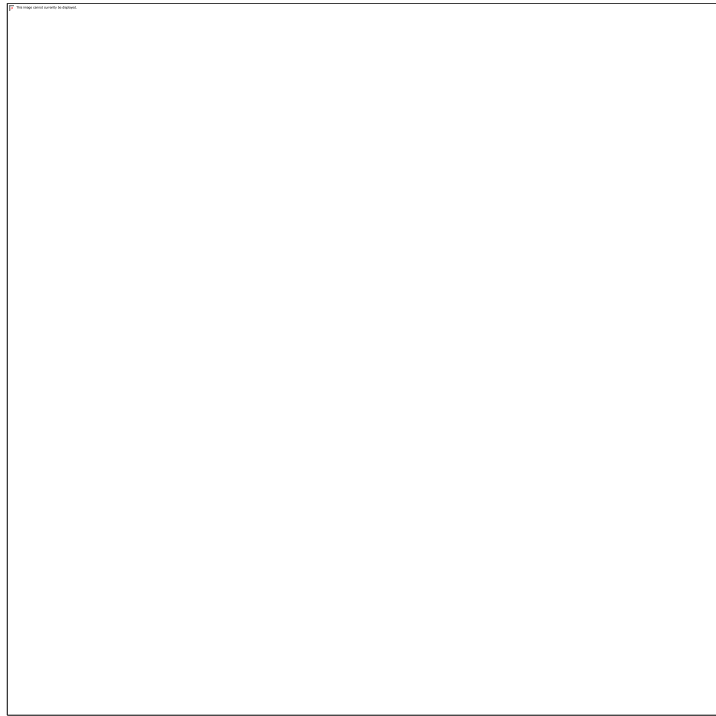


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



rural women's contribution towards community development: a case of mutare district (ward 14)

BY

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Peace and Governance in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Bachelor's of Science in Peace and Governance Degree.

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ABSTRACT

The research focused on the level of women's contribution in community development in rural district. Women have experienced trying situations which has led to their marginalization, henceforth the necessity to endorse women participation in community development. Qualitative research design was used in this study. Also, in this study the researcher used qualitative approach as the methodology. The sampling method used was simple purposive sample, which all drew 32 participants from Mutare district. Data was collected by means of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. This study found out that women face constraints in their developmental labours hence their participation in community development is lesser than anticipated. This is regardless of the fact that they constitute a higher percentage within communities. This study also noted that violence against women and societal attitudes among others are serious challenges which restrict women from carrying out meaningful developmental projects in their communities. The study concluded that isolation and social-cultural factors also play major roles on low participation of women in community development projects. The researcher made the following recommendations; there is need for the government to increase access to microfinance and credit facilities tailored for rural women to support their entrepreneurial ventures, Mutare Rural District needs to provide vocational training and support for women in agro-processing and other income-generating activities, there is need to develop policies that recognize and support unpaid care work through social protection measures such as childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements and the NGO's need to conduct capacity-building workshops focusing on women's rights, advocacy, and negotiation skills to empower women to challenge societal norms and demand equitable treatment.

DECLARATION

I, B191062B hereby declare that this project is my own original work and that it has not been copied or lifted from any other source without acknowledgement.

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATIONS

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful and ever supporting family which has been with me during this whole research. To my father, Mr S Mandikutse, my mother Mrs H Mandikutse, my sisters Nyasha and Rutendo and my little brother Michael, this one is for your undeterred support both spiritually and financially throughout my academic life. May the lord continue to bless you with good health and prosperity. Your inspiration kept me going. Most importantly I would like to register my gratitude to the Almighty for making this a success.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Empowering women has been an area of interest among various stakeholders in Zimbabwe (Gaidzanwa, 1996). Women as a disadvantaged group caught the attention of various stakeholders which include the government. Rural women lack access to use of social services, capital and capacity development. Women's participation and access to information and benefit in selection and management is needed to be ensured (Gender Equality Network, 2012,). Today aid agencies work closely with Government agencies. Although there has been some improvement, women from indigenous groups, some of remote area remain difficult to reach. In these areas' women show less interest in participating in developmental organizations. Further investigation is required into the challenges that prevented rural women's participation in developmental activities. The research findings will provide a better understanding of why rural women do not participate by understanding their roles and challenges to participate. Regarding education of Mutare District rural women, there is at present no gender gap at any level in the developing sectors, although it was not so in the olden day when girls were kept at home to do the housework and to look after younger siblings (UNICEF, 2013).

1.1 Background to the study

To date, many scholars have written on the issue related to the participation of women in community development. The impression gained suggests that these on-going investigations seem to have not yet resulted in specific solutions to the problems facing rural women and development. Studies conducted regarding the economic contribution of rural women in community development involved their participation in different forms of economic activities for their families and societal development. Such economic activities involve Agriculture, Trade transaction, food processing, hairdressing and weaving, Sewing and Knitting, and handcraft and creative art (Duflo, 2012). In explaining the important role women made, the world conference on the United Nations decades of women was that two-third of the total workforce done by women in the world are rural women who live in rural communities with poor social amenities (Hansen, Bangsbo, Jensen, Bibby, & Madsen, 2015). The value of the economic activities of rural women in the area of sustainable development is still not well recognized. They engage in peasant farming and house gardening as their major occupation

(Miranville, 2019). Germain, Dixon-Mueller, & Sen, (2009) examine rural women as half of the rural population, they have an important role in economic activities which leads to the entire development of a community, therefore in order to achieve rural community development an attention to women that involves in economic and developmental activities with men is required.

Women's participation and their role in economic structures is an indicator of the modernization of the national economy and economic development. Community development strategies should be based on a more active participation of rural women in economic activities. Providing the fact that women make the half of the population in rural communities, they are considered the major manufacturers of food and income for rural households which are the important aspect of agricultural production all over the world. (Allen, 2007) asserts that research pointed out that rural women's economic activities can be promoted in several ways because their potentialities as agents of change to community development through their participation in economic and income generating activities are untapped. However, their theoretical and practical knowledge to the environment and resource is not given due consideration. (Swain & Wallentin, 2009) examines the microfinance as a strategy for poverty reduction and a prime to achieve sustainable community development. More light should be put on the economic contribution rural women make to community development in developing countries where they constitute a large part of the workforce, particularly in agricultural production. Despite the fact that domestic chores are vitally associated with women in all societies, they are involved in non-domestic and wage-earning activities for the well-being of their family and community development in general.

In a research work on women and development process (Mustafa et al., 2008) examine the economic contribution of rural women as way of national development. They save as the major source of capital of the country and principal market for domestic manufacturers. They are responsible for over 50% of all productive activities, (80% of food production in Africa, 60% of food production in Latin America), yet they are indignant as a result of great poverty, ignorance, and poor health condition. The researcher further assesses that 75% of the population live and work in rural areas lacks the basic amenities such as potable water, electricity, and motor able roads. Duflo (2012) in a study legitimized the idea of productive partners in agriculture and other economic activities, discovering and documenting the various roles played by rural women as farmers, and agricultural professionals. Rural women in Zimbabwe have little benefits compared to men regarding Education, Employment

opportunities, personal income, Assets and land tenure. Over 50% of women in Zimbabwe live in a rural community where they draw their livelihood and highly struggle for survival. Besides working on farms, rural women in Zimbabwean societies also participate actively in non-agricultural activities as various trade transaction, such as hand and creative art. Despite the important role rural women play in economic activities, they are hardly given any attention in the area of training and visitation by community development agents, extension agent or any government officials with improved technologies. Alkire (2010) points out that the economic contribution rural women made to the community development through handcraft as the traditional way of making pots, it is one of the oldest vocations in Zimbabwean rural communities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Kasuni (2016) a rise in rural women negligence participation has been noted ever since the colonial era. This has been causing conflicts patterning gender issues in Zimbabwe. According to statistics being provided by our current census 79% of women live in rural area yet they do not get much attention for them to be included in economic activities towards community development. Rural women were cited as the most vulnerable group being sidelined hence the need to involve them in activities that will also build their community. Women in rural areas are isolated, confined and marginalized through the non-interactive government policies on rural areas. These symptoms reflect a lack of structured development strategy to create needed opportunities for women in these areas. As a result, there is a high rate of unemployment, because the present development policy clearly has failed to enhance the welfare of most rural women including rural women in Mutare of ward 14. According to (Allen,2000), women form over half of the rural population and 80% of labour force is provided by women. Sneyder and Tadesse (1995) reveals that rural women work almost 90% of roadwork under the “Food-for-work” programme. They also do almost 60% of the work related to marketing Africa’s food. Yet they face gender-specific barriers in accessing financial services, and can receive less than 1% of the total credit to small farmers and 10% of the total credit to agriculture (Hunger Project, 1999).

1.3 Aim

Measures that can be taken to include rural women in economic development.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the economic activities of rural women towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe.
2. To identify barriers that the women may face in participating towards community development activities.
3. To practice methods that break down barriers that hold rural women back from disciplinary laws to unfair share of home, family and community care.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What should be done to identify the socioeconomic activities of rural women towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe?
2. What are the barriers that women may face in participating towards community development?
3. How do they overcome barriers that hold rural women back from disciplinary laws to unfair share of home, family and community care?

1.6 Assumption

The study assumed that all rural women have the knowledge pertaining to the economic development contribution to the community and the country as a whole. It also assumed that rural women participation gave accurate and unbiased information about rural women at large. The scope of this research was to survey women's roles in community development activities in Ward 14 Area of Mutare District. It suggested that with only a few exceptions, rural women progress more than rural men and urban women and men. While data collection along these lines has improved in recent years because of increased donor and government interest, there still remains a general lack of data dismantled by rural and urban areas. This has an impact on our ability to confidently monitor progress toward women's participation. This study also assumed that in rural areas there is often a greater prevalence of social and cultural barriers, labour requirements and distance penalties, that keep females out of school which will keep them illiterate and have less knowledge on how to participate as well in the developing their communities.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The research focused on how rural women should be helped so as to have a chance to participate towards community development. The beneficiaries of this included rural women, Stop Centres and academics. In Zimbabwe, rural women contribute to the development of their

communities through their involvement in different forms of economic activities. But the little emphasis is given to the economic contribution of rural women that constitute 60% of the population. Results of the present study can remind the government as well as non-governmental organizations that community development process can achieve more and move faster with the involvement of women in economic and developmental activities. The significance of this study contributed to the surveying of the roles of women in community development activities and how it has impacted positively in the whole sectors of the socio-economic development of Mutare District. The positive impact is to encourage and incentive rural women to participate convenience in community development activities through their limited cultures, norms and concepts. This research will encourage Government departments to actions on field level activities. The outcomes to be considered consist of enhancing rural women to influence in political, economy and decision making; encourage rural women to participate in community activities at field level and eliminate some of limiting concepts that rural women could not lead in the social, economy and political sectors.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The research was conducted in Mutare District Ward 14 in Manicaland Province. The population of the area is rural women of Mutare District Ward 14. The research was conducted in the rural area and it focused specifically on rural women. This group of people was chosen because of its willingness to unravel the needed information.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The research was conducted in Mutare District Ward14 which is a small community hence it did not have a complexity of cultures, tribes and different contextual communities this means that other contributing factors like religion and culture will be researched with bias towards a particular stance. The research sample size might be difficult to reach since the participants involved live in spaced home areas where most of the participants will be usually at work during the anticipated time of conducting the research. Another challenge is that due to the patriarchal nature of our society, women participation is being considered personal or private matters which are not taken seriously. The women are also at times uncomfortable disclosing their wishes and needs so that they may be heard in fear of being exposed individually. However, the research made use of all relevant ethical considerations meaning participation will be to all women despite their classical differences.

