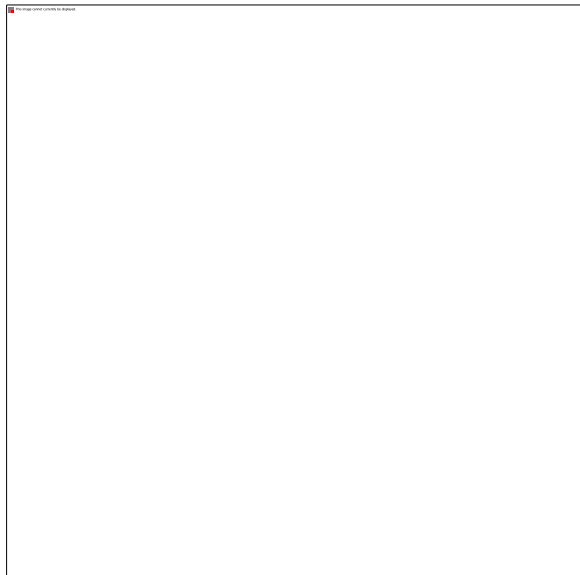


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**THE IMPORTANCE OF AWARENESS CREATION FOR THE
RESTORATION OF DEGRADED FORESTS IN WARD 9 OF MAGANGA
COMMUNAL AREA, MARONDERA DISTRICT IN ZIMBABWE**



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(B201445B)

***A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE HONOURS
DEGREE IN NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT***

DATE: JUNE 2025

DECLARATIONS

The undersigned certify that they have read this research project and have approved its submission for marking in relation to the department's guidelines and regulations .

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this research to my two sisters, Ruvimbo and Lucia Chivere, who have been supportive from the beginning of my studies up to this level. I also dedicate this to my mother, Ms S Chivere, for always being helpful and supportive throughout my studies.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates initiation of awareness creation for restoring degraded forests in ward 9, Maganga Communal Area, Marondera District. A mixed- methods methodology was employed, integrating questionnaires, qualitative interviews, focus groups, structured and semi structured one-on-one sessions. The research examines the bases for selecting awareness creation strategies, identifies potential awareness activities and stakeholder roles, and determines needs to promote restoration efforts. The findings reveal that socio-demographic factors, including age, gender and education level, significantly influence awareness levels, knowledge and behaviors related to forest restoration. Younger individuals tend to prioritize sustainability and conservation, while older adults bring valuable experiences and traditional knowledge. The study also underscore the importance of community involvement, with local community meetings and visual aids, such as posters and charts, emerging as effective platforms for conservation messaging. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement is critical, requiring a deep understanding of local perspectives, preferences and needs to enhance initiative impact and promote sustainable forest management and conservation. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in forest restoration initiatives, ensuring their needs and concerns are addressed. These insights inform effective awareness creation and stakeholder engagement strategies, contributing to forest sustainability and conservation initiatives that are tailored to specific needs of local communities.

Key words; forest restoration, Marondera, awareness initiatives ,gender, community participation, degraded forests, environmental conservation

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGRITEX.....Agricultural Technical and Extension Services

EMA.....Environmental Management Agency

NGOs.....Non Governmental Organizations

FGD(s).....Focus Group Discussions

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Forests are vital ecosystems in maintaining biodiversity, regulating climate, and supporting livelihoods, as well as carbon sequestration and soil preservation. The restoration of degraded forests is a critical environmental issue in Zimbabwe rural areas, particularly in regions like Marondera District, where deforestation and land degradation have significant ecological and socio-economic impacts. Marondera District has experienced significant forest degradation due to factors such as unsustainable agricultural practices. Degradation results in loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, climate change and also have adverse effects on local communities. Many community members may not fully understand the benefits of restoration or the long-term impacts of degradation. It is therefore necessary to promote educational initiatives so as to empower local populations, foster stewardship and encourage sustainable practices. While there have been some initiatives aimed at forest conservation, gaps still remain in community engagement and awareness. This study seeks to identify effective strategies for raising awareness towards the restoration of degraded forests in Marondera District.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Marondera District faces significant environmental challenges due to the degradation of its forests, primarily driven by unsustainable agricultural practices. As a result, local ecosystems are deteriorating, leading to loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, with negative impacts on community livelihoods. Despite the critical importance of forest restoration, there is a lack of awareness and engagement among local communities regarding the benefits of restoring degraded forests. Forest degradation threatens the livelihoods of local residents, impacting agricultural productivity, resource access, and local economic stability.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION

