

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE STUDIES



**FROM STRUGGLE TO LEGACY: SAFEGUARDING ZIMBABWE'S WOMEN
LIBERATION HERITAGE.**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND
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Abstract

This study examines how the contributions of women to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle are remembered, preserved, and represented in historical and cultural heritage discourses. It places particular emphasis on strategies to enhance the visibility and protection of this often-overlooked dimension of national memory. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews with war veterans, historians, museum officials, and young people. The findings reveal that, despite women's critical roles in the liberation movement as fighters, messengers, nurses, and organizers their contributions remain largely underrepresented in official narratives, public commemorations, and institutional memory. Respondents highlighted several barriers to preserving this heritage, including the dominance of male-centered histories, inadequate documentation efforts, limited academic attention, and weak institutional support. To address these challenges, the study recommends a range of strategies: launching oral history projects focused on women's experiences, integrating women's liberation stories into educational curricula, leveraging digital storytelling platforms, fostering community-driven archiving practices, and reinforcing national heritage policies to be more inclusive of gendered narratives. The research concludes that the effective preservation of women's liberation heritage requires a coordinated, inclusive, and multi-pronged approach that brings together government bodies, academic institutions, cultural organizations, and local communities. Recognizing and safeguarding this heritage not only promotes historical justice but also enriches the broader national identity and collective memory. By making women's liberation stories more visible and accessible, Zimbabwe can build a more comprehensive and equitable account of its past, thereby strengthening the foundations for future generations to understand and appreciate the full scope of the liberation struggle.

Declaration Release Form

I, Getrude Marima studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Culture and Heritage studies, aware of the fact that plagiarism is an academic offense and that falsifying information is a breach of the ethics of Culture and Heritage and Bindura University of Science Education, I honestly declare that:

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Chairperson of the department Board of examination

The department of Board of examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and I therefore recommend Bindura University of Science Education to accept a research project titled: From struggle to legacy: Safeguarding Zimbabwe's women liberation heritage in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Science honors degree in Culture and Heritage Studies.

Chairperson name DR M-E SAGATA Signature M-E Sagata Date 17/09/25

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the fearless women of Zimbabwe, whose enduring strength and selfless contributions to the liberation struggle deserve greater recognition. It is also dedicated to my family, whose love and support sustained me, and to all individuals committed to preserving genuine cultural heritage and advocating for gender justice.

Acknowledgment

I am profoundly thankful to everyone who contributed to this project. I am especially grateful to the war veterans, historians, museum staff, and community participants whose shared experiences formed the core of this study. I also extend deep thanks to my research supervisor Dr M. Mavesera for her valuable input, steady guidance, and encouragement. Appreciation is also due to the heritage institutions and community leaders who helped facilitate access to critical sources and participants. Finally, I am indebted to my family members especially my parents and friends for their ongoing support and understanding throughout this research journey. This study is a reflection of the many people who generously offered their time, insight, and assistance.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ZAPU: Zimbabwe African People's Union

ZANU: Zimbabwe African National Union

ZANLA: Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

AHD: Authorized Heritage Discourse

ZPRA: Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the study

The 2nd Chimurenga, also known as the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, which lasted from the late 1960s to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, was a turning point in Africa's history. The Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) had led the strong opposition against colonial rule that defined this long-lasting war. The crucial roles that women had played during this time were commonly downplayed in historical accounts, despite the bravery and planned leadership of male guerrilla fighters being widely documented and honored.

Throughout Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, women had fulfilled a variety of roles including that of fighters, organizers, nurses, propagandists, and community organizers. Their involvement had not only been helpful but also crucial in keeping the liberation forces' operational capacity and confidence high. Individuals like Ruth Chinamano and Joice Mujuru were leading examples of how women actively participated in leadership and strategic roles, challenged gender conventions, and made vital contributions to the success of the liberation movement. Despite these efforts, male personalities received more attention in national monuments, education programs, and post-independence celebrations than women. This created a distorted historical record that minimized the achievements of women.

More universal gender biases in Zimbabwean society were reflected in the marginalization of women's contributions to the preservation of the liberation legacy. Therefore, preserving the history of women's liberation was not only important for historical accuracy, but also a vital step in building a complete national identity that honored the various contributions made by all its citizens.

Zimbabwe had made significant progress in creating institutions and policies meant to preserve its liberation history in the years following independence. However, stories remained underrepresented in archives, museums, and public commemorations. Furthermore, the personal experiences and oral histories of female warriors and their families were still insufficiently

recorded, which put the knowledge of the liberation fight at risk of losing priceless firsthand recollections.

The ongoing discussions in Zimbabwe about gender equity and historical preservation highlighted the importance of this study. It became important to review and restart preservation efforts as the nation continued to negotiate its post-colonial identity to ensure they were inclusive and representative of all who contributed to the nation's freedom. This project aimed to close historical record gaps relating to women's liberation heritage preservation, promote more comprehensive preservation policies, and illustrate the socio-cultural effects of acknowledging women's contributions to Zimbabwe's national narrative.

Moreover, this research was positioned in a wider scholarly conversation that examined how gender, memory, and history connected in post-colonial settings. It examined how gendered viewpoints could alter how historical events were understood and preserved, drawing on feminist history and heritage studies. In doing so, the study contributed to the body of knowledge while also having applications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners working with cultural heritage in Zimbabwe and other post-colonial countries.

The study's background made clear how important it was to re-evaluate and strengthen the preservation of women's contributions to Zimbabwe's liberation war. It drew attention to the historical context, pointed out the weaknesses in the current cultural preservation landscape, and emphasized the broader implications for national identity and gender equality. This study laid the groundwork for an extensive investigation into the best ways to maintain and incorporate Zimbabwe's history of women's liberation into the country's collective memory.

1.2 Purpose of the study

Evaluated the state of representation and preservation of women's liberation heritage in various forms such as historical records, monuments, museums, and oral history.

1.3 Statement of the problem

There had been a need to address the socio-cultural effects of this marginalization as well as the dearth in the historical documentation and preservation of women's liberation history. To ensure that women's contributions were fairly and sufficiently represented in Zimbabwe's national

memory and history, this study aimed to explore these topics by examining the obstacles to the preservation of women's liberation heritage.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives that guided this study were to:

- i. Assess the then-current state of preservation of women's liberation heritage;
- ii. Analyze the impact of women's liberation heritage on existing gender dynamics;
- iii. Document the contributions of women in the liberation struggle; and
- iv. Propose strategies for the effective preservation and dissemination of women's liberation heritage.

1.5 Research questions

- i. What was the then-current state of preservation of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe?
- ii. How did the preservation or lack of preservation of women's liberation heritage impact contemporary gender dynamics in Zimbabwe?
- iii. What were the significant contributions of women to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle?
- iv. What strategies could be implemented to ensure the effective preservation and distribution of women's liberation heritage?

1.6 Assumption of the study

The study assumed that women's contributions to the liberation fight had been underrepresented in national narratives, historical accounts, and initiatives to preserve cultural heritage. A distorted understanding of the history of emancipation resulted from this under-representation. To effectively explore the heritage of women's liberation in Zimbabwe and its impact on contemporary society, this study was built on several foundational assumptions. First, it posited that this heritage was not a static historical artifact but rather a vibrant and evolving narrative that continued to influence current understandings of gender roles and identity. The significance of both individual and collective memories was recognized, as personal accounts and community narratives shaped identities and informed social movements. Moreover, it was essential to examine women's experiences through an intersectional lens, acknowledging the diversity shaped by race,

class, age, and socio-political context. This understanding underscored the belief that historical struggles for women's rights held contemporary relevance, informing present advocacy and policy efforts.

Additionally, the study assumed that younger generations were eager to engage with their heritage, seeking connections to the narratives of their predecessors, which was vital for preserving women's liberation history. The necessity of inclusion was also emphasized, recognizing the importance of voices from marginalized groups, such as rural women, women with disabilities, and others. Finally, it was believed that by highlighting the contributions of women throughout history, this research had the potential to inspire social change. Such awareness could prompt contemporary society to reflect on its values regarding gender equality, ultimately leading to tangible improvements in women's lives. These assumptions guided the study's focus and methodology, fostering a rich discussion on safeguarding Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage while illuminating its effects on identity and the pursuit of social justice.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study was crucial as it sought to highlight and document the often-overlooked contributions of women in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. By focusing on their roles, the research aimed to address the existing gaps in historical narratives that had predominantly emphasized male figures. Recognizing and showcasing the agency, resilience, and leadership of women within this context not only reshaped the conventional stories surrounding Zimbabwe's fight for independence but also enhanced understanding of how historical experiences related to contemporary gender issues in the country.

The findings of this research held significance for a variety of stakeholders, including academics, policymakers, educators, activists, and community organizations. Scholars in relevant fields benefited from a deeper appreciation of women's contributions, while policymakers could use the insights to inform gender equality initiatives. Moreover, educators were able to integrate these narratives into their curricula, fostering inclusivity in understanding Zimbabwe's past. The outcomes of this study included improved historical recognition of women's roles, empowerment of current and future generations, enhanced discussions on gender equality, and informed policy-making that addressed historical injustices. Additionally, the study advocated for the preservation

and promotion of women's liberation heritage, contributing to a richer representation of Zimbabwe's cultural identity.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

This study focused specifically on the historical and contemporary roles of women in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, examining their contributions, challenges, and the efforts to preserve their legacy within the frameworks of Zimbabwean history and culture. The research employed qualitative methods, including interviews and analysis of archival materials, targeting key informants such as historians, activists, and scholars, as well as pertinent historical documents. While acknowledging the wider African context of liberation movements, this study did not extend its examination to women's roles in liberation struggles in other countries, nor did it address gender issues that fell outside the specific historical and cultural context of Zimbabwe's liberation effort. Furthermore, the research concentrated on the timeframe from the beginning of the liberation struggle in the 1960s to the present day, thereby excluding earlier historical contexts or discussions related to women's issues in post-independence Zimbabwe that did not directly connect to the theme of liberation heritage.

1.9 Limitations of the study

This study faced several limitations that could have influenced its conclusions and applicability. First, the reliance on qualitative data collected from a small group of key informants such as historians, activists, and scholars might have introduced biases derived from individual viewpoints and experiences, potentially resulting in an incomplete portrayal of women's contributions to the liberation struggle. In addition, access to archival materials might have been limited due to issues such as preservation challenges, availability, or political sensitivities related to specific historical accounts, which could have restricted the scope of information accessible for analysis. Moreover, by concentrating on a single geographic context Zimbabwe the study may have limited the potential for comparisons with women's liberation movements in other nations, thus narrowing the broader relevance of its findings within feminist or liberation discourse. Lastly, the evolving nature of the socio-political landscape could have led to swift changes that affected the significance and implications of the research results over time.

1.10 Definition of key terms

- i. Gender Equality: Gender equality was the condition in which all individuals, regardless of their gender, enjoyed equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.
- ii. Heritage Preservation: Heritage preservation entailed the protection and promotion of cultural, historical, and social legacies to ensure their existence for future generations.
- iii. 'From struggle to legacy: Referred to the transition of a movement or fight for rights and freedom into a lasting impact or heritage that shaped the identity, culture, and historical narrative of a community or nation.
- iv. Liberation Heritage: Liberation heritage referred to the shared narratives, memories, and historical contributions of individuals and groups engaged in movements aimed at gaining freedom from oppression, colonization, or discrimination.
- v. Liberation Struggle: A liberation struggle referred to the organized efforts by a group or community to achieve freedom from oppression, colonization, or unjust governance.
- vi. Women's Liberation: Women's liberation was a movement dedicated to securing equal rights and opportunities for women while addressing social, political, and economic inequalities.

1.11 dissertation outline

This outline provided a structured framework for the dissertation, ensuring a coherent flow of information and analysis throughout the study.

Chapter 1: Introduction introduced the context of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle and the importance of women's contributions, outlined the problem of their underrepresentation, stated research objectives, questions, and significance, and described the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review Reviewed existing theoretical frameworks related to feminism and gender studies, provided historical context on Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, examined gender representation in historical narratives, and discussed contemporary perspectives on women's liberation movements.

Chapter 3: Methodology described the research design, data collection methods (such as interviews and archival research), data analysis techniques, and outlined potential limitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Historical Overview of Women's Roles in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle Detailed key figures and their contributions, explored the cultural and social dynamics influencing women's roles, and examined the formation and contributions of women's organizations in the liberation movement. Analyzed how women's contributions were represented in modern narratives, assessed the then-current socio-political environment for women in Zimbabwe, and discussed contemporary gender activism and its challenges. Proposed strategies for preserving women's liberation heritage, emphasized the importance of cultural recognition, and made recommendations for policy and practice to enhance women's historical representation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion summarized key findings, discussed implications for future research, and reflected on the broader impact of safeguarding women's liberation heritage on Zimbabwean society.

