

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter critically lays out the research design and methodology used in this thesis. Firstly, it explains the research paradigm informing and underpinning the research. The thesis uses the interpretivism research paradigm to show how nonviolent resistance has been used to the benefit of society in Buhera South Constituency in Zimbabwe. Interpretivism helps to explain the link between research objectives, research design and methodology. In this chapter I explain in detail how the research methods specific to the research area were used. The chapter explains and justifies the methodology used. The research largely used qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis.

For purposes of this thesis the paradigm provided a philosophical approach to research. The major four elements of this research are summarised as epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. They help to facilitate an explanation of the methodology used. “The philosophical approach underpins all facets of the study from assessing the general philosophical ideas behind the enquiry to the detailed data collection and analysis procedures” (Creswell, 2003: 3). The philosophical approach in this research helped to underpin the appropriate research tools to be used giving way to appropriate explanation of tools used. Guba and Lincoln (1994:116) buttress the view that “paradigm issues are crucial; no inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach.” Okesina (2020) underscores the importance of a paradigm by stating that “the choice of a paradigm in research clearly shows the research intent and motivation. A paradigm defines a researcher’s “philosophical orientation, or perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of

shared beliefs, that influence what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted” (Okesina, 2020: 58)

Interpretivist paradigm is useful for loose and flexible methodology, such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, ethno-methodology, narrative research or hermeneutics (Edwards & Holland, 2013:16). The aim is to study the experiences of participants and their perceptions. Interpretivism shows that social phenomena are socially constructed thus the aim is to generate meanings and insights from such phenomena.

The methodology in this regard favours qualitative method or approaches in data gathering and analysis. It focuses on the full complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges. The methodology under interpretivism augers well with purposeful sampling techniques and selects individuals and sites that are information rich in conducting research. In short, a paradigm complements a methodology as it is “a shared world view that represents the beliefs and values in a discipline and that guides how problems are solved” (Schwandt, 2001). The methodological process is guided by philosophical beliefs about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values and by the theoretical framework that informs comprehension, interpretation, choice of literature and research practice on a given topic of study. Methodology is where assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge, values, and theory and practice on a given topic come together. A “paradigm hence implies a pattern, structure and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions” (Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlop, 1992:16). Figure 3.1 below shows factors the link between research paradigm, methodology and objectives.

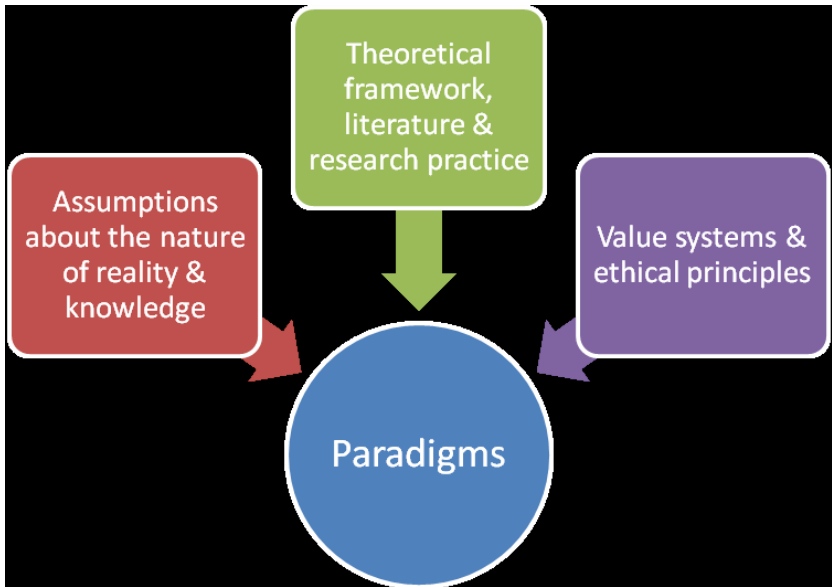


Figure 3.1: The Link between paradigm, theory, principles and knowledge (*Chilisa and Kawulich, 20011: 3*)

The diagram above reflects how choosing appropriate methodology is influenced by the research paradigm in this instance the interpretivism paradigm. In turn, the methodological process is influenced by epistemology, ontology and axiology. A paradigm is a product of theoretical framework and literature study, value systems and ethical practice and assumptions about knowledge and reality.