This study contributes towards the restoration of degraded forests in Marondera District by identifying effective awareness strategies. By raising awareness, the study aims to empower local

communities to take an active role in forest conservation. Increased knowledge can lead to sustainable practices that support both environmental and economic resilience. Restoring degraded forests can enhance local livelihoods by improving non-timber forest products and agricultural productivity. The findings will inform policymakers and conservation organizations about the specific needs and barriers faced by communities. The study lays the groundwork for further research on community engagement and restoration practices, contributing to the broader field of environmental science and sustainable development. By promoting forest restoration, the study contributes to broader climate change mitigation efforts.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

- 1.4.1 To examine bases for selection of strategies for awareness creation.
- 1.4.2 To explore possible awareness activities and identify stakeholders and their roles .
- 1.4.3 To identify needs to promote restoration efforts and strengthen support.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were designed to meet the study's objectives :

- 1.5.1 What are the bases for selecting strategies for awareness creation in forest restoration initiatives?
- 1.5.2. What specific awareness activities and stakeholder roles are most effective in promoting restoration efforts?
- 1.5.3 What needs must be addressed to promote restoration efforts and strengthen support?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There is overwhelming interest by many workers in the strategies for creating awareness in forestry conservation and stakeholder participation in rural areas. The most frequent issues for discussion involve factors such as rural age structure and gender , level of education, occupational status of inhabitants, community participation and community meetings.

2.2 AGE STRUCTURE AND GENDER STATUS

The factors of age structure and gender status have a very significant bearing on awareness for reclamation and restoration of environmental potential in rural areas. Muhamad *et al* (2018), has defined age structure as the amount of time an individual has been surviving ,typically the number of years since birth. It has been found out that age structure is crucial in influencing different perspectives and values . Shifts in generations have been recognized as contributing elements to changes in environmental awareness (Liu *et al*, 2023) . Examining action-oriented motives and behavioral patterns within demographic segments can provide insights in support of conservation efforts (Satinover *et al.*, 2023, and Takshe *et al.*, 2023). Across multiple research studies, it has been suggested that younger generations typically demonstrate greater environmental conservation awareness and similar challenges when compared to past generations (Li *et al.*, 2023, and Nikolić *et al.*, 2022).The younger generation shows different value priorities than social norms supported by previous generations (Danesh *et al.*, 2015).The difference between men and women is also important in this study because it shows behavioral intentions and environmental values. Women show stronger eco-conscious behaviors than men (Tien ,2023).

2.3 LEVEL OF EDUCATION

In many development activities conducted especially in rural areas of Zimbabwe, the levels of educational attainment do seem to be critical for the achievement of community objective. Educational profiles significantly influence environmental awareness. Those with highest qualifications and those who have completed higher education courses on the environment are more aware of global concerns, such as climate change and water pollution. (Grammare *et at*

2022). This is important in this research because certain awareness creation strategies might be more effective for stakeholders with specific educational backgrounds.

2.4 OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Townsend (1997), defines occupational status as every action taken by people to occupy themselves. The local communities understand forest degradation issues but might not fully understand its extent or consequences. Restoration approaches should be sensitive to the socio-cultural context and meet local needs (Nederlof and Dangbegnon 2007, and Galabuzi *et al* 2014). This is considered important in this study because it balance human needs with environmental conservation and conflict resolution through collaborations.

2.5 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation is considered to be vital in forest restoration because it increases engagement and ownership as well as enhancing resource management. The potential loss of forest benefits inspires local communities to take part in conservation efforts (Ite, 1996; Fonta and Isyaku , 2021). Local communities can play a crucial role in conservation (Abraaoetal, 2008), given the right encouragement and structured participation opportunities (Marie *et al.* 2009 ; Galabuzi *et al* 2014).

2.6 COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Community meetings are the cornerstone of successful forest restoration, fostering collaboration and collective action among stakeholders. By uniting diverse voices and perspectives, they empower communities to take ownership of their natural resources, driving sustainable practices. Martin and Mcheimech (2016), define community as a collection of individuals who engage and help one another and are connected by shared experience. Community meetings play a crucial role in this study because it allows for stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing, building trust and identifying needs and concerns. Understanding stakeholders' perspectives and attitudes is essential, as they shape their preferences and willingness to engage in conservation efforts like agroforestry (Meijer *et al.*, 2015a; Sirivongs 2012 ; Durrant *et al* 2025). Perceptions refer to famers' views on tree cover restoration shaped by their experiences and needs, while attitudes reflect their positive or negative responses to it (Kideghesho *et al.*, 2007; Lucungu *et al.*, 2022; Meijer *et al.*, 2015).

