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**FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCE**

**DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR OPTIMAL TALENT IDENTIFICATION IN
JUNIOR FOOTBALL TEAMS AGED 10–19 YEARS IN HARARE URBAN.**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
THE HONOURS DEGREE OF SPORTS SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT**

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Abstract

Talent identification in junior football is essential for developing future elite players, but in many urban African contexts, the process is still uneven and undeveloped. The goal of this study was to create a thorough framework for identifying the best talent among Harare Urban players between the ages of 10 and 19. Through surveys and 15 in-depth interviews with coaches, the study used a mixed-methods approach to involve 250 participants to analyse present practices, assess their efficacy, pinpoint problems, and suggest a better model. The results showed that socioeconomic hurdles, such as players' restricted access to venues, a lack of standardised processes, inadequate equipment, and poor communication, all hindered the discovery of talent in Harare. The analysis of qualitative data with NVivo identified five main ideas for creating a framework: having standard processes and a clear selection method (5 references), using small-sided games to effectively evaluate skills (4 references), assessing various abilities beyond just physical skills (3 references), involving all relevant parties in the process (3 references), and ensuring access and inclusion for everyone. Coaches overwhelmingly endorsed the use of small-sided games (such as 5-a-side formats) as useful, reasonably priced instruments for assessing technical and tactical skills in regional settings. Participants also underlined the significance of fair, open procedures and the necessity of cooperation between coaches, educators, and parents. The study offers a strategic roadmap for stakeholders looking to improve junior football development in Harare Urban and beyond by proposing a locally applicable framework based on structure, inclusion, and multidimensional assessment.

Key words: Talent, Talent Identification, Long Term Athlete Development, Framework, Multidimensional

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List of Abbreviations

1. AFCON - Africa Cup of Nations
2. CAF - Confederation of African Football
3. FIFA - Fédération Internationale de Football Association
4. ZIFA - Zimbabwe Football Association
5. ZCA - Zimbabwe Coaches Association
6. TID - Talent Identification
7. LTAD - Long-Term Athlete Development
8. NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's background, problem statement, significance, research questions, goals, study boundaries, and outline.

1.2 Background of Study

The process of identifying present players who have the potential to develop into elite athletes is known as talent identification (Unnithan, White, Georgiou, Iga, and Drust, 2012). Finding athletes with the skills and competencies to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, competitive success is the goal of sports talent identification (Pruna, Tribaldos, and Bahdur, 2018). To help these athletes realise their full potential, they are typically selected and recruited into specialised development programmes that provide the necessary facilities, personnel, equipment, learning environments, and resources (Bergkamp, Niessen, Hartigh, Frencken, and Meijer, 2019). Finding talent is a crucial step in the growth of young athletes, especially in junior football. According to Williams and Reilly (2000), the long-term success of gifted players as well as the expansion of football as a sport as a whole depends on their early identification and development.

However, because junior football is a complex and multifaceted process (Reilly, Williams, Nevill, and Franks, 2000), identifying talent requires a significant amount of expertise and experience. Bennett, Vaeyens, and Fransen (2018) state that a systematic and objective framework is necessary to effectively identify and develop promising young players.

Although the Zimbabwe National Team (The Warriors) qualified for the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) multiple times in 2004, 2006, 2017, and most recently in 2019, they never qualified for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, indicating that Zimbabwe's sporting performance has been stagnant or depreciating rather than lucrative (Mugota, 2021). Football is a popular sport in Harare, Zimbabwe, as shown by the large number of young and old people who congregate to play the game in the streets and open areas, as well as the influx of adults who fervently support their football teams into sports bars. Local teams in the Premier Soccer League have not shown a noticeable improvement in their sports

performance recently, despite having talented and loving youth. Their popularity is demonstrated by the low attendance at the top-tier league games (12000 is thought to be the highest attendance; "What a turnout at BF", 2023) and the early eliminations from regional competitions such as the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Champions League, where only one team made it to the competition's finals (Dynamos in 1998) ("Dynamos Class of 1998", 2020), which was a long time ago. The primary query is: Does imply that we lack the skilled people necessary to duplicate these standards or even outperform the Dynamos of 1998?

Although FIFA has focused on promoting and disseminating innovative plans, such as the Talent Identification Model for the identification of athletic talent (Pruna, Tribaldos, and Bahdur, 2018), there is no universal consensus regarding how these plans should be set up because different countries have different environments, demographics, and other factors that affect talent identification. Thus, nations are urged to use the FIFA Talent ID as a starting point for their player identification initiatives (FIFA, 2024). FIFA also disclosed that many football organisations lack a specific talent identification strategy in its May 2021 global ecosystem analysis report. Additionally, Pruna et al. (2018) found that the majority of nations currently employ unstructured and unsystematic methods, which may. Studies on talent identification have been conducted, but none of them have focused on creating a framework for talent identification; instead, they have compared the statistical norms used to identify talent in Zimbabwe and Mexico (Martinez et al., 2022) and developed test batteries using the populations of Bulawayo and Matabeleland North (Sibindi, 2022). The above conclusions are supported by unpublished preliminary research by Machihani (2023), which shows that talent identification procedures in the Harare area and throughout Zimbabwe are frequently haphazard and subjective, mainly depending on the opinions and prejudices of coaches and scouts. Athletes are also accused of needing to pay a few dollars or know someone on the selection panel to be chosen. The absence of standardised practices, objective standards, and research in the field frequently results in the misallocation of resources and the failure to recognise potentially gifted players.

The current study intends to create a thorough framework for junior football talent identification in Harare Urban address these issues. This framework will offer a methodical way to find and develop young football players with the potential for success in the future by establishing an organised, evidence-based approach. The suggested framework will take into account elements that affect player development and performance, such as technical

proficiency, physical characteristics, tactical awareness, psychological characteristics, and socioenvironmental elements. The goal of the research-based method for locating and nurturing young players who have the potential to succeed in the future. This framework will support the growth of football in the area by encouraging impartiality, equity, and inclusivity, enabling gifted people to receive the chances they merit. Additionally, it will be an invaluable tool for talent development programmes, coaches, and scouts in their quest to find and develop the next wave of football stars.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Talent identification is very beneficial to junior football players because it provides a systematic approach to identifying and developing potential skills. However, Harare, Zimbabwe, lacks a consistent and systematic framework for identifying young football players with talent. Due to arbitrary scouting methods, a lack of funding, and inadequate developmental pathways, many gifted athletes have been overlooked or underdeveloped as a result of this discrepancy, which has led to uneven player selection.

Since there is no clear identification process in place, the vast majority of young players do not progress to elite levels, according to data from local academies and the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA). ZIFA's 2022 youth football report states that only 15% of Harare junior league players go on to play for professional teams or the national team. Additionally, a 2021 study of grassroots coaches in Harare found that over 60% of young players with potential do not receive enough development opportunities due to unstructured scouting and selection processes.

Additionally, research done in 2020 by the Zimbabwe Coaches Association (ZCA) reveals that over 70% of junior football coaches identify talent based on their subjective observations rather than a data-driven approach. This reliance on unofficial methods, combined with restricted access to performance metrics and standardised training plans, has prevented many talented athletes from reaching their full potential.

Long-term effects of Harare's junior football system's lack of a systematic talent identification framework include a diminished pool of top players for professional teams and the national team. Zimbabwean football consequently lacks the competitive advantage observed in nations with established youth development systems, and it still struggles on the global scene.

By creating a thorough framework for the best talent identification in Harare Urban junior football teams, this study aims to address these issues. To guarantee that all talented young athletes have an equal chance to develop and progress in the sport, the framework attempts to combine developmental strategies, scouting guidelines, and objective performance metrics.

1.4 Main Research Question

How can an optimal framework for talent identification be developed to improve the selection and development of junior football players aged 10–19 years in Harare Urban?

Subsidiary Research Questions

1. What are the current methods used in talent identification for junior football players aged 10–19 in Harare Urban?
2. How effective are the current talent identification methods in recognising football potential among 10- to 19-year-old players in Harare Urban?
3. What challenges do coaches and scouts face in identifying talent within junior football teams?
4. Can we develop a framework for talent identification in junior football in Harare Urban?

1.5 Main Research Objective:

To develop an optimal framework for talent identification in junior football teams aged 10–19 years in Harare Urban to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of player selection and development.

Subsidiary Research Objectives:

1. To examine the current methods used in talent identification for football players aged 10 to 19 years in Harare urban.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of current talent identification methods for recognising football potential among 10-to-19-year-old players in Harare Urban.
3. To assess the challenges faced by coaches and scouts in the talent identification process.
4. To develop a comprehensive framework for talent identification in junior football in Harare urban.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The purpose of the proposed framework for Harare Urban junior football talent identification is to offer an organised, research-based method for locating and nurturing young players who

have the potential to succeed in the future. The framework, which will be the first document created for the Harare community and most likely for Zimbabwe, will greatly aid the Football Governing Body (ZIFA) in raising the level of our national teams' performances. Benefits of the suggested framework include better player development, higher junior team performance, and improved relationships between coaches and scouts. The study may explore the potential applications of technology, such as artificial intelligence and data analytics, in identifying talent. It will also look at how coaches and scouts find talent and how crucial they are to finding and nurturing young players with potential. The study will usher in a new era in the expansion and advancement of football in Zimbabwe, and the framework will also improve the performance of our national teams and the general growth of football in the area. This study adds to the field of identifying junior football talent and fills important gaps in Zimbabwean football literature. This framework will support the growth of football in the area by encouraging impartiality, equity, and inclusivity, enabling gifted people to receive the chances they merit. Additionally, it will serve as an invaluable tool for talent development programs, coaches, and scouts to identify and nurture the next generation of football stars.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study aims to create a framework for the best possible talent identification in Harare Urban junior football teams for players aged 10 to 19. More than 200 academies, including unregistered ones, are located in Harare Urban. corresponds to over 500 coaches and thousands of junior football players (boys and girls).

1.8 Study Outline

The five chapters that make up this dissertation gradually advance the creation of a thorough framework for identifying junior football talent in Harare Urban. The study's background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, significance, and delimitations are all presented in Chapter One. A thorough review of related literature is given in Chapter Two, which is divided into two sections: a theoretical review that looks at important theories and models that guide talent identification and a thematic review that is organised around the goals of the study and covers current approaches, efficacy, difficulties, and conceptual frameworks. The research design, target population, sampling techniques, data collection tools, validity and reliability metrics, ethical considerations, and data analysis strategies are all covered in detail in Chapter Three, which also provides an overview of the research methodology. The research

findings, arranged in accordance with the goals of the study and backed by both qualitative and quantitative information from athletes and coaches, are presented and examined in Chapter 4. The summary, conclusions, and practical recommendations, including a framework for talent identification that is specific to the local context and suggests areas for further research, are provided in Chapter Five.

1.9 Chapter Summary

The study's first chapter, "The Problem and Its Setting", examines the need for a successful framework for identifying talent for Harare Urban junior football teams. It draws attention to Zimbabwe's vibrant football culture while highlighting the absence of a standardised scientific system, which has resulted in inconsistent and biased talent selection. The chapter points out that current approaches are frequently arbitrary and defines talent identification as an essential procedure for identifying young athletes with elite potential. By creating an impartial, equitable, and inclusive framework that is suited to Harare's requirements, the study seeks to close this gap.

