

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



**AN ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES IN THE MANUAL SYSTEMS ON COUNCIL
STANDS ALLOCATION. A CASE STUDY OF MASVINGO RURAL DISTRICT**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONOURS DEGREE IN
PEACE AND GOVERNANCE OF BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

BINDURA, ZIMBABWE

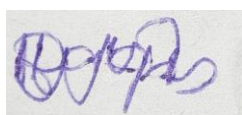
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ABSTRACT

The allocation of council stands in many local governments including Masvingo Rural District Council often relies on manual systems. This study explored the challenges inherent in such systems focusing on data management, process inefficiencies and issues related to transparency and accountability. The researcher used constructivism philosophy which emphasizes the understanding of how individuals and groups construct their own understanding and meaning of the world based on their experiences and interaction. The researcher used a case study research design which allows for a detailed in-depth exploration of a single case, the stand allocation system at Masvingo Rural District Council. Primary and secondary data both supported research instruments of this study. Additionally, the lack of a centralized system hinders effective communication and coordination among council departments and stakeholders. These issues are compounded by potential security risks such as fraud and data breaches and the system's difficulty in adapting to changes and scaling demand. Need for transitioning to digital solutions to enhance efficiency, transparency and service delivery in council stands allocation. However, several recommendations were put forward. It has been recommended that future studies should examine the feasibility and effects of shifting from manual to digital stand allocation systems in Masvingo Rural District. Further research could investigate existing land allocation policies in Zimbabwe to identify gaps and inconsistencies that may impact local councils' performance.

DECLARATION FORM

I, B212460B, affirm that this study is a product of my own work and has not been previously presented for a degree at this or any other academic institution.

Student Signature**Date.....28-08-2025.....****Supervisor Name: Mr Mhuri****Signature**

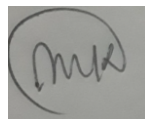
APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have supervised the student, B212460B's dissertation entitled:
An assessment of the challenges in the manual systems on Council stands allocation: A case study
of Masvingo Rural District Council. This dissertation is submitted by B212460B in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Peace and Governance in Honors Degree at the
Bindura University.

Supervisor



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Chairperson.....

Date...30/08/2028.....

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents for their steadfast support, to my siblings for their financial and emotional support, my friends and to my supervisor, Mr. Mhuri, for his invaluable guidance and advice during the project's development. Without the help of this incredible team, I could not have accomplished this. Above all, I'm very grateful to the Almighty God for giving me life and guiding me through.

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RELEASE FORM

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ACRNOMYS

MLG- MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MRDC- MASVINGO RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

UN - UNITED NATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

The manual allocation of stands remains a persistent challenge, especially in developing countries where land administration systems are often underdeveloped. Manual systems are characterized by paper-based records and face-to-face transactions, often prone to inefficiencies, corruption and delays. A study by Sutherland (2017) highlights that manual land allocation processes often lack transparency and are susceptible to manipulation resulting in unequal access to land and fueling social tensions. The inefficiency of these systems hinders effective urban planning and the provision of services as accurate and timely data on land use are essential for development planning. As a result, many countries are transitioning to digital land administration systems which offer greater transparency, efficiency and security. However, the transition is uneven with many regions still reliant on outdated manual processes (Sutherland, 2017). These challenges not only hinder effective land management but also undermine public trust in local government and impede the realization of development goals (World Bank, 2019; Tadesse & Getnet, 2021).

In Africa, the problem of inefficient and corrupt land allocation systems is widespread. For instance, in Kenya manual land allocation processes have been marred by irregularities and delays leading to land disputes and disenfranchisement of vulnerable populations (Odote, 2018). Also, in Nigeria the Land use Act of 1978 despite its intent to streamline land management has been criticized for perpetuating corruption and inequities in land distribution due to manual processes (Olanrewaju, 2015). These challenges have sparked significant debate of the need for reforms and the adoption of digital systems to enhance transparency and efficiency in land administration

across Africa (Cotula, 2020). African Union has recognized these challenges and advocated for the modernization of land administration systems across the continent to improve governance hence transparency and ensure equitable access to land (African Union, 2017).

In Southern Africa, the issue of manual land allocation systems is equally pressing. In countries like Zambia and Mozambique, manual land allocation processes have led to significant challenges in land administration including delays in processing land applications, loss of records and corruption (Chileshe, 2015; Milgroom & Giller, 2018). These inefficiencies have had far-reaching consequences contributing to land conflicts, reduced agricultural productivity and hampering efforts to promote rural development. The Southern African Development Community has recognized these issues and has been advocating for the modernization of land administration systems emphasizing the need of transparency, accountability and community participation (SADC, 2020). For example, in Namibia, the manual allocation of communal land has led to disputes with traditional authorities often accused of favoritism and lack of accountability (Werner, 2018). While there have been efforts to digitize land records and streamline allocation processes, progress has been slow, and communities continue to rely on outdated manual methods (Cousins, 2017).

In Zimbabwe the challenges associated with manual systems of council land allocation are in both urban and rural areas but particularly in rural areas such as Masvingo. The manual processes employed by local councils have been plagued by inefficiencies, corruption and lack of transparency leading to widespread dissatisfaction among residents and potential landowners (Mushongera, 2020). The delays in processing land applications, coupled with poor recording have resulted in land disputes and inequitable land distribution further exacerbating poverty and social tensions in rural communities (Chitiga, 2021). The Zimbabwean government has recognized these challenges and

is exploring the potential for digital solutions to improve land administration, but progress has been slow due resource constraints and political complexities (Moyo, 2023). These systems usually involve extensive paperwork, personal consultations and manual record-keeping, which can lead to inefficiencies, errors and lack of transparency. Masvingo Rural District Council is a rural council located in the Southern part of Masvingo City, specifically in Nemamwa. As an essential local government institution, it plays a crucial role in the management, development and allocation of residential, commercial and industrial land for the community within its jurisdiction. Its mission is to promote community development and provide effective and efficient services to global standards.

In the manual stand allocation system, files often become misplaced, lost or damaged over time making it difficult to retrieve information when needed and hindering efficiency and transparency. This issue is a problematic during audits or when resolving disputes (Mandishona & Gondo, 2015). According to Chirisa (2012), the council has faced criticism from residents and stakeholders for delays in processing stand applications and a lack of transparency in the allocation process. Additionally, corruption has been reported further complicating efforts to ensure fair access to land. This study seeks to unmask the challenges associated with the manual systems on council stands allocation which are inefficiency, corruption, lack of transparency, data inaccuracies and poor record management hence hindering the effective and fair distribution of land.

1.2 Aim of the study

To analyze the challenges associated with the manual systems of council stands allocation in Masvingo Rural District Council.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Rural district councils in as much as they have the constitutional mandate whereby, they do service delivery duties. Another role they play is the allocation of stands but the process is often fraught with many challenges (Zindi, 2020). The problem is critical for the council, local government authorities and community members as it undermines transparency, efficiency and equality in the land distribution. The manual processes are prone to errors, corruption and delays leading to disputes, unequal land access and potential loss of trust in local governance. The inefficiencies hamper economic growth, exacerbate social inequalities and contribute to underdevelopment in the region making it imperative to address the flaws in the current system to promote sustainable development and good governance. Given the increasing demand for land and pressure for transparent governance, addressing these challenges is important for aligning local administration with broader business and social and political trends toward accountability, equality and sustainable development.

1.4 Research Objectives of the study

- i)To examine the perceptions of council officials and community members regarding the current manual stand allocation system.
- ii)To identify the key challenges in the manual stand allocation system used by the Masvingo Rural District Council.
- iii)To assess the impact of manual system challenges on the efficiency and transparency of the stand allocation processes in Masvingo rural district council.
- iv)To explore potential improvements to the manual stand allocation system to enhance its effectiveness in Masvingo rural district council.