1.12 Framework for the outline

Activity	Expected Completion Date
Chapter 1: Introduction Conduct background research	Month 1, Week 1
Draft Chapter 1	Month 1, Week 3
Revise Chapter 1 based on feedback	Month 1, Week 4
Chapter 2: Literature Review Conduct literature search	Month 2, Week 1
Review and analyze literature	Month 2, Week 2
Draft Chapter 2	Month 2, Week 4
Revise Chapter 2 based on feedback	Month 3, Week 1
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology Develop research design	Month 3, Week 2
Draft Chapter 3	Month 3, Week 4
Revise Chapter 3 based on feedback	Month 4, Week 1
Chapter 4: Results and Discussion Collect quantitative and qualitative data	Month 4, Weeks 2-4
Analyze data	Month 5, Weeks 1-2
Draft Chapter 4	Month 5, Week 3
Revise Chapter 4 based on feedback	Month 5, Week 4
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations Draft Chapter 5	Month 6, Week 1
Revise Chapter 5 based on feedback	Month 6, Week 2
Final revision and submission	Month 6, Week 3

Compile all chapters	
Final proofreading and formatting	Month 6, Week 4
Submit dissertation	End of Month 6

1.13 Chapter summary

This Chapter laid the groundwork for the study by outlining its background, purpose, and the central problem it addresses. It defined the research objectives and questions, underlying assumptions, and the significance of the investigation. Additionally, the chapter detailed the study's scope, limitations, and delimitations, along with a definition of key terms, the structure of the dissertation, and its time frame. Collectively, these elements established a clear and focused foundation for the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the background, purpose, problem statement, research objectives and questions, assumptions, significance, delimitations, limitations, dissertation outline, definition of key terms, and time frame of the study that gave us the foundation of the research. This chapter introduces the overlooked importance of preserving Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage within the broader context of the nation's independence struggle. While historical narratives often emphasized male contributions, this chapter highlights the vital yet marginalized roles played by women as combatants, organizers, cultural custodians, and ideologues. It addresses historiographical gaps and underscores the need to preserve women's stories to secure their rightful place in national memory.

The discussion engaged with both global and local theoretical frameworks, including feminist theory, memory studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural heritage theory. Scholars such as Judith Butler, bell hooks, Maurice Halbwachs, and Frantz Fanon were referenced, alongside Zimbabwean feminist perspectives and critiques of national heritage practices. These frameworks were used to contextualize the preservation of women's liberation heritage as an act of decolonization and empowerment.

2.2 National Theory

2.2.1 Feminist Theory: Gender and Liberation

This section examined how feminist theory had been applied to the safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, highlighting the marginalization of women's contributions within national historical narratives. Feminist perspectives provided a critical lens for understanding how colonial and patriarchal structures contributed to the erasure of women's roles in the liberation struggle.

The works of Judith Butler, Bell Hooks, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty were explored to uncover different dimensions of this erasure. Butler's theory of gender performativity explained how

women's non-conforming roles during the struggle were often overlooked in national memory because they did not align with traditional gender expectations. Hooks introduced the concept of intersectionality, showing how overlapping oppressions race, class, and gender shaped women's experiences in the liberation movement. She emphasized the role of grassroots activism in reclaiming women's narratives. Mohanty critiqued Western feminist frameworks for universalizing women's struggles and stressed the importance of local, decolonial perspectives in reconstructing Zimbabwean women's histories.

The theories of these scholars offered complementary but distinct approaches: Butler focused on redefining gender roles, hooks emphasized intersectionality and community engagement, and Mohanty advocated for decolonizing feminist thought through localized perspectives.

The section concluded with a call for the creation of gender-sensitive historical archives that centered women's voices through oral histories, personal narratives, and artifacts. These archives were presented as essential tools for countering male-dominated accounts and for preserving the legacy of women's contributions to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

2.2.2 Memory Studies: Collective Memory and the Politics of Forgetting

This section explored how Memory Studies had offered critical insights into the marginalization and erasure of Zimbabwean women's contributions to the liberation struggle. Central to this field was the concept of collective memory, as developed by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and the rituals of remembering and forgetting, as theorized by Paul Connerton (1989). These theories helped explain how Zimbabwe's national historical narrative came to prioritize male contributions while excluding women from public memory.

Halbwachs' theory emphasized that collective memory was shaped through social frameworks such as education, family, religion, and state institutions which had historically reinforced patriarchal narratives. In Zimbabwe, these institutions had contributed to a national memory dominated by male liberation figures, marginalizing women's roles. Halbwachs' work suggested that reclaiming women's liberation heritage required transforming these frameworks to include women's stories in the official national narrative and public discourse.

Connerton, on the other hand, focused on how rituals and commemorative practices such as national holidays, statues, and public ceremonies played a significant role in shaping what societies remembered or forgot. In Zimbabwe, these public rituals often celebrated male heroes while overlooking women's contributions. Connerton's theory highlighted the need to reimagine national rituals to include and honor the stories of women in the liberation struggle.

Both scholars underscored that memory was not a passive recollection of the past, but an active and political process shaped by dominant ideologies. While Halbwachs emphasized the role of social institutions, Connerton focused on ceremonial practices both mechanisms having contributed to the erasure of women's histories.

Ultimately, the application of Halbwachs' and Connerton's theories revealed how the politics of forgetting had functioned in Zimbabwe's postcolonial memory-making and how a conscious, inclusive, and feminist reconfiguration of national memory was necessary to ensure the recognition and preservation of women's liberation heritage.

2.2.3 Postcolonial Theory: Decolonizing History and Memory

Postcolonial theory had provided a critical framework for understanding and dismantling the colonial legacies that shaped history and memory, particularly the erasure of marginalized voices. In the context of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, postcolonial theory illuminated how colonial and postcolonial systems had excluded women's contributions from the national narrative. The theories of Frantz Fanon (1963), Homi K. Bhabha (1994), and Gayatri Spivak (1988) offered valuable insights into this erasure and the processes needed for historical recovery.

Frantz Fanon (1963), argued that colonialism distorted both identity and history. He emphasized that true decolonization required the reclamation of history and memory. Fanon's theory was particularly relevant to Zimbabwe, where the colonial and post-independence narratives had focused on male freedom fighters, neglecting the essential roles women played in the liberation struggle. He would have advocated for a process of memory reclamation to correct this historical injustice.

Homi K. Bhabha (1994), through his concept of hybridity (1994), explored how colonized identities were formed in the spaces between traditional and imposed roles. Zimbabwean women, during the liberation struggle, had existed within such hybrid spaces, negotiating roles between traditional gender norms and revolutionary participation. Bhabha's theory suggested that women's histories needed to be reconstructed in a way that acknowledged their complex identities and the intersectional oppressions they faced colonialism, patriarchy, and racism.

Gayatri Spivak (1988), focused on the silencing of subaltern voices, particularly women in colonized societies. In Zimbabwe, the women who had participated in grassroots and support roles during the liberation struggle were largely excluded from the official historiography. Spivak's work highlighted the need for women to speak for themselves, and for their stories to be integrated into the national memory through oral history, memoirs, and feminist research.

Together, these theorists underscored the connection between colonization, memory, and identity. Fanon stressed the necessity of reclaiming memory as a path to liberation. Bhabha brought attention to the hybrid and fluid identities shaped by colonial power. Spivak emphasized the importance of amplifying silenced voices. All three theorists agreed that reclaiming and reconstructing memory was essential to true decolonization.

Ultimately, postcolonial theory had demonstrated that decolonizing Zimbabwe's historical memory required both structural and symbolic change placing women at the center of the national story and ensuring that their voices were heard, respected, and remembered.

2.2.4 Cultural Heritage Theory: Reclaiming and Safeguarding Heritage

Cultural heritage theory had served as a vital framework for understanding how societies identified, preserved, and transmitted their collective memory and traditions. In the context of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, it offered insights into how women's roles during the liberation struggle could be reclaimed, protected, and passed down to future generations. The theory had helped analyze the marginalization of women's contributions and suggested ways to recognize and integrate these hidden histories into the national narrative.

Laurajane Smith (2006) introduced the idea of "authorized heritage discourse" (AHD), which explained how dominant social and political powers shaped what was considered valuable heritage. In Zimbabwe, this discourse had contributed to the marginalization of women's roles in the liberation struggle, favoring male-centered narratives. Smith's critique emphasized the need to challenge these dominant perspectives and to establish more inclusive heritage practices that recognized women's contributions through initiatives like monuments, exhibitions, and educational content.

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (1995) explored the gendered nature of heritage, arguing that historical narratives often silenced or excluded women's roles, especially in the context of war and revolution. His work had highlighted how Zimbabwe's liberation history, though deeply influenced by women's participation, had been shaped by masculine ideals that obscured female contributions. He advocated for rewriting and revisiting gender-biased national histories to reclaim women's place in heritage.

David Lowenthal (1985) offered a broader perspective by asserting that heritage was a constructed and evolving process, shaped by present-day political and social values rather than being a static or objective record of the past. In Zimbabwe, this meant that how people remembered and celebrated the liberation struggle especially women's roles depended on current societal attitudes. His view underscored that safeguarding women's heritage was not a one-time task but an ongoing negotiation of memory and identity.

These theorists collectively argued that heritage was not neutral or passive but rather a political tool that could either silence or empower marginalized voices. Smith focused on the institutional power behind heritage narratives, Eilberg-Schwartz revealed the gender exclusions within those narratives, and Lowenthal emphasized the evolving nature of memory and heritage.

In sum, cultural heritage theory had shown that the safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage required an inclusive, participatory, and evolving approach. By challenging traditional narratives, promoting gender equity in historical memory, and creating platforms for women's voices, Zimbabwe had the opportunity to reclaim, preserve, and celebrate the full scope of its liberation history for future generations.

2.3. National Theory

2.3.1 Nationalist Histories and Gender in Zimbabwe

The narrative of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle had historically been shaped by nationalist histories that emphasized the roles of male figures while marginalizing the contributions of women. Although women had participated actively both as combatants and in vital support roles their stories were often sidelined in official accounts. While nationalist narratives had helped construct a collective identity, they had generally failed to fully recognize women's integral roles in the fight for independence.

These male-centric histories had focused on prominent figures like Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, overshadowing the diverse contributions of women. Feminist scholars argued that without the inclusion of women's experiences, Zimbabwe's liberation history remained incomplete. They emphasized that to safeguard Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, women's contributions needed to be recognized, documented, and celebrated in national narratives, museums, and monuments.

Cynthia Enloe (1989) critiqued the patriarchal nationalism prevalent in African liberation movements, including Zimbabwe's, noting how women's multifaceted roles ranging from combat to logistics and healing had often been ignored. She called for gender-inclusive histories that centered women's agency. Similarly, Mai Chavhunduka (2012) highlighted the disconnection between official history and women's lived experiences during the liberation war. She urged for a re-examination of historical narratives to incorporate these overlooked contributions.

Ruth Chinamano (1980), a key female figure in Zimbabwe's liberation, had also critiqued the post-independence marginalization of women in political structures. Her memoir revealed the continued struggle for recognition faced by women even after the war. She and other scholars insisted that including women's roles in the national historical memory was not only a matter of justice but also essential for building a more equitable society.

Zimbabwe's educational curricula and national monuments had long focused on male heroes, reinforcing gender bias. To correct this, there had been a growing call to rewrite historical

narratives to reflect women's roles as active participants, not just supporters. This required acknowledging their contributions in combat, intelligence, logistics, and healing.

Efforts to safeguard women's liberation heritage were seen as extending beyond rewriting history. They involved preserving both tangible and intangible heritage, including oral histories, archives, and monuments. Scholars and activists emphasized the importance of cultural institutions working in partnership with women's groups to ensure these contributions were accurately represented and preserved.

Ultimately, safeguarding this heritage had been understood as a transformative process one that redefined Zimbabwe's national identity to include the gendered experiences of its liberation struggle. As Brian Raftopoulos (2004) observed, the future of Zimbabwe's post-colonial identity depended on acknowledging and integrating women as central figures in shaping the nation's past and future.

2.3.2 Zimbabwean Feminism and Women's Liberation Theory

Zimbabwean feminism, as a critical theoretical framework, played a pivotal role in understanding the national discourse surrounding the safeguarding of women's liberation heritage. Over the years, Zimbabwean feminism sought to highlight the profound contributions that women had made during the liberation struggle and their subsequent roles in shaping the post-independence landscape. As Zimbabwe strove to transition from struggle to legacy, safeguarding the heritage of women in the liberation movement became essential for the country's historical and cultural integrity. This theory examined the key arguments within Zimbabwean feminism regarding the safeguarding of women's liberation heritage, identified points of divergence and convergence between feminist scholars, and offered practical recommendations for preserving this essential aspect of the national heritage.