The research questions and objectives are also described in this chapter, with an emphasis on assessing current procedures and suggesting enhancements. The study's importance stems from its potential to improve football development by providing a methodical approach that helps national teams, coaches, and scouts. According to the delimitation section, the study will concentrate on the junior football community in Harare, which includes various academies, coaches, and players. The upcoming chapter will review the existing literature on football talent identification.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section examines the literature on football talent development (TD) and identification (TID), highlighting methodologies, challenges, and exemplary methods that could inform the creation of a framework tailored for Harare. Anticipated issues encompass the conceptual review, theoretical review, and thematic review, which are its three principal parts. Each section will delineate research deficiencies that the proposed framework intends to address and offer explanations about the current status of the subject.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Conceptualising of Talent Identification

Talent identification programmes are crucial for a football team, garnering significant attention in both research and practice, particularly among elite teams and nations who employ extensive initiatives to cultivate a robust and competitive squad. The concept of talent has garnered significant attention in academic research, with scholars acknowledging the absence of a singular definition since various researchers propose differing interpretations (Roberts, 2021). Till and Baker (2020) define talent as an inherent ability, biological predispositions, present skill level, and anticipated potential for improvement, whereas Mbayo (2022) characterises it as a natural aptitude that may be cultivated via suitable training. Ommundsen (2009) posits that talent is an inherent quality, an identity, a potentiality, or a capacity for development.

Although other perspectives exist, the predominant definition is that put out by Till and Baker. The definitions indicate that talent is innate and may be cultivated through access to high-quality training programs and appropriate equipment (Zuber et al., 2016). There are two conceptions of talent observation: static and dynamic. The static concept perceives skill as an intrinsic quality. The static idea conative and sociological attributes (Gullich, 2014). These two concepts underpin talent identification (TID) and talent development (TD). In this research, talent will be defined as an innate capacity to execute a certain sports-related task, along with the ability to enhance and adapt effectively to developmental interventions. The term includes various dimensions of sports performance, such as technical, tactical, physiological, and psychological factors.

At the highest echelons of team sports, a competitive edge. Consequently, sports organisations continue to finance the identification and development of talented young athletes within their academy systems, hoping to unearth or cultivate their own elite competitors. Barraclough et al. (2022). Talent identification denotes the process of selecting athletes with the potential to

evolve into effective elite performers (Till and Baker, 2020). Williams et al. (2020) describe talent identification (TID) as the process of recognising athletes within a sport who have the potential to achieve excellence. Although it is a commendable initiative, researchers concur that TID is an exceedingly challenging undertaking that does not ensure success. The dynamic nature of talent makes it challenging to predict future potential based on current player attributes, especially during significant growth and development phases (Archer et al., 2016; Unnithan et al., 2012; Vaeyens et al., 2008). Cobley et al. (2020) also observe that the majority of physical and technological competencies necessary for high-performance sport evolve gradually.

In light of these characteristics, the working definition of TID in this research will be the systematic process of identifying athletes now engaged in football who are judged to possess the potential to thrive and become top footballers in the future. This definition acknowledges that TID primarily relies on projections of future performance based on present performance, which may fluctuate with growth and development, hence heightening the risk of inaccurately forecasting future performance.

2.2.2 Conceptualising of Junior Football Teams

Within the research topic, "Developing a Framework for Optimal Talent Identification in Junior Football Teams Aged 10 to 19 in Harare Urban," junior football teams are defined as organised collectives of young athletes, generally aged 10 to 19, participating in structured football activities focused on skill enhancement, competition, and advancement to elite levels of the sport. These teams operate within educational institutions, football academies, community clubs, and local associations, constituting the foundational tier of the football talent pipeline (Williams & Reilly, 2000).

Junior football teams are institutions that work to identify, develop, prepare, and expose talent to professional football. According to Bailey and Collins (2013), early exposure to organised sports is crucial for sustainable player development. Scholars have brought different definitions to the table. Conte (1999) defines a junior team as a developmental unit where athletes' technical, tactical, physical and psychological performance is developed. For the purpose of this research, a junior football team shall be defined as a group with clearly defined age groups where structured training is offered to nurture talent and expose it to professional football at a later stage.

Understanding junior football teams in this manner facilitates the establishment of an efficient, age-appropriate, and contextually relevant talent identification framework suited to the conditions of Harare Urban.

2.3 Theoretical Review

2.3.1 Introduction

This section discusses theories that are related to the research, analysing their contributions, strengths, limits, and applicability to the Harare urban environment.

2.3.2 Multidimensional Model of Talent Identification (Williams & Reilly, 2000)

This model emphasises the use of physical, technical, tactical, and psychological factors in assessing athletes. The advantages of this model lie in its exhaustiveness and application across many developmental stages, promoting the use of objective assessment more than the use of subjective assessment. The application of science in talent identification becomes essential in talent identification, increasing the effectiveness of the talent identification process. While it provides a better prediction of future performance, the multidimensional model requires a huge investment in resources, like qualified scouts and suitable facilities for its use, and it can also be very difficult to execute at the grassroots level.

2.3.3 Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Model (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004)

The LTAD model breaks talent development into phases in which athletes go through from the first training phase up to retirement. It emphasises the need for appropriate coaching methods and objectives for each age and maturity level. It explicitly defines how and when TID comes in during the development of athletes.

LTAD is an evidence-based developmental methodology that, when implemented well, can yield high quality athletes who are skilled and ready to compete at an elite level. It is also important to note that LTAD covers all important attributes of an athlete, which are physical, cognitive, and emotional growth. This makes LTAD a crucial model in this research, as it aligns well with the Multidimensional Model of Talent Identification. However, applying it in poorly equipped football academies in Harare urban areas can be problematic, as coaches are not adequately trained and often face challenges with equipment.

2.3.4 Ecological Dynamics Theory (Davids et al., 2008)

The ecological theory provides an insight into the relationship between an individual, task, and environment in the process of talent development. It suggests that talent development is greatly influenced by the environment in which athletes are developed. The theory also describes locally organised matches and casual football play, like street football, as genuine settings for recognising and refining talent. It is especially critical in talent discovery since it encourages reliable, game-orientated evaluations rather than artificial drills, and it is versatile and adaptable to diverse circumstances. The application of this theory is very complicated, making it challenging for grassroots coaches to use without enough training.

Table 2.1

Comparative Summary of Theories

Theory	Strengths	Weaknesses	Relevance to Study
Multidimensional Model	Holistic and inclusive	Complex and resource-heavy	Forms core of framework design
LTAD	Structured and developmental	Needs structured setup	Provides timeline for TID phases
Ecological Dynamics	Context-driven	Theoretical complexity	Encourages realistic identification settings

2.3.7 Paradigm Shifts and Emerging Trends

The multidimensional and ecological dynamic models have clearly displaced traditionally used unidimensional models as people move towards a fully science-based era of talent identification. Modern perceptions give much emphasis on developmental potential, environmental factors, and long-term development rather than previous beliefs that focused on intrinsic talent and physical dominance. The increasing use of sports science and data analytics in elite environments has enabled more advanced identification approaches; however, these methods have yet to effectively reach areas like Harare Urban. The Multidimensional Four Corner Model employed by the English Football Association will serve as the foundation for establishing a local talent identification framework.

2.4 Thematic Review

Talent identification (TID) is essential to all athletes' development, especially in football, where early recognition of talent can influence future performance. The identification and development of talent in junior football within Harare Urban encounters numerous institutional and contextual obstacles. This thematic literature review examines essential aspects of TID in accordance with the study's aims. The review is thematically structured to address the following primary areas of investigation: existing talent discovery methods, their efficacy, the obstacles encountered by coaches and scouts, and the formulation of a customised framework appropriate for the local situation. This review thoroughly assesses the qualities, weaknesses, and significance of each methodology while emphasising famous academic arguments, contradictions, and paradigm shifts within the domain of TID. This section assesses the extent to which existing research meets the needs and realities of junior football development in Harare Urban while also identifying deficiencies in the literature, especially within African and Zimbabwean contexts. The aim is to develop a robust foundation for constructing a talent identification framework that is more scientifically grounded and contextually relevant.

2.4.1 Current Methods Used in Talent Identification for Football Players Aged 10 to 19 in Harare Urban

Talent identification (TID) models that are used in football internationally are an integration of physical, technical, tactical, and psychological assessments (Williams & Reilly, 2000; Vaeyens et al., 2008). In developing countries like Zimbabwe, the dominant practices are mostly non-formal and coach-centric, heavily dependent on visual scouting during matches and training sessions (Chawira & Dube, 2017). Banda and Sibanda (2021) proclaim that most of the coaches in Harare Urban rely on subjective assessments rather than the objective data-driven assessments.

Although these TID methods are easy to conduct, inexpensive, and readily accessible, they are highly ineffective and inconsistent in identifying talented athletes, and they are also prone to bias. Talented athletes from economically disadvantaged communities like peri-urban areas are left out due to lack of exposure. While certain academies in Zimbabwe are starting to implement standardised fitness assessments and technical exercises, their scope remains limited.

A significant global trend is emerging in which many countries are applying sports science and technology for early talent identification, with GPS monitoring, video analysis, and psychometric tests becoming increasingly dominant in nations such as the UK and Germany (Unnithan et al., 2012). However, a significant difference exists in the geographical distribution of these developments, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The situation of Harare Urban is lacking in the use of such gadgets, signifying a requirement for local modification as a replacement for direct application of external systems.

Many discussions focus on applying elite TID models from European countries to underdeveloped communities like Harare. While other scholars are pushing for a common TID model (Larkin & O'Connor, 2017), others are advocating for a model developed with the local context in mind (Adeboye & Ogundipe, 2020), especially in resource- and infrastructure-limited settings.

2.4.2 Effectiveness of Current Talent Identification Methods in Recognizing Football Potential

Reliability and predictive capability in talent identification typically measure a TID method's effectiveness. In Harare Urban, limited research has analytically assessed whether recognised individuals attain elite status. Muzondiwa (2019) asserts that there is an increased number of identified athletes before they become elite footballers, bringing the methods used in TID into question.

Scholars like Vaeyens et al. (2009) dispute that specialising early and depending on present performance rather than potential may lead to identifying the wrong athletes, missing out on the ones who could develop to become elite performers. Research by Mupfiga and Marimo (2022) found out that in Zimbabwe, those who develop late are frequently overlooked, as the coaches will be after instant physical or technical dominance.

A notable paradigm change in the literature is occurring, transitioning from static, one-time assessments to dynamic and longitudinal evaluations of talent, including bio-banding and relative age effect considerations (Cumming et al., 2017). However, these sophisticated methods do not exist in less developed football communities, such as those in Harare.

This indicates a distinct deficiency in the local literature concerning longitudinal tracking and developmental monitoring. Coaches frequently lack the resources and time to consistently monitor players throughout age groups, hindering the evaluation of the long-term efficacy of identification tactics.