This research adopted the interpretivist philosophical research paradigm. Interpretivism has its foundation in the works of Max Webber (1864-1920) and Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) “who attempted to establish an objective science of the subjective” (Pullar & Carter 2018). Ferguson (1993: 36) simplified the definition of interpretivism by stating that “at the risk of oversimplification, interpretivism might be simply characterized as the belief that “facts” are not things out in

some objective world waiting to be discovered, but, rather, are the social constructions of humans who apprehend the world through interpretive activity". They delved into the more basic or inherent features, character and qualities of meaningful social action and how meaning can be attributed.

Many research paradigms have been proposed but three main research paradigms stand out namely positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. The difference in the three research paradigms can be explained by the figure below.

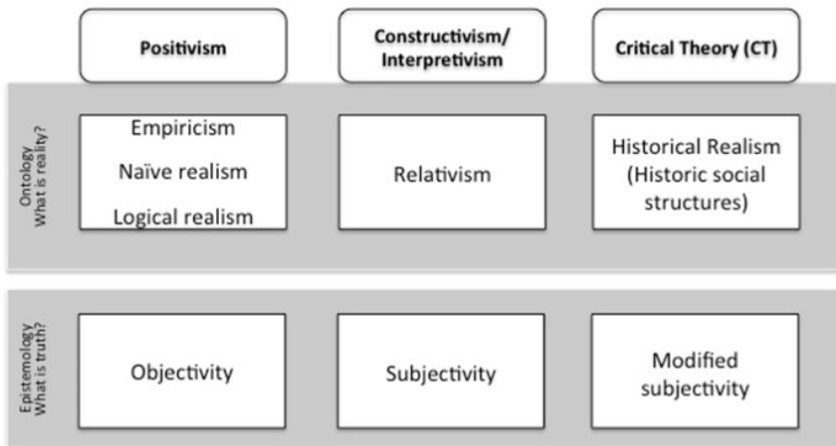


Figure 3.2 Research paradigms (Ryan & Gemma, 2018: 2).

As depicted above Interpretivism shows that truth and knowledge are subjective, culturally and historically situated, and based on people's experiences and their understanding of them. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. It uses meaning oriented methodologies that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects such as interviewing or participant observation. Interpretivist research is about 'exploring and

understanding phenomenon inductively and believe that the social event is understood from the point of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated” (Osekimo, 2020: 60). Researchers can never be completely free from their own values and beliefs and ideological ‘colouring’ of their suppositions, so these will inevitably inform the way in which they collect, interpret and analyse data (Ryan and Gemma 2018: 8).

The researcher chose the interpretivist philosophical paradigm taking a leaf from Costelloe (2016) who argues that there is a distinction between the natural and social world and more importantly, social organisation and social experiences form our perceptions of reality and truth. This approach is particularly important for this study. Further to that, interpretivism has a relativist ontological perspective whereby it asserts that reality is only knowable through socially constructed meanings and that there is no single shared reality (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This reflects the proposition that there are multiple realities because of individuals’ different perceptions. Meanings are ‘the categories that make up a participant’s view of reality and with which actions are defined... culture, norms, understanding, social reality and definitions of the situation’ (Krauss, 2005).

In using the interpretivism paradigm, epistemology is critical. Epistemology is “used to describe how we come to know something; how we know the truth or reality. It is concerned with the very bases of knowledge, its nature and forms, and how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated to other human beings” (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017: 27). Schwandt (1997) defines epistemology as the study of the nature of knowledge and justification. To unpack this, there is need to identify the four basic sources of knowledge through which the research unfolded. The four sources of knowledge as identified by Slavin (1984) are “intuitive knowledge, authoritative knowledge, logical knowledge, and empirical knowledge”. Epistemology shows

that truth lies with human experience, what is true is culture specific and historically bound or even context dependent.

Ontology in this study answers the question of reality and its relativism. Reality is a social construct which differs from society to society or from people to people. It is limited to time, space and culture. Ontology is therefore the “philosophical study of the nature of existence or reality, of being or becoming, and the basic categories of things that exist and their relations” (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017: 27). Ontology is so essential to this study and the use of the interpretive paradigm because it helps to provide an understanding of the things that constitute the world, as it is known (Scott & Usher, 2004). Patton (2002) explains that “ontology relates to whether we believe there is one verifiable reality or whether there exist multiple, socially constructed realities.” In this study ontology answered the social reality of violence, development and human security. It exposes the reality of political violence in Zimbabwe from 1999, and how this violence has curtailed development in Buhera.

