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Exploring street children's recidivism in Harare's Central Business District after forced removal and reintegration. Findings the City of Harare and Department of Social Welfare

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AUTHOR

FADZAI VHULEGOMA (B213625B)

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SUPERVISOR DR MHLANGA

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APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned faculty members attest that they have supervised the student, Fadzai Vhulengoma (with registration number B213625B) in completing their dissertation titled: "Exploring street children recidivism in Harare Central Business District after forced removal and reintegration. Findings the City of Harare and Department of Social Welfare."

…… …….

SUPERVISOR DATE

…… ……

CHAIRPERSON DATE

DECLARATION

I declare that have followed the Bindura University of Science Education guidelines and regulations for the preparations and submission. The dissertation is my original work and it has not been submitted to any other institution or university for academic evaluation. All sources of information have been acknowledged and referenced in accordance.

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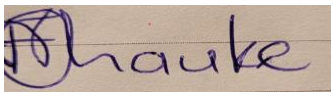

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends whose love and sacrifices have shaped me into the person I have become today. Your unwavering support is deeply appreciated.

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I give thanks and praise to the Almighty God for His abundant love, mercy, and the strength that upheld me throughout this research journey. His divine guidance and support empowered me to endure and finish this dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the issue of recidivism among street children in Harare's Central Business District following their forced relocation and reintegration, aiming to comprehend the core reasons behind their continual return to street existence despite multiple withdrawal and reintegration attempts. The ongoing reappearance of street children in the city centre, in spite of the efforts of authorities, revealed a deficiency in localized studies that examine the repetitive cycle of recidivism through the lived experiences of the children, service providers, and policymakers directly involved. Informed by Strain Theory and a qualitative research framework, this study utilized a phenomenological research method, selecting street children, government officials, and representatives from welfare organizations through purposive, snowball, and quota sampling strategies. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and direct observation within Harare's CBD. The results indicated that enforced removals were motivated more by economic and political intentions rather than genuine concern for the children's welfare, while recidivism was largely fuelled by systemic inadequacies such as economic difficulties, insufficient reintegration systems, and emotional and psychological obstacles. The research also indicated that addressing recidivism demanded a comprehensive strategy that combined economic empowerment, psychosocial assistance, and inclusive community structures. In spite of the efforts made by the Department of Social Welfare and other stakeholders, challenges remained, including restricted access to education, job opportunities, and secure living conditions. Drawing from the findings, the study suggested incorporating vocational training into reintegration strategies, bolstering psychosocial support and trauma counselling, improving family reunification programs, creating community-based mentorship initiatives, and coordinating multi-stakeholder reintegration frameworks. The insights gained from the study held significance for policy and practice, underscoring the necessity for a more holistic and sustainable approach to confronting streetism in Harare.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The effort of this research is to examine street children's recidivism in Harare's Central Business District after forced removal. The mainstay of this chapter is to present the background to the research, the statement of the problem, the research objectives and the significance of the research.

1.1 Background to the Study

In 2020, UNICEF estimated that throughout the world the number of street children is around 100 million. Although it is a global phenomenon, it is now a growing problem in most African cities and towns (Mhlanga, 2021). Studies show that Zimbabwe is not an exception. In 2020, a study by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency showed that there were 150,000 street children in Zimbabwe, with a significant proportion residing in Harare's Central Business District (CBD).

Many factors have been attributed to the surge in the number of street children. Manwa (2024) notes that family disintegration, abuse, and neglect in Zimbabwe push children onto the streets, where they often face further exploitation and marginalization. The dearth of the extended family is echoed by Chinyangarara et al. (2005), who argue that traditional African value of communal responsibility for child upbringing has weakened. They argue that this community's failure to protect its children is continually contributing to street youth.

However, Chowdhury et al (2017) and Mhlanga (2021) consider poverty to be the major factor that drives children away from homes. This explanation is echoed by MacDonald (2008) who argues that many street children perceive the street as a more lucrative environment compared to their homes, which are often characterized by economic instability (emphasis). These sentiments run contrary to those of Machingura, (2018) who points out that in Zimbabwe, direct and structural violence that have characterized society since the country gained independence in 1980 have contributed to street children. The author argues that the persistence of political and socio-economic instability has forced families to live in dire conditions which in turn have forced children to struggle for survival.

