

Bindura University of Science Education



A MODEL TOWARDS ADDRESSING HIGH RATE OF FOOD INSECURITY AMONG ORPHANS IN ZIMBABWE. A CASE STUDY OF A SELECTED WARD IN MUDZI DISTRICT.

BY

EVELYN RONICA MUTIMBA

(B210119B)

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

SUPERVISOR: DR CHIKONO


**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK,
BINDURA UNIVERSITY FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
HONOURS DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.**

2025

APPROVAL FORM

I certify that I supervised **Mutimba Evelyn Ronica (B210119B)** in carrying out this research titled: A model towards address high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. A case study of a selected ward in Mudzi District in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Science, Honours Degree in Social Work and recommend that it proceeds for examination.

Supervisor

Name **Dr. G. Chikono**..... Signature  Date
20/06/2025.....

Chairperson of the Department Board of Examiners

The departmental board of examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and therefore I recommend to Bindura University of Science Education to accept this research project by Mutimba Evelyn Ronica titled: A model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. A case study of a selected ward in Mudzi District in partial fulfilment of the Bachelor of Science, Honours Degree in Social work.

Chairperson

Name..... Signature..... Date.....

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



E.R. Mutimba E.R. Mutimba , 22/08/2025

Student Signature

Date

[Signature] , 22/08/25

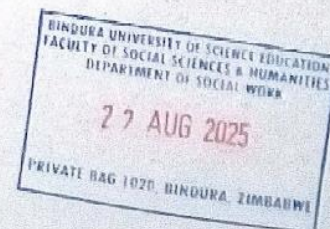
Supervisor Signature

Date

[Signature] , 22/08/25

Chairperson Signature

Date



DECLARATION RELEASE FORM

I, Mutimba Evelyn Ronica studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work, aware of the fact that plagiarism is an academic offense and that falsifying information is a breach of the ethics of Social Work research, I truthfully declare that:

1. The dissertation report titled: **A model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. A case study of a selected ward Mudzi District** is my original work and has not been plagiarised.
2. The research was crafted within the confines of the research ethics and the ethics of the profession.
3. I have also followed all the guidelines provided by the university in writing this dissertation and whenever I have used the material from any other sources, due credit through the provision of their details in the references has been offered.
4. Bindura University of Science Education can use this dissertation for academic purposes.

Student's name..... Signature.....Date.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God for the gift of life for nothing would have been possible without his Grace. I also would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Chikono for his patience in guiding me throughout this research. I am really grateful to my friends for their unconditional love and support during my studies. Sincere appreciation to the Department of Social Development for giving me an opportunity to carry out this study. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the study.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedication to my mother Winnie Mutimba, your love and support during my academic studies from day one is greatly appreciated. I also dedicate this project to my beloved husband Musa Ajida, you have always been there for me and you are greatly loved always and forever.

PLAGIARISM REPORT

Mutimba Evelyn Ronica B210119B

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10%

SIMILARITY INDEX

8%

INTERNET SOURCES

4%

PUBLICATIONS

3%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	link.springer.com Internet Source	1 %
2	ir.msu.ac.zw:8080 Internet Source	1 %
3	docs.wfp.org Internet Source	1 %
4	ulspace.ul.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
5	"Religion, Climate Change, and Food Security in Africa", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2024 Publication	<1 %
6	Submitted to Jackson State University Student Paper	<1 %
7	reliefweb.int Internet Source	<1 %
8	Submitted to Clear Creek Independent School District Student Paper	<1 %
9	liboasis.buse.ac.zw:8080 Internet Source	<1 %
10	Submitted to Bindura University of Science Education Student Paper	<1 %
11	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1 %

MARKING GUIDE

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

--

Name: Mutimba Evelyn Ronica

Registration No: B210119B

MARKING GUIDE: UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	Possible Mark	Actual Mark
Abstract	10	
Background to the study- what is it that has made you choose this particular topic? Include objectives or purpose of the study	20	
Statement of the problem	10	
Research questions	15	
Assumptions	5	
Significance of the study	15	
Limitations of the study	5	
Delimitations of the study	5	
Definition of terms	10	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	15	

Comments.....
.....
.....

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction- what do you want to write about in this chapter?	5	
Conceptual or theoretical framework	10	
Identification, interpretations and evaluation of relevant literature and citations	40	
Contextualisation of the literature to the problem	10	
Establishing gaps in knowledge and how the research will try to bridge these gaps	10	
Structuring and logical sequencing of ideas	10	
Discursive skills	10	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	20	

Comments.....
.....
.....

Chapter 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction	5	
--------------	---	--

Research design	10	
What instruments are you using to collect data?	30	
Population, sample and sampling techniques to be used in the study	25	
Procedures for collecting data	15	
Data presentation and analysis procedures	10	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	25	

Comments.....
.....
.....

Chapter 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction	5	
Data presentation	50	
Is there any attempt to link literature review with new findings	10	
How is the new knowledge trying to fill the gaps identified earlier	10	
Discursive and analytical skills	20	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	30	

Comments
.....
.....
.....

Chapter 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction- focus of the chapter	5	
Summary of the whole project including constraints	25	
Conclusions- have you come up with answers to the problem under study	30	
Recommendations(should be based on findings) Be precise	30	
References	5	
Appendices i.e. copies of instruments used and any other relevant material	5	
Total	100	
Weighted mark	10	

Comments
.....
.....
.....

SUMMARY:-

Actual

Total

Chapter 1 _____

Chapter 2 _____

Chapter 3 _____

Chapter 4 _____

Chapter 5 _____

Total _____

ABSTRACT

This study sought to develop an intervention model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. The study was guided by three objectives which are; to identify the underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans, to assess challenges faced by orphans due to food insecurity and to develop a model to address the high rate of food insecurity among orphaned children. Qualitative research approach was utilized to collect, analyze and present findings. All groups that participated in the research were selected through purposive sampling technique. Theoretically, the study was underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The study findings showed that food insecurity among orphans is caused by a combination of social, economic and environmental factors. These includes, neglect, lack of family support, lack of employment in rural areas, climate change leading to poor agricultural resources, poverty and lack of access to resources. Therefore, these factors are leading to serious challenges or effects among orphans which includes high rate of malnutrition, extreme hunger and starvation leading to delayed cognitive and physical development among orphaned children, increased school dropouts and poor academic performance, increased child exploitation and early child marriages. The findings demonstrated that the government, non-governmental organizations and other international organizations had put some efforts to provide social services specifically food to the orphans through various programs but still it is limited and not sustainable. However, based on the ecological systems theory, there is an interdependent relationship between all social systems in a society, therefore to promote food security, welfare and protection of orphaned children, there is need for the strong integration of all these systems towards a common goal. The study recommends the government to work together with NGOs, International organizations and all social systems to help to develop sustainable strategies and programs in order to promote food availability and accessibility among orphaned children.

ACRONOMYS

FAO-	Food and Agriculture Organization
HIV& AIDS-	Human Immuno Virus & Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome.
UNICEF-	United Nations Children’s Fund.
NGO-	Non-Governmental Organizations.
DSD-	Department of Social Development.
IFAD-	International Fund for Agricultural Development.
CARE-	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.
WFP-	World Food Programme.
WHO-	World Health Organization.
SADC-	Southern African Development Community.
FNSS-	Food Nutrition Security Strategy.
OVC-	Orphans and Vulnerable Children.
NAP-	National Action Plan.
CCW-	Community Childcare Worker.

Table of Contents

APPROVAL FORM	Error! Bookmark not defined.
DECLARATION RELEASE FORM.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
DEDICATION	vi
PLAGIARISM REPORT	vii
MARKING GUIDE	viii
ABSTRACT.....	xi
ACRONOMYS	xii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xvi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the study	1
1.3 Statement of the problem	3
1.4 Aim of the study.....	3
1.5 Research objectives	3
1.6 Research Questions	4
1.7 Justification of the study.....	4
1.8 Definition of Terms	4
1.8.1 Orphans.....	4
1.8.2 Food insecurity.....	5
1.8.3 Food security.....	5
1.9 Dissertation Outline	5
1.10 Chapter Summary	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.0 Introduction	7
2.1. Theoretical Framework: The Ecological Systems Theory.....	7
2.2 Global overview of Food Insecurity	8
2.2.1 Food insecurity in SADC Region	9
2.3. Food Insecurity in Zimbabwe.....	11
2.3.1 Impact of climate change and environmental factors	11
2.3.2 Economic crisis.....	12
2.3.3 Poverty	13
2.3.4 Social Challenges and lack of Social Support	14
2.3.5 Impact of HIV/AIDS	14
2.3.6 Orphan hood and Vulnerability	15

2.4. Consequences of Food Insecurity on Orphans	15
2.4.1 Poor Health and Nutrition.....	15
2.4.2 Education challenges	16
2.4.3 Vulnerability to exploitation	17
2.5 Social Support Systems and Food Insecurity	17
2.6 Chapter Summary	19
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
3.0. Introduction	20
3.2 Research philosophy	20
3.1.1 Ontological assumptions.....	20
3.1.2 Epistemology	21
3.1.3 Axiology.....	21
3.2. Research approach	21
3.2.1 Research design	22
3.3. Study setting	22
3.4. Targeted Population	23
3.5. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size	23
3.5.1 Purposive sampling	24
3.6. Data collection techniques and tools.....	24
3.6.1 In-depth Interviews.....	25
3.6.2 Observations	25
3.7. Research Procedure	26
3.8. Validity	27
3.8.1. Reliability.....	27
3.9. Ethical Considerations.....	27
3.10. Data analysis	28
3.11. Limitations of the study	28
3.12. Chapter Summary	29
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	30
4.1 Introduction	30
4.2 Demographic information.....	30
4.3 Theme 1. Underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi district.	34
4.3.1 Lack of employment and poverty	34
4.3.2 High market price.....	35
4.3.3 Environmental shocks	37

4.4 Theme 2: Assessing the challenges faced by orphans due to food insecurity in a selected ward in Mudzi District	39
4.4.1 Chronic hunger and malnutrition.....	39
4.4.2 Educational disrupts.....	40
4.4.3 Risk behaviors	42
4.5 Chapter summary.....	43
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	45
5.1 Introduction	45
5.2 Summary	45
Key findings.....	45
5.3 Conclusions	46
5.3.1 Malnutrition and poor health outcomes	47
5.3.2 Poor academic outcomes.....	47
5.4 Implication to social work profession	48
5.5 Recommendations	48
5.6 Area of further study	49
5.7 Chapter summary.....	49
REFERENCES	53
Appendix 1	61
Informed Consent Form	61
Appendix 2	62
In-depth interview guides for orphan caregivers	62
Appendix 3	63
Interview guide for key informants	63
Appendix 5: Approval letter.....	66
Appendix 6: Chief Director of Department of social development approval letter	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: 4.2.1 Demographic information of Caregivers/ Guardians	30
Table 2: 4.2.2 Demographic information for key informants	31
Table 3: 4.2.3 Demographic information for orphans	32
Figure 1: 5.8 Intervention Model: Integrated Support for Orphan Welfare and Protection Model (ISOWP).....	51

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Food insecurity remains a critical challenge affecting vulnerable populations worldwide, with orphans being particularly at risk. In Mudzi District, the prevalence of food insecurity among orphans has reached alarming levels, prompting urgent investigation into its underlying causes and potential solutions. This research aims to develop a comprehensive model that highlights the multifaceted nature of food insecurity in considering economic, social, and environmental factors.

1.2 Background of the study

Globally, food insecurity is rapidly increasing. In 2021, a total of 20.2 percent of the African population was facing hunger, compared to 9.1 percent in Asia, 8.6 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.8 percent in Oceania and less than 2.5 percent in North America and Europe. The key drivers of the increasing levels of food insecurity are violent conflicts, climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic. Smith et al (2022) highlighted that climate change is a major cause of food insecurity, affecting agricultural productivity through extreme weather events like droughts, floods, and unpredictable rainfall patterns. According to the WFP (2023) the regions affected by prolonged conflicts such as parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Yemen experience the highest levels of acute food shortages.

Zimbabwe is landlocked, lower middle income, food deficient country. Over the last decade, it has experienced several economic and environmental shocks that have contributed to high food insecurity and malnutrition. At least 49% of its people are living in abject poverty the most vulnerable orphans in particular. Vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and orphans have been particularly affected by food insecurity in Zimbabwe. Orphanhood due to the death of one or both parents is a strong predictor of food insecurity among children. According to Mashayahanya (2017) orphans under elderly or sick caregivers often lack access to agricultural labor, worsening food shortages. Orphaned children are frequently in disrupted family configurations with attendant food insecurity and inadequate nutrition.

Extended family members or other caregivers may not have the financial means to provide adequate nutrition, leading to an increased risk of malnutrition and food insecurity among orphans. Many orphans face significant barriers to accessing food, education, and healthcare, compounding their risk of malnutrition and food insecurity. Children who are not adequately

nourished during critical periods of growth are more susceptible to diseases, have weaker immune systems, and are more likely to experience delayed cognitive development.

Zimbabwe is currently recovering from the impact of El Nino induced drought, which has significantly impacted food and nutrition security outcomes, agriculture production and livelihoods. The impacts of El Nino drought led to increased life threatening severe malnutrition, diseases outbreaks and health issues among children mainly orphans. The country's reliance on rain-fed agriculture means that erratic rainfall patterns have significant impacts on food production. According to Jones and Patel (2023) the effects of these factors has pushed millions into poverty and food insecurity, challenging global efforts to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal for zero hunger by 2030. From 2015 onward, the effects of prolonged droughts and changing weather patterns have become increasingly visible, contributing to lower crop yields, especially for staple foods like maize. The 2024 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committees (ZimVAC) Urban livelihoods assessment estimates that 1.7 million people in urban areas are currently food insecure. While the Rural Livelihoods assessment estimates that some 4.7 million people in rural areas are food insecure including the vulnerable populations.

Zimbabwe has undertaken a range of strategies to mitigate food insecurity, engaging multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations. According to Hossain and Khan (2019) sustainable solutions to food insecurity among orphans require a holistic approach that includes improving local food production, investing in child nutrition, and enhancing the socio-economic conditions of caregivers. These efforts aim to stabilize food production, enhance access to nutrition, and build resilience among vulnerable populations. The Zimbabwean government, in collaboration with NGOs such as Oxfam and Practical Action, has provided farmers with essential agricultural inputs, including seeds, fertilizers, and farming equipment. These organizations have also facilitated training and extension services to improve agricultural practices and productivity. For instance, Oxfam has supported smallholder farmers by promoting sustainable farming techniques, helping them adapt to climatic challenges and maximize yields.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has also been a key player in providing emergency food aid and cash transfers to vulnerable households, including orphans and those affected by economic hardships. Local NGOs, such as CARE Zimbabwe, have also implemented programs that distribute food and provide nutritional support to communities in need. The United Nations

Children's Fund actively works to support orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe, implementing programs that include food assistance, nutrition education, and health services to improve their overall well-being. These efforts aim to ensure that affected populations can access basic food supplies during crises, alleviating immediate hunger.

