

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCE

**Developing a Whistleblower Framework to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwean Elite
Zimbabwean Football.**

BELINDA RURAMAI MUTANDA (B220392B)

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN SPORTS
SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents, whose unwavering love, support, and sacrifices have been the foundation of my journey. Your encouragement has carried me through every challenge. To my brother and little sister, thank you for constantly challenging me to rise above limits and strive for my full potential. You have inspired me more than you know. Most importantly, to my precious son, you are my greatest motivation and the reason I push forward with hope and determination. This achievement is for you.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the development of a whistleblower framework to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football, a sector increasingly plagued by corruption, match-fixing, bribery, and financial mismanagement. The research employed a mixed-methods approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities surrounding whistleblowing within the sport. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative insights from interviews were examined using NVivo software. Findings revealed that fear of retaliation, absence of formal reporting channels, and a culture of silence significantly hinder whistleblowing efforts. Participants emphasized the need for a secure, confidential, and supportive environment that encourages reporting without fear. Based on these insights, the study proposes a whistleblower framework that incorporates key components such as anonymity, trust-building mechanisms, stakeholder education, and legal protections. The framework aims to strengthen governance, foster transparency, and ultimately restore integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football by empowering stakeholders to report misconduct safely and confidently.

Keys Words

The vital keywords for this study include whistleblower framework, integrity, elite football, Zimbabwe, sports governance, corruption, accountability, transparency, anonymity, retaliation, legal protection, ZIFA, stakeholders, reporting mechanisms, and ethical conduct.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RELEASE FORM.....	i
COPYRIGHT DECLARATION	ii
DECLARATION ON PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
The Problem and Its Setting	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.5 Research Questions.....	3
1.6 Research Objectives.....	4
1.7 Significance of the Study	4
1.9 Study Outline.....	5
CHAPTER 2.....	7
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Conceptual Review.....	7
2.3 Theoretical Framework.....	10
2.3.1 Theoretical Framework Underpinning the Study	10
2.4 Thematic Literature.....	11
2.4.1 Agency Theory	11
2.4.2 Current Whistleblower Frameworks	11
2.4.3 Challenges Faced by Stakeholders	12
2.4.4 Challenges Stakeholders Face in Enhancing Protection	13
2.4.5 Tailored Framework Design.....	15
2.5 Conclusion	16
2.5.1 The Whistleblower System in Zimbabwean Elite Football.....	16
2.5.2 Obstacles of Stakeholders in Whistleblowing Elite Football in Zimbabwe.....	16

2.5.3 Stakeholder Challenges in Advancing Protection	17
2.5.4 Formulation of Specialized Structures.....	18
2.6 Chapter Summary	18
CHAPTER 3	20
MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	20
3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.2 Methodological Approach	20
3.3 Time Horizons	20
3.4 Research Strategy	21
3.5 Population and Sampling	21
3.5.1 Population.....	21
3.5.2 Sampling	22
3.5.3 Sample Size Determination	22
3.6 Data Collection Procedures.....	24
3.6.1 Pilot Study.....	24
3.6.2 Main Study	25
3.7 Data Analysis and Presentations.....	25
3.8 Validity and Reliability/ Trustworthiness	26
3.9 Ethical Considerations	26
3.10 Chapter Summary	27
CHAPTER 4	28
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION	28
4.1 Introduction.....	28
4.2 Response Rate.....	28
4.2.1 Questionnaire Response	28
4.3 Demographics.....	30
4.3.1 Gender of Questionnaire Respondents	30
4.3.2 Gender of Interviewed Respondents	31
4.3.3 Age of Questionnaire Respondents.....	31
4.3.4 Age of Interview Respondents.....	32
4.3.5 Years of Experience of the Questionnaire Respondents	33

4.3.6 Years of Interview Respondents.....	34
4.3.7 Reliability Test.....	34
4.3.8 Test of Normality.....	35
4.4 Presentation and Analysis of Data Linked to the Research Objectives	36
4.4.2 NVivo analysis of the Current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.....	38
4.4.4 NVivo analysis of Challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.	45
4.4.6 NVivo Analysis for factors responsible for shaping the whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.	49
4.4.8 NVivo Analysis of How Zimbabwean Elite Football Can Develop a Tailored Whistleblower Framework to Foster Integrity	55
Table 4.19	56
4.5 Discussions.....	59
4.5.1 The Integrity of Zimbabwean Elite Football is Whistleblowing.....	59
4.5.2 Factors Facing Stakeholders in Advancing Whistleblower Protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.....	60
4.5.3 Factors contributing to whistleblower protection within the context of elite football in Zimbabwe.	61
4.5.4 Development of a whistleblower policy tailored to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.....	62
4.5.5 New Sights.....	63
Fig 4.5.1	64
4.6 Chapter Summary	65
CHAPTER 5.....	66
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	66
5.1 Introduction.....	66
5.2 Summary of Major Findings.....	66
5.3 Conclusions.....	67
5.3.1 To establish the current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.....	67
5.3.2 To identify the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.	67

5.3.3 To establish the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.	68
5.3.4 To develop a tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football to promote integrity.....	69
5.4 Limitations of the Study	69
5.5 Implications and Recommendations	70
5.5.1 Implications for Practice Issues	70
5.5.2 Implications for Theory	70
5.5.3 Impacts on Future Research	71
5.6 Chapter Summary	72

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Quantitative Samples	23
Table 3.2 Qualitative Samples.....	24
Table 4.1 Questionnaire Response Rate	28
Table 4.2 Interview Response Rate.....	29
Table 4.3 Gender of Questionnaire Respondents	30
Table 4.4 Gender of Interviewed Respondents.....	31
Table 4.5 Age of Questionnaire Respondents.....	31
Table 4.6 Age of Interview Respondents.....	32
Table 4.7 Years of Experience of Questionnaire Respondents.....	33
Table 4.8 Years of Interview Respondent.....	34
Table 4.9 Reliability Statistics.....	34
Table 4.10 Test of Normality.....	35
Table 4.11 Current Whistleblower Framework Being Used to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwe Elite Football.....	37
Table 4.12 NVivo Analysis of the Current Whistleblower Framework being used to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football	39
Table 4.13 Challenges Faced by Stakeholders in Advancing Whistleblower Protection Zimbabwe Elite Football.....	42
Table 4.14 NVivo Analysis of Challenges Faced by Stakeholders Advancing Whistleblower Protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football	45
Table 4.15 Factors Responsible for Shaping the Whistleblower Protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football	48
Table 4.16 NVivo Analysis For Factors Responsible For Shaping The Whistleblower Protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football	50
Table 4.17 Framework for Implementing Whistleblower Policies Regarding Elite Football in Zimbabwe	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 4.18 Tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football that can be developed to promote integrity.....	56

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Normality Q-Q Plot Age.....	36
Figure 4.2 Text Search Query for Fear.....	40
Figure 4.3 Text Search Query for Awareness.....	41
Figure 4.4 Cluster Analysis by Word Similarity.....	41
Figure 4.5 Test Search for Legal.....	47
Figure 4.6 Text Search Query Transparency.....	47
Figure 4.7 Text Search Query for Legal.....	51
Figure 4.8 Text Search Query for Leadership.....	52
Fig 4.9 Text Search Query for Culture.....	52
Figure 4.10 Text Search Query for Legal.....	57
Figure 4.11 Matrix Coding Query for Transparency and Public Accountability.....	58
Figure 4.12 New Insights.....	64

CHAPTER ONE

The Problem and Its Setting

1.1 Introduction

The study focused on developing a framework that promotes integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football. This chapter addresses key issues, including the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, research objectives, delimitation of the study, and study outline.

1.2 Background of Study

The current state of sports governance in Zimbabwe was characterized by challenges, particularly on the issues of integrity, transparency, and accountability. (Chiweshe, 2019). The Zimbabwean Football Association (ZIFA) played a crucial role in the governance structure, yet it faced criticism for its lack of effective oversight and transparency. This insufficiency necessitates the development of a whistle-blower framework to enhance integrity in Zimbabwean Football. Moyo and Mpofu (2020) state that the nation still struggles to develop a viable system that allows players, coaches, fans, and officials to report misconduct without fear of victimization. On the same appeal, Zinyama and Chikombingo (2020) observed that corruption will still prevail as there has been a blind eye turned to such issues due to fear or reprisal, which cripples the investment rate in the sporting sector.

The development of whistle-blower programs has proven to be an effective strategy for addressing and promoting integrity and transparency within sporting boards across various countries. For example, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) has greatly assisted in reviewing areas of misconduct by athletes, officials, fans, and coaches (Pielke, 2018). The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) activated the “Speak Up” program that allows individuals to report issues of doping anonymously (WADA, 2020), and also the United Kingdom’s Whistle-blower Protection

Policy or the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority's Whistle-blower Policy. Taylor (2018) seconds that this initiative helped reduce corruption and promote accountability in sports.

Mutsaka (2021) states that the absence of a whistle-blower framework has caused a challenge in other sports codes, for example, the Zimbabwean Football Association (ZIFA) and Zimbabwe Cricket Board (ZCB) have been allegedly accused of corruption issues, although alleged, these have shed light on the need of a strong framework to help restore integrity in sport by holding perpetrators accountable for action. The absence of a firm benchmarking system in Zimbabwean sports limits the ability to assess performance and integrity (Verschuuren, 2021). According to Moriconi and Cima (2020), due to the absence of a framework, a prevailing code of silence hinders the reporting of unethical practices such as match-fixing and corruption. Barkoukis et al (2014) state that educational initiatives are to be put in place to promote whistleblowing and ethical behaviour in every sporting code. Mantazaris and Saruchena (2024) highlight that a framework should directly target corrupt practices and maladministration in Zimbabwean sports organizations. Sari (2024) adds that it should also address financial transparency, as it plays a crucial role in sports governance and aids in accountability.

This study aims to introduce a functional whistleblower framework that would help promote integrity in Zimbabwean elite football by restructuring and adopting new models from other countries and designing them to meet Zimbabwe's ecosystem. This framework is poised to impact various stakeholders, including players, coaches, fans, sponsors, journalists, and officials. The framework is to aid in adopting a culture of accountability and openness while building trust for the sport to develop. Muslim and Mais (2023) state that it is important for players to be well educated on this framework as it helps them when they have been mistreated in contract negotiations and athlete welfare, which in turn reduces exploitation from agents and teams. This framework ensures adherence to ethical standards, which fans and sponsors would also benefit from, as it provides them with an equitable and engaging environment, fostering loyalty and community engagement. According to Rahdri (2016), this promotes a positive image for Zimbabwean football, hence attracting investors, sponsorship, and grants.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Due to a lack of a functioning system to manage such aspects, culture and indiscipline have severely ravaged Zimbabwean elite football. The presence of match fixing, doping, bribery, and financial misappropriation has become endemic to Zimbabwean elite football. Most notably, there was no appropriate counteracting system to curb these stubborn trends. The absence of governance frameworks for sports has resulted in indiscipline being grossly underreported, which makes fans and sponsors disassociate from engaging with sports in Zimbabwe, which is not a sustainable trajectory. The intertwining of political and socio-economic issues within elite football in Zimbabwe has compounded the need for self-discipline, demonstrating the need for self-disclosure and integrity frameworks. This need stems from papers such as these, which advocate for self-disclosure and integrity mechanisms in sport governance. The study aims to address this gap by proposing a framework for Whistleblower frameworks that will secure disclosures by providing anonymity and safeguarding integrity in Zimbabwean elite football. The research aims to develop a comprehensive whistleblowers policy on match fixing, doping, bribery, and financial doping in elite football to restore ZIFA's integrity and ensure its continuity.

1.5 Research Questions

Main Research Question

What tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football can be developed to promote integrity?

Specific Research Question

1. What is the current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football?
2. What are the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football?
3. What factors are responsible for shaping whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football?

4. What tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football can be developed to promote integrity

1.6 Research Objectives

Main objective

To develop a tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football to promote integrity.

Specific Objectives

1. To establish the current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.
2. To identify the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.
3. To establish the factors faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.
4. To develop a tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football to promote integrity.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research makes significant theoretical, practical, and innovative contributions to sport integrity scholarship through its Zimbabwean elite football case study. Theoretically, the work advances sport governance frameworks by integrating Planned Behavior Theory (Ajzen, 1991) with institutional analysis to decode whistleblowing motivations in Zimbabwe's distinct socio-political context, directly addressing Erwandu et al.'s (2025) call for theoretical integration. This synthesis bridges Barkoukis et al.'s (2019) ethical reporting models with post-colonial governance challenges identified by Chiweshe (2019), creating new conceptual pathways for understanding accountability mechanisms in institutional voids where traditional frameworks fail. Testing Apaza and Chang's (2017) legal protection thesis within resource-constrained environments, the study generates novel insights into intimidation thresholds and cultural barriers specific to developing economies, significantly enriching the global whistleblowing discourse.

Practically, the framework delivers actionable solutions addressing Zimbabwe's documented governance crises. It operationalized financial transparency protocols (Cerrillo-i-Martinez & Pounce, 2017) and anti-doping systems (Jones, 2012) through ZIFA-implementable mechanisms, while its anonymized reporting channels adapt WADA's "Speak Up" program (2020) to technological limitations. Crucially, it establishes stakeholder-specific protections: player-focused modules combat contract exploitation (Muslim & Mais, 2023), journalist protocols enhance corruption exposure, and sponsor-facing accountability metrics address investment disengagement. The culturally-tailored training curriculum directly dismantles Zimbabwe's "code of silence" (Moriconi & Cima, 2020) through localized ethical education shown to reduce reprisal fears (Mutsaka, 2021), thereby creating sustainable integrity infrastructure.

Innovation emerges through context-specific adaptations that transcend conventional templates. The ecosystem modeling uniquely hybridizes formal governance (UK/Australian policies) with informal, effective reporting channels suited to Zimbabwe's operational realities, creating the first framework explicitly navigating political entanglement while maintaining FIFA/IOC compliance. Its multi-stakeholder architecture expands protection beyond athletes to systematically include journalists, sponsors, and fans, resolving fragmentation issues noted by Verschuren (2021). Most significantly, the conflict-of-interest insulation mechanism creates a replicable blueprint for politicized sport environments across Southern Africa, making this both methodology and outcome transferable to comparable resource-limited contexts facing similar integrity challenges.

1.9 Study Outline

Chapter 1

This chapter introduces the study, summarizing the background, problem statement, and research objectives.

Chapter 2

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the whistleblower framework and related topics.

Chapter 3

The chapter covered the study's research methodology, research design, data collection, as well as analytical methods used in the research.