Research design provides a framework created to answer research questions. Creswell & Clark (2007: 58) define research design as ‘procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies.’ The research is purely qualitative in design showing that “research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 24). The research design for this study focused on answering questions on evidence or data collected and how the evidence is gathered.

The research was conducted under the interpretivist paradigm which has a wide choice of methodologies. The purpose of the research is to understand people’s experiences regarding the issue of nonviolent resistance as deployed by the MDC party in Buhera, Zimbabwe. Methodology is the broad term used to refer to the research design,

methods, approaches and procedures used in an investigation (Keeves, 1997). The methodology of a paradigm provides a strategy of enquiry, the strategy moves from the underlying assumptions to research design, and data collection and analysis.

This research combined case study methodology and phenomenology. The research uses qualitative research methodologies that involve “an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Domegan and Fleming (2007: 24), explain that “qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem. There is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of problem. It uses ‘soft’ data and gets ‘rich’ data’”. Qualitative methods include interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis among others. Methodology is influenced by the theoretical framework and research practice, assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality and value systems and ethical principles.

“A case study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon” (Sturman, 1997: 61). Therefore, a case study is a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis. Its main elements are the characterization of the case and the events, and a description of the discovery process of these features (Mesec, 1998: 45). Simons (2009) formulated the following definition of a case study based on a critical review that sought commonalities of various case study definitions: “a case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in ‘real life’” (Simon, 2009: 21). In this study, the case studied is Buhera South Constituency in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe.

Phenomenology helps in understanding the people's experiences in Buhera South constituency and how they interpret that experience. This research is political in nature as it exposes the link between violence, development and human security. As explained by Qutoshi (2018: 216) phenomenology is an approach to educate our own vision, to define our position, to broaden how we see the world around, and to study the lived experience at deeper level. It generally describes the essence of experiences from an individual perspective. This emanates from Edmund Husserl (1927) who coined "descriptive phenomenological methodologies." Husserl (2012, 2001, and 1973) in his reductive phenomenology alludes to reduction, knowledge of essence and emphasis in original. Essence is the centre of knowledge in phenomenological methodology. This was further developed by Heidegger who combines Husserl essence with interpretation as an integral party of the methodology. Heidegger (1996: 141) argues that "interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something to us" as everyone is conditioned in their cultural, historical and political environment. In this case participants are conscious of their subjective consciousness (Qutoshi, 2018: 217).

The phenomenological methodology holds both the characteristics of philosophy and a method of inquiry. Phenomenology is part of constructivist/interpretivist paradigm that is both philosophy and methodology. The notion behind all these philosophical and methodological views of phenomenology and procedures directly link to the core concept of understanding the phenomena related to a human being with a deeper level of consciousness. The consciousness in this context applies to how the people in Buhera are conscious of their development failures due to violence in politics. Violence has forced some to migrate, abandon homesteads and lose property to appease their opponents; some have failed to go further with education to advance their lives. Thus, phenomenological approaches are more effective in describing rather than explaining subjective

realities, insights, beliefs, motivation and actions and folk wisdom (Husserl, 1977). Phenomenological approach to research may be based on single cases and multiple cases, with a clear principle emphasis on minimum structure and maximum depth to keep a balance of research focus within limitations of time and other resources (Lester, 1999). This type of research, like other qualitative researches, uses many methods including interviews, observations, action research, discussions, focus group meetings and document analysis. The focus is on more in-depth understanding of phenomena. The analysis is messy, as data do not tend to fall into neat categories and there can be many ways of linking between different parts of discussions or observations. Creswell (1998) argues for the centrality of understanding of human experiences as the best tool for using phenomenology.

A tradition of interpretivism can be tethered to the ethnographies of non-western peoples in the 19th century and continues to be a popular way to explain human behaviour and social phenomenon today. The interpretivist view invites the researcher to investigate meaning behind the understanding of human behaviour, interactions and society. This involves the researcher attempting to develop an in-depth subjective understanding of people's lives (Pullar and Carter 2018). Creswell (2005: 39) defines qualitative study as: "a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the view of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or texts) from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner". Qualitative research is inductive oriented as the researcher comes with broader generalisations and theories from specific observations.