Economic instability and poverty are two primary factors driving food insecurity in Africa. Many African countries face high levels of poverty, with a large proportion of the population unable to access sufficient food. According to FAO (2020) nearly 60% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lives below the poverty line, making it difficult for households to afford nutritious food. The situation is exacerbated by low agricultural productivity, limited access to markets, and inadequate infrastructure (Tadesse et al., 2018).

1.3 Statement of the problem

Food insecurity remains a critical challenge in Zimbabwe, with orphans in Mudzi District, particularly affected by this issue. Despite various interventions and policies aimed at alleviating food scarcity, the high rate of food insecurity among orphans persists, leading to adverse health and developmental outcomes. This vulnerability is compounded by a combination of socio-economic factors, including poverty, limited access to agricultural resources, and the impact of climate change on local food production. Hence, the researcher aims to explore root causes leading to food shortages among orphans in Mudzi District and develop a comprehensive model that identifies key contributing factors, evaluates existing interventions, and provides targeted recommendations.

1.4 Aim of the study

This study seeks to develop a model that not only highlights the critical issue of food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi District but also come up with effective interventions to promote food accessibility and availability.

1.5 Research objectives

The following specific objectives will guide the study:

- To identify the underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi District.
- To assess the challenges faced by orphans due to food insecurity.
- To develop a model towards addressing the high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi District.

1.6 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the primary causes of food insecurity among orphans in rural areas in Zimbabwe?
- What are the physical, social and mental effects of food shortages to orphans in Zimbabwe?
- How can care givers be supported to ensure food security among orphans in rural areas?
- How can policy makers and stakeholders ensure sustainable food security for orphans in rural areas in Zimbabwe?
- How effective are the food security intervention strategies imposed by the Zimbabwean government and other stakeholders in reducing food shortages?

1.7 Justification of the study

Need for reduction of food insecurities in rural areas mainly focusing on vulnerable population specifically orphans. The study seeks to address food shortage challenges being faced by orphans in rural areas through implementing various community based initiatives. These might be through intervention strategies imposed by the Zimbabwean government and other humanitarian organization such as UNICEF, WHO, World Vision in order to reduce malnutrition, hunger, starvation, and high rate of mortality among orphans specifically in Mudzi District. According to Haris and Gupta (2021) food insecurity contributes to poor nutrition outcomes, leading to higher rates of malnutrition, stunted growth in children, and various diet-related diseases.

The study also seeks to elaborate the root causes and consequences of food shortages to vulnerable population in Zimbabwe. This enhance implementation of food security policies targeting orphans and effective intervention initiatives or measures to address food insecurity issues in rural areas.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Orphans

According Smith and Anderson (2020) orphans are children who have lost one or both parents as a result of death, and they are at risk of experiencing emotional, social, and economic difficulties. Williams and Lee (2018) defined an orphan as a child who has lost one or both parents through death, and this loss may contribute to long-term psychological distress, depending on the age of the child and the quality of caregiving following the loss.

1.8.2 Food insecurity

Food and Agriculture Organization (2021) defines food insecurity as a situation that exists when people do not have adequate physical, social, or economic access to food as a basic human right. According to Patel and Fernandez (2020) food insecurity is a condition where individuals or households are unable to consistently access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain an active and healthy life."

1.8.3 Food security

According to Carter and Wright (2021) food security exists when individuals or communities have reliable access to sufficient, affordable, and nutritious food, regardless of external pressures such as climate events or market volatility. FAO (2018) defines food security as a situation in which all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

1.9 Dissertation Outline

Dissertation is made of five chapters:

1.9.1 Chapter One: This chapter presents Introduction and background of the study. It also elaborate on statement of the problem. Additionally, introduction outlines hypotheses guiding the project, setting the stage for investigation. Objectives are also defined, explaining what the researcher hopes to achieve through the study. The significance of the study is emphasized, discussing the potential impact of the findings on the field, policy, practice, or future research.

1.9.2 Chapter Two: Reviews literature of existing related research by other scholars on factors and impacts of food insecurity among orphans and intervention strategies imposed. It also includes theoretical frameworks that identifies and discusses the key theories relevant to the research.

1.9.3 Chapter Three: Outlines the methods and procedures used by the researcher to conduct the research. Also outlines the techniques and tools used for data collection and all the steps taken throughout the research process.

1.9.4 Chapter Four: This chapter compromises analysis, presentation and interpretation of the findings from the study.

1.9.5 Chapter Five: This chapter comprises of summary of the findings, recommendations, conclusions, implications to social work profession as well as area for further study.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research where the background factors that led to this research were explained. The background of the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, research objectives, justification of the study were outlined. Also key terms were defined as well as elaborating on dissertation outline

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Food insecurity is a significant concern globally, with many factors contributing to its persistence, particularly among vulnerable populations like orphans. This chapter is going to provide literature review from various sources. The literature is going to focus on food insecurity, economic instability, climate change, impacts among orphans and intervention strategies with particular attention to a selected ward in Mudzi District in Mashonaland East.

2.1. Theoretical Framework: The Ecological Systems Theory

The researcher will apply Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. It focuses on connectivity and interdependency of system-level components. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) human development is affected by different layers of environmental systems, ranging from different immediate settings to broader societal contexts. The theory underpinning this is that food insecurity of orphans is multi-causal and not a single factor problem; which is influenced by economic, social, government and family settings, health settings, education settings. This theory suggests that it is impossible to attribute social problems to any one because all levels of the environment and life situations are interrelated and must be examined in conjunction with one another. Poverty, limited social protection, lack of institutional support, and macroeconomic instability underpin food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. Nyikahadzoi et al., (2019) states that weak governance, limited child protection policies, and inadequate funding for social welfare programs exacerbate orphan food insecurity. Food insecurity among orphans is such a problem involving stakeholders from diverse sectors such as government ministries and NGOs. According to Chirwa and Kadzamira (2018) policies related to social protection, healthcare and agriculture shape the resources available for food security. Systems theory facilitates the design of a holistic model by accounting for the dynamic feedback loops and relationships between these stakeholders. For instance, inadequate nutrition leads to poor health and educational outcomes which in turn reinforce the cycle of poverty and vulnerability. According to FAO (2020) community-based interventions that integrate food distribution, education, and healthcare can strengthen these subsystems to better support orphaned children. The theory also supports adaptive and participatory approaches, encouraging the involvement of local communities and beneficiaries in the design and implementation of interventions. This aligns with the idea of learning systems where the system evolves based on feedback and participation. In this framework, caregivers, local leaders and even the orphans themselves play a role in co-creating sustainable solutions.

Despite the applicability of systems theory in analysing complex social challenges, scholarly literature on food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe reveals several critical gaps. One of the most prominent gaps is the limited contextual adaptation of systems theory. While systems theory has widely applied in global studies of poverty and vulnerability, few scholars have effectively localized its principles to the Zimbabwean context. This includes neglecting unique socio-cultural elements such as extended family networks, traditional kinship care and community-based safety nets that are integral to orphan care in Zimbabwe. The study seeks to address the issue by grounding the research within the country's unique socio-cultural realities. The incorporation of local knowledge and community dynamics will allow for the development of a model that is both theoretically robust and practically viable within Zimbabwe's orphan care environment.

Furthermore, previous studies have not adequately addressed the issue of orphan participation in the development of interventions aimed at combating food insecurity. Orphans' voices and lived experiences are often missing from scholarly discourse. Systems theory promotes feedback and participatory learning but current literature largely treats orphans as passive recipients rather than active participants in shaping interventions. This study seeks to address this gap by incorporating orphan perspective into the design of a system based model for food security in Zimbabwe. Through qualitative engagement with orphans and their caregivers, the study aims to ensure that proposed solutions are responsive, inclusive and sustainable.

2.2 Global overview of Food Insecurity

The WPF's 2025 Global Outlook estimated that 343 million people worldwide are impacted by the complicated problem of food insecurity, and Zimbabwe is one of the nations that is dealing with it. According to Wang et al (2023) food insecurity exists when food forms are unavailable, unaffordable, inaccessible and unacceptable. Global food insecurity has been greatly exacerbated by poverty, economic inequality, conflicts, and climate change. Since 2016, economic, environmental and geopolitical variables have influenced the occurrence of food insecurity. In recent years, food insecurity has gotten worse. Due to economic instability, conflicts and climate change the number of people experiencing chronic hunger has risen from 795 million in 2016 to over 828 million in 2021. FAO (2021) states that hunger has increased in Latin America, the Caribbean, and parts of Asia, reversing progress made in previous decades.

Studies indicated that climate change has affected countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya through prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall that led to failed harvests, water scarcity, and food insecurity. These conditions, compounded by limited adaptive capacity, make the

region highly vulnerable. According to Meyer (2020) climate change reduces the nutritional quality of crops and increases the prevalence of pests and diseases, further compounding food security challenges. Millions of people are in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the frequent droughts in the Horn of Africa in particular.

2.2.1 Food insecurity in SADC Region

Food and nutrition insecurity in the SADC region continues to be unacceptably high, requiring concerted efforts for the region to build resilience to address the multiple and increasing shocks it faces. The region is grappling with a severe food insecurity crisis, largely due to the devastating effects of the El Nino-induced drought. According to FAO (2023) highlights that nearly 282 million people across the region are currently food insecure. Countries most affected include Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia and Lesotho. The drought has led to significant crop failures and livestock losses, severely disrupting food production and rural livelihoods.

The agricultural sector which is the primary source of income and sustenance for much of the population, has been particularly impacted. Maize the staple crop for many SADC countries has experienced sharp declines in production with a 20% drop in South Africa, a 54% reduction in Zambia and a staggering 72% decrease in Zimbabwe compared to the previous year. These reduction have led to soaring food prices and dwindling food stocks placing millions at risk of hunger. According to WFP (2023) the 2023-2024 EL Nino phenomenon led to severe droughts and erratic rainfall patterns, devastating crop yields. The crisis is also compounding existing health challenges such as rising cases of child malnutrition with an estimated 21 million children facing nutrition deficits including orphans. World Bank (2020) states that the absence of proper nutrition leads to long-term developmental problems, including cognitive delays and stunted physical growth, which can persist into adulthood. According to UNICEF (2020) malnutrition remains one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among children in SADC region.

Food insecurity in the SADC region has devastating effects on orphans and other vulnerable children. These children already at risk due to the loss of parental care, face heightened challenges in accessing adequate nutrition, health services and education. World Bank (2019) states that orphans in conflict zones or displaced persons' camps are often left without caregivers or access to food assistance. According to FAO (2021) the prolonged droughts, led to severe malnutrition and food scarcity for displaced populations, including orphans. Orphans often rely on extended family, community or institutional care, many of which are strained

during food crisis. In times of drought or economic hardship, these support systems are unable to provide sufficient food, resulting in undernourishment and in many cases severe malnutrition. Malnourished children are more susceptible to illness, stunted growth and cognitive development delays all of which can have long-term consequences on their well-being and potential.

Food insecurity also affects orphan's access to education. Many children are forced to miss school in order to search for food, care for siblings or engage in income generating activities. Without stable food access, orphans especially those in child-headed households experience increased psychological stress, insecurity and exposure to exploitation. In disparate circumstances, some may turn to hazardous labor or early marriages as coping mechanisms. The economic strain on guardians and community caregivers also often leads to neglect or reduced capacity to care for additional children, further marginalizing orphans. According to Nkoko et al. (2024) in Lesotho, factors such as household income, education level and access to resources influenced food security status. Households with lower income levels and limited access to resources were more likely to experience food insecurity. Furthermore, Orphanages and child welfare centers are often overwhelmed during periods of food insecurity. These institutions rely on external aid. During regional crises, donations and aid may decrease while demand increases, leading to resource shortages and declining living conditions for institutionalized orphans.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has implemented several regional strategies to combat food insecurity among orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), recognizing the multifaceted challenges they face due to poverty, climate change and HIV/AIDS. Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS) 2015-2025, was implemented and it emphasizes a multi-sectoral approach to reduce food and nutrition insecurity in the region. The strategy focused on improving food availability, access, utilization and stability with particular attention to vulnerable groups including orphans. Furthermore, SADC collaborated with international organizations and non-governmental organizations to mobilize resources and technical assistance. Programs such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF have been instrumental in scaling up food assistance initiatives targeting orphans in the region. These collaborations have led to the development of comprehensive programs that combine food aid with health services, education and livelihood support for caregivers.

Despite significant progress by the SADC in addressing food insecurity among orphans, several key gaps remain. For instance, over reliance on donor funding is a significant gap that is resulting in dependency syndrome. Many interventions rely heavily on donor agencies, making them unsustainable in the long run. This study is going to develop a new model that will focus on building domestic resource mobilization strategies and encouraging community ownership to ensure sustainability and resilience. There is limited orphan and caregiver involvement in the sense that orphans and their caregivers are often passive recipients of aid rather than active participant in the program design. Therefore the researcher is going to consider a participatory approach that empowers these groups to voice their needs and contribute to solutions.

2.3. Food Insecurity in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, food insecurity has been widespread due to factors like economic collapse, political instability, and climate change. According to the World Food Programme (2020), Zimbabwe has been experiencing chronic food insecurity, particularly since the land reform program of the early 2000s, which disrupted agricultural production. Food insecurity has been made worse by Zimbabwe's socioeconomic problems, especially for vulnerable populations like orphans. A lot of families, especially orphans, have had trouble getting food because of economic instability, hyperinflation, unemployment, and the breakdown of social services.

