Media as a Catalyst for Conflict Resolution: Lived Experiences of Selected Private Electronic Media Entities in Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the role of media in conflict resolution. We rely on the lived experiences of 22 participants in carefully selected private electronic media firms in Zambia. This study was directed by qualitative technique and a Phenomenology research design based on functional and dysfunctional communication theory. This research proposes media companies engaged in perceived negative media and poor editorial practices, which are notorious for risking and undermining societal peace and harmony. Political propaganda, falsehoods, prejudices, discrimination, and biased media editorial policies were among the negative media behaviors highlighted. Other results included the fact that Zambia's media rules and regulations have been progressing toward media self-regulation under the open access to information statute. It was discovered that major media houses in Zambia have been attempting to tailor their editorial policies in line with the media's posited role of educating, informing, promoting dialogue, and creating meaningful debate on issues that improve public perceptions and interest in peace and conflict resolution. As a result, it is possible to infer that, in the right hands, the media is a panacea for peace and conflict settlement, but in the wrong hands, it is a threat to long-term peace and conflict resolution. Three recommendations were made for the media to act as a catalyst for conflict resolution in Zambia: (i) The Government of Zambia should pass the free access to information bill, which would improve accountability, transparency, and openness. Three recommendations were made for the media to act as a catalyst for conflict resolution in Zambia: (i) The Government of Zambia should pass the free access to information bill, which would improve accountability, transparency, and participation. (ii) The government should secure the safety of media personnel in the course of their duties; and (iii) media organizations and stakeholders should band together to reclaim their place as the fourth estate in peacebuilding.

Keywords: Experiences, Media Conflict Resolution, Zambia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This is an excerpt from the Principal researcher's dissertation titled Exploration of the Media as a Catalyst for Conflict Resolution: Lived Experiences of Selected Private Electronic Media Entities in Zambia. Students must perform a research study that culminates in a dissertation as a requirement for the award of a Master of Science in Peace Leadership and Conflict Resolution at the University of Zambia (UNZA) in cooperation with the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). Since 2014, the UNZA-ZOU relationship has been operating through distance learning. The University of Zambia is set up in dual mode (Simui *et al.*, 2018; Muntengwa *et al.*, 2020; and Mwase *et al.*, 2020).

The media and journalism can be of considerable service in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, their authority is also limited, as they will never be able to completely abolish armed wars. In a healthy and functioning environment, the media can be a useful instrument; nevertheless, more than ethical and responsible reporting is required to promote long-term peace and safety. The media has a dual role: on the one hand, it reports and reflects on important topics, and on the other, it can help to challenge established beliefs and ideas (Berry, 2008). On the other side, they can be employed for propagandist reasons, attempting to conceal information rather than revealing it, thereby limiting people's freedom and access to information. Regardless of the media's potential in conflict and post-conflict settings, the media has been underutilized. In democracies, free and critical media serve a key role as the primary source of information, providing society with knowledge and a range of experiences. It also serves as a forum for public debate, opinion formation, and development (Berry, 2008). The media is considered as a form of power that influences, controls, and promotes new social standards while reinforcing current ones.

Thus, the media is a key agent for societal growth, democracy, and good governance, as well as a critical component in conflict zones. It is possible to argue that the media can be both a friend and an opponent to

a peace process. The media can promote human security, and there is evidence that the media can increase motivation for conflict. For example, in Rwanda, the media is accused of encouraging and extending the unrest that resulted in the slaughter and killing of one million people from a predominantly Tutsi ethnic population. According to Straus (2007), perpetrators of genocide claimed radio broadcasts as a crucial influence in increasing hatred. It can be used to spread messages and techniques for peace and conflict resolution.

The media can also be used as a weapon of war, disseminating biased information, and manipulating populations or groups in conflict by dividing ideas and encouraging harmful behavior. As a result, the media has become ubiquitous and enormously influential in shaping attitudes toward conflict (Berry, 2008). To be ethical in the media, attitudinal and behavioral changes regarding the values that every media person and agency should adopt when covering conflict are essential. As a result, peace ideas and attributes can be included into all levels of news coverage (Berry, 2008).

