*Original Paper*

# Critical Thinking and Conflict Resolution in a Political Youth Setting

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*Abstract*

*Some circles have wondered if some of the recorded conflicts in Zimbabwe might not have been either averted or stopped had appropriate approaches and attitudes been adopted at various levels. Against this background, the study explores the place, feasibility and role of critical thinking in conflict resolution with particular focus on political youth setting in Zimbabwe. A qualitative online research was conducted with 44 youth drawn from Harare. The survey had questions about the youth's understanding of critical thinking, respective application and its impact in conflict resolution processes. The study also analysed 10 selected court case verdicts drawn from the Zimbabwe courts between 1988 and 2015. The cases were selected because they relate to cases where the accused could have applied some critical thinking skills. To analyse data, SPSS was complimented with Narrative Content Analysis. The study was guided by the concept of reason and logic as enshrined in critical thinking. The study established that critical thinking is a new phenomenon yet to be appreciated by most youth. However, wherever applied, the phenomenon has helped ease the process and situation and helped analyse surrounding fundamentals.*

*Keywords*

*conflict resolution, political youth, critical thinking, conflict management, thinking skills*

## 1. Introduction

There are no communities or organisations that do not experience conflicts. For as long as there are people with diverse backgrounds, different educational attainments, varying life expectations and contrasting approaches to the final attainment of goals, conflicts are inevitable; they are part and parcel of the whole entity. In most cases, conflicts do drive and set the agenda for the institutions and

communities. They are necessary for development and effective transformation.

However, often times when people look at conflicts, they resign believing that the conflicts may be so destructive that there will be nothing to salvage. It is in few moments that people realise that most of the change comes through conflicts hence their necessity. There are also instances when people choose to resign as alluded above. This is largely as result of people's failure and reluctance to think deeply about the conflict before selecting potential solutions. It is in such deep thinking that people try to use their past knowledge and facts; step back and away from the conflict; separate a problem from people and better evaluate available arguments. This is critical thinking.

## 2. Background to the Study

In Zimbabwe just like any other country, conflicts have been recorded all producing varying results. All these conflicts have also involved various classes of the people but most importantly the youth who have largely sustained them physically and morally. What has been most glaring in all the conflicts is that there have been youth who unfortunately have been serving as proxy participants. In all their activities, they have been getting instructions from other parties and more interesting, they have been involved in conflicts on behalf of others.

Since 1980 when Zimbabwe was declared independent from the Whiteman's rule, it has recorded several conflicts and cases of violence. Some of the most notable cases include the 1982-1987 *Gukurahundi* massacre, 1985 Perm Operation in the urban areas by Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF), 2000 farm invasions, 2002 and 2008 political elections' violence and economic protests: 1998 Food Riots, 01 August 2018 and 14 January 2019 political protests (Dodo et al., 2017). There have also been the 2007 Final push operation by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the November 2017 coup solidarity march. In almost all these situations, there have been casualties in the form of arrests and deaths and unfortunately, the majority have been youth.

The fact that most of the youth involved in conflicts have been doing it for others and that they receive instructions from elsewhere other than their bases, implies that they have not been really and deeply involved in the planning and execution of the conflicts. It also means that very little thinking about the basis of the conflict, financiers, direct and secondary parties and likely outcome has been done. Basically none of the 5Ws (what, where, when, why, who) is questioned. From a layman's analysis of the cases of conflicts and violence in Zimbabwe, it is evident that the youth could have in most instances either avoided or averted the unfortunate incidences had they tried to apply the 5Ws with a view to establishing if there were no other better, cheaper and applicable options. In most cases, it was a question of applying emotions and physical effort instead of reason and logic.

It is therefore against this background that the study explores the place, feasibility and role of critical thinking in conflict resolution with particular focus on political youth setting in Zimbabwe.

### 3. Methodology

A formal qualitative online research was conducted with youth drawn from Harare. The participants were confirmed youth of ages between 20 and 35 years as defined by Zimstat (2017). An online survey was created with 10 open ended questions about their understanding of critical thinking, respective application and its impact in conflict resolution processes. Fifty survey questionnaires were distributed to various Zimbabwean youth in politics and based in Harare. The participants were selected through a random search via Facebook pages that were related to political activism. The study received a total of 44 responses (88%) after 14 days. The other 12% was just unaccounted for without any responses online. Specifically, the study focussed on conflicts experienced between 2010 and 2019.