2.7 CONCLUSION

Specific research in the field of awareness creation for rehabilitation and restoration of forests potential in Marondera District is rather lacking. However, available standard information and research elsewhere on the effect of demographic factors do seem to indicate strong support of these towards awareness creation and need for forest rehabilitation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A mixed methodology approach (Coyle and Williams, 2000), integrating various methods to comprehensively explore research questions, encompassing data collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation. Combined qualitative and quantitative insights (Bryman, 2012) were employed to collect, structure, and examine data on awareness levels, restoration efforts and community perceptions on forest restoration. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods, which comprised questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), key informants' interviews and in-depth interviews were used to collect data on awareness levels, restoration efforts and community perceptions on forest restoration.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

Marondera District is found in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. The district is characterized by miombo woodlands and other forest types. Key degradation challenges in the district include deforestation, soil erosion, stream bank cultivation, mining, veld fires, pollution and agriculture. Agriculture is the major source of income and the district's agricultural sector is characterized by small-scale farming, livestock production and commercial farming. Within the district, Ward 9(Maganga area) is notable for severe forest degradation due to high rates of deforestation, rural poverty and limited livelihood opportunities, with local communities actively involved in forest conservation and management.

3.2.1 LOCATION

Marondera District is located in the Mashonaland East Province in the eastern part of Zimbabwe, and is divided into two constituencies which are Marondera East and West respectively. It is located 75km south east of Harare along Harare-Mutare highway. Ward 9(Maganga area) is nestled within the district with its specific boundaries defined by local administrative divisions.

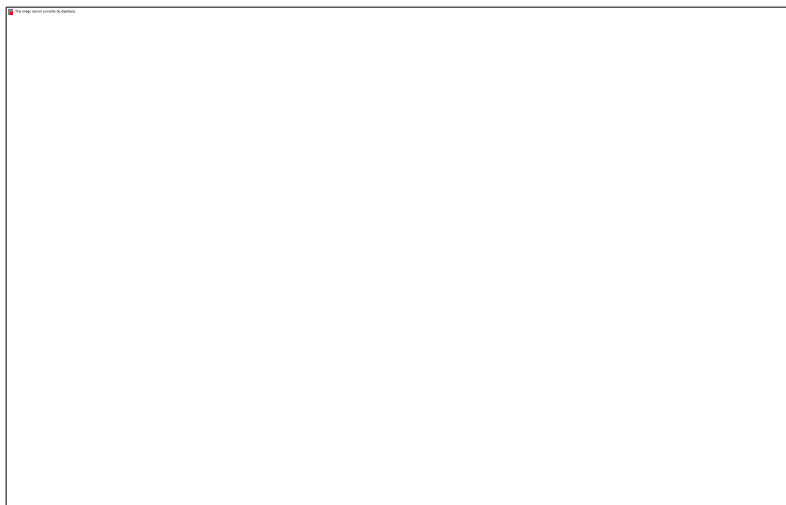


Figure 1: Map of ward 9, Maganga(Marondera District)

3.2.2 CLIMATE

Marondera District experiences a tropical climate, with dry winters and wet summers. The wet season usually spans from November to March, with peak rainfall from December to February. A cold and dry season usually occurs from April to August, characterized by occasional night time ground frost and low temperatures. September to October is usually characterized by warm to hot temperatures. Ward 9(Maganga area), likely shares similar climate conditions, with potential localized variations due to topography.

3.2.3 TOPOGRAPHY

Marondera District features varied topography, including hills, slopes and valleys, with several major rivers flowing through the area. The district lies on the watershed of most of the country's rivers, which plays a crucial role in shaping the landscape and supporting local ecosystems. Some notable rivers in the area include Wenimbi, Nyagui, Ruzawi and there are a number of weirs in the district. These rivers may influence land use patterns, with valleys potentially more suitable for agriculture. The Maganga area features a mix of hills, slopes and valleys and the area's topography may contribute to soil erosion and land degradation, particularly in areas with steep slopes or poor land management practices.

3.2.4 GEOLOGY

Marondera District geology comprises granitic and doleritic rocks, with potential for varied mineral deposits. These geological formations can influence soil composition, land use patterns and economic activities. In ward 9, quarrying activities are being conducted, potentially

exploiting local rock resources such as granite and dolerite and this can influence land degradation and water quality.

3.2.5 SOIL

Marondera District's soils vary, with dominant soil type being sandy loam which is derived from granite sandstone, and is suitable for agriculture. In ward 9(Maganga area), soil conditions may be more degraded, with potential for soil erosion, nutrient depletion or decreased fertility due to prolonged agricultural activities and deforestation.

3.2.6 VEGETATION

The dominant vegetation in Marondera District is Savanna woodland, with miombo species like Musasa(*Brachystegia spiciformis*) being majority tree type. The *Brachystegia spiciformis* and other combretum species are mainly used for tobacco curing and firewood. In ward 9(Maganga area), the vegetation is degraded due to the rising demand for firewood for tobacco curing and curing of farm bricks.

3.2.7 PRESENT LAND USE

Marondera District's land use is primarily agriculture. The district's fertile soils and tropical climate support various farming activities. Ward 9(Maganga area) lies under natural farming region and major farming crops include maize, wheat, beans and groundnuts. In this ward, land use is likely dominated by small-scale agriculture, quarrying activities and residential area.