Bandura (1977) point out to peer influence and social networks, arguing that they contribute to street children. This observation is echoed by MacDonald (2008) who explains that many children form strong bonds with their peers, which can lead to a subculture that normalizes

street life. In contrast Chinyangarara et al. (2005) point out to the weakening of the traditional African value of communal responsibility for child upbringing, arguing that this cultural shift has increased vulnerability for children in urban setting whilst also failing to protect them.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The phenomenon of street children in urban environments, is often viewed as a nuisance and deemed beyond redemption (Matsvetu, 1993). However, against the backdrop of having been forcibly removed by the City of Harare, and in some cases rehabilitated and reintegrated with their families of origin and communities, recidivism, defined as the tendency to return to or going back to previous negative behaviour (Bourgois 2003) remains high in particularly in the Central Business District of Harare, Zimbabwe. Mupedziswa (2017) argues that as high as 70% of the children return to the streets within a short period after being removed. Although some of the researches on street-children have focused on this topic in the context of rehabilitation centres (see Mhlanga, 2021), there is a dearth of research on recidivism of street children in the context of forced removals by the City of Harare and the Government of Zimbabwe.

1.3 Aims of Study

The purpose of the research is to examine recidivism among street children in Harare's Central Business District after forced removals by the City of Harare and the Government between 2020 and 2024.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the accentuating circumstances behind forced removal of street children from the Central Business District of Harare between 2020-2024
2. To investigate the specific causes of recidivism by street children in Harare's Central Business District (CBD) between 202 and 2024.
3. To suggest measures to reduce recidivism by street children in Harare Central Business District

1.5 Research Questions

1. What have been the accentuating circumstances behind the forced removal of street children from the Central Business District of Harare between 2020 and 2024?
2. What have been the causes of recidivism by street children in Harare’s Central Business District (CBD)?
3. How can recidivism by street children in Harare’s Central Business District be addressed?

1.6 Significance of Study

The significance of this research extends beyond academic inquiry; it has profound implications for policy, practice, and the lives of street children in Harare. Key areas of significance include Informing Policy: Findings from this research can provide valuable insights to policymakers and social workers, enabling them to design more effective and contextually relevant interventions aimed at reducing recidivism among street children. Enhancing Rehabilitation Programs: By understanding the factors that contribute to recidivism, rehabilitation programs can be adapted to include psychological support, mentorship, and community engagement strategies that foster positive self-perceptions. This research can raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by street children, encouraging societal empathy and reducing stigma. Increased public understanding can lead to greater community support for initiatives aimed at helping these vulnerable individuals. This study will add to the existing literature on street children and recidivism, providing a foundation for future research in this area. It will highlight the need for interdisciplinary approaches that consider psychological, sociological, and cultural factors.

1.7 Scope of The Study

The study will be conducted in Harare's CBD, employing both survey research and in-depth interviews with street children, as well as focus group discussions with key stakeholders. The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

1.8.1 Recidivism

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), define recidivism as a person's relapse into criminal behaviour, often after receiving sanctions or undergoing interventions for a previous crime. It is typically measured by rearrests, reconviction, or return to incarceration within a specific follow-up period after release (National Institute of Justice, 2024). The Pew centre reports that recidivism rates can be quantified by the percentage of released prisoners who are incarcerated within a certain timeframe (Pew Centre on the States, 2011). The Urban Institute highlights that recidivism is influenced by various factors, including personal characteristics and situational contexts (Urban Institute, 2003).

1.8.2 Children

The UNCRC defines a child as any human being below the age of 18 years, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national law. This definition emphasizes the need for special

protections for individuals in this age group due to their vulnerability (UNHCHR & Rädda, 2007). This charter similarly defines a child as every human being below the age of 18 years, reinforcing the importance of recognizing children's rights across different cultural contexts (Vučković-Šahović et al., 2012). From a sociological standpoint, children are often viewed as a social grouping of humans from birth to age twenty. This perspective highlights the social construction of childhood and the varying experiences and roles of children in different societies (Vučković-Šahović et al., 2012)

Scholars argue that childhood is not merely a biological stage but a socially constructed life phase that varies historically and cross-culturally. This definition emphasizes that the experiences and expectations of children can differ significantly based on societal norms and values (Van Bueren, 1998). In developmental psychology, children are typically defined as individuals in the early stages of life, particularly focusing on the critical developmental milestones that occur from birth through adolescence. This perspective considers both biological maturation and the influence of environmental factors on a child's growth and development (Vučković-Šahović et al., 2012).