According to Gilboa (2009), the media, particularly radio and television, played a role in inciting conflict and bloodshed in areas like Rwanda and Bosnia. The Danish cartoon dispute also shows how the media can spark a violent fight. Scholars and practitioners have observed how the media exacerbates conflict and determined that the role of the media can be reversed and changed into constructive contributions to conflict resolution. This reversal, on the other hand, is difficult to achieve. It is usually simpler to fuel conflict than it is to end it, and the function of the media in conflict resolution is more difficult than the responsibilities of those who dominate the violence phase.

It is to such a status quo in as far as the media is concerned that the researcher was interested in exploring the media as a catalyst for conflict resolution with a reflection on lived experiences of private electronic media entities in Zambia. The hope has been to find an understanding in establishing proper measures to be taken by media entities in promoting peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution.

A. Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, the duty of the media in a democratic society has been to promote peace and coexistence. Despite such a favorable sociological fit, certain media organizations have engaged in several regarded bad media and poor editorial practices, which are notorious for compromising and destroying communal peace and harmony. For example, the media should serve as a catalyst for pacifying cultures where peace is threatened or is likely to be jeopardized by misinformation, prejudice, discrimination, and biased media editorial policies. The media should not be used to spread hate speech, partisan, regional, ethnic, and tribalist notions in this cause. It should aid in the attainment of societal peace, as envisioned by Zambia's treasured dream of One Zambia, One Nation, as articulated by Zambia's founding President, Late Dr. Kaunda, Kenneth David. Peace, harmony, and coexistence are thought to be acquired, perpetuated, and maintained through such engagements.

As a result, there is a need to investigate various lived experiences among Zambian private electronic media firms in regard to media as a catalyst for conflict resolution in Zambia. There is also a requirement to respond to questions based on the following objectives:

B. Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study were:
  i. Explore editorial media policies in pursuant of Peace in Zambia.
  ii. Describe lived experiences of media practitioners on the media as a catalyst for conflict resolution within the political and democratic dispensation in Zambia.
  iii. Explore the existing challenges associated with the media actors in their quest to cultivate peace in Zambia.
  iv. Explore strategies in use where the media serves as a catalyst for conflict resolution.

C. Theoretical Framework

Michael Wright's (1974) functional and dysfunctional theory of communication is a classic communication theory that views institutions, including the media, as having societal roles. This theory has influenced the development of numerous approaches and techniques in modern communication research, including media effects, uses and gratifications, agenda-setting, framing, cultivation theory, and the spiral of silence theory. Wright's distinction between functions and dysfunctions is critical to our research because the media can provide useful information to citizens who may be compelled to act against their own and their community's interests (Wright, 1974). The application of Wright's formula demonstrates that, even if the media is sincerely interested in contributing to the prevention, management, resolution, or reconciliation of international conflict, the results may backfire. The usage of Wright's formula demonstrates that, even if the media is genuinely interested in contributing in a beneficial way to the prevention, management, resolution, or reconciliation of international conflict, the outcomes may backfire. It is critical to educate the public about conflict sources and the possibility of violence or conflict resolution.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Media and the Case of Yugoslavia, Ethiopia and Rwanda's Genocide

Gessese (2020) conducted a qualitative study which found that the media made conflicts worse in nations like Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Six ethnic-based publications from Ethiopia's Amhara, Oromo, and Tigre ethnic groups were chosen to study the media's dominant crisis frames, which created fear, a sense of a clear and present danger, and inspired violent action in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The study also highlighted the need for structured, content-specific, aggressive, and proactive interventions in Ethiopian ethnic media. The date of the Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana's death in 1994, nearly two weeks after the plane crash, plunged the country into chaos and received almost no international media attention. An international peacekeeping force led by a Canadian general, Roméo Dallaire, was sent to oversee the implementation of the peacekeeping agreement.

The Rwandan genocide was a genocide that began in Kigali on April 6-7th and was carried out by unknown assailants, including the Tutsi. Hutu moderates who were willing to share power were among the first to be targeted, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) confirmed its undeniable role in the killings (Teferi, 2012). The media used RTLM and radio to call for the genocide's annihilation, and international media reports on Rwanda were flooded with images of bloated corpses strewn along the roadside or choking the rivers. The news media had the potential to make a difference, but the only news media making a difference were hate media outlets such as RTLM, which aided in fanning the flames and implicating tens of thousands of ordinary people in the genocide. Ethiopia has a population of over 100 million people and more than 80 ethnic groups, making it one of the most affected countries by violent inter-ethnic conflicts (Teferi, 2012).

