

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



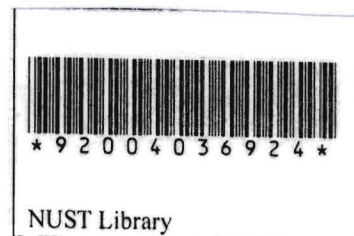
PROJECT TITLE:



Do private and state media in Zimbabwe conform to established ethical paradigms when reporting on electoral institutions? A comparative study of the how the *Sunday News* and *The Standard* reported on the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

By

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ABSTRACT

The research is a comparative qualitative study of whether state and private media conform to ethical paradigms when reporting on electoral institutions. It is an exploratory case study research of how the *Sunday News* and *The Standard* covered the Zimbabwe Electoral Institution (ZEC) during the period 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2011. Its main objectives are to: evaluate the extent to which both state and private media conformed to ethical standards when covering the independent electoral commission, ZEC; assess the role that can be played by media in promoting electoral processes/institutions and investigate how media can mobilise public perceptions on such institutions; and to examine whether it is feasible to have a professional media in a polarised media environment. The study reviewed literature on journalism ethics, media polarisations and case studies on media ethics in Zimbabwe such as the latest one done by the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ). The key theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed the study are the Normative Media Theory, Media Ethics theories, the concept of journalism objectivity and the concept of *Ubuntu*. A triangulated data gathering method of questionnaires, content analysis and in-depth interviews was used to collect data from respondents in Bulawayo, journalists from the two newspapers under study and officials from ZEC. The study found that both private and public press fail to ethically report on independent electoral institutions in a polarised media environment. The major ethical issues that were identified in the two newspapers' reported were lack of: factuality and accuracy; fairness and impartiality; independence and informativeness. The readers felt that both newspapers were biased in their reporting forcing them to read both papers at the same time in order to establish the truth about ZEC. The study concluded that there are a lot of factors affecting media reportage of electoral processes and institutions in Zimbabwe including pressure from media owners; polarisation; commercialisation; and lack of training among others. The study recommends the need for media organisations to formulate codes of ethics, organise refresher training on journalism ethics among others.