1.8.3 Street Children

UNICEF defines street children as those who live or work on the streets, often lacking stable housing and parental care. This group is typically divided into two categories, children of the street, who have no family ties and live entirely on the streets, as well as children on the street, who may return to their families but spend significant time on the streets for work or survival. Ennew, (1994) describes street children as those who spend a significant part of their time on the street, engage in economic activities, and are often marginalized from mainstream society, emphasizing their economic activities and social exclusion. Lansdown, (1995) characterizes street children as individuals who have either chosen to live on the streets or have been forced into that situation due to family breakdown, poverty, or social displacement, highlighting the agency of children as well as the structural factors contributing to their circumstances. Katz, (1997) notes that street children are often included in various forms of survival strategies, including begging, scavenging, and performing, underscoring the survival tactics employed by these children in response to their socio-economic environments.

1.8.4 Central Business District (CBD)

Hawley, (1950) defines the CBD as the point of focus of economic activity in a city, characterized by a concentration of retail, office, and service functions. This definition emphasizes the CBD's role as the primary economic engine of urban areas. Hoyt, (1939) in his

theory of urban land use, describes the CBD as a compact area in which the highest land values exist, primarily due to its accessibility and the intensity of business activities. Harris & Ullman, (1945) describe the CBD as the area of a city where the greatest concentration of commercial and business activity occurs, surrounded by residential zones, citing the CBD within the broader urban structure. Cheshire & Sheppard, (2004) denote the CBD as the core of a city, where the interplay of land use, transportation, and business activities creates a distinct urban environment. This definition emphasizes the integrative role of the CBD in urban planning and development. Sullivan, (2011) defines the CBD as the main business and commercial area of a city, characterized by high density, significant pedestrian traffic, and diverse economic functions, highlighting the social and economic vibrancy of the CBD.

1.8.5 Organisation of The Study

The study on attitudes and beliefs behind recidivism of street children in Harare's Central Business District (CBD) will be organized into several stages. The research will be conducted over a period of six months. The research will begin with an introduction of the phenomenon of recidivism, exploring the issue from a global perspective and narrowing into the Zimbabwean case. A literature review and pilot study will be conducted, where a comprehensive review of existing literature on street children's recidivism will be conducted, and a pilot study will be carried out to test the research instruments and identify any methodological issues. Data collection, where both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected from street children, parents, caregivers, law enforcement officials, and social workers through surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Data analysis, where the data will be analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including thematic analysis and descriptive statistics. Reporting and dissemination, where the findings will be presented in a comprehensive report, and recommendations will be made to stakeholders, including policymakers, practitioners, and the community.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the background to the research, giving a brief history of the phenomenon of recidivism of street children from a global perspective and then the case of Zimbabwe, subsequently developing into the statement of the problem. This was succeeded by outlining the rationale, and the significance of the research. The significance of the research was succeeded by the research questions, which were clearly outlined in perfect sync to the objectives. The next subsection covered the research hypothesis, which in turn were followed by the justification of the research. The scope and limitations of the research were then detailed

