic. The narrator is portrayed as a sensitive and compassionate person as shown by her dedication to caring for her uncle during his period of hopelessness and anguish. This depiction highlights the centrality of the family institution as a collective system that affords support in times of crisis. The family is considered resilient as its members show a positive attitude towards the infected and affected person. This results in unity of purpose where the

household feels strong, buoyant, and resourceful in confronting adverse circumstances. This resilience is proven by the narrator and her grandmother who assist her uncle psychologically, physically, and socially in facing HIV and AIDS.

In both stories discussed above, the fundamental benefits of declaring one's positive status lead to family tolerance, acceptance, and support or assistance from different organisations that disseminate information and educational pamphlets on how to live positively with the virus. Organisations that are active in educating society, especially women include the Federation of African Media Women in Zimbabwe (FAMWZ), New Start Centre, and Mzinyathini Adult Literacy Group. These organisations are instruments of empowering women with an appreciation of how HIV and AIDS attacks the body. According to the short stories these organisations emphasise body reconstruction and rebuilding as a survival strategy. Female characters like Tina and others in all short stories are engaged in what Woodward (2003) cited in Musanga and Mukhuba (2019:60) calls 'body projects' which is "an attempt to impose control over their bodies and survive HIV and AIDS". Musanga and Mukhuba (2019:60) further contend that the existence of HIV in one's body is not a death sentence, but that the infected person should:

... demonstrate an awareness of the body as an important site of reconstruction, and this produces a new sort of self-knowledge that has as its object protection, self-mastery, and survival, and that is explicitly linked to the creation of a certain type of life that is in harmony with being HIV positive.



Tina and others engage in lifestyle changes which include eating well and take anti-retroviral drugs to re-vitalise their bodies. Writers demonstrate that human bodies are open to modification, control, supervision, and refurbishment. Furthermore, Tina is depicted as a fighter who has developed into an individual who inspires hope in her community because of her assistance in the local clinic. She has transformed herself to be a teacher who educates people on HIV and AIDS issues.

Information from other stories like *Awungeke ukufihle* ( You cannot hide it) also demonstrates women's resilience as they are depicted as caregivers in households devastated by HIV and AIDS. One respondent in an interview concurred with the above observation:

Zimbabwean literature on the pandemic reveals that HIV and AIDS by nature request a high proportion of sacrifice; love, time, care, and women and girls have excelled on this part. In several literary texts, there is a tendency for female characters to burden themselves with the care of infected victims.

This shows that while females are coping with HIV in literary texts, they not only have to struggle with the pandemic "but are saddled with several other stressful issues that they need to contend with" ( Zhou and Landa 2013:408). Their enemies are male characters that force them into polygamous marriages that expose them to HIV and AIDS. What is focalised is that female characters are vulnerable to pandemics because their voices are muted in matters of sex and sexuality. However, what is significant in these stories is the fortitude displayed by female characters. For example, in *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2006), MaDlamini encourages her daughter Nkazanyana to resist forced marriage in a polygamous setup being pursued

by Mzila, her father. She declares that: *Ngizwile, indlebe zami zivulekile. Ukwendiswa, hatshi. Isithembo hatshi* (40) (I have learnt and understood. Forced marriage no. Polgamous marriage no). In *Ulwazi luyaphilisa* (Knowledge is life ), NaShorai refuses to have sexual intercourse with her husband who has been engaged in a sexual liason in Kwekwe with a girlfriend who lost her husband and two children to the disease. Her husband comes back home seriously ill and unrecognisable, forcing his young children to flee him because of his frail body. It is, therefore, argued that Ndebele writers of short stories on HIV and AIDS encourage and motivate female characters to be proactive and speak out about the risks that expose them to the pandemic. Maintaining silence and secrecy is not celebrated by these writers as it is detrimental to their survival in the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic; it “only worsens the existing pain and shuts out potential support systems and escape routes” (Zhou and Landa, 2013:410). By insisting on resisting to male dominance, writers of these stories are providing women with the power to tap into their resilience and claim triumph over HIV and Aids. The image of women who are resolute in challenging men’s behaviour and beliefs shows the fact that women have assumed a new identity of being hands-on in the nationwide struggles to combat HIV and AIDS.