The research was conducted in Manicaland Province focusing on Buhera South constituency as the case study area. Buhera South constituency has a population of around 80000 people. The choice of the study population was rather deliberate. Buhera South is one of the

most impoverished districts in Manicaland which receives minimal rainfall and mostly survives on food donations from Non-Governmental Organisations. In terms of infrastructural development, it has no tarred roads, heavily relying on ungraded gravel roads. It has no functional big business centres, and cell phone connectivity is poor. However, despite these apparent failures, in 2000, the area witnessed unprecedented violence. There were several reported cases of murder, torture and general violence and intimidation of people during the period under review. Buhera South was one of the hotspots of the liberation struggle. Foxtrot now Dzapasi in Buhera was used as an Assembly Point during the last days of the liberation struggle. It is also no coincidence that the murders of Talent Mabika and Tichaona Chiminya in the year 2000 were in Buhera at Murambinda. During the period under study, 2000-2017, Buhera South became a target of derision from politicians who felt the 'challenges' facing the country were attributable to the leadership of the opposition party.

As alluded to by Awoniyi, Aderanti & Tayo (2011), "a sample refers to any portion of a population selected for the study and on whom information needed for the study is obtained. Samples in qualitative research are usually purposive". The participants in this study were selected on their usefulness to the area under investigation. Due to the complexity of the research topic the researcher used snowball sampling to cover the interested groups in the study. Snowball sampling was preferred because it is a referral form of sampling where the researcher was helped in identifying interviewees by other interviewed victims. This sampling is important in political situations where victims might not be willing to open up fearing reprisals. This sampling procedure is critical in that it included research within the opposition parties, civic society, the ordinary people and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. The target population consisted of 50 people from across the district. This sample ensured that data saturation was reached when additional input from new participants did not continue to generate new information, themes and new understanding on the study topic. This sample size was ably assisted by other data collection techniques which include document analysis.

As suggested by Jacobs (1987), the researcher initially chooses methods based on the questions to be addressed. The questions, issues, and topics of the study themselves may change as the researcher's conception of the reality of the "world" being studied changes. The most appropriate data collection strategy for phenomenological research is the open or semi-structured interview. These two types of interviews allow the researcher to address the phenomenon profoundly, providing space for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible. The detailed descriptions or interpretations brought by the participant in the profound-phenomenological interview should be as representative of experienced reality as possible. The focus of the phenomenological interview is the description of the meanings of phenomena (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Interviews were the main data gathering instruments. Interviews were held in the months of November and December 2021. Interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. The purpose of interviews is to learn from participants, in this case their individual experiences during the period under review. Interviews solicited data on how conflict/politics affected their development. 35 interviews were carried out mostly with victims and perpetrators of violence. The sampling used to carry out and identify participants was largely snowball sampling. The researcher initially contacted a few potential respondents and then asked them whether they knew of anybody with the same characteristics being addressed in the research. The researcher identified himself as a researcher working on nonviolent resistance and after that sought consent to proceed from the participants. This research sample conveniently limits the quantity but gives quality in terms of participants as quantity gives the same message each time again and again. As pointed out by Jacobs (2010), data gathered can be used to make generalisations of the population under study.

Questionnaires also helped in reaching some difficult places for the purpose of the research. For this research 25 questionnaires were distributed across the broad spectrum of Buhera South constituency.

However, only twelve questionnaires were returned while the rest were no returns. Upon the relaxation of Covid-19 induced lockdown restrictions, face to face interactions were possible with strict adherence to World Health Organisations (WHO) Covid19 protocols to ensure that meetings would not compromise the health of participants and the researcher. Questionnaires were distributed to respondents through email, WhatsApp and through a central research participant. Of the three methods the email was a bit problematic as some respondents hardly checked their emails. However, WhatsApp was a more effective platform to use. The advantage of questionnaires is that they gave respondents enough time to answer the questions and send them when they were free. The advent of the use of smartphones was handy as most people had access to the gadgets giving them ample time to answer the questions.

The first set of interviews held were with the local MDC Buhera South Constituency leadership as they were the main sources of information in terms of violence and vulnerability of MDC membership in the area. The second category involved the Provincial and national MDC leadership, and groups such as the Zimbabwe NGO Forum which represents mostly NGOs in human rights work, and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights who helped victims of violence in the constituency.

For the purposes of this research an interview guide was used. This interview guide had questions for specific audience notably scholars, MDC leadership and the victims of violence. The use of different interview guides was deliberate for it provided probing questions for specific sectors. The interview guides are attached in Appendix A.