2.4.3 Challenges Faced by Coaches and Scouts in the Talent Identification Process

Most studies done so far highlight the challenges faced by scouts and coaches in sub-Saharan Africa. These include lack of training in TID, lack of a TID framework, little to no infrastructure, and limited access to rural or underserved regions (Onywera, 2015). Similar findings were done by Dube and Chikonde (2021), who indicated that most coaches in Zimbabwe have limited training in TID and mostly depend on subjective assessments.

Another challenge often hampering TID processes is financial limitations. A greater number of coaches work as volunteers or have limited resources, greatly reducing their ability to attend many matches, organise trials, or even acquire relevant equipment and technology to use in TID. Furthermore, Mutekede and Chikowero (2020) discovered that there is a limited relationship between schools, football academies and professional football teams, which results in fragmented talent channels.

Available literature shows inconsistencies regarding whether these issues are mostly universal or knowledge-based. Other scholars like Williams (2013) argue that adequate coach education will go a long way in addressing these challenges, while others like Akindes & Kirwan (2009) believe that a more structured investment can reduce or eradicate these challenges faced by coaches and scouts in TID.

2.4.4 Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Talent Identification in Junior Football in Harare Urban

In the international scene, wonderfully crafted talent identification frameworks that are multidisciplinary exist, incorporating scouting, coaching, sports science, and long-term athlete development models (Lloyd et al., 2015). These frameworks merge short-term performance metrics with long-term potential indicators, including growth, psychological elasticity, and strategic learning.

Research by Chikowore & Makumbe (2021) indicates that most TID programs are fragmented and operated separately by private academies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It is with this background that thorough research is done to develop a framework that meets the needs and solves challenges faced by scouts and coaches during TID processes.

Emerging trends in TID calls for data-driven decision-making, the application of age-specific assessments, and structured partnership between stakeholders (FIFA, 2020). Economical strategies like mobile assessment teams, community-focused scouting programs, or online registration platforms for young participants are examples of local variations that can be used to produce a better framework.

For long-term success, the framework must incorporate inclusive practices and developmental psychology. Physical measurements as well as socioemotional growth, learning styles, and adaptability must all be incorporated into a comprehensive plan. There is a growing body of scholarly opinion that a universal approach is not effective. Therefore, the principle that frameworks must be adaptable, inclusive, and tailored to local contexts should guide the development of the Harare Urban model.

This thematic review emphasises a fragmented and unreliable talent identification system in Harare Urban. Although international best practices prioritise scientific and longitudinal methodologies, the local situation is largely characterised by subjective, inadequately funded approaches. The present scenario provides a great opportunity to develop a thorough, flexible framework based on international standards blended with local circumstances. Substantial deficiencies include a lack of methodical assessments, limited longitudinal monitoring, and institutional obstacles encountered by coaches and scouts. A potential framework must confront these issues while guaranteeing affordability, scalability, and community engagement.

2.5 Conclusion

The examination of current literature on talent identification (TID) in junior football reveals significant deficiencies, especially for Harare, Zimbabwe. Most current research emphasises

generalised frameworks established in Western contexts, which have restricted relevance to the socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural limitations of Zimbabwe. The detected gaps indicate that local coaches prefer a one-dimensional approach in TID, and all research conducted in the country has been one-dimensional. Despite evidence highlighting the significance of psychological qualities and the necessity of a multidimensional approach to talent identification and development (TID), along with the creation of a customised TID framework for each nation, no research has been conducted to address this gap. This research seeks to establish a framework for optimal talent identification in junior football teams in Harare, addressing one or more of the highlighted deficiencies.

This research will address existing gaps by prioritising Zimbabwe's distinct socio-economic conditions, offering a model that considers resource restrictions, community engagement, infrastructural constraints, and employing a multi-dimensional framework. This comprehensive method will assist coaches and teams in making better-informed judgements that transcend physical and technical skills, establishing a well-rounded framework for talent discovery. This research will investigate TID techniques that inclusively consider both male and female junior athletes to rectify the gender bias present in existing studies. Emphasising gender equity would enhance inclusivity and promote the advancement of female football potential, facilitating a balanced and equitable developmental trajectory for all young athletes. This study will provide practical and sustainable solutions specifically designed for the Zimbabwean context by addressing these research gaps. This research will aid coaches, scouts, and clubs in Harare's urban football community in more successfully finding, supporting, and developing young football talent, thereby fostering a robust and equitable approach to talent identification nationwide.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive literature analysis on TID practices worldwide and within the Zimbabwean context, as evidenced by numerous studies conducted by various scholars. It delineates the principal topics, theories in TID, global best practices in TID, TID methodologies, the efficacy of TID, and prospective areas for enhancement and intervention. It highlights considerable deficiencies in the literature, particularly the lack of localised research examining the application of a multi-dimensional approach to TID in Zimbabwe and the formulation of a framework for TID. This study seeks to overcome these shortcomings to

offer significant insights that help enhance successful TID for junior football teams in Harare. This chapter will delineate the technique employed in this investigation. The document shall delineate the research strategy, participant selection criteria, data-gathering methodologies, and analytical procedures utilised.

CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology employed to develop a framework for optimal talent identification in junior football teams in Harare, Zimbabwe. This section covers the research approach, time horizon, research strategy, sampling methods, data collection and analysis techniques, and ethical considerations, supporting a structured pathway for data collection and interpretation. The selected methodology aligns with the study's aim to enhance

understanding of the processes and criteria used in junior football talent identification. Given the socio-economic and infrastructural challenges in Zimbabwe, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative research to create a well-rounded, contextually relevant framework.

3.2 Methodological Approach

To thoroughly examine talent identification strategies, this study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. Mixed techniques allow for the integration of qualitative information about socioeconomic and contextual elements impacting talent identification with quantitative data on players' technical and physical traits (Creswell, 2014). Compared to a single approach, the combination improves data richness, triangulates findings, and offers a more comprehensive view (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This approach guarantees that the framework is based on facts and offers useful advice that scouts and coaches can use in situations with limited resources.

3.3 Time Horizons

This study employed a cross-sectional time horizon, with data collection occurring during a defined duration. Cross-sectional studies are frequently employed to assess the status of a phenomenon at a certain moment, rendering them appropriate for evaluating contemporary procedures in talent identification within Harare's junior football clubs (Bryman, 2012).

3.4 Research Strategy

This study used a Convergent Sequential Design that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. This approach guarantees that the framework is based on actual facts and offers useful advice that scouts and coaches can use in situations with limited resources. The research used surveys to collect numerical data from a wide range of junior players and interviews to get in-depth opinions from coaches, helping to gather useful information on the physical, technical, and mental qualities important for identifying talent (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

3.5 Population and Sampling

3.5.1 Population

The target population for this study includes Junior Football Players, young male and female players aged 10 to 19 years of chronological age who are actively participating in junior

football teams in Harare's urban areas, Coaches and Scouts (Individuals responsible for training, scouting, and selecting young players within Harare's junior football community). The population of athletes in Harare is not known in this research as time is a limiting factor denying the researcher a chance to conduct a census. However, it can be estimated that the population of athletes both in the school and academy systems is more than 5,000.

3.5.2 Sampling Procedures

3.5.2.1 Quantitative Strand

To guarantee a representative sample of players from various age and gender categories, stratified random sampling was employed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This approach gives participants in each stratum (gender and role in talent identification) an equal chance of being chosen, enabling findings that may be applied to a broad spectrum of young players, coaches and scouts (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

3.5.2.2 Qualitative Strand

For coaches and scouts, purposeful sampling was used to determine the sample. With this approach, the researcher can choose key informants who are experienced in talent identification and well-versed on TID practices, obstacles, and policy ramifications in Zimbabwe. By offering in-depth insights into the potential and challenges in Harare's TID scene, the selection of seasoned professionals improves the quality of the data (Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.5.3 Sample Size Determination

The research used Cochran's formula to determine the sample size for the quantitative strand, aiming for a total of approximately 250 junior players, while purposeful sampling was used to determine the sample size for qualitative strand (Patton, 2015), producing 30 participants for interviews (20 coaches or 10 scouts). The Cochran's formula was used because the actual population of junior players in Harare could not be determined through census due to time constraints. The population of athletes and coaches in Harare is also very big hence the use of this formula. The calculations done using the Cochran's formula to determine sample size for an infinite population are shown below:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_0 = required sample size
- Z = Z-score (based on desired confidence level)
- p = estimated proportion of population (usually 0.5 if unknown)
- e = desired margin of error

Assumptions for This Study:

- **Confidence level:** 95% $\rightarrow Z=1.96$
- **Proportion:** $p=0.5$ (most conservative, assumes maximum variability)
- **Margin of error:** $e=0.062$ (or **6.2%**)
- Population is assumed **large** ($\geq 10,000$)

$$\begin{aligned} n_0 &= \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}{(0.062)^2} \\ n_0 &= \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.003844} \\ n_0 &= \frac{0.9604}{0.003844} \\ n_0 &\approx 249.8 \end{aligned}$$

Academies were selected from the 7 districts of the province, with equal numbers of participants being chosen to determine the sample population for both qualitative and quantitative data. This sample size balances the need for statistically significant data with the practical constraints of time and resources. A robust sample size allows for sufficient statistical power in quantitative analysis while maintaining feasibility (Cochran, 1977).

3.5.4 Data Collection Procedures

3.5.4.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was used to collect data from players and coaches who are part of the population but not the sample. These people can give a meaningful response, as they have the same characteristics as the sample population. A total of twenty (20) questionnaires were issued for

the pilot study, and five (5) interviews were done to test the effectiveness of the research instruments.

3.5.4.2 Main Study

The study combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. We collected quantitative data using a total of two hundred and fifty (250) Likert scale questionnaires. Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with coaches and scouts to further understand their thoughts and insights in talent identification in Harare. This method gives coaches and scouts the freedom to fully express themselves in discussing the strengths, weaknesses, and potential improvements in current TID practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research was conducted during the period May and June, where the researcher moved from one area to another using public transport. The researcher first approached the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) to seek permission to conduct research in the academies, as ZIFA is the highest football authority and custodian in Zimbabwe, and then sought permission from academy administrators, coaches, and parents to work with their athletes and children, respectively. The data was conducted in Kuwadzana, Dzivarasekwa, Chitungwiza, Epworth, Mbare, and Mabvuku-Tafara, as well as the Mount Pleasant suburb. These areas were targeted so that insights from all communities that constitute Harare are represented so as to produce insights that can be used to describe the general outlook of junior football in Harare. In this research, athletes, both boys and girls between the chronological ages of ten to nineteen years, were issued soft copies of the questionnaire provided through Google Forms, but the turnout was very low, as most of the athletes do not have phones or other electronic gadgets to use. This prompted the researcher to print the questionnaires and issue hard copies of them for the athletes to fill out. With the printed copies, it became easier and faster to collect data from athletes all over Harare. The athletes were initially reluctant to fill out the surveys, fearing their coaches would retaliate if they were caught exposing them. But after careful explanation and assurance of anonymity, they complied and gave their honest opinions. Qualitative data was collected from interviewing coaches and a few scouts that were not part of academies from whom athletes participated in qualitative data collection.