1.5 Research Questions

- i) What are the key challenges faced by the Masvingo Rural District Council in its manual stand allocation system?
- ii) How do council officials and community members perceive the current manual stand allocation system in Masvingo?
- iii) What are the impacts of the challenges in the manual stand allocation system on the efficiency and transparency of the allocation processes within the Masvingo Rural District Council?
- iv) What potential improvements can be made to the manual stand allocation systems to enhance their effectiveness in the Masvingo rural district council?

1.6 Assumption of the study

- i) The research assumes that the challenges faced by manual stand allocation processes in Masvingo rural district council are representative of similar challenges faced by other rural councils in Zimbabwe.
- ii) The research also assumes that manual stand allocation processes have been stable for considerable period and need to accurately assess the challenges and historical results.
- iii) The study assumes that relevant data and documents related to the assignment of stands such as assigned stand data, applications and related correspondence are available and correct.

1.7 Significance of the study

The following people will benefit from the study:

➤ **Other scholars**

The study offers a foundation for future research on the potential of digitalization and automation in enhancing public sector transparency and accountability thus contributing to ongoing debates about modernization in public administration. By examining the challenges in the manual system of council stands allocation within Masvingo Rural District Council, this research provides empirical data and insights that can inform theoretical models on land governance, especially in rural areas.

➤ **Residents**

The study can lead to reforms in the stand allocation processes hence ensuring transparency and fair. This would reduce the likelihood of corruption ensuring that residents are allocated stands in a more just manner. Residents could have clearer communication and access to information regarding the allocation process which will empower them to make informed decisions and participate more in the process.

➤ **Policymakers and the Government**

The importance of this study lies in its potential to provide insights into the efficiency and challenges associated with manual stand dispensing systems. By identifying these problems and explaining alternative solutions such as digital systems, the study can help to improve transparency, reduce corruption and improve service delivery in local government operations. These findings are particularly relevant to policymakers, urban planners and local government officials in Zimbabwe and other regions facing similar challenges.

➤ **Local authorities (Masvingo Rural District Council)**

These findings inefficiencies providing local authorities with insights on how to reduce bottlenecks and how they can streamline the process. Also, local authorities could use the study to justify the need for modernization that is transforming to a digital system which could improve overall governance.

➤ **The student**

The research allows the student to acquire a practical understanding of the complexities of local governance in the challenges of manual systems and have an opportunity to gain practical insights into the problem of local governance in the challenges of manual systems of public administration which improve their understanding of land management and contribute to their academic and professional development in government and public administration.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The study focuses on Masvingo specifically the Masvingo Rural District Council.

The study focuses on the views of council officials, residents and experts involved in the process of sharing the solution excluding other potential stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, external parties not directly involved in the process. The study is limited to the Masvingo Rural District Council in Zimbabwe excluding other rural or urban councils that may have different administrative processes within the council. The study is based on qualitative data collected from interviews, focus groups and surveys with council officials, community members and other stakeholders involved in stand allocation

1.9 Limitations of study

The researcher predicted the following limitations when conducting the study:

The accuracy and completeness of the data provided by the Masvingo Rural District Council may be limited. Incomplete or inaccurate data may affect the validity of the results; To mitigate this problem, the researcher will supplement the research with interviews, focus groups and surveys of the stakeholders, including council officials and community members. Respondents, including council officers and residents, cannot give completely truthful answers for fear of personal bias. This can lead to response biases that affect the reliability of the data collected. The researcher will reduce bias by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality during interviews, creating a safe environment for honest feedback and gathering data from a diverse group of participants to ensure balanced perspectives and cross-reference with document analysis. The study assumes potential benefits of digital systems but cannot fully understand the practical challenges and costs associated with implementing these systems in a rural context. The researcher will monitor any technological changes during the research period and document them in her findings. If significant changes occur, she will assess their potential impact and adjust the focus of the analysis accordingly highlighting how the identified challenges can be addressed. The study may be affected by changes in land governance policies during the research period, making some of the findings potentially outdated. To reduce this risk, the researcher will keep track of any legal changes throughout the research process and document them in her findings

1.10 Definitions of terms

- Service delivery refers to the extent to which the services provided by public service and public sector meet or exceed the expectations of the beneficiaries (Denney *et al.*2017).

- According to Zhou & Chilika (2013), local authority refers to an executive and secretarial local government body responsible for providing public service in areas where they have autonomy such as metropolises, municipalities, and towns.
- Good governance refers to governing systems which are capable, responsive, inclusive and transparent (UNDP, 2011).
- Farazmand (2018) defines governance as a set of traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised.

1.11 Dissertation Outline

Chapter One: Introduction and background This chapter introduced the background, research problem, research questions, and aims, significance of the study and the structure of thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review. This chapter reviews literature on the overview of stand separation systems, the challenges of manual systems i.e. data inaccuracies, corruption and lack of transparency and inefficiency and delays

Chapter 3: Research methodology. This chapter discusses the research paradigms, research designs and the research methods used in the study

Chapter 4: Results. This chapter presents the results of the findings.

Chapter 5: The chapter presents and discusses the research findings, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review on the challenges associated with manual

system of stand allocation systems specifically on Masvingo Rural District Council. This chapter is structured into two sections which are the context and the theoretical review. The context explores the challenges of manual stand allocation systems in different sectors at global, continental, regional and national scales examining how these challenges manifest in various contexts emphasizing the inefficiencies, corruption and delays in manual systems. The section also highlights ongoing global and regional efforts to transition to digital and administrative systems and the impact of these transitions.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by two theories which are Public Administration Theory and Land Governance Theory, and they provide lens through which the challenges of manual land allocation systems can be understood and analyzed.

2.2.1 Public Administration Theory

Public administration theory examines how public institutions operate focusing on the principles of efficiency, transparency, accountability and service delivery. In the context of land allocation, this theory is relevant because it highlights the role of public administration in managing land resources and providing services to citizens. The inefficiencies and corruption observed in manual land allocation systems can be attributed to weak public administration practices where there is a lack of clear procedures, oversight and accountability mechanisms (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). The theory also emphasizes the importance of modernizing public administration through the adoption of technology and the professionalization of public services. In line with this the study examines the potential for automating land allocation processes to improve efficiency, reduce corruption and enhance service delivery in rural councils like Masvingo (Osborne & Gaebler,

2023). Public Administration theory core principle is the need for efficiency in public service delivery. The manual stand allocation system may suffer from bureaucratic inefficiencies such as delays, redundant processes and human errors. The theory suggests that these inefficiencies are often rooted in outdated administrative practices that have not evolved to meet modern demands (Yang & Holzer, 2023).

Public Administration theory highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement in ensuring effective public service delivery. The engagement of stakeholders can reveal gaps in service delivery, communication breakdowns and the disconnect between policy intentions and implementation. This theory also emphasizes the role of community participation in decision-making processes. By examining how community members perceive the manual stand allocation system, it will assess the extent to which the system incorporates participatory governance principles whether the system is inclusive or exclusionary (Nabatchi, 2018).

According to the theory, transparency is a cornerstone of good governance (Bovens, Goodin & Schillemans, 2022). Without transparency, public confidence in the allocation process can diminish leading to perception of unfairness and the impact of transparency can be explained by examining how information is managed within the MRDC and how decisions are passed to the public (Hood & Curtin, 2018). Public Administration theory explores the e-government in improving public sector efficiency and implementing an electronic stand allocation system which could reduce the manual system's limitations by streamlining processes, increasing transparency and making the system more accessible to the public (Dawes & Helbig, 2020).