2.3.3 Zimbabwean Feminism: A Historical and Ideological Overview

Zimbabwean feminism emerged as a significant ideological force during the nationalist struggles against colonialism and racism, where women played crucial roles in both armed and non-armed resistance. Despite their contributions, women's roles in the liberation struggle were often

marginalized by both nationalist movements and post-independence narratives that primarily focused on male revolutionaries. Feminist scholars in Zimbabwe critiqued this marginalization and highlighted women's material and intellectual contributions, which often transcended traditional gender roles.

Zimbabwean feminism asserted that women's efforts during the struggle, though often unrecognized or minimized, deserved acknowledgment as fundamental to the achievement of independence. Scholars such as Cheryl Hendricks (2007) called for the rewriting of historical narratives to reflect women's agency, resilience, and leadership roles in the liberation movement.

The theory also emphasized the intersection between feminism and the politics of memory, arguing that women's roles had been historically forgotten or suppressed. Feminist scholars advocated for the memorialization of these contributions through archives, historical records, and physical monuments to ensure their legacy was preserved for future generations.

The politics of memory within Zimbabwean feminism focused not only on remembering but also on reclaiming and celebrating women's contributions. As Ruth Chinamano (1980) noted in her memoir, the post-independence era witnessed deliberate efforts to silence women's roles, resulting in a form of gendered amnesia. Her account highlighted the ongoing struggle for recognition that women faced despite their vital involvement in the liberation movement.

2.3.4 Feminist Critiques of Nationalist Histories and the Gendered Struggle for Recognition

Zimbabwe's post-independence history, shaped by nationalist movements, often failed to adequately recognize women's collective contributions to the liberation struggle. Nationalist histories, dominated by male leadership, focused on glorifying male figures while relegating women to secondary roles. These accounts excluded women's diverse experiences, thereby reinforcing a patriarchal national memory.

Mai Chavhunduka (2012) criticized the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwe's national history, which centered on male combatants and erased women's stories from the national narrative. Feminist critiques argued that without acknowledging women's physical and emotional labor in the liberation struggle, a significant part of the nation's historical memory would be lost. Nationalist

histories often ignored the gendered dynamics of the struggle, hindering the full recognition of women's roles. Feminists therefore advocated for a gender-inclusive national history that recognized the complexity and diversity of women's experiences during the liberation war.

Safeguarding women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe required a critical reassessment of women's roles in the struggle. Zimbabwean feminism provided tools to document and amplify women's experiences through oral histories, archives, and academic research, essential for preventing the erasure of women's contributions from history.

Mai Chavhunduka (2012) and Cheryl Hendricks (2007) argued that safeguarding women's heritage necessitated active efforts to collect and preserve women's voices via interviews, memoirs, and institutional archives. They also recommended integrating these narratives into national educational curricula. Preserving women's histories demanded collaboration among government institutions, women's organizations, and academia to ensure these stories were told and retold, becoming a vital part of Zimbabwe's national heritage.

The safeguarding of women's liberation heritage required sustained efforts across multiple sectors. Drawing on feminist scholarship, recommendations included institutionalizing gender-inclusive histories by prioritizing the collection and preservation of women's stories in national archives, museums, and memorials, and revising educational curricula to incorporate gendered perspectives on the liberation struggle.

Ultimately, safeguarding Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was not merely an academic task but a necessary action for social and political progress. Zimbabwean feminism offered critical insights into the historical marginalization of women's contributions. By engaging feminist critiques of nationalist histories and employing strategies of collective memory, Zimbabwe could ensure that the legacy of women's contributions was preserved and celebrated. Through sustained documentation, education, and public commemoration, Zimbabwe was able to safeguard its women's liberation heritage as an integral part of its broader national identity.

2.4. Regional Theories:

2.4.1 Pan-African Feminist Theory

Pan-African Feminist Theory, which emerged from the broader Pan-African movement, provided a significant regional lens for examining the safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. This theory highlighted the shared struggles of African women across the continent against both colonial oppression and patriarchal structures, offering insight into how these experiences intersected with national liberation movements, particularly in Zimbabwe. By emphasizing gender justice, intersectionality, and the collective memory of African women's contributions to liberation, Pan-African feminism served as a powerful framework for reclaiming the histories and legacies of women in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. In this essay, the theoretical framework of Pan-African feminism was analyzed to underscore the importance of safeguarding Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage.

Pan-African feminism operated within the broader Pan-African movement, which was historically rooted in resistance to colonialism, imperialism, and racism. Pan-African feminism, however, focused on the roles and experiences of African women within these struggles. Pan-African feminist thought argued that women's participation in liberation movements was often overlooked, and their historical contributions were marginalized or erased from national narratives. Scholars in this field, such as Amina Mama (1997), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), and Fatou Sow (2008), emphasized the need to highlight women's agency and resilience in Africa's liberation struggles, advocating for the reclaiming of African women's historical roles in these movements.

In the context of Zimbabwe, the liberation struggle against British colonial rule and the subsequent struggle for national independence from the Rhodesian government involved significant participation of women. However, as had been noted by Veronica G. Oyo and other feminist scholars, Zimbabwe's post-independence narratives often marginalized or downplayed women's contributions, instead focusing primarily on male figures and heroes. Pan-African feminist theory thus offered a lens to examine the erasure of women's roles in historical memory and the need to address this injustice by safeguarding women's liberation heritage.

2.4.2 The Role of Women in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle and Pan-African Feminism

During the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, women played pivotal roles in various capacities, such as fighters in the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), logistical support, and political mobilization. Women such as Mbuya Nehanda, Sally Mugabe, and Victoria Chitepo were symbolic of the diverse roles women held in the movement. Despite this, Zimbabwe's national historical discourse often relegated their roles to secondary positions or excluded them entirely. Pan-African feminism critiqued this marginalization and argued that the legacies of these women must be reclaimed as part of the broader Pan-African struggle.

Fatou Sow (2008) critiqued the gendered memory that often accompanied nationalist movements, arguing that women's contributions were often overshadowed by the male-dominated narratives that focused on heroic male fighters and leaders. The Pan-African feminist perspective demanded that women's roles be celebrated not only in Zimbabwe but also within the regional African liberation narrative. Zimbabwean women, in this context, were understood as transnational actors who contributed to a broader struggle for African liberation.

The politics of memory and identity were central to the safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. Pan-African feminist theorists advocated for inclusive memory-making, one that included marginalized voices and ensured that African women's histories were recorded, preserved, and transmitted to future generations. Memory, in this context, was not simply a historical reconstruction but a powerful tool for cultural continuity and identity-building.

As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) highlighted, Pan-African feminism worked to decolonize both history and memory, rejecting the patriarchal and colonial legacies that had shaped African women's roles in nationalist struggles. In Zimbabwe, the absence of women's contributions from public memory reflected the colonial and patriarchal biases that persisted even after independence. Maurice Halbwachs' (1992) suggested that the state played a significant role in shaping public memory, and Pan-African feminists argued that a more inclusive history that foregrounded women's experiences was crucial in the post-colonial era.

Zimbabwe's official narratives of the liberation struggle often overlooked how women were involved not only in military operations but also in the ideological and political aspects of the war.

Memory studies have provided a framework for safeguarding women's liberation heritage by focusing on both the individual and collective memory of women and ensuring that these memories were recorded, documented, and institutionalized.

2.4.3 Theoretical Divergence and Commonalities among Pan-African Feminist Scholars

Scholars in Pan-African feminist theory were not monolithic in their approaches to the safeguarding of women's liberation heritage, and there were nuances in their arguments that warranted attention. While there was broad consensus about the importance of decolonizing history and reclaiming women's contributions, the methods of doing so varied. Amina Mama (1997) argued that women's agency in African liberation struggles should be preserved through alternative archival practices, such as oral histories, creative arts, and grassroots memorials. She advocated for community-based memory that reflected women's lived experiences.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) emphasized the importance of solidarity among African women in the face of neocolonial forces. Mohanty advocated for an intersectional approach that took into account the interlocking structures of oppression that African women faced, both during and after colonialism.

Fatou Sow (2008) drew attention to the political implications of excluding women from national histories, noting that gendered history-making shaped political participation in the post-colonial state. She called for the revolutionization of historiography to reflect African women's roles.

The line of argument among these scholars was largely consistent, though there were differences in their approaches. Mama and Sow emphasized grassroots, community-based efforts for safeguarding memory, while Mohanty advocated for solidarity and transnational cooperation among African women in shaping post-colonial identities. These variations provided a diverse toolbox for safeguarding women's liberation heritage.

Oral History Projects and Archiving Women's Experiences: Oral history projects were recommended to document the experiences of Zimbabwean women who participated in the liberation struggle. These archives were to be made accessible to the public and integrated into national archives, ensuring that oral testimonies were preserved for future generations.

Creating Inclusive Educational Content: Zimbabwe's education system was suggested to be revised to include more comprehensive studies of women's contributions to the liberation movement. This involved teacher training in gender-sensitive education, as well as the creation of textbooks and materials that incorporated the history of women in the liberation struggle.

Cultural Heritage Preservation through the Arts: Artists, filmmakers, and other cultural workers were identified as key players in safeguarding women's liberation heritage by producing creative works that reflected women's participation in the liberation struggle. These works could be used as tools for both education and cultural preservation.

Fostering Regional Solidarity: In line with Pan-African feminist principles, Zimbabwe was encouraged to collaborate with other African countries to ensure that women's liberation legacies were recognized as part of the broader African liberation narrative. This could involve regional commemorations, cultural exchanges, and the creation of Pan-African archives dedicated to preserving women's histories.

Pan-African feminist theory provided a vital regional framework for safeguarding Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. By focusing on reclaiming memory, decolonizing historiographies, and advocating for women's inclusion in national liberation narratives, Pan-African feminism offered a comprehensive approach to safeguarding Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. The recommendations presented, including the institutionalization of gendered histories, oral history archiving, and cultural preservation, were expected to significantly contribute to ensuring that Zimbabwean women's contributions to the liberation struggle were preserved and celebrated for future generations.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed key literature and theoretical approaches relevant to preserving the overlooked contributions of women in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. It highlighted how historical narratives have traditionally centered on male roles, often neglecting the significant involvement of women as fighters, planners, caregivers, and cultural figures. By applying feminist theory, memory studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural heritage frameworks, the chapter shed

light on how and why women's experiences have been excluded from mainstream national memory.

The insights of scholars such as Judith Butler, Bell Hooks (2000), Maurice Halbwachs (1992), and Frantz Fanon (19630), along with voices from Zimbabwean feminist scholarship, offered valuable tools for analyzing and challenging the gender bias in heritage practices. These perspectives emphasize that documenting and honoring women's roles is not only about preserving history it is also a form of reclaiming identity and resisting patriarchal and colonial legacies.

Preserving women's liberation heritage, therefore, serves both as a form of empowerment and a corrective step toward a more equitable historical record.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

For further understanding the previous chapter outlined, described and pointed out the difference of the different theories that has been selected to suit the research. It also gave different perspectives from different scholars while pointing out areas of argument and also gaps on the researched project. This chapter described the research methodology employed in the study "From Struggle to Legacy: Safeguarding Zimbabwe's Women Liberation Heritage." It outlined the approaches used to collect, analyze, and interpret data on the recognition, documentation, and preservation of women's contributions to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

A well-defined research methodology was crucial for ensuring that the study was conducted systematically and ethically while maintaining academic integrity. This research adopted a qualitative approach, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of historical records, personal narratives, and the challenges associated with preserving women's liberation heritage. A case study method was applied to examine Zimbabwe's efforts in safeguarding this history, with a focus on oral traditions, archival materials, museum exhibits, and cultural policies.

The chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. It also discussed the steps taken to enhance reliability and validity, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the study. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed, particularly when handling sensitive information from former female combatants and historical sources.

By establishing a structured research framework, this chapter set the stage for meaningful and reliable findings. The chosen methodology aimed to provide a thorough understanding of how women's roles in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle had been documented, interpreted, and preserved.

3.2 Research Design

The research design was a key element in structuring how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted in this study. A qualitative research design was used to examine the documentation, preservation, and representation of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. This approach was

well-suited for exploring personal experiences, historical narratives, and cultural practices in relation to heritage conservation, as it allowed for a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative approach was selected because it facilitated a comprehensive exploration of individual stories, historical perspectives, and the social implications of women's roles in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. In contrast to quantitative methods, which focused on numerical data, qualitative research emphasized detailed descriptions and insights gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach provided a platform to gather personal accounts from female freedom fighters, historians, and heritage experts, which helped to understand how their contributions had been preserved and memorialized.