Focus group discussions were carried out notably to have a group feeling of the violence perpetrated on individuals and families and to create a platform for sharing trends in nonviolent resistance. 'A focus group is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening

environment' (Steiberg, 2011). For the purposes of this study, three groups were chosen namely MDC members, ZANU-PF members and mixed groups of youth. The idea to use the youth was strategic in that these are the foot soldiers deployed to perpetrate acts of political violence across the political divide. The idea was to get their shared experiences and how they were coping. Focus groups were useful in providing an interactive platform for both victims and perpetrators and mapping the way forward in maintaining and cementing relationships in the community. Hotspots of violence were identified for focus group discussions namely Mavhungire Shopping Centre, Chapanduka Business Centre and Chabata shopping centre. The participants were identified through the local political leadership. Three focus group discussions were held at the above shopping centres. These focus group discussions were held in November and December 2021 taking advantage of the relaxed lockdown restrictions in Zimbabwe. The lockdown measures had been reduced to a level which allowed for the gathering of around 100 people in public spaces.

The focus group discussions were specific to victims of violence. The guide used was open ended to ensure that it left room for further probing, openness, honesty and truthfulness. It also ensured that the discussants provided information without much leading questions from the investigator. The Focus Group Discussion guide is attached in Appendix B.

Document study is important in qualitative research because while the research sample has the memory, they hardly keep records to verify information. There has been extensive documentation of violence in Zimbabwe, but the communities are not the owners of the information. It was prudent for the researcher to sift through both primary and secondary data for cross checking purposes. Madenga (2016) opines that "the criterion involves weighing the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of documents intended for research purposes." By this he referred to genuineness, free from implacable

sources, credible, free from bias and relevant. The researcher was privileged to access documents from Human rights organisations, research institute, political parties and various journal articles, blogs, books and newspapers. This helped to verify information provided from interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires. Access was obtained to the National Archives where most information is readily available while internet sources were consulted.

Qualitative data analysis can be defined as “working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:145). Shank (2002:5) similarly defines it as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning.” Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3) posit that qualitative researchers study “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” For this study inductive and coding methods were used in data analysis. Kelle (1995) defines inductive data analysis as “a series of alternating inductive and deductive steps whereby data driven inductive hypothesis is followed by deductive hypothesis examination for the purpose of verification.” Inductive approach allows researcher to derive frequent, dominant or significant themes from the raw data. It is free from the restraints imposed by other methodologies. Thomas (2003) summarises the purpose of inductive approach into two namely: to condense data in summary format and show the link between objectives. Findings may help to develop a theme.

Inductive approach helps in creating data codes in data analysis. Coding is the core of inductive data analysis. Data coding can assume the form of descriptive coding, topic coding and analytical coding. Open coding involves line by line coding where concepts and key phrases are identified and highlighted and moved into subcategories, then categories. This breaks the data down into conceptual

components and the researcher can start to theorise or reflect on what they are reading and understanding making sense of the data. The data from each participant will be 'constantly compared' for similarities.

Axial coding at this stage relationships are identified between the categories, and connections identified. Selective coding: this involves identifying the core category and methodically relating it to other categories. The relationships must be authenticated and categories refined. Categories are then integrated together and identified. See the figure below.

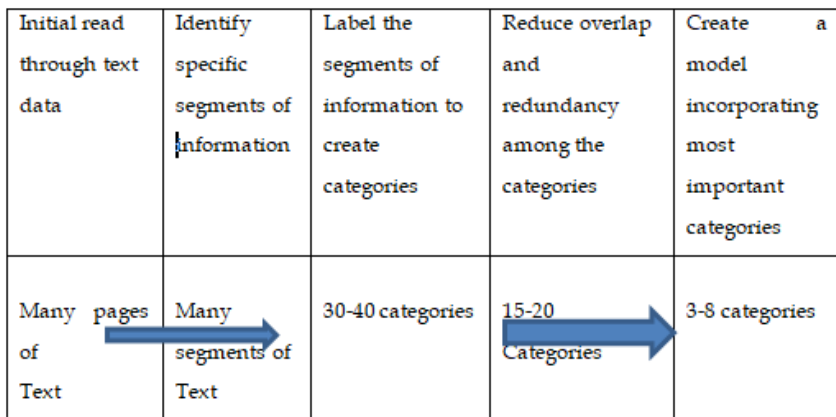


Fig 3.3 Data coding process (Note Adapted from Creswell, 2002, Figure 9.4, p. 266)