1.10.0 Definitions of Key terms

1.10.1 Poverty eradication

Poverty eradication implies the complete removal of poverty within a given community. It should however, be noted that this is not the same as poverty alleviation which may be defined as a process that improves the conditions under which the poor live (Anger, 2010).

1.10.2 Empowerment

According to Luttrell, et al., (2007) empowerment entails giving the people power, authority or means to embark for instance on projects rather than just telling them that such projects are paying. A successfully implemented empowerment policy can give such people the opportunity to become more economically active by providing them with skills and enterprise development.

1.10.3 Human security

In essence, Human Security refers to safety for the people from both violent and non-violent threats. It can also be viewed as an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference unit of analysis hence emphasis on human beings distinguishes human security from the objective of protecting state territories that dominated security policies in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In this case human security is deliberately human protective as it is human centred (Tadjbakhsh et al., 2010).

1.10.4 Human development

Alkire (2010) defined human development as a process of enlarging a person's functioning's and capabilities to function, the range of things that a person could do and be in life. The purpose therefore is to improve human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable and to participate in communal life.

1.10.5 Gender

The relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially (Grandgirard, at el., 2002)

1.11. Dissertation Outline

The dissertation will be comprising of five chapters. Chapter One will introduce the research background statement of the problem objectives research questions and the significance of the study. Chapter Two will concentrate on reviewing related literature and how it applies in community development. Chapter Three will explain research methodology. Discussions on the research methodology will be further elaborated including data collection and sampling techniques. There will be practices of participation, the notion of community, approaches to community development. Chapter Four will be on data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. This chapter is going to deal with the presentation and discussion of the analysis found whilst the research was being carried. Chapter Five will be a summary and conclusion and recommendations based on the findings that will further bring solutions to the problem limiting rural women to engage on community development in all areas.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into existing literature on rural women's contributions to community development, emphasizing various modes of women's empowerment and their participation from grassroots to leadership levels. It explores international instruments designed to combat neglect of rural women in communities. Additionally, the research examines strategies employed by stakeholders to raise awareness about rural women's contributions to community development. Utilizing Hart's Ladder of participation, the study assesses the extent of women's involvement in community initiatives. Furthermore, the chapter identifies barriers hindering women from utilizing available resources for community development, such as lack of awareness and religious beliefs.

2.2.0 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Hart's ladder of participation

Hart (1994) proposed the first comprehensive definition of the concept of participation, based on his experiences in environmental studies. He described participation as the process of sharing decisions that affect one life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. According to Hart, participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.

The key element of Hart's definition is decision-making. He describes participation as a ladder, with levels of women involvement in projects ranging from non-participation to full participation. He identifies eight levels of participation, calling this the Ladder of Participation. The first level is that of manipulation in this kind of participation, rural women have no understanding of the issues and hence do not understand their actions (Hassan & Silong, 2008). They are consulted but given no feedback on how the ideas they shared during the consultation are used. This can boost young girls and women incomes for positive community development, but they were never given feedback of what happened after or how the organisation is going to be operating in their area. This shows that at these level women are used as tools needed for government entity officials to benefit in the name of community development. (Hart, 2008)

Enhancing women's participation includes showcasing their contributions through performances or tangible evidence of their involvement. One effective approach is to highlight credible depictions of women in positive roles, featuring profiles of inspirational role models.

These narratives can serve as educational materials in local contexts, fostering understanding and empowerment (Rubin & Babbie, 2000). For instance, biblical stories of women breaking religious barriers are highlighted, such as the account of the woman with a bleeding disorder who defied societal norms to seek healing by touching Jesus' garments (Mark 5:25–34). This story illustrates women's agency and potential for self-empowerment through initiative and risk-taking. It underscores the message that women can leverage available opportunities to achieve liberation, drawing inspiration from various examples within the Christian faith. Tokenism in this level, women appear to have a voice. They are invited to sit in conference panels as representatives of women but provided no opportunity to formulate their ideas on the subject of discussion for example the leaders of Rural Women Empowerment Committee can be invited as a representative of all rural women, to present their grievances in the house of leadership where those responsible for rural positive change will be present as well. Likewise, no process enables them to consult with other women they are supposed to represent.

The next five levels in Hart's ladder signify genuine participation, where women actively engage and understand their involvement in projects. At the "Assigned-but-informed" level, women comprehend the project's intentions, the decision-makers behind their participation, and their meaningful role. They volunteer for projects after receiving clear explanations. An example is gender mainstreaming, which ensures that any law, policy change, or program considers both genders' impacts (Tadbakhsh et al., 2010). To bolster rural women's participation in community development, advocating for gender mainstreaming in developmental organizations is crucial. This involves promoting gender balance and ensuring institutional mandates, policies, and actions are shaped inclusively. Training rural women in workshops on integrating gender policies with broader institutional mandates and implementing clear objectives with a gender focus is essential. Organizations should also equip themselves with comprehensive gender-disaggregated data to foster women's active participation in community development, thereby ensuring equitable distribution of benefits for all stakeholders.

Gender roles are learned and are changeable. Gender equality is a goal to ensure equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for rural women, men, girls and boys. It is also a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Consulted-and-informed at this level the project is designed and run by community but rural

women understand the project and their opinions are treated seriously. We can use the CBOs as our entry point to ensure that organizational decisions, actions, structure, and function are founded in logic, efficiency, and rationality, where equity is given value at all levels. This would be one way of ensuring that gender-equitable outcomes are reached.

There are three organizational issues which should be addressed: traditional power (the power to make and enforce decisions), agenda power (the power to decide what can be talked about or even considered in organizational discourse), and hidden power (power that shapes one's sense of one's place in society by orienting one's perceptions, cognition, and preferences). So, for change to be realized, rural women's perspectives must be brought into political access, accountability systems, cultural systems, and cognitive systems that have been internalized, resulting in changing assumptions about internal organizational dynamics and the work itself.

Changes are essential to empower communities to challenge gender-biased institutions within society (Bradley, Coleman, & Okoro, 2014). These changes aim to democratize relationships, amplify women's voices within organizations, enhance accountability to women clients, and foster greater female participation. For instance, Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC 2014), a prominent rural development NGO, exemplifies this approach by leading efforts to promote gender equality within its operations and services for rural women. Transforming communal norms, systems, and relationships was pivotal in this endeavour, involving phases such as start-up, needs assessment, knowledge dissemination, strategic planning, trainer training, program refinement, and implementation (Henderson, Stackman, & Koh, 2013).

Rural women-initiated and directed rural women can initiate and direct their own projects provided the community is able to leave rural women alone to design their own projects. This can be evidenced by another prominent business lady called Mandi Majoni who is the owner of Imba Vazvare lodge in Rusape and a very big farm along Harare Road. this can be classified under a good initiated project that renders employment to rural people and also works as a poverty eradication tool in the community hence contributing towards community development (Henderson et al., 2013), rural women-initiated, shared decisions with the community. This is the highest and the last level of participation, according to Hart's model. Here, rural women incorporate the community at large into projects they have designed and managed. Hart does not differentiate it from the other levels of participation (Hassan & Silong, 2008). He explains this level by citing example and by saying that this kind of participation is very rare.

2.2. Community Development

According to Duane (2007), community development is defined as socio-economic changes involving the transformation of agrarian society in order to reach a common set of development goals based on the capabilities and needs of the people. World Bank (2001) contends that community development is a process through which rural poverty is alleviated by sustained increase in the productivity and incomes of low rural workers and households. Revivo-Stainer (2000) argues that community development is the process whereby cultural, political and educational motivation of rural dwellers enables them to rationally exploit and harness the resources of their environment for the social and economic well-being of the society. Allen (2000), in his book, “communities and their development as a process” stressed that community development is possible only when the people in the community first thoroughly discuss and define their wants and then plan together to satisfy them. UNESCO defines community development as the process by which the efforts of the people are united with the government to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities. Community development in simple terms is the process of improving the quality of human lives. It involves the sustained elevation of the entire community and social system towards a better human life. Gilens (2004) identified three important aspect of community development as:

- (i) Raising people’s living standard – income and consumption levels, access to medical services, education, safe drinking water etc. through relevant economic growth process.
- (ii) Creating condition conducive for the growth of people’s self-esteem through the establishment of social institutions that promote human dignity and respect.
- (iii) Increasing people’s freedom by enlarging the range of the choices as by increasing varieties of consumer goods and services. He asserts that if all three of these have declined from higher level, then beyond doubt, there has been a period of development for the community concerned. Author Dunham quoted publication made as far back as 1915 stating community development as making the small town a better place to live in and a better place in which to do business. Duncan spotlights that the problems of community development lie on the ability to identify, document, and use the available resources for the development of the community. Hence, lack of mobilization and local participation in community development may turn ruling class, thus making people to be reluctant.

Community development is a process by which the effort of the people themselves are unified with those of government and non-governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and enable them contribute fully to national progress (UN, 2007). It is a process of social action in which people of the community organize themselves for the identification of their needs with maximum reliance on their own initiative and resources, supplemented with assistance in any form from government and non-governmental organization. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to affect change in their own community. It involves changing the relationship between ordinary people and people in position of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It seeks to empower individuals and groups in their own community. It is a process of helping a community strengthen itself and develop towards its full potential.

2.3 Participatory Community Development

Yoshikawa and Carr (2002) argue that participatory community development occurs when all members of a community, regardless of gender or age, are actively involved in addressing local issues through their participation rather than relying on centralized leadership. This approach empowers community members to identify their own needs, make decisions about their future, and foster sustainability. By engaging local community members in development projects, it becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of local issues and priorities first-hand. According to Alvin (2009), the participatory approach aims to equip communities with the skills and knowledge to be self-reliant rather than dependent on external assistance. Local development experts within the community are best positioned to understand and address their own needs effectively. When the members of the community are involved in the decision-making process, they develop a sense of ownership towards the project at hand (Roger et al, 2008). The sense of local ownership that develop from the participatory process generate legitimacy which when combined with credibility formulate a powerful social capital that enables any development project to be borne through.