3.2.2 Case Study Methodology

This study used a case study design, focusing specifically on Zimbabwe. A case study allowed for an in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context, making it ideal for investigating the preservation of women's liberation heritage. Zimbabwe was particularly relevant as a case study due to its history of resistance against colonial rule and the significant roles women played in the liberation movement.

Key elements of the case study approach included were analyzing national archives, museums, and heritage sites to assess the documentation of women's contributions to the liberation struggle. Conducting interviews with former female combatants, historians, and policymakers to gain insights into how these contributions were remembered and represented and also examining government policies and institutional initiatives aimed at preserving women's historical legacies. The case study methodology provided a thorough framework to explore the historical narratives, institutional preservation efforts, and cultural practices surrounding women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe.

3.3 Study Area: A Case Study of Bindura

This study centered on Bindura, the capital of Mashonaland Central, to explore how women's liberation heritage was preserved in Zimbabwe. Bindura held considerable historical value due to its role during the liberation struggle, where women were actively involved in both combat and support roles. This region offered a rich setting to investigate the ways in which the contributions

of women in the liberation movement had been commemorated and safeguarded within the town and surrounding areas.

Bindura, strategically located in Mashonaland Central, was an important site during the war of liberation. The town served as a central point for Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) operations, with many fighters, including women, stationed there. Its proximity to rural areas, where significant battles and resistance took place, made Bindura a key location for military activities and logistical support. Women in Bindura played vital roles, whether as combatants, nurses, intelligence agents, or in providing support to the fighters. This study focused on understanding the role of women in Bindura during the liberation struggle.

3.3.2 Key Historical Sites in Bindura

Bindura and its surrounding areas contained several significant historical sites that honored the liberation struggle. While these sites often focused on the broader war effort, they also highlighted the essential roles women played. Notable sites included were Bindura Liberation War Memorial This memorial honored those who fought for Zimbabwe's independence, including the women who contributed to the struggle, graves of Female Freedom Fighters also war veteran.

3.3.3 Rural Communities and Women's Contributions

In addition to Bindura, the rural communities surrounding the town also played a critical role in supporting the liberation forces. Women in these communities provided food, shelter, medical care, and acted as messengers and informants. Many women participated in underground operations, offering vital support to the struggle. These contributions were often overlooked in formal histories but remained crucial to understanding the full extent of women's involvement in the liberation struggle. The study gathered oral histories from local women, former fighters, and community elders to document the personal stories of women's involvement in the struggle. These oral traditions were vital for preserving the narratives of women who played crucial roles but were not formally recognized in traditional historical records

Government Policies and Preservation of Women's Liberation Heritage in Bindura, government efforts played a key role in preserving and recognizing the contributions of women in the liberation struggle. National and provincial initiatives ensured that the legacies of women were protected and honored. This study examined the involvement of government bodies, such as the National

Heritage Council of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Sports, Arts, and Culture, in safeguarding the memory of women's participation in the struggle.

National Heritage Council of Zimbabwe: This body was responsible for the preservation of Zimbabwe's cultural heritage, which included the recognition of women's vital roles in the liberation movement.

Ministry of Sports, Recreation, Arts, and Culture: The ministry oversaw national projects aimed at preserving historical narratives, including those that honored the contributions of women in the liberation struggle.

This case study offered valuable perspectives on how local communities worked to preserve the legacies of women fighters and how these legacies were passed down. The study also highlighted efforts to safeguard the heritage of women in the liberation movement through oral traditions, historical sites, and government policies, ensuring the memory of these women endured for future generations.

Bindura was a significant case study area for understanding the preservation of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, offering a comprehensive view of the ways in which local, national, and personal efforts worked together to honor women's contributions to Zimbabwe's independence.

3.4 Target Population

The target population for this research included individuals and groups who were directly or indirectly involved in preserving and honoring the contributions of women to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The study focused on a broad range of participants who could provide valuable insights into how women's historical roles from the liberation movement were safeguarded in Bindura. The population was divided into several key categories:

3.4.1 Female and male veterans of the liberation War

A significant portion of the target population consisted of women who had participated in the liberation struggle. These women were involved in a variety of roles such as combatants, support personnel, nurses, and intelligence agents. Their firsthand experiences were critical for understanding the significant roles women played in the independence movement and how those contributions had been preserved. These women also shared personal stories, testimonies, and

memories that were often missing from formal historical records. However male war veterans also witnessed the contribution of woman during liberation struggle

3.4.2 Community Leaders

The study also engaged community leaders in Bindura who were involved in the preservation of local history and cultural heritage, particularly those working to preserve the legacy of the liberation struggle. These leaders included individuals associated with heritage organizations, museums, and cultural centers. They played an essential role in organizing commemorations, memorials, and heritage initiatives that acknowledged women's contributions during the liberation movement. Their perspectives offered insights into how women's contributions had been commemorated and remembered in the local community.

3.4.3 Local Educators and Historians

Educators and historians who taught Zimbabwe's history and the liberation struggle were also part of the target population. These individuals played a central role in shaping how the country's history, including the roles of women, was taught to students and the public. Scholars and educators provided critical academic perspectives on the preservation of women's roles in the liberation struggle and the importance of including these contributions in the national historical narrative.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling was a vital aspect of the research that helped determine which group was studied, allowing the researcher to make broader inferences. For this study, the sampling techniques and sample size were selected to ensure the data collected accurately reflected the experiences and viewpoints of those involved in preserving the legacy of Zimbabwe's female liberation fighters. This section outlined the methods used for participant selection and the reasoning behind the chosen sample size.

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how women's contributions to the liberation struggle were preserved in Bindura, this study used purposive sampling, a method that selected participants intentionally rather than randomly. This approach was appropriate for this research, as it allowed for a targeted selection of individuals who possessed specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study.

The following sampling methods were applied:

a) Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to select individuals directly involved in preserving the history of women's contributions to the liberation struggle. The participants chosen for the study had connections to the liberation movement, with a focus on the roles women played. The participants included female veterans of the liberation struggle, families of female fighters, historians and educators knowledgeable about the liberation movement, community leaders active in heritage preservation, museum and cultural center staff working on historical conservation, social and gender activists advocating for the recognition of women's historical roles, and government officials responsible for heritage policies and programs.

b) Snowball Sampling

Along with purposive sampling, snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants. This method involved starting with a few initial participants who met the research criteria and then asking them to refer others with similar characteristics. This technique was especially useful for finding important individuals, such as veterans or families of fighters, who might not have been widely recognized or accessible. By using referrals, the study reached a more diverse group of participants, ensuring a comprehensive set of viewpoints.

c) Stratified Sampling

Stratified sampling ensured that various subgroups within the target population were represented. This method divided the population into distinct categories or strata, and participants were selected from each group. For this study, the strata included female and male veterans from different age groups or military roles, families of women who fought in the liberation struggle, community leaders engaged in cultural heritage projects, and government officials working in heritage or cultural sectors. By selecting participants from each of these strata, the study ensured that the views of all relevant groups were included.

3.5.2 Sample Size

Determining the appropriate sample size was crucial for ensuring that the findings were both reliable and valid. The sample size for this study targeted at least 20 participants. Seven female veterans of the liberation struggle were selected to gather diverse perspectives on their involvement

in the struggle. Two male and female educators and historians specializing in Zimbabwe's liberation history were included. Their knowledge of how the contributions of women were presented in educational settings and the broader historical narrative was important for understanding the preservation of these roles. Four government officials, both male and female, from relevant agencies such as the National Heritage Council or the Ministry of Arts and Culture, were interviewed. These officials shaped policies and initiatives that supported the recognition and preservation of women's historical contributions. The study also included three community leaders involved in cultural heritage preservation. These individuals played a key role in ensuring that the contributions of women in the liberation struggle were recognized and remembered within the community.

3.5.3 Justification for Sample Size

The chosen sample size was sufficiently large to capture a wide range of perspectives while still being manageable for detailed analysis. Since this was a qualitative study, the emphasis was on gathering in-depth information rather than aiming for a statistically representative sample. The principle of saturation ensured that enough data was collected to address the research questions effectively. By combining purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and stratified sampling, this study ensured that key groups involved in preserving women's liberation heritage were represented.

3.6. Data Collection Methods

Data collection was an essential step in this research, providing critical information to support or challenge the study's research questions. In this study, qualitative methods were utilized to offer a comprehensive understanding of how Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was preserved in Bindura. This qualitative method was designed to gather both in-depth personal accounts and broader, measurable data to give a well-rounded analysis of the issue.

3.6.1 Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Since this study focused on the preservation of women's liberation history in Bindura, qualitative methods were emphasized. These approaches allowed the researcher to gain deep insights into participants' experiences and perspectives concerning the legacy of women in the liberation movement.

i. Interviews

The primary method used for data collection in this research was semi-structured interviews. This method combined predetermined questions with open-ended prompts, offering the flexibility to explore topics while ensuring consistency across interviews. Semi-structured interviews were ideal for gathering detailed, nuanced responses from participants, allowing for a deeper exploration of their views.

Important features of the interviews included are one-on-one interactions: Conducting individual interviews allowed participants to speak freely in a private, confidential setting, interview guide that helped to maintain consistency across all interviews while providing flexibility for participants to offer detailed responses. Duration, interview lasted for at least 30 to 60 minutes, depending on how much participants had to share. Setting, the interviews were held in accessible locations such as homes, community centers, or offices to ensure privacy and comfort.

Interview topics focused on the role and contribution of women in the liberation struggle. Ongoing efforts to preserve the history of female fighters in Bindura. Obstacles to acknowledging women's contributions such as gender dynamics. Strategies on upholding women liberation heritage in the society. Views on how women's roles were represented in the national narrative

ii. Oral Histories

Another important data collection method that was used was oral history. This technique involved gathering personal testimonies that provided rich, firsthand accounts of historical events, often from perspectives that were not captured in official records. Given that much of the history of Zimbabwe's women fighters was passed down orally, this method was crucial for preserving those experiences. Video and audio recordings were made as per the participants' consent.

3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was a crucial process that involved applying systematic techniques to examine data, identify trends, and extract meaningful conclusions that addressed the research questions. This study used qualitative data analysis techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the preservation of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage in Bindura.

3.7.1 Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of qualitative data was a crucial stage in this study, providing the bridge between the raw information collected and the development of meaningful interpretations about the

safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. Since the data for this study was non-numerical including interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and archival documents the analysis process had to be thorough, reflective, and systematic. To achieve these aims, the study primarily employed thematic analysis, complemented by narrative analysis and document analysis.

3.7.2 Thematic Analysis

The primary method of analysis was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible and widely used approach in qualitative research that focuses on identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within a dataset. It provided an accessible and theoretically grounded way of making sense of rich qualitative material. Following the model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis process in this study involved six distinct steps. First, the researcher immersed herself in the data through extensive reading and re-reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and archival documents, taking preliminary notes and gaining an initial sense of emerging patterns.

The second step involved generating initial codes by systematically identifying and labeling important features of the data relevant to the research questions. For example, codes included concepts such as "erasure of women's stories," "oral traditions as preservation," or "political manipulation of memory." These codes served as the building blocks for the next step, which involved searching for themes. Related codes were grouped together into broader themes that captured significant aspects of the participants' experiences or societal patterns, such as "Community-led Preservation Initiatives" or "Challenges of Patriarchal Narratives."

Once potential themes were identified, the fourth step required reviewing and refining them to ensure that they accurately reflected the data and were distinct from one another. Some themes were merged, refined, or even discarded depending on their coherence and relevance. The fifth step entailed defining and naming each theme clearly, developing a detailed analysis that explained what each theme represented and why it was important. Finally, the sixth step involved producing the final written report, where these themes were woven together with direct quotations from participants and observations from the field to present a compelling, evidence-based account of how Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was remembered and safeguarded.

3.7.3 Narrative Analysis

Alongside thematic analysis, narrative analysis was employed selectively, especially in relation to the life histories and personal testimonies shared during interviews. Narrative analysis focused on the structure and meaning of stories that individuals told about their lives. In the context of this study, narrative analysis helped illuminate how women liberation fighters and activists constructed their identities, remembered their contributions, and situated themselves within the broader historical narrative of Zimbabwe. It explored not just what was said, but how it was said—the sequencing of events, the emotions conveyed, and the cultural references used. Narrative analysis was particularly valuable because it respected participants as active meaning-makers rather than passive subjects, revealing how personal memories intersected with collective histories.