2.2.2 Land Governance Theory

Land governance theory emphasizes the need for open and clear processes in land allocation. In

many manual systems, lack of transparency can lead to favoritism, corruption and unequal access to land. Without proper documentation and oversight, it becomes difficult to ensure fairness in the allocation processes (Bugri, 2019). Effective land governance demands that public officials be accountable for their decisions. In manual systems, it is often hard to trace responsibility for errors or intentional misallocations of land. This lack of accountability can erode public trust and reduce the system's effectiveness (Williamson et al, 2014). Land governance theory seeks to ensure that all members of society, regardless of their status or connections, have equal access to land. In manual systems, where records are often poorly maintained, it is easier for powerful individuals to exploit the system depriving vulnerable groups of access to land (Toulmin, 2020). Good governance includes involving local communities in decision-making processes. For Masvingo Rural District Council, perceptions of council officials and community members will likely show that manual systems limit their involvement, leading to dissatisfaction and contestations over land rights (German & Schoneveld, 2020). A key goal of land governance is to ensure that landholders feel secure in their property rights. In systems where allocation is done manually, it becomes harder to protect land tenure security due to poor documentation as highlighted in studies of African land tenure (Deininger & Byerlee, 2017).

Land Governance theory emphasizes clear, transparent systems for land administration. In a manual system, challenges such as inefficiency, corruption and lack of accountability may arise. Enemark et al (2016) highlights the risks of poor governance in land administration. Manual land allocation systems often suffer from inefficiencies due to delays in processing, inaccuracies in record-keeping and vulnerability to corruption (Larbi, 2015). The absence of digitized to track allocations or manage disputes effectively. These are common challenges in land administration systems that lack proper governance structures.

According to this theory, the perceptions of stakeholders such as council officials and community members are crucial to ensure equitable and participatory governance. Community engagement as seen in Deininger et al (2014) is key to fostering transparency and trust in land allocation. Stakeholders often perceive manual systems to favor individuals with connections while council officials might be overburdened by paperwork and lack the tools to administer land efficiently (Njoh, 2018). Understanding these perceptions is crucial to implementing reforms.

The inefficiencies and lack of transparency in manual land allocation systems can lead to disputes, land grabbing and inequity. The theoretical insights Palmer et al (2016) support that poor land governance often results in these outcomes. Manual allocation systems reduce efficiency due to the cumbersome nature of paperwork, land standardized procedures and delays caused by physical storage and retrieval of documents (Zevenbergen et al, 2016). Transparency suffers when records are not easily accessible or tampered with, leading to a lack of confidence in the system.

From Land Governance Theory perspective, improvements should involve digitizing the system, promoting transparency and fostering local participation as argued by authors like Zevenbergen et al (2016). Digitization can enhance the accountability and accuracy of land records. Moving towards digital land administration systems is a recommended improvement to enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability (McLaren & Enemark, 2016). This involves using Geographic Information System and technologies to automate processes. Training local officials and engaging the community in this transition are also crucial.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1 Key challenges in manual land allocation system

There are challenges inherent in manual land allocation systems and one of them is inefficiency as manual processes are time-consuming and labor-intensive, and this results in delays in processing applications leading to frustration among applicants and a backlog of unresolved cases (Chigwenya, 2022). Manual systems are inherently slow and prone to errors making the land allocation process lengthy and burdensome for both administrators and applicants. Such inefficiencies are particularly evident in Masvingo where limited staff resources must handle voluminous paperwork. These administrative delays can lead to significant backlogs in allocation creating frustration among applicants and reducing the council's responsiveness to community needs (Adeoye & Mensah, 2018). Moreover, this inefficiency impacts the council's revenue generation as delays in land allocation hinder timely tax assessments and collection.

Additionally, data management where there is a lack of proper record-keeping and lack of transparency in manual systems creates opportunities for corruption, favoritism and other unethical practices. Officials may exploit their positions to allocate preferred individuals or groups leading to inequitable land distribution and social tensions (Nyagwambo & Mutanga, 2020). In manual systems records are often kept on paper which is susceptible to damage, loss and manipulation. This compromises the accuracy and reliability of land records making it difficult to track land ownership, resolve disputes or plan for future land use (Tenywa & Kyeyune, 2021). The absence of a centralized database also hinders effective communication and coordination among different departments and stakeholders involved in land management (Toulmin & Quan, 2000).

Community members in rural areas are often unaware of procedural requirements for land

allocation which exacerbates inefficiencies in the system. Without digital systems, public awareness campaigns are harder to implement, and residents may struggle to understand and comply with processes. Moreover, local councils sometimes lack the capacity to conduct educational outreach on land rights and allocation policies hence creating misunderstandings and potential conflicts (Byamugisha, 2013). Without proper engagement, communities often view land allocation as biased, suspecting favoritism particularly in manual systems where documentation can be unclear. This distrust may escalate into community resistance to council-led initiatives. Sub-Saharan in Africa studies indicate that a lack of transparency and communication leads communities to question the legitimacy of land allocations heightening conflicts and eroding trust in local authorities (World Bank, 2014).

Many types of council's including those in Zimbabwe lack the financial resources to adopt digital land information systems or geographic information systems. Implementing digital systems requires substantial investment in hardware, software and training resources that are often scarce in rural councils. The lack of technological infrastructure coupled with insufficient internet connectivity and unreliable electricity makes the transition from manual to digital systems challenging. A study on land systems in Uganda and Tanzania also highlighted that these barriers require long-term investment and support to overcome (Dekeyne et al, 2020). Technological constraints prevent the council from achieving the transparency and accountability that digital systems could offer. Manual systems are not only slower but also increase opportunities for errors and manipulation. In contrast, automated systems allow for efficient record-keeping, audit trails and public access to information. For example, digital systems in Nigeria have improved transparency in land allocation but the financial and technological barriers to implementing similar systems in rural Zimbabwe remain high (Adeoye & Mensah, 2018).

2.3.2 Difference between manual and automated Land allocation systems

The distinction between manual and automated land allocation systems is a critical area of study. Manual systems are often characterized by paper-based processes and human intervention has been the traditional approach in many rural councils including Masvingo Rural District Council. Studies have shown that manual systems are prone to several challenges including delivery inefficiencies (Deininger & Feder, 2019). In contrast, automated systems which utilize digital technologies offer the potential for enhanced accuracy, transparency and efficiency in the land allocation. However, the transition to automated systems requires significant investments in technology, training and infrastructure which may not be readily available in resource-constrained settings (Kraemer-Mbula & Wamae, 2016).

Manual systems are often criticized for their lack of transparency as they make it difficult to trace decisions and track challenges in land allocation records and this opacity can create opportunities for corruption, fraud and manipulation as it is harder to establish an audit trail. Adeoye & Mensah (2018), studies from Nigeria indicate that manual land allocation has been linked to corrupt practices with officials sometimes altering records for personal gain due to the lack of accountability in paper-based systems. In contrast, automated land allocation systems improve transparency through audit trails and secure digital records which can be easily accessed and reviewed. For example, Tanzania's adoption of a digital land registry has enabled stakeholders to verify and track land ownership history improving public confidence and reducing disputes (Dekeyne et al, 2020). Also automated systems include user portals where applicants can check the status of their applications enhancing transparency.

Furthermore, manual land records are susceptible to errors, loss and damage as they are typically

stored in physical formats such as ledger or paper files. Over time these records can degrade making retrieval difficult and potentially leading to discrepancies. In Zimbabwe's Masvingo Rural District Council for instance outdated records and data loss in manual systems have contributed to land disputes and confusion regarding ownership (Chigudu & Muchineripi, 2021). Then the automated system allows for more accurate and secures data management. Digital records reduce human errors during data ensure consistency and can be backed up to prevent loss. The integration of Land Information System and Geographical Information System technologies also allows for spatial data to be stored alongside ownership records providing a comprehensive accurate view of land allocation. For example, Ghana's Customary Land Secretariats have seen improved accuracy and reduced data loss since adopting automated systems for tracking land ownership (Byamugisha, 2013).

In manual system disputes are common due to inconsistencies in record-keeping and the difficulty of verifying ownership histories. Lack of transparency and data accuracy exacerbates conflicts as stakeholders may challenge allocation decisions that are not documented properly. These challenges are particularly evident in rural Zimbabwe where manual record-keeping leads to boundary disputes and allocation conflicts (Chigudu & Muchineripi, 2021). In contrast, automated systems help mitigate conflicts by providing clear and accessible records that serve as evidence in disputes. GIS integrated land systems make boundary delineations more precise, reducing ambiguity and the potential for conflict. For example, in Uganda digitalization of land information has contributed to a reduction in land disputes by providing indisputable records of land ownership and boundaries (Dekeyne, 2020).