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Given the mixed-methods design, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were applied. For quantitative data analysis, survey data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of IBM SPSS 21. Descriptive statistics (mean, median,

and mode) were used to summarise the responses provided by athletes during the research. Descriptive statistics help to identify trends and commonalities among players' attributes, while inferential statistics examine relationships and differences across variables (Field, 2013). Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests and ANOVA, were used to assess differences in TID practices based on variables like age, gender, and socio-economic background (Field, 2013). The data for qualitative analysis was presented using tables, pie charts and graphs.

Qualitative data from interviews was analysed using NVivo 15 software. Themes such as socio-economic challenges, gender bias, and psychological barriers will be identified, coded, and analysed to reveal patterns that impact TID in Harare. This approach helps capture coaches' and scouts' subjective perspectives on talent identification (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach also enables the researcher to synthesise insights into actionable recommendations for the proposed framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings are presented in tables, charts, narrative format, and word clouds, offering a comprehensive view of both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.7 Validity and Reliability (Quantitative Research) / Trustworthiness (Qualitative Research)

3.7.1 Validity and Reliability

Validity in quantitative research is addressed through careful questionnaire design, informed by a pilot study with a small subset of participants to verify clarity and relevance. Reliability is ensured by standardising data collection procedures across all teams and participants (Creswell, 2014).

3.7.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and providing detailed descriptions of the study context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation, achieved by combining surveys, interviews, and observations, helps validate findings across multiple data sources, while member checking ensures the accuracy of interpretations.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study upholds ethical standards as required by the relevant institutional review board (IRB) and the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA). Key ethical considerations include:

1. **Informed Consent:** All participants received detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Consent forms will be signed by adult participants and guardians of junior players under 18 years of age.
2. **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Participants' responses were kept confidential, and data will be anonymized to protect their identities. Names and identifying details will be removed from reports to ensure privacy.
3. **Right to Withdraw:** Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. This autonomy respects their freedom to choose their level of involvement (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).
4. **Protection of Minor Participants:** Special care will be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of minor participants. All interactions with junior players will be conducted under the supervision of coaches and guardians.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research methodology, covering the mixed-methods approach, sampling techniques, data collection, and analysis methods, as well as ethical considerations. The chosen methodology addresses the gaps identified in Chapter 2 and lays the foundation for creating a culturally relevant and inclusive as well as resource-appropriate and effective framework for talent identification in Harare's junior football teams. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, this study aims to provide insights that are reliable, valid, and applicable to the context of Zimbabwe's urban football sector. The findings from this study were analysed using SPSS 21 and NVivo 15. The next chapter (Chapter 4) is about data analysis and presentation. It shows how qualitative and quantitative data were analysed and presented against each of the objectives as they are given in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a study that created a framework for policies to encourage inclusivity in school sports in Zimbabwe. It starts by providing background information on the final sample size and representation, as well as the response rate from the data phase. It then examines the participants' age, gender, and educational attainment, among other demographic data. The consistency and credibility of the measures employed are then guaranteed by evaluating the reliability of the data collection tools. The chapter turns its attention to addressing the main goals of the research. The inclusion of pertinent tables, figures, and charts improves the results' readability and visual appeal.

4.2 Response Rate

This section describes the questionnaire and interview response rates from various academy coaches, scouts, and players in the Harare Urban area.

Table 4.1

Questionnaire Response Rate

	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Questionnaires Not Returned	Return (%)
Players	250	230	20	92
Total	250	230	20	100.0

In Harare Urban, 250 junior football players between the ages of 10 and 19 were given questionnaires; 230 of them successfully filled them out and sent them back. In survey-based research, a high percentage like this—92%—is regarded as excellent. Strong participant engagement is indicated by the high response rate, which also implies that the data gathered is trustworthy and typical of the larger population of junior football players and academies in the area. This degree of involvement strengthens the findings' validity and aids in the creation of a strong framework for the best possible talent identification.

Table 4.2

Interview Response Rate

Stakeholder	Target	Number Interviewed	Percent Returned	Cumulative Percent
Coaches	20	10	66.7%	66.7%
Scouts	10	5	33.3%	100.0%
Total	30	15	100.0%	

Out of the 30 interviews that were scheduled (20 coaches and 10 scouts), 20 were completed, 10 with coaches and 5 with scouts, resulting in response rates of 66.7% and 33.3%, respectively.

The data saturation principle, which states that no new themes or insights are emerging from further interviews, served as the basis for the decision to end the interviews at 15. This strategy made sure that data collection was methodologically sound and efficient. A strong and useful framework for the best talent identification in junior football teams throughout Harare Urban was developed thanks to the sample size that was attained, which was adequate to record important viewpoints from both development-focused (coaches) and evaluative (scouts) stakeholders.

4.3 Demographic Data

This section examines the demographics of the main players and coaches, with a particular emphasis on age, gender, and academic standing. Understanding the demographics of the respondents helped to validate their insights by allowing them to analyse their profiles.

4.3.1 Gender composition of the respondents

Table 4.3

Gender of questionnaire respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	83	36.1	36.1	36.1
	Male	147	63.9	63.9	100.0
	Total	230	100.0	100.0	

The demographic data from the questionnaire shows a gender imbalance, with 63.9% of respondents being men and 36.1% being women. This scenario implies that males predominate in junior football in Harare Urban, which might be a reflection of larger cultural trends in sports

engagement. A male-centric approach that ignores the special needs and difficulties faced by girls in football could result from the under-representation of women in the talent identification framework.

Table 4.4

Gender of interview respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	10	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%
Female	5	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	15	100.0%	100.0%	

Ten (66.7%) and five (33.3%) of the 15 interviewees who took part in the study were men. In addition to ensuring that both male and female viewpoints were recorded, this gender distribution represents the general demographic trends in Harare Urban's junior football coaching and administration.

4.3.2 Age of the respondents

Table 4.5

Age of questionnaire respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	13 -16 years	21	9.1	9.1	9.1
	15 - 16 years	19	8.3	8.3	17.4
	17 -19 years	190	82.6	82.6	100.0
	Total	230	100.0	100.0	

The majority of the 230 survey participants (82.6%) were between the ages of 17 and 19, compared to just 9.1% who were between the ages of 13 and 14 and 8.3% who were between the ages of 15 and 16. This lopsided distribution shows that older teenagers are well represented

in Harare Urban junior football. Since these athletes are frequently closer to making the move to the senior levels, their perspectives are useful for comprehending more complex phases of talent identification. Younger players' under-representation, however, might restrict the range of research on early-stage talent development. Future research could strive for a more balanced age distribution throughout the whole 10–19 age range, and this should be taken into account when interpreting results.

Table 4.6

Age of interview respondents

Age range		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 30 years	3	20	20	20
	31 - 40 years	7	46.7	46.7	66.7
	41 - 50 years	5	33.3	33.3	100
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Of the 15 interviewees, 20% were under 30, 46.7% were between the ages of 31 and 40, and 33.3% were between the ages of 41 and 50. Their ages ranged from under 30 to 50. This age range guarantees a wide range of perspectives on identifying junior football talent. While the mid- and older-age groups provided depth of experience and historical context, the younger respondents' inclusion introduced new, potentially more modern viewpoints. In addition to supporting the creation of a strong and flexible framework for identifying talent across various stages of junior football development in Harare Urban, this generational diversity adds depth to the qualitative data.

4.3.3 Education of the respondents

Table 4.7

Education (Coaching Qualification) levels of interview respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CAF B and above	7	46.7	46.7	46.7

	ZIFA level 1 to CAF C	5	33.3	33.3	80
	No formal Qualification	3	20	20	100
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

The 15 interviewees had a wide range of coaching qualifications: 46.7% had CAF B licences or higher, 33.3% had ZIFA Level 1 to CAF C certifications, and 20% had no formal coaching credentials. This wide range of experience offered a comprehensive viewpoint on junior football talent spotting procedures. While coaches with intermediate or no formal qualifications provided pragmatic, grassroots perspectives, highly qualified coaches offered insights based on sophisticated training methodologies. This combination of formal and informal coaching experience greatly enhanced the creation of a thorough and inclusive framework for talent identification in Harare Urban.

4.4 Presentation and Analysis of data linked to Research Objectives

This section provides a thorough outcome and a refined appraisal of the results by presenting the data according to the instruments used. The quantitative data from the questionnaires and the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were presented first.

4.4.1. To examine the current methods used in talent identification for football players aged 10 to 19 years in Harare Urban

Table 4.8

Descriptive Statistics for the current methods used in talent identification

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our team regularly uses structured trials to identify talented football players aged 10–19.	230	1	4	2.58	1.098

Physical attributes (e.g., speed, strength) are prioritized over technical skills in talent identification.	230	1	4	2.14	.972
Coaches use standardized assessment tools (e.g., score sheets, checklists) during talent scouting.	230	1	5	2.07	1.070
Talent identification decisions are often based on the coach's personal judgment or "eye test".	230	1	3	1.66	.890
Young players are identified through school tournaments and grassroots competitions.	230	1	4	2.53	1.162
Valid N (listwise)	230				

The descriptive statistics as indicated in table 4.8 reveal several critical insights into the current state of talent identification practices in junior football teams within Harare Urban. The data shows that structured trials are not regularly used, with a mean of 2.58 indicating general disagreement among respondents. This inconsistency is further reflected in the limited use of standardised assessment tools, such as score sheets and checklists (mean = 2.07), suggesting a lack of formal evaluation methods during scouting. Instead, coaches appear to rely heavily on personal judgement or the so-called "eye test," as evidenced by a low mean of 1.66, indicating strong agreement. Additionally, there is a noticeable prioritisation of physical attributes like speed and strength over technical skills, with a mean score of 2.14, which may result in technically skilled but less physically dominant players being overlooked. The identification of players through school tournaments and grassroots competitions is also inconsistent, as indicated by a mean of 2.53. These findings highlight a fragmented and subjective talent identification process, characterised by inconsistent practices, limited use of objective tools, and underutilised scouting platforms. As such, they underscore the urgent need to develop a comprehensive and standardised framework that promotes the consistent use of structured trials, objective assessment criteria, and the integration of grassroots systems to ensure a fair and effective approach to identifying football talent in the 10–19 age group.

Table 4.9

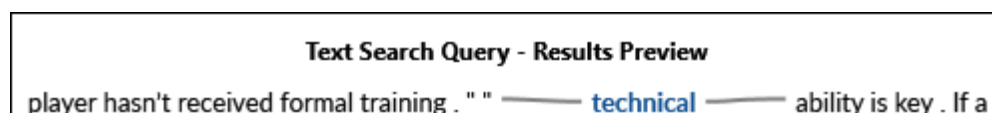
NVivo 15 analysis of how coaches and scouts identify talent in junior football in Harare.

NVivo Code	The aggregate number of coding references
Academy and Elite Development Pathways	1
Organised Competitions and Community Scouting	4
School and Stakeholder Collaboration	2
Technical, Tactical, and Psychological Evaluation	7
Use of Technology and Media in Scouting	1

Table 4.9 shows that the NVivo 15 analysis of interviews with coaches and scouts in Harare reveals that the main way to identify talent in junior football is by looking at performance, especially focussing on technical and tactical skills, which are mentioned the most. The text search query in Fig. 4.1 which displays the most frequently mentioned word, 'technical ability', further supports this assertion.