This concluding section of the chapter examined the coping and survival strategies employed by female characters amid the ravages of HIV and AIDS in the anthology *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2006). Through the portrayal of girls and women, writers appear to advise that female characters have a better chance of triumphing over HIV and AIDS because of their flexibility and adaptability. As a community devastated by the pandemic, they

collectively or individually devise positive strategies and mechanisms to manage, endure painful and stressful situations brought by the disease. Various writers reflect that HIV infections must not be viewed as a death sentence as they encourage the community to be aware and be familiar with old and latest trends of survival in the HIV and AIDS studies. The stories educate society that they can survive the pandemic and that they can reinvent themselves. Additionally, survival mechanisms should incorporate body reconstruction for good health and the safety of the diseased body.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

The chapter deliberated and evaluated how the concept of crisis is contextualised in selected Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe. The chapter argued that writers of these short stories view the crisis as a decisive period in the history of the country where the masses experienced unmitigated difficulty. It has been noted that most of the short stories analysed in this chapter dwell on political, economic, and social crises where political violence and opportunism, corruption, greed, and corruption are narrated within their setting. The chapter also argued that the political crisis triggered the cataclysmic fall of the Zimbabwean economy characterised by a worthless currency, unemployment, poverty and hunger, collapse of essential services and infrastructure. The short stories discussed in this chapter also elucidate the intricacies and misfortunes of HIV and AIDS that the country confronted due to economic collapse. All the short stories analysed in this chapter seem to dwell on the gloomier aspects of the country without any appreciation for the positive aspects because the country was in turmoil.

The chapter also argued that the literary representations of the multi-faceted crisis are not decontextualized, but that these short stories are set in a country plagued with failure of leadership. In this regard, this chapter argued that Zimbabwe is in crisis because of very old people who pursue detrimental policies and programmes that impede the development of the nation. The Ndebele short stories also reflected and refracted the coping and survival strategies adopted by characters to alleviate the socio-economic and political crisis in post-2000 Zimbabwe despite the presence of a clueless leadership. Some of the coping strategies discussed and analysed include resistance, rebellion, migration, crime and *kukiya-kiya* in the informal sector. However, some of these survival mechanisms are not sustainable because they are not coordinated, there are, therefore, depicted as individual efforts to temporarily assuage the effects of the crisis.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conclusion and summary of the major findings of the literary representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis in the Ndebele short story. The discussion is on the following short story anthologies, *Vala Singafohleli Lesisilo* (2006), *Thaph`Uluju: Iqoqo Lezindatshana*, *Ilifa Lakho* (2010), *Siqondephi Manje? Indatshana zase Zimbabwe* (2014), *Izigigaba zakwa Ndongaziyaduma* (2014) and *Kambe Sesingabantu Bani?* (2016). The short stories drawn from the above collections are used as primary sources because they are set in the historic period of post-2000 when the country experienced the unprecedented crisis that resulted in the near-collapse of everything. Apart from presenting the research findings, this chapter also gives recommendations for future and possible future studies that can be undertaken on Ndebele short stories published in the post-2000 period.

#### 6.2 Research Findings

It has been established that the concept of crisis as defined and explained in the medical field is similar to what transpired in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Although the concept of crisis has no direct Ndebele equivalent, through textual analysis of short stories, interviews and questionnaires, the study demonstrated that the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis can be summarised as a political, economic and social disaster which had grave repercussions for the nation's stability and development.

The study observed that crisis of a political nature is one of the major themes raised by writers of short stories. A great deal of the literary comments on the political crisis shows that the country was plagued by various forms of political challenges. Firstly, the study revealed that the nation was afflicted by an extraordinary degree of willful political violence and barbarity after the emergence of the MDC. This was because the party threatened the future of the ruling ZANU PF party that had led the country since 1980. Writers demonstrated that the heavy contestation in the political landscape resulted in the ruling party unleashing political violence against their perceived enemies. The same authors also noted that the opposition engaged in self-defence violence to stop brutalisation by the ruling party.