2.3.1 Impact of climate change and environmental factors

Climate change refers to the gradual increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, like drought, flood, storm and irregular rainfall. Droughts, unpredictable rainfall, and inadequate management of land and water resources have all had a significant impact on farming, which is the primary source of food and revenue for rural people. According to Mavhura et al (2021) climate change has primarily manifested itself in Africa through declining rainfall patterns and rising temperatures. The country's predominantly subsistence agriculture economy is particularly prone to the changing weather patterns resulting from climate change. According to Mashizha (2019) the unfavorable effects of climate change on African agriculture and livelihoods are anticipated to have a negative influence on food security. Zimbabwe is also adversely affected by the world's highest inflation rate (over 11 million per cent by the end of August 2008). Most rural communities rely on agricultural production and food security and livelihoods are severely affected. The El Niño phenomenon exacerbated food insecurity in 2015–2016 by causing severe droughts that resulted in crop failure, animal loss, and water resource depletion. In response to the humanitarian crises brought on by the droughts,

Zimbabwe proclaimed a state of calamity across the country. Gukurume (2019) highlights that in rural Zimbabwe, poverty and food insecurity are linked to limited access to productive resources like land, seeds, and farming tools, with orphans often lacking inheritance rights or the ability to farm.

Climate change affects four elements of food security in Zimbabwe at the same time increasing the frequency and severity of natural catastrophes such as droughts, floods and storms. These climate-related disasters have the ability to destroy crops, vital infrastructure, and important communal assets, thereby diminishing livelihoods and aggravating poverty and food insecurity. According to Popoola et al (2020) food prices will increase and food insecurity will rise since climate change will have a detrimental effect on agricultural output. Climate change in Zimbabwe lead to shifts in growing seasons, poorer agricultural productivity due to variability in rainfall and higher temperature trends reducing local food availability. Food availability is likely the most common indicator of food security, and it has a connection to climate change, which directly impacts food security.

2.3.2 Economic crisis

In Zimbabwe, an economic crisis significantly impacts food security by causing widespread food insecurity due to factors like high food prices, reduced purchasing power, limited access to agricultural inputs and decreased household income, leading to malnutrition, particularly among vulnerable populations like children and the elderly, as people struggle to afford basic food necessities; this often forces them to rely on coping mechanisms like reducing meal sizes or resorting to less nutritious food sources. Zimbabwe is recovering from a decade long (2000-2008) economic crisis that witnessed inflation reaching 230 million%. The crisis also caused shortages of goods and services and resulted in severe food insecurity especially among the urban poor who rely on purchased food.

One of the most direct effects of Zimbabwe's economic downturn has been the widespread decline in household incomes. High unemployment rates, coupled with a weakening currency, have significantly reduced families' purchasing power. According to Moyo et al. (2019), orphaned households are particularly affected because they often rely on extended family members or charitable organizations for financial support. However, in an economy where most people struggle to meet their basic needs, caregivers of orphans often cannot provide adequate food. This situation is especially dire in urban areas, where families depend on cash-based food purchases rather than subsistence farming (Chikwaiwa & Mavhunga, 2020). Hyperinflation has also been a defining feature of Zimbabwe's economic crisis, making basic

food items increasingly unaffordable. The cost of staple foods such as maize meal, cooking oil, and bread has skyrocketed, disproportionately affecting low-income households. Mugabe (2020) states that inflation-driven price hikes have forced many orphaned children to survive on inadequate and nutritionally poor diets. As food prices continue to rise, caregivers are forced to prioritize cheaper, calorie-dense foods over nutritionally balanced meals, leading to increased cases of malnutrition among orphans. According to Dube and Gumbo (2018) many orphanages and community feeding programs have struggled to sustain food assistance due to the high cost of food supplies.

In addition, Zimbabwe's agricultural sector, once the backbone of its economy, has suffered due to economic mismanagement, land reform policies, and climate-related challenges. Many households that previously relied on subsistence farming now struggle to produce enough food due to limited access to farming inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation facilities. According to Sithole et al. (2022) orphaned children in rural areas often experience severe food shortages as their guardians are unable to cultivate sufficient crops. Additionally, government food relief programs have been inconsistent, with reports of corruption and mismanagement limiting their effectiveness (Nkomo & Mlambo, 2021). Social protection programs play a crucial role in addressing food insecurity, but Zimbabwe's economic crisis has severely weakened government-funded food assistance schemes. Moyo et al. (2019) note that due to budgetary constraints, the government has struggled to maintain regular food distributions to vulnerable children. School feeding programs, which provide a critical source of nutrition for orphans, have been disrupted due to financial limitations. Furthermore, NGOs that provide food assistance have also faced funding challenges, as international donors reduce aid amid Zimbabwe's ongoing economic instability (Dube & Gumbo, 2019). The combination of reduced government support and shrinking NGO assistance has left many orphaned children without reliable food sources.

2.3.3 Poverty

Poverty is a significant contributor to food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe especially those in rural areas. Economic hardships limits caregiver's ability to provide adequate nutrition, leading to adverse health and developmental outcomes for the children. A study by Lukwa et al. (2020) found that children from poorer households, especially in rural areas, were more likely to experience food insecurity and malnutrition. The study further highlighted that socio-economic status and residence significantly predict food insecurity and malnutrition among under-five children hence emphasizing the role of poverty in these outcomes.

2.3.4 Social Challenges and lack of Social Support

Food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe is exacerbated by significant social challenges, including the breakdown of traditional family structures, stigmatization, and limited access to community resources. Orphans, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, often face stigma and discrimination in their communities. Mavhunga (2020) highlights that some communities view orphans as burdens, leading to their marginalization and exclusion from social support networks. This exclusion limits their access to food aid programs, education, and healthcare, further deepening food insecurity. These issues reduce the support available to orphans, leaving them vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. Relatives particularly grandparents, aunts, and uncles, traditionally took responsibility for orphaned children. However, due to economic hardships and urban migration, this support system has weakened. Kabonga (2022) notes that many caregivers, particularly elderly guardians, struggle to provide adequate food and resources due to financial constraints. The increasing burden on extended families has made it difficult for them to sustain food security for orphaned children. In many rural and peri-urban areas, social services are inadequate or inaccessible.

Community-based organizations and NGOs have stepped in to fill the gap, but their resources are often insufficient. Dube & Gumbo (2019) emphasize that while NGOs provide temporary relief through food aid programs, the lack of sustainable community initiatives leaves many orphans vulnerable once aid runs out. The erosion of social support structures has significantly contributed to food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. The weakening of extended family support, social exclusion, and inadequate community resources have left many orphans without stable food sources. Strengthening social safety nets, community programs, and policy interventions is essential to address these challenges and improve food security for vulnerable children.

2.3.5 Impact of HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a profound impact on Zimbabwe, leading to a significant increase in orphan hood and increasing food insecurity among these vulnerable children. According to Munyaneza et al. (2020) HIV/AIDS contributes to child food insecurity by weakening the household economic base and depleting caregiving capacity. As parents succumb to illness or death, orphaned children are frequently placed in the care of elderly relatives or forced into child headed households where the resources are limited and food access also becomes limited. The first case of HIV in Zimbabwe was reported in the mid-1980s. The virus was initially concentrated among high-risk groups, such as sex workers and

men who have sex with men. However, it soon spread to the general population. HIV/AIDS has been a major driver of orphan hood in Zimbabwe, with many children losing one or both parents to the disease. This loss disrupts family structures and places children at heightened risk of neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

2.3.6 Orphan hood and Vulnerability

The lack of parental support, poverty, and restricted access to resources are the main causes of the food insecurity issues that orphans in Zimbabwe confront. In terms of food insecurity, they are one of the most susceptible groups. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2018), children who have lost one or both parents are more likely to experience food insecurity due to a lack of financial support, emotional care, and adequate guardianship. In Zimbabwe, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has contributed significantly to the number of orphans. Orphans frequently do not have access to the adult support networks that are essential to their welfare. The high number of orphaned children in rural places like Mudzi District may disrupt traditional family structures, leaving children at risk for starvation and malnutrition due to a lack of economic resources and a sustainable means of subsistence.

The overwhelming number of orphans has put a burden on traditional community-based systems, like communal farming and local food sharing, which used to assist alleviate food shortages in rural areas. Studies by Nyamukondiwa (2018) highlight that in rural areas, the inability of extended family and community networks to provide the necessary emotional and financial support leaves orphans vulnerable to malnutrition. The absence of a strong social support system significantly increases the likelihood of food insecurity, as many orphans lack the resources to access nutritious food.

2.4. Consequences of Food Insecurity on Orphans

2.4.1 Poor Health and Nutrition

Food insecurity has profound and multifaceted consequences for orphans, affecting their health, development, education, and overall well-being. Orphans in food-insecure households are particularly susceptible to malnutrition and related health issues. According to Ndiweni and Manik (2018) children from such households are more vulnerable to diseases and often miss school or fail to participate in school activities due to health complications. Food insecurity significantly contributes to malnutrition among orphans, which in turn leads to growth stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies. According to Moyo et al. (2021), children who experience prolonged food shortages are at high risk of stunted growth, which affects their cognitive development and future productivity. The lack of essential vitamins and minerals, such as iron, vitamin A, and zinc, results in weakened immune systems, increasing

vulnerability to infections and diseases. UNICEF (2021) noted that undernutrition is especially prevalent among children in low-income, unstable environments where market forces and weak institutional support exacerbate food insecurity. The combination of malnutrition and frequent illness further hinders physical and cognitive development, reducing the chances of orphans breaking the cycle of poverty.

The psychological impact of food insecurity is another critical aspect affecting orphaned children. Anxiety, stress, and depression are common among orphans who lack consistent access to food (Chitiyo & Mavunga, 2019). The uncertainty of when or where their next meal will come from can lead to behavioral and emotional distress, negatively affecting their social interactions and academic performance. Food insecurity can have long-term consequences on a child's development. Children who suffer from prolonged malnutrition often experience cognitive impairments, which affect their educational performance and future employment prospects (Tshuma & Dube, 2021). Poor nutrition during early childhood is linked to lower IQ levels, reduced attention spans, and poor memory retention.

2.4.2 Education challenges

Food insecurity significantly affects the education of orphans, particularly in developing countries like Zimbabwe. Orphans often experience barriers such as poor school attendance, low academic performance, and early dropout due to inadequate nutrition and economic hardships. Food insecurity contributes to high absenteeism and school dropout rates among orphaned children. Many orphans come from child-headed households or live with extended families that struggle to provide for their basic needs. According to Nkomo and Dube (2020), food insecurity forces many children to miss school in search of food or work to support themselves. In some cases, children drop out entirely due to the inability to afford school fees, uniforms, and other necessities. Learning materials such as textbooks, stationery, and school uniforms. Additionally, limited access to school feeding programs and inadequate support from caregivers further worsens their educational experiences. According to Chitiyo and Mavunga (2019), orphans in food-insecure households often feel isolated in school due to their socio-economic status, leading to a lack of motivation and engagement in learning activities.

The emotional burden of food insecurity affects the mental health of orphans, impacting their ability to learn. Hunger-related stress, anxiety, and depression make it difficult for children to focus on their studies. Studies by Mutisi and Gondo (2022) highlight that orphaned children experiencing food insecurity are more likely to suffer from emotional distress, leading to disruptive behavior, withdrawal from social activities, and difficulty forming relationships with

teachers and peers. Food insecurity forces some orphans into child labor as they struggle to meet their basic needs. Instead of attending school, they engage in informal work such as street vending, domestic labor, or farm work to earn money for food. Tshuma and Dube (2021) states that many orphaned children in Zimbabwe are vulnerable to exploitation, making it even more difficult for them to complete their education.

2.4.3 Vulnerability to exploitation

Food insecurity significantly increases the vulnerability of orphans in Zimbabwe to various forms of exploitation. The scarcity of resources and the absence of parental protection expose these children to heightened risks, including child labor, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking networks. According to Kabonga and Mavhura (2022) the absence of parental care and economic hardships leave these children at heightened risk of being exploited for survival. Many food-insecure orphans are forced into child labor to secure food or income. According to Nkomo and Sibanda (2020), orphans engage in informal jobs such as street vending, domestic work, and farm labor, which exposes them to physical abuse and hazardous working conditions. These activities often interfere with their education, further reducing their chances of breaking the cycle of poverty.

Hunger and lack of financial support make orphans particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Moyo and Sibanda (2021) highlight that some children are coerced into exploitative relationships or commercial sex work in exchange for food or shelter. Additionally, traffickers target food-insecure orphans by luring them with false promises of employment or education, only to subject them to forced labor or sexual abuse (Mutisi & Gondo, 2022).

2.5 Social Support Systems and Food Insecurity

The role of social support systems, both formal and informal, in alleviating food insecurity among orphans has been a subject of significant research. Makoni (2020) highlights that social protection in rural Zimbabwe found that while food aid programs have provided temporary relief, they are not sustainable in the long term. Due to administrative and logistical difficulties, many orphans in rural locations like Mudzi do not regularly have access to social support programs. A number of initiatives, including school feeding programs, cash transfers, and food aid programs, have been put in place by social security systems in assisting orphans. These initiatives have had varying degrees of success in rural areas, nevertheless.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government initiatives have attempted to alleviate Zimbabwe's orphans' food insecurity. The Ministry of Social Welfare of the

government has carried out a number of child support programs in collaboration with global agencies such as UNICEF and WFP. Reaching all impacted children, especially those in isolated rural locations, has proven difficult for these programs. UNICEF (2018) reports that although these efforts have alleviated food insecurity in some regions, they remain insufficient due to limited funding and the scale of the problem. By providing food aid, educational opportunities, and financial support to parents of orphaned children, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Plan International and Save the Children have attempted to fortify local social support networks. According to Sikwila (2019), these organizations often partner with local community groups to provide emergency food aid and sustainable agricultural practices, but the reach of these programs remains inconsistent. In particular, rural areas such as Mudzi District struggle to benefit from these interventions due to logistical and infrastructural challenges.

The Zimbabwean government has implemented several policies to enhance food security and promote the social well-being of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). These efforts were part of broader national strategy to address insecurity, child vulnerability and food insecurity through integrated, multi-sectorial interventions. The National Orphan Care Policy (1999) aimed at providing care and protection for the OVCs. The policy emphasized family and community-based care, rather than institutionalization as the best way to meet the emotional, nutritional and developmental needs of orphans. According to the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (1999) the policy encouraged partnerships between government, communities and non-governmental organizations to ensure that orphaned children receive access to basic services including education, food and healthcare. National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) is another policy that was launched to operationalize the Orphan Care Policy. It coordinated efforts such as health, education and child protection to ensure comprehensive service delivery to vulnerable children. The Zimbabwe National Social Protection Policy Framework which was implemented in 2016, further supported vulnerable households through social assistance programs such as the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Programme. This policy targeted poor households, mostly the vulnerable children, providing them with regular cash transfers that helped to improve food security and access to basic needs (Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, 2016).