Figure 4.1

Text-search query on technical ability and psychological evaluation.



One coach said, “*If a player can control the ball well and has excellent footwork, we take a closer look,*” while another highlighted that “*Discipline and attitude matter. If a child listens to instructions, trains hard, and stays focused, that’s a big plus.*” This evidence indicates that attributes such as ball control, dribbling, passing, positioning, and decision-making are considered the most critical indicators of potential in young players. The second most prominent theme, organised competition (mentioned 4 times), highlights the importance placed on players’ participation and performance in structured tournaments and school leagues, suggesting that scouts prefer to assess talent in competitive environments. School and stakeholder involvement, only mentioned two times in the responses, points to the role of schools, parents, and community clubs in supporting talent development, although such engagement is given less weight than direct observation of skill. Notably, the use of technology and academy or elite development systems (both mentioned ones) received minimal attention, indicating that modern scouting tools like performance tracking software and formal

development pathways are either underused or not widely accessible in the local context. Overall, the findings suggest that talent identification in Harare's junior football remains largely traditional and experience-based, with limited integration of advanced methods or systemic development structures.

There is an urgent need for a standardised and comprehensive framework that incorporates structured trials, objective assessment tools, and the integration of grassroots and school-based competitions to ensure a more equitable, consistent, and effective approach to identifying football talent among youth aged 10 to 19 in Harare Urban. The findings also highlight a disconnect between the perceived importance of technical ability and the actual methods used to identify it, as well as a general lack of systematic, evidence-based practices.

4.4.2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the current talent identification methods in recognizing football potential among 10- to 19-year-old players in Harare Urban

Table 4.10

One-Way ANOVA on the effectiveness of current methods.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our team regularly uses structured trials to identify talented football players aged 10–19.	230	1	4	2.58	1.098

Physical attributes (e.g., speed, strength) are prioritized over technical skills in talent identification.	230	1	4	2.14	.972
Coaches use standardized assessment tools (e.g., score sheets, checklists) during talent scouting.	230	1	5	2.07	1.070
Talent identification decisions are often based on the coach's personal judgment or "eye test".	230	1	3	1.66	.890
Young players are identified through school tournaments and grassroots competitions.	230	1	4	2.53	1.162
Valid N (listwise)	230				

The findings of the ANOVA indicate that stakeholders have differing opinions about the current talent identification system for junior football in Harare Urban. Significant differences were found in respondents' perceptions of the fairness of the selection process ($F = 35.697$, $p < .001$), the advancement of identified players to higher competition levels ($F = 11.823$, $p < .001$), and the effectiveness of coach training in spotting and developing talent ($F = 6.411$, $p = .002$). These discrepancies point to inconsistent opportunity, advancement, and preparation across the board and imply that various coaching groups or team types have notably different experiences with the system. There was, however, a general lack of confidence in the predictive validity of the system, as evidenced by the lack of significant group differences in perceptions of its ability to identify long-term talent ($F = 2.028$, $p = .134$) or differentiate short-term performers from long-term prospects ($F = 0.269$, $p = .764$). These results highlight how urgently a standardised, equitable, and evidence-based framework for identifying talent is needed. This framework should include improved fairness, clear progression pathways, and better coach training programs.

Table 4.11

One-Sample t-test on the effectiveness of current talent identification methods

	Test Value = 3.0
--	-------------------------

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
The current methods used in talent identification accurately reflect a player's long-term potential.	-10.195	229	.000	-.700	-.84	-.56

A statistically significant perception gap about the efficacy of the current talent identification techniques in junior football in Harare Urban is revealed by the one-sample t-test result. The mean rating for whether current methods accurately reflect long-term player potential was significantly lower ($t = -10.195$, $p < .001$), with a test value of 3.0. This resulted in a mean difference of -0.700. The respondents' tendency towards disagreement is confirmed by the 95% CI (-0.84, -0.56), underscoring a lack of trust in current procedures. There is general concern that current identification strategies do not identify and develop long-term football talent, as this finding supports previous descriptive and ANOVA results. The implication is obvious: in order to guarantee that new talent is appropriately and fairly identified and supported, the current system urgently needs to be reformed by incorporating evidence-based tools and long-term player tracking mechanisms.

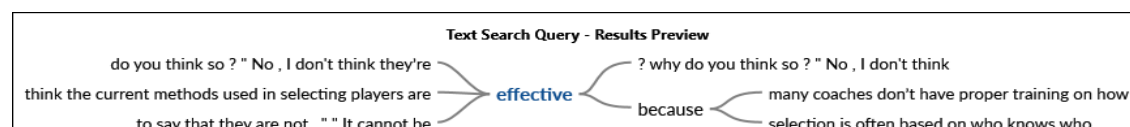
Table 4.12

NVIVO 15 analysis of the effectiveness of the current talent identification methods in talent in junior football in Harare.

NVivo Code	The aggregate number of coding references
Subjectivity and bias	4
Inadequate training and professionalism	3
Lack of coordination in talent search	3
Financial and geographic exclusion	2
Inefficient trial formats and lack of inclusivity.	2

The NVivo coding results in table 4.12, provide important insight into the main issues compromising the effectiveness of current talent identification techniques for junior football players in Harare Urban aged 10 to 19. Subjectivity and bias are the most commonly cited issues, with four coding references, indicating that player selection is frequently influenced by non-merit-based criteria, personal preferences, or favouritism. This compromises equity and diminishes the likelihood of impartially determining actual potential. A major issue is the selectors' and coaches' lack of professionalism and training, which has been mentioned three times. This shows that they lack the technical expertise and organisational procedures required to properly assess talent. The lack of coordination in the talent search, which also yielded three references, is another significant issue. This shows that there is no centralised or uniform method for scouting and selecting across various teams or institutions, indicating that current efforts are dispersed. Additionally, structural barriers that keep many talented players, especially those from low-income or remote areas, from being seen or given a fair chance are highlighted by financial and geographic exclusion, ineffective trial formats, and a lack of inclusivity (each with two references). All of these answers support the need for a more thorough, impartial, and inclusive framework for identifying talent in junior football throughout Harare Urban, as they show that the current system is not only inefficient but also unfair.

Figure 4.2
Text search Query



The text query in fig. 4.2 also supports the collective sentiments of the respondents, showing that the current methods are not effective.

The quantitative and qualitative results indicate that the current system for identifying talent is unfair, inconsistent, and ineffectual. A standardised, open, and inclusive framework that incorporates objective evaluation standards, scouting and coaching professional development, and fair access to trials and competitions is desperately needed to increase its efficacy. The

football ecosystem in Harare Urban can only genuinely assist the identification and cultivation of long-term talent among its youth by undergoing such a change.

4.4.3 To assess the challenges coaches and scouts face in the talent identification process.

Table 4.13

One-way ANOVA for challenges faced by coaches

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Lack of resources (e.g., equipment, facilities) hinders effective talent identification.	Between Groups	25.583	2	12.792	16.200	.000
	Within Groups	179.238	227	.790		
	Total	204.822	229			
There is limited collaboration between schools, academies, and clubs in scouting young talent.	Between Groups	64.032	2	32.016	22.360	.000
	Within Groups	325.033	227	1.432		
	Total	389.065	229			
Socio-economic factors affect some players' ability to attend trials or training sessions.	Between Groups	53.458	2	26.729	17.807	.000
	Within Groups	340.733	227	1.501		
	Total	394.191	229			
There is a shortage of qualified coaches and scouts at the junior football level.	Between Groups	5.721	2	2.860	12.932	.000
	Within Groups	50.210	227	.221		
	Total	55.930	229			

Strong statistical evidence of notable differences in the perceptions of various stakeholders regarding the difficulties in identifying talent in junior football throughout Harare Urban can be found in the ANOVA results. The respondents' opinions on the impact of socio-economic barriers ($F = 17.807$, $p < .001$), the availability of qualified coaches and scouts ($F = 12.932$, $p < .001$), the impact of resource shortages ($F = 16.200$, $p < .001$), and the degree of collaboration among institutions ($F = 22.360$, $p < .001$) varied significantly. These statistically significant findings point to structural injustices in the football ecosystem, where certain teams and geographical areas are disproportionately impacted. The findings highlight the pressing need

for a cohesive and inclusive framework that tackles infrastructure inequalities, encourages teamwork, aids underprivileged athletes, and improves coaching staff competency. To guarantee that talent identification is fair, successful, and long-lasting at all junior football levels in Harare Urban, such interventions are crucial.

Table 4.14

NVIVO 15 analysis of the effectiveness of the current talent identification methods in talent in junior football in Harare.

NVivo Code	The aggregate number of coding references
Subjectivity and bias	4
Inadequate training and professionalism	3
Lack of coordination in talent search	3
Financial and geographic exclusion	2
Inefficient trial formats and lack of inclusivity.	2

Table 4.14 provides a graphic representation of the primary challenges faced by coaches and scouts in their search for gifted young football players. Subjectivity and bias are the most commonly cited issues, with four coding references suggesting that player selection is frequently influenced by personal preferences, favouritism, or non-merit-based criteria. This category includes issues like bias, pressure from the community and parents, political interference, and the lack of financial compensation for scouts. The lack of coordination in the talent search, which also yielded three references, is another significant issue. This data shows that there is no centralised or uniform method for scouting and selecting across various teams or institutions, indicating that current efforts are dispersed. Additionally, structural barriers that keep many talented players especially those from low-income or remote areas from being seen or given a fair chance are highlighted by financial and geographic exclusion, ineffective trial formats, and a lack of inclusivity (each with two references). All of these answers support the need for a more thorough, impartial, and inclusive framework for identifying talent in junior football throughout Harare Urban, as they show that the current system is not only inefficient but also unfair.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results of the data analysis point to a common worry among scouts and coaches about the complex difficulties in spotting junior football talent in Harare Urban. Together, the participants identified systemic problems like political meddling and favouritism, inadequate communication systems, inadequate equipment and training, trial time constraints, and financial limitations for both players and selectors. These issues are interconnected and show that in order to create a more professional, organised, and inclusive framework for identifying talent, football teams, schools, community leaders, and governing bodies must respond in concert.

4.4.4. To develop a comprehensive framework for talent identification in junior football in Harare urban

Table 4.15

One-way ANOVA for the need to develop a comprehensive framework for talent identification.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
There is a need for a standardized framework for talent identification in junior football.	Between Groups	7.642	2	3.821	17.471	.000
	Within Groups	49.645	227	.219		
	Total	57.287	229			
I would be happy if a new framework is adopted if it	Between Groups	16.311	2	8.155	11.004	.000

improved the identification and development of talent.	Within Groups	168.233	227	.741		
	Total	184.543	229			

The argument for changing the current junior football talent identification system in Harare Urban is strongly supported by the ANOVA results. Responses regarding the necessity of a standardised framework ($F = 17.471$, $p < .001$) and support for implementing a new system if it enhanced talent identification results ($F = 11.004$, $p < .001$) showed statistically significant differences. These findings suggest that there is broad agreement that the current system is insufficient, even though viewpoints vary amongst groups—possibly as a result of role, experience, or organisational context. Crucially, the strong willingness to embrace a better framework highlights the viability and pressing need to adopt a more uniform, impartial, and cooperative model for identifying talent. These observations offer a solid basis for creating and putting forth a workable and inclusive framework that can promote the more steady and fair growth of football talent in the area.