Secondly, the research also ascertained that the abandonment political morality by the ruling elite and the opposition led to the abuse of the youths who were used as foot soldiers in perpetrating political violence. Thematising political violence, writers of short stories show how the ruling party targets desperate and unemployed youths for manipulation for their survival. Their major concern is that the nation's politics has become poisoned by the mutilated mindset of the youths who have been conditioned to hate and kill political opponents.

Thirdly, the study established that Zimbabwe is in political crisis because of an old leadership that has been in power since 1980. The political decline is blamed on Mugabe, his ministers and war veterans who have become old and incapable of taking the nation forward. Their leadership has become clueless and only occupied with the myth that they are the 'first citizens' of the country. Furthermore, they argue that those who never fought in the liberation war can never rule Zimbabwe. Such kind of reasoning is backward and unprogressive in mature democracies and runs afoul of the African worldview that constructs leadership as rotational. The reality of their old age and political bankruptcy involuntarily predisposes them to use unorthodox means to remain in power at the same time executing populist empowerment programmes. The land reform of 2000 is also blamed for its far-reaching economic effects on an economy that was already exhibiting symptoms of suffocation and deterioration.

The study also revealed that the theme of political crisis is shunned by most writers because they fear for their lives since the ruling party is famous for its ruthless tactics of silencing dissenting voices. However, some writers have deployed devices like literary onomastics to comment on the political crisis of the post-2000 period. Names and phrases like Election, Vote and Runoff are used by Bulawayo as a way of avoiding censorship, but readers and critics who are familiar with the history of the country understand their political import. Some writers have deliberately adopted the literary technique of 'not naming' characters with the covert intention that critics and analysts will give names to these characters based on their knowledge of the post-2000 period in Zimbabwe.

This study also found out that the political crisis of post-2000 in Zimbabwe triggered a catastrophic and protracted economic collapse that led to livelihoods challenges never experienced before. Many people could hardly sustain their households due to company closures, retrenchment, unemployment, a worthless currency and hyperinflation. Research findings show that economic implosion caused severe poverty as individuals and families struggled to put food on the table. The economic collapse also compromised service delivery, especially in the health and education sectors. Furthermore, writers have shown that infrastructure was not spared from disintegration and breakdown. The analysis of short stories also showed that economic collapse and stagnation led to the ruralisation of urban lifestyles steeped in degrading and dehumanising living conditions.

Given the economic crisis and poverty, writers of Ndebele short stories revealed that this reality fuelled the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In their fictional representation of the disease in the context of the post-2000 economic crisis, writers argued that poverty spawned commercial sex in exchange for basic needs. Women characters employ sex work as a surviving tool for ameliorating the effects of an economic meltdown. Female characters abandon moral uprightness and ethical behaviour or *ubuntu* for the urgencies of survival. The theme of sex work is deployed by authors to show that characters in the grip of poverty are vulnerable and at high risk of getting infected. Writers used the epidemic as a metaphor for economic collapse and the economic betrayal of the ordinary people.

The research findings of this study show that Zimbabwe reached the zenith of its post -2000 social, political and economic crisis because of the failure



of leadership. Most of the writers blame ZANU PF and its leader, Robert Mugabe, for driving the country to the precipice and ushering in national catastrophes through corruption, ineptitude, and populist but empty policies. Due to old age, ZANU PF leaders subsequently led the country into recurrent underdevelopment and stagnation. Their leadership lacked a vibrant, fresh and progressive vision outside the liberation mantra. This is an alternative explanation to the causes of the crisis since it challenges the ruling party's position that the country is in crisis because of economic sanctions imposed by the West because of the successful land reform in Zimbabwe. Data gathered through interviews and questionnaires also revealed that blaming external forces for the crisis is retrogressive since it hinders the nation from discussing internal dynamics. It is, therefore, concluded that the causes of the post-2000 crisis and the suffering that followed is to be located at the doorstep of political leadership that betrayed the ordinary people.