3.2.8 LAND DEGRADATION STATUS

The district experiences various forms of land degradation such as soil erosion, stream bank cultivation, sand abstraction, deforestation and veld fires, primarily due to increased population, agricultural activities and human settlement patterns. In ward 9(Maganga area), severe forest degradation and poor land management practices exacerbate land degradation, with issues like deforestation, stream bank cultivation and inadequate soil conservation measures contributing to the problem.

3.2.9 POPULATION

The total population defined as the number of units from which data is collected, such as individuals, artefacts, events or organizations (Parahoo, 2006) was used. This was where a sample defined as "a proportion of a population" (Polit and Beck 2004) was made.

The probability sampling technique was used to select participants who then took part in FGDs and completed questionnaires to collect data. Stratified random sampling was employed, where participants who have once witnessed or participated in forest restoration initiatives were divided into sub-groups called strata, based on their relevant characteristics. This allowed representation of diverse subgroups, allowing for targeted awareness initiatives that capture specific needs and concerns, enhancing the effectiveness of forest restoration efforts. It also helped to have the required sample size of key informants from Forestry Commission, EMA and AGRITEX.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Primary data was collected to obtain information from participants using questionnaires, in-depth interviews and Focus Group discussions (FDGs). Questionnaires, for measuring separate variables such as behaviors, preferences, and facts (Kabir ,2016), were used to gather data on current awareness levels and practices, to identify potential awareness activities and stakeholder roles, to determine needs, concerns priorities and provide insights on effective strategies and initiatives.

Through the Focus Group discussions (FDGs) , were a mixture of interviewing and observation. This research approach brought together a group of individuals with similar demographics to discuss a particular theme (Frechtling, 2002). In focus groups, individuals with common characteristics are interviewed to elicit their views, opinions, and experiences related to a particular area of interest (Holloway ,2005). Seven to eight participants between ages of 26 to 52 years were interviewed to assess and understand awareness levels, knowledge, behaviors regarding forest restoration. In-depth interviews (Fretchling, 2002), utilizing both open-ended and closed-ended questions , captured detailed qualitative and quantitative information . For semi structured interviews (Polit and Beck ,2004) a written topic guide was prepared in advance as a list of questions to be covered by the respondents. Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted to assess community awareness levels about forest restoration, evaluating attitudes towards forest conservation, exploring local communities' experiences with forest degradation and gathering suggestions for effective awareness initiatives. Unstructured interviews were also conducted to understand community narratives around forest use and conservation.

For key informant interviews, an interview guide was used to gather expert insights and information from stakeholders such as EMA and Forestry Commission and AGRITEX. This was for gathering insights on effective awareness strategies, exploring potential awareness activities and stakeholder roles, identifying challenges, opportunities, needs for promoting restoration efforts and informing ways to strengthen forest restoration initiatives

3.4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data was presented in tables, accompanied by short descriptions and explanatory notes . This was to enable capture of different aspects of awareness and perception regarding forest restoration and to draw comprehensive conclusions about awareness levels and factors influencing restoration efforts.

Data was summarized and arranged in a way to suit simple descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS statistical model (IBM SPSS Statistics 23) available in the computer

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

For ethical considerations, (Homan, 1991), all participant data was kept confidential and utilized exclusively for academic research. Collected data was stored securely in a locked cabinet.

In order to evade disclosing information, participant confidentiality (Smyth and Williamson, 2004), was protected by using pseudonyms, thereby concealing their true identities in the presentation of findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The total number of respondents was 18. The most frequent age group in this study was 28 years (Table 1) with a frequency of 4 and a percentage of 22%.

Table 1: A summary of age distribution of respondents/ people

Ages of respondents/people	Number of people of the age shown in years	%Age
26	1	6
28	4	22
30	1	6
31	1	6
34	1	6
35	1	6
36	1	6
38	1	6
40	3	17
45	2	11
48	1	6
52	1	6
Totals	18	100

Age range is rather broad and diverse as shown by 26 -52 years of age (Table 1)

From a statistical analysis, using population of 18, The mean age of the respondents is 36.22 with a standard deviation of 7.80 and percent coefficient of variation (% CV) of 21.53. The equivalent figures for median and mode are 35.5 and 28 respectively.

4.2 GENDER

There was notable difference in gender representation among participants (Table 2). Men represents the majority, with a 78 % of the total population, while women accounts for the remainder.

Table 2: Total number of individuals by gender

Gender	Total no. of individuals	%age
Male	14	78
Females	4	22
Totals	18	100

4.3 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

The educational level (Table 3) indicates the distribution of participants educational attainment. This is a demographic characteristic that can influence various aspects of a person's life, including their career, socioeconomic status and perspectives.