2.3.3 Implications of inefficient and transparent land allocation systems

Economic Impact on local development

Economically, they stifle investment and growth by creating barriers to land access and increasing transaction costs. When land allocation is delayed it affects the ability of individuals and businesses to develop land for productive uses such as agriculture or housing (Deininger & Byerlee, 2014). Investors require clear, secure and accessible land rights to consider land as an asset. Inefficient land allocation systems lead to prolonged processes and increased risks which deter investment. For instance, in Kenya the implementation of an automated system improved investor confidence as it provided clear records and reduced the risk of disputes hence better planning for development projects (World Bank, 2014).

Social Impact

Socially, the lack of transparency and fairness in land allocation can lead to conflicts as communities perceive the process as biased or corrupt. This undermines social cohesion and trust in local governance institutions making it difficult to achieve long-term development goals (Boone & Nyeme, 2019). Nontransparent land allocation system lacks clear processes making it easy for corrupt practices and favoritism to flourish. Inefficiency can lead to unchecked power and enable officials to engage in bribery and unauthorized land allocation. This was observed in Zimbabwe where weak land governance has led to corruption and mistrust in the local councils (Chigudu & Muchineripi, 2021).

Environmental Implications

The inefficient land allocation can result in the unsustainable use of land resources. Without proper

planning and management, land may be allocated in ways that lead to overexploitation, deforestation or degradation further exacerbating the challenges faced by rural communities (Nkonya et al, 2016). The intersection of these economic, social and environmental factors highlights the critical need for reforming land allocation systems to ensure they contribute to sustainable development. In places where transparency is lacking, there is poor enforcement of sustainable land use policies. This can lead to land degradation as short-term interest overrides responsible management. Transparent and efficient systems such as in Ghana's land administration reforms help to integrate environmental considerations by clearly defining land use rights and restrictions (Byamugisha, 2013).

2.3.4 Improvements to enhance effectiveness of the manual stand allocation systems

Enhancing the effectiveness of manual stand allocation systems in land management can help improve efficiency, transparency and public trust.

Standardization of procedures and documentation

Establishing clear, standardized procedures and documentation formats for stand allocations can reduce errors, delays and inconsistencies. Standardized forms and protocols can simply make it easier for officials to manage applications and for applicants to understand requirements. Standardization also limits the discretionary power of individual officials reducing opportunities for corruption (Dekeyne et al, 2020)

Community Engagement and Awareness Programs

Educating the community on land allocation processes and their rights can improve transparency and reduce disputes. Public awareness programs can help citizens understand how to apply for

land allocation, what documents are required and the steps involved in creating a more inclusive environment. This has been successful in Uganda where local councils involved communities in land governance leading to decline in allocation disputes and improved public trust (Ali et al, 2014). According to Bina & Lavau (2020), community participation and empowerment can enhance fairness and transparency.

Establishing Record-Keeping and Filing Systems

A systematic filing and record-keeping system can help local councils manage applications and prevent the loss and misplacement of records. Digitalizing some aspects of record-keeping can also reduce physical file management burdens. For example, Kenya's efforts to digitize partial records before implementing a fully automated system allowed better tracking and storage of information (World Bank, 2014).

Periodic Audits and Monitoring

Regular audits and monitoring can help identify inefficiencies and corruption in the allocation process. Audits should be performed by independent bodies or through community representatives to ensure transparency. For instances, routine checks of allocation records have been used successfully in Nigeria to mitigate corruption in manual land transactions (Adeoye & Mensah, 2018).

A Case Study in Africa

Kenya experiences digitizing land and stand allocation where Kenyan authorities historically faced significant challenges with manual allocation systems resulting in inefficiency, corruption and lack of transparency. These issues are common across African countries relying on manual land

administration as noted by World Bank and the African Union in their advocacy for digitized land governance. The key challenges in Kenya's manual system are inefficiency and delays where manual process requires citizens to visit multiple offices for land allocation leading to long processing times, corruption and loss of records where manual records were susceptible to alteration, loss or destruction making it challenging to verify ownership and allocate land transparently and another challenge is limited public access and trust whereby citizens often had limited access to land records resulting in disputes and a lack of trust in local authorities.

Kenya implemented a digital land registry system, integrated geographic information system and block chain technology for improved accuracy, accountability and transparency. The shift was supported by the National information management system developed with the assistance of the World Bank. To overcome these challenges, they convert physical records into digital formats enabling quick access and better security, also streamlining allocation with online applications and approvals reducing face-to-face interactions and bureaucratic delays and block chain technology was integrated into the registry system to enhance data integrity and provide verifiable land records. Furthermore, the new system led to significant improvements in efficiency, reduced corruption and increased public trust. Additionally, the African Union's framework and guidelines on land policy in Africa recognized the approach as a model for improving land governance, advocating for broader adoption of technology-based solutions across the continent.

2.4 Research Gap Analysis

This research aims to address the following gaps identified in existing literature. The first gap is limited examination of context-specific operational challenges. While the research has broadly noted issues like delays, record-keeping difficulties and corruption in manual systems, the distinct

operational challenges faced by Masvingo's council such as resource constraints and administrative inefficiencies have not been comprehensively studied. This research will explore the unique operational and resource-based challenges faced by rural councils in managing manual land allocation adding to the existing knowledge base with a focus on rural governance in Zimbabwe thereby help to clarify why these challenges persist. The second gap is lack of in-depth analysis on local perceptions and trust in manual systems and existing studies generally highlight that manual systems are prone to corruption, in efficiencies and a lack of transparency.

However, there is limited empirical data on how council officials and the community in Masvingo specifically perceive these challenges regarding the perceived fairness and effectiveness of the allocation process. By exploring the perceptions of both council officials and community members, this research aims to capture a well-rounded view of how the manual system is experienced and assessed by those directly involved and this insight will bridge the gap by providing a grounded understanding of stakeholder satisfaction, trust and areas of concern specifically in Masvingo. The third gap is insufficient exploration of feasible improvement strategies tailored for resource-constrained settings and there is a gap in research on how rural councils like Masvingo's realistically transition to automated or semi-automated land allocation systems given budget, infrastructure and training limitations. The current studies highlight digital land systems but lack a focus on gradual changes that can be more practical for Masvingo context. The research will explore potential improvements to the manual system that are feasible within a rural council's limited budget and resources like better record-keeping and gradual digitalization thereby aiming to offer immediate practical changes that can increase system effectiveness.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter commenced by providing an overview and examining the theoretical framework, elucidating the defined variables and expounding on the underlying theories. Furthermore, it conducted a review of empirical literature to identify relevant research conducted by scholars from diverse geographical locations. As a result, this study aims to bridge that gap in research literature.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary emphasis of this chapter is on research methodologies utilized in this study to address research goals. This chapter provided a detailed and brief account of the study's implementation. Specifically, this chapter addressed the research framework, target population, sample selection,

research tools, and data gathering methods, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research philosophy

The researcher used constructivism philosophy which emphasizes the understanding of how individuals and groups construct their own understanding and meaning of the world based on their experiences and interaction. It was useful for exploring how people interpret and make sense of their social realities. Constructivism encouraged various stakeholders to interpret and experience these challenges based on their unique perspectives, for example council officials and community members. According to Driscoll (2000), constructivist theory posits that knowledge can only exist within the human mind and that it does not have to match any real-world reality.

3.3 Research methodology

The researcher used a qualitative research methodology which is ideal for exploring the complexities and nuances of manual systems in council stands allocation. The transcribed data was coded using a thematic coding process and this involves identifying and labeling key themes, patterns and categories that emerge from the data. Initially, open coding was used to capture broad themes followed by axial coding to identify the relationship between the themes. Then the final stage involved selective coding to focus on the relevant themes related to the challenges in the manual stand allocation system. The processed evidence involved organizing the coded data into meaningful categories and themes that align with the research questions. This process included grouping similar codes together, identifying patterns and drawing connections between different themes. Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem.