However, cultural customs and financial constraints have an impact on how well social support networks work. Male-headed households are frequently given preference by traditional

standards, which might prevent orphans especially girls from getting the help they require. Orphans' inheritance rights are occasionally violated, which results in their losing their land and becoming even more vulnerable financially. Gukurume (2019) notes that in many instances, orphans, especially in rural Zimbabwe, are left without adequate resources to farm their land or access markets, which compounds food insecurity. Strengthening these systems requires a multi-faceted approach, including better targeting of support programs, increased funding, and addressing the economic and cultural barriers that perpetuate food insecurity among orphans.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter's goal was to examine and assess the pertinent research on the causes of food insecurity in Zimbabwe, particularly among orphans, as well as the effects and efficacy of intervention techniques proposed to advance food security. Taking into account the local and international literature evaluations, the chapter additionally looked at the study's theoretical approach

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

The chapter outlines the research approach, design, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The study sought to understand the complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors leading to food insecurity among orphans, its impact on their health status, social life as well as education and proposed suitable model to address these challenges.

3.2 Research philosophy

The research is be guided by a constructivism qualitative research philosophy which emphasizes that knowledge is not discovered but constructed through human experience and interaction within specific cultural, historical and social contexts. Braun and Clarke (2021) states that multiple realities exist, shaped individuals' unique backgrounds, perceptions and social environments. By using a constructivist approach, the researcher seeks to understand how orphans and caregivers perceive the causes of food insecurity, their coping strategies and informal support systems they depend on. Tracy (2020) highlighted that constructivist research places value on situated meaning which are essential when addressing issues that intersect with poverty, trauma and marginalization. Constructivist philosophy also encourages reflexivity, which means the researcher must remain aware of how their own background, beliefs and interactions influence the research process. According to Nowell et al (2019) this mutual construction of knowledge aligns with the goal of developing a community-driven model that reflects the voices and realities of orphans rather than imposing external assumptions.

3.1.1 Ontological assumptions

Food insecurity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that exists in the real world, influenced by both objective conditions such as food availability and access, subjective experiences such as the psychological impact of hunger and social stigma. From an ontological perspective, food insecurity is not a single or fixed reality but a dynamic and shaped by a range of factors, including socio-economic status, geography, and political conditions. According to Chikozho (2018) in Zimbabwe food insecurity is often linked to issues like poverty, economic instability, climate change, and poor agricultural practices. However food insecurity among orphans is further compounded by the lack of parental care and often a lack of access to resources such as land, financial support and social networks that might otherwise alleviate hunger. Webb (2017) highlights that food insecurity is experienced, felt and lived by individuals and its impacts are emotional and psychological, not just physical.

3.1.2 Epistemology

The assumption is that epistemology is fundamental to understanding how knowledge about food insecurity and its impact on orphans is generated, interpreted and applied. The pragmatic epistemology guiding this study assumes that knowledge is derived from practical problem-solving and real-world contexts. The researcher strived to explore contributing factors to food insecurity among orphans, its impact. Ruel et al. (2018) emphasizes that food insecurity is not only about numbers but also involves local food systems, socio-cultural dynamics and community-based knowledge.

3.1.3 Axiology

Axiology helps frame the importance of addressing food insecurity not only from a practical standpoint but also from the standpoint of human dignity, justice, and the value of life. The researcher strived for a deeper examination of what is at stake for these children in terms of their well-being, future prospects and rights as individuals. WPF (2019) emphasize the importance of rights-based approaches to food insecurity, advocating for food systems that do not merely meet basic nutritional needs but also respect the human rights and dignity of orphans and vulnerable children. Food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe raises questions about social justice, human rights and the ethics of care. The situation involves vulnerable children who, due to the loss of parental care face compounded challenges in accessing food, nutrition and health services. According to Luginaah et al (2020) the right to food for orphans should be embedded in national policies and that social protection systems need to be strengthened to uphold the values of human dignity and justice.

3.2. Research approach

According to Sileyew (2019) inductive research approach is a methodological strategy in which researchers begin with specific observations or data towards identifying patterns, developing themes and formulating broader generalizations. Inductive research approach was employed in this study in order to gather detailed information on the factors leading to food insecurity and its impact among orphans as well as practical based intervention strategies that can be implemented to address this issue. Interviews and observations enable researchers to explore the lived experiences of orphans, which can uncover insights into their coping strategies, psychological distress and the social dynamics at play.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018) qualitative research method involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data through interviews, observations and narratives. Considering focus group discussions with local stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations

(NGOs), social worker and health workers assisted to provide diverse perspectives on the broader impact of food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi district. Qualitative interviews can reveal that food insecurity is exacerbated by social stigma and a lack of community support for orphans, who may be seen as a burden by their caregivers. Through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions, researchers can explore these hidden factors and understand the cultural and psychological dimensions of food insecurity.

3.2.1 Research design

The researcher used the case study research design to gather detailed information. This is a qualitative method involving an in-depth context which allows researchers to explore complex issues where multiple variables and dynamics are at play, often in real-world settings. The researcher applied case study research design in the context of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe, particularly in Mudzi district, because this approach is critical to understanding localized factors contributing to the issue and developing targeted interventions. Tolar-Peterson et al, (2022) argued that the case study design's ability to focus on specific settings, like Mudzi district, helps explore the interplay of environmental, social, and economic factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans. According to Creswell & Poth (2018) case study approach integrates diverse data sources such as interviews, policy reviews and observations, to provide a comprehensive understanding of food security challenges in orphaned households. Case studies often involve active participation from community members, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring practical, community-led solutions.

3.3. Study setting

A research setting refers to the specific physical, social or contextual environment where a study is conducted. The research is set in Mudzi District, located in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. This rural area is characterized by semi-arid conditions with low and erratic rainfall, making agricultural productivity highly unreliable. The region rely on subsistence farming leaves residents vulnerable to food insecurity, especially during drought periods. The community faces multiple challenges which consists of social, economic and environmental challenges. Orphans in particular are among the most vulnerable groups due to the loss of parental support, often resulting in child-headed households or reliance on elderly caregivers. The research aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition particularly for vulnerable populations. The combination of environmental fragility and socio-economic

hardship makes Mudzi District an ideal location for studying food insecurity in orphaned populations.

This research is characterized by its problem-focused, contextual, and participatory approach. It examines the multifaceted issue of food insecurity through a case study design, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors contributing to food insecurity among orphaned children in a selected ward in Mudzi district. The study prioritizes participatory methodologies by involving local authorities, key informants, caregivers, and orphans themselves in identifying challenges and co-developing potential solutions.

3.4. Targeted Population

A population is a group of individuals, institution, or objects that have a common characteristic that are the interest of the researcher. The target population is the specific subset of the population that the research aims to study. According to Daniel (2019) the purpose of defining targeted population is to ensure that the findings are applicable and meaningful for the group of interests. The study targeted orphaned children who are eighteen years and below. The researcher focused on this population because orphans are one of the most vulnerable groups affected by food insecurity, especially in rural areas of developing countries like Zimbabwe. Govere et al (2020) highlights that orphans often face compounded challenges such as lack of access to resources, limited household income, and inadequate social support, which make them particularly susceptible to food insecurity. By focusing on this group, the research directly addressed the population most impacted by the issue.

3.5. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling means choosing a group of people from a population of interest. According to Guest et al. (2020) sample size is typically small and flexible determined by the principle of data saturation, at which no new information or themes emerge from the data. For this study, the researcher used non-probability sampling technique specifically purposive sampling to select participants. Non-probability sampling is a technique where not all members of the population have equal chance of being selected. Orphans living in Mudzi District are identified through local schools, orphanages, and community organizations. For this study, a sample size of 24 participants was appropriate, depending on the richness of the data collected. Thus, this sample

size allowed the researcher to conduct the study effectively without resource constraints and time, enabling the generalizability of the findings to the entire population.

The researcher also utilized a purposive sampling technique to obtain valid information from individuals who have expertise in the area under study, such as caregivers, community leaders and Community Health Workers. Therefore, this careful selection process ensured that the sample accurately offered insightful viewpoints on the subject.

3.5.1 Purposive sampling

This is a non-probability sampling technique where a researcher intentionally selects participants based on specific characteristics. It is also known as selective sampling. The researcher used purposive sampling to specifically choose orphans who are affected by the challenge of food insecurity. The researcher used purposive sampling to understand challenges faced by orphans according to their gender resulting from food shortages. According to Campbell et al. (2020) this approach enables researchers to include voices that might be excluded, particularly in sensitive topics involving child welfare, health and poverty.

Purposive sampling was used in the research to ensure that information was gathered from caregivers who had firsthand experience with food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi District. This targeted approach enhances the depth and richness of the data collected. This method was crucial because it allowed the researchers to focus on participants who had direct knowledge of the challenges related to food access, availability, and nutrition for orphans. This approach also ensured that the study captured detailed and context-specific information about the factors contributing to food insecurity in the district. Furthermore, purposive sampling helped the researcher reach caregivers in rural and marginalized communities, whose experiences were essential for understanding the depth of the food insecurity crisis. The rich, qualitative data obtained provided a clearer picture of the struggles faced by caregivers and orphans, ultimately informing the development of a model to address the high rate of food insecurity in the area.

3.6. Data collection techniques and tools

These are tools used to collect data related to the research being conducted. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) data collection tools are methods or procedures used to gather data or information such as interviews, focus groups, document analysis or observations. Being guided by the qualitative research approach, this study is going to use in-depth interviews and observations. Every research instrument has its own weaknesses, thus the researcher will be using various research instruments in order to improve the reliability of the research findings.

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

The researcher employed data collection method of face to face interviews using interview guide with semi-structured questions to collect data from a selected sample. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) an interview is a flexible data collection method that allows researchers to explore participants' views, experiences, and interpretations in depth. Semi structured questions allowed the researchers to gather detailed qualitative data. These questions allow for the exploration of deep emotional responses and personal narratives, making them effective for understanding human experiences at a profound level (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2020). Open-ended questions foster an environment of active engagement, allowing participants to feel heard and valued, which can result in more honest and reflective responses. In this study, the key informant's interviews involved orphans, caregivers, local community leaders and community health workers.

Engaging directly with participants can lead to higher response rates and more complete data, as individuals may feel more compelled to participate when approached personally. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) the interview process fosters a conversational relationship that can help uncover hidden issues, such as the stigma or emotional toll associated with food insecurity. Given the sensitive nature of food insecurity, face-to-face interviews can provide an opportunity for participants to express their emotions and seek support, fostering a more holistic understanding of their circumstances. They are ideal for collecting comprehensive data on participant attitudes, experiences, and perceptions, which may not be fully captured through quantitative or closed-ended questions (Smith & Osborn, 2021).

3.6.2 Observations

Observation is a primary data collection method widely used in qualitative research to study behaviours, interactions, and phenomena in their natural context. It involves systematically watching and recording events, actions, or processes as they unfold, providing rich and detailed data. According to Creswell & Poth (2018) observation is particularly valuable when studying environments or behaviours where direct questioning might influence the participants' responses or when investigating complex social dynamics. The researcher considered non-participant and direct observations as a reliable method to understand the physical appearance of orphans and the impact of climate changes and environmental factors on food insecurity leading to malnutrition, hunger, starvation, poor educational performance and extreme poverty among orphans in rural areas in Mudzi District. Through direct observation, researchers can understand the context in which food insecurity is occurring. This includes observing the local

resources, community structures, and the daily routines of orphans, which may not be fully captured through interviews or surveys alone (Bazeley, 2019). For instance participant observation in schools could reveal whether food insecurity affects participation or concentration during class activities, which might not emerge from interviews alone. The researcher used observation guides because they help to systematically document and reflect on the behaviours, interactions and environments they observe.

In addition, the researcher observed that there are poor agricultural practices in Mudzi District due to climate change resulting in droughts and heat waves. Therefore this impact food security mainly in rural areas as they rely more on agriculture. Orphans are mostly affected because they have no other sources of income to have access to food hence they are vulnerable to various diseases especially malnutrition.

3.7. Research Procedure

The procedure section of this study will educate participants about the investigation basic steps. The procedure is going to fully describe the steps so that other researchers can replicate the study. The investigation will be carried out by conducting semi-structured and unstructured interviews to five caregivers or guardians of the orphans, ten orphans and other participants mentioned above who are facing various challenges due to food insecurity and also understanding the root causes of food insecurity as well as its impact to vulnerable population specifically orphans. On data collection, the researcher is going to consider the following steps:

1. Bindura University of Science Education should approve the investigations for this study. The investigator will then submit the approval letter to the Department of Social Development, Mashonaland East for additional permission to conduct a research within the identified community.
2. Following the study permission, the researcher will be paired with the Community Childcare Workers (CCW) operating in the proposed study area by the Department of Social Development. The CCWs should help to invite orphans, caregivers, community leaders informing them about the research and scheduling appointment for interviews in their community.
3. Before starting the interviews, the researcher is going to explain the study's goal to the caregivers, orphans, community leaders, healthcare workers and other participant's rights to confidentiality, consent to participate, consent to tape recording. The participants should sign the consent form before the interviews. The researcher will inform the participants that the study report and recording will not contain any

identifiable information such as names, residential numbers and phone numbers. The interviews will be conducted using interview guides.

4. After the interviews, the researcher will appreciate all the participants for their contributions.

3.8. Validity

In research, ensuring the validity of measuring instruments is critical for producing reliable and credible results. According to Bryman (2017) valid data collection methods contribute to the overall quality of the research. Studies that employ valid procedures are seen as more trustworthy, making it easier for researchers to publish findings in reputable journals and to have their work influence policy and practice. The researcher used qualitative research design, techniques and tools to identify the causes of food insecurity among orphans who live in Mudzi district Ward 1, challenges faced by orphans and intervention methods that can be applied to promote food security among vulnerable groups.

3.8.1. Reliability

According to Nowell et al. (2017) reliability often referred to as dependability, reflects the consistency and stability of data overtime and across different researchers. To test stability the interview guides were tested to ten participants who comprised of seven orphans and seven caregivers with the same characteristics as potential participants. By administering the interview guides to fourteen research participants the researcher assessed whether the guide came out with same results thus assessing internal consistence.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in this research, especially given the vulnerable population being studied. The researcher firstly obtained informed consent from caregivers or guardians of the orphans and also orphans as well as other participants before starting data collection process. The study ensured confidentiality and anonymity, protecting participants' identities and personal information. According to Ncube et al (2020) participants must fully understand the purpose of the study, their role, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Additionally, the research adhere to ethical guidelines set forth by institutional review boards and relevant authorities, emphasizing the importance of conducting research responsibly and ethically. Maintaining privacy is essential when dealing with sensitive issues like food insecurity and orphan hood. Researchers must safeguard participants' identities and personal information, using anonymized data and secure storage methods. Confidentiality builds trust and protects participants from potential stigma or

exploitation arising from the disclosure of their circumstances. The study's aim is to generate actionable insights or interventions to alleviate food insecurity among orphans, ensuring that they benefit directly from the research outcomes rather than being treated solely as subjects of study (Springer, 2018).