Online survey received responses from Zimbabwean youth living in various locations of Harare inclusive of the dormitory town of Chitungwiza. Subjects who contributed responses online were never screened for their levels of literacy or education but all responded in English. However, their experience and duration in politics were considered.

The questionnaires deliberately summarised the skill of critical thinking as an introduction to the participants. The introduction was meant to conscientise the participants of the skill's essence and practice so that all could start and argue from the same standpoint. The questionnaires posited questions around the following themes;

- Appraising on the knowledge about critical thinking.
- Establishing the number of political conflicts ever involved.
- Identify basic skills necessary to deal with conflict resolution.
- Most commonly methods and skills applied in determining positions.
- Identifying critical thinking skills necessary for youth interaction.
- Benefits of applying critical thing skills in conflict resolution processes.

The study also analysed 10 selected court case verdicts drawn from the Zimbabwe courts between 1988 and 2015. All the cases were extracted from Zimbabwe Legal Information Institute (ZLII) (2019) and University of Zimbabwe Student Law Review (UZSLR) (2018). Deliberately, all the cases were selected because they relate to cases where the accused (youth) could have applied some critical thinking skills in either averting or out-rightly stopping the commission of the offences.

The selected cases are presented below for reference purposes. In the analysis, full texts were used to allow a comprehensive appreciation of the facts and the defence (youth) arguments. It is in the defence that content analysis was applied to explore effective use of critical thinking or its inherent weaknesses.

1) *"S v Mutizwa and Ors 1988 (2) ZLR 74 (S)* Xs were members of the youth wing of the ruling political party. They were members of a group of about 100 people who went to stop building operations by the complainant in their grazing area in their communal land. They acted as they did because they had been instructed by party and government officials to

prevent squatters settling in their area and cutting down trees. They believed they had a right to protect their grazing area from the depredations of squatters".

2) *"S v Vambe and Anor 2000 (2) ZLR 494 (S)* the Supreme Court made it clear that in where a criminal group acts with a common purpose all members of the group can be liable for a crime committed that fell within the common purpose".

3) *"S v Chinyerere 2008 ZLR 3 (A); 2008 (2) SA 576 (RA)* members of a political group conspired to break into some premise in order to steal".

4) *"S v Garanewako 2010 (2) ZLR 395 (H)* X was convicted of unlawful entry into premises, in contravention of s 131 of the Criminal Law Code. He had opened the sliding gate of the complainant's yard and entered the yard, where he was discovered".

5) *"S v Stanley 2010 (1) ZLR 380 (H)* the act of conspiring; combination for unlawful purpose, plot".

6) *"S v Choruma and Anor 2010 (1) ZLR 403 (H)* being an accessory to a crime".

7) *"S v Mumpande and Ors 2014 (2) ZLR 417 (H)* Witnessing crime and doing nothing to prevent it".

8) *"S v Ncube and Anor 2014 (2) ZLR 174 (S)* the Supreme Court decided that in respect of the defence of dissociation from a crime, a last-minute withdrawal on its own is insufficient to exculpate a secondary party from the main charge".

9) *"S v Musedza 2015 (1) ZLR 927 (H)* involving members of the security services".

10) *"S v Matoyi HH 919-15* X was found guilty of incitement to commit murder. He has hired a person to kill his son over use of witchcraft practices" (UZSLR, 2018; ZLII, 2019).

The study was conducted along an anti-positivist' perspective that believes in depth of data rather than width and so settled for a small sample (Hellstrom, 2008) which could bring out the desired results efficiently. To analyse data, SPSS was complimented with Narrative Content Analysis to capture open and relevant points consciously raised by the participants. Content analysis is a flexible technique for analysing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). It looks at the features of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Tesch, 1990). Precisely, using a summative approach to qualitative content analysis begins with categorising and counting particular words or content in a manuscript with the intention of appreciating the contextual usage of the words or content. The quantification explores usage as given by Tesch (1990). Examining for the existence of a particular word or content in textual material is referred to as manifest content analysis (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). However, the process goes further to include latent content analysis, which refers to the process of interpretation of content. In this analysis, the emphasis is on establishing fundamental connotations of the words or the content. Basically, summative approach helps understand an occurrence of importance and also offers elementary discernments into how words are really used.

The themes especially ideas, behaviours, and incidents were created from the data itself.

To guarantee credibility, reliability and some generalizability of the findings, the study applied data and methodological triangulation which saw the use of different sources of information and methodologies.