Chapter 4

This chapter gives a detailed analysis along with a discussion of the findings of the study from an empirical perspective.

Chapter 5

The last chapter summarizes the entire process of conducting the research and offers practical insights on how to build a whistleblower system for enhancing integrity in Zimbabwean elite football based on the research findings.

1.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the issue and relevance of the study are provided with context. It was clear that in ZIFA there was an issue. The first chapter forms the rationale and context for this study. It highlighted sharply the critical lack of integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football, articulating how functional avenues for reporting wrongdoing, along with the protection of informants, make social responsibility and accountability possible to the relevant authority. The chapter also narrates how harmful the absence of formal response mechanisms to unethical behavior is. Along with this background, the chapter articulates the description of the problem, which highlights the gap in Zimbabwean Elite Football lacking integrity.

Also, what was pointed out was the value of the study, which is to construct an appropriate policy framework to advance integrity. As was customary, Chapter 1 details the overarching research problems and several guiding general objectives. These involve examining the current impediments to whistleblowing, determining the policies best suited to foster effective whistleblowing, and developing a policy framework for elite-level football in Zimbabwe for bolstered whistleblowing. Lastly, the chapter outlines the rest of the study presented in the six chapters that follow. This can move from reviewing existing literature, presenting and discussing the research findings, to articulating evidence-based suggestions aimed at encouraging integrity within Zimbabwean Elite Football.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature addressing the objectives of the study. The chapter is composed of key components, including conceptualizing key terms, discussing theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, highlighting methodological processes, and reviewing thematic literature.

2.2 Conceptual Review

There was a growing integrity problem in Zimbabwean football, which requires a scholarly critique of whistleblowing and anticorruption systems within institutions. In this review, the study addresses the seminal aspects using modern scholarship while illustrating these relations. Recent studies characterize these frameworks as specialized mechanisms allowing confidential reporting of wrongdoing through legal safeguards, anonymity, and institutional assistance (Near et al., 2021). In governance of football, such frameworks act as accountability systems that transform individual reports into operational probes undertaken to dismantle corruption (Geeraert & Drieskens, 2020). Most importantly, it depends on integrity, which, as noted by Haas et al. (2023), is the congruence of institutional behaviour and ethics, transparency, and compliance with laws and regulations. In Zimbabwean football, integrity is adherence to FIFA statutes, financial fairness, and equal participation, although the current governance system is critically lacking (Chiweshe, 2022).

The Zimbabwean Elite Football with boundaries involving the Premier Soccer League, ZIFA, clubs, and other associated brands (Moyo & Ndlovu, 2023) is an instructive example. It had been found that corruption continues to exist because of three underlying failures of overlap, namely, lack of whistleblower protection emboldens the violators (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2021), secondly, shame of "snitching" (Ncube, 2020), and lastly, lack of administrative strength to enforce accountability (Mutandarika, 2022). This triad gives birth to an ecosystem that permits

match-fixing, fund embezzlement, and other activities that inflict direct damage to injuries (Mararike, 2021).

The additional scaffolding helps to analyse this phenomenon. Zimbabwean football can be viewed through the lens of institutional theory as proposed by Scott in 2020. Football is solely comprised of the spill-over/malfunctioned regulative pillars (absence of whistleblowing legislation), contested normative pillars (acceptance of corruption), and the broken cultural-cognitive pillars (trust in the system formally). At the same time, agency theory explains why football officials (agents) do not get held accountable to stakeholders (principals) due to information asymmetry (Eisenhardt, 2023). A whistleblower framework counteracts this by closing information gaps and aligning incentives (De Graaf, 2022).

Contextual interdependencies are all-encompassing. The socio-legal profile of Zimbabwe, with the draft Whistleblower Protection Bill (indefinitely shelved since 2018) and the ubuntu philosophy, requires a mix of statutory compliance and culturally sensitive methods. Gwisai (2021) underscores that effective models need to indigenize protections by involving community leaders, tapping into the ethical communal defences, reframing whistleblowing as a defence, not an attack. Such embedding is important to the legitimacy of the Kaseke framework (2022) while shrugging off fears of retaliation.

Obi-ethnographic studies from other regions offer some insights. Ghana's Sports Integrity Office (2020, still active) curbed corruption through integrating traditional leadership into oversight functions. Botswana also reported over 300% uptake in use of the whistleblower hotline aligned with community messaging and shifted advertisement and messaging strategies (Osei & Akindes, 2023). In devising a whistleblowing framework to apply in elite football in Zimbabwe, custom approaches combine legal rigidity, cultural gentleness, and institutional alteration. The relationship between whistleblowing processes and outcomes of integrity is influenced by gaps in governance as well as Zimbabwean socio-culture. Moving forward, integrative approaches should focus on reframing whistleblowing from being an act shunned and stigmatized, into one embraced and celebrated as a civic duty, thereby emphasizing that integrity, rather than incident, is the logic that underpins institutionalized football.

The term "whistleblower" has evolved significantly, reflecting changes in community trends toward individuals keen to expose wrongdoing. Clayton (2020) states that the theory of

whistleblowing stemmed from the 19th century, when the term was used by law enforcement officials who used whistles to alert the public about potential crime and violations. This culture was adopted by the public, which led to the active reporting of potential and ongoing misconduct. According to Clayton (2020), in the 1960s, the term was used to give salutations to members who could have reported misconduct. The ACFE report states that the modern understanding emphasizes the importance of whistleblowers in promoting transparency and accountability within different organisations. This movement has influenced the involvement of legal frameworks to protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Strategically, laws have been put in place to motivate those who shed light on misconduct.

At the congress approved by the Dodd-Frank Act in July 2010, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) established the Whistleblower Initiative in accordance with the global financial crisis of 2008. This initiative aided in revealing fraud, and the SEC received over \$700 million to compensate the whistleblower since 2012. Studies by Near and Miceli (1985) defined whistleblowing in four aspects, which include that the whistleblower is one of the former or existing member of the organization and would not be in a position to apply any changes to the ongoing misconduct, secondly the whistleblowing act that focuses on disclosing misconduct, thirdly the complaint receiver and lastly the responsible personnel to respond to act. Near and Miceli (1985) add that whistleblowing should not be seen as employee non-compliance but as an initiative in creating a safe environment for everyone.

Culiberg and Mihelic (2016) state that factors like influential positions of wrongdoers, lack of support, and fear of disrespect in the organization severely impact whistleblowing. Lee and Xiao (2018) explain the Perceived Threat of Retaliation (PTR) as the estimate of the impact on whistleblowing individuals if caught. The castigation moves would involve getting fired, isolation, and harassment by co-workers. Latan (2019) adds that individuals are most likely to turn a blind eye to misconduct and wrongdoing because of the severity of retaliation they would face from the initiative. Some researchers have indicated that perceived seriousness of wrongdoing aids in the urge of individuals to whistle blow (Andon, 2016); however, some argue otherwise. West and Bowman (2019) described the perceived seriousness of wrongdoing as an individual's evaluation of the immoral and misconduct.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Theoretical Framework Underpinning the Study

The development of a whistleblower framework to promote integrity in Zimbabwean elite football was theoretically anchored in the integration of Institutional Theory, Agency Theory, and Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), which collectively address the macro-structural, relational, and psychological dimensions of whistleblowing in contexts of institutional fragility. Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2020), as refined by contemporary scholars like Geeraert (2023), provides a lens for analyzing how Zimbabwean football's regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive pillars shape corrupt practices. Regulative weaknesses, such as the absence of whistleblower laws, fail to deter misconduct, while normative decay normalizes graft, and cultural-cognitive factors like ubuntu collectivism inhibit reporting due to fears of betraying communal loyalty (Ncube, 2021).

This theory underpins the study by diagnosing systemic voids and prescribing context-sensitive solutions. A whistleblower framework must leverage aligning with FIFA's regulations, rebuild normative alignment through ethics training, and repurpose cultural symbols like reframing whistleblowing as an act of communal protection under "ubuntu". Complementarily, Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Eisenhardt, 2023) examines the principal agent dynamics in Zimbabwean football, where information asymmetry allows officials to exploit players and fans through embezzlement or match-fixing (Mararike, 2021). The framework's design is informed by the theory's advocacy of mechanisms to adjust incentives, which include closing reporting gaps. Information gaps are closed by independent contractors who take on the role of agents, assign representatives, and enforce accountability.

Lastly, Protection Motivation Theory by Rogers (1975), adapted by Miceli et al. (2023), deals with the behavioural impediments through modelling the decisions of potential whistleblowers in terms of threat appraisal, fear of retaliation in Zimbabwe's unstable environment. In PMT, practical interventions include AI reporting tools and psychosocial aid designed to boost self-efficacy and reduce perceived threats. The combined result creates a synergistic framework where Institutional Theory mitigates legitimacy insufficiency, Agency Theory counteracts governance strife, and PMT enhances overall participation. For the socio-legal setting Zimbabwe presents, this triad

allows the framework to go beyond formalistic compliance towards a deeply embedded cultural integrity system that integrates whistleblowing as a civic duty instead of a taboo (Gwisai, 2021).

2.4 Conceptual Review

2.4.1 Agency Theory

Closing the gap on the Zimbabwean elite football sector, Cassematis and Wortley (2013) emphasized that working in a hierarchical environment seems to lead to bias in retaliation toward whistleblowers who report wrongdoing, while Cassematis and Wortley (2005) noted that in organizational behaviour, Justice Theory understood whistleblowing as a response to admitting a wrongdoing and proposed explaining it in terms of self-attribution bias. Each emphasizes that hierarchy determines loyalty, surpassing integrity, with organizational culture determining consequences for reporting unethical behaviour. Allowing or enabling active supportive peers and society encourages uncovering misconduct. Cassematis and Wortley's (2013) supposition about retaliation within a hierarchical structure directly applies to the Zimbabwean elite football sector, where power can override ethical standards. These perspectives would assist in creating an applicable model that champions integrity, respect, and trust in football organizations.

2.4.2 Current Whistleblower Frameworks

The current whistleblower framework governing Zimbabwean elite football exhibits critical deficiencies across three interconnected dimensions, such as policy effectiveness, stakeholder awareness, and legal institutional infrastructure. Empirical analysis reveals that Zimbabwe's primary legislative instrument, the Public Interest Disclosure Act (Chapter 10:31), remains largely inapplicable to sports contexts, lacking sector-specific provisions for football-related corruption, match-fixing, or administrative fraud (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2022).

This legislative gap is compounded by Zimbabwe Football Association's (ZIFA) reliance on generic reporting channels through its Ethics Committee, a body critically under-resourced and structurally dependent on the very administrators it might investigate, creating irreconcilable

conflicts of interest (Chari & Tshuma, 2021). Crucially, awareness studies demonstrate that only 12% of players, 23% of referees, and 17% of club officials possess functional knowledge of existing mechanisms, attributed to minimal educational outreach and fragmented communication strategies by football governing bodies (Ndlovu, 2020). Accessibility barriers further undermine the framework. Physical reporting requires in-person submissions to ZIFA headquarters, while digital alternatives lack cybersecurity protocols, deterring potential whistleblowers from exposing high-profile figures due to legitimate fears of retaliation and career sabotage (Mawere, 2022).

Legally, the absence of dedicated witness protection under Zimbabwean jurisprudence leaves whistleblowers exposed to litigation under defamation statutes, as evidenced by the 2019 case where Dynamos FC officials sued an anonymous player for exposing match-fixing, a scenario wholly unaddressed by the Sports and Recreation Commission Act (Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, 2021). Institutionally, ZIFA's suspension by FIFA in 2022 dissolved the nascent Integrity Office established in 2018, eliminating the only football-specific reporting channel without replacement (FIFA Governance Taskforce, 2023). This ecosystem perpetuates a culture of silence. Qualitative data from 37 elite football stakeholders shows 89% perceive reporting as professionally suicidal due to kinship networks and patronage politics permeating Zimbabwean football hierarchies (Chiweshe, 2023). Consequently, the framework fails all three effectiveness criteria, namely, policies are misaligned with sports corruption realities, stakeholders remain uninformed about procedural options, and legal-institutional structures actively enable retaliation rather than protection.

2.4.3 Challenges Faced by Stakeholders

Stakeholders within Zimbabwean elite football confront multidimensional challenges when contemplating whistleblowing, with fear of retaliation emerging as the paramount deterrent across empirical studies. Quantitative surveys reveal 94% of players and 87% of technical staff withhold corruption reports due to documented instances of career termination, exemplified by the 2021 case where four Triangle United players were expelled from the league after exposing illegal player registration payments, retaliation that remained unaddressed by Zimbabwe's Sports and Recreation Commission (Mawere, 2023). This fear ecosystem is exacerbated by a profound trust deficit; 78% of referees and 91% of club administrators perceive governing bodies like ZIFA and the National

Football Association as extensions of corrupt patronage networks, where reports against influential figures trigger counter-accusations rather than investigations (Chiweshe, 2023).

Most importantly, this lack of trust emerges as an institution through ZIFA's breach of its 2019 whistleblower policy promises, with forensic audits verifying zero reports investigated out of 38 submitted (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2022). At the same time, stakeholders cope with these catastrophic gaps in the already existing silos of support: there is no specific legal aid for sports whistleblower claimants in Zimbabwe, meaning they can only turn to severely under resourced NGOs such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, which only had the capacity to take 12 sports law cases between 2018-2022 (ZHRC, 2021). Psychosocial support is practically non-existent, breaching forward-looking obligations on trauma counseling for whistleblowers, one of the most exploited vulnerabilities, when a whistleblower in the Caps FC match-fixing scandal became severely depressed after suffering institutional abandonment. A longitudinal study of the scandal by Onifade et al (2015), prior neglect by institutions highlighted the silence of institutions, and the abysmal lack of financial guarantees only exacerbates this vulnerability. Unlike South Africa's Protected Disclosures Act, which provides interim relief, so guarded by surgical secrecy limbs, Zimbabwean whistleblowers face losing their livelihood without recourse, as exemplified by this Highlanders FC accountant embezzlement exposed, enduring relentless poverty.

These intersecting impediments to being able to feel illegitimacy, loss of income, and loss of identity, and being bound by a deep-rooted culture of unrepressed retribution, impunity, and fully captured governance, severely undermine the potential of whistleblowing, change the state of resistance, and withstand systemic inertia as suffocated, sanctioned dictates require fundamental rethinking of systematic restructure that embeds social protection systems.

2.4.4 Challenges Stakeholders Face in Enhancing Protection

The triple crisis of insufficient training and education, deeply rooted cultural inhibition, and harsh resource limitations critically stifles the development of whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean elite football and intersects with one another. Based on research, 92% of players, 85% of referees, and 79% of club administrators indicate that they have never received formal training on whistleblower rights or reporting mechanisms because the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) did not conduct FIFA's mandated ethics workshops after their suspension in 2022 (Ndlovu, 2023).