3.10. Data analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis technique to analyse data. This enabled the researcher to understand and interpret data focusing on themes which includes food scarcity among orphans, coping strategies, psychological and physical impacts as well as external aid systems in Mudzi district. For instance, economic challenges such as poverty and lack of resources might emerge as significant themes, reflecting the systemic causes of food insecurity. According to Braun and Clarke (2020) thematic analysis is a process that involves data interpretation within the social and cultural contexts of the participants, adding depth to the findings. It provides a detailed understanding of data by focusing on the meanings and experiences of participants. Thematic analysis identifies and interprets aspects of the research questions.

This method allows researchers to explore the data in depth, identifying patterns, themes, and nuances that may not be immediately apparent. It is particularly useful for understanding complex and multifaceted issues, as it facilitates a detailed interpretation of participants' lived experiences (Nowell et al., 2020). Data was systematically coded to identify relationships between contributing factors to food insecurity. For example, codes like food aid programs or community kitchens may reveal the effectiveness or inadequacy of existing interventions. By categorizing these codes into broader themes, the analysis uncovered systemic gaps such as a lack of sustainable support structures for orphans.

3.11. Limitations of the study

The researcher faced a challenge of cultural barriers and language differences during the data collection period. This affected communication, leading to misinterpretation of responses. To address this, a local community member, fluent in the participant's language was involved to bridge the communication gap. The liaison also helped build rapport between the interviewer and participant.

3.12. Chapter Summary

The researcher explored methodology used and followed in conducting research. Research approach, design, sampling method, data collection tools and techniques, ethical consideration and study limitations were included. The researcher described every component of the process so that it might be replicated in other similar studies.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, there is presentation of data and discussion of the findings on developing a model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi district. The findings and data presentation are in accordance with the research questions and objectives outlined in Chapter one. The data was gathered through in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and observations. Thematic analysis has been employed in analysing data gathered through in-depth interviews.

4.2 Demographic information

This section presents background information of the respondents in the aspects of gender, age, level of education and location of work. Understanding their backgrounds provides a framework for interpreting the findings related to food insecurity among orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi district. As mentioned in chapter 3 of methodology, the sample size consists of 24 participants including orphan caregivers/ guardians, community leaders, social workers, healthcare workers and orphans.

Table 1: 4.2.1 Demographic information of Caregivers/ Guardians

Variable		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	2	28.6%
	Female	5	71.4%
Age Group	25-39 years	2	28.6%
	40- 49 years	3	42.8%
	50+ years	2	28.6%
Education Level	Primary	2	29%
	Secondary	4	57%
	Tertiary	1	14%
Employment status	Subsistence Farming	3	42.8%
	Local domestic work	2	28.6%
	Unemployed	2	28.6%
Relationship to orphans	Extended family (aunt, uncle)	4	57%
	Foster parent	2	29%

	Guardian of child headed	1	14%
--	--------------------------	---	-----

The data shows that among seven (7) participants, the majority of caregivers were females (71, 4%) aged 40 to 49 years and have been taking responsibility for years. Most of the caregivers were kin caregivers such as uncles and aunts (57%), as follows Zimbabwean cultural practice of kinship care. This is also indicated by the Ecological Systems Theory, where it highlights that the extended family is a vital factor as part of the micro-system and mezzo-system in care of orphaned children. Foster parents accounted for (29%), occasionally assisted by NGOs or church organizations, and one caregiver in a child-headed household.

However, educational attainment is low, with only one caregiver having tertiary qualification (14%) and others with only primary and secondary education, limiting their job opportunities. Most rely on subsistence farming (42, 8%) and local domestic work (28, 6) while some are entirely unemployed (28, 6%). This in turn affects their capacity to consistently provide food for orphans under their care. The intersection of low education, unstable work or no employment and direct caregiving responsibilities creates a high risk for food insecurity in these households, hence justifying the need for an effective model in addressing the challenges further promoting food security among vulnerable groups specifically orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi district.

Table 2: 4.2.2 Demographic information for key informants

Position	Gender	Frequency (n)	Age group	Years of service	Percentage (%)
Social workers	Male	1	30-45	10	14.3%
	Female	2	45-50	15	28.6%
Village heads	Male	2	50-60	15	28.6%
Ward Councillor	Male	1	50-60	10	14.3%
Healthcare worker	Female	1	40-55	11	14.3%

The data shows that social workers (42.9%) make up the largest group indicating emphasis on child welfare and social support services. This demonstrates that social workers are critical in identifying needs and providing direct assistance to vulnerable children particularly orphans. Village heads are the second largest group with (28.6%) as shown in the table. They play significant roles in community leadership, resource distribution and local decision making in rural areas. Their input is crucial for understanding community-based solutions and challenges related to food insecurity. Ward councillor and healthcare worker each represent (14.3%) of the sample. This demonstrates that their roles are also important in understanding the policy framework and healthcare perspectives. They are both closely tied to food security issue and well-being of the orphaned children in the community.

All participants have more than 10 years and above of experience. Their long-term involvement in the community means they have seen cycles of crisis, particularly how food insecurity affects vulnerable groups like orphans. Therefore, their experience, knowledge of local challenges, ability to influence policy and established trust make them well-positioned to propose and implement effective solutions to promote food availability among orphans in their community.

Table 3: 4.2.3 Demographic information for orphans

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)		Percentage (%)
Age	14-15 years	4		40%
	16-18 years	6		60%
Gender	Male	5		50%
	Female	5		50%
Education level	No attending school	4		40%
	Primary school	3		30%
	Secondary school	3		30%
Living Arrangement	Extended family	6		60%
	Foster parent	2		20%
	Child-headed family	2		20%
Geographical Location	Rural area	7		70%
	Urban area	3		30%

The demographic data on orphans reveals that the orphans are mostly in the 16-18 years of age group with (60%) of the total sample. While (40%) of the orphans are in the 14-15 age group still in their adolescent years which is crucial for educational development and the building of foundational skills. There is an equal gender split of (50%) male and (50%) female, and this demonstrates that both male and female orphans face similar levels of vulnerability and challenges in accessing education, nutrition, healthcare and social support. Thus in case of food insecurity, both genders would be similarly impacted by lack of sufficient food which can lead to malnutrition, poor physical health and mental stress. Data reveals that (40%) of the orphans are not enrolled in school which is a concerning statistic. Poverty and food insecurity are likely significant factors behind the high number of out of school orphans. Poverty may force children to work or engage in activities to support household through food and money rather than attend school especially child-headed households.

The orphans enrolled in secondary school add up to (30%) while the other (30%) of orphans are in primary school. Secondary education is critical as it opens up opportunities for vocational training, higher education and better job prospects. Low number of orphans in secondary and primary school indicates that there are barriers beyond just access to education. Issues such as poverty and food insecurity must be addressed to enable these children to stay in school and succeed. The (60%) of orphans live with extended families such as aunts, uncles and grandparents. Extended families often provide care and basic needs to orphans, but may also face challenges of resource shortages which may affect the quality of care and access to food, healthcare and other basic needs. Some orphans are living under foster parent care and the data shows (20%) of orphans are under foster care. This low percentage demonstrates that the quality of care can vary depending on foster family's resources as most foster parents depends of the support from NGOs and religious institutions. The remaining (20%) of orphans are in child-headed families which has highly vulnerable situation where the children are responsible for their own welfare. This can severely affect food security and access to education as these families often lack the resources and adult supervision needed to thrive. Lastly, data shows that (70%) of the orphans live in rural areas where access to education, healthcare and food might be limited. Rural areas mostly face higher rates of food insecurity due to a combination of economic, social, infrastructural and environmental challenges and orphans in these areas are particularly vulnerable. The remaining (30%) of orphans live in urban areas where access to

resources may be better but they still face challenges related to poverty and social instability which can lead to food insecurity.

4.3 Theme 1. Underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi district.

Orphaned children in Mudzi district are facing various challenges due to food insecurity. Factors such as poverty, lack of employment, lack of social support and protection as well as environmental and climate shocks are contributing to food shortages among orphans. Despite receiving aid from NGOs and donors, they are still facing the challenges because the aid sustain them for a short time and it is not sustainable.

4.3.1 Lack of employment and poverty

The responses revealed that lack of employment is major contributing factor to food insecurity among orphan households. Six caregivers claimed that they are unable to provide enough food for the orphaned children under their care because they are poor and does not have any source of income. They articulated that unemployment in rural areas, left them reliant on irregular and low paying informal work or subsistence farming which is often affected by unpredictable weather and poor access to agricultural inputs. One caregiver claimed that:

“Handishande uye mabasa acho haasi kuwanika kunyanya kuno kumamisha, pasina mari handikwanise kupa vana zvokudya zuva nezuva.” (I am not employed, and jobs are hard to find especially here in rural areas. Without money, I cannot provide food for the children every day).

Additionally, some caregivers noted that their responsibilities in looking after multiple orphaned children made it difficult for them to seek employment outside the home area. The burden of caregiving limit their mobility and availability, further restricting their economic opportunities. In households headed by elderly caregivers, the situation is even harder, a physical limitations compounded the challenge of securing employment hence the inability to provide nutritious food for the children. An elderly caregiver shared:

“I am too old, I have no strength to work in the fields or do heavy jobs and I have no one to help me, but the children still need to eat every day.”

Key informants identified unemployment as a contributing factor to food insecurity among orphans particularly in child-headed and elderly headed households. The village leaders also emphasized that even when food is available in local markets, lack of purchasing power

prevents vulnerable households from accessing it. The absence of social safety nets means that orphans often rely on extended family members or community donations which are limited and inconsistent. A key informant shared:

“Most of the orphaned children in our area live in poverty and their caregivers are unemployed, sometimes they are sick. Without money, they cannot buy food and we as local leaders also have no budget to support them.”

The responses are similar to the study of Moyo et al. (2019) who claimed that orphaned households are particularly affected because they often rely on extended family members or charitable organizations for financial support. However, in an economy where most people struggle to meet their basic needs, caregivers of orphans often cannot provide adequate food. The responses of the participants are in line with the arguments of Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his ecological systems theory in which he stressed that poverty affects not only the economic status of caregivers but also the broader social, economic and environmental systems that influence the well-being of orphans. Most respondents identified unemployment as the primary barrier to securing adequate food. Many caregivers especially elderly grandparents, aunts, uncles and elder siblings lack formal education and vocational skills making them uncompetitive in job market. These findings emphasize that beyond food aid, long term solutions such as economic empowerment programs, skills training and social safety nets are essential. Without structural interventions to improve employment and household income, food insecurity will persist undermining the health, education and future of orphaned children.

4.3.2 High market price

Interviews with both caregivers and key informants such revealed that high market prices for food commodities are a significant cause of food insecurity among orphan households in a selected ward in Mudzi district. The steep cost of basic necessities, coupled with low or no income cause these vulnerable households unable to meet their daily nutritional needs. All caregivers explained that even when food is available in nearby markets, they are unable to afford due to inflated prices. This is common especially among orphan households with no regular source of income and those relying on informal work which pays a little. One elderly caregiver articulated:

“I go to the market to purchase food, but the prices are too high. Sometimes I come back with nothing because the little money I have is not enough even for mealie meal.”

Other caregivers claimed that they are facing same challenges, emphasizing how rising prices force them to reduce meal frequency, cut portion size or even eliminate certain food groups entirely such as meat, vegetables or cooking oil. This comprises dietary diversity and increases the risk of malnutrition among orphaned children especially those under the age of five years. One caregiver shared:

“My grandson is not growing well and he is always tired and small for his age. I am unable to give him enough and nutritious food because of high food prices which I cannot afford. We only eat to fill the stomach not to make the body strong.”

Key informants confirmed that price inflation has worsened food insecurity, particularly for orphaned households. They noted that local markets have become unaffordable for poor families especially during droughts or times of economic instability. Village heads reported that orphan households are often the hardest hit by market inflation. They claimed that while food might be available in shops, the prices are beyond the reach of most caregivers looking after orphaned children. This has led to poor nutrition and underfeeding especially for younger orphaned children. One village head stated:

“Children under five need soft and nutritious food but in most orphan households, they just eat available food mostly sadza and okra, hence some children end up showing visible signs of malnutrition including weight loss, skin conditions and delayed child development.”

The combined views of caregivers and key informants reveal a deeply interlinked relationship between high food prices, poverty, food shortages hence resulting in child malnutrition especially among orphans under the age of five. They both emphasized that rising cost of essential food items has forced orphan households to eliminate critical food groups such as proteins, fruits and vegetables leading to poor dietary diversity and malnutrition. This problem is mainly in orphan-headed and elderly headed households where there is often no stable income. Caregivers described surviving on sadza and okra, while key informants highlighted visible signs of malnourishment such as stunted growth and weakened immunity among children. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes how a child’s development is shaped by multiple layers of environmental influence from the immediate microsystem (family) to broader macro-level factors such as economic policy and food market systems. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) has noted that undernutrition is especially prevalent among children in low-income, unstable environments where market forces and weak institutional support exacerbate food insecurity.

During interviews, the researcher observed that several children had persistent coughs, runny nose and visible skin rashes which indicates weakened immune system. These observations confirmed the reports by caregivers and key informants that malnutrition caused by food shortages and lack of dietary diversity is affecting not just children's nutrition but their overall health and resilience to diseases. Therefore this reinforces the urgency of addressing not only food insecurity but the wider health and development risks facing orphaned children in Mudzi district.

From the researcher's perspective, high food prices have made it impossible for caregivers of orphans to afford nutritious food leading to severe food insecurity and visible signs of malnutrition among children especially those under five years. The continuous rise in the cost of basic food items such as cooking oil, mealie meal, meat and others has forced caregivers to eliminate essential food groups contributing to stunted growth, low energy and vulnerability to diseases.

4.3.3 Environmental shocks

Environmental such as El Nino induced droughts, floods, prolonged dry spells and erratic rainfall have become increasingly common in Zimbabwe, severely impacting agricultural productivity and food availability mainly amid orphaned children. In Mudzi District rural areas, where many orphan households rely on subsistence farming, these climatic disruptions have intensified hunger.