Qualitative researchers are interested in the accuracy of the final report. They utilise various methods, to ensure accuracy such as member-checks (where the participants get to review their comments), or the use of many sources to verify a theme. To begin with the researcher took note of the major sources of error in research namely the researcher, the participants and the methods used. Measures were taken to ensure validity through removal of bias and ensuring

trustworthiness. For participants, the researcher ensured clarity of questions, building a relationship of trust, and comparing results obtained. Qualitative validity procedures rely on the participants, the researcher, or the reader (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Relying on the participants ensured that the researcher also got first-hand information from victims of violence and development failures. The research paradigm used ensured the testing of validity and reliability since the purpose is to "engage in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features" (Johnson, 1995:4). Thus, there was methodological and data triangulation to ensure the recheck of both methodology and data to verify validity and reliability.

The research methodologies were tested in a pilot test. Pilot testing ensures the adjustments of data collecting methods to suit the demands of the research. To present the methods clearly, precisely and thoroughly they were pretested for accuracy and reliability. Pilot testing is about assuring the quality of methods used through pretesting and refining them.

The research was informed and underpinned by ethical issues that needed to be considered when conducting research. The ethical issues include the following: informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, researcher's positionality, do no harm, safety in research, storage of research data. Research participants were given the informed consent form which spelt out their rights during the research process. Informed consent ensured that participation was voluntary and those who felt they no longer wanted to participate could withdraw from the research process. The researcher promised the anonymity of participants. Anonymity meant that their identity was protected. This research has ensured the anonymity of respondents due to its political nature. It ensured the confidentiality of

respondents by making them anonymous. Data gathered from respondents and other sources was secured in safe soft copies which could only be accessed by the researcher through multiple passwords. To ensure the safety of the researcher and participants the local police was advised of the visits. The police were informed of the scheduled visits through getting clearance letter from the Provincial Police member in charge. The clearance letters protected the researcher and the participants from violent political opponents as the clearance letters gave the go ahead to carry the research. The research was explicit in that it explained that this was an academic exercise which had no political bearing. The consent from local traditional leaders such as village heads, and Headman was also given to make sure participants were not victimized after the research. The research dealt with the politically sensitive issue of political violence and its effects on development. Since reality and knowledge are social constructs, societal inquiry is influenced by values.

Participants to the research process were cognisant of the ethical requirements. The fundamental of this research was guided by the following basic principles namely: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice and respect for communities interacted with. Ethical considerations are of paramount importance. Participants were informed and not coerced into the research. Data gathered was secured on cloud in a google drive whose password is known to the researcher. The data can only be destroyed after 5 years by the researcher.

Mutual consent was the first step before interviewing the participants. In this research participants were made aware of the nature of the study and the title before the interviews and focus group discussions commenced. Those who felt uncomfortable were excused. During interviews, those who felt the topic brought bad memories and did not want to continue with the interview were respected. Participants were

informed of the consent primarily that should they feel to participate and withdraw it was within their rights to do so. The consent to participate form was given to each participant to sign and acknowledge willing participation.

The researcher guaranteed no harm to the research participants. While the topic was particularly sensitive to some I explained to them the procedures to their safety. Emphasis was made to explain that this is an academic endeavour devoid of political or organisational affiliation, thus anonymity was guaranteed unless participants wanted exposure. Permission for the study was sought from relevant authorities. However, getting permission from the state did not unveil the confidentiality of my sources.

The researcher guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality as articulated above. I guaranteed the anonymity of participants and ensuring their confidentiality and confidence in the research.

This chapter critically examined the research methodology and the research paradigm. It explained the interpretivist paradigm, described and enunciated the research methodology underpinning the study, detailed the sampling technique, data collection tools and data analysis and presentation strategies employed in the study. The chapter also explained the research design by highlighting the case study approach used. The fieldwork was an eye opener as it was done during the Covid19 pandemic and the state induced lockdowns. Interviews booked were conducted well, however, travel arrangements were affected by the transport situation prevailing as the Zimbabwean government had banned other transport operators preferring state owned Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO). Questionnaires distributed had to be followed up to get feedback. Carrying out interviews with political leaders was cumbersome as they

were frequently busy. Some interviews were postponed and rescheduled which meant the interviewee had to be patiently waited for to get feedback. The next chapter discusses the history of non-violent resistance in Zimbabwe from the colonial to the post-colonial era.