3.7.3 Document and Archival Analysis

Finally, document and archival analysis also formed an important part of the overall data analysis strategy. Archival documents, autobiographies, policy papers, media articles, and historical photographs were critically examined to uncover how women's contributions to the liberation struggle had been officially recorded, celebrated, or marginalized over time. Document analysis involved a close reading of texts to identify themes, biases, omissions, and dominant narratives, providing a crucial historical backdrop against which contemporary preservation efforts could be understood. This technique helped the study trace the evolution of women's representation within national memory and cultural policy.

By combining thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and document analysis, this study ensured a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach to understanding the complex realities surrounding the safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. The integration of these techniques allowed for a deep exploration of both individual and collective experiences, exposing not only the overt narratives but also the silences and contestations that surrounded this critical aspect of Zimbabwean history.

3.8 Data Collection (Primary and Secondary/Documentary)

This study utilized both primary and secondary (documentary) data collection methods to develop a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was safeguarded. Integrating these approaches strengthened the credibility and richness of the research findings.

Primary data was obtained directly from individuals and groups with firsthand knowledge or involvement in the liberation struggle and heritage preservation initiatives. The primary methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants such as women liberation war veterans, historians, heritage professionals, activists, and policymakers. These interviews aimed to capture personal experiences, expert interpretations, and reflections on the state of heritage preservation concerning women's contributions.

Focus group discussions further enriched the data by fostering dialogue among participants with shared or differing perspectives. These discussions created spaces for dynamic interaction, promoting the emergence of collective memories, debates, and shared insights on the visibility and treatment of women's stories within Zimbabwe's broader liberation narrative. Participant observation was also employed by attending events such as cultural exhibitions, national commemorations, and storytelling sessions. Observing these activities provided valuable insights into how women's liberation heritage was publicly performed, celebrated, and interpreted in contemporary settings.

Alongside primary data, secondary (documentary) data was critically analyzed to supplement and contextualize the research. Secondary data included materials such as autobiographical accounts of female liberation fighters, archival records, policy documents, museum displays, academic literature, and historical media reports. The documentary analysis focused on how women's roles and contributions had been documented historically, the narratives that had been promoted or marginalized, and how official records reflected or distorted the lived realities of women involved in the liberation struggle.

By examining these documents, the study traced the evolution of women's representation within Zimbabwe's official memory and heritage discourse. Cross-referencing secondary sources with primary data enabled the identification of inconsistencies, omissions, and contested narratives, offering a more critical and layered understanding of the challenges involved in preserving women's liberation heritage.

Thus, the combined use of primary and secondary data collection methods ensured that the research captured the full complexity of the topic, balancing lived experiences with documented

history to provide a nuanced, credible, and holistic view of the safeguarding of Zimbabwean women's liberation legacies.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, maintaining validity and reliability was vital to ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of the study's findings. In this investigation into the safeguarding of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, special emphasis was placed on strategies that enhanced both validity and reliability, thereby strengthening the overall quality and credibility of the research outcomes.

Validity referred to the extent to which the research accurately captured and represented participants' experiences, meanings, and realities. To enhance the validity of this study, several techniques were applied. Triangulation was a core strategy, involving the use of multiple data sources including interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and documentary analysis to cross-check and corroborate findings. By comparing information from different angles, triangulation minimized individual biases and enriched the overall understanding of the subject.

In addition, member checking was employed. Participants had the opportunity to review and validate preliminary interpretations or summaries of the findings, ensuring their experiences were accurately represented. This process fostered authenticity and strengthened the credibility of the research. Furthermore, the study incorporated rich, thick description, providing detailed accounts of the research settings, participant backgrounds, and contextual factors. Such depth allowed readers to make informed judgments about the transferability of the findings to other settings or populations.

Reliability in qualitative research concerned the consistency and dependability of the research process. While qualitative studies did not aim for replicability in the strictest sense, they did seek transparency and coherence in how findings were generated. To enhance reliability, this research maintained a comprehensive audit trail, systematically documenting every stage of the research process from data collection and coding decisions to theme development and analytical reflections.

A structured coding framework was also applied during thematic analysis to ensure consistency in how themes were identified and interpreted. Codes were clearly defined and applied uniformly across all data sets, and regular reviews helped maintain alignment throughout the analysis process.

Moreover, peer debriefing sessions with academic advisors and research peers provided external feedback, helping to challenge interpretations, identify biases, and refine analytical insights.

The broader concept of trustworthiness encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability underpinned the approach to validity and reliability in this study. Through careful application of strategies such as triangulation, member checking, rich description, transparent documentation, systematic coding, and peer consultation, the research aimed to produce findings that were robust, credible, and meaningful both within academic discourse and in practical heritage preservation efforts.

In summary, these measures ensured that the exploration of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was grounded in rigorous qualitative practices, producing knowledge that was not only trustworthy but also deeply reflective of the voices and experiences at the heart of the liberation narrative.

3.10 Data Presentation and Analysis

The processes of presenting and analyzing data were essential for transforming collected information into meaningful and insightful results. In this research focused on safeguarding Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, a careful, organized, and systematic approach was adopted to ensure that participants' voices were faithfully represented and that the findings were insightful and critically reflective.

The data was organized and presented according to key themes that emerged during the analysis. Once the information from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documentary reviews was gathered, it was transcribed, carefully organized, and coded. The study relied on thematic analysis as the primary technique, enabling the researcher to uncover and interpret patterns, experiences, and ideas embedded within the data. To deepen understanding, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts and notes multiple times. Initial coding was carried out either manually or with the support of qualitative analysis software such as NVivo, which helped manage and systematize large datasets efficiently.

Findings were presented under major thematic areas that aligned with the study's research objectives and questions. These included themes such as "Women's Contributions to the Liberation Struggle," "Community-based Heritage Initiatives," "Obstacles to Preserving Women's

Histories," and "National Narratives and Gender Representation." Each theme was supported by direct quotations from participants to ensure that the presentation remained grounded in the authentic voices and lived experiences of those interviewed. These quotations lent credibility and depth to the analysis.

Narrative analysis was also applied where relevant, particularly when dealing with the life stories and personal accounts of women who participated in the liberation movement. This allowed for an exploration not only of the events they recounted but also how they framed and interpreted their experiences, offering a richer, more layered understanding of their personal and collective journeys.

In addition to primary data, documentary sources including policy documents, autobiographies, historical archives, and media reports were analyzed. The findings from these secondary sources were critically examined and integrated with the primary data to provide historical and policy context. This allowed the study to highlight areas where official narratives aligned or conflicted with the experiences shared by participants.

To enhance clarity and structure, visual tools such as tables, figures, and thematic maps were employed. These helped to organize and present complex information, showing how different themes and subthemes related to each other, and illustrating key findings alongside supporting evidence.

Throughout the analysis, special attention was paid to identifying patterns, contradictions, and silences within the data. Particular focus was placed on instances where participants' accounts challenged dominant historical narratives or brought forward previously overlooked aspects of women's heritage. The researcher maintained analytical memos and reflective notes throughout this process, documenting decisions, emerging thoughts, and shifts in understanding.

The goal of the analysis was not merely to describe the data but to critically interpret and contextualize it, considering broader socio-political, cultural, and gendered frameworks. This critical lens enabled a deeper understanding of the dynamics that shaped how Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was preserved or neglected.

In conclusion, data presentation and analysis in this study were conducted systematically and thoughtfully. Through the use of thematic and narrative analysis, the incorporation of documentary

evidence, and the application of visual aids, the research provided a rich, authentic, and critical exploration of the safeguarding of women's contributions to Zimbabwe's liberation history.

3.11. Pilot testing

Before the main data collection began, it was crucial to conduct pilot testing or pretesting of the questionnaire to ensure its clarity, effectiveness, and cultural relevance. In this study on the preservation of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, pilot testing helped refine the questionnaire and improve the overall quality of the research.

Pilot testing involved administering the initial version of the questionnaire to a small group of participants who shared similar characteristics with the intended study group. This trial phase was designed to identify any potential issues, such as unclear wording, confusing question order, or inappropriate length. Feedback from participants helped pinpoint areas where questions caused confusion or discomfort, allowing for adjustments before the main data collection.

For this research, the pilot test was carried out with a small sample of 5 to 10 women who had either been part of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle or were engaged in preserving women's liberation history. Their responses provided valuable insights into whether the questionnaire effectively captured the required information and whether the wording was clear and easily understood.

Key aspects of the pilot test included evaluating the clarity of language, assessing the overall length and organization of the questionnaire, and ensuring that the content was culturally appropriate. Particular attention was given to making sure that the questions were easy to comprehend by participants with diverse educational backgrounds, and that no question inadvertently caused discomfort or offense.

After completing the pilot, the researcher carefully reviewed participant feedback, along with field notes, and made necessary revisions to improve the questionnaire. Revisions involved rephrasing unclear questions, adjusting the flow of questions, removing redundant items, or adding new questions if certain topics were not adequately covered.

Additionally, pilot testing provided an opportunity to address the practical aspects of the data collection process. This included determining how long it took participants to complete the questionnaire, testing the clarity of the instructions provided, and assessing the smoothness of the

consent process. These logistical considerations were fine-tuned during the pilot phase to ensure a smoother data collection process in the full study.

In conclusion, pilot testing was an essential step in strengthening the questionnaire, ensuring that it was clear, culturally sensitive, and capable of producing reliable and valid data. By conducting this phase, the research was better prepared to gather accurate and authentic information from women involved in Zimbabwe's liberation history, which enhanced the overall credibility of the study.

3.12. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were essential in conducting this research, especially when engaging with human participants. In this study, which examined the preservation of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, strict ethical guidelines were followed to ensure the protection of participants' rights, dignity, and well-being. Adhering to these ethical standards enhanced the integrity of the research while ensuring participants were treated with respect throughout the process.

Informed Consent

A primary ethical focus of this research was informed consent. Prior to participating, individuals were provided with a clear and thorough explanation of the study's goals, methodology, potential risks, and benefits. This information was presented both verbally and in written form, allowing participants to fully understand what their involvement entailed. Participants were made aware that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form before the data collection began. This form outlined the participant's rights, including confidentiality, the right to withdraw at any time, and the use of their data. Participants were assured that their personal information would be kept confidential and that no identifying information would be included in any of the study's findings.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality was another critical ethical consideration in this study. All personal and identifying information collected from participants was kept private. The study ensured that no participant's

identity was revealed in the final results, and any personal details were replaced with pseudonyms or anonymized to protect their privacy.

Data was securely stored in password-protected files, and access was restricted to the researcher and authorized personnel. Any physical data was kept in a locked location, and any audio or video recordings were deleted after being transcribed to further protect participant confidentiality.

Respect for Participants

Respecting the autonomy and dignity of participants was at the forefront of this study. As the research involved sensitive topics related to personal experiences of women involved in the liberation struggle, the researcher approached the interviews with care and empathy. Participants were given the freedom to share their experiences at their own pace, and no one was pressured to disclose any information they were uncomfortable with.

The researcher created an environment in which participants felt safe, respected, and valued during the data collection process. This included providing opportunities for participants to ask questions, clarify concerns, and ensure they felt supported throughout their involvement in the study.

Minimizing Harm

The study strove to minimize any potential harm to participants. Given the emotionally charged nature of the subject matter, special attention was given to participants' emotional well-being. If any participant experienced distress during an interview or focus group, they were given the option to pause, end the session, or receive emotional support. Additionally, participants were informed about counseling services available to them after their participation.

Ethical Approval

Before beginning data collection, the researcher obtained ethical approval from an appropriate ethics committee or institutional review board (IRB). This process ensured that the research design and methods aligned with ethical standards and were suitable for the study's objectives. The researcher complied with all ethical guidelines provided by the review board.

Integrity and Transparency

Throughout the research process, the researcher upheld integrity and transparency. This included presenting findings honestly, whether they aligned with the researcher's initial hypotheses or not, and acknowledging any potential biases or limitations in the research. Any conflicts of interest or sources of funding were also disclosed to maintain transparency and ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Cultural Sensitivity

Given the focus on Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage, cultural sensitivity was a priority throughout the research. The researcher ensured that questions were framed in a way that respected the participants' historical and cultural backgrounds. Attention was also paid to the power dynamics between the researcher and participants, particularly when discussing sensitive topics such as gender, political involvement, and history.

In conclusion, ethical considerations were integral to the success of this research. By adhering to principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, respect for participants, and cultural sensitivity, the study ensured that participants' rights were protected, and that the research was conducted with the highest ethical standards. This approach enhanced the credibility of the findings and ensured that the study contributed to the body of knowledge in a responsible and respectful manner.

3.13. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology that guided the study on preserving Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. It detailed the research approach, sampling techniques, methods of data collection, and analysis strategies, ensuring a structured path toward achieving the research objectives.