3.4 Research Design

Creswell (2013) defines a research design as the comprehensive approach utilized to integrate the diverse elements of a study into a coherent framework, thereby ensuring the successful exploration of the research topic. Research design refers to a methodological approach employed to address a research enquiry by collecting and analyzing empirical data. The researcher used a case study research design which allows for a detailed in-depth exploration of a single case, the stand allocation system at Masvingo Rural District Council. The challenges in the manual systems often involve complex interactions between people, processes and the administrative practices. It enabled a thorough examination of how various factors contribute to the problems within the systems offering a nuanced understanding that might be missed in broader studies.

3.5 Population Sample

In general terms, a research population is an assembly or collection of people, items or occurrences that exhibit distinct attributes and are the focal point of a researcher's attention. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2012) provide a definition of population as a collective of individuals from which statistical samples are gathered and analyzed. This study focused on stakeholders who include individuals directly affected by the stand allocation system, staff members who manage the allocation process, individuals who handle the day to day operations related to stand allocations, include individuals who interact with impacted by the system, residents that apply for or affected by allocations and community leaders who have insights into how the system impacts the broader community.

3.6 Sample Size

Wang and Cheng (2020) define sampling as a procedure of choosing specific individuals or a smaller group from the entire population to gauge the attributes of the entire population. A sample size must not be excessively big or insufficiently small but optimum in size to allow for detection of statistically meaningful variances and ensure attainment of sound outcomes (Gumbili and Das, 2022). Lakens (2022) provides additional support by justifying that a sample size exceeding 50% of the entire population is necessary to ensure reliability of the results. The sample size composed of 30 respondents from the sampling frame of 60 employees of MRDC, with the managerial personnel represented by 15 people and 15 for the non-managerial personnel. This was done with the view that they will be representative of the total population of interest.

3.7 Sampling Method

The research used purposive sampling which involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research and chose council staff, staff who handles day-to-day operations and community leaders who interact with the allocation system to gain deep insights into challenges and perceptions from those most knowledgeable about the system.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

Primary and secondary data both supported research instruments of this study.

Primary data

Primary data refers to unprocessed data that needs to be collected by the researcher (Tabuena and Hilario, 2021). Primary data provides an unprocessed and pertinent response to targeted research

inquiries to offer a precise depiction of findings. However, collecting primary data can be very expensive and good strategies should be employed to minimize data collection costs. The researcher has minimum control over errors made by respondents during data collection.

Primary data collection involves the use of interviews, focus group discussion and will be transcribed by converting audio or video recordings into written text. The transcription will be done orally to ensure that all data is accurately captured. Interviews are a powerful qualitative research tool that can provide insight into the challenges facing municipal stall manual distribution systems. It allows for an in-depth examination of a specific case such as the manual distribution system of the Masvingo rural district council. A group discussion is where participants share their views and experiences and conduct focus groups with community members who have applied for stands to discuss their collective experiences and challenges to understand share experiences and ideas for improvements. Monday (2020) defines an interview as a formal exchange of dialogue in which one participant poses inquires and the other furnishes responses.

Secondary data

Secondary data refers to information utilized for reasons different from their original purpose at the time of collection (Naher et al., 2023). Usually, secondary data encompasses diverse application situations and is sourced from a wide a broad range of existing sources. Secondary data collection is a cost-effective approach since it utilizes information previously gathered by other parties. Secondary data is considered dependable owing to its origination and dissemination by professionals; hence, such information enhances the quality and credibility of most research projects. Nevertheless, secondary data could be outdated, lacking in comprehensiveness, influenced by partiality and not precise, all of which could have an impact on the outcomes of a

study.

3.9 Data Presentation

Data presentation aims to convey findings clearly and persuasively while retaining the depth and complexity of the data. This is achieved through detailed narratives, direct quotations and thematic maps. According to Miles et al (2014), visual tools like word clouds, diagrams and matrices can help illustrate relationships between themes and sub-themes. The researcher focused on themes and categories which help organize and interpret data in response to the research questions. The researcher prioritized presenting data in a way that aligns with the audience while staying true to participants' voices and use tables to summarize challenges, impacts and stakeholder perceptions.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves systematically examining non-numerical data to identify themes, patterns and insights. The researcher used thematic analysis, and data is collected through interviews, focus groups, transcribed and coded into manageable themes. Memos were used to document ideas and interpretations during the coding process helping to refine the analysis and transcription converting audio or video recordings of interviews or focus groups into written text hence allows the researcher to review and analyze what the participants said in their own words, making it easier to code and identify themes. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), the credibility of the analysis is enhanced through triangulation, member checking and reflexivity.

3.10 Validity and Reliability of data

The researcher used interviews and focus groups to cross-verify the findings and after conducting interviews or focus groups, the researcher shared interpretations with participants to ensure their

views and experiences have been accurately captured. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), validity refers to the accuracy and truthfulness and credibility of the data and the conclusion drawn from it and ensuring validity involves strategies like triangulation where data is collected from multiple sources or through various methods to confirm findings.

The researcher focused on internal reliability, which is the consistency of data interpretation within the study. The result of the analysis was processed by creating a clear and consistent set of codes to categorize responses, hence ensuring that similar responses are interpreted and categorized in the same way. Consistency in interview protocol ensures that all participants are asked the same set of questions in a similar manner, and this helps make the data collection process consistent.

3.11 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing is an essential step to ensure that the research design, tools and methods are appropriate and produce reliable and valid data. For the research, pilot testing involved conducting a small-scale test with a subgroup of participants to test the clarity of interview guides and focus group discussions. This process identified and solved any problems with the research tools, evaluated the feasibility of methods and ensured that questions effectively capture the necessary data.

3.12 Ethical consideration

The researcher asked questions in a way that will not force respondents to lie or to give false answers and all information collected will be strict for educational purposes and will be kept in strict confidence. Saunders et al (2007) postulates that ethics of research include informed consent, confidentiality, protection of privacy, protection against harm, and protection against identity. In

cognizance of research ethics, the researcher was guided by the following ethical considerations as guided by Saunders et al (2007). During data collection, the researcher first sought informed consent from the respondents by explaining the reasons for the research.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter concentrated on the methodological approaches utilized in the research to address research goals. Specifically, the chapter addressed research design, target population data gathering, presentation and analysis, and ethical considerations. The researcher managed to explain how each and every research design and methodology is going to be used in order to come up with a rich conclusion on the challenges in the manual systems on council stands allocation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data collected through interviews and focus group discussions conducted with various stakeholders in MRDC. The aim of this chapter is to analyze and interpret the data to address the objectives of this study, providing the in-depth analysis of the challenges in the manual system of stands allocation in MRDC.

4.2 Biographical Presentation of Participants

4.2.1 Age

Participants were categorized into different categories. The findings are depicted below.

Age categories	Frequency	Percentage
18_25 years	3	12%
26_35 years	8	32%
36_45 years	6	24%
46-55 years	5	20%
56 and above	3	12%
Total	25	100

Table 4.2.1 Age

The findings indicate that most of the participants were in the age category between 26 to 35 years. There were 8(32%). Followed by the ones who were between 36 to 45years who constituted 6 (24%). Followed by the ones who were between 46 to 55 years who constituted 5(20%). The least frequency was 3(12%) of participants who were between 18 to 25 and 56 and above years

4.2.2 Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	56%
Female	11	44%
Total	25	100

Table 4.2.2 Sex

The findings indicate that most participants were males about 14 (56%). Only 11 (44%) were females.

4.2.3 Education

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary level	3	12%
Secondary level	7	48%
Diploma level	9	36%
Degree	5	20%
Postgraduate	1	4%
Total	25	100%

Table 4.2.3 Education

The findings indicate that all the participants were at least literate. About 9 (36%) were at Diploma level followed by 7 (28%) who were at Secondary level, then followed by 5(20%) were at Degree level and 1(4%) had Postgraduate qualifications and only 3(12%) said they did primary level.