Table 4.16

NVIVO 15 analysis on developing a comprehensive framework for talent identification.

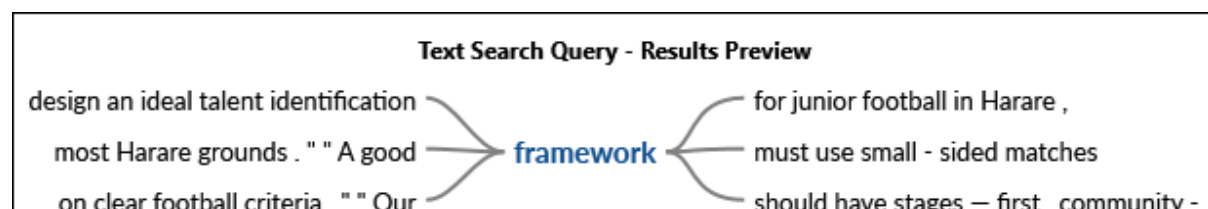
NVivo Code	The aggregate number of coding references
Collaborative and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement	3
Multidimensional Assessment Beyond Physical Ability	3
Small-Sided Games for Effective Skill Assessment	4
Standardization and Structured Multi-Stage Selection	5

The NVivo-coded data highlights key priorities for creating a thorough framework to identify junior football talent in Harare Urban. Standardisation and Structured Multi-Stage Selection

were the most often mentioned themes, highlighting the pressing need for uniform protocols and open assessment methods among various districts. Coaches can now more closely observe skills thanks to small-sided games, which have become a very useful tool for talent assessment, particularly in urban settings with limited space. With an emphasis on technical, tactical, and psychological aspects, the theme of multidimensional assessment reflects a growing understanding that talent encompasses more than just physical attributes. Additionally prominent were collaborative and inclusive stakeholder engagement, which emphasises the value of enlisting communities, educators, and parents to guarantee early detection and ongoing player support. Together, these themes imply that coaches are demanding a framework that is both flexible and structured, based on contemporary ideas but grounded in local realities. The variety of answers shows that stakeholders have a comprehensive grasp of what is required to enhance talent identification. In the end, these realisations offer a strong foundation for creating a system that is both successful and pertinent to the area.

Figure 4.3

Text Search Query on developing a talent identification framework



In addition to highlighting the results of the interviews, the text search query in Fig. 4.3 also highlights the necessity of using small-sided matches during the identification process and demonstrates how the framework should have a clear criterion for selecting players.

The statistical and thematic results come together to provide a clear directive: there is widespread support and knowledgeable insight to direct the creation of an all-encompassing framework. Such a system ought to be objective but locally based, standardised but flexible, and built to support long-term talent development, equity, and transparency. These revelations not only support the need for change, but they also provide a clear path forward for developing

a workable and efficient talent identification system that is adapted to the particular circumstances of Harare Urban.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Objective A. To examine the current methods used in talent identification for football players aged 10 to 19 years in Harare Urban

The results of this study support the thematic review's conclusion that Harare Urban's current talent identification (TID) practices are primarily informal, erratic, and mainly dependent on coaches' subjective evaluations. With low mean scores for techniques like using score sheets, technical drills, and scouting platforms, quantitative data showed a limited use of structured trials and standardised assessment tools. Like Chawira and Dube (2017) and Banda and Sibanda (2021), who contend that the majority of Zimbabwean coaches choose players based on perceived potential rather than methodical assessment, the qualitative data also revealed a significant reliance on visual scouting and subjective judgement.

Despite being economical, this over-reliance on subjective methods raises the possibility of bias and talent exclusion, especially for athletes from under-represented groups who might not be able to attend elite competitions or academies. The debate reflects global issues raised by Vaeyens et al. (2008) and Williams and Reilly (2000), who support a multifaceted TID strategy that includes tactical, psychological, physical, and technical elements. These multifaceted evaluations aren't organised or used consistently in Harare Urban, though.

The limited adoption of sport science and technological innovations in Zimbabwe further widens the gap between local practice and global trends. Although advanced football systems incorporate technologies like GPS tracking and psychometric analysis (Unnithan et al., 2012), Harare lacks these approaches mainly because of financial and infrastructure limitations. This bolsters Adeboye and Ogundipe's (2020) case for contextualising TID frameworks in settings with limited resources. Replicating elite European models without modifying them to fit the football environment in Harare would be unrealistic and can produce no meaningful results.

Scholars who support contextual relevance and those who support universal TID standards (Larkin & O'Connor, 2017) are clearly at odds with one another. The latter is supported by the

study's findings, which show that although international models provide insightful information, Harare Urban needs a low-cost, inclusive, grassroots framework that combines technical and psychological evaluations, structured trials, and partnerships with communities and schools. A framework like this would make it easier to find talent in a variety of urban settings while also increasing consistency, fairness, and accessibility.

4.5.2 Objective B: To Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Current Talent Identification Methods in Recognizing Football Potential Among 10- to 19-Year-Old Players in Harare Urban

An analysis of Harare Urban's present talent identification (TID) procedures reveals serious inconsistencies and inefficiencies that compromise their efficacy. The system does not offer equal opportunities for spotting and developing football talent, according to quantitative results from ANOVA and t-tests that reveal sharp disparities in coaches' and stakeholders' perceptions of fairness, player development, and coaching readiness. A significant mean difference ($-0.700, p < .001$) indicates low confidence in the system's ability to predict long-term success, which supports the idea that the current approaches are not only disjointed but also lack predictive validity. These problems are in line with international research that cautions that identifying talent incorrectly can result from a reliance on short-term performance rather than long-term potential (Vaeyens et al., 2009; Mupfiga & Marimo, 2022).

These conclusions are supported by the qualitative analysis, which identifies subjectivity, partiality, and a lack of selector training as the main obstacles to efficacy. In Harare, coaches frequently work without official policies or opportunities for professional growth, which results in skewed selections and inconsistent assessments. Additionally, the systemic exclusion of potentially talented people is facilitated by dispersed and disorganised scouting efforts, a lack of inclusivity, and inadequate outreach to players who are financially or geographically disadvantaged. Both the lack of technical structure and the lack of opportunity equity are reflected in these difficulties, which significantly reduce the system's efficacy.

Although age-relative evaluations, bio-banding, and longitudinal tracking are becoming more popular worldwide (Cumming et al., 2017), Harare's youth football ecosystem noticeably lacks these innovations. Coaches are unable to evaluate players' development or potential over time

in the absence of follow-up mechanisms, which lowers the likelihood of correctly identifying late bloomers or developmental progress. Muzondiwa (2019) observed high dropout rates among players who were first scouted, suggesting a weak connection between identification and development pathways. This situation is consistent with their findings.

Overall, the study's conclusions imply that Harare Urban's current approaches are insufficient for accurately identifying long-term football potential. A structured, inclusive, and evidence-based TID framework that prioritises objective criteria, long-term player monitoring, coach capacity-building, and fairness is desperately needed. Only then will Harare's talent identification process start to follow global best practices and cater to the young football players' developmental needs.

4.5.3 Objective C. To Assess the Challenges Coaches and Scouts Face in the Talent Identification Process

A complex interaction of institutional, operational, and systemic barriers is revealed by the evaluation of the difficulties faced by coaches and scouts in Harare Urban's junior football talent identification system. Significant differences between teams and regions are highlighted by quantitative data from the ANOVA results, especially when it comes to resource availability ($F = 16.200, p < .001$), inter-institution collaboration ($F = 22.360, p < .001$), and the presence of qualified personnel ($F = 12.932, p < .001$). These results demonstrate that although certain environments enjoy relative access and support, others continue to be underfunded and ill-coordinated, which results in unfair scouting results and lost chances for talented players.

These conclusions are supported by qualitative findings. The biggest obstacle was bias and political meddling, which included favouritism, community pressures, and low motivation among unpaid or underfunded scouts. This is consistent with more general African literature (Dube & Chikonde, 2021; Akindes & Kirwan, 2009), which contends that social favouritism and political patronage frequently have a greater impact on player selection than merit. In a similar vein, many young athletes are denied access to trials due to a lack of information caused by communication breakdowns, particularly with parents and schools. The effectiveness of the process was further undermined by coaches pointing out their own shortcomings, such as a lack of basic evaluation tools and inadequate training in formal talent identification techniques.

Operational problems were also common, including time restraints during trials and financial obstacles for players and coaches. Onywera (2015) and Mutekede & Chikowero (2020) support the idea that players from low-income backgrounds are less noticeable to scouts because they struggle with transportation, kit, or academy fees. Additionally, promising players drop out or stagnate as a result of the fragmented nature of school-club-academy collaboration, which limits the continuity of talent pathways.

The results of this study indicate that training alone is not enough, despite the claims of some academics (Williams, 2013) that upskilling coaches would enhance talent identification. Deeply ingrained structural issues necessitate systemic investments in tools, infrastructure, and organisational cooperation. Therefore, creating a well-coordinated, inclusive, and resource-rich framework that places a high priority on equity, communication, and professional standards in TID processes is just as important as improving coach education.

In conclusion, the fairness and effectiveness of junior football talent identification are hampered by the numerous issues that coaches and scouts in Harare Urban deal with. To maximise the identification and development of football talent in the area, a cooperative, stakeholder-driven intervention that tackles systemic and knowledge barriers is desperately needed.

4.5.4 Objective D. To Develop a Comprehensive Framework for Talent Identification in Junior Football in Harare Urban

Stakeholder readiness for reform and the obvious evidence of systemic inefficiencies makes the creation of a thorough talent identification (TID) framework for junior football in Harare Urban both necessary and timely. This need has strong statistical support from the quantitative analysis. Although opinions may differ among groups, there is broad agreement regarding the shortcomings of current practices and openness to innovation, as evidenced by significant ANOVA findings on the need for a standardised framework ($F = 17.471$, $p < .001$) and support for implementing new systems if they enhance talent outcomes ($F = 11.004$, $p < .001$).

The qualitative results support this consensus and provide insight into what such a framework ought to include. The overarching theme of standardisation and structured multi-stage selection highlights the pressing need for uniformity, openness, and equity among districts. The incorporation of small-sided games, an economical and useful tool appropriate for urban space constraints and helpful for observing technical, tactical, and decision-making skills in realistic

settings, was warmly endorsed by coaches. The focus on multidimensional assessment also suggests a move away from a purely physical approach and towards a more comprehensive strategy that takes psychological, technical, and tactical aspects into account.

Crucially, the qualitative data also emphasise the importance of inclusive and collaborative stakeholder engagement, which includes feedback from communities, parents, and schools. This is in line with the international literature, which supports interdisciplinary approaches and multi-stakeholder collaboration in TID frameworks (Lloyd et al., 2015; FIFA, 2020). Thematic insights highlight the need for sustainable frameworks to address player development, emotional resilience, and long-term progression in addition to performance metrics.