in the following sections of this chapter. The chapter then concluded by detailing the organisation of the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Chapter two is going to provide a nuanced review of existing literature on the recidivism of street children, focusing on attitudes, beliefs, and systemic factors influencing their return to the streets despite reintegration efforts. The review will combine both theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from various contexts, around developing and developed nations. The chapter will start with the conceptual framework, which will define key concepts relevant to the study. This will be followed by the theoretical framework, which will outline the guiding theories that explain recidivism in this context and an overview of street children's recidivism will be also presented. Next, the literature review will critically examine past research in relation to each research objective, ensuring a direct engagement with issues such as forced removal, causes of recidivism, and potential interventions. The chapter will also identify research knowledge gaps, highlighting areas that require further investigation to enhance understanding and policy development. Finally, a summary will be presented to synthesize key insights from the reviewed literature.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a structured approach utilized to define important ideas and their relationships within a research, providing a foundation for understanding how variables interact in a given context (Ravitch and Riggan, 2021). The conceptual framework of this research gives a structured lens through which the issue of street children's recidivism in Harare's Central Business District (CBD) can be understood. It outlines the interconnected variables that shape their experiences, focusing on how forced removal, reintegration efforts, and social, economic, and institutional factors contribute to their repeated return to the streets as illustrated in Fig 2.1. Pointing out the problem through multiple dimensions, this research can clarify the relationships between interventions, individual responses, and systemic influences. According to Chimdessa (2022), street children's recidivism is not a singular issue but a complex cycle influenced by both push and pull factors. The push factors involve state-led efforts to remove children from the streets and integrate them into formal care systems, however, these efforts often lack the necessary support structures to ensure long-term success such as money and shelter (Chimdessa, 2022). On the other hand, the pull factors such as economic hardships, social networks on the street, and psychological influences, can draw children back to their previous lifestyles, reinforcing the cycle of recidivism (Chimdessa, 2022). To systematically examine this cycle, the conceptual framework is organized into distinct but interrelated

components, each reflecting a key element that affects street children's interactions with urban policies and social welfare systems.

2.1.1 Forced Removal of Street Children

Lwandiko (2023) posits that, forced removal refers to state-led interventions aimed at clearing street children from the CBD. These interventions are often driven by concerns about urban order, public safety, and economic interests, as city authorities and businesses view street presence as disruptive (UNICEF, 2020). In most cases, removal efforts include law enforcement operations, institutional relocations, and short-term rehabilitation programs designed to take children off the streets. However, these interventions tend to be reactionary rather than preventative, addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes (Julien, 2024). Many children end up displaced rather than reintegrated, sometimes moving to less visible urban spaces or returning to the streets shortly after removal. Without addressing these underlying vulnerabilities, removal campaigns inadvertently reinforce cycles of homelessness rather than eliminating them.

2.1.2 Reintegration Efforts and Challenges

According to Zewude et al. (2023), reintegration is a key component of interventions designed to transition street children into structured environments such as foster care, children homes, rehabilitation centers, or family reunification programs. The goal is to provide alternatives to street life through education, psychosocial support, and vocational training, ensuring that children remain in stable conditions instead of returning to the streets. Despite these intentions, reintegration faces major challenges. Many children struggle with social stigmatization, as reintegration efforts often fail to address societal attitudes that marginalize them (Zewude et al., 2023). Institutional care may also be underfunded and overstretched, leading to inadequate follow-up and supervision. Furthermore, some children experience rejection from families that lack the financial or emotional capacity to provide proper care (Julien, 2024). Without sustained support mechanisms, reintegration efforts can be short-lived, with children eventually drifting back to street life due to isolation, instability, or a lack of long-term economic prospects.

2.1.3 Causes of Recidivism among Street Children

Recidivism refers to the tendency of street children to return to urban centers despite interventions aimed at reintegration (MacDonald, 2008). Several interrelated factors contribute to this phenomenon. Economic survival plays a significant role, as many street children rely on informal income sources such as begging, vending, or scavenging (Alem and Laha, 2021). Reintegration programs often fail to provide viable economic alternatives, making the return

to street life a rational choice for survival. Moreover, social dynamics must be considered. Oino (2013) articulated that, the street provides a unique social network, offering relationships and peer support that institutions often fail to replicate. For children accustomed to navigating life independently, the transition to restrictive environments can feel isolating, making the streets a more attractive option. Institutional shortcomings also play a part in perpetuating recidivism. Many welfare systems adopt a one-size-fits-all approach, failing to tailor interventions to the specific needs of each child (Ngaku, 2015). Crombach et al. (2014) further argued that, psychological factors further worsen the issue, with many children struggling with trauma, abuse, and neglect, making structured environments difficult to adapt to. The lack of specialized mental health support means children may revert to familiar coping mechanisms, reinforcing the cycle of street life.