Credibility comes with the level of the project's ability to survive. When a project is done deliberately and implemented with the locals, there is always a better opportunity that it will be sustained and cared for by these same people, thus it makes good use of more credibility. Involvement in community development begets commitment of both men and women.

2.4 The Issue of Gender in Community Development

Development means different things to different people. Hodgson (2000) identifies them to be economic, growth, modernization distributive justice, socio-economic transformation and spatial reorganization. Some people however uneasy material prosperity as the ultimate objectives of development efforts. For example, Rogers (1976) describes development as a type of social change in which new ideas are brought on the table within a social system to give out higher per capital incomes and levels of living through more production, methods and improved social organizations. Southern African Development (1980) believed that development should mean "a widely participatory routine of social changes in society willed to bring about social and material advancement (adding up greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of people through obtaining control over their environment". Mackenzie (2000) has claimed that rural women predominate among the poor in the world today. Their annual incomes throughout the world have undervalued so sharply in recent years that they had gone below poverty line. Rural women according to Mackenzie (2000), are getting poorer and further underrated both in the utilization of available resources and access to community development resources. Although, male super patriotism may be right in saying that women are affected by poverty, it is clear to the most superficial analyst that women are far more disadvantaged and more vulnerable. The UNDP report (1990), claimed that majority of African women still work for between 14-18 hours per day and come out of between 50-80 percent of Sub-Sahara Africa's food, fetch water, gather firewood, and care for the family. In Nigeria, according to Allen (2000), women form over half of the rural population and it is predicted that 80 percent of rural labour force is provided by women. Another anticipation by the UNDP claims that about one third of all African households are headed by women.

2.5.0 barriers/factors Affecting Effective Contribution of Rural Women

2.5.1 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a form of male having power and influence over women. Radical feminism argues that men cause a large amount of physical and sexual violence over women through their sovereignty which enlarges beyond the family, as it affects employment condition, distribution of wealth, provision of opportunities among others. Such lordship has been accepted as normal by society and it is the philosophy of the theory that this dominion can be questioned and changed. As noted by Boserup (2013), advocates for radical feminism work towards formulating alternative social institutions which fulfil their needs, at the same time

giving chance for women to make choices on social and health issues that affect them and rejecting pressures that are exerted by patriarchy. This view about radical feminism is also expressed by Boserup (2013) who noted that men come up with and maintain patriarchy not only because they have the resources to do so but also because they have real interest's in making women serve their interests. The dominance of patriarchy in postulation and practices has to be questioned as it makes society accept inequality between men and women as normal. Some element of radicalism may be necessary to make a difference to such thinking. Men have historically submerged women because they knew of the potential power women possessed, which derives from the necessity of society to reproduce itself (Higgins, 2011). Men thereby developed political dominance to limit women's alternatives in relation to motherhood and mothering. They succeeded in this by equating women's identity with not just childbearing (a biological characteristic), but childrearing (a socially created characteristic). Patriarchy thereby sought to keep in good condition the myth that patriarchal motherhood (beyond women's biological ability to give birth to children) is a biological truth rather than a politically constructed necessity. This allowed men to justify the confinement of women to the private sphere, allowing them to have control over the public and political sphere, and thus be in going headlong of structuring society, which further solidified the gender division. 16 This gender division has persisted in the modern evolution of liberal state societies. Wohl (2014) describes how the state, although it should ideally give fair resemblance to all groups in society, tends to be persuaded by powerful social groups. Since men have historically had a higher profile role in the public sphere than women, most politicians have been male. Resultantly, these state actors give birth to masculine hegemony within the state, for example the bureaucracy. As a result, the state becomes well defined according to masculine values and norms. In the same direction, this gendered choosiness also exists within institutions and organizations of civil society, since men's engagement in the public sphere has similarly permitted them to become widely known in civil society and the economy (Eisenstein, 2012). As Wohl (2014) postulate, interests of specific social groups are purposefully selected by the dominant hegemonic groups and modified to their demands describing how patriarchy has presented its own priority as the interests of all social groups, specifically women, and thereby concealed the patriarchal values it provides an advantage as the values of society as a whole. As a result, masculine oriented norms such as having a strong desire to be more than others within neoliberal state politics, gender regimes and capitalist production become the fundament of society's structure (Eisenstein, 2012 and MacKinnon, 2010). Although norms such as having a killer instinct are not necessarily joined to masculinity, patriarchy accepts this to be the case.

2.5.2 Culture and Socialisation

Cultural beliefs are the ordinarily held norms and moral standards of a culture. These are the standards of right and wrong that set of thoughts that occupy one's mind for behaviour. They also include the roles that are appropriate for particular persons. Women's ineffectiveness to take up leadership procedure in communities is credited to the cultural belief that referenced natural leadership in the household and wider community assignment to men. Women are only there to support. Gender relations are rooted in the ideology that women are subordinate to men. Women are constantly contradicted inheritance rights, freedom of expression, mobility and participation in community activities and say personal choices and preferences. The society and family changes boys and girls into men and women and construct a hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged.

2.5.3 Personal Challenges

Globally, rural women experience specific challenges when aiming for leadership positions and undertaking leadership roles. These specific challenges are double burden (domestic responsibilities), lack of confidence, lack of mutual support among women and a disadvantage from perceptions and stereotypes. Women are improving their professional opportunities, yet are still responsible for the majority of the chores and care giving duties, also known as the double burden syndrome. This syndrome is particularly experienced in the African and Asian regions, which reflects the responsibility for both work and household setting a glass ceiling for them (Mawere, 2011). A major problem relates to women's confidence, in both the beliefs in their own abilities, as well as in the skilful of communicating confidence. In an environment where the behaviours expected are still male dominated, female-specific communication can be interpreted negatively (Mawere, 2011). Unfortunately, women do experience a strong gender bias when being evaluated for promotions on both their level of performance as well as their potential impact. Women have to significantly work harder to be perceived as equally competent as men (Lyness and Heilman, 2006).

2.5.4 Political Violence against Women

Election and political violence are on pins and needles, volatile and characterised by campaigns marked by high levels of intimidation, violence, displacement of people, abductions and loss of life. Exemplification of violence include torture, rape, beatings, burning down of houses and tortures camps. Violence against women is a critical tool in the maintenance of male hegemony. It is the means by which the patriarchal requirements of conformity and obedience are extended to women and enforced.

2.5.5 Institutional Factors

These are and various formal set ups that guide the mechanisms of governance and political participation. Factors that limit representative participation include the type of electoral system and how women's representation is outlined in a countries or political party's constitution. This includes the rules and techniques through which candidates are selected or votes are cast in an election and in turn helps to determine the extent to which local decision-making bodies are genuinely democratic and gender sensitive.

2.5.6 Isolation

Rural isolation is not limited to how far out of town you live, but also where to turn when the pressures within farming life get too much. Feelings of isolation are not limited to rural men, which led a group of Sanganai women to band together to combat the issue.

2.5.7 Societal attitudes

The societies have so many beliefs that contribute to uncomfortable way of treating women by the society. This includes cultural, religious beliefs labelled on women that end up limiting their contribution towards development

2.6 Case study

A case study of women plays a significant role in aquaculture production in Bangladesh (Halim and Ahmed, 2006). In terms of production, 43 percent of rural women are estimated to contribute their time to agriculture and/or aquaculture and fisheries-related activities in addition to their household responsibilities (Ahmed et al., 2012). Labour is a major requirement for intensified agricultural production systems and this cost is often saved by family labour (Jahan et al., 2015), especially women's (Faruque, 2007). Shirajee et al. (2010) found that average fish production increased by 10–20 percent in their study site as a result of women's involvement. Women also play diverse and significant roles in shrimp aquaculture in Bangladesh (Halim, 2004; Islam, 2008), snail collection⁵ and breaking (Islam, 2008) and in the shrimp processing factories (Shelly and Costa, 2002; Islam, 2008). Moreover, as explained previously, successful engagement in aquaculture enables women to prove their competency and gain more control over the inputs and outputs of production, as well as decisions around how to use the income generated. Exidine a trained, 35-year-old Hindu rural women started a nursery in her pond, in the example prior, used her 10 000-taka worth of savings to buy Golda shrimp and released them in the pond. She also decided to keep the fish saved in the pond until her daughter's wedding. She explained, “we will not be able to afford so much fish to feed the guests during

my daughter's wedding and so I have decided not to harvest the fish this year.''' As a trained women expressed more of a desire to exert decision-making power and influence and have her voice heard. She expressed awareness of gender discrimination and the constraints she faces. For example, one trained woman in her group (in agreement with the others) explained that "we women help men in their work, but men hardly help us. There is more criticism if men do women's work rather than other way around" (Priyanka trained, 45- year-old, Hindu respondent). She also articulated that they long for recognition and value.

2.7 Summary

In summary, rural women's contribution towards community development is hindered by the discrimination of women because of their gender this tends to be the global issue as most African countries are faced with the very same problem where women are not given the same opportunity as that of their counterparts. This is generally felt by women in rural areas. Davis (2016) emphasised that women's involvement is crucial, as they are often the primary caregivers and maintainers of community life. Women involvement is essential for the transformation of the society. This statement is fully supports that women are so dynamic that they are found in almost all spheres of life and they make tremendous contributions towards community development.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter pays attention to the research design and methodology which are going to be used in conducting the research. The researcher used qualitative approach. This chapter also focused on the data collection techniques, research instruments as well as the sample and sampling techniques to be used in coming up with the sample size. This chapter also highlighted the ethical considerations to be considered during the undertaking of the research

3.2 Research design

Qualitative research design was employed in this study to explore and understand the nuanced experiences, perspectives, and behaviours of rural women in Mutare Ward 14 regarding their contributions to community development. Unlike quantitative approaches that prioritize numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on gathering rich, descriptive data through methods like interviews, observations, and document analysis. This design was chosen because it allows for a deep exploration of complex social phenomena, such as the impact of women's economic activities and societal roles within their communities (Quarics 2024). By using qualitative methods, the researcher aimed to uncover the subjective meanings and interpretations that participants attribute to their experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding that quantitative methods alone might not capture. This approach was well-suited to the study's objectives of examining barriers to women's participation in community development and exploring the transformative potential of their economic and social roles within a specific cultural context.

3.3 Population of the Study

Durand (2020) refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In this study the targeted population were women particularly women who are involved in community development work within Zimbabwe emphasis placed in Mutare Rural District. In this study the researcher focused on representatives from the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Employment creation, and women from ward 14 of the Mutare rural district to obtain relevant information on women' contribution towards Community Development.