A qualitative research approach was selected to deeply explore the personal experiences and historical contributions of women who participated in the liberation struggle. Purposive sampling was employed to target individuals with direct knowledge and experience relevant to the study. Data collection involved the use of interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis, allowing for a comprehensive gathering of rich and meaningful information.

The research drew on both primary data, collected firsthand from participants, and secondary data, sourced from literature, archives, and official documents. Thematic analysis was used to

systematically interpret the data, helping to uncover major themes and patterns related to the recognition and protection of women's liberation efforts.

In discussing reliability and validity, the chapter emphasized the use of techniques such as triangulation, member checking, and maintaining a detailed audit trail to ensure the credibility of the findings. Ethical issues, including informed consent, safeguarding participant confidentiality, minimizing potential harm, and ensuring cultural sensitivity, were also carefully considered to protect all individuals involved and uphold the study's ethical standards.

Additionally, pilot testing of the research instruments was conducted to ensure that the tools used for data collection were clear, effective, and suitable for the target population.

In conclusion, the methods laid out in this chapter offered a strong and ethical framework for investigating the ways in which Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage was preserved. The next chapter applied these methods to present and analyze the study's findings in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter was dealing with the search methodology viewing qualitative method as a research tool .I used in-depth interviews and document analysis and narrative analysis for deeper understanding. This chapter presented and analyzed data collected through qualitative methods mainly in-depth interviews and document analysis to explore how women's contributions to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle had been preserved. Using Bindura as a case study, it drew insights from eight participants, including war veterans, historians, and youth. Although 20 participants were initially targeted, data saturation was reached at eight. The chapter highlighted the marginalization of female fighters in historical narratives, examined the impact of this neglect on past and present gender dynamics, and discussed strategies that had been proposed to promote inclusive heritage preservation.

4.2 Data presentation

The data presented in this chapter were organized and guided by the qualitative research approach that was employed in this study.

4.2.1 Demographic and professional details of the research participants

This section present the statistical and demographic descriptions tables of the participants who Participated in this study.

Table 4.1: Response by Gender

Gender	Male	Female	total
Number of participants	3	5	8

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of research participants by gender. Out of a total of 8 participants, 3 were male and 5 were female. This indicates a higher representation of female respondents in the study.

Table 4.2: Response by Age

Age of participants	20-30	40-60	70-80	TOTAL
	1	3	4	8

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of research participants by age .The majority of respondents (4 out of 8) were aged between 70 and 80, followed by 3 participants aged 40 to 60, and only 1 participant in the 20–30 age range.

Table 4.3: Response by Occupation

ROLE	historians	War veterans	Museum curators	youth	total
Number of participant	2	4	1	1	8

Table 4.3 outlines the roles of participants involved in the study. The largest group of respondents were war veterans (4), followed by historians (2), while museum curators and youth were each represented by 1 participant.

Table 1

Table 4.4 Response by Educational level

Educational level	primary	secondary	tertiary	total
number	2	4	2	8

Table 4.4 presents the educational backgrounds of participants in the study "From Struggle to Legacy: The Preservation of Women's Liberation Heritage." Of the 8 respondents, 4 had attained secondary education, while 2 each had primary and tertiary education.

4.2.2. Participants

The participants in this study held diverse roles that offered valuable perspectives on the preservation of women’s liberation heritage in Zimbabwe. Participant A was a historian with expertise in national memory and heritage. Participant B was a female war veteran who provided

firsthand accounts of the liberation struggle. Participant C served as a museum curator, offering insight into institutional representation. Participant D was another historian, contributing academic and analytical depth. Participant E was a male war veteran, reflecting on both personal experience and education. Participant F was a youth participant, representing the younger generation's view on heritage. Participant G was also a female war veteran, highlighting community-level memory retention. Lastly, Participant H was a male war veteran who addressed the political dimensions of historical recognition.

4.2.3. Responses from participants

Participant's response to question 1. *What is the current state of preservation of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe?*

The preservation of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe remains a critical but neglected issue. According to participant A, a historian, there is currently a significant gap in both policies and institutions specifically dedicated to safeguarding the history of women's roles in the liberation struggle. He emphasized that the lack of a formal structure means these vital stories risk being forgotten. "It's an overlooked issue," he noted, "and unless a specific framework is introduced, the contributions of women may be lost to history."

Echoing this concern, participant B, a female war veteran, expressed her frustration with the marginalization of women's narratives in national discourse. (*Nhoroondo dzevakadzi dziri kusiiwa shure, dzisinganyanyotaurwa kumisangano yakakura*) she said, which translates to, "In many public forums and national events, women's contributions are barely mentioned. This has resulted in their stories being neglected. The history of women's role in the liberation struggle is fading from collective memory."

Participant C, a museum curator, added that the imbalance is starkly evident in public memorials and exhibitions. "Most monuments and museums only mention men," she explained. "Women are rarely acknowledged, and their sacrifices are often invisible in the national narrative."

Further emphasizing the urgency of the situation, participant D, another historian, pointed out that oral traditions long a cornerstone of preserving Zimbabwe's cultural history are slowly fading. "Without proper recording mechanisms," he warned, "this intangible heritage especially that of women, is disappearing."

Education also appears to be a missing link in this chain. Participant E, a male war veteran, lamented that (*Kudzidzisa kwevana kuchikoro hakubatanidzi zvakaitwa nevakadzi muhondo*) meaning “the school curriculum does not integrate the roles women played during the liberation struggle. As a result, students grow up unaware of these significant contributions. Educational content remains largely male-centric.”

The media, according to participant F, a youth, has also failed to play its role in preserving this heritage. There are barely any programs or documentaries about female liberation fighters,” he noted. “This silence in mainstream media contributes to the fading of their legacy.”

Participant G, a female war veteran, acknowledged that while some local communities still retain fragments of this knowledge, there is no formal or national system in place to preserve or disseminate it. “We need more structured ways to ensure these stories are told and remembered,” she urged.

Finally, participant H, a male war veteran, highlighted the political dimension of the issue. “Political leaders tend to focus more on male war heroes,” he stated. “Women’s contributions are often sidelined, despite their equally significant roles in the liberation struggle.”

Participant’s response to question 2. *How does the preservation or lack of preservation of women’s liberation heritage impact contemporary gender dynamics in Zimbabwe?*

Participant A, a historian, remarked that erasing women from history contributes to the normalization of male dominance in leadership roles. “When women are omitted from national memory,” he explained, “society begins to see leadership as a male domain, as if women were never part of the struggle or capable of making significant contributions.”

This sentiment was echoed by Participant B, a female war veteran, who stressed the danger of such erasure for younger generations. (*Kana vana vasina kuona kuti amai vavo vakaita basa, vanofunga kuti varume chete ndivo vanoita zvinhu*) she said translated to: “If children don’t learn about the sacrifices and contributions of their mothers, they develop a biased view that only men are capable of greatness.” She warned that this not only distorts history but also deprives girls of role models, leading them to internalize the belief that leadership and heroism are male-only traits.

Participant C, a museum curator, observed that this imbalance in historical representation fosters a societal impression that women cannot lead or embody heroism. “When museums and public memory exclude women,” she noted, “they reinforce the idea that leadership is not for women, and this seeps into everyday thinking.”

Participant D, another historian, added that the absence of female figures in historical narratives leaves young girls without role models. “This lack of representation,” he explained, “affects girls’ self-confidence and their sense of what they can aspire to. If you can’t see it, you can’t be it.”

Participant E, a male war veteran, underscored the broader community impact of this omission. (*Kubviswa kwevakadzi munhoroondo kunodzikisira kukosha kwavo munharaunda*) he said meaning “excluding women from history reduces their value in the community.” He emphasized that this marginalization doesn’t just affect perception; it actively diminishes the societal status of women.

For Participant F, a youth, the connection between historical erasure and present-day exclusion is clear. “Women tend to be left out of important policy dialogues,” he noted, “and this is partly because their past contributions have not been acknowledged. If history doesn’t highlight their leadership, people find it hard to justify their involvement in decision-making today.”

Participant G, a female citizen, added that this leads to an over-celebration of male achievements, further deepening gender inequality. “It creates a culture,” she said, “where men’s efforts are always recognized and elevated, while women’s sacrifices go unnoticed.”

Finally, Participant H, a male veteran, concluded that true gender equality is difficult to attain without historical balance. “How can we expect to build an equal society,” he asked, “when our history is so unequal?”

Participant’s response to question 3 *What were the significant contributions of women to Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle?*

The role of women in Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle was profound, multifaceted, and far too often overlooked. Participant A, a historian, emphasized that women were not mere bystanders or supporters they fought on the battlefield alongside men. “Women shared the dangers of war,” he noted, “shouldering the same physical and emotional burdens as their male counterparts.”

Participant B, a female war veteran, offered a vivid account of the critical behind-the-scenes roles women played. *Vakadzi vakatakura zvokudya, mishonga, nemashoko evakuru vasingabatwi nemuvengi*) she said translated to: “Women carried food, medicine, and important messages through dangerous terrain. They navigated enemy zones without being caught.” She explained that their bravery and tactical skills were essential to the survival of many fighters.

Adding to this, Participant C, a museum curator, explained how women used their homes as safe havens during times of danger. “They hid comrades and weapons,” she said, “often risking their own lives to protect the resistance. Their homes became covert bases of operation.”

Participant D, also a historian, shed light on the nurturing and spiritual support women provided. “Many women served as nurses,” he said, “tending to the wounded and offering emotional and spiritual guidance. They became a source of strength and hope during the most difficult moments of the war.”

Participant E highlighted the political and community-based roles women played. “They were organizers,” he explained. “Women mobilized entire communities, recruited fighters, and built networks of resistance that became the backbone of the liberation effort.”

The resilience of women was especially emphasized by Participant F, a male war veteran. (*Vamwe vakadzi vakashungurudzwa asi vakatsungirira nokuda kwenyika*) he recalled meaning “many women endured abuse and traumatic experiences but remained resilient for the sake of Zimbabwe's freedom.” He pointed out that their courage in the face of violence was remarkable, and that many endured even greater hardships than their male peers.

Participant G, a female war veteran, added that women were not limited to supportive roles they were trained in combat and strategy. “We were fighters,” she asserted. “We knew how to shoot, how to plan, and how to lead.”

Finally, Participant H, a male liberator, emphasized the ideological strength of women during the struggle. “Women also participated in political education,” he said. “They were ideologically strong and helped spread the message of liberation and equality. Their understanding of the cause was deep and unwavering.”

These testimonies collectively shatter the myth that women were peripheral figures in the liberation movement. From combat and logistics to ideological education and community mobilization, women were central to Zimbabwe's fight for independence. Their courage, strategy, and unwavering commitment were vital to the struggle and their legacy deserves to be honored and remembered.

Participant's response to question 4. *What strategies can be implemented to ensure the effective preservation and distribution of women's liberation heritage?*

Preserving the legacy of women in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle requires intentional and structured efforts initiatives that ensure these powerful narratives are documented, taught, and celebrated for generations to come. Participant A, a historian, stressed the importance of launching oral history projects specifically focused on women. "We need formal efforts," he said, "to gather and preserve firsthand accounts from female veterans before their voices are lost to time."

Participant B, a female war veteran, emphasized the need for grassroots involvement in this process. (*Tinoda kuti zvinyorwa nemabhuku zvinyorwe nevanhu vemunharaunda*) she said, meaning "there is a need for local communities to document their own stories in books and articles." She explained that community-led writing ensures authenticity and cultural relevance. "These narratives must come from the people who lived them," she added. "That's how we keep our stories alive."

Participant C, a museum curator, suggested that these histories be integrated into the national education curriculum. "Introducing women's liberation stories in schools," she said, "would ensure young people grow up with a more inclusive understanding of the past. It will give girls the heroes they've never been taught about."

Participant D, also a historian, advocated for the digitization of testimonies. "We must record and archive interviews with surviving female war veterans," he said. "Digital platforms can make these stories accessible to wider audiences and preserve them for future research."

Participant E proposed the creation of physical spaces dedicated to honoring women's roles. "We should build museums or curated exhibits focused specifically on female fighters," he recommended. "These spaces would serve both as educational centers and memorials."

Adding a cultural dimension, Participant F, a male war veteran, suggested the revival of oral traditions through public gatherings. (*Vakuru veharaunda vanofanira kuita misangano inoona nezvemadzimai akarwira nyika yedu*) he said, meaning “community elders should host storytelling events about the women who fought for our country.” These communal engagements, he noted, would keep history alive in an accessible and participatory way.

Participant G, a female liberator, pointed out the value of working with traditional authorities. “Collaborating with chiefs and village leaders,” she said, “can help uncover local accounts that are often left out of the national story. Their involvement lends credibility and ensures that rural narratives are not forgotten.”