In light of the political, social, economic and leadership crisis that bedeviled the country, this study demonstrated that Zimbabweans are resilient people. Findings from the research show that despite all the difficulties, Zimbabweans employed creative ways to alleviate the effects of the crisis. Many characters in the short stories studied demonstrated resourcefulness, ingenuity innovativeness and resilience in navigating the multi-faceted crisis. This study observed that characters resisted political persecution through organising demonstrations and participating in elections with the hope of changing the direction and picture of Zimbabwe's landscape. Those that experienced economic challenges and remained in the country engaged in all activities that kept soul and the body together. The main finding is that ordinary people, old and young became a community of hustlers in *kukiya-*

*kiya* informal sector. The need to survive the economic crisis pushed characters into vending, crime, corruption and commercial sex work. Although these are deviant and reprehensible behaviours, the study demonstrated desperate economic realities that rendered most of the victims heartless and insensitive. To the suffering masses, issues of morality and cultural integrity are peripheral if survival is to be achieved.

The study also established that some characters responded to the political and economic crisis by escaping the poverty spaces of Zimbabwe. The theme of out-migration is shown to have been popular during the crisis period as characters sought a better life in neighbouring countries and in Europe, Asia and America. However, the study also revealed that the hunt for better life outside Zimbabwe has its challenges. These include the hazards of border jumping, identity crisis, xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination in host countries. Those who make it in the Diaspora support and empower their families back home through remittances.

Short stories discussed in this study demonstrated the social crisis of HIV and AIDS and the resilience of those who wanted to survive the pandemic. Various short stories repeatedly reminded society that being HIV positive is not a death sentence but through counselling, proper diet and taking ARVs, characters can take control of their bodies and cope with the stress of living with the disease. The emphasis is that disclosure, tolerance and acceptance are the key individual choices in coping with one's positive status. Those living with the scourge are discouraged from engaging in self-damaging behaviours. Those that live with the pandemic are exhorted to show adaptability and flexibility if they hope to live longer.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

In view of the above research findings, the study makes the following recommendations for future practice and future studies:

### **6.3.1 Recommendations for future practice**

1. The study mainly focused on gerontocratic rule as the bane of Zimbabwean politics in the focal short stories. It is therefore recommended that national leadership should be a complex mix of the old and young for leadership renewal and rotation.
2. Sanctions, whether targeted or not, always have an impact on the ordinary people and are often used as diversionary narratives by the ruling elite. Future practice could concentrate on how sanctions impact on the livelihoods of the people and the conduct of national politics.
3. Leaders should refrain from self-enrichment and aggrandisement and work towards the betterment of people livelihoods.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

1. This study was an analysis of Ndebele short stories's literary representations of the post-2000 socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. However, it will be worthwhile for other researchers to explore how short stories from other Zimbabwean officially recognised languages depict the theme of the post-2000 in order to unpack similarities and points of departure.
2. Since the current study examined Ndebele short stories, other researchers may also focus on other forms of literature such as novels, poetry, drama and music to establish the link between literature and the crisis period.
3. It is also important to note that researchers in other fields like history, economics and political science interested in understanding the Zimbabwean post-2000 crisis can also refer to the Ndebele short stories since the study established that writers are also reliable historians and commentators.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview guide for University academics

Dear Respondent

My name is Bhekezakhe Ncube, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is '**Representations of post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories**'. The aim of this study is to analyse the representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. It seeks to examine how male and female writers construct the nature, character, causes and effects of the crisis. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of responding to the questions below. This interview collects data on the themes and concerns that emerge from Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. May you please cooperate and contribute through responding to the questions. Your views could be of immense value to the research because they 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.*

1. What is your understanding the post-2000 socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe?
2. What is the nature of post- 2000 socio-economic and political crisis?
3. In your view, what are the causes of this crisis?
4. What are the effects of these crises on the welfare of the ordinary people?
5. In your view, how have ordinary people and the elite responded to the effects of these crises.

6. Would you classify Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe as literature about the crisis? If yes, state your reasons. If no, state your reasons as well.

7. In your view, are Ndebele authors of short stories providing different perspectives to understandings of Zimbabwean crisis?

8. Can Ndebele short stories be used as an effective tool for understanding post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe?