## 4. Conceptual Explanation

The study was guided by the concept of reason and logic as enshrined in critical thinking. Halpern (1996) posits that when conflicting parties think analytically, they are stimulated to think for themselves, interrogate suppositions, examine and blend events, and even advance fresh hypotheses before trying them against available facts. The concept argues that since questioning is the basis of critical thinking and subsequently the main source of knowledge creation, it should be considered as an outline for all conflict resolution processes.

According to the contention of the concept, critical thinking increases ingenuity and improves the way conflicting parties manage time. Besides, it helps parties to a conflict to relate these skills to actual problems (Bowell & Kemp, 2002). It also improves the ability to reason in accordance with the procedures of logic while providing with a more insightful appreciation of the involved parties. The concept of critical thinking is relevant to this study because it helps both parties to a conflict and critical thinkers to perfect their approaches to the process of amicably resolving conflicts.

## 5. Literature Review

### 5.1 Roles of Conflict Resolution Processes

Following an eruption of a conflict, it is expected that appropriate measures be instituted to either manage or resolve it efficiently. Therefore, in order to achieve this, relevant parties may be roped in to see how the conflict may be addressed and these require appropriate skills. These also help expedite the various invaluable roles played by conflict resolution processes (Burton, 1990). Such roles include conflict management. Conflict theorists submit that conflict is a progressive force in society and that social groups must manage conflicts in dynamic ways (Burton, 1990). Some scholars describe the casual approaches that traditional community and family systems afford for the management of conflict citing the intervention in extended family conflict that may be fixed by other members who are not deeply involved in the conflict (Lederach, 2003). Fellow community members' support according to some scholars is necessary as lack of it could force conflicting parties to resort to violence in an endeavour to attain resolution.

Conflict resolution process provides some control systems (Burton, 1990). Social control is an indispensable task; a society requires means to guarantee that its members do not hurt each other. Violence, from this viewpoint, shows failures in the control process (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Shaw and McKay (1942) posit that communities without constant, solid networks of informal social control

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record problems with youth and violence. Such control systems bring in order and eventually peace.

Socialization is also another role that is played by the process of conflict resolution. Youth must be educated on the anticipations of their social group. Violence is usually experienced when youth do not get essential skills to manage interpersonal relationships and to turn out to be economically autonomous. Effective socialization entails more than just the availability of grown-ups who can impart skills. Farrington (1989) cites deficits in the child raising experiences of violent youth; their infancy having been defined by strict discipline, absence of nurturance, and poor direction.

Conflict resolution processes enhance development in specific areas where it is implemented. Since conflicts are unavoidable, learning to deal with them in a positive manner is vital (Burton, 1990). When conflict is mishandled, it could damage people and their development initiatives. But when managed in a courteous and optimistic fashion (Lederach, 2003), conflict affords a chance for growth, eventually consolidating the tie in communities. Again, the process of conflict resolution unearths societal challenges and abnormalities that may also require some attention. Exposing such societal abnormalities is healthy as it allows appropriate remedial action to be taken on time. It also helps avert crises and societal disasters.

*5.2 Critical Thinking*

Critical thinking refers to the capability to apply information, actualities, and data to successfully resolve conflicts. It is a very essential skill for handling conflict situations and transforming them into opportunities (Lamn, 2015). It is basically a process of questioning and challenging a situation. It offers an opportunity to be impartial, less emotional, and more flexible while appreciating others' views and thoughts (Halpern, 1996). In conflict resolution, there are conflict parties who choose to think critically with a view to finding a sustainable solution. They are also called critical thinkers. Critical thinking is most needed in generating well thought-out appraisals and decisions in assignments such as interceding conflicts, tactical planning, listening to colleagues and disentangling intricate problems (Lamn, 2015).

In conflict resolution process, conflict parties are expected to move away from the conflict and allow critical thinking; considering facts, identifying expectations and appraising other perspectives. Stepping away also allows them to look at the conflict from a different vantage point as strangers (Paul & Elder, 2008). This approach comes against the fact that when conflict parties are part of the conflict, it is difficult to be part of the solution at the same time. Critical thinking allows conflict parties to elucidate the objectives of determining the conflict clearly which, in turn, prepares for an actual determination.