3.4. Sample

A sample refers to a subset of individuals or cases selected from a larger population for the purpose of conducting research and drawing conclusions about that population. In this study, the sample consisted of 32 participants, chosen through purposive sampling to ensure they could provide relevant and detailed information pertaining to rural women's contributions to community development in Mutare Ward 14. The small sample size was intentional and characteristic of qualitative research designs, which prioritize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. This approach allows researchers to delve deeply into participants' perspectives and experiences, capturing nuanced insights that larger samples might overlook. Additionally, the sample included two key informants from the Ministry of Women Affairs in Mutare Ward 14, selected for their expert knowledge and direct involvement in policies and programs affecting women in the community. Their inclusion enriched the study by providing authoritative perspectives and contextual information essential to comprehending the dynamics of community development initiatives in the area.

3.5.0 Sampling Method

3.5.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling was employed by the researcher in this study to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This sampling method involves deliberately choosing individuals or cases that can provide the most relevant and informative data for the studies purposes (Martins 2022). In this research, the researcher targeted key informants such as district administrators, officials from women's NGOs, and rural women actively involved in community development in Mutare District Ward 14. By selecting participants who possess first-hand knowledge and experience related to the study's focus, purposive sampling ensured that the data collected was rich, detailed, and directly aligned with the research questions. Advantages of purposive sampling include the ability to gather in-depth insights from knowledgeable informants, maximize resources by focusing on specific groups or cases, and enhance the relevance and applicability of the findings to the research context. This methodological approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of rural women's contributions to community development, drawing on the perspectives of key stakeholders in the field.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

3.6.1 Primary Data Collection Methods

The researcher utilized primary data collection methods to gather first-hand information directly from the sources relevant to the study. According to Jimfit (2020), primary data refers to original data collected first-hand by a researcher specifically for their own investigation or study, rather than being sourced from secondary or previously published materials. Primary data collection methods typically involve interactions with individuals or entities pertinent to the research, such as surveys, interviews, experiments, or direct observations. The aim of collecting primary data is to obtain specific and first-hand information directly applicable to the research objectives and questions. This involved conducting structured and semi-structured interviews to explore topics in depth, administering questionnaires to gather standardized responses from a larger sample, and engaging in participant observation to observe and record behaviours and interactions in the research setting. These primary data collection methods were chosen to ensure the accuracy, relevance, and depth of the data collected, allowing the researcher to directly address the research questions with evidence from the field.

3.7 Research Instruments

To gather essential data on the topic of interest, the researcher utilized research instruments as tools (EBSCO Support, 2019). Data were collected through in-depth research interviews featuring both structured and semi-structured questions, alongside questionnaires. These instruments were directly aligned with the research design, facilitating the collection of qualitative data. Acting as a facilitator, the researcher ensured participants shared necessary information efficiently. While in-depth interviews expedited data collection compared to other survey methods, each session typically spanned 30-45 minutes, demanding considerable time investment.

3.7.1 In-depth Interviews

Qualitative research often employs interviews as a primary instrument, involving participants responding to questions posed by the researcher. In this study, interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives on rural women's contributions towards community development. These interviews aimed to gather detailed and comprehensive information crucial for achieving the study's objectives. The questions were meticulously crafted, blending open-ended queries to encourage expansive responses and closed-ended questions to facilitate pattern recognition and straightforward comparisons between participants' answers.

3.7.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires served as a vital research instrument for collecting data in this study, incorporating a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. They offered several advantages, such as cost-effectiveness and the ability to elicit standardized responses that are straightforward to analyse. The researcher also employed structured and semi-structured interviews, along with participatory observation, to gather qualitative data directly aligned with the research design. These methods ensured a comprehensive approach to data collection. Questionnaires provided the additional benefit of maintaining respondent anonymity and being relatively inexpensive to administer. According to Young (2015), questionnaires allow flexibility for respondents in how they complete and return their survey forms.

3.8 Data Analysis Method

The analysis played a crucial role in this research by systematically organizing and interpreting qualitative data gathered from key informants, including district administrators, officials from women's affairs, NGOs, and rural women themselves. According to (Saunders 2022) This method involved identifying recurring patterns and themes across interview transcripts and observational data related to rural women's contributions to community development in Mutare District. By coding and categorizing data, thematic analysis facilitated the discovery of underlying meanings, motivations, and challenges faced by rural women. It allowed for a nuanced understanding of how these women engage in various development activities and navigate societal barriers. This structured approach ensured research rigor and transparency, enabling the study to generate insightful findings that shed light on the complexities of rural community dynamics and the roles of women within them.

3.9.0 Ethical Considerations

Ethics can be generally understood as a set of rules and norms or standards that guides the moral conduct and the way which a person behaves Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed throughout this study to ensure that all research procedures adhered to proper conduct and ethical standards. These guidelines, as highlighted by Makau and Akaranga (2020), are crucial for maintaining the integrity of the research process and safeguarding participants from any potential physical or social harm. It is emphasized by Abrar & Sidik (2019) that failure to adhere to these ethical standards can adversely impact not only the participants but also the institution and the researcher. In this study, strict adherence to ethical principles included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, maintaining anonymity, and other essential considerations to uphold ethical integrity.

3.9.1 Informed Consent

According to Graham (2023), informed consent is a crucial ethical principle in research, where participants are fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights before agreeing to participate. In this study, the researcher meticulously ensured that each participant comprehended the details of the research, including its objectives, methods, confidentiality measures, and their freedom to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification, and their consent was documented through consent forms that were presented in a clear and understandable manner. Throughout the study, on-going consent was maintained by keeping participants informed of any changes or developments that might impact their decision to continue participating. This approach not only respected participants' autonomy and rights but also upheld the integrity and ethical standards of the research process.

3.9.2 Confidentiality

According to (Saunders, 2020) a fundamental ethical principle in research that ensures the protection of participants' privacy and sensitive information. In this study, the researcher implemented rigorous measures to safeguard confidentiality throughout the research process. Participants were assured that their identities and personal data would be kept strictly confidential and would only be accessed by authorized research personnel for the purposes outlined in the study. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning codes or pseudonyms to participants instead of using their real names in any published or disseminated materials. Data collected were securely stored with restricted access, and any identifying information was removed during data analysis and reporting to prevent disclosure. These measures were crucial in fostering trust with participants and upholding their right to privacy, thereby adhering to ethical guidelines and ensuring the integrity of the research findings.

3.9.3 Respect

Respect in research refers to the ethical principle of acknowledging and valuing the autonomy, dignity, and rights of participants throughout the study process. In this research, respect for participants was upheld by ensuring their voluntary participation and informed consent (Griggs 2020). Participants were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the study objectives, procedures, and potential risks or benefits before agreeing to take part. Their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences was respected, emphasizing their

autonomy in decision-making. During data collection, researchers maintained respectful communication and interactions with participants, fostering an environment where individuals felt comfortable expressing their perspectives and experiences openly. Respect was also demonstrated by considering cultural sensitivities and preferences, adapting research methods to align with participants' backgrounds and ensuring their voices were accurately represented in the findings. Overall, respecting participants' autonomy and dignity was central to maintaining ethical standards and conducting research that upheld the principles of fairness and integrity.

3.10 Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology employed for data collection in this study. A qualitative approach was utilized to gather data, focusing on exploring the experiences and perspectives of the targeted population. It introduced, explained, and justified the sampling techniques used to select specific respondents for the study. Additionally, the chapter discussed the research instruments questionnaires and interviews and provided rationale for their selection and relevance to the study population. Ethical considerations were also addressed to ensure the credibility of the study on women's participation in community development.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is comprised of the data presentation and analysis. The chapter mainly focused on findings of this research collected by the researcher from the sampled population. The chapter discussed the findings from the key informant interviews conducted concerning women's contribution towards community development. This chapter contains demographic profile of key informants who took part in this study. The researcher issued 45 questionnaires and 32 were returned.

4.2.0 SECTION A: Biographical Data of Respondents

4.2.1 Demographic profile information

Figure 4.1: Gender Distribution

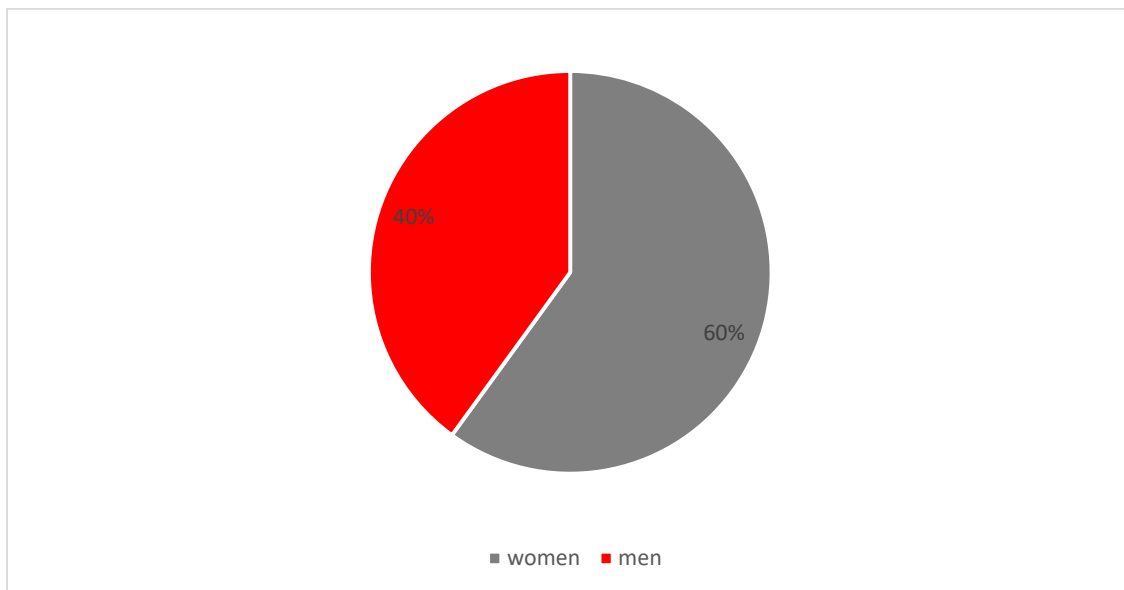
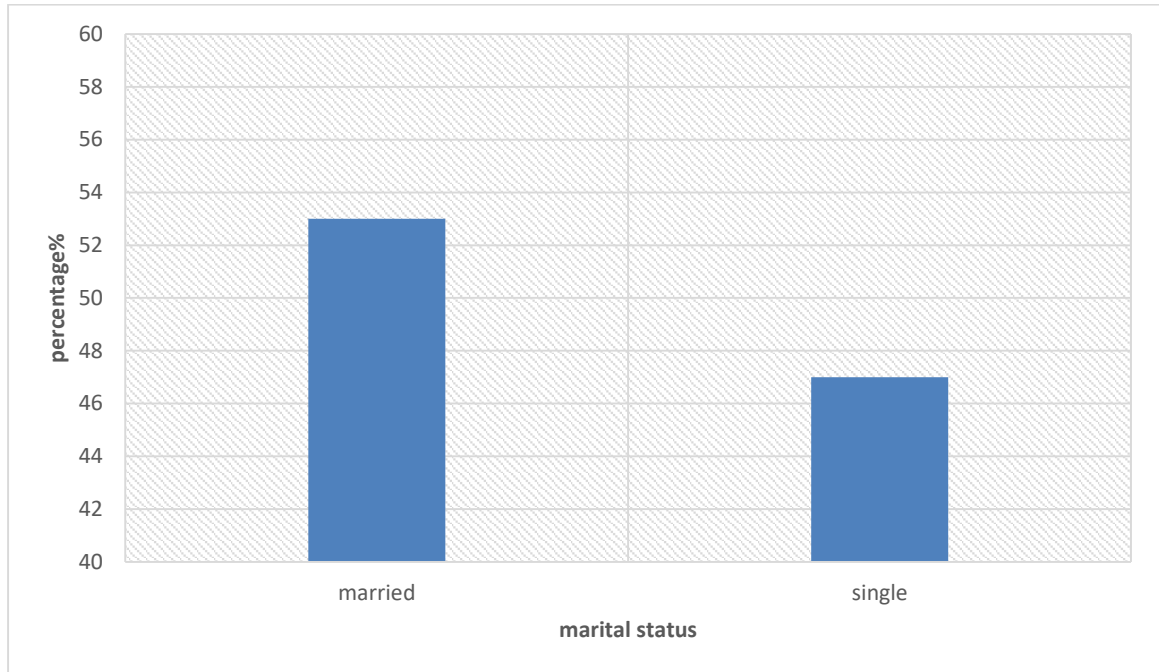