Caregivers of orphaned children in a selected ward in Mudzi District rural areas expressed that environmental shocks particularly recurrent droughts and erratic rainfall have intensified food insecurity in their households. One caregiver explained that their survival heavily depends on rain fed agriculture, but recent years especially during El Nino seasons have brought prolonged dry spells that destroyed crops before they matured. Without irrigation, fertilizers and farming equipment, caregivers are left vulnerable to nature's unpredictability which directly impacts their ability to feed the children under their care. A caregiver shared:

"We planted maize but it all dried up before harvest because there is no rain and now we have nothing to rely on. I am looking after three orphans, and sometimes we go for days eating only wild fruits."

Two caregivers highlighted the compounding impact of poor soils, heatwaves and livestock deaths due to unpredictable climate changes. Some caregivers had previously relied on small

livestock such as cattle, goats and chickens as source of food, income and manure for agricultural purposes. However, repeated droughts and heatwaves led to the death of livestock. One caregiver stated:

“When we had cattle and goats, we could sell one and buy food for months. Now that they are gone, we have no way to get food unless someone help us.”

Key informants reported that frequent droughts and erratic rainfall patterns in Mudzi District have destroyed crops, leaving orphan care households without sufficient food to last throughout the year. These households which often lack adult labor and farming inputs, are particularly exposed to crop failure resulting in hunger and dependence on food aid. One village head shared:

“Our people used to survive on what they grew, but now we see crops drying before they mature. This hits families with orphans the hardest because they already have limited resources.”

Environmental shocks have also reduced access to water, affecting both agriculture and daily nutrition. Social workers explained that environmental shocks have long-term consequences for orphaned children’s development. Thus cycle of hunger, malnutrition and missed education creates long-term vulnerability trapping orphans in poverty. A social worker stated:

“When there is no food at home, the children miss school or drop out of school completely and some get involved in child labor in order to get money for food. Therefore their chances of a better future are reduced.”

The environmental shocks such as droughts, heatwaves, erratic rainfall and water scarcity contribute significantly to food insecurity among orphans and their effects align closely with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory by demonstrating how a child’s development is shaped by the dynamic interaction between individual, family, institutional and societal factors. When environmental conditions deteriorate, at microsystem level caregivers are unable to access sufficient food therefore affecting children’s nutrition, health and educational opportunities. The mesosystem which involves connection between household and community service is weakened when caregivers lack access to agricultural extension services, clean water or local markets. This disconnection reduces the support systems available to both caregivers and orphans in adapting to environmental stress. The findings again align with the study of Gukurume (2019) highlighting that in rural Zimbabwe, poverty and food insecurity are linked

to limited access to productive resources like land, seeds, and farming tools, with orphans often lacking inheritance rights or the ability to farm. The researcher identifies that in Mudzi district, people rely more on agriculture as their source of food but due to climate change they are facing severe challenges especially food insecurity particularly in orphan household. Therefore, it is recommended that an effective model be developed and implemented in Mudzi District, integrating climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable water management, caregiver capacity building and institutional support systems to holistically address the high rate of food insecurity among orphans.

4.4 Theme 2: Assessing the challenges faced by orphans due to food insecurity in a selected ward in Mudzi District

Orphans in Zimbabwe face multiple of challenges with food insecurity emerging as one of the most critical threat to their well-being and development. In a selected ward in Mudzi District, where poverty levels are high and climatic conditions frequently disrupt agricultural activities, orphaned children often experience chronic hunger, poor nutrition, emotional instability and limited access to education. This study explores the specific challenges faced by orphans as a result of food shortages drawing on responses from caregivers, community leaders, social workers, healthcare workers and the orphans themselves to provide a clear understanding of the issue and inform sustainable solutions.

4.4.1 Chronic hunger and malnutrition

The responses revealed the inability of caregivers to provide sufficient and nutritious food for orphans in their care. Five caregivers shared that their children often survive on a single and unbalanced meal per day such as sadza and pumpkin leaves without cooking oil. This result in visible signs of malnutrition such as weight loss, weakness and skin problems. Additionally they explained that orphans in their care who are below five years are suffering from diarrhea, skin rashes and also kwashiorkor due to protein deficiency. An elderly caregiver shared:

“Vana vadiki vari kutambudzika zvikuru nenzara, muzukuru wangu akazvimba makumbo uye nevhudzi dzvuku. Kuchipatara vakati ane kwashi iri kukonzerwa nekusadya zvokudya zvakakwana uye zvine utano.” (Young children are suffering the most from hunger, my grandchild’s legs are swollen and his hair has turned red. At the clinic, they said he has kwashiorkor, which is caused by not eating enough nutritious food).

Key informants, especially healthcare workers and social workers highlighted that they observed many orphaned children particularly those under five years, having signs of

malnutrition such as skin rash, weight loss and this is due to food shortages in their households. They reported increased cases of underweight children mostly those living with elderly caregivers and child-headed households. A healthcare worker stated:

“We are seeing many orphans who are underweight, with swollen stomach and pale skin. These are signs of severe malnutrition.”

Responses from orphans themselves particularly those who are fourteen years and above reveals their deep emotional experience about the challenge of severe hunger resulting from not having enough food at home. They described going to bed on empty stomachs, struggling to concentrate in school, feeling weak, weight loss and even school drop outs, while getting involved in child labour in order to get money for food. Many expressed feelings of sadness, hopelessness and social isolation. One orphan shared:

“Ndinonzwa kuneta nguva dzose uye pandinofamba kuenda kuchikoro ndinonzwa dzungu nekuti ndinenge ndisina kudya chinhu.” (I feel tired all the time and when I walk to school, I get dizzy because of not eating anything) (14 year old girl).

The findings relates with the existing literature emphasizing that orphaned children in low-income households are more vulnerable to food insecurity due to weakened social support structures, aging caregivers and limited access to services. Ndiweni and Manik (2018) highlighted that children from orphan households with low income are more vulnerable to diseases and often miss school or fail to participate in school activities due to health complications. The findings also corresponds with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory which suggest that child development is shaped by multiple interconnected systems that must function well together for positives outcomes. The researcher observes that food insecurity impacts on orphan’s physical, emotional and social development reflect a breakdown in both household and community support systems.

4.4.2 Educational disrupts

Food insecurity among orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi District significantly disrupts theirs access to education. Findings highlighted that many orphaned children face difficulties attending and remaining in school due to hunger, lack of school materials and the need to contribute to household survival.

Caregivers described how this situation often lead to school dropout, engagement in child labor and girls being involved in early child marriages as a mean of coping with extreme poverty.

They also noted that some orphaned children go to school without eating making it difficult for them to concentrate or stay at the school throughout the day. While others are at home to help with household chores, farming and informal work to contribute to the family's survival. A caregiver claimed:

“Muzukuru wangu nherera anobatsira mabasa epamba nemumunda panzvimbo pekuenda kuchikoro nekuti tinoda kuti pave nezvokudya pamba.” (My orphaned grandson helps in the fields instead of going to school because we need food on the table).

Social workers noted increasing cases of school dropouts especially among girls who end up in early child marriages as a survival strategy. Two social workers articulated:

“We are seeing more children dropping out of school especially girls and they end up married early because their guardians cannot provide enough food for them.”

Orphaned children shared their experiences of being forced leave school due to hunger and pressure to find income in order to purchase food. Some spoke of shame of being at school with no lunch box while others described their experience of working in the fields, fetching water for pay and being pushed into marriage as a way out of poverty. One orphan stated:

“Mukoma vangu vakaroorwa vaine makore gumi nematanhatu nekuti ambuya vedu waitadza kutichengeta tese. Vakafunga kuti pamwe murume wavo aizogona kuvachengeta.” (My sister was married at the age of 16 years because our grandmother could not feed both of us. She thought maybe the husband would take care of her). (15 year old orphaned girl)

The findings demonstrate that food insecurity not only affects the health of orphans but also deprives them of their right to education and also exposes them to exploitative labor as well as early child marriages. This strongly aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which highlights that the disruption of orphan's education due to food insecurity demonstrates how the challenges at the microsystem level directly impact their school attendants, as caregivers often lack resources to provide food, school fees or uniforms. At the mesosystem level, weak linkages between home and school environments make it difficult for children to stay engaged in learning. The exosystem, including local governance, aid structures and social support networks is often inconsistent, leaving caregivers without the external help they need. The findings also align with studies by Chitiyo and Mavunga (2019) highlighting that orphans in food-insecure households often feel isolated in school due to their socio-economic status, leading to a lack of motivation and engagement in learning activities. The researcher notes that

unavailability of enough and nutritious food among orphan household due to poverty, high market prices and environmental shock is limiting children from attending schools therefore affecting their future.

4.4.3 Risk behaviors

The findings highlights that prolonged food shortages is pushing orphaned children in a selected ward in Mudzi District towards various risk behaviors as they try to survive in an environment of extreme poverty and limited support. Caregivers explained that orphaned children in their care engage in risky activities including stealing food, running away from home and engaging in early sexual relationships as a coping mechanism. They acknowledged that hunger often leaves children desperate and more likely to be influenced by peers and strangers offering them money or food. A caregiver shared:

“Vamwe vanotanga kuba mumisha yevavakidzani nekuti havana chekudya.” (Some start stealing from neighbor’s homes because they have nothing to eat).

Social workers explained that they observed an increase in risky and bad behaviors such as petty theft, early pregnancies and substance use among orphaned adolescents. They linked their behaviors to food shortages and lack of supervision especially in child-headed households. Two social workers emphasized that some girls engage in sex for food while boys get involved in illegal work or street hustling. A social worker stated:

“We are having increased cases of girls engaging in sex activities for food and small amounts of money, while boys are being pushed into stealing and doing illegal jobs because they are desperate and hungry. Food insecurity is driving these children into very dangerous situations.”

The findings demonstrates that food shortages among orphan household increase vulnerability and exploitation leading to risk behaviours by orphaned children as a surviving mechanism. The inability of social systems to provide basic needs for the orphans particularly food, push children into survival strategies that are risky to themselves and others in the community. This strongly relates to the Ecological Systems Theory which states that orphans operate within interconnected systems that shape their development and behaviour. When these systems fail, children are pushed into risk activities to survive. Findings also aligns with existing studies by Moyo and Sibanda (2021) highlighting that some children are coerced into exploitative relationships or commercial sex work in exchange for food or shelter. The researcher notes that

food insecurity is a root cause of all the challenges being faced by orphans making them vulnerable and desperate hence leading to risk behaviors. Therefore interventions towards addressing food insecurity and enhancing child protection must be prioritized as part of any effort to break the cycle of vulnerability and exploitation among orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi District.

4.5 Theme 3: Intervention strategies that can be put forward to promote food availability and accessibility among orphaned children in Mudzi district

The findings showed that, both caregivers and key informants provided valuable insights into strategies that could help improve food availability and accessibility for orphans. A caregiver stated:

“Tingada zvirongwa zvinotibatsira kuwana mari senge kutengesa zvidhinha kana huku.”

Caregivers expressed that income-generating programs such as selling bricks or raising chickens are beneficial because they empower them to become self-reliant and consistently provide food for the orphans in their care. These programs reduce dependency on external aid and create a sustainable source of income that can be used to meet daily household needs, especially food. As one caregiver noted, “Kana tine mari yedu, tinogona kutenga chikafu nguva dzese, kwete kungomirira rubatsiro.” (“If we have our own money, we can buy food at all times instead of just waiting for aid.”)

Key informants suggested several ways that can be put forward to promote food security hence reducing many problems among orphans. A healthcare worker stated:

“We see high cases of malnutrition among orphans due to poor diets and food shortages therefore there is need for implementation of community-based nutrition programs offering food supplements and fortified meals for orphaned children.”

These findings demonstrate that food insecurity among orphans is a multifaceted issue rooted in poverty, lack of structured support, and limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities for caregivers. The responses show a shared understanding among caregivers and key informants such as social workers, healthcare workers, and village leaders that while short-term food aid is helpful, there is a strong need for long-term, community-driven, and economically empowering solutions. The emphasis on income-generating activities, nutrition education, social protection programs, and community involvement indicates that stakeholders are not just aware of the problem but are also capable of proposing practical, context-appropriate interventions. These insights highlight the importance of integrating social welfare, health, and community systems to develop sustainable strategies that ensure orphans have regular access to nutritious food and a stable environment for growth and development.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and analyzed the research findings aimed at developing an intervention model towards addressing the high rate of food insecurity among orphaned children. Data was

collected from orphan caregivers, orphaned children and key informants. The findings indicated a combination of various factors contributing to food shortages among orphan households. Findings also demonstrated the challenges or effects faced by orphaned children as a result of food insecurity. The findings were orphaned through thematic analysis aligned with the study objectives.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations are part of this chapter as they serve the purpose of assisting the implementation of the model in future. The government and other Non-governmental organizations who are into child protection can also benefit in this project aiming on mitigating food insecurity among orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi District.

5.2 Summary

The aim of this study was to develop an intervention model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphan households in Mudzi District. The objectives of the study were to identify underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans, to assess the challenges faced by orphans as a result of food shortages and to develop an effective model to address high rate of food insecurity among orphans. The research was guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Case study research design was used during the research. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample from total population. The study was conducted with twenty four participants within Mudzi District. The participants consist of orphan caregivers, orphaned children, village heads, ward councilor and key informants from the Department of Social Development and Ministry of Health.

Based on the research findings and analysis, the researcher proposed an Integrated Support for Orphan Welfare and Protection Model (ISOWP). This model was developed to effectively address this challenge of food insecurity among vulnerable populations specifically orphans. It is an integration of all the social systems to work together in mitigating food shortages and other challenges being faced by orphans hence promoting well-being.

Key findings

The researcher managed to identify factors contributing to food insecurity among orphan households which includes:

1. Lack of employment
2. Household poverty
3. Agricultural challenges
4. Limited community and government support
5. Inflation
6. Lack of access to resources

The second objective identified and assess challenges faced by orphaned children as a result of food shortages. These challenges includes:

- Extreme hunger and starvation
- Malnutrition and poor health outcomes
- Poor academic outcomes and school dropouts
- Increased vulnerability to abuse and exploitation
- Increased risk behaviors such as theft and involvement in illegal activities
- Increased psychological stress
- High rate of child labor

Based on the findings, the participants managed to point out intervention strategies that can help them to promote food security among orphan households. Some of the strategies identified by participants includes:

- Empowering orphan caregivers to start income generating projects
- Strengthening school feeding programs
- Improving access to community resources
- Improving government and NGO support
- Strengthening family support systems
- Promoting community agriculture
- Policy reform and change

The strategies that were recommended are incorporative and when implemented they reinforce each other to provide a stronger solution to food insecurity challenge among orphans. Therefore they require a multifaceted intervention model to promote food security among orphans.