4.2.4 Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Not married	9	36%
Married	12	48%
Divorced	2	8%
Widowed	2	8%
Total	25	100%

Table 4.2.4 Marital Status

The findings indicate that the most participants were married 12 (48%), followed by 9 (36%) who were not married and then followed by 2(8%) who were Widowed and Divorced.

4.3 Response Rate

The response rate of participants who participated in the research targeted 30 participants. Out of the 30 participants it managed to interview only 25 participants. The five participants who were left out could not participate due to many reasons. According to Thein (2020) a response rate that

is above 60% is reliable. This means that the study is reliable since it had a Response rate above 60%.

4.4 Perceptions of Council Officials

Council officials generally viewed the manual system as outdated, slow and prone to inefficiencies. Respondents emphasized that the reliance on physical records increases delays, administrative workload and chances of errors. Many officials acknowledged that the paper-based approach makes it difficult to track applications leading to delays and frequent complaints from applicants. One official stated

‘The manual allocation process involves a lot of paperwork which leads to long processing times. Sometimes files get misplaced. We must start from scratch.’

This response reflects the inefficiencies of the manual stand allocation process emphasizing excessive paperwork, long processing times and the risk of misplacing important documents, for instances receipts of the stand. This not only delays service delivery but also increases administrative burdens and the likelihood of errors. Furthermore, losing files can result in applicants having to restart the process causing frustration and reducing public trust in the system. These challenges underscore the need for a more efficient, transparent and digitalized approach to land allocation.

Another participant also noted that,

‘The current system is too slow. Processing a stand allocation takes months, sometimes

years and if a file is misplaced it can take even longer to resolve disputes.’

This response highlights the inefficiencies and delays caused by the manual stand allocation system emphasizing the prolonged processing time and administrative bottlenecks. The fact that allocations can take months or even years indicates a lack of efficiency which can frustrate applicants and hinder orderly land development. Additionally, the risk of file misplacement exacerbates delays leading to disputes that take even longer to resolve and such inefficiencies not only slow down service delivery but also create opportunities for corruption, favoritism and public distrust in the system. To address these challenges the adoption of a digital land management system would improve record-keeping, enhance transparency and reduce processing time.

Another official responsible for stand records emphasized that the lack of a centralized digital database makes it easy for errors and double allocation. This consists of research by Toulmin (2020) which highlights that manual land systems in Africa are inefficient, making them vulnerable to administrative errors and corruption. A review by Magigi (2015) highlights similar challenges in Tanzania’s local governments where inefficiencies in land allocation have resulted in disputes and land tenure insecurity. In addition, history of a particular stand. This issue has led to cases where multiple individuals are allocated the same stand. According to World Bank (2019), such problems are common in African municipalities that still rely on paper-based land administration systems. Additionally, officials noted that political interference often influences the allocation process, which further complicates transparency and accountability. This aligns with findings by Njoh (2018) who observed that political favoritism in land allocation is prevalent in many African countries where manual systems are used.

4.4.1 Perceptions of Community Members

Community members expressed frustration over the slow and non-transparent nature of stand allocation. Many believed that stand allocations were not conducted fairly citing favoritism and corruption as significant concerns. One respondent noted:

‘Some people who apply for stands get them within a short time while others wait for years.

It seems like knowing someone in the council helps.’

This response reflects that inconsistencies and potential favoritism in the manual stand allocation process where some applicants receive stands quickly while others experience long delays. This raises concerns about lack of transparency, possible corruption and unfairness in the system. It implies that personal connections within the council may influence allocation decisions undermining trust in the process and such practices can lead to public dissatisfaction, inequality and reduced confidence in local governance highlighting the need for clear, standardized and accountable procedures. This aligns with findings by Njoh (2018) who argues that manual land administration systems often create opportunities for elite capture and corruption, reducing public trust in local governance structures.

Community members also criticized the lack of communication from the council regarding allocation procedures and waiting lists. According to the research by Chirisa et al (2019) on land governance in Zimbabwe found that poor communication between local authorities and citizens contributes to mistrust and grievances. Another issue raised was inconsistent record-keeping where some community members reported receiving contradictory information about their applications hence causing disputes over stand ownership.

4.5 Key Challenges in the Manual Stand Allocation System

4.5.1 Delays and Bureaucratic Inefficiencies

Respondents identified excessive bureaucratic procedures as a major bottleneck in the manual stand allocation system. Council officials noted that approvals required multiple signatures from different departments causing unnecessary delays. According to World Bank (2021), inefficient land administration processes in Africa can extend transaction times by up to 60% leading to frustration among applicants and slowing urban development. A council official in the allocation department admitted

‘On average it takes about 6 to 12 months to allocate a stand and in some cases, applicants have waited for more than two years due to missing documents.’

Participant's response highlights concern about inefficiency, favoritism and potential corruption in the manual stand allocation system. It suggests that the process lacks transparency and consistency with some individuals benefiting from connections within the council while others face prolonged delays. This perception undermines public trust in the system and raises questions about fairness and accountability and it also indicates that the allocation process may be influenced by informal networks rather than clear criteria leading to disparities in access land. Addressing these issues would require stronger governance mechanisms that enhance transparency and possibly the digitization of the allocation system. This interpretation aligns with the literature of the World Bank (2020) which says delays in land allocation discourage investment and hinder development a challenge that is common in many local authorities in Africa.

4.5.2 Errors and Duplication of Stand Allocations

One of the most serious challenges noted was the frequent occurrence of duplicate allocations. Due to the lack of an automated tracking system, some stands have been allocated to multiple applicants. This problem has led to an increase in legal disputes with some cases being taken to court. Adam and Mutungi (2021) found that manual land records are vulnerable to manipulation contributing to overlapping claims and contested ownership. A council official explained:

‘We sometimes receive complaints that two people were allocated the same stand. This happens because we rely on manual-on-manual ledgers, which are difficult to update in real-time’.

This response reflects a critical flaw in the manual stand allocation system that is duplicate allocation due to outdated and inefficient record-keeping. Since the process relies on manual ledgers, updates are not instantaneous increasing the risk of errors and conflicting allocations. This not only leads to disputes between beneficiaries but also creates administrative challenges for the council which must resolve these conflicts. Such inefficiencies can undermine public trust, fuel perceptions of mismanagement and even expose the system to fraudulent activities. To address this issue a digitalized real time tracking system is essential to enhance accuracy, transparency and efficiency in land allocation.

Another response is from an official from the land management department stated,

‘Without a digital system it’s difficult to detect errors early and we only realize a stand has been double allocated when two applicants claim ownership.’

This response reflects the inefficiencies and risks associated with manual stand allocation,

particularly the challenge of detecting errors such as double allocation. This aligns with research by Enemark et al (2019) which found manual land administration systems in developing countries contribute to errors, land disputes and litigation cases. Also, Williamson et al (2020) further argue that digital land management systems enhance accuracy, reduce conflicts and improve transparency in land governance. This underscores the need for digitalization to minimize human errors to enhance record keeping and fairness.

4.5.3 Transparency and Corruption Risks

Transparency emerged as a critical challenge in the current system. Respondents noted that without digital system it is difficult to track allocation decisions and hold officials accountable. Some community members alleged that bribes were required to speed up processing times. A report by African Union (2020) on land governance in Africa confirms that corruption risks are higher in manual land administration system due to the lack of digital auditing mechanisms. One community member noted,

‘Those with connections inside the council seem to get their stands faster. If you don’t know anyone you wait especially on waiting list for years.’

This response reflects concerns about nepotism, favoritism and lack of transparency in the manual stand allocation. The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes on weak institutional governance that leads to inefficiencies and unequal access to public service benefiting those with social or political connections (Pritchett and Woolcock, 2004). Participant’s response underscores the need for procedural fairness, institutional reforms and digitalized system to ensure equal access to land allocation hence reducing opportunities for corruption and undue influence.