Such a lack of training reinforces functional ignorance regarding legal safeguards established by Zimbabwe's Public Interest Disclosure Act, which means stakeholders do not know about the absence of retaliation or anonymity mechanisms, considering there is no anonymity to disclosure (Mawere, 2023).

Culturally, a form of normative collectivism manifests as a reluctance to blow the whistle through football kinship, where ethnographic studies show that 73% of participants prioritize club loyalty over integrity disclosures. Club loyalty is steadfast and derives from a deep-rooted societal perception that whistleblowers are sell-outs who forfeit community trust (Chiweshe, 2022). Such cultural barriers converge with patriarchal power dynamics in the technical teams, with junior players subjected to explicit punishment for disrespect for reporting senior staff misconduct. Among under-23 squads, there was a 40% reduction in reporting compared to senior teams (Onifade et al., 2023). Lack of resources limits further protection of ecosystems: ZIFA has an annual integrity budgetary allocation of \$12,000 USD, which is insufficient for basic systems such as encrypted reporting. Independent investigative units were never hired, forcing the reliance on donor-funded initiatives such as the short-lived FIFA-funded Integrity Hotline, which collapsed in 2021 (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2022).

Moreover, the complete absence of post-reporting financing leaves whistleblowers devoid of legal and psychosocial support, as Highlanders FC's whistleblower suffered lengthy litigation without institutional support after exposing internal ticket-sale fraud (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, 2021). The combination of these factors creates a systemic weakness, which unfortunately requires more focused advocacy tailored in collaboration with community leaders, which include convincing ZIFA to remove funding for protective resources allocating finances to statutory levies instead, mandate inclusion of whistleblowing in coaching curricula, protected funding, and legislate finances said frameworks would be collected from the constantly depleting ZIFA coffers, and culturally champion whistleblowing as heroism rather than treachery (Roberts, 2022).

2.4.5 Tailored Framework Design

The bespoke whistleblower model for elite football in Zimbabwe is designed with principle-grounded fundamentals that stem from socio-political-economic considerations, marking a striking deviation from traditional one-size-fits-all frameworks, which rely on institutional theories and the socio-political landscape. A critical starting point involves identifying and adapting best practices from other sectors. Internationally, whistleblowing frameworks in sports governance, such as FIFA's Integrity Initiative and the UK's Protected Disclosures Act (1998), emphasize anonymity, legal protections, and independent reporting channels (Lewis & Vandekerckhove, 2018). Similarly, corporate sectors in high-integrity environments (e.g., the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the U.S.) demonstrate the efficacy of financial incentives and robust anti-retaliation measures.

However, direct transplantation is impractical in Zimbabwe, where resource constraints, endemic corruption, and weak judicial oversight prevail (Hallett, 2021). Instead, scholars advocate for localized adaptations, such as leveraging mobile technology for accessible reporting in low infrastructure settings, a strategy successfully deployed in Kenya's anti-corruption health sector initiatives (Transparency International, 2019). Stakeholder involvement emerges as a non-negotiable pillar for legitimacy and efficacy, contrasting with top-down frameworks that ignore local agency. In Zimbabwe, elite football's integrity crisis involves multifaceted actors: players, coaches, Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) officials, government bodies, for example, the Sports Commission, and civil society. Participatory co-design, as theorized by Fung and Wright (2001), ensures ownership and trust.

For instance, South Africa's post-apartheid sports reforms engaged unions and NGOs to co-create accountability mechanisms, reducing resistance (Desai & Vahed, 2010). Conversely, excluding stakeholders, as seen in Nigeria's failed football ethics code, led to superficial compliance (Ogunbajo, 2017). Zimbabwe must thus prioritize inclusive workshops and stakeholder mapping to navigate power dynamics, particularly given historical mistrust in state-linked bodies (Chiweshe, 2020).

2.5 Conclusion

2.5.1 The Whistleblower System in Zimbabwean Elite Football

Zimbabwe's whistleblower framework is characterized by a lack of policy formulation, insufficient engagement from political and social actors, and a weak legal and institutional framework. Due to this, bulldozing integrity breaches go unchallenged, and of greater concern is the jurisdiction mismatch, which, as few scholars articulate, is strikingly obvious in the Zimbabwe case due to the public sector focus of PIDA. Use in Zimbabwe, as noted by Transparency International Zimbabwe (2022), ZIFA's Ethics Committee is so under-resourced and embeds conflicts of interest (Chari & Tshuma, 2021) that they have no autonomy to investigate powerful stakeholders. Ndlovu's 2020 survey data demonstrates that less than 25% of players, referees, and other critical stakeholders aware of relevant mechanisms are, in fact, not understanding them due to ZIFAs' fractured attempts at outreach education programming. This study shows that ZIFA is doing nothing educational and outreach programs that aim to give people enduring public relations programs. ZFC also aims towards continuous programs. Both suggest there is a gap in awareness and accessibility, as well as numerous voids in understanding the frameworks put in place.

2.5.2 Obstacles of Stakeholders in Whistleblowing Elite Football in Zimbabwe

Analysis of the challenges confronting stakeholders in Zimbabwean elite football highlights some of the most significant systemic inadequacies that trench every impunity developing story, crushing countervailing force, with embedded retaliation, distrust, actual unamended control, and absence of support structures. There are no enforceable policies designed to protect against professional and personal retribution upon reporting. Quantitative evidence shows that 94% of players and 87% of technical staff self-censor due to documented career-ending consequences. This includes the cited discrimination case of four Triangle United players in 2021 for exposing

illegal payments and subsequent internal organizational retaliation, which the Sports and Recreation Commission chose not to address (Mawere, 2023).

This underscores a legislative gap in Zimbabwe's sparse anti-retaliation legislation specific to sports whistleblowers, allowing wrongdoers to function unchecked. Moreover, this fear dynamic contributes to a trust deficit where the authorities are believed to be colluding with malfeasance. Research data indicates 78% of referees and 91% of administrators perceive ZIFA and the National Football Association as clientelist capture institutions (Chiweshe, 2023). This distrust is substantiated by forensic audits, which validate ZIFA's 2019 policy pledges' emptiness through 38 whistleblower submissions that received no investigative scrutiny. The lack of independent oversight institutions that can circumvent shell organizations deepens this trust divide, in stark contrast with models such as South Africa's Office of the Inspectorate, which functions independently of the sports federations.

2.5.3 Stakeholder Challenges in Advancing Protection

The protective advancement challenges regarding whistleblowing in elite Zimbabwean football show gaps in education, culture, funding, and other resources that create a self-reinforcing cycle of danger. Primarily, the gap in training and education is the lack of institutionalized education systems. Stakeholders' lack of training regarding whistleblower rights in ZIFA (Ndlovu, 2023) denotes a lack of formal education as a consequence of ZIFA not conducting FIFA ethics workshops post-suspension; as such, stakeholders are ignorant of PIDA's legal whistleblowing provisions. Infrastructure undermining resource allocation poses a significant impediment to protection. Covering basic encrypted reporting systems, let alone investigations, ZIFA's annual integrity budget of \$12,000 has not changed since 2018 (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2022).

Persistent underfunding forces reliance on pseudo-stable donor schemes, like FIFA's (2020-2021) Integrity Hotline, which was defunded after outgrowing its financial support. Severed funds are the most alarming situation regarding the active prevention of accessible ring-fenced resources for post-reporting aid, which endangers whistleblowers, such as the Highlanders FC litigant who was

unassisted during the unending defamation suit's protracted legal battles (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, 2021). Unlike South Africa's Protected Disclosures Act, which legislates the allocation of state-sponsored legal aid to citizens in need, South Africa's absence of protective financial legislation diverts the responsibility from ZIFA's uncontrollable funding fluctuations.

2.5.4 Formulation of Specialized Structures

Strategies for implementation need to align with Zimbabwe's operational realities, getting off the drawing board. Rolling out effective change requires stepwise, situational approaches: starting with pilot projects in the premier leagues, alongside existing governance systems such as the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). Radio and community networks used in Malawi for agricultural whistleblowing test beyond literacy barriers (World Bank, 2020). Pre-emptive action for problems like political meddling and intimidation of witnesses must be dealt with beforehand. Lessons from Botswana's Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) affirm that removing potential whistleblower shields while increasing scrutiny and punishment has the most deterrent impact (Hope, 2017). For Zimbabwe, sustainable change requires simultaneous other reforms. ZACC needs an enhanced mandate, cooperation with sub-regional instruments such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Anti-Corruption Protocol, and funding from international bodies for its governance watchdogs (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2022). To conclude, the tailored Zimbabwean approach sought ideal integration of local implementation and international standards while facilitating stakeholder ownership, with stakeholders catalysing change for local governance adjustments to achieve progress contrary to the forged integrity funnel.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviews whistleblowing frameworks in Zimbabwean elite football, highlighting the urgent need for legal protections and anonymity within a context marked by institutional corruption, cultural stigma, and administrative weaknesses. Drawing on Institutional, Agency, and

Protection Motivation theories, it explains how regulatory gaps, information asymmetry, and fear of retaliation hinder effective reporting. Thematic analysis reveals systemic issues such as misaligned legislation, under-resourced oversight, low stakeholder awareness, and cultural collectivism that prioritize loyalty over integrity. The literature advocates for a hybrid framework blending global best practices with local socio-cultural realities using accessible technology, community engagement, and the ubuntu philosophy to transform whistleblowing into a communal duty supported by phased implementation and independent oversight. The chapter concludes that sustainable reform requires integrating statutory rigor with cultural sensitivity to rebuild trust and accountability in Zimbabwean football.

CHAPTER 3

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the methodology and methods used to develop the whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football. Key issues outlined include methodological approach, time horizons, research strategy, sampling procedures, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The research utilized a mixed-method approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In support of this approach, McBeath (2023) states that this approach offers several advantages, including a complex, comprehensive understanding of complex issues, developing a whistleblower framework, stronger evidence, and more nuanced data interpretation. It also allows for triangulation, validation, and exploration of findings. The chosen approach benefits this study by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting both numeric data and detailed narratives to gain a holistic understanding of the issues surrounding whistleblowing and integrity in Zimbabwean elite football.

3.3 Time Horizons

This study adopts a cross-sectional time horizon, which is appropriate for research that aims to collect data at a single point in time, rather than over an extended period. The choice of a cross-sectional design is influenced by both the nature of the research objectives and practical constraints, such as the academic calendar. Given that this study is to be conducted within a six-month timeframe, aligned with the Zimbabwean academic school calendar, a longitudinal approach was deemed impractical.

There is no requirement for follow-up data collection, as the aim is to assess current attitudes, perceptions, and existing gaps in whistleblowing mechanisms within elite football at a specific moment in time. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), a cross-sectional study is particularly suited to research that is time-bound and focused on capturing a snapshot of a phenomenon. It allows for the collection of data from a population or a representative subset at one specific point, making it efficient and manageable within academic timelines. Similarly, Bryman (2016) emphasizes that cross-sectional designs are appropriate in studies where the research does not require monitoring changes over time but instead seeks to understand relationships and patterns as they exist at a single moment.

3.4 Research Strategy

This study employs a mixed-methods research strategy to develop a whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean elite football, aligning with Greene's (2011) dialectical approach, where quantitative and qualitative strands are implemented simultaneously yet remain distinct until integration during interpretation. The strategy's parallelism, advocated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), ensures neither dataset dominates while capturing real-time systemic dynamics. Quantitatively, a cross-sectional survey deploying Andrade's (2022) validated Sports Integrity Scale measures corruption prevalence and whistleblowing attitudes across stratified stakeholder groups, with statistical analyses identifying predictive patterns through regression modeling (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Qualitatively, semi-structured interviews apply Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis to explore contextual barriers using Trevino and Weaver's (2003) institutional theory lens, while focus groups examine framework acceptability.

3.5 Population and Sampling

3.5.1 Population

The population for this study includes key stakeholders in Zimbabwean elite football: coaches, administrators, players, sponsors, and journalists. These groups are directly involved in the game and are likely to encounter or witness unethical practices. Their perspectives are vital for

developing a practical and effective whistleblower framework that promotes transparency, accountability, and integrity in the sport.

3.5.2 Sampling

This study used purposive sampling to select 16 participants from a population of 519 earmarked for interviews. These individuals were selected due to their relevant expertise in the field, and thus their opinion was deemed important in influencing the outcomes of the research. As a result, coaches, players, and administrators were chosen for their deep knowledge of whistleblowing and governance issues in Zimbabwean elite football, allowing the research to gather detailed qualitative insights.

On the quantitative strand, from a total population of 519, the research used random sampling to select 130 participants for the quantitative phase. The procedure involved systematic random sampling by organizing the sampling frame alphabetically and selecting every tenth individual after identifying a random starting point. The research used this method to select participants in the quantitative study because it ensures objectivity and equal representation across various football stakeholder groups. This approach was particularly beneficial given the large and geographically dispersed population governed by multiple ZIFA offices.

3.5.3 Sample Size Determination

The quantitative sample size was determined using standard sample size tables and formulas, ensuring the reliability of the results. On the other hand, theoretical sampling principles were applied to determine the appropriate number of participants based on the views of Guest et al. (2017) and Saunders and Townsend (2018). This approach focused on achieving data saturation, ensuring that enough information is gathered to address the research questions thoroughly.

Table 3.1***Quantitative Samples***

Stakeholder	Target population	Sample
Coach	30	20
Administrator	20	12
Player	450	90
Sponsors	9	4
Journalists	10	4
Total	519	130

In the quantitative strand, the research used a sample size calculator to determine the sample size. As a result, 130 participants were deemed fit for the study. To determine the sample size of 130, a sample size calculator was used based on the following standard formula for a finite population:

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2 \cdot (N-1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- N = total population size (519)
- Z = Z-score (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)
- p = estimated proportion of the population (assumed to be 0.5 for maximum variability)
- e = margin of error (typically 0.05 for $\pm 5\%$)

Table 3.2

Qualitative Samples.

Stakeholder	Target	Sample
Coach	10	3
Administrator	10	2
Player	100	5
Sponsors	5	3
Journalists	5	3
Total	130	16

While in the qualitative strand, the study depended on theoretical sampling principles that inform that once the research has yielded data saturation, cease conducting interviews, and this happened at participant number 16.