Figure 4.1 explains gender differences across population which is proportional to the targeted population thus 60% females and 40% males.

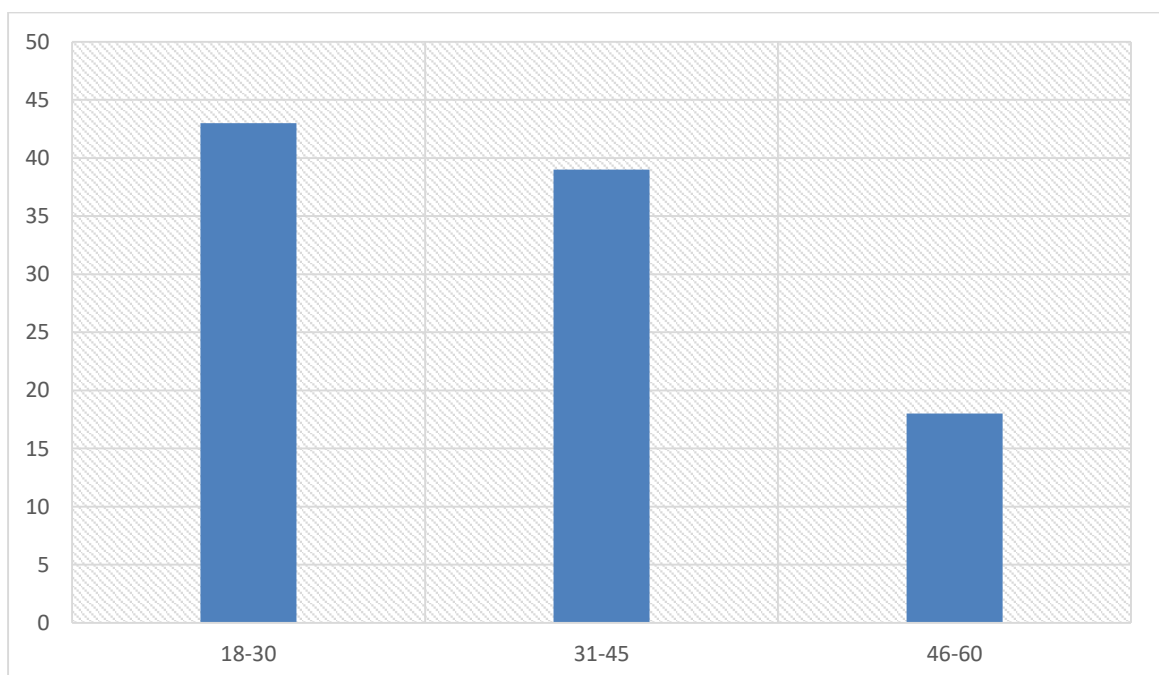
4.2 Marital Status

Figure 4.2 Marital Status



From the respondents of the study 53% were married and 47% were single

4.3. Age Figure



The bar graph above reflects on the different age groups that responded to the questionnaires, 43% of the respondents were between ages of 18-30years, 39% between the ages of 31-45 and 18% between ages of 31-60years

4.4 Level of Education

Table 4.4.1 Education

Education level	Total frequency	Percentage
Primary	8	14.3%
Secondary	26	46.4%
Tertiary	13	23.2%
Ever	9	16.1%

Table 2 above shows the level of education of the people who took part in the questionnaire

4.5 SECTION B: Women's Contribution towards Community Development.

The research findings were categorized into the following themes and sub-themes:

1. Economic activities of rural women towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe.
2. Barriers that the women may face in participating towards community development activities.
3. Methods that break down barriers that hold rural women back from disciplinary laws to unfair share of home, family and community care.

4.6.0 Economic activities of rural women towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe

4.6.1 Agriculture and farming

According to the collected data, Agriculture and farming are foundational to rural economies, providing sustenance and livelihoods for a significant portion of the population. Rural women, in particular those in Mutare District Ward 14, play a crucial role in this sector, engaging in diverse activities such as crop cultivation, horticulture, and livestock rearing. They grow essential food crops like rice, wheat, and vegetables, ensuring food security for their families

and communities. Additionally, they cultivate fruits and flowers, adding economic value through horticulture. Livestock rearing, including dairy farming and poultry, provides a steady income and nutritional benefits.

One of the research participants shared that

“Women often manage small-scale fish farming and aquaculture, diversifying their income sources. By adopting sustainable farming practices, they contribute to soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity, ensuring long-term agricultural productivity. Their involvement in agriculture not only bolsters rural economies but also enhances food security, supports environmental sustainability, and empowers women economically and socially”.

The collected data indicated that in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, agriculture and farming are vital to the local economy and the sustenance of the community. Rural women are actively engaged in various agricultural activities, contributing significantly to food security and economic stability. They cultivate staple crops such as maize, beans, and groundnuts, which are essential for household consumption and local markets. Horticulture also plays a crucial role, with women growing a variety of fruits and vegetables that enhance both nutrition and income. Livestock rearing, particularly of cattle, goats, and chickens, is another key activity, providing meat, milk, and eggs, as well as additional revenue from sales.

One of the research participants shared that

“Women in Mutare District Ward 14 participate in small-scale fish farming, which diversifies their livelihoods and contributes to dietary diversity. Sustainable farming practices are increasingly adopted, including conservation agriculture techniques that improve soil health and water retention, crucial in an area prone to climate variability. These practices not only boost agricultural productivity but also help in mitigating the impacts of climate change.”

The involvement of rural women in these agricultural activities is supported by local initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing their skills and access to resources. For instance, agricultural extension services provide training on improved farming methods, pest management, and post-harvest handling. Women's participation in community-based organizations and cooperatives further strengthens their economic position, facilitating access to markets, credit, and agricultural inputs.

In addition to their direct involvement in crop cultivation and livestock rearing, women in Mutare District Ward 14 engage in various agro-processing activities that add value to their agricultural products. They process maize into mealie meal, a staple food in Zimbabwe, and produce peanut butter from groundnuts, both of which are sold in local markets. These activities not only provide additional income but also create employment opportunities within the community.

Another research participant shared that

“Women often play a central role in managing household food security. They are responsible for food storage and preservation, ensuring that surplus produce from the harvest is adequately stored for use during lean periods. This management is crucial in a region where food availability can be highly seasonal.”

Another participant further added that

“Training and capacity-building programs, often facilitated by non-governmental organizations and government agencies, equip women with essential skills in modern agricultural techniques, financial literacy, and business management. These programs help women to optimize their agricultural practices, manage their finances more effectively, and scale up their farming operations.”

Women's involvement in agriculture in Mutare District Ward 14 is also supported by the establishment of savings and credit groups, which provide them with the financial means to invest in better seeds, tools, and technologies. These microfinance initiatives empower women economically, enabling them to make improvements to their farms and increase their productivity.

Moreover, the social dynamics within the community have seen a positive shift due to the active participation of women in agriculture. Women's economic contributions have enhanced their status and decision-making power within households and the community at large. This empowerment has led to greater gender equality and has encouraged more women to take up leadership roles in local governance and community development initiatives.

Another research participant shared that

“Environmental sustainability is another critical aspect of their agricultural practices. Women in Mutare District Ward 14 are increasingly aware of the need to protect their

natural resources. Initiatives such as tree planting, organic farming, and soil conservation practices are being adopted to ensure the long-term viability of their agricultural activities. These efforts contribute to the overall health of the ecosystem, benefiting not just the current population but future generations as well.”

The economic activities of rural women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, particularly in agriculture and farming, are integral to the sustainable socioeconomic development of their community. Through crop cultivation, livestock rearing, agro-processing, and participation in savings and credit groups, these women are enhancing food security, boosting economic resilience, and fostering sustainable development practices. Their contributions are vital in building a stronger, more equitable, and sustainable future for the entire district.

4.6.2 Microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

According to the collected data, Microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are transformative mechanisms that significantly enhance the economic empowerment of rural women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe. SHGs are small, community-based groups that pool savings from their members and provide loans at low interest rates, enabling women to invest in income-generating activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, and small-scale trade. These groups offer financial services to women who typically lack access to traditional banking systems, providing them with the capital needed to start or expand businesses. Beyond financial support, SHGs foster a sense of community and mutual support, where members share knowledge, skills, and experiences. Training programs associated with microfinance initiatives further equip women with essential skills in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and business management.

One of the research participants shared that

The increased financial independence and self-reliance resulting from SHG participation enhance women's decision-making power within their households and communities, leading to greater gender equality. Moreover, the collective nature of SHGs strengthens social bonds and builds solidarity, contributing to the overall social and economic resilience of the community.