According to Makumbe and Chikoore's (2021) research, Zimbabwe's current systems are disjointed, run by separate NGOs or private academies, and lack a cohesive framework. This presents Harare Urban with a significant chance to lead the way in developing a context-sensitive model that is accessible, inclusive, and scalable. Age-appropriate assessments, bio-banding, and longitudinal tracking are examples of global best practices that provide useful tools, but they must be modified to accommodate local limitations like a lack of funding, infrastructure, and official training.

From the research findings, the following should be included in the creation of a locally customised framework:

- Standardized, multi-phase trials incorporating technical, tactical, and psychological assessments.
- Community-based scouting and outreach days, especially targeting low-income areas.
- Mobile assessment teams or rotating hubs to reach underserved regions.
- Digital platforms for registering and tracking young players longitudinally.
- Coach education programs focused on modern, evidence-based TID methods.
- Parent and school involvement in early identification and sustained support.

Fig 4.4

Proposed Talent Identification Framework



Fig 4.4 shows the proposed framework for talent identification in Harare Urban. The framework is a comprehensive methodology for talent discovery and development in football, grounded in continuous feedback and collaborative evaluation among ZIFA, academies, and schools. The fundamental aspect is the continuous assessment and enhancement process that involves players, coaches, scouts, and parents to guarantee the system's dynamism and efficacy. The framework comprises six interrelated components. The Scouts and Recruiting Process underscores collaborations with educational institutions, community involvement, and recommendations from coaches and peers to uncover talent at an early stage. Community integration and support guarantees parental engagement, school cooperation, and the advancement of nutritional and health consciousness for comprehensive player development. The Multidimensional Player Analysis assesses players across physical, technical, tactical, psychological, and social aspects using standardised drills, small-sided games, observations, and video analysis, utilising norm tables for guidance. Talent tracking encompasses the maintenance of a player database, the provision of mentorship, and the execution of regular evaluations to assess development and advancement. The Coaches and Scouts Training component emphasises professional growth via workshops, bias awareness training, and the implementation of objective evaluation instruments. These parts constitute a cyclical process, mutually supporting one another to establish a sustainable and inclusive framework for cultivating football potential.

In conclusion, the necessity of a thorough TID framework in Harare Urban is supported by both the data and thematic literature. In order to provide structured, multifaceted, and inclusive approaches that address both the identification and development of football talent, such a model must strike a balance between global insights and local realities. The viability of introducing a more professional, cooperative, and equitable TID system throughout Harare's junior football scene is further supported by the strong stakeholder willingness to embrace a new system.

4.6 Chapter Summary

A system that mainly relies on informal and subjective methods, with little use of standardised tools and structured assessments, is revealed by the data analysis and presentation of the research on talent identification in junior football in Harare Urban. Inconsistencies in opportunity and advancement are highlighted by quantitative results that reveal notable differences in how various coaching groups perceive fairness, advancement, and coach readiness. The need for reform is further supported by a one-sample t-test, which shows a

general lack of trust in the system's capacity to recognise long-term potential. The results of the ANOVA also point to the main difficulties that coaches and scouts encounter, such as a lack of resources, socioeconomic obstacles, poor teamwork, and a shortage of skilled staff. These are supported by the qualitative analysis, which found that the main barriers to efficient talent identification were prejudice, inadequate training, poor communication, and budgetary limitations. Notwithstanding these obstacles, stakeholders strongly support the creation of an all-encompassing, standardised framework that incorporates small-sided games, multi-stage assessments, and multidimensional evaluation criteria. The suggested model places a strong emphasis on diversity, cooperation between communities, schools, and football organisations, as well as striking a balance between local realities and global best practices. This highlights a pressing and doable chance to create a more fair and efficient system for identifying talent that is adapted to the particular circumstances of Harare Urban.

The summary of the main findings, the conclusion, and suggestions for future research and practice are examined in the following chapter (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter delivers the conclusive synthesis of the study by summarising the principal findings, formulating conclusions, and proposing suggestions aligned with the research objectives. The conclusions directly respond to the four research questions presented in Chapter 1: the existing methods employed in talent identification, the effectiveness of these methods, the challenges encountered by coaches and scouts, and the possibility of creating a comprehensive and data driven framework suited to the context of junior football in Harare Urban. This chapter presents practical advice for stakeholders in football development, including policy-makers, coaches, scouts, and community organisations. Additionally, recommendations for future study are proposed to enhance and maintain talent identification systems in Harare, Zimbabwe, and comparable contexts. This chapter aims to synthesise the insights acquired and facilitate actionable measures to improve junior football talent identification.

5.2 Summary of major findings

The study indicated that talent identification (TID) procedures for football players aged 10 to 19 years in Harare Urban are mostly informal, inconsistent, and significantly dependent on coaches' subjective assessments, with limited application of structured trials or standardised instruments. This method, while economical, frequently fails to acknowledge and identify talented youth, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds due to its absence of organisation and reliance on prominence within elite networks. Stakeholders generally regard these methodologies as incompetent, lacking in fairness, predictive accuracy, and consistency in recognising long-term potential. Coaches and scouts encounter numerous hurdles, such as

football political interference, inadequate training, restricted resources, and socio-economic obstacles, all of which undermine the Talent Identification (TID) process. Nevertheless, these challenges, there is a robust agreement on the necessity for a more equal and standardised system. Stakeholders endorse reforms that incorporate systematic, multi-phase selection procedures, comprehensive evaluations (technical, tactical, psychological), and collaborative engagement with educational institutions and communities. The study underscores the pressing necessity for a contextually relevant, grassroots-oriented TID framework specifically designed for the conditions of Harare Urban.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 What are the current methods used in talent identification for junior football players aged 10–19 in Harare Urban?

The study shows that the existing talent identification (TID) methods utilised in Harare Urban are mainly informal, unstandardised, and significantly dependent on coaches' subjective visual evaluations. Both qualitative and quantitative results demonstrate a restricted use of controlled trials, technical drills, or scientific assessment instruments. Player selection frequently relies on perceived ability and individual prejudice instead of comprehensive evaluation standards. This method is inconsistent and does not afford impartial opportunity for all youth players, particularly those from marginalised families who may lack access to elite academies or prestigious contests.

5.3.2 How effective are the current talent identification methods in recognizing football potential among 10- to 19-year-old players in Harare Urban?

The results indicate that the existing TID approaches are slightly effective in identifying football talent. Although coaches can recognise certain skilled players through experience, the lack of standardised measurements reduces the objectivity and fairness of the selection process. An excessive dependence on non-data driven and subjective assessments results in the possible neglect of talent and raises inconsistency in recognising well-rounded athletes with technical, physical, psychological, and tactical skills. Moreover, insufficient follow-up and developmental monitoring reduce the long-term effectiveness of TID activities.

5.3.3 What challenges do coaches and scouts face in identifying talent within junior football teams?

The study discovered a lot of challenges that reduce the effectiveness of talent identification in Harare Urban. These include lack of finance, a deficit of trained staff, restricted access to modern training and scouting facilities, and inadequate collaboration among stakeholders. Moreover, political interfering, favouritism, and the absence of structured data management systems worsen the challenges in identifying and developing talent. These issues have resulted in a fragmented and unfair TID environment that disadvantages underprivileged participants and hinders long-term growth.

5.3.4 What framework can be developed for Talent Identification in Junior Football in Harare Urban?

The study recommends a context-specific and inclusive framework to enhance talent identification. This proposed framework should integrate schools, community clubs, and academies through systematic cooperation. It should incorporate economical, standardised assessment instruments that examine the technical, physical, psychological, and tactical dimensions of players. The structure must include frequent capacity-building seminars for coaches, technology tools for monitoring player performance, and policy assistance from local football authorities. This strategy would guarantee consistency, honesty, and inclusivity in the TID process.

5.3.5 Overall Conclusion

This study suggests that Harare Urban has a large pool of latent football skill among youth aged 10–19 years; however, the existing methods for identifying this talent are insufficient and inconsistent. The results confirm that the lack of systematic, objective, and inclusive identification mechanisms reduces the effectiveness of TID initiatives. Challenges including constrained resources, insufficient coordination, and informal procedures further worsen this issue. Grassroots, cost-effective, and multifaceted framework tailored to the socio-economic context of Harare must be implemented to overcome these deficiencies. Implementing such a system might markedly improve the identification, development, and promotion of youth football talent in the city.

5.4 Limitation of the study

This study encountered numerous restrictions that influenced its extensiveness. The literature behind the study also imposed certain limitations. The majority of academic research on talent identification is focused in affluent nations, especially in Europe and North America, rendering it difficult to locate contextually pertinent models or data suitable for low-resource settings such as Zimbabwe. Consequently, certain examined frameworks may not fully correspond with the socio-economic conditions of the local football system.

Access difficulties further constrained the research. Several coaches were inaccessible for interviews, while others postponed their involvement in the research, thereby extending the data gathering duration. Replacement participants were found for individuals who withdrew from the research to ensure timely completion and prevent delays. Moreover, certain coaches and scouts shown hesitance to reveal their comprehensive methods, potentially due to apprehensions regarding judgement or the exposure of systematic deficiencies. These limitations affected the thoroughness of the study.

Researcher bias may have also affected the procedure, especially in the interpretation of qualitative data. As a researcher with previous experience in grassroots football in Harare, there was a potential for overstating familiar difficulties or inadequately expressing differing perspectives. To address these limitations, many data sources were triangulated, participant anonymity was guaranteed to promote transparency, and a reflexive log was kept to minimise interpretive bias. Furthermore, efforts were made to equilibrate Western literature with promising African viewpoints to guarantee contextual relevance in the ultimate analysis. Notwithstanding these constraints, the study offers a reliable basis for comprehending and enhancing talent identification systems in Harare Urban.

5.5 Implications/Recommendations

5.5.1 Implications for Practice

The study's results highlight the pressing necessity to overhaul the current talent identification (TID) methods in youth football within Harare Urban. To resolve concerns of inconsistency, subjectivity, and fragmentation, it is advisable for football associations, academies, and government ministries to implement a standardised and structured Talent Identification framework. This framework must encompass transparent, multi-tiered evaluation systems that integrate technical, physical, tactical, and psychological aspects of player development.

Regular training sessions and seminars must be implemented for coaches and scouts to enhance objectivity and guarantee the application of uniform evaluation standards. Moreover, the institutionalisation of stakeholder engagement, particularly involving parents, educators, and community leaders, is essential to foster a supportive and inclusive developmental environment. Resource-efficient strategies, such as small-sided games and mobile scouting clinics, can mitigate infrastructure limitations in urban environments.

5.5.2 Implications for Theory

This study considerably enhances the theoretical framework of talent identification by presenting a context-specific model that amalgamates global best practices with local realities. It addresses a significant deficiency in the literature on sports development in Zimbabwe and the wider sub-Saharan African region, which has predominantly neglected the systematic, structured, and inclusive identification of emerging football talent. The suggested methodology integrates multidimensional evaluation principles and long-term athlete development, aligning with modern talent development theories. Furthermore, it contests conventional perspectives that prioritise solely physical capability, advocating for a more comprehensive approach that appreciates psychological resilience, tactical acumen, and socio-emotional preparedness. The study thereby broadens theoretical discussions on inclusive, evidence-based talent development in resource-limited settings.