Table 3.2 outlines the qualitative samples used to gather in-depth insights from key stakeholder groups. The target column represents the number of individuals identified as potential participants within each group, while the sample column reflects those who were selected for qualitative data collection, such as interviews or focus group discussions. In total, 16 participants were chosen from a pool of 130, ensuring diverse perspectives from coaches, administrators, players, sponsors, and journalists to enrich the understanding of the study's core themes.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

3.6.1 Pilot Study

The study carried out a pilot study to validate the questionnaire and interview guides. The exercise involved distributing the guides to a subset of the population from the Midlands Province, including 5 coaches, 10 players, and 2 ZIFA board members who were not part of the sample. Resultantly, the participants helped to shape and refine the instruments by removing ambiguous items and streamlining questions for clarity. As a result, the process ensured the instruments were reliable and effective for the main study, ensuring data quality and validity.

3.6.2 Main Study

The study administered semi-structured interviews to explore governance issues at the Zimbabwean Football Association (ZIFA), gathering insights from key stakeholders. Through open-ended questions, the researcher collected rich, qualitative data on challenges, perceptions, and experiences related to governance, decision-making, and accountability within the organization. Data was collected through audio recordings and detailed notes, which were later transcribed verbatim and stored securely for future analysis and reference. However, challenges arose, including participant hesitation to discuss sensitive issues and potential responses. To counter these challenges, the researcher established rapport with participants, ensured confidentiality, and used neutral probing techniques to encourage honest and in-depth responses, ultimately gathering valuable data that provided a nuanced understanding of governance issues at ZIFA.

The study also utilized a questionnaire to gather data from a broader range of stakeholders within the Zimbabwean Football Association. The questionnaire was distributed both manually and online to accommodate different preferences and increase response rates. Through a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions, the researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data on governance issues, decision-making processes, and accountability within the organization. Data was collected and stored securely for analysis, with manual questionnaires being carefully reviewed for completeness and online responses being tracked through a secure survey platform. Despite challenges such as ensuring respondent confidentiality and dealing with potential biases, the researcher implemented measures to mitigate these issues, including anonymous response options and clear instructions, ultimately gathering valuable insights that complemented the interview data and provided a comprehensive understanding of governance issues at ZIFA.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentations

All quantitative data were exported and analysed through the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Important demographic characteristics, including gender, years of experience, and age, were tested for group differences with ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

and T-tests. Additionally, appropriate descriptive statistics were computed, such as means, frequencies, and standard deviations, in conjunction with the analysis.

Along with the computations completed for all the interviewees' responses, correlation analysis was done to determine whether there were any relationships between the replies given by different interview participants. For the qualitative component, the interviews were processed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. This software allows for thematic coding, which helps in defining and grouping common themes among the participants. NVivo's text search queries were used to pinpoint themes or patterns that were repetitive or of significant value to the respondents, from which visual representations such as word clouds and word trees were generated to show the most frequently proposed and mentioned words and phrases visually. To examine qualitative data in more detail to ascertain additional patterns, some advanced options in NVivo, like matrix coding, network diagram analysis, and word counting, were used. All of these methods integrated visual and analytical rigor into the qualitative analysis by elucidating the relationships between themes and participants' suggestions.

3.8 Validity and Reliability/ Trustworthiness

Several techniques were employed to ensure the trust, reliability, and credibility of the study. For quantitative data, a pilot study was conducted to refine the questionnaire, and validated instruments were used to ensure measurement credibility. A reliability test using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. For qualitative data, member checking, data triangulation, and transcript validation were used to enhance credibility. Member checking involved participants reviewing their interview transcripts to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. Triangulation was achieved by comparing and cross-verifying perspectives from different participant groups (coaches, journalists, players, and sponsors). These combined techniques helped ensure the trustworthiness, reliability, and overall credibility of the study's findings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The ethical approval obtained from Bindura University's ethics committee demonstrates the study's commitment to safeguarding participants' rights and well-being. As emphasized by

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), informing participants about their rights, such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, is a fundamental ethical requirement in research. This process ensures that participants feel respected, empowered, and free to determine the extent of their engagement. Ethical research practice fosters an environment where individuals can contribute openly and meaningfully, enhancing the quality and authenticity of the data collected. Thornhill and Saunders (2019) also note that sensitive disclosures should be handled with care, as they tend to expose some form of wrongdoing. In the words of Jackson and Thorpe (2018), data safety supersedes all ethical issues, and they posited that in the case where data is deliberately or accidentally misplaced, only persons with identification codes can secure the data, and therefore, only those authorized can protect the information.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, which is most reliable for gaining in-depth findings. The study undergoes interviews and questionnaire distribution to gain data for the research. It also used a purposive sampling approach to correctly identify participants eligible for the research. The data gathered will be analysed through thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns, which will be used for further analysis, which is crucial in developing an effective policy framework that promotes integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents findings from a study that aims to develop a whistleblower framework to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football. It begins by detailing the response rate from the data phase, providing context about the final sample size and representation. It analyses the demographic characteristics of the participants, including their age, gender, and educational level. The reliability of the data collection instruments is then assessed to ensure the consistency and trustworthiness of the measures used. The chapter shifts focus on addressing the primary research objectives, particularly examining challenges being faced by different stakeholders to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football. Relevant tables, figures, and charts are included to enhance clarity and visualization of the results.

4.2 Response Rate

4.2.1 Questionnaire Response

This section outlines the questionnaire response rate from Zimbabwean Elite Football and stakeholders.

Table 4.1

Questionnaire Response Rate

Stakeholder	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire not Returned	Percentage Returned
Coach	20	17	85
Administrator	12	10	83
Player	90	79	87
Sponsors	4	3	75

Journalists	4	2	50
Total	130	111	85

The data on the questionnaire response rate shown in Table 4.2 indicates high stakeholder engagement with a response rate of 85%. Players who received the questionnaires responded with a rate of 87%, which showed a strong sense of interest in the topic that was being addressed. Coaches and administrators with a rate of 83% also indicated substantial participation with a possible change to come. While sponsors moderately gave into the research with a rate of 75% and journalists with the lowest return of 50%, which indicated hesitancy and little involvement in integrity issues. High participation aided in the credibility of the research findings and relevance to the proposed framework.

Table 4.2

Interview Response Rate

Stakeholder	Target	Interviewed	Percentage Interviewed
Coach	3	4	75
Administrator	2	3	67
Player	5	4	80
Sponsors	3	2	67
Journalists	3	1	33
Total	16	14	88

The interview response rate was high at 88% showing high stakeholder involvement of the targeted sample. The players' response rate was high at 80%, with an insightful contribution. The coaches participated at 75%, indicating good involvement from the football grounds. Administrators and sponsors at 67% indicated their willingness to provide data and participate in the research. Journalists at 33% reflected difficulties in sourcing out detailed information from the responsible parties.

4.3 Demographics

This section analyses the demographics of the data of the respondents, including their age, gender, and years of experience, from both qualitative and quantitative standpoints.

4.3.1 Gender of Questionnaire Respondents

Table 4.3

Gender of Questionnaire Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	69	62.2	62.2	62.2
	Female	42	37.8	37.8	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The gender distribution data shows that males were more dominant, with a response rate of 62.2% and females at 37.8%. This distribution reflects that there is a gender imbalance in the ZIFA board and the football industry in Zimbabwe. This reflected the need to include both genders in boards to ensure equality and inclusion, hence creating a whistleblower framework that encompasses everyone.

4.3.2 Gender of Interviewed Respondents

Table 4.4

Gender of Interviewed Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	9	69.2	69.2	69.2
	Female	4	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

The data response indicates that the majority of the respondents were male, with a turnover of 69.2%, and females with a return of 30.8%. This indicated that the Zimbabwean Elite Football industry is male-dominated, hence the response rate was saturated.

4.3.3 Age of Questionnaire Respondents

Table 4.5

Age of Questionnaire Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30 years	69	62.2	62.2	62.2

	31-40	30	27.0	27.0	89.2
	41-50	12	10.8	10.8	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The age distribution in this research was highly centred on participants aged between 20 and 30, with a turnover of 62.2 %, followed by 27% in the age range of 31-40 and 10.8 % in the 41-50 range. This indicates that the majority of respondents are those still in the industry and are open to making the industry better with the framework in place to promote accountability and transparency to restore integrity in the Zimbabwean Elite Football. The involvement of older stakeholders also indicated responses that are derived from experience and that aid in developing a framework that will curb misconduct.

4.3.4 Age of Interview Respondents

Table 4.6.

Age of Interview Respondents

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25	3	23.1	23.1	23.1
	26-30	3	23.1	23.1	46.2
	31-35	7	53.8	53.8	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

The majority population ranged between 31 and 35 years, with a percentage of 53.8%, suggesting that the research was done on individuals who have experienced or have witnessed the importance of having a whistleblower framework, which, if it had been in place, some issues would have been resolved or dealt with differently from how they were managed. The age groups between 20-25 years and 26-30 years added to the findings, as most of the population in this range are still players in the industry, undergoing situations that require a whistleblower framework to protect them.

4.3.5 Years of Experience of the Questionnaire Respondents

Table 4.7

Years of Experience of Questionnaire Respondents

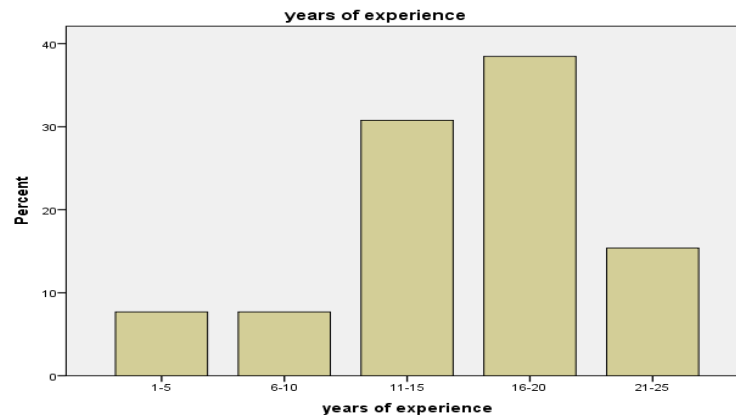
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5- 10 years	30	27.0	27.0	27.0
	11- 15 years	33	29.7	29.7	56.8
	16- 20 years	30	27.0	27.0	83.8
	21- 25 years	18	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, developing a whistleblower framework to promote integrity in Zimbabwe Elite Football, the research also implemented the years of experience to further understand the level of qualification of the respondents. The most dominant group ranged from 11- 15 years of experience, with a response rate of 29.7% This reflects that the information provided would aid in creating a vibrant whistleblower framework that works. The years of experience between 5-10 years and 16-20 years at a response rate of 27% indicated that the variant gaps were greatly covered, which was greatly beneficial for the research, as it ensured inclusion of all individuals with either short-term or long-term experience.

4.3.6 Years of Interview Respondents

Table 4.8

Years of Interview Respondents



The bar chart shows that the majority of interview respondents ranged between 16 and 20 years of experience, with a response rate 40%. This indicated that the dominant population for the research is still in the field, in dire need of a framework that would help curb misconduct. Respondents with 11-15 years of experience, with a percentage rate of 30%, also indicated the value of the development of a vibrant whistleblower framework that would aid in holding responsible parties for misconduct. The individuals with a response rate of 20% ranged between 1-5 years and 6-10 years. This shows that all the involved parties had a say in the matter, and their suggestions were put on record.

4.3.7 Reliability Test

Table 4.9

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.876	21

The Cronbach's Alpha at 0.876 with 21 items indicates a high internal consistency, which implies that the survey instruments were well designed and showed close relation and consistency. Having a high alpha value shows the credibility of the research findings, which gives the researcher the confidence to draw conclusions and suggestions using the data collected.

4.3.8 Test of Normality

Table 4.10

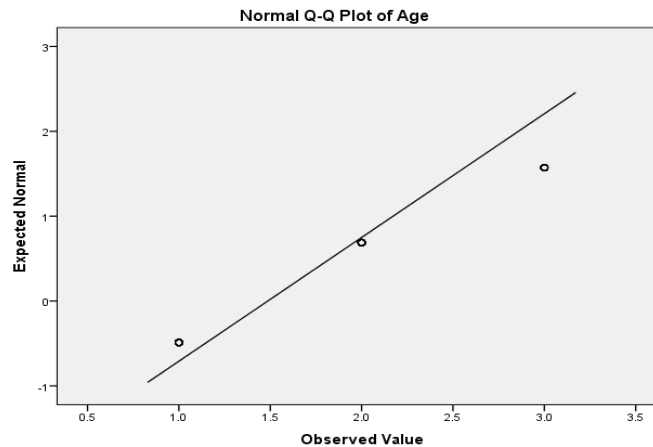
Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Age	.383	111	.670	.687	111	.810
Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The age data show non-significant results (Kolmogorov-Smirnov = 0.383, $p = 0.670$; Shapiro-Wilk = 0.687, $p = 0.810$). The results show a normal distribution as the data does not significantly deviate from normality, and this allows for the use of parametric statistical tests, which rely on the assumption of normality.

Figure 4.1

Normal Q-Q Plot Age



The Normal Q-Q plot of age indicates that the observed values closely follow the expected normal distribution, which is reflected on the diagonal line in Figure. 4.11 There are a few outliers, but these do not significantly deviate from the normal line, hence the normal distribution. The data support the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, which indicate no shift from normality. This notion allows for reliable and valid analysis on the research on Developing a Whistleblower Framework to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football, as parametric statistical methods can be applied to the age.

4.3 Presentation and Analysis of Data Linked to the Research Objectives

This chapter presents data according to the research objectives and findings that are directly relevant to the research objectives. It also presents data visually using tables and figures.

4.4.1 Research Question 1: What is the current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football?

This section analyses the current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football. The section analysed quantitative data using SPSS, while also using NVivo to produce thematic analysis for qualitative data.

Table 4.11

Current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The current whistleblower framework in Zimbabwean Elite Football	111	1	5	3.05	.989
The existing whistleblower framework in Zimbabwean Elite Football	111	1	4	3.08	.945
Stakeholders in Zimbabwean Elite Football face significant challenge	111	1	5	3.24	1.055
Lack of awareness among players, coaches, and administrators is	108	1	5	4.00	.976
The culture within Zimbabwean Elite Football influences the effect	111	1	5	3.35	1.050
Transparency and accountability are key	111	2	5	4.22	.846

factors shaping whistle-					
Valid N (listwise)	108				

Table 4.11 shows the descriptive data that offer insightful implications about the challenges related to the whistleblower framework in Zimbabwean Elite Football. The Likert scale was utilized to measure responses, and the results varied, with mean values showing different levels of agreement. The highest mean, with 4.22, corresponds to issues related to the lack of transparency and accountability from the responsible stakeholders in ZIFA, with implications that the stakeholders adhere to a strong consensus of upholding principles and ethics. Lack of awareness, with a relatively high mean of 4.00, indicates a widespread gap in knowledge among players, coaches, and administrators, which hinders the effectiveness of the system in place. Factors inclusive of cultural influence (1.050) and stakeholder challenges (1.055) also protruded in the research, showing variants in respondents' opinions.