Critical thinking emphasises on the conflict, not on people (Facione, 2007). In conflict circumstances, emotionally motivated conflict parties usually have a tendency to point out mistakes in the methods taken by others. Critical thinking therefore allows conflict parties to detach a conflict from people and guide the determination procedure observing the conflict in perspective. It also means better assessment of the arguments (Lamn, 2015). In a conflict situation, there are always numerous arguments where

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individual standpoints and philosophies are shared by everybody involved. Conflict parties also referred to as critical thinkers listen to alternate and opposing standpoints without essentially accepting them (Paul & Elder, 2008). This therefore allows them to bring all the thought processes and reasoning on the table. Impartial assessment of these arguments against the overall objective of determination betters the chances of a positive resolution.

Critical thinking presents facts on the table (Lamn, 2015). When faced with conflicts, conflict parties all the time gather information, evidence and developments linked with the conflict. This information combined with a comprehensive appraisal of arguments afford an arduous base for determining the conflict.

*5.3 Critical Thinking Process*

Critical thinking not only defines the capability to think according to the rules of reason and probability, but also the ability to relate these skills to real-life problems. Lamm, (2016) defines critical thinking as a rational, purposive, and reflective method to addressing problems or attending to inquiries with inadequate substantiation and data and for which an indubitable result is doubtful (Facione, 2007). The process requires a rigorous and thought-out approach which is initiated by the presentation of a conflict or in other circles a problem.

The problem explains the details of the situation and any solutions that have hitherto been attempted. The problem then has to be interpreted accordingly in response to the; who, what, when, why, where and how questions. A deep analysis could follow with some exploration of both the anticipated and real inferential connections among the accounts and questions that may be coming out of the process (Halpern, 1996). All the facts may be considered. From the analysis, all the statements, views, values, data, evidence, and attitudes could be applied to find conceivable determinations and discuss the feasibility of each solution.

The inference stage then allows an evaluation of the integrity of the solutions gradually emerging. A deeper and more objective evaluation of the validity of the possible solutions naturally searches for flaws in thinking and reason (Facione, 2007). The process requires a thorough review and self-regulation which helps to pick and eliminate any biases and contamination of the thoughts. However, other scholars (Paul & Elder, 2008) argue that critical thinking just requires skills to interpret, analyse, reason and evaluate problems and conflicts. At the end of it all, the process takes with it the following components; opinion, assumptions, feeling and language, argument, myth, reason, and problem solving (Lamn, 2015).

## 6. Findings

After analysing all the data from the 88% participants and the selected 10 court case verdicts and in particular in relation and response to the following questions, themes were created which then guided

the presentations. The findings were presented according to these themes.

- Appraising on the knowledge about critical thinking.
- Establishing the number of political conflicts ever involved.
- Identify basic skills necessary to deal with conflict resolution.
- Most commonly applied methods and skills in determining positions.
- Identifying critical thinking skills necessary for youth interaction.
- Benefits of applying critical thing skills in conflict resolution processes.
- Possibilities of applying critical thinking skills before the commission of the offences.

*6.1 Demographics*

Of the 44 participants, 16 were females (36%) while 28 were males (64%).

The participants were drawn from the following areas in Harare.

**Table 1. Demographics**

| Area | Mbare | Seke | Zengeza | Avondale | Budiriro | Msasa Park | Houghton Park | Highlands | Mabvuku | Glen view |
|------|-------|------|---------|----------|----------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Freq | 5 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 4 |

1) Appraising on the knowledge about critical thinking.

Out of the 44 participants, 14 (32%) indicated that they were not aware of any skill known as critical thinking while the other 20 (46%) revealed that while they were unaware of the term itself, they were usually in the habit of applying the skill whenever required to resolve conflicts.

The other six participants (14%) indicated that they had either read or studied the skill in school and therefore very much aware of it and its merits and demerits. They also indicated that a number of people applied the skill though unaware of its dictates.

2) Establishing the number of political conflicts ever involved.

**Table 2. Conflict Statistics**

| Age group | Political | family | workplace | Other | Total |
|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|
| 20-24 yrs | 5 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 17 |
| 25-29 yrs | 11 | 13 | 9 | +31 | 64 |
| 30-35 yrs | 17 | 41 | 6 | +50 | 114 |
|  | 33 | 57 | 16 | 89 | 195 |

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*Please note that the number of conflicts noted above are a cumulative figure by all the participants in that age cohort.

In total, there were over 195 conflicts recorded between 2010 and 2019.

The 20-24 cohort experienced a total of 17 conflicts (9%).

The 25-29 cohort experienced a total of 64 conflicts (33%).

The 30-35 cohort recorded a total of 114 conflicts (58%).