The collected data further indicated that the impact of microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Mutare District Ward 14 extends beyond individual economic empowerment to broader community development. As women gain financial stability through SHGs, they are better able to invest in their families' health, education, and well-being. This, in turn, leads to improved health outcomes, higher school enrollment

rates for children, and enhanced overall quality of life within the community. SHGs also encourage a culture of savings and financial discipline, which fosters long-term economic security.

Another research participant further shared that

“The structure of SHGs promotes leadership and organizational skills among women. Members often take on roles such as group leaders, treasurers, or secretaries, which builds their confidence and hones their abilities to manage collective resources and activities. This leadership experience is invaluable, as it translates into greater participation of women in local governance and community decision-making processes. The empowerment of women through SHGs thus has a ripple effect, strengthening the social fabric and democratic processes within the community.”

In addition, SHGs serve as platforms for social awareness and advocacy. They address critical issues such as health, sanitation, and gender-based violence, providing a forum for women to discuss and take collective action on these matters. For example, through SHGs, women can organize health camps, promote hygiene practices, and advocate for their rights, leading to more informed and healthier communities.

Environmental sustainability is another significant benefit of SHGs. Many groups engage in activities such as tree planting, organic farming, and waste management projects, which contribute to the preservation of the local environment. By pooling resources and efforts, SHGs can undertake larger-scale environmental initiatives that individual members might not be able to achieve on their own.

Another research participant further shared that

“The support network provided by SHGs also plays a crucial role in crisis situations. Whether facing economic downturns, natural disasters, or personal emergencies, the solidarity and mutual assistance within SHGs provide a safety net for members. This resilience is vital in maintaining community stability and recovery during challenging times.”

Overall, microfinance and SHGs in Mutare District Ward 14 are powerful tools for socioeconomic transformation. By fostering financial independence, leadership, social awareness, and environmental stewardship, these groups not only uplift individual women but also drive the sustainable development of their entire community. The continued support and

expansion of such initiatives are essential for building a more equitable, resilient, and prosperous future.

4.6.3 Education and advocacy

According to the collected data, Education and advocacy are pivotal elements in the empowerment of rural women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, driving both personal and community-wide transformation. Educational initiatives, including adult literacy programs and vocational training, equip women with essential skills and knowledge, enabling them to improve their livelihoods and contribute more effectively to their families and communities. These programs often cover diverse topics, from basic literacy and numeracy to advanced agricultural techniques and financial management, enhancing women's ability to engage in various economic activities.

One of the research participants shared that

“Advocacy efforts complement these educational initiatives by raising awareness about women's rights, health, and social issues. Through community meetings, workshops, and campaigns, women learn to advocate for better access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. They also address critical issues such as gender-based violence and child marriage, fostering a safer and more equitable community. The combination of education and advocacy not only empowers individual women but also cultivates a culture of informed and active citizenship, driving sustainable socioeconomic development and promoting gender equality throughout the district.”

The impact of education and advocacy in Mutare District Ward 14 extends beyond individual empowerment, catalyzing broader social change. Educated women often become role models within their communities, inspiring others to pursue education and become active participants in local development. They advocate for school enrollment and retention for girls, addressing cultural and economic barriers that might otherwise hinder their education. This focus on education for the next generation ensures a sustainable cycle of empowerment and progress.

Advocacy efforts led by educated women also foster stronger community governance. By participating in local councils and decision-making bodies, women ensure that their perspectives and needs are represented, leading to more inclusive and equitable policies. These women champion issues such as improved infrastructure, access to clean water, and better healthcare services, which benefit the entire community.

Another research participant further shared that

“Moreover, education and advocacy drive economic development by enabling women to start and manage businesses more effectively. With knowledge of market trends, financial management, and entrepreneurial skills gained through education, women can diversify their income sources and improve their economic stability. Advocacy for better access to resources, such as microfinance and agricultural inputs, further supports their economic ventures.”

Health education is another crucial aspect, as women become advocates for public health within their communities. They disseminate vital information on topics such as nutrition, maternal and child health, sanitation, and disease prevention. This grassroots health advocacy leads to better health outcomes, reducing mortality rates and improving overall community well-being. Environmental education and advocacy are also significant, with women leading initiatives to promote sustainable practices such as conservation agriculture, waste management, and reforestation. Their efforts in environmental stewardship not only protect local ecosystems but also enhance the resilience of agricultural practices against climate change.

Another participant shared that

“Through advocacy, women in Mutare District Ward 14 address social injustices and work towards achieving gender equality. They fight against practices like child marriage and gender-based violence, advocating for legal reforms and the enforcement of existing laws to protect women's rights. Community dialogues facilitated by these women help shift cultural norms and attitudes, fostering a more supportive environment for women's empowerment.”

In summary, the combination of education and advocacy among rural women in Mutare District Ward 14 creates a powerful force for sustainable development. By gaining knowledge and skills, women not only improve their own lives but also drive positive changes in their communities. Their advocacy efforts ensure that critical issues are addressed, leading to more inclusive, equitable, and resilient communities. As these efforts continue to grow and evolve, they lay the foundation for a brighter future, marked by gender equality, economic prosperity, and social justice.

4.7.0 Barriers that the women may face in participating towards community development activities.

4.7.1 Patriarchy

According to the data, Patriarchy remains a significant barrier for women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, impeding their full participation in community development activities. Deeply ingrained cultural norms and traditional gender roles often dictate that women's primary responsibilities are confined to household duties and child-rearing, limiting their opportunities to engage in public and economic spheres. This patriarchal mindset not only restricts women's access to education and vocational training but also diminishes their confidence and societal support needed to take on leadership roles. Furthermore, patriarchal structures in local governance and community organizations frequently marginalize women's voices, making it challenging for them to influence decision-making processes.

One of the research participants shared that

“The lack of gender-sensitive policies and the prevalence of gender-based violence further exacerbate these challenges, creating an environment where women's contributions are undervalued and their potential stifled. Addressing these patriarchal barriers requires comprehensive efforts, including education, advocacy, and the promotion of gender equality, to empower women and enable their active and meaningful participation in community development.”

In addition to cultural and societal norms, economic barriers stemming from patriarchal systems also hinder women's participation in community development activities. Women often face limited access to resources such as land, credit, and technology, which are crucial for starting businesses or participating in agricultural initiatives. Patriarchal control over household finances can further restrict women's ability to invest in their own ventures or participate in income-generating activities. Moreover, discriminatory practices in inheritance and property rights often disadvantage women, denying them ownership and control over productive assets.

Another research participant shared that

“The lack of recognition for unpaid care work, such as domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities, further burdens women, leaving them with less time and energy to engage in community initiatives. Addressing these economic dimensions of patriarchy requires targeted interventions to promote financial inclusion, improve access to

resources, and advocate for legal reforms that uphold women's rights and economic empowerment. By dismantling these barriers, communities can harness the full potential of women as drivers of sustainable development and social change in Mutare District Ward 14 and beyond.”

Furthermore, patriarchal attitudes often manifest in social barriers that discourage women from assuming leadership roles or speaking out in public forums. Traditional gender norms dictate that women should be submissive and deferential, which can lead to their exclusion from decision-making processes and community meetings where important issues are discussed. This exclusion perpetuates a cycle of marginalization and reinforces stereotypes about women's capabilities and contributions. Additionally, cultural practices such as early marriage and gender-based violence are rooted in patriarchal beliefs, posing significant threats to women's physical and emotional well-being. Fear of stigma or retaliation may prevent women from reporting instances of abuse or seeking help, further isolating them from community support networks.

Another research participant shared that

“Patriarchal structures within formal institutions, such as schools and workplaces, often limit women's educational and professional opportunities. Discriminatory practices may result in fewer educational resources allocated to girls, leading to lower literacy rates and reduced access to higher education. In the workforce, women may face unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and workplace harassment, all of which contribute to their economic dependency and hinder their ability to participate fully in community development efforts.”

Addressing patriarchy as a barrier to women's participation in community development requires multifaceted approaches. These include promoting gender-sensitive policies and legislation, providing training and capacity-building programs that empower women to challenge stereotypes and assert their rights, fostering supportive environments that encourage women's leadership and participation, and engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality and ending harmful patriarchal practices. By dismantling these barriers, communities can harness the full potential of women as agents of change and achieve more inclusive and sustainable development in Mutare District Ward 14 and beyond.

4.7.2 Society Attitudes

According to the collected data, societal attitudes present formidable barriers for women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, seeking to engage in community development activities. Deep-seated stereotypes and traditional beliefs often undermine women's roles outside the home, perpetuating the notion that their primary responsibilities should be domestic and caregiving in nature. This societal expectation limits opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes and leadership roles within community initiatives. Moreover, cultural norms that prioritize male authority and dismiss female voices marginalize women's contributions, leading to their exclusion from critical discussions and policy-making forums. Additionally, stigma and discrimination against women who challenge these norms can deter them from actively pursuing educational or entrepreneurial opportunities that would benefit the community at large.

One of the research participants shared that

“Overcoming these societal attitudes requires concerted efforts to promote gender equality, challenge harmful stereotypes, and foster inclusive environments where women are valued as equal partners in community development efforts. Educational campaigns, awareness programs, and advocacy initiatives are essential in shifting societal perceptions and creating spaces where women can fully contribute their skills, knowledge, and leadership to advance sustainable development goals.”

Data further indicated that societal attitudes present formidable barriers for women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, seeking to engage in community development activities. Deep-seated stereotypes and traditional beliefs often undermine women's roles outside the home, perpetuating the notion that their primary responsibilities should be domestic and caregiving in nature. This societal expectation limits opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes and leadership roles within community initiatives. Cultural norms that prioritize male authority and dismiss female voices marginalize women's contributions, leading to their exclusion from critical discussions and policy-making forums.

Another research participant shared that

“Stigma and discrimination against women who challenge these norms can deter them from actively pursuing educational or entrepreneurial opportunities that would benefit the community at large. Overcoming these societal attitudes requires concerted efforts to promote gender equality, challenge harmful stereotypes, and foster inclusive

environments where women are valued as equal partners in community development efforts. Educational campaigns, awareness programs, and advocacy initiatives are essential in shifting societal perceptions and creating spaces where women can fully contribute their skills, knowledge, and leadership to advance sustainable development goals.”

4.7.3 Political Violence against Women

According to the collected data, Political violence against women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, remains a significant barrier to their full participation in political processes and community development. Women who engage in political activities, whether as voters, candidates, or activists, often face intimidation, harassment, and physical violence as a means to deter their involvement. This violence is rooted in entrenched patriarchal attitudes that perceive women's participation in politics as threatening to traditional power structures.