5.3 Conclusions

The research seeks to develop an effective intervention model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi District. Based on the objectives of the study, the researcher identified underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans, also managed to assess the challenges experienced by orphaned children due to food shortages. The researcher managed to develop an intervention model for sustainable response and enhanced orphan welfare.

The research concluded that food insecurity among orphans is caused by a collaboration of social, economic, structural and institutional factors. The loss of parental care mainly resulting

in child headed households and having unstable, ill or elderly caregivers often leads to increased poverty, social isolation as well as lack of access to basics such as food, protection, education and health services. High rate of unemployment for orphan caregivers in rural areas, weak social safety nets and limited institutional and community based support increases vulnerability to food shortages among orphans. Lack of access to resources not only lead to food insecurity but also increased inequalities and marginalization among orphans.

The researcher also managed to highlight and assess the challenges faced by orphans as a result of food insecurity. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that food insecurity leads to short term and long term consequences. Some of the challenges are malnutrition and poor health outcomes, poor academic outcomes and school drop outs, increased vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation, extreme hunger and starvation, early child marriages, child labor and increased rate of risk behaviors such as theft.

5.3.1 Malnutrition and poor health outcomes

Children under the age of five are facing challenge of malnutrition due to lack of enough nutritious food. Unavailability of food is resulting in reduced portion of meals that are expected per day to an extent of having one meal per day. Therefore, this results in stunted growth, delayed child cognitive development, skin rashes among young orphaned children. Orphans above five years are facing weight loss challenges, chronic illnesses other health related problems due to food shortages.

5.3.2 Poor academic outcomes

Inability to access food among orphans is leading to disrupted educational performance and increased school drop out in search of work and early child marriages as a coping mechanism. Children are failing to concentrate in classes due to hunger, they feel weak, dizzy and isolated. Some orphaned children drop out of school and get involved in child labor activities as they will be trying to look for money to buy food or working for food.

Based on the findings, the researcher learnt that there are several existing intervention strategies that has been implemented to promote food security among orphans. These includes international food aid programs, school feeding programs, community support initiatives (zunde ramambo). This has brought about positive outcomes but remain limited in scale, sustainability and coordination. Most strategies promoted dependency syndrome they are not sustainable for future prevention and mitigation of food insecurity therefore failing to integrate

and meet the diverse needs of orphans. Lack of collaboration and sustainable support is leading to short lived impact.

5.4 Implication to social work profession

The social Work practice is set to benefit from the research at the macro, mezzo and micro levels. Based on the findings of the study, Integrated Support for Orphan Welfare and Protection model aimed at addressing the high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Mudzi District would significantly expand the roles and responsibilities of social workers. They would not only provide psychosocial support but also become advocates for policy changes that improve food access and child welfare services. Social workers would be involved in designing and implementing community-based programs such as school feeding schemes and nutrition education, helping to ensure that orphans receive consistent and adequate food support. The findings can also be used to initiate policy formulation by the Ministry of Labor, Social Welfare and Social Development and its sister Ministries to guide OVCs programs and child protection programs in the Social Work practice settings. The finding can be utilized by non-state actors and child protection organization to strengthen families and community structures through various programs to mitigate food insecurity among orphans and promote protection and overall well-being of orphaned children in rural areas.

The findings will aid social workers to develop structures and support programs that deal with the challenges of food insecurity, child headed homes and single parenting to ensure that the children are not vulnerable to health problems, early child marriages, child labor, sexual abuse and involvement in illegal activities. It will also encourage social workers to increase mobilization and strengthening of collaboration between government, churches, private sectors and community structures in the fostering and promotion of sustainable support to reduce food insecurity among orphans therefore enhancing welfare, protection and overall well-being of orphaned children.

5.5 Recommendations

Below are the recommendations the researcher found worth to give in a bid to promote food security among orphans as well as promoting well-being of orphans in Mudzi District.

- Ensure access to Orphan and Vulnerable Children support programs which provide vouchers, nutrition education and support services.
- There is an urgent need for enhanced collaboration and coordination among social structures including family, community, government agencies, Non-governmental

organizations, education and health systems to effectively promote food accessibility and availability and the overall well-being of orphans.

- There is a need to strengthen social support networks for orphans and their families to enhance emotional well-being, improve access to essential services, and build community-based resilience and care systems.
- Building resilient local food systems and empowering communities with knowledge and resources. Implementing community based initiatives like gardens and cooperatives, along with training and information sharing can create lasting sustainable solutions to solve food insecurity problem among orphaned children and their households.
- Strengthening school feeding programs to provide daily nutritious meals for orphaned children and increase school attendance. These programs enhance school attendance, improve nutritional status, and foster cognitive development, ultimately increasing their chances of academic success and brighter futures.

5.6 Area of further study

To promote sustainable results-based interventions that not only address immediate food needs but also promote resilience and protection for orphaned children, the researcher suggested further future studies in the following areas:

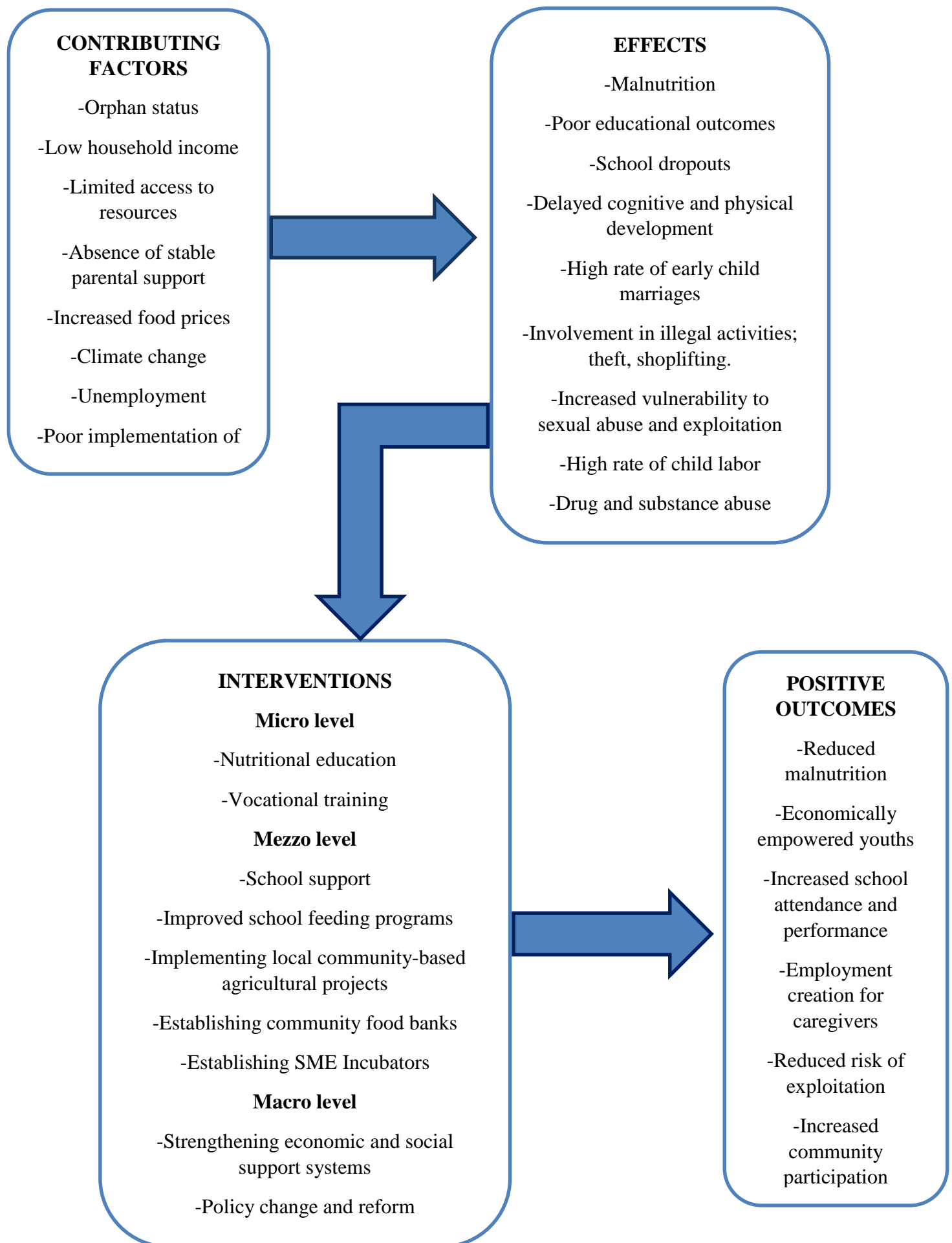
- There should be a study to explore the gender based dimensions of food insecurity, focusing on whether orphaned girls and boys experience different levels of vulnerability and access to food support.
- There should be a clear research country wide, to assess how migration, displacement, or urbanization affects food access and nutritional stability among orphaned children.
- There should be an investigation into the barriers that prevent orphaned children from accessing community resources, government food support or social safety net programs.

5.7 Chapter summary

The Chapter covered the summary of the whole study that include the objectives of the study, theoretical framework, methodology as well as the findings. Conclusions and recommendations were also part of this chapter to enhance social structures collaboration and coordination in order to promote and ensure sustainable solutions to reduce food insecurity among orphaned children in rural areas. Implication to social work profession and areas of

future study were highlighted to promote sustainability, resilience and long term benefits for orphans in future.

Figure 1: 5.8 Intervention Model: Integrated Support for Orphan Welfare and Protection Model (ISOWP).



An Integrated Support for Orphan Welfare and Protection Model (ISOWP) is a four phase process that was developed after the researcher collected and analysed the findings aiming towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphan households. The model seeks to address the objectives of the study which are as follow; to identify underlying factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans, to assess challenges faced by orphans due to food insecurity and to develop an intervention model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in a selected ward in Mudzi District. The core components of the ISOWP model includes empowerment, support, coordination, protection, participation and sustainability. The critical objectives of the ISOWP model , was to move beyond literature describing factors that result in and from food shortages, goes on to provide effects of food shortages, provide best intervention methods and clearly points out possible positive outcomes if the interventions are positively carried out.

The first stage of the model shows the contributing factors that result in food shortages among orphans and the factors consists of social, economic and environmental factors. The following stage explains the effects of these factors on orphans for instances increased malnutrition, school dropouts and poor performance, delayed cognitive and physical development. The third stage illustrates the interventions at micro level, mezzo level and macro level. The fourth stage shows the positive intervention outcomes that promotes food access, better quality of life as well as orphan well-being and enhanced child protection.

This model is significant in addressing the high rate of food insecurity among orphans as it offers a holistic approach that respond to the root causes of hunger among the most vulnerable populations. The model incorporates all relevant social systems starting from the micro system level, macro system and mezzo system. It also helps to visualize in one's mind something that can be difficult to see or understand. The model does not only focus on mitigating food insecurity, but it addresses interconnected challenges like poverty, health issues, education, environmental shocks which all contribute to chronic food insecurity. The model aim to create long lasting and sustainable solutions that can reduce dependency syndrome hence promoting self-reliance possibly significant for the future generations. Orphaned children are one of the most vulnerable populations, hence the researcher seeks to be the voice of these children that quick interventions can be promote food security hence strengthening orphan welfare and protection in Mudzi District.

REFERENCES

- Bazeley, P. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Biesta, G. (2017). *The pragmatics of education*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(7), 654-664. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1169333>
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing interviews* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Carter, B. T., & Wright, J. L. (2021). *Food security and sustainable agriculture: Global challenges and local responses*. Routledge.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., & Sheedy, D. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple. Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652-661.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.).
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Chikozho, C. (2018). Understanding food insecurity and vulnerability in southern Africa: Perspectives on Zimbabwe's food security situation. *African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development*, 18(4), 13747–13761. <https://doi.org/10.18697/ajfand.81.17483>
- Chitiyo, M., & Mavunga, G. (2019). Food insecurity and psychological stress among orphans in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Child Welfare*, 15(2), 45-62.
- Chirwa, E., & Kadzamira, E. (2018). *Social protection for orphans and vulnerable children in Malawi: A review of policy and practice*. *Development Southern Africa*, 35(5), 639-654.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing*

- Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Chikwaiwa, B., & Mavhunga, C. (2020). Social exclusion and food insecurity among orphans in rural Zimbabwe. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 35(1), 45-62.
- Dube, L., & Gumbo, P. (2019). Community-based interventions for improving food security among orphans in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development*, 18(2), 13456-13470.
- Daniel, J. (2019). *Sampling essentials: Practical guidelines for making sampling choices*. SAGE Publications.
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO. (2021). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021: Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition, and affordable healthy diets for all*. Food and Agriculture Organization. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org>.
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2020). *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2020). Demystifying qualitative research: The importance of flexible questioning. *Qualitative Health Research*, 30(3), 402-415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732320901493>
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2021). *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2021: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. Rome: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2021/en/>
- Food and Agriculture Oorganisation (2020). *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2020*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/ca9692en.pdf>
- Govere, E. M., Mugandani, R., & Rurinda, E. (2020). Food insecurity and coping strategies

- among vulnerable populations in rural Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Agricultural Research*, 15(3), 121-132. <https://doi.org/10.xxxxx>
- Webb, P. (2017). Food insecurity and its consequences: A review. *International Journal of Food Security*, 29(2), 47-55.
- Gukurume, S. (2019). Food insecurity in Zimbabwe: Challenges and opportunities. *African Studies Quarterly*, 19(1), 22-34. <https://doi.org/10.>
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). *A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research*. PLoS ONE, 15(5), e0232076.
- Harris, K. A., & Gupta, R. (2021). *Addressing food insecurity for better health and nutrition outcomes*. Springer.
- Hennink, M. M. (2020). *Focus Group Discussions* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Hossain, M., & Khan, S. (2019). The impact of food assistance on food security in sub-Saharan Africa: A critical review. *Food Policy*, 84, 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2018.10.005>
- Jones, A., & Patel, R. (2023). *Economic shocks and global food insecurity: An analysis of the post-pandemic era*. *Global Food Security*, 35, 100689.
- Kabonga, I. (2022). NGOs' responses to the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Chegutu, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 37(1), 121-146.
- Kabonga, I., & Mavhura, E. (2022). NGOs' responses to the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Chegutu, Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Social Work*, 12(1), 1–10.
- Luginaah, I., Kumi, E., & Kpenu, E. (2020). The impact of social protection programs on food security in sub-Saharan Africa: A review of Zimbabwe's policies and practices. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(3), 24-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23250725.2020.1734264>
- Lukwa, A. T., Zablun, K. N., Azam, J. M., & Alaba, O. A. (2020). *Socioeconomic inequalities*

- in food insecurity and alnutrition among under-five children: within and between-group inequalities in Zimbabwe.* BMC Public Health, 20, 1199.
- Matondi, P. (2018). *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*. Routledge.
- Mashayahanya, J. (2017). NGOs response to challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Chegutu, Zimbabwe.
- Mashizha, T. M. (2019). Building adaptive capacity: Reducing the climate vulnerability of small holder farmers in Zimbabwe. *Business Strategy and Development*, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.50>Mashizha
- Meyer, A. (2020). The impact of climate change on food systems, diet quality, nutrition, and health outcomes: A narrative review. *Frontiers in Nutrition*.
- Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. (1999). *National Orphan Care Policy*. Harare: Government of Zimbabwe.
- Morse, J. M. (2020). *Qualitative health research: Creating a new discipline*. SAGE Publications.
- Moyo, T., Sibanda, N., & Dlamini, K. (2021). The impact of food insecurity on child malnutrition in Zimbabwean orphanages. *Journal of Public Health Research*, 8(1), 33-47.
- Moyo, S., Ndlovu, T., & Sibanda, P. (2019). Economic challenges and food insecurity among orphaned households in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 10(4), 112-128.
- Mavhura, E., Manyangadze, T., & Aryal, K. R. (2021). Perceived impacts of climate variability and change: An exploration of farmers' adaptation strategies in Zimbabwe's intensive farming region. *GeoJournal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-021-10451-0>
- Mugabe, T. (2020). Policy frameworks for supporting orphaned and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Social Policy*, 15(3), 78-92.