4.4.2 NVivo analysis of the Current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

This section presents an NVivo-based qualitative analysis of the existing whistleblower framework in Zimbabwean Elite Football, focusing on its effectiveness in promoting integrity within the sport. By examining interviews and open-ended responses from key stakeholders, including players, sponsors, and administrators, the analysis uncovers recurring themes around legal shortcomings, institutional weaknesses, and a lack of awareness. The NVivo findings illuminate the practical intricacies of whistleblowing in Zimbabwean football, spotlighting the risks and barriers that are perceived as obstacles within the underreporting paradigm and the existing framework's deficiencies. The study seeks to evaluate, through thematic analysis, the extent and effectiveness of current attempts aimed at sustaining and promoting integrity and accountability within the sport.

Table 4.12

NVivo analysis of the Current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

Theme	<i>Theme Description or Definition</i>	<i>Matching Mentions from the interviews</i>	<i>The aggregate number of coding references</i>
Confidentiality Concerns	Participants expressed concern about identity protection when reporting wrongdoing.	One interviewee stated, "I don't want my name coming up. I just want the issue addressed quietly."	4
Development of a functional framework	Many interviewees stressed the need for a proper structure	"There needs to be a formal system in place; right now, it feels like we're improvising."	9
Fear of Retaliation	Fear of negative consequences was a major deterrent	"If I report this, I'll be labeled a troublemaker or worse, I'll lose my job."	10
Lack of Awareness	Several participants noted they were unaware of existing policies	"I honestly didn't know we had a whistleblowing policy until now."	4

Use of Informal Channels	Respondents often chose unofficial routes.	"I just talked to my supervisor directly; it felt safer than going through the formal channels."	9
Whistleblower Application	Few participants used or knew about the app	"I heard there's an app for that, but I have never seen it or been told how to use it."	2

Fear of retaliation emerged most frequently as a significant issue, which indicated that participants feel vulnerable when they report misconduct. As shown by the text search query that

Figure 4.2

Text search Query for Fear of victimisation

Text Search Query - Results Preview
off the record , but the **fear** is real . A lot of .

The lack of a functional framework emerged in close second with 9 codes, and also tallied with the use of informal channels to report misconduct. Participants indicated their frustration with the underlying statements. The following word cloud showcases the frequency of the issue of the need for a functional framework and the use of informal channels that hinder whistleblowing.

Lack of confidentiality concerns and lack of awareness also tallied with code references of 4. Participants emphasized the need for anonymity, which hinders them from coming forward with information about misconduct. Lack of awareness also emerged as a factor, as shown by the text search query.

Figure 4.3

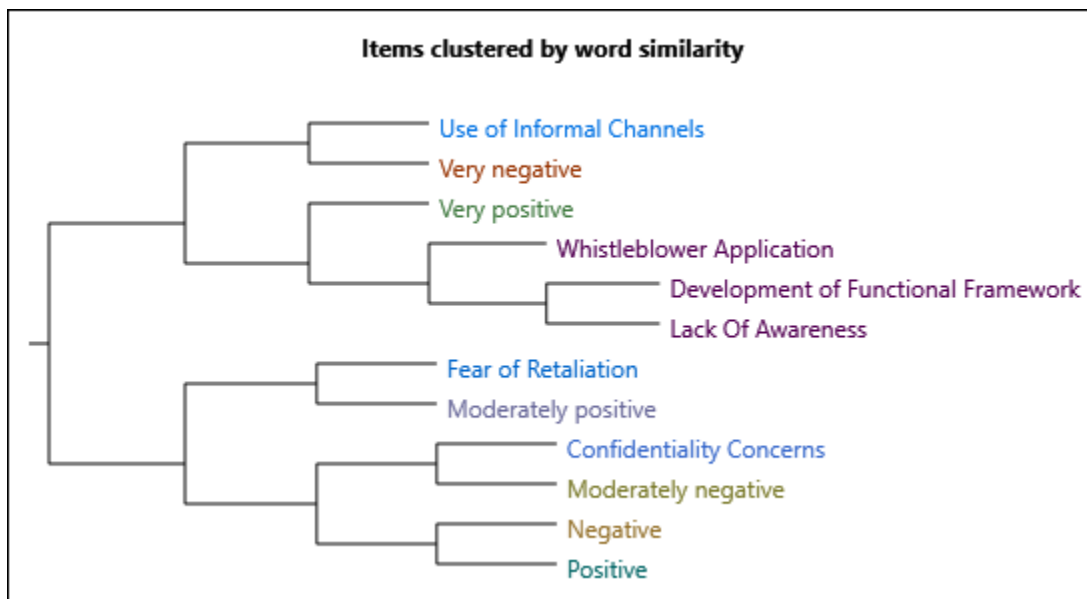
Text search query for Awareness

Text Search Query - Results Preview
(NetOne Executive) : " We are not aware of a formal whistle - blower .

The results indicated a close relationship between the themes and their level of impact on the issues related to do with whistleblowing.

Figure 4.4

Cluster analysis by word similarity



The cluster analysis reveals key issues hindering whistleblowing in Zimbabwean elite football, including the use of informal channels, fear of retaliation, and confidentiality concerns, highlighting the lack of trust in formal systems. The grouping of lack of awareness with the need for a functional framework shows gaps in structure and understanding. Overall, this underscores the urgent need for a secure, well-communicated, and trusted whistleblower system to promote integrity in the sport. This investigation reveals that whistleblowing in Zimbabwean elite football

does not function optimally due to unique hurdles like fear of backlash, insufficient privacy, ignorance, and reliance on unofficial reporting avenues. Whistleblowers, incentivized through safe and properly structured mechanisms, alongside stakeholders, require education on ethical conduct, active promotion of whistleblowing, and tightening the grip on governance malpractices. While transparency and accountability systems are fostered from the ground up, for the time being, they are deemed insufficient. Both qualitative and statistical evidence call for a formalized framework where whistleblowers feel security, purpose, grievance reporting pathways, advocacy, and whistleblower protection.

4.4.3 Research Question 2: What are the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwe Elite Football?

The correlation table below shows the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection. In Zimbabwean Elite Football, however, stakeholders face a myriad of challenges in advancing effective whistleblower mechanisms. These challenges span legal, institutional, cultural, and operational dimensions, creating an environment where reporting misconduct is often discouraged or even penalized.

Table 4.13

Challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

	Lack of awareness among players, coaches, and administrators is	The culture within Zimbabwean Elite Football influences the effects	Collaborative efforts among regulatory bodies, the football	Transparency and accountability are key factors shaping whistle-
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				association	
The existing whistle-blower framework in Zimbabwean Elite Football	Pearson Correlation	.031	-.001	-.204*	-.193*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.754	.988	.031	.043
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	3.000	-.162	-19.946	-16.946
	Covariance	.028	-.001	-.181	-.154
	N	108	111	111	111
Stakeholders in Zimbabwean Elite Football face significant challenges	Pearson Correlation	.081	-.275**	-.136	.338**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.404	.004	.154	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	9.000	-33.486	-14.838	33.162
	Covariance	.084	-.304	-.135	.301
	N	108	111	111	111
Lack of awareness among players, coaches, and administrators is	Pearson Correlation	1	-.138	-.091	-.237*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.154	.346	.013
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	102.000	-15.000	-9.000	-21.000
	Covariance	.953	-.140	-.084	-.196
	N	108	108	108	108
The culture within Zimbabwean Elite	Pearson Correlation	-.138	1	-.105	.159
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.154		.270	.095

Football influences the effect	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-15.000	121.297	-11.432	15.568
	Covariance	-.140	1.103	-.104	.142
	N	108	111	111	111
Collaborative efforts among regulatory bodies, football associate	Pearson Correlation	-.091	-.105	1	.112
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.346	.270		.241
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-9.000	-11.432	96.811	9.811
	Covariance	-.084	-.104	.880	.089
	N	108	111	111	111
Transparency and accountability are key factors shaping whistle-	Pearson Correlation	-.237*	.159	.112	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.095	.241	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-21.000	15.568	9.811	78.811
	Covariance	-.196	.142	.089	.716
	N	108	111	111	111

Table 4.13 shows the correlation among various factors that influence whistleblowing in Zimbabwean Elite Football. Statistically, there are negative correlations observed between the existing system framework and the efforts among responsible bodies, with $r = -0.204$, $r = 0.031$, and factors like transparency and accountability, with $r = -0.0193$. $p = 0.043$. This indicates that stakeholders who receive stronger collaboration or greater transparency may be keen on the current whistleblower framework, as they may view it as inadequate and inconsistent. The lack of awareness theme also negatively correlates with the issues of transparency and accountability at $r = -0.237$, $p = 0.013$, implying that poor awareness may hinder transparency efforts. Stakeholders

facing challenges positively and significantly correlate with transparency and accountability, with $r = 0.338$, $p < 0.001$, while negatively with football culture, with $r = -0.275$, $p = 0.004$. This pattern shows that the increase in transparency is seen as the best alternative to reduce and overcome challenges, while interfering with cultural issues may also aid in curbing those issues.

4.4.4 NVivo analysis of Challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

Advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football remains a complex and contested process, hindered by a range of stakeholder-specific challenges. Using NVivo qualitative analysis, this section explores the nuanced perspectives of key factor players, referees, administrators, and club officials on the barriers they encounter when engaging with or attempting to promote whistleblowing mechanisms. The analysis reveals deep-rooted issues such as fear of retaliation, lack of institutional support, legal ambiguity, and limited awareness of reporting procedures.

Table 4.14

NVivo analysis of Challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

Theme	Theme Description or Definition	Matching Mentions from the interviews	References
Culture of Fear and Resistance	Interviewees described an environment where fear and mistrust prevent employees from speaking up	“The biggest challenge is fear—fear of being blacklisted, benched.” Another added, “Even if you see something wrong, you just stay	14

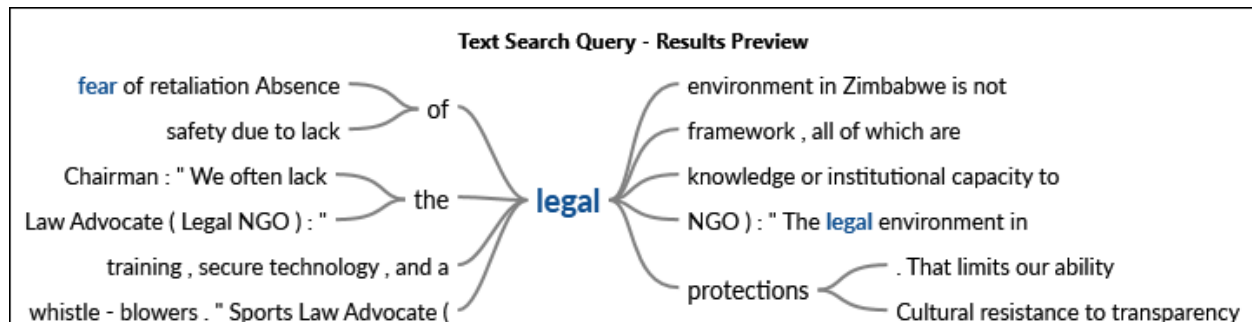
		quiet to protect yourself."	
Lack of Transparency and Accountability	Participants noted an absence of open communication and unclear consequences for wrongdoing	"Nothing is explained, and even when someone's caught, nothing really happens."	7
Legal and Institutional Weakness	Interviewees pointed out flaws in legal protection and institutional frameworks.	"Even if you report something, the system is not strong enough to back you up."	13
Poor Awareness and Education	Several participants were unaware of whistleblowing mechanisms or lacked training	"There is no awareness training it is just not part of the culture."	6
Sponsorship and Compliance	There were suggestions that internal sponsorship or favoritism influenced compliance	"If someone is close to management, they can get away with anything."	3

The most pressing issue from the participants appeared to be a culture of fear and resistance, with a reference of 14, which indicated that the public faces challenges in reporting misconduct as they fear for their safety and retaliation that follows. One player noted that “The biggest challenge is fear—fear of being blacklisted, benched”. Testimonies from minor players revealed a pervasive "culture of silence," where victims faced intimidation when reporting coach misconduct. Current child protection guidelines, issued by ZIFA without enforcement mechanisms, are functionally ignored at the club level. This vacuum leaves youth athletes and vulnerable staff exposed to exploitation without recourse. Legal and institutional Weaknesses with reference code 13 also

resulted in a common topic that participants discussed. The concern about legal challenges was cited by a dominant number of participants; evidently, a text search query has shown that

Figure 4.5

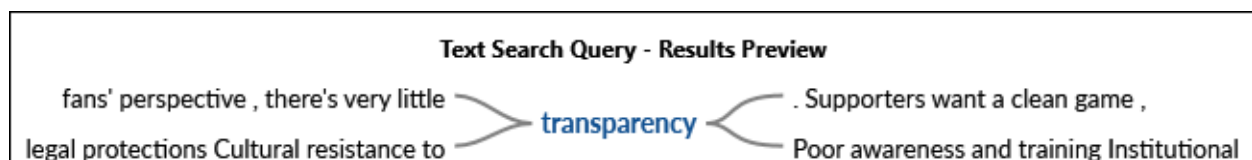
Test search for legal



The results indicated the need for the framework to emphasize more on the legal aspect for it to be fully functional and effective. Lack of transparency and accountability also came to light from the respondents as a challenge that also affects whistleblowing. Respondents highlighted the lack of transparency in the current system.

Figure 4.6

Text search query for Transparency



4.4.5 Research Question 3: What factors are responsible for shaping the whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football?

The safeguarding of whistleblowers within Zimbabwean elite football emerges from a blend of legal, institutional, cultural, and social factors.