Since 1992, nearly 800 people have been killed in 17 conflict incidents, and the country has been severely affected. Taddele (2017) has found that Ethiopian media has been heavily influenced by a deeply ingrained victimization frame imposed by nationalist elites, leading to alienation and violence. This frame has steadily increased over the last two years, as violent conflict between various ethnic groups has become more complicated. Oromo nationalists portray other ethnic groups in the country, particularly the Amhara, as settlers and rebels respectively, to counter the competition between them (Amhara TV, 2018). This is done through the use of ethnic media to frame them as 'Settlers' vs. 'Strangers' and 'Son of the soil' to sow discord and hostility (Bekalu, 2017). An antihero frame is framed by Oromo and Tigre ethnic groups, while Melese Zenawi is framed as an anti-hero person and Jawar Mohammed as a "mobilizer, the voice for the voiceless of the country (Tigray TV, 2018).

B. The Role of the Media and Conflict: The Cases of Rwanda, Bosnia, and Denmark

According to Gilboa (2009), most existing studies focus on the media's often negative contributions to the escalation and violence phases of conflict. Few studies have been conducted on the actual or potential contributions of the media to conflict resolution and reconciliation. Indeed, the media, particularly radio and television, played an important role in inciting conflict and violence in places like Rwanda and Bosnia. The Danish cartoon controversy also shows how the media can spark a violent conflict.

Scholars and practitioners have observed how the media exacerbates conflict and concluded that the role of the media can be reversed and converted into positive contributions to conflict resolution. This reversal, on the other hand, is difficult to achieve. It is always easier to instigate conflict than it is to resolve it, and the role of the media in conflict resolution is more complicated than the roles of those who dominate the violence phase (Gilboa, 2009). According to Frohardt and Temin (2003), before the outbreak of the highest stage of violent conflict, genocide, in Rwanda, the media attempted to instill fear in Hutus by disseminating information depicting an impending attack by a Tutsi militia.

C. Nigerian Media Objectivity and Conflict Management

Akinro (2016) provides an insightful account of a complex conflict, involving the Boko Haram conflict, in northern Nigeria. The study found that the Boko Haram crisis was represented in the newspapers examined and that the newspapers did not provide sufficient contextual and background information about the crisis. The media did not play active roles towards conflict management, as advocated by Galtung, and were involved in partisan reporting of incidents in the crisis. The study made a significant contribution to the debate about objectivity in news reporting and the role of the media for societal good (Akinro, 2016).

D. The Media and Electoral Violence in Zimbabwe

According to Tsarwe and Mare (2008), Zimbabwe has a history of electoral violence, and the media played a key role in mediating it in 2008, from the build-up to the election to the post-election period. Tsarwe and Mare (2008) conducted research in Zimbabwe that revealed an apparent bias in the Zimbabwean press' coverage of contesting political parties, an obvious omission of facts, and a proclivity for fanning divisive politics through name calling and the use of inflammatory language. The SADC Electoral Commission stated that "the mission noted with concern the partisan and biased coverage given

to some political parties and their candidates by both the public and private media". Furthermore, research revealed that the Zimbabwean press followed similar trends seen in Africa, Western and Eastern Europe in previous decades (Tsarwe & Mare, 2008).

E. Some Media Engagement and Polarization in Zambia

Mazurova, Pokai, and Chisholm (2021) investigated the role of the media in polarizing views and escalating tension. The cases examined reflect competing perspectives on Chinese engagement in Zambia, ranging from Chinese investment courtship to rising anti-Chinese sentiment. Based on a comparative media analysis of English and Mandarin news articles about the ZAFFICO and COVID-19 discrimination controversies, we argue that Zambia's media landscape's multi-layered polarisation exacerbates existing identity conflicts. The tone, word choice, and detail selection in articles change with the media outlet's positionality and shape the discourse around the cases. Sensationalization, misinformation, and divergent frames all contribute to conflict among various identity groups, which is exploited in a divisive political environment. The media encourages blackboxing and us versus them thinking, which frequently precede conflict. In the Zambian media landscape, the 'other' includes 'China/the Chinese,' 'the opposition,' and the ruling Patriotic Front. The media is responsible for polarizing opinions and amplifying societal tensions surrounding Chinese-Zambian engagement.