Finally, Participant H, a male war veteran, called for a broader vision. “We need to seek international funding,” he urged, “to support heritage documentation projects. Global partnerships could provide the technical and financial resources needed to preserve this essential part of our national identity.”

Together, these suggestions paint a compelling roadmap for safeguarding the heritage of Zimbabwe’s women liberation fighters. From schools and museums to community storytelling and digitized archives, the participants envision a future where women’s contributions are no longer hidden but are preserved, celebrated, and passed on as a proud legacy.

4.3. Data analysis

The data has been gathered through the use of interview guide that has been shown in appendix as an instrument. Targeted population was 20 but due to data saturation the research stopped at 8 participants. For proper and deeper analysis the researcher used tools like document and archival analysis and narrative analysis. The gender distribution, with more female (5) than male (3) respondents, reflected a deliberate effort to center women’s often-overlooked contributions to Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle. Women shared emotional, personal stories, highlighting their historical marginalization.

In terms of age, the majority of participants (4) were aged 70–80, offering firsthand war experiences. The 40–60 age group (3) included those involved in preserving memory, such as historians, while only one youth (20–30) represented a generational interpretation of the past.

The largest role group was war veterans (4), as key bearers of authentic memory. Historians (2) added analytical depth, while the museum curator (1) provided insights into institutional memory. A single youth participant reflected the study's focus on lived rather than inherited memory.

Educationally, most participants had secondary education (4), shaped by wartime disruptions. Primary-educated respondents (2) were elderly veterans, while tertiary-educated participants (2) a historian and curator were fewer due to limited access to advanced education.

These demographic patterns were shaped by purposeful sampling, practical constraints, and historical realities, ensuring a diverse and meaningful dataset aligned with the study's focus on memory, authenticity, and marginalized voices.

4.3.1. What is the current state of preservation of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe?

The responses to this question show a strong consensus that women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe is largely underrepresented and poorly preserved. Interviewees A, B, C, E, and H emphasize the lack of institutional support, including the absence of policies, public commemoration, and curriculum integration. Their statements converge on the idea that women's historical roles are largely ignored or omitted from the national narrative.

Interviewees B and E, who responded in Shona, provided perspectives rooted in community and educational contexts. B's comment about women's stories being ignored in formal gatherings aligns with C's observation that museums and monuments focus on men. E's concern that schools do not teach about women's roles highlights how systemic neglect begins early in the education process. These views were consistent with those expressed in English, showing cross-linguistic and cross-cultural agreement.

However, Interviewee G offered a slightly different perspective, noting that while formal preservation is lacking, some community knowledge persists. This divergence may be influenced by age, with G possibly belonging to an older generation more engaged in oral traditions. Similarly, Interviewee D noted the decline of oral traditions, suggesting that without recording mechanisms, even this informal knowledge risks disappearing.

Together, these voices reveal a deeply rooted and systemic neglect of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe across institutions, education, media, and national memory. They call for urgent action to record, honor, and preserve the stories of the women who fought for the nation's freedom. This mixture of views suggests that while the dominant narrative is one of neglect, there are differing perceptions on how and where the heritage is maintained. Factors such as gender, age, community role, and exposure to formal systems appear to influence the way individuals perceive and experience heritage preservation.

4.3.2 The preservation or lack of preservation of women's liberation heritage impact contemporary gender dynamics in Zimbabwe?"

The responses to this question reflect a unified concern among participants: the erasure or marginalization of women's contributions during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle has had a significant and lasting impact on gender dynamics in contemporary society. Respondents consistently emphasized that the absence of women's voices in historical narratives contributes to the continued dominance of patriarchal norms and the underrepresentation of women in leadership, policy-making, and public recognition.

Interviewees A, C, and F highlight the structural consequences of this historical imbalance. They argue that failing to document and celebrate women's contributions reinforces a male-centric perception of leadership and heroism. When women are excluded from historical accounts, it becomes difficult for society to view them as capable leaders or decision-makers. This has implications for political representation, employment opportunities, and access to platforms of influence, perpetuating a cycle where men dominate key societal roles while women remain sidelined.

Further deepening this argument, Interviewee B, speaking in Shona, states, "*Kana vana vasina kuona kuti amai vavo vakaita basa, vanofunga kuti varume chete ndivo vanoita zvinhu.*" (If children do not see that their mothers contributed, they think only men are capable of doing important things.) This statement brings the issue closer to the family unit and education. It suggests that when children grow up without awareness of their mothers' or other women's historical roles, they internalize a skewed understanding of gender roles. Boys may grow up

believing that leadership is inherently male, while girls may struggle with self-worth or ambition due to a lack of relatable role models.

Interviewee E echoes this sentiment, saying in Shona that excluding women from history “*kunodzikisira kukosha kwavo munharaunda*” (reduces their value in the community). This not only marginalizes women symbolically but also diminishes their status and influence in everyday life. Without institutional acknowledgment through textbooks, museums, public holidays, or the media women’s efforts during the war are forgotten, and their societal contributions go unrecognized.

Interviewee D adds a psychological and aspirational dimension to the analysis by pointing out that the lack of visible female role models hinders young girls’ self-esteem and ambition. Without historical figures to look up to, girls may struggle to envision themselves in leadership or empowered roles, reinforcing a cycle of dependency and passivity.

In summary, the responses collectively argue that the lack of preservation of women’s liberation heritage feeds into a broader cultural narrative that undervalues women. This historical silence is not neutral it shapes contemporary attitudes, institutional structures, and gender expectations. The analysis reveals that restoring women’s place in the historical record is not merely about honoring the past, but about reshaping the future of gender equality in Zimbabwe. Only through balanced and inclusive historical preservation can society begin to deconstruct entrenched gender hierarchies and empower future generations of women.

4.3.3 What were the significant contributions of women to Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle?

The responses to this research question reveal a shared understanding among participants that women played a vital and multifaceted role in Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle. Contrary to popular narratives that often emphasize male heroism, interviewees emphasized that women were not merely supporters but were active agents in various strategic, logistical, and emotional capacities during the war. Their contributions, though historically under acknowledged, were central to the success of the liberation movement.

Several participants, including Interviewees A and G, directly addressed women's participation in combat. They noted that women received military training, engaged in battles, and risked their lives alongside their male counterparts. This challenges the widespread misconception that women's roles were confined to domestic or background support, and it highlights their bravery and commitment to national freedom. Such involvement in armed struggle reflects not only physical courage but also ideological conviction, demonstrating that women were equally invested in the political and nationalistic goals of the movement.



Figure 4.1

Fig4.1 Two female Zimbabwean liberation fighters, standing in front of a church during the Second Chimurenga. Lyons, Tanya. (2004). "Guns and Guerilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle." Africa World Press.



Figure 4.2

Fig4.2Bronze statue at the Zimbabwe National Heroes Acre monument, Harare, Zimbabwe. The bronze statue depicted in the image is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a prominent feature at the site. It features three heroic figures two men and one woman standing in a commanding pose.

In addition to military engagement, many interviewees highlighted the critical roles women played in support networks. Interviewees B and C, for example, detailed how women transported food, medicine, and sensitive information through dangerous terrain, often evading enemy detection. These logistical tasks were essential to the survival and coordination of liberation forces. Women also provided shelter for fighters, concealed weapons, and acted as intermediaries between guerrilla fighters and rural communities. These covert operations required strategic thinking, courage, and strong community ties further debunking the notion that women's involvement was secondary or passive.

Other participants, such as Interviewees D and E, focused on women's social and emotional contributions. They noted that women served as nurses, caregivers, spiritual supporters, and community mobilizers. These roles were crucial in maintaining the morale and well-being of fighters and civilians alike. Furthermore, women were instrumental in recruiting others into the liberation movement, fostering political awareness, and spreading revolutionary ideology. This

indicates that their role extended beyond physical tasks to include psychological and ideological contributions that sustained the liberation effort.

Interviewee F added a particularly poignant perspective by highlighting the abuse and trauma that many women endured during the war. She noted that despite being subjected to gender-based violence, these women remained resilient and committed to the cause. This aspect of their contribution underscores both their physical and emotional endurance, and it points to the need for deeper acknowledgment of the sacrifices they made—not only as freedom fighters but also as survivors of a war that often weaponized their gender.

Taken together, the testimonies paint a picture of women as central actors in the liberation struggle, involved at every level from the battlefield to the home front, from strategy to sacrifice. However, these diverse contributions have been overshadowed in official histories, which tend to center male fighters. This lack of recognition not only distorts the historical record but also diminishes the full scope of Zimbabwe's path to independence.

In conclusion, the data strongly suggest that women's roles in the liberation war were both diverse and indispensable. Whether as fighters, logisticians, caregivers, or ideological mobilizers, women demonstrated remarkable courage, resilience, and leadership. Recognizing these contributions is essential for building a more inclusive and accurate historical narrative one that honors the full spectrum of those who fought for Zimbabwe's freedom.

Another layer of difference relates to the legacy of recognition and memory. As Interviewee G noted, men are frequently memorialized in Zimbabwean liberation history, while women's stories are either downplayed or entirely forgotten. This erasure not only diminishes the role of women in national identity but also perpetuates the patriarchal structure that the liberation war ostensibly sought to dismantle.

In conclusion, the interview data make clear that the experiences of men and women during and after the liberation struggle were marked by stark inequalities. Women fought bravely and made immense sacrifices, yet they were often denied recognition, subjected to additional layers of trauma, and excluded from the benefits of victory. Understanding these gendered dynamics is essential for creating a more equitable and inclusive historical narrative. It also calls for a

reevaluation of how post-conflict societies honor contributions to national struggles and how they address lingering injustices in gender representation and rights.

4.3.4 What Strategies Can Be Implemented to Ensure the Effective Preservation and Distribution of Women's Liberation Heritage?

The participants' responses to this question highlight a growing recognition of the need to preserve and promote the contributions of women in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, which have historically been marginalized or overshadowed by dominant male narratives. The strategies suggested by respondents particularly war veterans, historians, and museum curators reflect both practical needs and deeper calls for inclusivity, equity, and education in heritage preservation.

One of the most frequently mentioned strategies was the documentation and archiving of women's stories. Several war veterans and historians emphasized the urgent need to record oral histories from surviving female fighters and supporters, particularly those who operated in rural areas or in auxiliary roles such as nursing, cooking, or intelligence gathering. These women's contributions, though often informal, were indispensable to the success of the struggle. Without a deliberate effort to document their voices, this valuable historical knowledge is at risk of being lost. Respondents suggested using audio and video interviews, as well as written memoirs, to ensure this information is preserved for future generations.

Another recurring strategy was curriculum integration. Museum curators and educators advocated for the inclusion of women's roles in the liberation struggle in school syllabi and university programs. This would help shape a more balanced and accurate historical consciousness among young people. It was noted that current education materials tend to focus heavily on male military leaders, with women mentioned only in passing. By incorporating women's experiences into mainstream history education, a more inclusive national narrative can be built.

Participants also highlighted the importance of community engagement and local memory projects. Respondents suggested that local museums, schools, and community centers organize events such as heritage days, storytelling festivals, and exhibitions focused specifically on women's contributions. These grassroots initiatives would not only help preserve heritage but also give communities a sense of ownership over their history. War veterans and youth respondents

agreed that intergenerational dialogue in which older women share their stories with younger strengthen both historical understanding and cultural identity.

Use of digital platforms and media emerged as another key strategy, especially among younger respondents. They emphasized that digital tools such as social media, podcasts, and documentary films can be powerful avenues for sharing women's liberation histories with broader audiences, both locally and internationally. This strategy was also seen as a way to connect youth with heritage, using media formats they are already familiar with. Museum curators supported this idea, noting that digitizing existing archives and developing mobile exhibitions could vastly improve accessibility.

Participants further stressed the importance of policy and institutional support. Respondents argued that the government and relevant cultural institutions must develop clear policies that mandate gender inclusivity in heritage programming and funding. This includes supporting research grants, scholarships, and museum projects that focus on women's liberation heritage. Without such institutional commitment, many grassroots initiatives would struggle to sustain themselves. One museum curator pointed out that even national commemorations, like Heroes Day, rarely highlight women's roles an imbalance that should be addressed through more inclusive planning and representation.

Lastly, public recognition and commemoration were seen as essential. Respondents recommended building monuments, naming streets or buildings after female liberation fighters, and hosting annual remembrance events dedicated to their sacrifices. These symbolic acts would affirm the value of women's contributions and help embed them in the collective national memory.

In summary the preservation and distribution of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe require a multi-pronged approach that combines documentation, education, community engagement, digital innovation, institutional backing, and public recognition. Implementing these strategies can ensure that the legacy of female fighters and supporters is not only preserved but also celebrated as a central pillar of Zimbabwe's liberation history.