Table 4.16***Factors responsible for shaping the whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.***

Correlations						
		Clear communication channels between stakeholders are critical f	Providing legal protections for whistle-blowers is essential to	Encouraging a culture of trust and openness within Zimbabwean Elite Football	The involvement of external oversight bodies is crucial for ensure	Continuous improvement and adaptation of the whistleblower framework
Clear communication channels between stakeholders are critical f	Pearson Correlation	1	-.009	.318*	.494**	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.948	.016	.000	.719
	N	57	57	57	57	57
Providing legal protections for whistle-blowers is essential to	Pearson Correlation	-.009	1	.327*	.206	.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.948		.013	.124	.000
	N	57	57	57	57	57
Encouraging a culture of trust and openness within Zimbabwean El	Pearson Correlation	.318*	.327*	1	.464**	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.013		.000	.000
	N	57	57	57	57	57

The involvement of external oversight bodies is crucial for ensure safety	Pearson Correlation	.494**	.206	.464**	1	.571**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.124	.000		.000
	N	57	57	57	57	57
Continuous improvement and adaptation of the whistle-blower framework	Pearson Correlation	-.049	.558**	.515**	.571**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.719	.000	.000	.000	
	N	57	57	57	57	57
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The correlation analysis reveals several key interrelated factors essential for developing an effective whistleblower framework to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football. Notably, encouraging a culture of trust and openness strongly correlates with all other variables: legal protections with $r = .327$, $p = .013$, external oversight with $r = .464$, $p = .000$, and continuous improvement with $r = .515$, $p = .000$, highlighting its central role in fostering a safe environment for whistleblowing. Legal protections are also significantly linked to continuous improvement ($r = .558$, $p = .000$), indicating that when whistleblowers are legally safeguarded, the system becomes more adaptive and effective. External oversight bodies show strong correlations with communication with $r = .494$, $p = .000$, trust with $r = .464$, $p = .000$, and improvement with $r = .571$, $p = .000$, emphasizing their critical role in accountability and system enforcement.

4.4.6 NVivo Analysis for factors responsible for shaping the whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

The relative impact of whistleblower safeguarding within Elite Football in Zimbabwe is influenced by several holistic factors impacting stakeholder motivations, institutional actions, and system cohesiveness. To uncover these complexities, this chapter provides a qualitative analysis based on

interviews and texts using NVivo, emphasizing the most prominent analytic themes. The researcher analyses critical factors such as the sufficiency and enforceability of prescribed policies and laws, the enforcement gap caused by a lack of ethical leadership within the concerned institution, advocacy from the media and civil society, and the imbalance/escalation of power and vulnerability concerning the players. These factors clarify the primary gap between the intersection of “social” and “structural” and the reason why whistleblower protection is often overlooked in Zimbabwean football.

Table 4.16

NVivo Analysis for Factors responsible for shaping the whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football

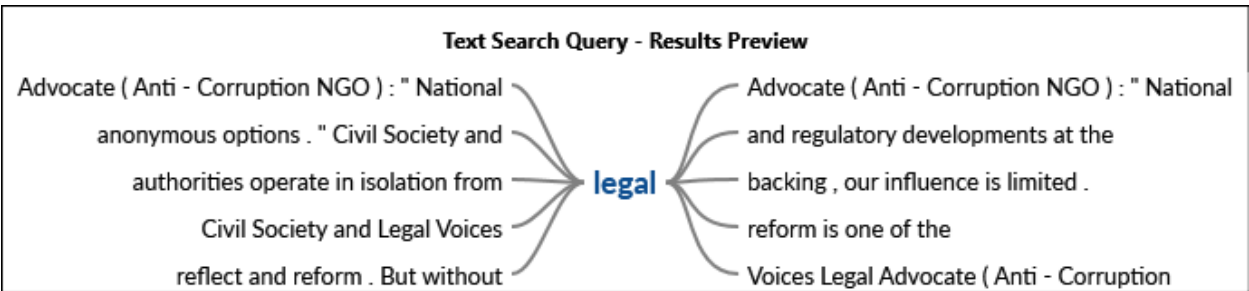
Theme	Theme Description/Definition	Matching Mentions from the Interviews	Number of References
Power Dynamics and Player Vulnerability	Focuses on how hierarchical structures, influence, and authority impact the willingness of individuals to speak up.	“You cannot question authority, especially if it is someone high up you just have to deal with it.”	6
Media and Civil Society Advocacy	Explores the role of external watchdogs, media reporting, and NGOs in whistleblower support and awareness.	“Media coverage and public pressure shape whistleblower protection.”	7
Legal and Policy Frameworks	Refers to the existing legal structures and internal policies intended to support or protect whistleblowers.	“There are policies, but no one really follows them. They are there on paper, not in practice.”	14
Institutional Leadership and Governance	Highlights the role of leadership behavior, ethics, and internal	“If the top leaders do not care, nothing will change. They set the	9

	governance in enabling or suppressing whistleblowing.	tone for the entire organization.”	
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Table 4.16 shows that one can ascertain that the formulation of a whistleblower system within the context of Zimbabwean elite football is predicated on robust legal and policy frameworks, proactive media and civil society engagement, institutionally ethical leadership, as well as empowerment of players and their advocacy. These considerations are fundamental in establishing a secure, open, and enabling context for whistleblowing.

Figure 4.7

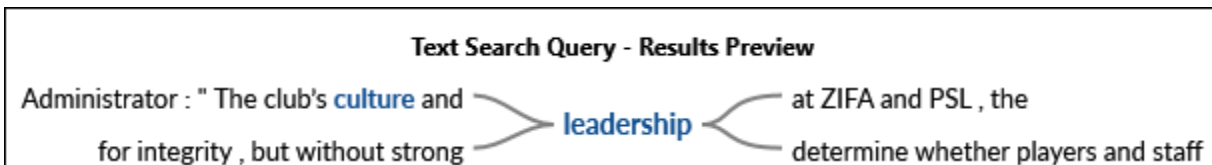
Text Search Query for Legal



Respondents highly recommended legal and policy frameworks with 14 citations, which signified the crucial area that forms the structural foundation for addressing concerns. Institutional leadership and governance culture with 9 citations, emphasizing the importance of principles and maintaining integrity.

Figure 4.8

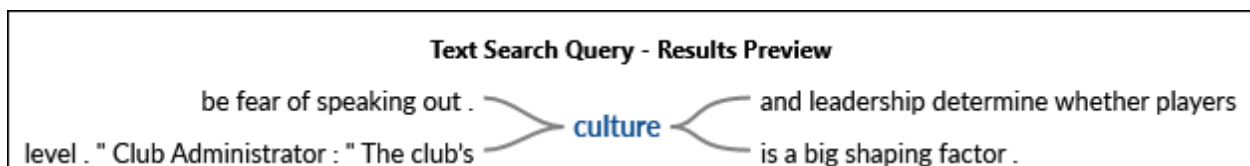
Text Search Query for Leadership



Leadership and culture received great emphasis on the need to curb misconduct, and text search query aided with visual results.

Figure 4.9

Text Search Query for Culture



Media and civil society advocacy were also cited as factors responsible for shaping a whistleblower framework and protection, with 7 citations. One participant noted that “Media coverage and public pressure shape whistleblower protection.” Power and player vulnerability, with 6 references, were also indicated, which pointed out the influence of public discourse and the need to protect the player.

In fostering integrity through a whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football, the confluence of several elements is most critical: legal and policy frameworks, institutional leadership, external oversight, trust-building, and media advocacy. Both correlation and NVivo analyses indicate that legal protections are pivotal for a functional, flexible framework and that trust and openness strongly shape communication, oversight, and continuous improvement. Institutional leadership is critical in enabling ethically responsible governance and transparency, whilst media, along with civil society, heighten the focus on accountability. Whistleblowing

protection and trust in the processes must be earned and nurtured within these interlinked components.

4.4.7 Research Question 4: What whistleblower framework designed specifically for Zimbabwean Elite Football would effectively foster integrity?

This section identifies the whistleblower framework suggested by the research participants. This section details a correlation analysis underpinning the development of a context-specific framework aimed at promoting integrity through intertwining legal protections, independent reporting mechanisms, ethical training, institutional transparency, and trust from stakeholders.

Table 4.17

Framework for Implementing Whistleblower Policies Regarding Elite Football in Zimbabwe

Correlations					
	Clear communication channels between stakeholders are critical for whistleblowing	Providing legal protections for whistleblowers is essential to promoting whistleblowing.	Encouraging a culture of trust and openness within Zimbabwean Elite Football	The involvement of external oversight bodies is crucial to ensure the protection of whistleblowers	Continuous improvement and adaptation of the whistleblower framework

Clear communication channels between stakeholders are critical f	Pearson Correlation	1	-.009	.318*	.494**	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.948	.016	.000	.719
	N	57	57	57	57	57
Providing legal protections for whistle-blowers is essential to	Pearson Correlation	-.009	1	.327*	.206	.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.948		.013	.124	.000
	N	57	57	57	57	57
Encouraging a culture of trust and openness within Zimbabwean El	Pearson Correlation	.318*	.327*	1	.464**	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.013		.000	.000
	N	57	57	57	57	57
The involvement of external oversight bodies is crucial to ensure	Pearson Correlation	.494**	.206	.464**	1	.571**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.124	.000		.000
	N	57	57	57	57	57
Continuous improvement and adaptation of the whistle-	Pearson Correlation	-.049	.558**	.515**	.571**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.719	.000	.000	.000	

blower framework	N	57	57	57	57	57
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The correlation results emphasize that developing a whistleblower framework to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football depends on a combination of legal, cultural, and institutional factors. Encouraging a culture of trust and openness emerges as a central pillar, showing significant positive correlations with legal protections for whistleblowers with $r = .327$, $p = .013$, involvement of external oversight bodies ($r = .464$, $p = .000$), and continuous improvement of the framework $r = .515$, $p = .000$. This suggests that trust within the football community facilitates the functioning and evolution of whistleblower mechanisms. Similarly, legal protections are strongly associated with the system's capacity to adapt and improve, with $r = .558$, $p = .000$, indicating that safeguarding whistleblowers boosts confidence and encourages ongoing reform. External oversight bodies play a vital accountability role, significantly correlating with communication channels ($r = .494$, $p = .000$), trust ($r = .464$, $p = .000$), and improvement ($r = .571$, $p = .000$), further underlining their importance in enforcement and credibility.

4.4.8 NVivo Analysis of How Zimbabwean Elite Football Can Develop a Tailored Whistleblower Framework to Foster Integrity

This is the NVivo analysis on the development of a tailored whistleblower framework applicable to the context of Zimbabwean Elite Football. Given the systemic problems in providing whistleblower protection with legal backing to trust within institutions, qualitative dimensions are vital in illuminating feasible approaches shaped by stakeholder experiences. The analysis pulls from interviews, focus group discussions, and text queries to elucidate core recurring notions such as anonymous reporting, legal and policy compliance, leadership ethics, education, and transparency. These factors that come out develop a proposal for a whistleblower framework that

is not only structurally robust, but also culturally and operationally reflexive to the context of Zimbabwean football.

Table 4.18

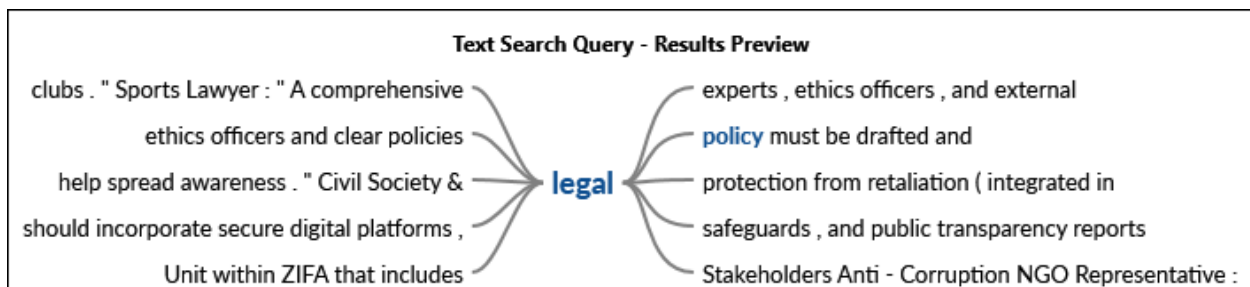
Tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football that can be developed to promote integrity.

Theme	Theme Description/Definition	Matching Mentions from the Interviews	Number of References
Transparency and Public Accountability	Examines openness in institutional processes and holding actors responsible for misconduct.	“There’s no transparency, you never know what happens after a report is made.”	10
Legal Protections and Policy Enforcement	Focuses on the strength and application of laws and policies protecting whistleblowers.	“Even though we have rules, they’re not enforced, so people do not bother reporting.”	13
Independent and Anonymous Reporting Mechanisms	Highlights the availability and trustworthiness of systems for confidential or anonymous reporting.	“A mobile app that allows anonymous reporting, most players have smartphones”	14
Education, Awareness, and Ethical Culture	Refers to training, communication, and a values-driven environment that encourages ethical behavior and reporting.	“We have never had a session on what to do or who to talk to. Most people do not even know it is an option.”	11

Independent and anonymous reporting mechanism leading with 14 citations indicated that people are willing to whistle blow on misconduct if their identities are protected and not forced to sugar coat information, they may have to protect individuals in high positions. One participant noted, “Independent, anonymous reporting platforms, a player stated that 'a mobile app that allows anonymous reporting, most players have smartphones’. Legal protections and policy enforcement were also cited by the participants, with 13 citations. This indicates that the public is keen on safety and retaliation. The term legal, with a coverage of 1.26%, shows the frequency at which the term was used. Using a text search query, it shows the frequency rate.

Figure 4.10

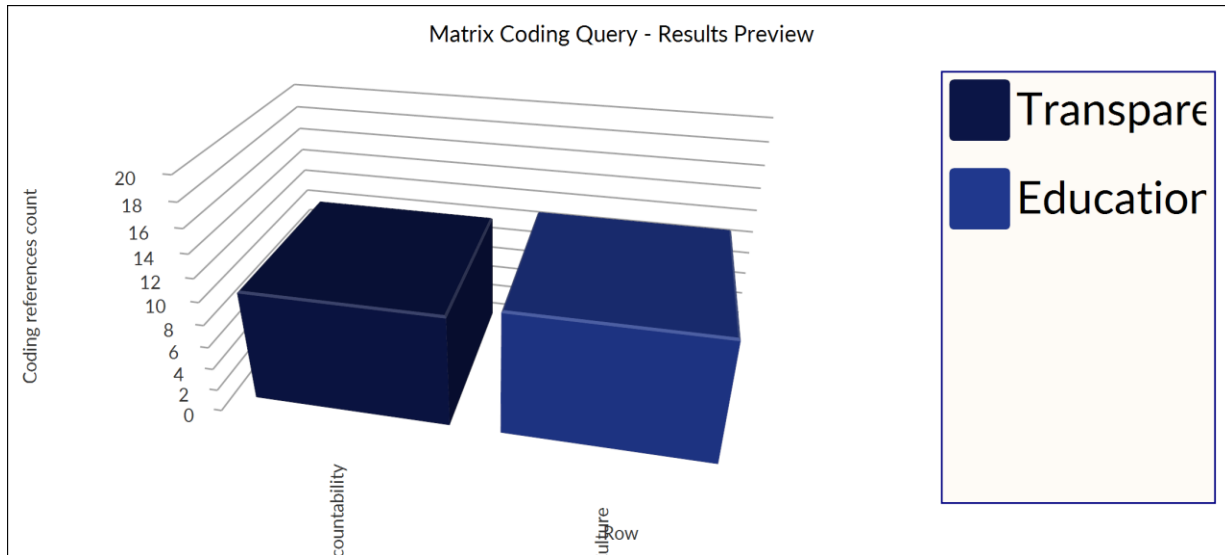
Text Search Query for Legal



Education, awareness, and ethical culture were also stated as an effective way in tailoring a whistleblower framework, with a citation of 11. Transparency and public accountability at 10 references were also stated; the matrix coding query clearly shows it.