We discovered noticeable differences in tone, word choice, and detail selection between articles based on the positionality of the outlet and its readership. These frame differences may contribute to polarization and conflict escalation in inter-group conflict. The majority of Chinese stakeholders are not malicious actors, as some media outlets claim, but differences between them and the Zambian people are exploited in a polarizing political environment. The media, while reflecting genuine grievances, also sensationalises and exaggerates information for political purposes. Analyzing the media is an intriguing but daunting task due to the numerous points of distortion (Mazurova, *et al.*, 2021). People are inundated with information, making it difficult to get to the bottom of a problem without becoming emotionally invested in the debate. Similarly, it is difficult for researchers to determine where, when, and what to evaluate in the media. This raises the issue of positionality, because how someone contributes to the conversation is influenced by their identity in relation to the identity of the group, society, or country being studied. Another challenge in media analysis is incorporating intersectionality into the analysis. Socioeconomic differences influence who is allowed to participate in media discourse and whose identities are validated (Mazurova, *et al.*, 2021).

All of these ideas contribute to information reliability, and there is no guarantee that the media is an accurate reflection of what is going on in society. Without effective spaces for addressing legitimate grievances and mediating between opposing viewpoints, the media will continue to exacerbate tensions and be used to incite violence. Those studying the media in any context should recognize positionality and intersectionality, and those working with activists, journalists, or stakeholders could create workshops and facilitate discussion on navigating media in various contexts.

According to another study and research conducted by Sepiso (2016), the media is polarized. The private media is under government surveillance, which makes it difficult for it to carry out its mission of providing a forum for public debate on a wide range of political issues affecting the country. Furthermore, he discovered that the public media was a state mouthpiece and could not criticize the government on human rights violations or issues bordering on a lack of accountability and transparency in its operations. This made it difficult for citizens to be well informed. Because of this polarization, Zambian media falls short of promoting peace.

F. Research Gap from the Reviewed Literature

From the above literature review, there has not been adequate study on exploring the media as a catalyst for conflict resolution with a reflection on lived experiences of selected public and private media entities in Zambia, specifically. Therefore, this study is an endeavour in that direction.

III. Methodology and Design

The qualitative method, specifically hermeneutical phenomenology, was used in the study. It is based on the theories of Van Manen, Raquel Ayala, and Miguel Martnez and focuses on how people interpret their lived experiences (Fuster, 2019). Phenomenology is a philosophical current founded in the mid-twentieth century by Edmund Husserl and is an opposition to naturalism. The main advantage of the qualitative, interpretive approach is that the results are more valid and less artificial. The data was rearranged and tabulated into themes in order to translate the analysis into a thematic analysis (Barbera & Inciarte, 2012).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The intent of the study was to explore the media as a catalyst for conflict resolution with a reflection on lived experiences of selected private electronic media entities in Zambia. The findings are presented according to the requirement of the research objectives as:

i.   Explore editorial media policies in pursuant of Peace in Zambia.
ii. Describe lived experiences of media practitioners on the media as a catalyst for conflict resolution within the political and democratic dispensation in Zambia.
iii. Explore the existing challenges associated with the media actors in their quest to cultivate peace in Zambia.
iv. Explore strategies in use where the media serves as a catalyst for conflict resolution.

A. Editorial Media Policies in Pursuant of Peace in Zambia

The first objective of the study was meant to explore media editorial policies in pursuant of peace in Zambia. From the inception, research participants acknowledged that freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of expression and access to information may not be absolute but one that require responsibility in Zambia's thriving democracy and democratisation. As such, Zambia's laws and regulations on the media have been making strides towards media self-regulation under the free access to information bill.

The findings are consistent with the position taken by MISA Zambia that major media outlets have worked hard to tailor their editorial policies to educate, inform, entertain, and create a forum for debate on issues of public interest, which is a huge democratic and peaceful step forward in Zambia's political dispensation (MISA Zambia, 2022). The premise is that requesting and receiving information held by public organizations and bodies is a fundamental human right. It is critical to ensure that information is held by public, and in some cases private, institutions is available to citizens. MISA Zambia has been advocating for legislative changes to media laws, specifically the repeal of laws that criminalize media work. The organization has developed clear advocacy messages and adopted new innovative and effective advocacy strategies. MISA Zambia has increased its contacts and engagement with the National Assembly, the Executive, and civil society organizations as part of its advocacy efforts, while also supporting grassroots organizations in their push for information access (MISA Zambia, 2022).