9. Are these writers of short stories offering any solutions to the crises that they raise? What are the solutions?

## Appendix B: Interview Guide for Authors

Dear Respondents

My name is Bhekezakhe Ncube, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is '**Representations of post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories**'. The aim of this study is to analyse the representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. It seeks to examine how male and female writers construct the nature, character, causes and effects of the crisis. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of responding to the questions below. This interview aims at collecting data on the themes and concerns that emerge from Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. May you please cooperate and contribute through responding to the questions. Your views could be of immense value to the research because the 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.*

1. What inspires you to write Ndebele short stories?
2. What do you write about in your short stories? What are you trying to achieve through your short stories?
3. Looking at the short stories that you have published between 2000 and 2009, what are the issues, grievances and demands that you raise? Why?
4. Would you say that your short stories about post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe can be classified under literature about the crisis? If yes, state your reasons. If no, state your reasons as well.
5. What message do your short stories carry?
6. How have ordinary people and the elite received the message in your short stories?
7. What kind of Zimbabwe do you want to see through your short stories?
8. In your view, what steps can be taken by the Zimbabwean government to alleviate the crisis?

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about your short stories which I have not covered in my questions?

*Thank you for your time and co-operation. If you wish I will send you a copy of my thesis, at least in electronic form, once it has gone through the university assessment processes. Thank you very much.*

## Appendix C: Interview Guide for Publishers

Dear Respondent

My name is Bhekezakhe Ncube, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is '**Representations of post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories**'. The aim of this study is to analyse the representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. It seeks to examine how male and female writers construct the nature, character, causes and effects of the crisis. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of responding to the questions below. This interview aims at collecting data on the themes and concerns that emerge from Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. May you please cooperate and contribute through responding to the questions. Your views could be of immense value to the research because the 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.*

1. What are the aims/ objectives of your publishing company?
2. What are your experiences with Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe?
3. In your view, what are the major themes of Ndebele short story anthologies that you have published?
4. What has been the government response to the short stories that you have published?



5. In your view, how have ordinary people and the elite responded to the effects of these crises.

6. Would you classify Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe as literature about the crisis? If yes, state your reasons. If no, state your reasons as well.

7. In your view, are Ndebele authors of short stories providing different perspectives to understandings of Zimbabwean crisis?

## Appendix D: Questionnaire for University lecturers

Dear Respondent

My name is Bhekezakhe Ncube, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is **'Representations of post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories'**. The aim of this study is to analyse the representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. It examines how male and female writers construct the nature, character, causes and effects of the crisis. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of responding to the questions below. This interview aims at collecting data on themes and concerns that emerge from Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in of the questionnaire. Your views could be of immense value to the research because the 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.*

1. What is your understanding of post-2000 socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe?

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2. What is the nature of post- 2000 socio-economic and political crisis?



5. In your view, how have ordinary people and the elite responded to the effects of these crises?

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6. Would you classify Ndebele short stories set in post- 2000 Zimbabwe as literature about the crisis? If yes, state your reasons. If not, state your reasons as well?

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7 In your view, are Ndebele authors of short stories providing different perspectives to the understanding of Zimbabwean crisis?

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8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of selected Ndebele short stories in their depiction of the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis?

Strengths-----  
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Weaknesses-----  
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## Appendix E: Questionnaire for authors

My name is Bhekezakhe Ncube, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is '**Representations of post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories**'. The aim of this study is to analyse the representations of the post-2000 Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis in selected Ndebele short stories. It examines how male and female writers construct the nature, character, causes and effects of the crisis. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of responding to the questions below. This interview aims at collecting data on themes and concerns that emerge from Ndebele short stories set in post-2000 Zimbabwe. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in of the questionnaire. Your views could be of immense value to the research because the 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.*

1. What inspires you to write Ndebele short stories?

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2. What do you write about in your short stories? What are you trying to achieve through your short stories?

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3. Looking at the short stories that you have published between 2000 and 2009, what are the issues, grievances and demands that you raise? Why?

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4. Would you say that your short stories about post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe? If yes, state your reasons. If not, state your reasons as well.

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5. What kind of Zimbabwe do you want to see through your short stories?--

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6. In your view, what steps can be taken by the Zimbabwean government to alleviate the crisis?

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7. Is there anything else you would like to say about your short stories, which I have not covered in my questions?

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