Table 3: The distribution of participants educational attainment

Educational level	Total number of individuals	% age
University degree	3	17
O' level	13	72
A' level	2	11
Totals	18	100

Holders of O' level qualifications form the largest group, outpacing those with higher educational qualifications.

4.4 OCCUPATION

Community members represented the largest group of individuals (Table 4). Most occupations have a frequency of one on number of individuals ,showing a wide variety of roles represented by single individuals.

Table 4: Occupation of individuals found in the area

Occupation	Number of individuals	% age
Managers	1	6
Publicity officers	1	6
extension officers	1	6
Councilors	1	6
Traditional Leaders	2	11
Village heads	1	6
Tobacco farmers	5	28
Community members	6	33
Totals	18	100

4.5 BASIC KNOWLEDGE ON FOREST CONSERVATION

Table 5: A summary of basic knowledge on forest conservation in the area

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Evidence of forest conservation knowledge	YES	18	100
	NO	0	0
	Other	0	0
Total	N/A	18	100

All participants responded YES consistently (Table 5) to having knowledge on forest conservation giving a total percentage of 100%.

4.6 EVIDENCE OF KNOWLEDGE ON IMPORTANCE OF FOREST CONSERVATION

Table 6:A summary of evidence of Knowledge on importance of forest conservation

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Evidence of Knowledge on importance of forest conservation	Not at all important(1)	0	0
	Slightly important(2)	4	22
	Important(3)	5	28
	Very important(4)	3	17
	Crucially important(5)	6	33
Total	N/A	18	100

The majority of respondents selected crucially important (5), indicating that most respondents consider forest conservation to be crucially important (Table 6).

4.7 FAMILIARITY WITH TERMS LIKE DEFORESTATION, REFORESTATION AND AFFORESTATION

Table 7:showing evidence of familiarity with terms like deforestation, reforestation and afforestation.

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Familiarity with terms like deforestation, reforestation and afforestation	Very familiar(1)	4	22
	Somewhat familiar(2)	8	44
	Heard of it(3)	6	33
	Not familiar(4)	0	
	Never heard of it(5)	0	
Total	N/A	18	100

The majority of respondents selected somewhat familiar (2), indicating that they are familiar with these terms but may not fully understand them. (Table 7)

4.8 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Table 8:Existence of effective communication channel in the area

Theme	Response	Number of people	% age
Effective communication channel	Social media(1)	0	0
	Newspapers(2)	0	0
	Radios/tv(3)	5	28
	Community meetings(4)	13	72
	Friends/family(5)	0	0
Total	N/A	18	100

Many respondents selected community meetings (4), indicating that community meetings (Table 8) are considered an effective communication channel.

4.9 CAUSES OF FOREST DEGRADATION

Table 9 :Causes of forest degradation

Theme	Response)	Number of individuals	% age
Causes of forest degradation	Deforestation(1)	9	50
	Over harvesting(2)	1	6
	Climate change(3)	0	
	Human-wildlife conflict(4)	0	
	Deforestation(1) and overharvesting(2)	1	6
	Deforestation(1), over harvesting(2) and climate change(3)	1	6
	All	6	33
Total	N/A	18	100

Deforestation(1), has the highest number of people indicating that the respondents acknowledged deforestation (Table 9) as a major contributor to forest degradation.

4.10 THE EFFECTS OF FOREST DEGRADATION

Table 10: Effects of forest degradation

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Effects of forest degradation	Loss of biodiversity(1)	1	6
	Soil erosion(2)	7	39
	Climate change(3)	1	6
	Water scarcity(4)	0	
	Soil erosion(2)and climate change(3)	3	17
	Soil erosion(2), climate change(3)and water scarcity(4)	1	6
	All	5	28
Total	N/A	18	100

Soil erosion(2), has the highest number of individuals (Table 10) , indicating that the people in the area acknowledged soil erosion as a prominent consequence of forest degradation.

4.11 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Table 11:Importance of community involvement

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Importance of community involvement	Extremely important(1)	4	22
	Very important(2)	6	33
	Important(3)	4	22
	Somewhat important(4)	4	22
Total	N/A	18	100

Many respondents selected very important(2) (Table 11), indicating that the respondents pre acknowledges the significance of community involvement in forest restoration.

4.12 INVOLVEMENT IN RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

Table 12:Current involvement in restoration activities

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Current involvement in restoration activities	YES	13	72
	NO	5	27
	Other	0	0
Total	N/A	18	100

Majority of the participants responded YES (Table 12) , indicating that most respondents are currently participating in restoration efforts.