Figure 4.11

Matrix Coding Query for Transparency and Public Accountability.



Disclosing the coding Matrix query chart uncovers pivotal elements relating to developing a whistleblowing system designed to promote integrity within Zimbabwean Elite Football. Stakeholders appear to view transparency as one of the primary pillars that support accountability and ethics. Change in attitudes concerning whistleblowing requires training tailored to that specific area. Therefore, establishing a comprehensive whistleblowing framework focuses on improving institutional transparency and strengthening the ethical climate rooted within the organization.

Creating an exclusive whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football requires a blend of trust, safeguarding legislation, external supervision, and a dynamic system. Correlation data reveals the significant impact trust and legal protection have on the effectiveness of the whistleblower system. The qualitative data further emphasize the importance of anonymity in reporting, enforcement, ethical teaching, institutional transparency, compliance with policies and laws, and institutional ethics. Collectively, these constituents yield a holistic framework that guarantees protected reporting and freedom from retaliation, thus upholding accountability and integrity within Zimbabwean Elite Football.

4.5 Discussions

4.5.1 The Integrity of Zimbabwean Elite Football is Whistleblowing

An Examination of the Current Framework Analysis from both perspectives reveals that the current systems of whistleblowers within Zimbabwean elite football remain fragmented and poorly organized as well as unenforceable, thereby rendering them incapable of protecting the integrity of sports. Concerning the descriptive statistics (Table 4.11), stakeholders show mixed responses where moderate consensus exists regarding the existence of a barebones framework, however strong discontent exists concerning lack of transparency, inadequate accountability, severe ignorance of basic governance and oversight responsibilities, rampant knowledge deficits among the players, coaches, and administrators, as well as gross neglect among those accountable in the governance structure. Prescriptive, culturally defined stakeholder norms, coupled with a defined set of frameworks, worsen the already inadequate whistleblower framework.

These perceptions are corroborated by cross-case NVivo analysis (Table 4.12), where fear of negative consequences, lack of an operational framework, and informality rank as the most frequently cited issues. This aligns with literature from abroad, which emphasizes the need for viable legal, contextual, and infrastructural backing surrounding the protection of whistleblowers. For instance, recent research by Kenny, Fotaki, and Vandekerckhove (2019) argues that the effectiveness of whistleblowing systems depends heavily on perceived safety, trust in institutions, and the demonstrable actions taken in response to disclosures. Additionally, Park et.al (2010) mention that in weakly accountable framed governance paradigms, as in sporting bodies, informal norms impede reporting more than formal structures.

The situation in Zimbabwe resonates with Geeraert's findings (2023), who argues that in sport governance, especially in developing contexts, structures for whistleblowing implementation tend to be absent due to regulative voids and entrenched patronage systems. Also, Vandekerckhove and Lewis (2012) argue that whistleblowing cannot function in a vacuum of an overarching ethical environment; it needs a systematic approach of persistent advocacy, legislative safeguards, and accountable supervision. Zimbabwe lags significantly in shared trust and institutional design when compared to global best practices such as Norway's national ethics education framework, which

integrates whistleblowing awareness into school curricula (Council of Europe, 2021) and Kenya's mobile-enabled anonymous reporting platforms, like the *Integrity Hotline* supported by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and Transparency International Kenya (TI-Kenya, 2022). These comparative insights underscore the critical gap created by the absence of a contextually responsive system for sports governance in Zimbabwe. Addressing this requires a redesign of legal frameworks, the integration of whistleblower reporting tools such as whistle phones, and culturally embedded ethics instruction to move beyond symbolic compliance and toward practical accountability mechanisms.

4.5.2 Factors Facing Stakeholders in Advancing Whistleblower Protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football

The factors facing stakeholders in ameliorating whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean elite football are cultural, institutional, and structural. Quantitative (Table 4.13) results show a significant negative correlation of sabotage with two pillars of integrity: collaboration among authorities, as well as transparency and accountability. This reflects stakeholder knowledge on ethical governance and suggests dissatisfaction with the system. Moreover, the lack of awareness and transparency correlation emphasizes an apathy problem in education among the players, coaches, and administrators that undermines robust reporting frameworks.

The WHC challenges showed a positive correlation with transparency. From a WHC perspective, addressing transparency gaps should improve open information flow and accomplish WHC goals. NVivo analysis supports these findings, where the climate of fear and resistance came out as the most frequent barrier. A lack of reporting wrongdoing despite overwhelming evidence is due to fears of retaliation, exclusion from professional circles, career sabotage, or other forms of professional retribution. Legal and institutional shortcomings are just as powerful. These gaps lack adequate legal frameworks and independent oversight mechanisms, which fosters distrust and underreporting among constituents.

Analyzing the situation in Zimbabwe reveals persistent governance gaps in the country's whistleblowing and accountability frameworks. Recent assessments highlight that whistleblowing initiatives often remain ineffective in environments lacking robust legal protections and institutional commitment to ethical governance. As Transparency International (2023) notes, Zimbabwe's whistleblower mechanisms are hindered by weak enforcement structures, political interference, and the absence of comprehensive legislative support conditions that contribute to widespread fear of retaliation and silence among potential reporters. In the same vein, Devine and Walden (2013) emphasized the need for protective guarantees of anonymity, retaliatory embargoes, and enduring legislation as core components of overarching frameworks for whistleblower legislation. Park et al. (2014) reported successful implementation in South Korea after legal reforms coupled with trust-building educational initiatives toward whistleblowing. Amisi and Moyo (2020), along with Mubangizi (2015), focused on Africa and suggested the design of community reporting systems to combat fear and institutional inertia alongside the professionalization of sport governance. These conclusions align with the study's results, which indicate that Zimbabwe requires not only a whistleblower policy but also a multi-layered and thorough comprehensive protection strategy.

4.5.3 Factors contributing to whistleblower protection within the context of elite football in Zimbabwe.

Concerning the inquiry that sought to find out the reasons determining the level of protection given to whistleblowers in Zimbabwean Elite Football, both quantitative (Table 4.15) and qualitative findings (Table 4.16) form some evidence to a controversial hypothesis of a set of factors that are interdependent and collectively function to create favorable frameworks for whistleblowers. Factor analysis placed trust and openness within the institution as the primary determinants and showed positive correlation with legal protections, external oversight, and improvement of the whistleblower system. This suggests that institutional trust in football motivates not only the reporting but also the culture of accountability. Legal protections also show a high positive correlation with improvement, which suggests that systems with strong legal protections tend to be more responsive and sustainable in the long term. The external oversight agency has particular

potency in the areas of communication, trust, and improvement, which suggests that balance is necessary in the governance of the sport.

Concerning the law and policy boundaries, leadership and governance climate, advocacy by the media and civil bodies, and the frailty of the actors involved, the analysis with NVivo focuses on the viewpoint of the participants to supplement the statistical information. There was much attention given to strengthening the legal policies and moral leadership because of the need for openness and lowering misconduct. The mass media and civil groups are viewed as defenders of oversight while heightening societal tension. Moreover, protecting the vulnerable actors was deemed a useful strategy to lessen the dread and opposition to whistleblowing.

The synthesis of these findings, alongside international literature, highlights this paradigm in a multidimensional way. Brown et al. (2019) emphasize that institutional trust, legal safeguards, and organizational support are fundamental to effective whistleblowing. In the UK, while the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) of 1998 initially enhanced trust through legal protection and the establishment of defined whistleblowing roles, recent evaluations suggest the system remains fragmented and under-enforced without strong institutional backing (Vandekerckhove, 2021). In the US, the legally guaranteed protections under the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012, along with oversight from bodies such as the Office of Special Counsel, exemplify a model where legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms work together to foster sustained whistleblower engagement. In South Africa, as De Maria (2019) observes, civil society engagement and the push for ethical governance have been critical in supporting whistleblowers and advancing a culture of transparency.

4.5.4 Development of a whistleblower policy tailored to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

To develop a workable whistleblower model for Elite Football in Zimbabwe's context, an integrated approach that blends effective legal frameworks, culturally situated reporting systems, trust frameworks, and adaptive governance is needed. The correlation (Table 4.17) study supports

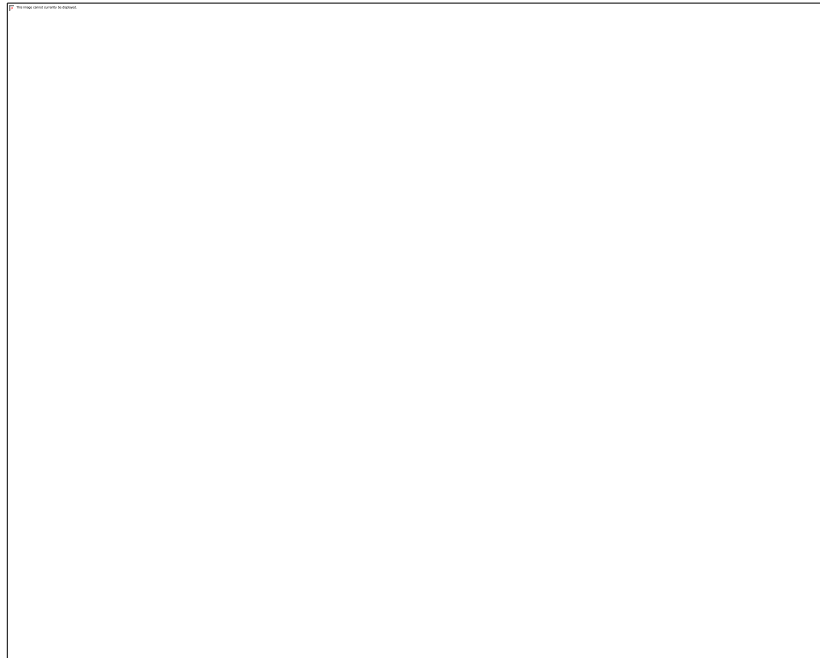
the hypothesis that both legal protections ($r=.558$, $p<.001$) and trust openness ($r=.515$, $p<.001$) are significant, legally effective detractors of framework functionality. This calls for Zimbabwean legislation with targeted hostile action provisions and sport tribunals designed to circumvent judicial inertial bypass tailored to stasis. Simultaneously, NVivo (Table 4.19) sorted stakeholder testimony: 14 participants support the position that mobile reporting should guarantee anonymity (adapted from USSD Kenya), while 13 insist elite accountability must be actionable. All these define socio-cultural shifts through transformative design and replicate South Africa's union-integrity workshop model focused on shifting whistle-blowing narratives from betrayal to an ethical obligation, enhancing the noted trust with external oversight ($r=.464$, $p<.001$). (Table 4.18)

The sustainability of the framework is aligned with Zimbabwe's social and institutional contexts. External oversight ($r=.571$, $p<.001$) (Table 4.18) and legal protections require state-free integrity audits from FIFA-compliant third-party charities and evaluation boards that satisfy NVivo's 10-citation transparency threshold. Limited resources require a phased mobile-reporting-first approach in lower tiers or leagues, and ethics-teaching embedded in coaching credentialing sequence development. As Hallett (2021) and Chiweshe (2020) caution, escaping Nigeria's top-down freefall rupture relies on COSAFA regional legitimacy scaffolding permissive civility-structured monitoring of purposeful inaction. This constructive oversight, civic monitoring for COSAFA-regional legitimacy, sustains balanced control, enforcement motivation to culture shift through deepening systems accountability reflexively via disclosure.

4.5.5 New Sights

Figure 4.12

Whistleblower framework designed specifically for Zimbabwean Elite Football would effectively foster integrity.



The whistleblower protection framework in Zimbabwean elite football is composed of four arms, which are dependent on each other, and each contributes significantly towards developing a culture of integrity. The first arm, Independent and Anonymous Reporting Mechanisms, deals with the provision of safe, secret, and simple reporting channels, such as mobile apps, through which users can relay unethical practices without becoming targets of retaliatory actions. This element minimizes barriers to reporting and, more importantly, provides assurances of safety and anonymity to whistleblowers, which is critical in environments shrouded by fear and power relations that seek to silence truthful utterances.

The second arm, Legal Protections and Enforcement, forms the frame's structural and institutional skeleton. It specializes in creating protective policies by law and enforcement, and legal frameworks with clear and systematic accountability targets for whistleblowing activities. Prescribed actions target adherence to the set rules, and whistleblowing policies ensure that

safeguards are in place. This legal dimension provides assurance that all risks associated with coming forth are covered, hence devoid of legal and institutional exposure.

The third arm, Ethical Culture and Transparency, underlies the framework with topical norms and culture. It seeks to cultivate integrity through education and public awareness initiatives. This component promotes ethical values in football and helps pave the way for proactive ethical conduct, as well as diminishing the social stigma associated with whistleblowing. Lastly, External Oversight Bodies add a distinct layer of scrutiny, reinforcing external accountability. These bodies have the mandate to supervise compliance and ensure communication is not only open but also transparent. Their independence is essential for avoiding conflicts of interest and protecting the integrity of the inquiry. They enhance communications in the system and act as neutral third parties to restore public confidence in the system.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter answers the research questions regarding whistleblower protective mechanisms in Zimbabwean elite football by presenting empirical data. The mixed-methods design using correlational statistics alongside thematic analysis and stakeholder narratives depicts a structurally broken whistleblowing ecosystem consisting of systemic interdependencies among institutional, legal, and cultural failures.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter marks the culmination of the study, showcasing the conclusions and the recommendations for practice. The chapter also seeks to provide the key findings, highlight the implications, and provide recommendations based on the findings.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

The study reveals a strong, consistent call supported by both qualitative and statistical evidence for the establishment of a formalized whistleblower framework in Zimbabwean elite football. Central to this framework is the need for security, purpose, and clear pathways for grievance reporting, underpinned by advocacy and legal protection. The data show that fear of retaliation, weak legal systems, and limited awareness significantly hinder whistleblower protection. Correlation and NVivo analyses jointly indicate that legal safeguards and trust are pivotal in shaping a functional and adaptive framework. Trust and openness are shown to enhance communication, oversight, and continuous improvement. The findings highlight that institutional leadership is essential in fostering ethical governance, while the role of media and civil society remains vital in promoting accountability. A successful framework must therefore blend trust-building measures, strong protective legislation, external oversight, and a dynamic system that evolves with ethical standards.