Of the various noted conflicts, the most prominent was the family with 57 (29%) followed by political with 33 (17%) while work-place had 16 (8%). An assortment of other conflicts that were minor and uncommon recorded 89 cases (46%).

3) Identify basic skills necessary to deal with conflict resolution.

Some of the skills that were extracted from the questionnaires and noted to have been commonly applied in resolving conflicts are presented in the Figure below.

**Table 3. Skills Frequency**

| Skill | Frequency |
| --- | --- |
| Effective communication | 38 |
| Questioning | 28 |
| Investigative | 17 |
| Listening | 44 |
| Persuasion | 23 |
| Compromise | 35 |
| Concession | 13 |
| Feedback | 44 |
| Accept criticism | 18 |
| Inducement | 13 |
| Empathy | 27 |
| Patience | 19 |
| Tolerance | 25 |
| Persistence | 15 |
| Introspection | 14 |

4) Most commonly applied methods and skills in determining positions.

After compiling the skills frequency, the following data with the most applied skills were established: listening and feedback had 44 each, effective communication with 38, compromise with 35, questioning and tolerance had 28 and 25 respectively.

The least applied skills were as follows: concession and inducement had 13 each introspection with 14 and persistence and investigation with 15 and 17 respectively.

5) Benefits of applying critical thing skills in conflict resolution processes.

Thirty-three participants (75%) indicated that from their experiences, critical thinking had helped them to admit and respect that individual views may vary. Therefore, there was need to work towards a mutual agreement. The same participants had also learnt that in conflict resolution, one focusses on the problem and not the individual.

Seventeen participants (39%) revealed that in critical thinking parties introspect their feelings assertively and say them out without impugning anyone.

Twelve participants (27%) pointed out that in conflict resolution process, there is no need to evaluate the situation as a competition, where the other part has to win while the other loses.

Nine participants (20%) indicated the need to focus on areas of common interest and agreement, instead of areas of disagreement and opposition. This is only possible if the parties manage to question the 5Ws effectively. According to these participants, it allowed the conflicting parties to focus on the issue and never concentrate one's position about the issue.

Five participants (11%) pointed out the need for listening without interrupting and where possible, ask for feedback.

6) Possibilities of applying critical thinking skills before the commission of the offences.

From the latent analysis following a summative approach, the study established a sequence of data that was then analysed across all the selected cases.

**Table 4. Summative Approach Coding Process**

| Case | Common keywords | Interpretation | Missing keywords | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Insult | Inflict psychological pain | Accidental | Unintentional |
| | Provoke | Pick a fight | Over-step | By mistake |
| | Destroy | Vandalise | | |
| 2 | Destroy | Vandalise | Sorry | Forgive |
| | Injure | Inflict physical damage | Hurt | Cause pain |
| 3 | Provoke | Pick a fight | Accidental | Unintentional |
| | Destroy | Vandalise | Mistake | Unintentional |
| | Steal | Deprive | Sorry | Forgive |
| | | | Hurt | Cause pain |
| 4 | Invade | Forcibly takeover | Trespass | Faulted |
| | Steal | Deprive | Transgression | Faulted |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Insult | Inflict psychological pain | | |
| | Provoke | Pick a fight | Hurt | Cause pain |
| | Injure | Inflict physical damage | Pass on | Death |
| | Death | Physical elimination | Forgiveness | Mercy |
| 6 | Provoke | Pick a fight | Hurt | Cause pain |
| | Injure | Inflict physical damage | Trespass | faulted |
| | Assault | Persecution | | |
| 7 | Insult | Inflict psychological pain | Hurt | Cause pain |
| | Injure | Inflict physical damage | Sorry | forgive |
| 8 | Provoke | Pick a fight | Hurt | Cause pain |
| | Assault | Persecution | Mistake | Unintentional |
| 9 | Insult | Inflict psychological pain | Hurt | Cause pain |
| 10 | Death | Physical elimination | Pass on | Death |
| | Assault | Persecution | Hurt | Cause pain |
| | Provoke | Pick a fight | Forgiveness | Mercy |

Data analysis started with computer-assisted searches for incidences of the terms injure, assault, death and insult in the defence court manuscripts. Word rate of recurrence for each of the four conflict-related words in a copy were calculated and compared to the total length of the court papers. Rate of recurrence of euphemisms versus direct words were matched across the total cases.