4.13 ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN FOREST RESTORATION

Table 13 :Encouragement to participate in forest restoration

Theme	Response	Number of individuals	% age
Encouragement to participate in forest restoration	YES	18	100
	No	0	0
	Other e.g. NOT SURE	0	0
Total	N/A	18	100

All participants responded YES (Table 13), giving a total percentage of 100%.

4.14 FEEDBACK QUESTIONS ON CLARITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The majority of participants found community meetings to be the most engaging and accessible platform to receive conservation messages representing 100 % of the total population (Table 14). During such communication processes (meeting, workshops, etc) the majority of individuals favored charts, posters and images citing their visual content as key factors for engagement.

Table 14:The most preferred communication channel and engagement in the area

Themes	Number of individuals	% age
Preferred communication channel and engagement	18	100
Use of visuals and examples	13	72
OTHER	0	0

4.15 SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS

Several successful collaborations, highlighting partnerships between local government, communities and NGOs were identified. This represented 100% of the total population (Table 15). People in the area articulated that the overarching aim was to create sustainable ecosystem

and restore degraded forests (Table 15). Participants revealed that local NGOs often manage logistics and community outreach while others provide regulatory support. In addition, they (participants) emphasized the importance of direct involvement to foster a sense of ownership over local conservation initiatives as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 15: Collaborations that could be successful with communities on forest restoration in the area

Themes	Number of individuals	% ages
Notable successful collaborations	18	100
Goals of collaborations	4	22
Stakeholder roles	4	22
Community involvement methods	18	100

4.16 UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS AND ASSESSING COMMITMENT LEVEL

Table 16 below displays varying levels of awareness regarding current restoration efforts. Many people in the area envisioned improvements not only in ecosystem health but also overall community well being. However, several challenges of common concerns including issues related to funding and poverty surfaced clearly representing 100 % of the people. Key motivators included community recognition for contributions and visible outcomes from the initiatives representing 100% (Table 16).

Table 16: Varying levels of awareness regarding current restoration

Themes	Number of individuals	% age
Awareness of restoration efforts	18	100
Community benefits	13	72
Perceived challenges	18	100
Long-term engagement factors	18	100

4.17 CULTURAL BELIEFS AND VALUES

Table 17 below is a summary of community perceptions and descriptions of forests as sacred spaces filled with spiritual meaning giving examples of cultural groves, and articulated various values including harmony, beauty and biodiversity which influence their views on conservation, fostering a sense of responsibility. It came out clearly that community cultural norms encourage responsible use of resources, emphasizing a balance between meeting needs and preserving environment. As a result, many people in this expressed strong commitment to conservation efforts, motivated by values such as cultural heritage, stewardship and a sense of responsibility for environment

Table 17: Cultural significance of forests, values and beliefs associated with forests and community engagement in conservation

Themes	Number of people	% age
Cultural significance of forests, values and beliefs associated with forests	18	100
Influence of cultural beliefs and culturally relevant practices	8	44
Community engagement in conservation	14	78

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, the issue of forest degradation and restoration in Zimbabwe is concerning especially in rural and resettlement areas. Apparently, awareness for restoration and environmental management strategies particularly in Marondera communal lands could be based on age structure and distribution in these rural areas, gender characteristics, levels of attained education, occupational status of inhabitants there, pre knowledge and experience in forest conservation as well as people's perception on participatory forest restoration.

5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF AGE STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION

Age can be defined as the amount of time an individual has been in existence ,typically the number of years since birth(Muhamad *et al* 2018). The findings from this research demonstrates age structure as crucial because it influences different perspectives and values , with younger individuals tending to prioritize sustainability and actively participate in conservation efforts, whereas older adults bring distinct experiences and values shaped by their historical context and land use practices. A mean age of 36.22 could indicate the demographics potential engagement in activities such as forest restoration, which may require practical involvement. A median of 35.5 indicating that the population is centered around middle age, proposing stability in perspectives and engagement levels. A mode of 28 indicates that younger demographic may be more open to new ideas and initiatives, such as forest restoration, making them a key target for awareness campaigns. A standard deviation of 7.80 indicate a diverse age range, which is important for understanding different perspectives in forest restoration efforts. A coefficient of variation of 21.53% indicates that while there is some diversity in age, it is not extreme and this can help in assessing how consistent the age distribution is relative to the average age. These findings align with a study by Danesh *et al.*, (2015), and Maleknia (2024),who also found that younger cohorts exhibit unique moral standards diverging from conventional cultural norms.. The similarities suggest that findings may be applicable across different contexts.

5.3 GENDER ISSUES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Seemingly, there is a gender imbalance ratio of 7 to 2 in favour of men. This means that there is gender inequality for participating in restoration efforts, with women's perspectives and experiences underrepresented due to traditional roles or expectations influencing participation. These findings align with a study by Durrant *et al*(2025), who also found that men show more positive attitudes towards agroforestry than women. In contrast to these findings, Tien (2023) found that women had significantly stronger pro-environmental behavioral intentions than men, while Lee *et al*(2013) found that women had higher pro-environmental value orientation and put greater significance on helping others in their life than men, thereby indicating significantly higher altruistic and biospheric values than men. The differences suggest that studies conducted at different times may reflect changing attitudes or behaviors.