One of the research participants shared that

“Instances of political violence against women include verbal abuse, threats of harm to themselves or their families, physical assaults, and even sexual violence. Such acts not only undermine women's physical and psychological well-being but also erode their confidence and sense of safety. Fear of reprisals can deter women from expressing their political opinions, seeking leadership roles, or participating in public forums where decisions affecting their communities are made. Moreover, discriminatory laws and practices that fail to adequately protect women from political violence perpetuate a culture of impunity, where perpetrators face few consequences for their actions. This impunity further reinforces the marginalization of women in political spheres and perpetuates inequalities in representation and decision-making.”

In addition, the collected data indicated efforts to combat political violence against women must include institutional reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in political processes. Strengthening mechanisms for reporting and addressing incidents of violence, including establishing specialized support services for survivors is crucial. These services should offer legal aid, counseling, and medical support to ensure that women affected by political violence receive comprehensive assistance.

Educational programs and awareness campaigns are also essential to challenge cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based violence and to educate the public about women's rights in

politics. Empowering women with knowledge of their legal protections and rights as political actors is vital in enabling them to confidently participate in electoral processes and governance.

Another research participant further shared that

“Fostering alliances and solidarity among women's organizations, civil society groups, and political leaders committed to gender equality can amplify advocacy efforts and strengthen collective responses to political violence. Building coalitions that advocate for policy reforms and promote zero tolerance towards violence against women in politics can create a more supportive environment for women leaders and activists in Mutare District Ward 14.”

Ultimately, addressing political violence against women requires a concerted effort from government institutions, civil society organizations, and the broader community to ensure that women can exercise their rights to participate in political life free from fear, intimidation, and violence. By promoting a culture of respect for women's rights and enhancing their opportunities for political engagement, Mutare District Ward 14 can advance towards more inclusive and democratic governance that reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of all its members.

4.8 Methods that break down barriers that hold rural women back from disciplinary laws to unfair share of home, family and community care.

According to the collected data, breaking down barriers that hold rural women back from accessing their rights and fair treatment in disciplines, laws, and responsibilities within home, family, and community care requires multifaceted approaches. According to the collected data, legal reforms are essential to ensure that discriminatory laws and practices are amended or abolished, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for women in all spheres of life. Effective enforcement mechanisms are crucial to uphold these rights and hold perpetrators of discrimination and gender-based violence accountable. Secondly, raising awareness and providing education on gender equality and women's rights is vital. This includes educating rural women about their legal rights, promoting leadership skills, and providing training on advocacy and negotiation. Thirdly, creating supportive environments through community networks, support groups, and social services helps empower women to challenge societal norms and demand fair treatment.

One of the research data shared that

“Economic empowerment through access to resources such as microfinance, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support enables women to achieve financial independence and reduce dependency within the home, promoting a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities. These methods collectively contribute to dismantling barriers and advancing gender equality, allowing rural women in places like Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, to participate fully and equally in their communities.”

The collected data indicated that strengthening institutional support and implementing policies that recognize and value women's unpaid care work is crucial. This involves advocating for policies that provide social protection, childcare facilities, and flexible working arrangements, allowing women to balance their caregiving responsibilities with other pursuits, including education and employment. These measures not only alleviate the burden on rural women but also contribute to their economic empowerment and overall well-being.

Another research participant further shared that

“Engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality is also essential. By challenging traditional gender roles and fostering attitudes that support women's rights and contributions, communities can create more inclusive and supportive environments. Educational campaigns targeting men and boys on issues of gender equality, respectful relationships, and shared responsibilities in caregiving can lead to positive cultural shifts and enhance mutual understanding and cooperation within families and communities.”

The collected data indicated that promoting women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including local governance and community development initiatives, is critical. Ensuring that women have a voice in policy-making and resource allocation processes enables them to advocate for policies that address their specific needs and challenges. This includes advocating for laws that protect against discrimination and violence, as well as policies that promote access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Another research participant shared that

“Building partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international bodies is crucial to mobilize resources and leverage expertise in addressing the multifaceted barriers faced by rural women. Collaborative efforts can

support the implementation of gender-sensitive policies, provide technical assistance for legal reforms, and facilitate the provision of essential services such as healthcare and education in rural areas. These partnerships can also strengthen advocacy efforts to raise awareness about women's rights and mobilize public support for gender equality initiatives.”

The collected data indicated that, investing in data collection and research is another critical strategy. Comprehensive data on the socioeconomic status needs, and challenges faced by rural women can inform evidence-based policies and interventions that effectively address their specific circumstances. This includes conducting gender-disaggregated research on issues such as access to land and resources, barriers to education and healthcare, and the impact of discriminatory laws and practices on women's lives.

One of the research participants shared that

“Promoting cultural change and social norms that support gender equality is essential. Community-based initiatives that challenge harmful traditional practices, promote positive masculinity, and celebrate women's contributions can help shift attitudes and behaviours over time. Engaging religious and traditional leaders as advocates for gender equality and women's rights is also effective in influencing community perceptions and norms.”

The collected data further indicated that continuous monitoring and evaluation of interventions are necessary to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement. Regular feedback mechanisms involving rural women themselves ensure that programs are responsive to their needs and aspirations. By adopting a holistic and inclusive approach that addresses legal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, communities can create enabling environments where rural women in places like Mutare District Ward 14 can fully exercise their rights, participate equitably in community development, and achieve sustainable socioeconomic progress.

4.9 Discussion of research findings.

The findings regarding the economic activities of rural women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, align closely with Hart's Ladder of Participation theory (1994), illustrating a progression from initial involvement to significant influence in community development. At the lower rungs of the ladder, women are engaged in foundational agricultural activities such as crop cultivation, horticulture, and livestock rearing, which ensure food security and provide

essential economic stability. These activities represent their initial participation in economic endeavours within their community.

Moving up the ladder, women in Mutare District Ward 14 demonstrate increasing levels of participation through initiatives like small-scale fish farming and aquaculture, which diversify their income sources and contribute to dietary diversity. Their adoption of sustainable farming practices, including conservation agriculture techniques, reflects a deeper engagement aimed at enhancing productivity while addressing environmental sustainability challenges posed by climate variability. This level of participation not only strengthens their economic standing but also positions them as stewards of natural resources within their community.

Infusing Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality perspective into the economic activities and empowerment of rural women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, as depicted through Hart's Ladder of Participation (1994), reveals a nuanced understanding of their multifaceted challenges and achievements. At the foundational level, Microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) empower women economically, providing them access to capital and opportunities in agriculture and small-scale trade. This initial involvement not only addresses economic disparities but also intersects with gender dynamics, challenging traditional roles by fostering financial independence and decision-making within households.

As women ascend Hart's ladder through SHGs, they engage in agro-processing activities like maize milling and peanut butter production, which not only diversify income sources but also create local employment opportunities. This economic agency intersects with social status, elevating women's roles within their households and community governance structures. This shift underscores the intersectional nature of their empowerment, where economic contributions bolster social capital and influence, challenging hierarchies that traditionally marginalized women from decision-making spheres.

SHGs facilitate skills development in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and modern agricultural techniques, enhancing women's capacities to lead and organize within their groups. This educational aspect of their participation intersects with empowerment, building confidence and organizational skills that translate into broader leadership roles in local governance and community development initiatives. Here, the intersectionality perspective emphasizes how women's empowerment through economic activities not only enhances individual agency but also contributes to collective resilience and environmental sustainability through initiatives like organic farming and tree planting.

Incorporating Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality perspective into the economic activities and empowerment of rural women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, as mapped through Hart's Ladder of Participation (1994), offers a comprehensive view of the multifaceted barriers and achievements these women experience. At the base of the ladder, Microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) provide women with access to capital, enabling them to engage in agriculture and small-scale trade. This financial inclusion intersects with gender dynamics, challenging traditional roles by fostering financial independence and enhancing decision-making power within their households and communities.

As women progress up Hart's ladder, they move beyond basic participation to engage in agro-processing activities such as maize milling and peanut butter production. These activities not only diversify their income but also create local employment opportunities, reflecting an intersectional impact on both economic and social dimensions. Women's economic agency intersects with their social status, enhancing their influence and decision-making power in household and community governance structure (Donnavan 2020). This shift underscores the intersectional nature of their empowerment, where economic contributions lead to increased social capital and influence, challenging traditional hierarchies that marginalized women from leadership roles.

Furthermore, according to (Bains, 2018) SHGs facilitate skill development in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and modern agricultural techniques, thereby enhancing women's capacity to manage and scale their economic ventures. This aspect of participation intersects with empowerment by building confidence and organizational skills, which are critical for leadership roles within their groups and broader community initiatives. Women's involvement in leadership roles such as group leaders or treasurers exemplifies their ascent on Hart's ladder, reflecting increased participation and leadership that strengthens community resilience and social cohesion.

Additionally, women's commitment to environmental sustainability through initiatives like organic farming and tree planting highlights their active role in ensuring the long-term viability of their agricultural practices. This environmental stewardship intersects with their economic activities, showcasing their contribution to the overall health of the ecosystem and community well-being.

Moreover, the impact of SHGs extends beyond individual empowerment to broader community development. As women gain financial stability and leadership experience, they advocate for

issues such as health, sanitation, and gender equality within their communities. Through SHGs, women organize health campaigns, promote sustainable practices like organic farming and waste management, and advocate for policies that benefit the entire community. These initiatives demonstrate their active engagement at higher rungs of Hart's ladder, influencing community decision-making processes and contributing to sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14.

The barriers faced by women in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe, when participating in community development activities are intricately linked to patriarchal norms, societal attitudes, and political violence. Patriarchy confines women to domestic roles, limiting their access to education, resources, and leadership opportunities outside the household. Societal attitudes reinforce stereotypes that undervalue women's contributions, restricting their involvement in decision-making processes within community initiatives. Political violence intimidates women who engage in political activities, aiming to silence their voices and perpetuate traditional power dynamics. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive efforts to promote gender equality, challenge stereotypes, and ensure women's safety and empowerment through inclusive policies, awareness campaigns, and legal protections. By dismantling these obstacles, communities can foster environments where women are valued as equal partners in driving sustainable development and social change. Efforts to overcome these barriers must involve initiatives that move beyond tokenistic inclusion towards meaningful participation and leadership for women. This entails challenging patriarchal structures through education, advocacy, and policy reforms that recognize and support women's rights and capabilities beyond traditional gender roles. Creating inclusive environments involves not only empowering women economically and politically but also fostering supportive community attitudes that value their contributions and protect them from violence and discrimination. By promoting genuine empowerment and dismantling systemic barriers, Mutare District Ward 14 can harness the full potential of women as agents of positive change, ensuring their active involvement in shaping more equitable and sustainable community development outcomes.