4.5.4 Record-Keeping and Data Management Issues

Both employees and community members noted that record-keeping in the manual system is unreliable. The participants' response reflects that the absence of centralized database makes it difficult to verify allocations hence contributing to conflicts. One focus group participant mentioned:

'Sometimes our allocation documents go missing and we are asked to resubmit information repeatedly.'

Participant response reflects file loss and damage as physical records are vulnerable to theft and these files are difficult in retrieval because searching for specific files is time-intensive, hence causing delays. The repeated loss documents forces applicants to resubmit information leading to delays, frustration and potential manipulation of records and such challenges undermine transparency and accountability (Enemark et al., 2019).

A senior council employee explained:

'We rely entirely on physical records and if a file is misplaced, we have no way to retrieve the information unless the applicant has a copy.'

The response reflects the vulnerability of manual record-keeping systems which lack backup mechanisms making information retrieval difficult when files are missing. The finding aligns with the literature, which highlights that digital land administration systems enhance data security and accessibility hence reducing risks associated with misplaced documents (World Bank, 2021). The council's reliance on physical files has led to problems with record-keeping. Another senior official admitted:

‘Storage is a challenge. We have cabinets full of records and sometimes finding an old file takes hours or even days.’

Participant’s response highlights the storage and retrieval challenges associated with manual record-keeping system. With physical cabinets filled with documents locating specific files becomes time-consuming, often taking hours or even days. This inefficiency not only delays decision-making and service delivery but also increases the risk of document loss, damage or misplacement. Furthermore, excessive reliance on physical storage limits space and makes the system difficult to scale as records accumulate overtime. Such challenges underscore the need for a digital record-keeping system that allows for quick retrieval, better organization and improved data security, ultimately enhancing efficiency and service delivery. According to the research by Enemark et al (2019), inefficient record-keeping in land administration contributes to delays and complicates conflict resolution.

Another council official explained,

‘Sometimes we spend weeks searching for a single file and some records go missing which creates disputes and delays.’

Participant’s response reflects the inefficiencies and risks of paper-based land administration where poor record-keeping leads to delays, loss of files and disputes over ownership. The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes how digital system enhances efficiency, reduce conflicts and improve land tenure security (Deininger, 2003). Adam & Mutungi (2021) highlight that poor record-keeping in manual land systems undermines accountability making it difficult to monitor transactions and detect fraudulent activities.

4.6 Impacts of Manual System Challenges on Efficiency and Transparency

4.6.1 Increased Processing Time

The delays caused by bureaucratic inefficiencies mean that applicants sometimes wait years before receiving a stand. The long process some times discourage investment and slow down urban expansion. The following excerpt shows one of the views of the participants

‘I applied for a stand three years ago and the process has still been finalized because the council said they are looking for my file.’

The response reflects that the manual system causes significant delays with applications taking an unreasonably long time to process hence leading to frustration among applicants eroding trust in the council’s processes and overall governance. This shows that there is need for modernization to transition from manual system automated solutions to enhance efficiency, reliability and citizen satisfaction. The World Bank (2021) states that manual systems can extend land administration processes by up to 60%, reducing services delivery efficiency.

4.6.2 Increased Land Disputes

Due to duplicate allocations and missing records, the MRDC has faced an increasing number of land disputes. This has resulted in legal battles further straining council resources. According to Toulmin (2020) it noted that inefficient land administration systems often lead to tenure insecurity which affects both landowners and local authorities. According to one council official.

‘We often receive complaints from people claiming ownership of the same stand and resolving these disputes takes a lot of time and resources.’

This response highlights the challenges posed by land disputes arising from inefficiencies in the manual stand allocation system. When multiple individuals claim ownership of the same stand it creates conflicts that demand significant time and resources to resolve. This not only delays land development but also places financial and administrative strain on the council, which must mediate disputes and, in some cases, engage in legal battles. Such conflicts erode public trust in the land administration system, hence contributing to tenure insecurity. This aligns with findings by Magigi (2015) who noted that stand allocation conflicts are common in regions relying on manual land systems. The situation underscores the need for a transparent and well-documented allocation process supported by digital record-keeping to prevent duplicate allocations and ensuring clarity in land ownership.

4.6.3 Revenue Loss for the Council

Officials noted that inefficiencies in stand allocation affect revenue collection. Since records are poorly maintained, some residents occupy stands without working making formal payments. The African Development Bank (AfDB, 2022) states that weak land administration systems lead to revenue leakages limiting a council's ability to fund infrastructure development. One of the staff members noted that

'Some residents occupy stands for years without paying because our records are not updated making it hard to track payments.'

This highlights how poor record-keeping in the manual stand allocation system leads to revenue losses for the council. Without accurate and up-to-date records, some residents occupy stands without making formal payment either due to oversight or intentional avoidance. This weakens the council's ability to enforce payment collection resulting in financial shortfalls that limit its capacity

to fund essential infrastructure and services. Additionally, the lack of proper monitoring creates loopholes that could be exploited for fraud and to address this issue an efficient digital tracking system is needed to ensure transparency, accountability and improved revenue collection for sustainable development. The research by Chirisa et al (2019) confirms that ineffective land allocation systems can negatively impact local government revenue.

4.7 Potential Improvements to Enhance the Effectiveness of the System

4.7.1 Capacity Building and Training

Officials acknowledged that transitioning to a digital system would require training. Without adequate skills, staff may struggle to operate a new system effectively. A respondent stated,

4.7.2 Digitization of stand allocation

Both officials and community members agreed that a digital land management system would address most of the current challenges. The proposed system would include a database for tracking allocations, reducing duplication and disputes. Several African cities including Nairobi and Kigali have successfully implemented Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Blockchain technology to enhance land transparency (AfDB, 2022). Discussions about digitization of the stand allocation process have been ongoing but have not progressed significantly. Respondents highlighted several barriers which are limited revenue from stand allocations hampers investment in technology, council employees lack the technical expertise to operate a digital system, and some staff members are hesitant to adopt new methods preferring the familiarity of the manual system. . One of the participants noted that

‘Now we are initiating new system whereby information is kept in the computers when the layout plan has approved, and this makes the allocation easier as we follow the chronological order of stand numbers while also, we are backstopping through the creation of files which is done by the Social Services Department.’

Participant’s response reflects a shift from a fully manual system to a semi digitalized approach in Masvingo Rural District Council’s process. By storing an approved layout plan in computers and following a chronological order of stand numbers the new system enhances efficiency and reduces errors associated with manual record-keeping. Moreover, the continued use of physical files serves as a backstopping mechanism ensuring data redundancy and accountability. The finding aligns with the literature, which recognizes the best practice in land governance which emphasizes both technological integration and administrative oversight (World Bank, 2021).

4.7.3 Community Awareness and Transparency Measures

To address transparency concerns, respondents suggested that the council should establish a public database where applicants can track the status of their applications. This recommendation aligns with best practices by Chirisa and Matsika (2019) as they found that participatory land allocation approaches reduce disputes and improve public trust in local governance.

4.8 Chapter Summary

The data collected through interviews and focus group discussions indicate that Masvingo Rural District Councils manual stand allocation system is characterized by inefficiencies, lack of transparency and corruption risks. These challenges negatively impact service delivery leading to increased disputes and loss of public trust. To address these issues, the council should prioritize

digitization, capacity building and enhanced stakeholder engagement. The next chapter will discuss the recommendations for policy and implications drawn from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings, draws conclusions based on the findings, provides recommendations for improving the stand allocation system in Masvingo Rural District Council and areas covered from chapter one to four shall be summarized as well as areas for future research

5.2 Summary

Chapter one introduced this study and focused mainly on the background, research objectives, research questions, limitations, delimitations, definition of key terms and a chapter summary.

The second chapter of this research focused on the conceptual framework that guided the research. Theoretical framework underpinning the research was Public Administration theory and Land Governance theory as well as a gap analysis is contained in the chapter.