2.1.4 Institutional and Policy Responses

Government institutions such as the City of Harare and the Department of Social Welfare play a fundamental role in shaping street child interventions (Kudenga et al., 2024). However, current policies tend to prioritize removal over long-term prevention, resulting in short-lived solutions that do not address systemic causes (Kudenga et al., 2024). Law enforcement-led approaches may reduce visibility temporarily, but without comprehensive rehabilitation strategies, they fail to secure lasting impact. A more effective approach would involve integrated policy measures that incorporate psychosocial, educational, and economic support (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). Community-based interventions could empower families and neighborhoods to play active roles in rehabilitation, ensuring children find stability beyond institutional programs (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017).

2.1.5 Strategies to Reduce Recidivism

Reducing recidivism requires interventions that go beyond forced removal and short-term welfare programs. Economic empowerment initiatives, such as vocational training and entrepreneurship support, can help street children develop sustainable livelihoods (Kobayashi, 2004 and World Bank, 2022). Social inclusion programs should be designed to shift societal perceptions, fostering acceptance and integration rather than marginalization (Mwamnyasi, 2024). Policy improvements should focus on coordinated, multi-agency approaches, ensuring that welfare programs, educational institutions, and community support structures work together to provide consistent care (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). Additionally, long-term mentorship and follow-up mechanisms could significantly improve reintegration success, ensuring that children receive sustained support even after initial interventions

(Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). A successful framework must prioritize sustainability and scalability, recognizing that reducing recidivism involves long-term engagement rather than short-term displacement strategies. Policymakers must address systemic drivers holistically rather than treating street children as isolated cases.