Breaking down barriers that hold rural women back from accessing their rights and achieving fair treatment within home, family, and community care involves a comprehensive approach, as highlighted by the collected data. Firstly, legal reforms are crucial to eliminate discriminatory laws and ensure equal opportunities for women across all spheres of life. Effective enforcement mechanisms are essential to uphold these rights and combat gender-based violence. Secondly, education and awareness-raising efforts play a vital role in

empowering rural women by informing them of their legal rights, fostering leadership skills, and providing training in advocacy and negotiation. Thirdly, creating supportive environments through community networks, support groups, and social services enables women to challenge societal norms and demand equitable treatment.

Economic empowerment is pivotal, offering access to resources such as microfinance, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support. This fosters financial independence among rural women, reducing dependency within the household and promoting a fairer distribution of caregiving responsibilities. Strengthening institutional support and implementing policies that recognize and value women's unpaid care work are also critical. Advocating for social protections, childcare facilities, and flexible work arrangements helps alleviate burdens on rural women, enhancing their economic empowerment and overall well-being.

Engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality is essential for challenging traditional gender roles and fostering supportive attitudes towards women's rights. Educational campaigns aimed at men and boys on gender equality, respectful relationships, and shared caregiving responsibilities can lead to positive cultural shifts and enhance cooperation within families and communities. Moreover, promoting women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels is vital. This ensures their voices are heard in policy-making and resource allocation, advocating for laws and policies that address their specific needs.

Building partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international bodies is crucial for mobilizing resources and expertise to address barriers faced by rural women. Collaborative efforts can support the implementation of gender-sensitive policies, provide technical assistance for legal reforms, and deliver essential services such as healthcare and education in rural areas. Investing in data collection and research is also essential for evidence-based policymaking, focusing on gender-disaggregated data to address barriers like access to land, education, and healthcare effectively.

Promoting cultural change and social norms that support gender equality through community-based initiatives and engaging religious and traditional leaders as advocates are effective strategies. These efforts challenge harmful practices and celebrate women's contributions, influencing perceptions and behaviours over time. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of interventions ensure responsiveness to rural women's needs and drive sustainable progress. By adopting a holistic approach that addresses legal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, communities can create enabling environments where rural women in places like Mutare

District Ward 14 can fully exercise their rights, participate equitably in community development, and achieve lasting socioeconomic advancement.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted the active involvement of women from Ward 14 in Mutare rural district in activities aimed at fostering sustainable socioeconomic development. These activities encompass agricultural and farming endeavours, educational initiatives, advocacy efforts, and the establishment of microfinance groups that enhance their economic empowerment. However, the pervasive influence of patriarchy remains a formidable obstacle, shaping societal norms and constraining women's roles within the community. Addressing these challenges requires urgent legal reforms to eradicate discriminatory laws and practices, thereby ensuring gender equality in all spheres of life. The chapter also examined the research findings through the lens of various scholars' perspectives.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings detailed, draws conclusions from the data, and provides recommendations for the government of Zimbabwe and non-governmental organizations involved in women's community development initiatives.

5.2 Summary

This study aimed to investigate the contributions of rural women to community development in Ward 14 of Mutare district. The first research objective examined the economic activities of rural women that promote sustainable socioeconomic development in this area. The second objective identified barriers that women face in participating in community development activities. The third objective explored methods to break down these barriers, addressing issues from discriminatory laws to the unequal distribution of responsibilities in home, family, and community care.

The study employed a phenomenological research design aimed at understanding phenomena through the recounting of lived experiences, thereby clarifying the detailed aspects of these experiences. A sample of 36 individuals from the Mutare Ward 14 community was selected using a simple random sampling method, ensuring that each member had an equal chance to participate. The study population included people from the age of 18 going upwards. In-depth interviews featuring structured and semi-structured questions, along with questionnaires, were utilized as data collection instruments. These tools were chosen for their alignment with the research design and their effectiveness in gathering qualitative data. The interview schedule was divided into two parts: Part A included introductory remarks and presented the research objectives to the respondents, while Part B contained the research questions.

Findings related to the first objective, which aimed to examine the economic activities of rural women towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14, revealed that women engage in agricultural and farming activities, education, advocacy, and participation in Microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). These SHGs serve as transformative mechanisms that significantly enhance women's economic empowerment. These small, community-based groups pool savings from their members and provide loans at

low interest rates, enabling women to invest in income-generating activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, and small-scale trade. SHGs offer financial services to women who typically lack access to traditional banking systems, providing them with the necessary capital to start or expand businesses. Beyond financial support, SHGs foster a sense of community and mutual support, where members share knowledge, skills, and experiences. Training programs associated with microfinance initiatives further equip women with essential skills in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and business management.

The second objective sought to identify the barriers that women face in participating in community development activities. According to the research, patriarchy remains a significant barrier, impeding women's full participation due to deeply ingrained cultural norms and traditional gender roles that often confine women to household duties and child-rearing, limiting their opportunities to engage in public and economic spheres. Similarly, societal attitudes present formidable barriers through deep-seated stereotypes and traditional beliefs that undermine women's roles outside the home, perpetuating the notion that their primary responsibilities should be domestic and caregiving in nature. This societal expectation limits opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes and leadership roles within community initiatives. The research indicated that women in the ward are exposed to political violence, further restricting their full participation in political processes and community development.

The third objective aimed to explore methods to break down barriers that hinder rural women from accessing their rights and achieving fair treatment in disciplines, laws, and responsibilities within home, family, and community care. The objective highlighted that breaking these barriers requires multifaceted approaches. Legal reforms are essential to amend or abolish discriminatory laws and practices, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in all spheres of life. Effective enforcement mechanisms are crucial to uphold these rights and hold perpetrators of discrimination and gender-based violence accountable. Raising awareness and providing education on gender equality and women's rights is also vital, including educating rural women about their legal rights, promoting leadership skills, and providing training in advocacy and negotiation. Creating supportive environments through community networks, support groups, and social services helps empower women to challenge societal norms and demand fair treatment.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the research findings, women in Ward 14 of Mutare rural district participate in activities that promote sustainable socioeconomic development. These activities include agricultural and farming practices, educational initiatives, advocacy, and the formation of microfinance groups that empower them economically. However, patriarchy poses a significant challenge, influencing societal expectations and restricting women's roles in the ward. To counter these challenges, legal reforms are necessary to amend or abolish discriminatory laws and practices, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in all aspects of life.

To examine the economic activities of rural women towards sustainable socioeconomic development in Mutare District Ward 14, Zimbabwe.

This study managed to point out the importance of women in community development. Women in Mutare District have been seen as agencies of development in all spheres. It has been noticed that, contribution of women in community development remove gender stereotypes and lifts up women who are still living up in marginalized societies. However, although the level of women participation is generally better, women in Mutare Rural District are only taking part in small projects such as self-help projects but there is a little involvement in areas to do with politics and government.

To identify barriers that the women may face in participating towards community development activities.

This research was able to identify the challenges affecting women's contribution towards community development. It has been noticed that, gender-based violence is a serious challenge which limit women from taking part in meaningful projects of community development. More so, reduced amount of capital to initiate meaningful business is affecting women's contribution towards community development. Gender stereotypes have also been noted as a barrier which hinders the participation of women in Mutare Rural Development. As a result, most women decide not to contribution towards community development because of these challenges. Moreover, the research was able to point out that husband of women leaders, friends, families and the community at large need to be facilitated so that they support women to contribution towards community development. The community should unite and dismantle norms that do

not favour women leadership, they need to be sensitised on the importance of women in development and the impact women have in the community.

To practice methods that break down barriers that hold rural women back from disciplinary laws to unfair share of home, family and community care.

This research manages to points out the strategies which can be initiated to enhance women's contribution towards community development it has been noted that, there is the need to organize opportunities to for elected officials such as members of parliament and councillors to meet women and share their success stories. In this case, these top ranked people will bring information about how women can get involved in influential positions. More so, it has been said that, there is need for financial assistance so that women contribution towards community development can improve. There is need to give financial and staff resources to support workshops, panel discussions, and regular information events on community development and how women and community can be included in meaningful community development projects.

5.4 Recommendations

Mutare Rural district council and the government. `

- There is the need to implement discriminatory laws to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in all sectors.
- There Implement and enforce legal protections against gender-based violence to create a safe environment for women.
- There is the need to Increase access to microfinance and credit facilities tailored for rural women to support their entrepreneurial ventures.
- Provide vocational training and support for women in agro-processing and other income-generating activities.
- Invest in education and training programs that enhance women's skills in financial literacy, modern agricultural techniques, and business management.
- There is need to develop policies that recognize and support unpaid care work through social protection measures such as childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements.

The Ministry of Women affairs and NGOs.

- There is need to ensure that rural women have access to healthcare and social services to improve their overall well-being.

- Improve rural infrastructure, including transportation, water supply, and sanitation, to facilitate women's participation in community and economic activities.
- Enhance access to technology and information to support women in modernizing their agricultural practices and expanding their businesses.
- The NGO's have to conduct capacity-building workshops focusing on women's rights, advocacy, and negotiation skills to empower women to challenge societal norms and demand equitable treatment.
- There is need to facilitate the formation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to provide mutual support and collective bargaining power.
- There is need to establish and support community networks and forums that encourage women's active participation and leadership in community development initiatives.
- There is need to promote initiatives that engage men and boys as allies in gender equality efforts to foster supportive and inclusive communities.

5.5 Areas for further research

The phenomenological research design, which seeks to understand phenomena by describing lived experiences, was employed in this study. This approach clarified the specifics of those lived experiences. However, there is need to further research on the effects of violence against women as major hindrances towards women's participation towards community development.

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AppendixQuestionnaire for rural women in Community Development.

My name is Rukudzo Mandikutse a student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE), carrying out a study on RURAL WOMENS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CASE OF MUTARE DISTRICT (WARD 14). As a fulfilment of the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Peace and Governance. You are kindly being requested to contribute to the study by answering the questions on this form. Please note that the findings will be strictly used for academic purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Your participation and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Instruction: Please tick the response that is mostly appropriate to you or write in spaces provide.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Indicate by ticking inside the appropriate box.

1.

FEMALE	MALE

2.

18-30	31-45	46-60	60+

3. Highest level of education attained

PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY	NONE

4. How do you rate men's perspective towards women participation in community development?

Good	Bad
------	-----

5. How would you rate the participation of women in community development? Scale 1 to 5 (1 extremely poor, 5 excellent)

Extremely poor1	Poor2	Moderate 3	Good4	Excellent 5

6. How many times do you hold women's forum or meetings within the community?

WEEKLY	FORT NIGHTLY	MONTHLY	NEVER

7. What issues are discussed at these meetings?

.....

8. Which organisations represent women's interest in your community?

.....

9. What are the reasons that hinder women from participating in community development?

.....

.....

.....

10. Any other comments?

.....

.....

THANK YOU

TATENDA