The third chapter presented the research methodology utilized by this study. The research is qualitative in nature, so it used constructivist paradigms and on research design, the researcher used case studies. The target population was composed of 30 respondents from the sampling frame of 60 employees of MRDC, with the managerial personnel represented by 15 people and 15 for the non-managerial personnel. The chapter also contains research instruments utilized, and ethical considerations made as well as an elaboration of validity and reliability of research data.

Chapter four analyzed and presented collected data and the findings were presented through themes. Interviews and focus groups available primary and secondary data was derived from published management and regulator reports. Research questions were answered in chapter four and these responses from participants showed the challenges being faced by manual stand allocations systems. Furthermore, a thematic approach was used, and the researcher made the use of tables to present the gathered data for better understanding.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that the manual stand allocation system used by MRDC presents significant challenges that affect efficiency, fairness and transparency. These challenges undermine public confidence in the system, limit the council's ability to deliver timely services and create opportunities for fraudulent activities.

5.3.1 The perceptions of council officials and community members regarding the current stand allocation system.

The research concludes that council officials and community members hold diverse views

regarding the manual stand allocation system as it provides a comprehensive understanding of how different stakeholders view the system's functionality, fairness and efficiency. By gathering insights from both council officials and community members, the research reveals discrepancies between those in positions of authority and the public highlighting potential gaps in communication, trust and governance. Council officials who are directly involved in the administration system of the system offer perspectives on the challenges they face such as administrative burdens which could be contributing to the system's inadequacy. On the other hand, community members who are the end-users of the system express concerns about issues such as transparency, favoritism and access to information which include the system's failures from public service delivery perspectives.

5.3.2 Key challenges in the manual stand allocation system used by MRDC

Moreover, research concludes that key challenges in the manual allocation system lie in its ability to highlight inefficiencies such as delays, record-keeping errors, lack of transparency and difficulties in tracking. It also reveals deeper more systemic issues like corruption, favoritism and the risk of unfair allocation practices. Identifying these challenges is essential for crafting targeted solutions that address the root cause of the system's shortcomings. Moreover, it enables policymakers and local government officials to prioritize areas for reform, ensuring that any changes made are directly aligned with the most pressing issues. These challenges serve as the foundation for recommending improvements as it is the step towards developing strategies for enhancing efficiency, transparency and accountability in the stand allocation process.

5.3.3 Impact on Efficiency and Transparency

Furthermore, the research concludes that impact on efficiency and transparency helps to quantify the consequences of inefficiencies such as delays, poor record-keeping, lack of transparency and potential corruption. This provides a clear picture of how these challenges undermine smooth operations of the allocation process leading to delays in issuing stands, backlogs and disputes over ownership hence erode public trust. Furthermore, the impact on efficiency and transparency lies in its capacity to establish a direct link between the problems within the system and their broader implications for service delivery, citizen satisfaction and the credibility of local government institutions. The impact is essential for measuring the severity of the challenges and prioritizing interventions that will improve both efficiency and transparency of stand allocation process in MRDC.

5.3.4 Potential Improvements to the manual stand allocation system to enhance its effectiveness in MRDC.

The research concludes that the potential improvement opens the opportunity to design strategies that enhance the functionality, transparency and fairness of the allocation system. Also allows for a comprehensive examination of various reform options such as the introduction of digital system, improved record-keeping practices and better communication mechanism. Additionally, a potential improvement to the manual stand allocation enables the identification of best practices from other regions or local authorities that have successfully implemented similar reforms which can serve as a guide for local adaptation. This lies in its capacity to move beyond merely diagnosing problems to actively seeking solutions that can transform the standing allocation

process into a more efficient, transparent and user-friendly system. Furthermore, exploring improvements helps ensure that any changes made are grounded in the needs and preferences of both council officials and community members fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in the reform process.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the above recommendations, the following recommendations were made by the author.

- It is important to implement an electronic land management system to improve efficiency, minimize errors and reduce processing delays. The council should introduce the use of Geographic Information System (GIS Technology) to enhance spatial planning and prevent stand allocation overlaps.
- Training of council officials provides capacity-building programs to equip council officials with digital land administration skills to ensure effective implementation. Also conducting workshops to educate community members on the allocation process and their rights in land acquisition.
- The council should enhance transparency and accountability that establish a public database where applicants can track their applications status in real-time. The council should implement independent auditing mechanisms to monitor stand allocation activities and publish allocation lists and selection criteria to prevent corruption and favoritism.
- The council should improve record-keeping and communication to enhance communication channels between MRDC and community members to provide updates on

allocation procedures and waiting lists. Also develop a centralized digital database to store and track stand allocation records.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

To build upon this study, future research should:

- Examine the feasibility and effects of shifting from manual to digital stand allocation systems in Masvingo Rural District. This research could evaluate how digital solutions might enhance efficiency, transparency, and community trust.
- Investigate existing land allocation policies in Zimbabwe to identify gaps and inconsistencies that may impact local councils' performance. This analysis could inform you about the development of more effective land management policies tailored to the needs of rural districts.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DISTRICT

My name is Blessed Mandyoro, a student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am currently towards attaining a BScHons Degree in Peace and Governance. I am carrying a research which says: **CHALLENGES IN THE MANUAL SYSTEMS OF STANDS ALLOCATION. (A case of Masvingo Rural District Council)** I kindly ask for your assistance in providing answers to my research inquiry and will greatly contribute to the achievement of the desired goal of this research. Responses and information given will be kept confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes. Participation in this research is voluntary and do not include any

personal information such as names, phone number and national identity numbers.

1. For how long have you been employee in Masvingo Rural District Council?
2. How long have you been involved in stand allocation at the council?
3. To what extent has the 60% discount policy affect the council?
4. How would you describe the current manual system of stands allocation used by the council?
5. What are the challenges you face in processing stand allocation manually.
6. How does the manual system affect efficiency of operations for instance time taken to allocate stands, errors and duplication?
7. What measures are in place to ensure transparency in the manual stand allocation system?
8. What challenges do you face when engaging with community members during the stand allocation process?
9. How does the council handle record keeping for stand allocation in the manual system?
10. Have there been a discussions or attempts to digitize stand allocation system?
11. What skills or resources would be necessary to improve the current system?
12. What suggestion do you have for overcoming the challenges of the manual system?

APPENDIX B

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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Masvingo
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Tel: 00263 924 111111
Fax: 00263 924 111111
Email: info@buse.edu.zw

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

28 November 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

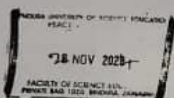
This serves to introduce the bearer, Blessed Mandyoro Student
Registration Number B2124608, who is a HBSC PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your
area/institution.

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

Yours respectfully



J. KUREWA (DR)
Acting Chairperson



**MASVINGO
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

17 MAR 2025

**P. O. BOX 724, MASVINGO
TEL: 039 - 262079**

The Chief Executive Officer
Masvingo Rural District Council
Box 724
Masvingo



05 December 2024

Dear Sir

RE: Request for permission to collect data at Masvingo Rural District Council.

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Blessed Mandyoro and I am currently a final-year undergraduate student pursuing a degree in Peace and Governance at Bindura University of Science Education. I had the privilege of undertaking my industrial attachment with Masvingo Rural District Council during September 2023 to August 2024, an experience that greatly enhanced my knowledge and skills in Local governance and administrative processes.

As part of my academic requirements, I am conducting research for my dissertation titled, 'CHALLENGES IN THE MANUAL SYSTEMS OF STAND ALLOCATION: A CASE STUDY OF MASVINGO RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.' My research aims to examine the challenges associated with the manual allocation system and explore the potential solutions to enhance efficiency, transparency within the council's operations.

I am kindly requesting your permission to collect data from the council through interviews with selected staff members, access to relevant documents and observations of applicable processes. I assure you that all data collected will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. The findings of this research will be shared with the council if deemed valuable for improving current systems.

Thank you for considering my request. I am confident that this research will provide insights that are beneficial to both my academics pursuit and the council's operational objectives. I look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

Blessed Mandyoro

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