Another finding indicated that the media is an important partner in Zambia's conflict resolution and peace processes. Other findings include that the Zambian media is well placed to provide authentic information to the public, and that it adheres to ethics and regulations in order not to misinform, mislead, or sensationalize its message to the masses. Furthermore, it was discovered that the media has the power to influence attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, and actions that are critical for mass decision making.

When viewed in this light, Zambian media has largely disseminated content that promotes peace. In Zambia, the media's role has been to educate, inform, entertain, and provide a forum for debate on issues of public interest. The media also serves as a watchdog by disseminating information about public officials' activities, crime, and corporate wrongdoing. In this way, the media encourages accountability, which can be achieved to some extent through investigative journalism.

B. Lived Experiences on the Media as a Catalyst for Conflict Resolution and Democracy

According to the findings of the study, the media's role in conflict resolution processes in Zambia has been defusing tension before it reaches a critical point, as well as providing checks and balances on the government, oppositional political parties, and society. Other methods have included: bridging warring factions, increasing and simplifying knowledge awareness on complex issues, being impartial and objective in reporting (without favoring any societal sect or group), and avoiding propaganda mongering on 'grey' areas that have the potential to divide political players and parties. Similarly, other participants stated that the Zambian media has been providing factual and accurate information to improve quick conflict resolution, as well as peace building initiatives that safeguard democratic governance, which is critical in bringing about humanitarian benefit. Furthermore, the participants emphasized that the Zambian media has been providing equal coverage space to players with opposing viewpoints, promoting the respect of human rights and freedoms, and engaging in public education about the electoral process.

Such findings are consistent with Kuusik's (2010) assertion that information is power, and insight can influence public discourse. Access to media can change perceptions in this way. Globally, various forms of media are used to disseminate knowledge, and idealistically, free mass media is a tool of and a signpost for democracy. Freedom of expression is not only the foundation of a healthy media, but it is also a fundamental human right and a necessary component of a democratic structure. It is difficult to define conflict and conflict zones (Kuusik, 2010). The involvement of unbiased and free media is critical not only for the Zambian public but also for those directly affected. However, the risk of manipulation and inflaming ethnic tensions cannot be overlooked. Another advantage of local media, particularly radio, is the ability to convey peace messages to passing fighters and refugees alike in border areas. Democratic media structures require

more than this; it is critical that information use in a society is not solely passive, but that the population actively participates in creating and broadcasting content (Kuusik, 2010). The media has the ability to defuse tensions before they become critical, as well as to keep a critical eye on the government, opposition, and society.

The media helps to manage conflicts and promote democratic principles by providing credible information to a large audience. Reconciliation and societal development can also be encouraged in the aftermath of a conflict. A suggested framework for peace-building media can employ a variety of strategies, including: (1) conflict-sensitive and peace journalism; (2) peace-promoting entertainment media; (3) media regulation to prevent incitement of violence; and (4) peace-promoting citizen media (Kuusik, 2010). Media and journalism can be extremely useful in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, their power is limited, as they will never be able to completely eliminate armed conflicts. In a healthy and functioning environment, the media can be a useful tool, but more than ethical and responsible reporting is required to ensure long-term peace and safety. On the one hand, the media reports and reflects on pressing issues, and on the other, it can help to question established concepts and ideas. The media has the potential to influence post-conflict situations, but its potential is underutilized. Kuusik (2010) suggests that this can lead to a lack of freedom and right to information.

C. Media challenges in the Quest to Cultivate Peace in Zambia

According to the research findings, the media fraternity faces the following challenges in its quest to cultivate peace in Zambia: political interference and intimidation, particularly by ruling parties, a lack of security and protection for media personnel, hooliganism and barbaric behavior, media polarization of private and public media, insufficient funding for comprehensive coverage, rigidity in licensing for wider coverage and media house expansion, hostile legal and tensile environments, and tensile environments.

The findings support Mulatu's (2016) assertions that, while the media can play a critical role in promoting peace through the use of various techniques, as mentioned above, they face some challenges in doing so, and can even play destructive roles in the peace-building process. These difficulties are described in various ways. Shoemaker and Reese (1996), for example, outline the challenges in five hierarchical levels: individual, media routines, organization, extra media, and ideological. Media ownership, media institutions, journalists, and recipients are all controlled by outside entities such as governments, owners, political parties, advertisers, and others, which can influence media content, working conditions, and financial matters (Wolfsfeld, 2004). The relationship between the media and the state is essential for the smooth operation of the media. The two's relationship undoubtedly has a significant impact on not only conflict issues but also other reporting, particularly in developing countries. One of the influences is the government's ability to limit information. It means that the political environment and media situation (how free the media is) limit the role of the media in general and the peace building process in particular. A peaceful political environment is one of the most important aspects of the peace-building process (Wolfsfeld, 2004).