5.5.3 Implications for Future Research

Future research should investigate the long-term effects of introducing a systematic TID framework in junior football across several districts in Zimbabwe. Research might assess the impact of such frameworks on player retention, performance advancement, and transition to professional levels. It would be advantageous to assess the efficacy of digital tools such as talent tracking applications and performance databases in enhancing transparency and communication among stakeholders. Moreover, additional qualitative research into the lived experiences of young athletes and grassroots coaches might enhance comprehension of the social, emotional, and economic elements affecting talent development. This research is essential for enhancing and expanding the framework suggested in this study. It is of great importance that future research work towards developing and integrating the use of norm tables specifically for Zimbabwe in talent identification.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesised the principal research findings, concluding in accordance with the initial research questions. The research validated widespread dissatisfaction with the existing TID system in Harare Urban and emphasized the need for a systematic, inclusive, and standardised framework. Essential implications for practice encompassed the necessity for systemic reform, enhancement of capacity, and increased engagement of diverse stakeholders. Theoretically, the work enhances the expanding literature that supports holistic and context-sensitive theories of talent development. Future study should prioritise longitudinal analysis, the incorporation of digital tools in the identification of youth in football, developing as well as the use of Zimbabwean norm tables in assessing athletes. The chapter summarised the importance of the study's findings and defined practical and academic pathways for improving junior football in Zimbabwe.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire for Qualitative Data Collection for the Topic: *Developing a Framework for Optimal Talent Identification in Junior Football Teams (Aged 10 to 19) in Harare Urban.*

Each item should be rated on a **5-point Likert scale**:

Strongly Disagree (1) – Disagree (2) – Neutral (3) – Agree (4) – Strongly Agree (5).

Section A: Current Talent Identification Methods (*Objective a*)

1. Our team regularly uses structured trials to identify talented football players aged 10–19 years.
2. Physical attributes (e.g., speed, strength) are prioritized over technical skills in talent identification.
3. Coaches use standardized assessment tools (e.g., score sheets, checklists) during talent scouting.
4. Talent identification decisions are often based on the coach’s personal judgment or “eye test.”
5. Young players are identified through school tournaments and grassroots competitions.

Section B: Effectiveness of Current Methods (*Objective b*)

6. The current methods used in talent identification accurately reflect a player’s long-term potential.
7. Identified players often progress to higher levels of competition (e.g., district, national teams).
8. The selection process is fair and gives equal opportunities to all players regardless of background.
9. The current system successfully differentiates between short-term performers and long-term talents.
10. Coaches receive adequate training in identifying and nurturing football talent.

Section C: Challenges in Talent Identification (*Objective c*)

11. Lack of resources (e.g., equipment, facilities) hinders effective talent identification.
12. There is limited collaboration between schools, academies, and clubs in scouting young talent.
13. Socio-economic factors affect some players’ ability to attend trials or training sessions.

14. There is a shortage of qualified coaches and scouts at the junior football level.

Section D: Developing a Framework (*Objective d*)

15. There is a need for a standardized framework for talent identification in junior football.
16. I would be willing to adopt a new framework if it improved the identification and development of talent.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Question 1: How do you identify talent / what methods do you use to identify talent in junior football?
2. Question 2: In your opinion, do you think the current methods used in selecting players are effective? Why do you think so?
3. Question 3: What are the main challenges you encounter when identifying talented players at the junior level?
4. Question 4: If you had the opportunity to design an ideal talent identification framework for junior football in Harare, what key elements would you include?

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Question 1: How do you identify talent / what methods do you use to identify talent in junior football.

1. "We use school tournaments like NASH and NAPH to scout young players who show promise on the pitch."
2. "I visit local grounds like Zimphos, Alex Sports Club, and Highfield grounds where community teams play regularly."
3. "We organise open trials in high-density suburbs like Mbare, Glen View, and Mabvuku to give every child a chance to show their talent."
4. "We work closely with PE teachers in primary and secondary schools who recommend talented kids from their schools."
5. "We look for raw skill — especially in high-density areas — even if the player hasn't received formal training."

6. "Technical ability is key. If a player can control the ball well and has good footwork, we take a closer look."
7. "We assess how a player performs in a real game situation — not just in drills — because match intelligence is critical."
8. "Discipline and attitude matter. If a child listens to instructions, trains hard, and stays focused, that's a big plus."
9. "We rely on word-of-mouth. Sometimes another coach or community leader will tip me off about a talented boy in their area."
10. "We use small-sided games, especially 5v5 or 7v7, to identify creativity, vision, and decision-making under pressure."
11. "I look for players who are consistent — not just those who have one good day. It's about long-term potential."
12. "Players from soccer academies like BN Academy or City Academy usually stand out due to better training and exposure."
13. "I watch how they play without the ball — their movement, positioning, and awareness."
14. "Sometimes we go to rural outreach tournaments when invited because raw talent can be found even outside Harare."
15. "We use WhatsApp videos shared by parents or coaches — it's now common to receive clips of promising players for initial assessment."

Question 2: In your opinion, do you think the current methods used in selecting players are effective? why do you think so?

1. "No, I don't think they're effective because selection is often based on who knows who, not on talent."
2. "Not at all. Many good players are left out because they can't afford to attend trials or pay academy fees."
3. "The current methods are not. We still rely too much on eye judgment, with no standard criteria — it's too subjective."

4. "There's a lot of favouritism, especially in school teams, where teachers select kids they personally like, so yeah they are not."
5. "Not they are not. Some players are selected just because they're physically bigger, not necessarily better in skill."
6. "Talent identification is inconsistent — some coaches scout, others don't even bother; there's no coordination. So, it is safe to say that they are not."
7. "It cannot be effective because many coaches don't have proper training on how to identify talent; we need capacity building."
8. "There is no effectiveness to talk about. This is so because trials are sometimes held in only one area — kids from other suburbs never get a chance."
9. "We don't have proper monitoring tools to track player development over time."
10. "Sometimes trials are rushed, and players aren't given enough time to prove themselves."
11. "There's too much focus on immediate performance, instead of long-term potential."
12. "Some talented players are introverted and don't stand out in open trials — they get overlooked."
13. "Parental influence sometimes interferes — kids are pushed into teams even when they lack ability."
14. "We're not using data or technology to support selection — everything is done manually and informally."
15. "The current system ignores rural and peri-urban talent, focusing only on urban centres."

Question 3. What are the main challenges you encounter when identifying talented players at the junior level

1. "Most kids can't afford transport to come for trials." Many talented players miss trials because they live far and have no money for kombis or buses.
2. "We don't have proper training or guidelines on how to select players." We choose based on what we see, but we were never trained on how to identify talent professionally.
3. "Parents sometimes force us to choose their children, even if they are not the best." There's pressure from parents or community leaders to favour certain players.
4. "We don't have enough time to assess every player properly during trials." We're forced to rush the selection, so some talented kids are left out.

5. "Some players only show up when trials are over because they never got the information." Many kids don't hear about the trials in time because there is poor communication.
6. "We lack proper equipment to assess skills properly." We don't have cones, bibs, or enough balls, which makes it hard to run organized sessions.
7. "Some coaches choose players based on size, not skill." Big or fast kids are chosen over those with real football ability.
8. "There's too much politics in player selection." Sometimes selections are based on connections, not performance.
9. "We don't get support from schools or communities to identify players early." Schools rarely work with us, and there's no organized system to track young talent.
10. "Some talented kids quit early because they lose hope." When they keep getting left out unfairly, they stop coming to training or trials.
11. "We're not paid, so many of us don't have motivation or time to scout properly." Scouting is voluntary, and it's hard to give full effort when you're struggling financially.
12. "We can't follow up on players after trials because there's no database or records." There's no system to keep track of players we've seen before or where they ended up.
13. "Talented kids from poor areas often go unnoticed." They don't get opportunities because they're not in well-known schools or clubs.
14. "We lack consistent scouting programs in different areas of Harare." Most areas are left out, especially high-density suburbs with many talented kids.
15. "Players come with different skill levels, and it's hard to judge fairly." Some have had coaching before, while others haven't, so comparing them is not easy.

Question 4. If you had the opportunity to design an ideal talent identification framework for junior football in Harare, what key elements would you include?

1. "I would include regular 5-a-side games during selection because they help us spot creativity, ball control, and teamwork—especially in tight spaces like what we see on most Harare grounds."
2. "A good framework must use small-sided matches because they give every player more touches on the ball, and we can run them even on school grounds or community open spaces."
3. "Kids from Mbare and Highfield thrive in small-sided setups—so we should hold zonal tournaments using 5-a-side or 7-a-side formats to assess real potential."
4. "We need a standard approach that every coach in Harare understands and follows, so selection is not based on who you know but on clear football criteria."

5. "Our framework should have stages—first, community-level trials, then district-level camps, and finally academy-level development—not just one-off events that favour already known kids."
6. "I would build in collaboration between coaches, schoolteachers, and parents because we all see different sides of the child—combining those views gives a better picture of the player's potential."
7. "Instead of full-field matches, we should use 5-a-side games during trials in places like Warren Park and Glen View where space is limited but talent is high."
8. "Let's include psychological traits—how a player responds to pressure, their discipline, and their willingness to learn—these are crucial but often ignored in our current systems."
9. "We need to stop rushing trials—each district should be given a few days for selection, not just two hours on one afternoon. That way we don't miss late bloomers."
10. "Coaches should get basic training on how to identify talent—not everyone knows what to look for beyond speed or size. Workshops can be done through the Zimbabwe Football Association or local leagues."
11. "We must have a clear way of recording and tracking players. Even a simple Excel database managed by district coaches would help follow up on promising kids."
12. "Trials should not be held only in central or elite schools. We should rotate them to areas like Dzivarasekwa and Mabvuku where raw talent is often overlooked."
13. "It's important to judge players based on multiple skills—technical ability, game sense, attitude—not just one standout performance in a single drill."
14. "Parent involvement is important, but they should be educated not to interfere with selection. We can hold orientation sessions at the start of trial days."
15. "After selection, there should be a mentorship phase where players continue training under local coaches so that development doesn't stop after trials."

APPENDIX 4: RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

CONFIDENTIALITY & CONSET FORM

For Participation in an Academic Research Interview and Questionnaire

Research Title: Developing a Framework for Optimal Talent Identification in Junior Football Teams in Harare Urban

Student Researcher: BSc2508

Department: Sports Science

Supervisor:

Purpose of the Study

I am conducting this research as part of my academic requirements at Bindura University of Science Education. This study aims to explore and critically analyze the talent identification practices being employed in junior football in Harare to inspire the development of an evidence-based talent Identification Framework. Your insights are valuable and will help deepen understanding of the topic.

Confidentiality

All responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your name or any identifying information will not appear in any reports, publications, or presentations. Data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and academic supervisor.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any given time without facing any penalties or consequences.

Consent Declaration

By signing this form, you confirm that:

1. Have been fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study.
2. Understand your rights, including the right to withdraw at any time.
3. Consent to the interview and understand the confidentiality agreement.

Interviewee's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your participation and contribution to academic research