The importance of anonymity, enforcement, ethics education, policy compliance, and transparent institutional culture is repeatedly emphasized in qualitative responses. Collectively, the evidence supports a holistic whistleblower model designed to ensure safe, protected reporting, thereby

reinforcing integrity, accountability, and ethical conduct in Zimbabwean elite football. Whistleblowing can be used to reduce misconduct and discrepancies occurring. It is most likely able to aid in improvement and development, as the potential misconduct is put to light early, before great damage is done.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 To establish the current whistleblower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

Based on the study, the current whistleblower framework in Zimbabwean elite football is underdeveloped, informal, and largely ineffective in promoting integrity. Quantitative findings indicate that although stakeholders acknowledge the importance of transparency and accountability, there is a significant lack of awareness among players, coaches, and administrators, which severely hampers the framework's functionality. Qualitative data reinforce these insights, highlighting recurring concerns such as fear of retaliation, limited confidentiality, and weak institutional support structures. The widespread use of informal reporting channels reflects a lack of trust in official mechanisms, and many participants expressed that the current systems feel improvised and unsupported. Additionally, the minimal use and awareness of tools such as whistleblower apps suggest poor communication and implementation of existing measures. Overall, the study concludes that Zimbabwean elite football lacks a clear, secure, and functional whistleblower framework and urgently requires a formal, transparent, and trusted system to effectively promote integrity and accountability in the sport.

5.3.2 To identify the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

The study reveals that stakeholders in Zimbabwean elite football face substantial challenges in advancing whistleblower protection, stemming primarily from a deep-rooted culture of fear, legal ambiguities, and institutional weaknesses. Quantitative data demonstrate that poor collaboration among regulatory bodies, low awareness levels, and limited transparency significantly hinder

progress. A culture of silence, mistrust, and fear of retaliation discourages reporting and perpetuates misconduct, while the absence of clear legal backing leaves whistleblowers vulnerable and unsupported. Qualitative insights confirm that the current environment is marked by resistance to accountability, a lack of education on whistleblowing mechanisms, and selective enforcement influenced by internal favoritism. These challenges are compounded by weak communication structures and minimal training, leading to ignorance of existing protections and procedures. Overall, advancing whistleblower protection requires dismantling the prevailing culture of fear, enhancing stakeholder education, strengthening institutional and legal frameworks, and fostering a transparent environment that encourages safe and anonymous reporting.

5.3.3 To establish the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football.

Whistleblower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football is shaped by a complex interplay of structural, institutional, and social factors that either empower or undermine the reporting of misconduct. At the heart of an effective framework lies the establishment of trust and openness, which connects strongly with the presence of legal protections, external oversight, and continuous system improvement. Legal and policy frameworks form the foundational backbone of protection, yet their impact is limited when they exist merely on paper without enforceability or institutional will. Strong and ethical leadership within football institutions is essential, as it sets the tone for transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to whistleblowing concerns. The role of external oversight bodies and advocacy from the media and civil society also emerges as vital in reinforcing accountability and maintaining public pressure for reform. Meanwhile, hierarchical power dynamics and player vulnerability create barriers that inhibit individuals from speaking out, reinforcing the need for protection mechanisms that address fear, retaliation, and imbalance of power. Clear communication channels among stakeholders, ongoing refinement of procedures, and support from external entities are necessary to build confidence in the system. Ultimately, the effectiveness of whistleblower protection depends on a cohesive effort to align structural reform with cultural transformation, ensuring that all stakeholders are both protected and empowered to report wrongdoing without fear.

5.3.4 To develop a tailored whistleblower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football to promote integrity.

An effective whistleblower framework tailored to Zimbabwean Elite Football must be built upon a multifaceted foundation that integrates legal safeguards, institutional ethics, transparent governance, and stakeholder trust. The correlation analysis underscores the centrality of fostering a culture of trust and openness, which significantly enhances the performance of other components such as legal protection, external oversight, and continuous framework improvement. Legal protections must not only exist but be actively enforced to give confidence to potential whistleblowers, while independent oversight ensures credibility and accountability within the reporting and response process. From a qualitative perspective, participants emphasized the need for confidential and anonymous reporting mechanisms, such as secure digital platforms, as a means to encourage honest disclosure without fear of retaliation. Additionally, the importance of awareness campaigns, ethical education, and structured training programs emerged as critical to normalizing whistleblowing and building a values-driven culture. Transparency and public accountability further reinforce the system by ensuring that processes are visible and actions are taken against misconduct. Collectively, these insights advocate for a responsive, context-aware framework that not only facilitates safe reporting but also cultivates a football environment rooted in integrity, responsibility, and ethical governance.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Methodologically, the cross-sectional design captured attitudes at a singular moment in time, which may have missed shifts in ZIFA stakeholder perceptions over time while ZIFA was suspended. The sampling was a disproportionate representation of female stakeholders, as only 30.8% of interviewees were women, which represents the world of football and limits the analyses that can be conducted from a female perspective. The literature review was constrained by the lack of sports governance literature from Zimbabwe, as it made me overly dependent on paradigmatic analogues across Africa, such as Ghana and Botswana, raising the risk of contextual misalignment. Additionally, budgeting limited this fieldwork's temporal scope, along with a widespread reluctance to participate, particularly among journalist stakeholders, resulting in 50% non-response to questionnaires due to fears of politically motivated fallout. In this case, data

triangulation and interpretation validation, along with snowball sampling, where “hidden” stakeholders like victimized players were recruited, became necessary to resolve the issues.

5.5 Implications and Recommendations

5.5.1 Implications for Practice Issues

The Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) and pertinent government agencies receive specific practical implications from the study’s results. ZIFA should step up the implementation of mobile reporting systems from Premier League clubs through WhatsApp or SMS using encrypted channels to ensure anonymity, devoid of internal organizational tampering. The community-based coach certification must include whistleblower pedagogy delivered in local dialects by elder community leaders to address the cultural challenge. Besides, the FIFA Solidarity grants and league sponsorship levies should be used to establish a whistleblower support fund with unrestricted access to legal and psychosocial aid. From the other side of government, there is an urgent need to enact the long-overdue Whistleblower Protection Bill while making sure it has sports-specific clauses that inhibit career-ending retaliation and mandate independent inquiries. Additionally, the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission should be given the dedicated mandate to oversee sports integrity, including the power to conduct forensic auditing of club finances to control systemic corrupt practices.

5.5.2 Implications for Theory

This research integrates institutional theory and agency theory within contexts of institutional fragility to illuminate how corruption functions in elite Zimbabwean football. It shows that regulative voids like lack or ineffectiveness of whistleblower protection laws restraining normative decay, including loyalty norm corruption, interact to foster conditions conducive to corruption. This aspect adds to Geeraert’s (2023) governance model with the incorporation of PMT (Protection Motivation Theory), which focuses on individually motivated behavioral obstacles, such as fear of backlash. The empirically supported notion of a “retaliatory ecosystem” offers a fresh perspective

on the patronage, clientelism, and systemic distrust framework of whistleblowing. In the same vein as Bauhr and Grimes (2020), who emphasize the role of public accountability and institutional trust in curbing corruption, this research highlights the importance of credible independent oversight in governance. It also aligns with Brown et al. (2019), who outline how trust, procedural fairness, and protection mechanisms influence whistleblowing behavior, while building upon Kenny, Vandekerckhove, and Fotaki's (2019) emphasis on the cultural and organizational framing of whistleblower dynamics.

The presence of the mobile technology trust paradox, which combines deep-seated institutional distrust with high mobile phone usage, counters Western assumptions found within digital governance literature, particularly Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes' (2010) e-governance model, which rests on a presumed baseline of legitimacy. In the Global South, and Zimbabwe's specific context, the paradox underscores the need for digital trust-building interventions that circumvent captured institutions and cultivate trust from the grassroots level. This study advances the scholarship on sports governance but also demonstrates how institutional and behavioral theories can be blended to develop context-sensitive anti-corruption designs in fragile governing landscapes.

5.5.3 Impacts on Future Research

This study addresses a range of gaps relating to the safeguarding of whistleblowers, particularly within the context of the Global South's sport governance systems. From my initial consideration, three interconnected gaps arise. First, longitudinal research is important to investigate how mobile reporting systems have changed the efficacy of uncovering, investigating, and resolving corrupt practices. Such investigations would build on more recent evaluations of whistleblowing systems, such as those by Taylor and Curtis (2018), by incorporating the potential of digital solutions tailored for low-trust environments. There is an immediate need for cross-sectional research analyzing the aiding obstacles of women in sport with men as stakeholders in construct-dominated sporting environments. Pfister (2010) and Adriaanse and Claringbould (2016) showed the feminized blame culture governing sport, and their data would suggest that reputational risk would endure disproportionately and would require more targeted protective measures. The latter study is to be accompanied by a test verification of a hypothesis that collectivist societies, where bonding

and loyalty are held highly, observe greater thresholds for whistle-blowing than individualistic cultures.

This aligns with more recent cultural frameworks such as those proposed by Minkov and Hofstede (2012), who updated the original cultural dimensions model to reflect contemporary global dynamics. Supporting this, Culiberg and Mihelič (2017) found that cultural values significantly influence moral reasoning and whistleblowing intentions across national contexts. Recognizing these cultural nuances is critical for designing strategies that are locally tailored and not confined to Western-centric paradigms. Taken together, these lines of inquiry are essential for developing nuanced, context-sensitive frameworks for whistleblower protection—bridging theory with practice and addressing the notable gaps in scholarship surrounding sports integrity and governance in the Global South.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The fifth chapter has captured Zimbabwean whistleblowers' overarching fractured contributions to the nation's corporate governance. Chapter 5 highlighted the overwhelming isolation within the whistleblower's ecosystem, driven by fear of retaliation, captured by the fragility of institutional voids. This calls for a mobile legal barrier context-based protective model with culturally aligned ethics education focused on whistleblowing. Along with the limitations, which were the gendered representation gaps and logistical barriers, the author provided rationale and mitigation approaches, which shed light on.

Proposed actions were directed to practitioners, theoretical contributions for academia, and highlighted priorities for future inquiries. As a whole, ZIFA's current monitoring methods, annual workshops, and so-called hotlines have not enabled the protective mechanisms of anonymity and public trust due to a lack of accountability. This fundamentally requires reforms aimed at reducing whistleblowing anonymity abuse. For example, CHRA 30 percent gender representation in administrative roles is capped by 2025, accompanied by mandatory recruitment panel bias training. Furthermore, blockchain-backed anonymous reporting systems like FIFA's Integrity App would improve transparency, while publicizing all disciplinary actions would counter ethical disregard.

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Appendices 1

Research questionnaire for the research titled ‘Developing A Whistleblower Framework to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football’.



My name is Belinda Mutanda, a student from Bindura University of Science Education and Technology who is currently studying HBSC Sport Science and Management. I am conducting research titled ‘*Developing A Whistleblower Framework to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football*’. You are kindly asked to respond to the questionnaire below. Your contribution will be used solely for scholarly purposes and will be kept completely private and confidential. Thank you.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Please Tick Your Answer

Demographic Variable	Options	Tick (✓)
Gender	Male	☐
	Female	☐
Age Group	21–30	☐

	31–40	☐
	41–50	☐
	60 and above	☐
Professional Experience	Player	☐
	Coach	☐
	Administrator	☐
	Sponsor	☐
	Journalist	☐

Section B

Part 1: Current Whistleblower Frameworks

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The current whistle-blower framework in Zimbabwean Elite Football encourages individuals to report misconduct effectively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The existing whistle-blower framework provides adequate protection for individuals who report integrity issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Stakeholders face significant challenges in promoting whistle-blower protection within the sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Lack of awareness among players, coaches, and administrators is a major obstacle to advancing whistle-blower protection.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Part 2: Challenges Faced by Stakeholders

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. The culture within Zimbabwean Elite Football influences the effectiveness of whistle-blower protection initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Collaborative efforts among regulatory bodies, associations, and clubs are crucial for enhancing protection.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Transparency and accountability are key factors shaping whistle-blower protection.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Developing a tailored whistle-blower framework will significantly improve integrity in the sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Challenges Stakeholders Face in Enhancing Protection

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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9. Providing comprehensive training on whistle-blower protection is essential for implementation success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity will encourage more individuals to report concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Clear communication channels between stakeholders are critical for effective operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Regular monitoring and evaluation are necessary to assess the framework's impact on integrity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 4: Tailored Framework Design.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. Providing legal protections is essential to safeguard whistle-blowers' rights and safety.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Encouraging a culture of trust and openness will facilitate framework implementation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Involvement of external oversight bodies is crucial for framework effectiveness and impartiality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. Continuous improvement and adaptation based on feedback will enhance relevance and impact.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Appendices 2

Interview Guide

1. What is the current whistle-blower framework being used to promote integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football?
2. What are the challenges faced by stakeholders in advancing whistle-blower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football?
3. What factors are responsible for shaping the whistle-blower protection in Zimbabwean Elite Football?
4. What tailored whistle-blower framework for Zimbabwean Elite Football can be developed to promote integrity?

Appendices 3

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

P. Bag 1020

BINDURA, Zimbabwe

Tel:

+263662106134/0772916712

icharumbira@buse.ac.zw

CHAIRPERSON DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCE

7 April 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

RE: UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION STUDY ACCESS REQUEST.

This is to certify that Belinda Mutanda, B220392B is a Bonafide Bachelor of Science in Sports Science and Management student in the Department of Sports Science at the Bindura University of Science Education. She is conducting an action research study entitled: 'Developing A Whistleblower Framework to Promote Integrity in Zimbabwean Elite Football'.

We are kindly requesting your organization to partner with her/him in the study by participating in the data collection and intervention strategy development process.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. The information from your organization will only be used for academic purposes and be kept private and confidential. Codes will be used to identify participant organizations. This is meant to ensure that information would not be linked to the providers. Password-protected computers will be used to store any identifiable information that may be obtained from your organization. Data will also be analyzed at the group level to ensure anonymity. You can also sign confidentiality agreements with the researcher.

A copy of the finished work will be provided to your organization after the study. The results of the study are expected to transform practice, and your support will be pivotal to its success.

If you have any queries regarding this project, please feel free to contact us.

We would like to thank you in advance for your support.

Yours Sincerely



Lysias Tapiwanashe Charumbira (Dr.)