Critical reporting is an important part of the peace-building process, but those who engage in it face serious consequences such as sanctions, threats, and death. Lobbyists and representatives of political institutions may also attempt to obstruct investigative journalism by canceling advertising or replacing critical journalists in leadership positions. Lastly, the preferences, interests, level of awareness, and habits of journalists' readers, listeners, and viewers influence their work (Wolfsfeld, 2004).

D. Strategies in which the Media Serves as a Catalyst for Conflict Resolution

According to the findings, the media in Zambia has the potential to promote peace by being objective and accurate in reporting, eliminating media polarisation, working together as a fraternity, encouraging tolerance, divergent views, and dialogue among political players, and ensuring that legislative reforms are undertaken to strengthen the media fraternity. The findings are consistent with Himelfarb and Chabalowski (2008), who asserts that the media and individual journalists play an important role in constructing conflict realities on the discursive battlefields of already fractured societies in conflict countries, and the media can help to strengthen dialogue processes, break down stereotypes of victims and perpetrators, and increase public awareness of political decisions. They can also help ex-combatants, including child soldiers, reintegrate into their communities through their work.

Himelfarb and Chabalowski (2008) opine that a framework used by peace-building media as one that can employ different strategies such as: Conflict-sensitive and peace journalism; Peace-promoting entertainment media; Media regulation to prevent incitement of violence, and Peace-promoting citizen media. The media is an indispensable political actor in peacebuilding processes. On the discursive battlefields of already fragmented societies in conflict countries, the media and individual journalists play an important part in constructing conflict realities. They provide a daily stream of information and analysis on current events. Through their work, media professionals not only influence the perceptions of millions of readers, viewers, listeners and internet users, but also determine to a crucial degree whether and to what extent conflict actors recognize the array of constructive options available for resolving their differences.

There are therefore multiple opportunities for the media to play a constructive role in conflict transformation. Through their work, the media can strengthen dialogue processes by introducing and anchoring important issues in national and local discourses. They can help to break up stereotypes of victims and perpetrators and build up the public's knowledge about political decisions relating to peace deals and the like, thus making potential transformation processes more participatory. They can raise awareness of the psychosocial effects of conflict. Through their work, they can also support reintegration processes of ex-combatants, including child soldiers, at the community level.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to explore the media as a catalyst for conflict resolution with a reflection on lived experiences of private electronic media entities in Zambia. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that, to a greater extent, the media and journalism can be of great help in conflict resolution and peace building. It can be a good tool in a healthy and functioning environment, but more is needed, like adherence to ethics and regulations that encourage dialogue, co-existence and tolerance. A peaceful media house should promote human rights respect, champion the rule of law, seek accountability and advocate transparency and responsible reporting for everyone's lasting peace and safety. Amidst some bad media practices like falsehoods, prejudices, discrimination and biased media editorial policies, Zambia's laws and regulations on the media have been making strides towards media self-regulation under the free access to information bill. Thus, major media houses in Zambia have endeavoured to tailor their editorial policies in line with the media's posit role to educate, inform, promotion of dialogue and the creation of a platform for meaningful debate on issues that better public perceptions and interest towards peace and conflict resolution. In the right hands, the media is a panacea to peace and conflict resolution and in wrong hands it is menace to lasting peace.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher provides three (3) recommendations.

i. The Government of the Republic of Zambia should, in consultation with a cross section of stakeholders, expedite the assenting into law the free access to information bill which would enhance accountability, transparency, good governance and promote the respect to the rule of law for a peaceful Zambia. It will make the work of the media easy in its quest to gather verifiable information without fear or favour since misinformation and public ignorance are a recipe for conflict and societal anarchy.

ii. The Government should ensure the protection of media personnel in their discharge of duty. Safety should be guaranteed, even when a story exposes the mischievousness of the elites in society.

iii. Media houses and media stakeholders should unite in order to win their space of societal influence as the fourth sector in societal progress. They should not work in isolation but should have a unified voice for better treatment, betterment of their conditions of service and in accessing verifiable information.

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