Talking about words like injure, assault, death and insult is discouraged. Use of such terms in Zimbabwean society is considered inflammatory and instead, the euphemisms encouraged include the following: hurt, pass on, abuse, forgiveness and so on. A failure to apply clear words impedes the effectiveness of communication between conflicting parties.

A search for terms' frequencies revealed the following (in descending order):

**Table 5. Terms' Frequencies**

| | Commonly used | Frequency | Missing terms | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Provoke | 6 | Cause pain | 8 |
| 2 | Insult | 4 | Unintentional | 4 |
| 3 | Injure | 4 | Forgive | 3 |
| 4 | Destroy | 3 | Faulted | 3 |
| 5 | Assault | 3 | Death | 2 |
| 6 | Steal | 2 | Mercy | 2 |
| 7 | Death | 2 | | |

| 8 | Invade | 1 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

What is evident from the analysis is the fact that had the youth decided to use such terms as "unintentional, forgive and faulted" and also realised that whatever their actions could then "cause pain" on others, almost all the cases could have been avoided.

Similarly, had the same youth avoided "provoking, insulting and injuring, destroying and assaulting" others, all the conflicts might have been averted.

## 7. Discussion

According to the study findings, though many people inclusive of the youth have participated in conflict resolution processes, some are not familiar with the concept of critical thinking. While there may be some applying the concept, they do not know its theoretical aspects. To some, it is a question of sheer wisdom.

On the benefits of applying critical thing skills in conflict resolution processes, generally the study notes that: critical thinking helps to admit and respect that individual views differ and therefore the problem should never be seen as a competition as that worsened the relations of the conflicting parties. The study also established that with critical thinking, parties introspect their feelings as they consistently question the 5Ws. These findings resonate well with Bowell and Kemp (2002) and Facione's (2007) position.

With regards to the application of critical skills before engaging in conflict resolution processes, it was established in the study that there were some terms that are commonly used in such discussions and yet, they are highly inflammatory and inciting. At all times, such terms should be identified and possibly eliminated while effort could be directed towards the identification of other terms that build peace, tolerance and show empathy and compassion towards each other. Such inciting terms could be identified through their frequency in the discussions of text vis-a-viz the respective rates of conflict manifestation.

Closely akin to the above were the study findings that established some of the most applied skills in conflict resolution by critical thinkers: listening and feedback that had 44 each, effective communication with 38, compromise with 35, questioning and tolerance with 28 and 25 respectively. Meanwhile, the least applied skills noted in the study were as follows: concession and inducement had 13 each introspection with 14 and persistence and investigation with 15 and 17 respectively. According to the study, these are critical in determining a sustainable conflict resolution as submitted by Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999).

The study also revealed that effective communication helps conflicting parties better appreciate each other and the prevailing situation thus allow them to address differences, generate confidence and

respect, and make atmospheres where ingenious thoughts, problem solving, and collective work could grow. The study realises that it is either from the conflicting parties or the parties themselves that critical thinkers are derived to partake in the conflict resolution processes. Conflict manifests once two or more parties fail to see from the same standpoint. If all parties involved do not introspect and embrace aspects of tolerance and diversity and critically examine the prevailing circumstances, a trifling conflict can turn out to be a disaster and even intensify into a physical confrontation. Therefore, according to the study, there is need for conflicting parties to be impartial, less emotional, and more flexible, consider facts, identify expectations and appraise other perspectives as propounded by Paul and Elder (2008) and Lamn (2015).

## 8. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that a critical thinker performs better than everyone in the same category. First and foremost, a critical conflict critical thinker is seen achieving better results efficiently while less dependent on the authorities for advice and resources. Again a critical thinker generates knowledge that may also be stored for future reference. This type of a participant in conflict resolution processes always finds time to evaluate, challenge and seek to change societal structures.

The study concludes that critical thinking, though an invaluable and handy concept remains elusive in most conflicting parties hence continued escalation of disputes into huge conflicts. This concept demands innate characteristics that are usually very rare and unobtainable in most conflict resolution practitioners. Most youth involved in conflicts in Zimbabwe believe that some of their hardliner approaches are the best for the attainment of desired results in conflict resolution processes.

It is concluded in the study that the application of critical thinking skills has a lot of benefits to both parties in the conflict resolution process. Critical thinking helps parties to examine themselves before making final decisions, to apply the 5Ws for the effective questioning of the prevailing conditionalities around a problem. It is also concluded that appropriate application of some of the skills can help either avert or stop the eruption of conflicts in societies.

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