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Think in Other Terms



## AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEWS MEDIA ACCESS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE CONSTITUTION MAKING PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF NGWANA WARD, BULILIMA.

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE M Sc DEGREE IN JOURNALISM  
AND MEDIA STUDIES OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between media access and citizen participation in the constitution making process through a case study of Ngwana ward in Bulilima District, in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland South province. The research sought to determine how access to news media had influenced citizen participation in the constitution making process and also establish other antecedent and intervening factors, besides the news media access, that may have affected citizen participation. The study was rooted in structuralism and multiculturalism. As such, the literature review relied on media theories including the Public Sphere Concept, Social Responsibility Theory and the Democratic Participant Theory, The Two Step Flow Theory and the Agenda Setting theories. The study was also located in Communication for Development, an approach in the Another Development Paradigm. The study combined the case study method with the survey approach through the use of questionnaires for data gathering. As such, through the use of self administered questionnaires, participant observation, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the study revealed that news media played a minimal role in informing and mobilising the Ngwana community to participate in the constitution making process. Mainstream media including television, radio and newspapers failed to effectively play their education, mobilisation and information role in the Ngwana community. The study established that the community relied on alternative media and means of communication on the process, which include COPAC posters, civic society organisations. Of importance is that more than 70% of the study population relied on word of mouth to get information on the constitution making process, with special reference to the consultative meetings. The study recommended that the Government should put in place policies that will ensure freedom of the airwaves so that community media flourish in rural areas and that more media can be established to serve rural communities. This will enable rural communities to effectively participate in democratic processes. The study also recommended that in future, COPAC or other such organisations should have media strategies that will ensure that information is effectively passed through the right media and the relevant languages in order to relevantly address diverse audiences in Zimbabwe.