5.4 LEVELS OF ATTAINED EDUCATION

Foundational education levels are more common among participants. Findings in this research indicate that forest restoration initiatives are more accessible to individuals with basic education. These studies are in line with other studies which shows that individuals' educational attributes are more influential than social attributes in shaping the overall profile of environmental concerns by Grammare. *et al* (2022). The similarities suggest that consistent results across studies may indicate broader applicability.

5.5 OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Occupation can be defined as everything people do to occupy themselves (Townsend, 1997) and therefore understanding occupational statuses is crucial in this research because it helps to develop more effective forest restoration strategies that engage local communities, promote sustainability, balance human needs with environmental conservation and conflict resolution through collaborative management. The findings in this research align with other studies which found that vegetation restoration methods should consider local requirements and align with socio-cultural values of the community (Nederlof and Dangbegnon 2007) and Galabuzi *et al* (2014). The similarities in these findings support the expansion of successful restoration initiatives, promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation.

5.6 PRE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN FOREST CONSERVATION AS WELL AS PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON PARTICIPATORY FOREST RESTORATION

It is apparent from this study that all the participants seemed to have knowledge of what forest conservation and its importance and impacts on the environment were all about. The majority of participants has a better understanding of terms like deforestation, reforestation and sustainable forestry. Most participants favored community meetings as the most effective communication channel. Majority of participants seemed to have a better understanding of the causes of forest degradation and a greater percentage of the total population has an understanding on the effects of forest degradation. Community involvement seem to be most important to most participants. Quite a number of participants are currently involved in restoration activities and 100 % of the population would encourage others to participate in forest restoration showing a sense of responsibility for the environment. The results align with previous research which found that local communities recognize the potential impacts of losing forest benefits, motivating them to engage in conservation efforts (Ite, 1996; Fonta and Ayuk, 2013 and Isyaku (2021). These similarities underscore the importance of community-led conservation efforts and highlight opportunities for collaborative action to safeguard forests.

5.7 COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION ON PARTICIPATORY FOREST RESTORATION

Community meetings were found to be the most engaging and accessible platform to receive conservation messages and they favored use of charts, posters and images. Participants identified several successful collaborations and mentioned roles of each stakeholder. Participants showed varying levels of awareness regarding current restoration and have clearly understood. They also identified common concerns as well as challenges. Participants also described the cultural values of forests sharing their norms and strong commitments to conservation efforts. The results corroborate earlier studies which found that identifying stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions is key to encouraging their participation in conservation efforts, such as agroforestry (Meijer et al., 2015a; Sirivongs and Tsuchiya, 2012), and Durrant (2025). The similarities underscore importance of engaging with stakeholders to understand their perceptions and preferences in increasing the effectiveness of initiatives.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the critical importance of incorporating demographic factors into forest restoration initiatives. By addressing the diverse needs, values and perspectives of local communities, restoration efforts can be tailored to promote sustainability and environmental conservation. The findings in this research underscore the potential for informed decision – making as well as positive change in forest restoration , contributing to the preservation of forest ecosystems and the well-being of communities that depend on them.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

The restoration of degraded forests is an immediate concern in both the Maganga area and the broader Marondera District. This research illustrated that while Maganga presents exceptional challenges and opportunities for forest restoration, the present findings here could be applied to the entire district. Critical insights include that effective engaging strategies are lacking limiting engagement in restoration initiatives across the district. Opportunities exists for improved collaboration among local authorities, NGOs and community groups to promote restoration efforts.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively initiate awareness and promote the restoration of degraded forests in both Maganga and the wider Marondera District, the following recommendations are proposed:

6.2.1 Develop and implement district-wide awareness campaigns suitable for both urban and rural contexts, emphasizing the ecological and economic benefits of forest restoration.

6.2.2 Utilize various platforms, including local media, workshops, such as radios to reach diverse audiences.

6.2.3 Introduce educational initiatives in schools across the district that focus on environmental stewardship and the importance of forests

6.2.4 Support collaborative efforts of community-led initiatives in both Maganga and surrounding areas to encourage active involvement in restoration projects, such as tree planting and conservation activities.

6.2.5 Foster collaboration between local governments, NGOs, and community organizations to share resources and best practices for restoration.

6.2.6 Develop a thorough comprehensive monitoring system to evaluate the effectiveness of awareness initiatives and restoration projects across the district.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for communal people

DEGRADED FOREST RESTORATION :PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

My name is Kudzanai Chivere (B201445B) , an undergraduate student at Bindura University of Science Education studying BSc Honours degree in Natural Resources Management. I am conducting a survey in this community to understand your perceptions, attitudes and experiences related to forest conservation and restoration Your input will contribute to a better understanding of local perspectives and help inform strategies for restoring degraded forests and promoting sustainable forest management.

SECTION 1

Introduction and Demographics

Name:.....(optional)

Age.....

Gender.....

Education level.....

Occupation.....

Location(village ,ward).....

SECTION 2

Basic knowledge on forest conservation

1. Have you heard about forest conservation? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, explain

Ans:.....
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2. On a scale of 1 to 5, can you rate your knowledge on importance of forest conservation and its impacts on the environment?(**Not at all important**(1), **Slightly important**(2), **Important**(3), **Very important**(4), **Crucially important**(5))

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

3. How familiar are you with terms like deforestation, reforestation and sustainable forestry ?(**Very familiar**(1), **Somewhat familiar**(2), **Heard of it**(3), **Not familiar**(4), **Never heard of it**(5))

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

- 4.What do you think is the most effective communication method for raising forest conservation awareness?(Social media(1), Newspapers(2), Radios/ TV(3), Community meetings(4), Friends/ family(5))

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

5. What are the causes of forest degradation? select all that apply(**Deforestation**(1), **Over-harvesting**(2), **Climate change**(3), **Human-Wildlife-Conflict**(4))

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ ☐

6. What are the effects of forest degradation? select all that apply(**Loss of biodiversity**(1), **Soil erosion**(2), **climate change**(3), **Water scarcity**(4))

☐ ☐ 3 ☐ ☐

1

2

3

4

7. How important is community involvement in forest restoration to you?(Extremely important(1), Very important(2), Important(3), Somewhat important(4), Not at all important(5)

1

2

3

1

4

1

5

8. Are you currently involved in restoration activities? **YES**

11

NO

If yes, describe your role and how often you participate

Ans.....

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9. Will you encourage others to participate in forest restoration? **YES**

10

NO

If yes, explain why

Ans.....

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SECTION 3

Post –information awareness

I. Feedback Questions on clarity and effectiveness

10. in your own understanding, what key lessons have you learned from the strategies that are used to raise awareness on forest conservation and restoration?

Ans.....
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11. What do you remember about sources of information that are used to learn about forest conservation. Are they effective?

Ans.....
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II. Questions on successful collaborations

12. Can you name any successful collaborations or partnerships that have focused on forest conservation in your region or community?

Ans.....
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13. In your own understanding , what are the main goals of these collaborations ?

Ans.....
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14. What roles did different stakeholders (e.g., local communities, NGOs, government agencies) play in these collaborations? How did their contributions complement each other?

Ans.....
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15. In your own understanding, what are the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved in forest conservation and restoration.?

Ans.....
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III. Understanding expectations and assessing commitment levels

16. In your opinion, What do you understand about the current restoration efforts ?

Ans.....
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17.How do you envision the community benefiting from these restoration projects?

Ans.....
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[illegible]

Ans.....

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36

20. What role do forests play in your culture? Are there any specific trees or areas that hold cultural or spiritual significance?

Ans.....
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21. How do cultural beliefs shape the way community uses forest resources (eg timber, medicine, plant, food) ?

Ans.....
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22. In your opinion, what values do you think motivate community to engage in conservation efforts?

Ans.....
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Appendix 2: Interview guide for key informants

My name is Kudzanai Chivere, a final year student at Bindura University of Science Education. The purpose of this discussion is to explore initiatives for initiating awareness for restoration of degraded forests in Ward 9, Marondera District. Your insights will be invaluable in helping understand effective strategies, activities and stakeholder roles .Thank you for participating in this interview.

- How do community perceptions and attitudes toward forest degradation impact awareness initiatives?
- What role does local knowledge play in shaping awareness strategies?
- What awareness activities have been effective in promoting forest restoration in Marondera District?
- Who are the key stakeholders involved in forest restoration efforts, and what roles do they play?
- How can collaboration among stakeholders be strengthened?
- What are the primary needs for promoting forest restoration?
- What challenges hinder awareness creation and restoration efforts, and how can they be addressed?

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion guide

- What do you know about forest degradation?
- How does it affect your community?
- What awareness initiatives would be effective in promoting restoration?

- Who should be involved?
- What challenges hinder restoration efforts?
- How can these challenges be addressed

Appendix 4: Structured interview guide

- What do you think are the most effective awareness creation strategies for forest restoration?
- What are the major challenges facing forest restoration efforts in Marondera District?
- How can local communities be engaged in forest restoration efforts?
- What role do you think education and training play in promoting forest restoration?
- What opportunities exist for collaboration and partnership in forest restoration?