4.4. Chapter summary

Chapter 4 has illuminated the pivotal roles that women played in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, highlighting their contributions across various domains, including combat, intelligence, healthcare, education, political activism, cultural expression, and post-war governance. The narratives presented underscore the necessity of preserving and disseminating these histories to ensure that the multifaceted contributions of women are acknowledged and celebrated.

The strategies discussed for preserving and promoting women's liberation heritage range from institutional documentation and community engagement to educational integration and international collaboration offer a comprehensive approach to safeguarding this invaluable history. Implementing these strategies requires a concerted effort from government bodies, educational institutions, civil society, and international partners. Such collaborative endeavors will ensure that the stories of women who contributed to Zimbabwe's liberation are not only preserved but also serve as a source of inspiration and empowerment for future generations.

The preservation and dissemination of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe are not merely acts of historical remembrance but are integral to the ongoing pursuit of gender equality and social justice. By honouring and sharing these narratives, Zimbabwe reaffirms its commitment to recognizing the contributions of all its citizens, ensuring that the legacies of those who fought for freedom and dignity continue to inspire and take the nation forward.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on data presentation and data analysis based on collected data during data collection process and the data was analyzed. This concluding chapter puts together the study's findings, interpreting their relevance within the broader framework of Zimbabwe's liberation history and gender discussions of the time. It revisited the research aims and questions, explored the significance of the results, and provided recommendations for future research and policy initiatives. The goal was to enhance the understanding of women's roles in Zimbabwe's journey to independence.

The research focused on documenting and analyzing the various roles women assumed during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, challenging dominant historical narratives that had often overlooked these contributions, and promoting gender equality by emphasizing women's leadership and agency. Through qualitative analysis of historical documents, personal accounts, and existing literature, the study uncovered the multifaceted participation of women as fighters, strategists, caregivers, and community organizers.

The findings highlighted the importance of reexamining historical records to fully acknowledge and honor the essential roles women played in the liberation movement. This reevaluation had significant implications for efforts to advance gender equality and social justice in Zimbabwe. Recognizing women's contributions not only corrected historical omissions but also inspired present and future generations to value and follow these examples of leadership and resilience.

The sections that followed delved deeper into the interpretation of the study's findings, discussed their broader implications, and offered concrete recommendations for integrating women's liberation heritage into national narratives and policies. Additionally, it suggested directions for future research to continue uncovering and amplifying the voices and experiences of women in Zimbabwe's liberation history.

5.2. Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 laid the groundwork for the study by outlining its background, purpose, and the central problem it addresses. It defined the research objectives and questions, underlying assumptions, and the significance of the investigation. Additionally, the chapter detailed the study's scope, limitations, and delimitations, along with a definition of key terms, the structure of the dissertation, and its time frame. Collectively, these elements established a clear and focused foundation for the research.

Chapter 2 explored the often-overlooked importance of preserving the heritage of Zimbabwean women in the context of the liberation struggle. While dominant narratives have traditionally centered on male contributions, this chapter spotlighted the essential yet marginalized roles of women as fighters, organizers, ideologues, and cultural custodians. It identified significant historiographical gaps and emphasized the need to document women's stories to ensure their inclusion in the national memory. The discussion was anchored in local and global theoretical frameworks, including feminist, postcolonial, memory, and cultural heritage theories, drawing on thinkers such as Judith Butler, bell hooks, Maurice Halbwachs, and Frantz Fanon. The chapter ultimately framed the preservation of women's liberation heritage as both an act of historical justice and a process of decolonization.

Chapter 3 detailed the research methodology used to investigate the preservation of Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage. A qualitative approach was adopted to capture rich, personal narratives and insights from individuals with firsthand experience. The study utilized purposive sampling and collected data through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Both primary and secondary sources were analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and themes. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were rigorously followed, and measures such as triangulation and member checking ensured the credibility and reliability of the findings.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the research, emphasizing the diverse roles women played in Zimbabwe's liberation ranging from combat and intelligence to education, healthcare, activism, and post-war leadership. These narratives underscored the need to document and honor women's multifaceted contributions. The chapter reviewed various strategies for heritage preservation, including institutional documentation, education, community involvement, and global

collaboration. It stressed the importance of coordinated efforts by the government, civil society, and international partners. The preservation of these histories was framed as essential not only for remembrance but also for advancing gender equity and national identity.

5.3. Conclusion of the findings

This study explored the vital yet often overlooked roles of women in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, aiming to challenge dominant historical accounts that have typically centered on male experiences. Drawing from qualitative data oral histories, archival records, and literature the research revealed the multifaceted involvement of women as fighters, organizers, caregivers, and mobilizers within their communities. The findings highlight the urgent need to revise national narratives to fully recognize women's contributions. Scholars like Teresa Barnes (1999) emphasize the importance of women's lived experiences in reconstructing history, while Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011) underscores the decolonization of memory to include excluded voices. These perspectives validate the study's call for inclusive historiography that acknowledges women's agency in shaping the liberation movement. Furthermore, restoring women's place in history contributes meaningfully to present-day efforts for gender justice and equality. As Bell Hooks (2000) argues, amplifying marginalized voices fosters empowerment, and Judith Butler (1990) notes that disrupting traditional gender roles can reshape social norms. Preserving women's liberation heritage is therefore not only about historical justice but also about inspiring future generations to value female leadership and resilience. In line with Achille Mbembe's (2002) reflections on postcolonial identity, this research affirms that safeguarding women's historical contributions strengthens a more inclusive and representative national consciousness.

5.4. Recommendations

Safeguarding the legacy of Zimbabwean women who participated in the liberation struggle is essential to moving their contributions from the margins of history into the national spotlight. For many years, women's involvement as fighters, informants, caregivers, and supporters has been overlooked in dominant historical accounts that largely focus on male figures. This exclusion has resulted in an incomplete national narrative. To address this, a variety of inclusive and strategic efforts are needed to ensure women's roles are acknowledged, preserved, and valued.

A primary recommendation is the collection and preservation of women's life stories. Historians, war veterans, and heritage experts stressed the need to document the memories of surviving female

participants, especially those whose roles were informal or community-based. Recording these stories through interviews, memoirs, and multimedia formats is critical to preventing this history from being lost with time.

Another key strategy involves updating the educational system to include women's experiences in the liberation war. Current curricula often give minimal attention to female figures. By incorporating their stories into textbooks and classroom discussions, a more comprehensive and gender-balanced view of Zimbabwe's history can be developed.

Community-based initiatives were also emphasized. Respondents proposed organizing storytelling events, exhibitions, and heritage days focused on women's contributions. Such programs not only preserve history at the grassroots level but also foster dialogue between generations, particularly when older women pass down their experiences to youth.

The use of digital technology was another important point, especially for younger respondents. They suggested using platforms like social media, podcasts, and online documentaries to share women's liberation stories with broader audiences. Heritage professionals supported this idea, noting that digital archives and mobile exhibits could improve public access and engagement.

Long-term success also depends on institutional support and national policy. Government and cultural organizations need to commit to including women's heritage in official programs and allocating funding to support related projects. Participants observed that commemorative events like Heroes Day often neglect women's roles a gap that should be filled through more inclusive planning and representation.

Finally, symbolic recognition through statues, memorials, or naming public spaces after female liberation heroes was seen as vital. These acts would publicly affirm the value of women's contributions and help embed them in the nation's collective memory.

In conclusion, preserving Zimbabwe's women's liberation heritage required a diverse and collaborative approach one that combines storytelling, education, community engagement, digital innovation, policy support, and public recognition. These steps helped to ensure that women's stories became an integral part of the country's liberation history and its future cultural identity.

5.5. Areas for Further Research on Zimbabwe's Women Liberation Heritage

While substantial progress had been made in documenting and celebrating the contributions of women to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, several critical areas remained underexplored. Addressing these gaps could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of women's roles and experiences during and after the liberation war.

There was a need for extensive oral history projects that captured the personal stories of female ex-combatants, caregivers, and supporters. These narratives could have offered insights into the lived experiences of women during the liberation struggle, shedding light on their motivations, challenges, and contributions. Such projects could also have served as a means of preserving cultural heritage and fostering intergenerational dialogue.

Research into the post-independence experiences of female veterans is crucial. Studies could have explored how societal expectations, political structures, and economic opportunities influenced their reintegration into civilian life. This included examining issues such as access to healthcare, education, and employment, as well as the persistence of gender-based violence and discrimination.

An analysis of how women had been represented in historical accounts of the liberation struggle was essential. This included examining the narratives constructed by political parties, media, and academic institutions, and how these representations shaped public perceptions of women's roles in the struggle. Such research could also have investigated the implications of these representations for gender equality in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Investigating the role of cultural expressions, such as music, dance, and literature, in preserving women's experiences during the liberation struggle was important. These cultural forms could have served as powerful tools for memory and identity, and research could have explored how they were used to challenge patriarchal narratives and promote gender equality.

Comparative research between Zimbabwe and other Southern African countries could have provided valuable insights into the shared and divergent experiences of women in liberation struggles. Such studies could have highlighted regional patterns and unique national contexts, contributing to a broader understanding of women's roles in African liberation movements.

By addressing these areas, future research could have contributed to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of Zimbabwe's liberation heritage, ensuring that the voices and experiences of women were fully acknowledged and celebrated.

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Appendix

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Bindura University
of Science Education



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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE STUDIES

5 February 2025

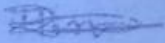
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, GETRUDE MARIMA, Student Registration Number B213686B, who is a Culture and Heritage Studies student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area/institution.

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

Yours faithfully



T.H Zimucha-Sagiya (Mrs)
Acting Chairperson

1

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS
BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
05 FEB 2025
P. BAG 1020
BINDURA

2. Interview Guide

My name is Getrude Marima a student of Bindura university doing research on titled "From Struggle to Legacy: Safeguarding Zimbabwe's Women's Liberation Heritage, "Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As part of this research project I am exploring how the contributions of women during the liberation struggle are currently remembered, preserved, and shared and looking at their role they played during liberation struggle. This lack of visibility has implications not only for how history is told but also for how gender roles are perceived in contemporary Zimbabwe. By documenting and understanding these gaps, the research aims to examine the impact of heritage preservation on gender dynamics and national identity. I am particularly interested in your views on the current state of women's liberation heritage, its importance in shaping a more inclusive historical record, and what strategies you believe can be used to safeguard and promote it for future generations. Your insight will help inform practical recommendations for preserving these legacies meaningfully.

Confidentiality Assurance

Your privacy is a top priority in this study. All information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential. We will not collect any personal identifying information, using unique code numbers instead. Recorded interviews and notes will be securely stored and accessible only to the research team. Any published results will present aggregated data without individual identifiers. You have the right to decline any questions and can withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. Your trust is essential, and we are committed to protecting your privacy throughout the research process.

Interview Guide: From struggle to legacy: safeguarding Zimbabwe's women liberation heritage

Duration: 10 minutes

Consent Confirmation: Confirm that the participant has read and understood the consent form. ☐

Section A: Background Information

1. Can you tell me about yourself?

1.1 Age Range 20-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40-50 ☐ 50-60 ☐ 60-70 ☐

1.2 Gender _____ Male ☐ Female ☐

1.3

Occupation _____

1.4 Length of residence in the area / frequency of visits to Victoria Falls.

Section B: Perception on current state of preservation

2. What is the current state of preservation of women's liberation heritage in Zimbabwe?

2.1 How do you perceive the efforts to maintain and protect the history of women's liberation in Zimbabwe?

2.2 Are there any challenges or gaps in the preservation of women's liberation heritage that you think need to be addressed in Zimbabwe?

Section C: Women preservation impact on gender dynamics

3. How does the preservation or lack of preservation of women's liberation impact contemporary gender dynamics in Zimbabwe?

3.1 How do you think the neglect of women's contributions to the liberation struggle affects modern gender relations and perceptions in Zimbabwe?

Section D: Women contribution to liberation heritage and strategies

4. What were the significant contribution of women to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle?

4.1 Can you describe specific actions or sacrifices made by women that played a crucial role in Zimbabwe's fight for independence?

4.2 What unique challenges did women face during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, and how did they overcome them to contribute to the movement

5. What strategies can be implemented to ensure the effective preservation and distribution of women's liberation heritage?

5.1 What measures could be taken by government bodies or institutions to safeguard better and share the history of women's involvement in Zimbabwe's liberation?

Closing Remarks

- Thank the participant for their time and insights.

This interview guide is designed to elicit rich, qualitative data while allowing participants to express their thoughts and experiences regarding preservation, contribution, current situation and strategies that can be taken