- Munyaneza, F., Ngabitsinze, P., & Ndayambanje, I. (2020). Understanding food insecurity among orphaned children in Rwanda through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29(11), 3030-3040.
- Mavhunga, C. (2020). Social exclusion and food insecurity among orphans in rural Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Social Work*, 12(3), 87-102.
- Mutisi, P., & Gondo, L. (2022). Dietary patterns and nutritional challenges among food-insecure orphans in Zimbabwe. *Nutrition and Health Journal*, 9(3), 112-129.
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Ncube, M., et al. (2020). Ethical research practices in vulnerable populations. *Journal of Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa*.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2020). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1609406917733847. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Ndiweni, N. J., & Manik, S. (2018). Determinants of food insecurity amongst primary school children through the lens of affected parents and teachers: The case of Matobo District, Zimbabwe. *Alternation Special Edition*, 21, 203–233.
- Nkomo, T., & Mlambo, N. (2021). The impact of HIV/AIDS on food security among orphaned children in Zimbabwe. *Health and Nutrition Journal*, 7(1), 23-37.
- Nkomo, P., & Sibanda, B. (2020). Malnutrition and disease vulnerability among food-insecure children: A case study of Zimbabwean orphans. *Global Health Review*, 14(2), 76-88.
- Nyamukondiwa, S. (2018). Food insecurity and vulnerability in rural Zimbabwe. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 58, 35-45.
- Nkoko, N., Cronje, N., & Swanepoel, J. W. (2024). *Factors associated with food security*

- among small-holder farming households in Lesotho*. *Agriculture & Food Security*, 13(3), 1-12.
- Nyumba, T. O., Wilson, K., Derrick, C. J., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 9(1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-210X.12860>
- Patel, A. K., & Fernandez, R. L. (2020). *Food insecurity and its impact on health outcomes in developing countries*. Springer.
- Plano Clark, V. L. (2019). *The mixed methods reader*. Sage Publications.
- Popoola, O. O., Yusuf, S. F. G., & Monde, N. (2020). Information sources and constraints to climatechange adaptation amongst smallholder farmers in Amathole District Municipality, EasternCape Province, South Africa. *Sustainability*, 12(14), 5846.
- Ruel, M. T., Alderman, H., & Hidrobo, M. (2018). *Food insecurity and nutrition outcomes*. In *Food policy research: Results from field experiments* (pp. 52-76). Elsevier.
- Sharma, R. (2024). Focus Group Discussion: An Emerging Qualitative Tool for Educational Research. *International Journal of Rsearch and Review*, 11(9), 278-283.
- Sikwila, F. (2019). The role of NGOs in addressing food insecurity among orphaned children in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 22(4), 112-127.
- Sileyew, K. J. (2019). *Research design and methodology*. In *Text Mining- Analysis, Programming and Application*.
- Sithole, M., Moyo, F., & Dhlamini, S. (2022). Empowerment initiatives for orphaned youths: A pathway to food security in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25(5), 678-695.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2021). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: A contemporary perspective. In M. T. M. Denzin & N. K. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 243-254). SAGE Publications.
- Smith, L. C., Ferris, S., & von Grebmer, K. (2022). *Climate change and food security: Impacts*

- on vulnerable populations. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 47, 123-144.
- Springer (2018). Cultural and ethical perspectives in addressing food insecurity. *Springer Open Access Journals*.
- Smith, J. R., & Anderson, P. (2020). The emotional and social challenges of orphanhood in post-conflict societies. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29(3), 450-467. <https://doi.org/10.1007/jcfs.2020.029>
- Tawodzera, G. (2020). "Food insecurity and urban poverty in Zimbabwe: A systems approach." *African Journal of Food Security*.
- Tolar-Peterson, T., Gardner, A. J., Wei, T., & Evans, M. W. (2022). Addressing food insecurity: A qualitative study of undergraduate students' perceptions of food access resources. *Nutrients*, 14(17), 3517. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14173517>
- Tshuma, R., & Dube, T. (2021). The effects of chronic food insecurity on child cognitive development. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 12(4), 101-118.
- Tadesse, G., Jembe, T., & Almaz, G. (2018). Economic instability and food insecurity in Africa: A focus on sub-Saharan Africa. *Development Studies Research.
- Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communication impact* (2nd ed.). Wiley-blackwell.
- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2018). *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2018: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*. FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf>
- United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). (2019). Zimbabwe Country Strategic Plan 2016–2020. *United Nations World Food Programme*. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/zimbabwe>
- UNICEF. (2020). The state of child nutrition in Somalia: Addressing food insecurity and

malnutrition. UNICEF Somalia. <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/food-insecurity>

UNICEF. (2018). *The state of the world's children 2018: Children in a digital world*. United

Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children-2018>

Wang X, Ma L, Yan S, Chen X, Growe A (2023) *Trade for food security: the stability of global agricultural trade networks*. Food Secur 12(2):271

Williams, H., & Lee, T. (2018). Orphanhood and psychological distress: A longitudinal study. *Psychology and Developmental Disabilities*, 40(5), 512-530. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdd.2018.02.006>.

World Bank. (2019). Poverty and vulnerability in Somalia: A report on child welfare and food insecurity. World Bank Group. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia>

Appendix 1

Informed Consent Form

Project title: A model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. A case study of a selected ward in Mudzi District.

Researcher's name: Evelyn R. Mutimba

Institution: Bindura University of Science Education

I am kindly requesting for your participation throughout the course of my research on the project title mentioned above. The purpose of this study is to understand factors that are contributing to food shortages among orphaned children, their impacts and to develop a suitable model to promote food security. The participation procedure involves completing questionnaires about the experiences of orphans and caregivers, your source of food and coping strategies when there is no enough food in their households. Engaging in interviews with the researcher and allowing the researcher to observe your daily activities. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as names and identifying information will not be linked to your responses. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study without penalty or consequence.

Adult Participant Consent: I.....
hereby consent to participate in the study entitled: **A model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. A case study of a selected ward in Mudzi District.** I understand the purpose of the study. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study anytime.

Signature..... Date.....

Child's Guardian Consent: I.....
hereby consent for my child to
participate in the study entitled; **A model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. A case study of a selected ward in Mudzi District.** I understand the purpose of the study. I also understand that my child's participation is voluntary and he/she may withdraw from the study anytime.

Signature..... Date.....

Appendix 2

In-depth interview guides for orphan caregivers

Introduction

My name is Evelyn Ronica Mutimba, a final year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work. I am carrying out a research on “**A model towards addressing high rate of food insecurity among orphans in Zimbabwe. Case study of a selected ward in Mudzi District, Mashonaland East.**” Thank you for volunteering to participate in this in-depth interviews.

Procedure

We are going to have interviews for about 45 minutes to an hour and your conversation will be audio recorded. If you are not comfortable of being recorded please let me know such that I write on the paper using a pen. Your participation in this interview is voluntary which means you can choose whether you like to join the study and you are free to withdraw. You are free to refuse to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable and there is no reason to give when you are not comfortable to answer any question. You can decide to stop participating any time and no reason concerning quitting need to be given. There is no wrong answer, the researcher just want to hear your opinion and ideas. The researcher anticipates a zero risk to you during the study.

For privacy and confidentiality purposes, your real name will not be written in any way, all the conversation will be recorded and hand written. After translating the spoken conversation into written conversations the tapes will be destroyed after some period. I am interested in knowing your experiences on food insecurity, how it is affecting lifestyle of orphans physically and psychologically, intervention strategies that has been put forward by other organisations to promote food availability and their effectiveness, other solutions and strategies that you need from the Zimbabwean government and other humanitarian organisation in order to solve the problem at hand.

SECTION A: General information

1. Participant's gender: Male [] Female[]
2. Participant's age: 25-30 [] 30-50[] 50+ []
3. Relationship to the child:.....
4. Employment status: Informal work [] Formal work [] Unemployed []
5. How many orphans are under your care and what are their ages?
6. How long have you been staying with the children?

SECTION B: Factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans

7. Describe how economic hardships has affected your ability to provide enough food to children under your care?
8. How has climate change affected food availability in your household?
9. Are there any other challenges you are facing in trying to provide food to the children?
10. Are there extended family members who are providing assistance?

SECTION C: Food availability and accessibility

9. How many meals do you often have per day in your household?
10. Describe challenges you face in ensuring regular meals for the children?
12. Are there times when you run out of food? If so, how do you cope?

SECTION D: Impacts of food shortages on orphans

13. Describe signs of malnutrition you have noticed among the children under your care?
14. What are the behavior changes you have notice among the children you are taking care of, as a result of food shortages?
15. How does hunger affect the educational performance of the children?
16. How does food shortages impact their safety and vulnerability to abuse?

SECTION E: Intervention strategies employed by social support systems in promoting food security among orphans

17. What are the community-based food assistance initiatives or feeding programs in your community?
18. How has these programs managed to promote food security among orphaned children?
19. Describe how government and NGO interventions has effectively addressed food insecurity among orphaned children in your community?
20. What recommendations do you have for improving food security among orphans in your community?

Appendix 3

Interview guide for key informants

SECTION A: Socio-economic, environmental and cultural factors contributing to food insecurity among orphans

5. How do climate change affect the availability and accessibility of food in your community?
6. Are there extended family members, community groups or organizations that offer help to orphans?
7. Are there cultural norms that influence how food is distributed within your community?

SECTION B: Challenges faced by orphans due to food shortages

9. How does food insecurity impact the physical health and development of the orphans?
10. In what ways does food shortages impact educational performance or the inability to attend school on orphans?
11. How does food unavailability affect emotional and psychological outcomes of orphans?

SECTION C: Effectiveness of current food security interventions in providing food assistance to orphans

12. Are there other childcare or humanitarian organizations providing food assistance to orphans in this community?
13. What types of food assistance are provided to orphans?
14. What are the barriers to food access?
15. Have you noticed any long term positive effects of these interventions on overall development of the orphans?

Appendix 4: In-depth interview guide for orphans

SECTION A: General information

1. What is your age?
2. Who do you live with?
3. Level of education: Secondary [] Tertiary []

SECTION B: Food availability and accessibility

4. How many meals do you eat per day?
5. Have you ever gone a whole day without eat?
6. Describe the challenges you face because of food shortages?

SECTION C: Negative impacts of food shortages on orphans

7. Have you experienced any health problems due to hunger?
8. Describe how hunger affect your ability to concentrate at school?
9. Does food shortage hinder you from doing your daily activities?
10. What other challenges do you face from not having enough food?
11. What are the things you wish family members, the community, government or NGOs should do to address this issue of food shortages?

SECTION D: C intervention strategies and support systems to address food insecurity

15. Do you receive food assistance from extended family members or other social organizations?
16. Describe kind of support you need in order to have enough food at home?

Thank you for participation.

Appendix 5: Approval letter



FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

P. Bag 1020
BINDURA, Zimbabwe

Tel: 263 - 71 - 7531-6, 7621-4

Fax: 263 - 71 - 7534

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date: 17 FEBRUARY 2025

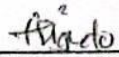
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

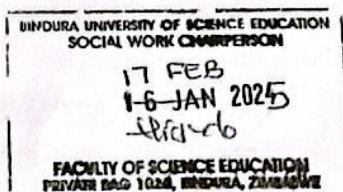
RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer: EVELYN R. MUTIMBA
Student Registration Number: 821011913 who is a BSc SOCIAL WORK student
at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in
your area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where
possible, conduct interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours faithfully


MS E.E. CHIGONDO
CHAIRPERSON



Appendix 6: Chief Director of Department of social development approval letter

Official communications should
Not be addressed to individuals

Telephone: 703711 / 790721-4
Harare



ZIMBABWE

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL
WELFARE
Compensation House

Cnr S.V Muzenda and Central Avenue
HARARE

21 May 2025

Evelyn R. Mutimba(B210119B)
Bindura University of Science Education

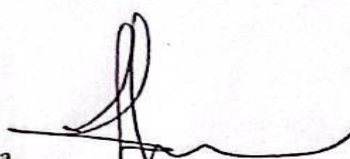
**REF: LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY
TITLED 'A MODEL TOWARDS ADDRESSING HIGH RATE OF FOOD
INSECURITY AMONG ORPHANS IN ZIMBABWE. A CASE STUDY OF
A SELECTED WARD IN MUDZI DISTRICT'**

Receipt of your letter with the above mentioned matter is acknowledged.

Please be advised that permission is hereby granted for you to carry out research titled 'A model Towards addressing High Rate of Food Insecurity Among Orphans In Zimbabwe. A case study of a Selected Ward In Mudzi District'

Permission is granted **STRICTLY** on condition that the research is for academic purposes only in pursuit of your Bachelors of Science Honours Degree in Social Work. The data collected should not be shared to third party (3rd).

You are requested to submit a copy of your final research documents to the Department of Social Development upon completion as your research has a bearing on the Department's mandate.


T. Zimhunga
Acting Chief Director Social Development, and Disability Affairs
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE