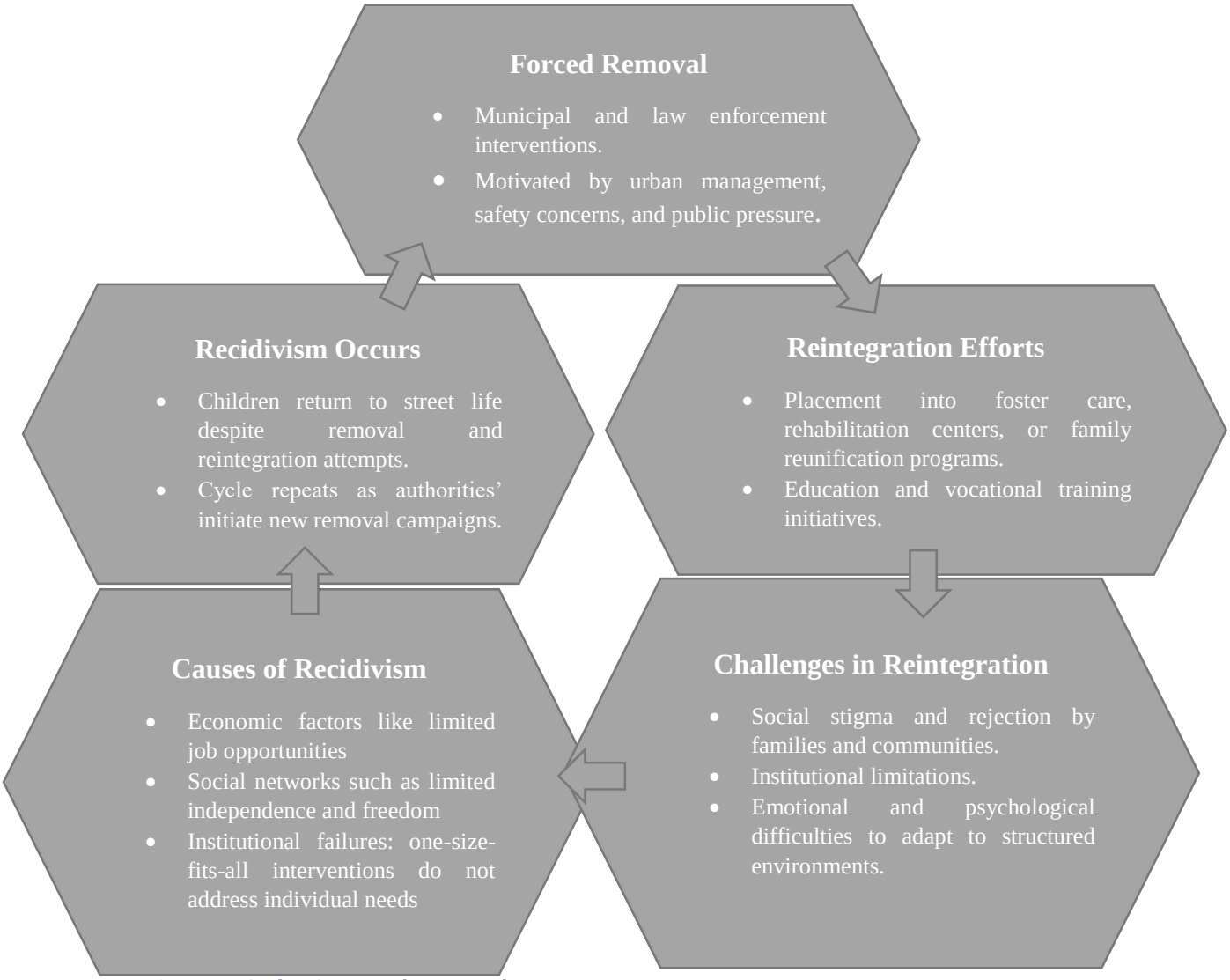

Figure 2.1. Study's Conceptual Framework

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the laying ground for a better understanding of the phenomenon of street children's recidivism in Harare's Central Business District (CBD). Exploring many theories which are relevant to this study, may help to identify the most suitable theoretical lens through which to analyze the underlying causes and recurring patterns of forced removal and reintegration failure. This section discusses multiple theories that offer insights into the issue, highlighting their core principles and relevance to the research. Following this discussion, one theory will be selected as the primary framework for the research and will be justified through its strengths, limitations, and applicability.

2.2.1 Theories for Understanding Recidivism among Street Children

Several theories provide useful perspectives on why street children return to urban spaces despite intervention efforts. These theories examine the structural and behavioral elements influencing recidivism, offering different explanations for why removal and reintegration programs struggle to achieve lasting success.

One notable theory is Strain Theory, which proposes that entities take part in unusual behavior when they experience a disconnection between societal goals and their ability to achieve them through legitimate ways (Merton, 1938). It was developed by Robert Merton in 1968, this theory posits that street children may resort to alternative survival mechanisms, such as returning to the streets, when conventional pathways like education or formal employment are inaccessible (Merton, 1938). In this context, recidivism can be understood as a response to systemic socioeconomic exclusion.

Another fundamental theory is the Social Disorganization Theory, which examines how weak institutional structures, unstable family environments, and fragmented communities contribute to recurring deviant behaviors (Bellair, 2017). This theory argues that areas with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and weak social support systems struggle to sustain reintegration efforts, making street life an ongoing reality for children (Shaw and McKay, 1942). In Harare, failures in urban policy and limited community-based interventions may explain why street children continually return to the CBD despite removal efforts.

Another key theory is the Attachment Theory, which offers valuable insight, particularly in understanding how psychological and social connections influence children's behavior (Simpson et al., 2021). It was developed by John Bowlby in 1969. This theory emphasizes the role of early emotional bonds in shaping individuals' ability to form stable relationships (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby (1969) further explained that, many street children experience abandonment, neglect, or trauma, leading to difficulties in forming trust-based connections with reintegration programs. The absence of secure attachments may drive them back to the familiar social networks of street life.

2.2.2 Strain Theory

Among the theories discussed, this study will utilize the Strain Theory as it offers the most comprehensive framework for analyzing street children's recidivism in Harare's CBD. This theory was originally developed by Robert Merton in 1968, explains how individuals resort to alternative behaviors when socially approved means of achieving success are blocked (Merton, 1938). Strain Theory posits that when people experience structural obstacles to achieve societal

expectations such as economic stability, education, or secure housing, they may engage in adaptive behaviors outside conventional norms (Merton, 1938). For street children, the inability to access formal education or stable employment creates strain, leading them to develop alternative survival strategies that often include returning to street life. The theory explains recidivism as a reaction to institutional failures, where children do not perceive viable alternatives to sustain their well-being.

There are many studies that have applied Strain Theory to analyze homelessness, juvenile delinquency, and social exclusion. Research on urban youth populations in developing countries has demonstrated that economic hardships and social barriers significantly contribute to cycles of recidivism. For example, studies on homeless youth in South Africa and other world regions have shown that institutional interventions often fail to address the underlying structural causes of homelessness, reinforcing the cycle of street life (Berckmans et al., 2012). Similar findings have emerged in studies on reintegration programs in Zimbabwe, where financial instability and limited access to education have led to repeated instances of street return among children (Medrala, 2025).

This theory has major strengths, its ability to link economic and social structural barriers to behavioral adaptation, for instance, released prisoners will also end up in prisons again due to family rejections and limited economic opportunities (Liu et al., 2021). This makes it particularly useful for studying street children's recidivism, as it provides a broad perspective on both macro-level institutional failures and micro-level survival behaviors. Additionally, the theory allows for policy-based discussions on how systemic changes can improve reintegration outcomes (Thomas, 2022). However, one limitation of Strain Theory is that it focuses primarily on structural constraints and may overlook individual psychological factors, such as trauma, emotional resilience, and personal decision-making (Cheng and Tsui, 1992). While economic exclusion is central to understanding recidivism, psychological factors such as attachment disruptions and survival instincts, also play a crucial role.

Besides its limitations, Strain Theory is the most suitable framework for this study because it emphasizes systemic barriers that contribute to street children's recidivism. While psychological and social dynamics are significant, the core issue driving recidivism is economic and institutional exclusion. Policies targeting reintegration must address financial sustainability, social mobility, and equitable opportunities, issues that are directly analyzed within Strain Theory. Furthermore, integrating complementary perspectives, such as insights

from Attachment Theory and Social Disorganization Theory, can help mitigate the limitations of Strain Theory. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of recidivism, this study can provide a holistic approach that considers both structural constraints and individual behaviors in addressing street children's return to urban spaces.

2.3 Street Children's Recidivism: An Overview

Street children's recidivism refers to the repeated return of children to street life despite efforts to remove and reintegrate them into stable environments (Miriti, 2015). Miriti (2015) further explained that, this cycle of homelessness is often driven by deep-rooted economic, social, and psychological factors that make reintegration challenging. While interventions such as forced removals and institutional rehabilitation programs aim to transition children into structured living conditions, the failure to address underlying causes often leads them back to the streets (Coren et al., 2016). One of the most persistent causes of recidivism is economic survival. Many street children rely on informal work such as vending, scavenging, or begging, which provides them with immediate financial independence (Gebretsadik, 2017). Reintegration programs frequently overlook the need for sustainable economic opportunities, leaving children with little choice but to return to urban spaces where they can generate income.

Social networks within street communities also play a fundamental role in recidivism. Over time, children form strong peer bonds and survival strategies that make street life familiar and, in some cases, preferable to institutional environments (Chepngetich, 2018 and Fikre, 2016). Reintegration efforts often fail to replicate these support systems, leading to isolation and eventual return to the streets. Additionally, many street children face family rejection or neglect, making reunification efforts difficult (Kudenga et al., 2024). Without strong familial ties, institutional care becomes their only alternative, and if these environments lack adequate psychological support or individualized care, recidivism rates remain high. Another key driver of recidivism is institutional limitations. According to Chimdessa (2022), many social welfare programs are underfunded, overcrowded, or inadequately structured, meaning children do not receive the specialized support they need to remain integrated. Institutional neglect, abuse, or strict regulatory environments within care facilities can push children back to the streets, where they experience greater autonomy and self-governance (Chimdessa, 2022).

Psychological factors further complicate reintegration efforts. Cenat et al. (2018) posits that, many street children experience trauma, abuse, and abandonment, making structured environments difficult to adapt to. Without comprehensive mental health support, their coping

mechanisms often drive them toward familiar survival strategies, reinforcing their dependence on street life. Street children's recidivism is not simply an issue of homelessness, it reflects systemic failures in urban policy, child welfare programs, and broader socio-economic structures (Zewedu et al., 2024). Addressing the cycle requires more than periodic removal efforts. But it demands multi-dimensional interventions that prioritize economic sustainability, psychological resilience, social support systems, and long-term monitoring.

2.4 Case Studies and Comparative Research on Street Children's Recidivism

This section examines case studies and comparative research related to street children's recidivism and addressing each research objective systematically. The discussion incorporates global, regional, and local perspectives to offer a better understanding of the factors influencing forced removal, the causes of recidivism, and strategies for sustainable intervention. Through these analyses, trends, policy effectiveness, and intervention gaps are identified to support the development of more effective approaches in the Harare CBD context.

2.4.1 Circumstances behind forced removal of street children from the Central Business District

De Benitez (2011) articulates that, the issue of street children has been managed through various municipal interventions across the world, often including removal campaigns justified as necessary for maintaining urban order and safety. In Lima, Peru, forced removals are frequently implemented to align with urban renewal projects, especially in cities preparing for global events such as the Olympics or economic summits (Aufseeser, 2014). Research indicates that these campaigns tend to focus on immediate displacement rather than long-term social rehabilitation. Studies show that in Rio de Janeiro and New Delhi, the forced removal of street children often results in hidden homelessness, where children migrate to less visible urban areas rather than achieving genuine integration (Lamba, 2022). Additionally, reports highlight cases of violent removal tactics, where law enforcement teams conduct operations that expose children to physical and emotional distress. Scholars have criticized such approaches for failing to address systemic drivers such as family breakdown, lack of access to education, and economic vulnerability.

In sub-Saharan Africa, street children are frequently displaced from urban areas under various government campaigns labeled as urban clean-up projects. In Tanzania, studies show that local authorities frame removal efforts as necessary for public safety, often linking the presence of street children to rising crime rates (Berckmans et al., 2012). However, research has challenged these assumptions, arguing that criminalizing street survival tactics such as informal vending

only exacerbates social marginalization (Aufseeser, 2014). Furthermore, studies from indicated that forced removal efforts often lack follow-up support mechanisms, leaving children vulnerable to repeat homelessness (Ojo, 2021). According to Makau Mwende (2023), without economic alternatives or structured reintegration efforts, children are either relocated to underfunded shelters or abandoned altogether, leading to further cycles of street dependence. Comparisons between African cities reveal that coercive removal without social support consistently leads to higher recidivism rates, highlighting the need for more comprehensive welfare strategies (Zewude et al., 2023).

In Zimbabwe, particularly in Harare's CBD, forced removal of street children has intensified between 2020 and2024 under various municipal efforts. Reports indicate that these operations often coincide with urban beautification programs, festival preparations, or economic policies designed to attract investors (Ndlovu and Tigere, 2022). However, local studies have criticized the short-term nature of these interventions, Medrala (2025) argued that, the absence of structured reintegration programs undermines their effectiveness. Kudenga et al. (2024) emphasized that, Zimbabwean removal campaigns tend to focus on displacement rather than rehabilitation, with children frequently migrating to peripheral urban locations or returning shortly after their removal. Additionally, economic instability and weak family support networks contribute to the failure of reintegration, as children lack viable options beyond street survival (Kudenga et al., 2024). Mazikana (2019) suggested that, more systematic engagement with community structures like educating parents on how to treat these children and engage different stakeholders could improve intervention outcomes, reducing the reliance on purely law-enforcement-led approaches.

2.4.2 Causes of recidivism by street children in Central Business District (CBD) between 2020 and 2024.

Several researches across the globe has examined why street children return to urban spaces besides intervention programs. In China, economic survival has been identified as a primary driver of recidivism, with studies showing that street children rely on informal street economies to sustain their livelihoods (Yu et al., 2019). Musabyimana (2018) mentioned that, reintegration efforts that fail to offer stable employment alternatives often lead to unsuccessful rehabilitation, forcing children back into street life. In American studies, psychological and social dimensions have been emphasized, for example, in Latin America highlights how street communities provide social bonds and peer networks, creating emotional dependency on informal urban spaces (Aptekar and Stoecklin, 2014).

African studies on street children's recidivism focus on structural inequalities and policy inadequacies. In countries like Mozambique, weak education and vocational training access as a primary factor pushing children back to the streets (Salokangas, 2010). Many programs lack individualized approaches, treating all children uniformly without addressing personal needs. Additionally, analyses in Ethiopia reveal that institutional neglect and underfunded welfare programs contribute to high recidivism rates (Zewele et al., 2024 and Chimdessa, 2022). Studies have also examined the role of urban migration in influencing street child populations (Taiwo, 2023). Without structured interventions, these patterns continue, exacerbating urban homelessness trends.

Zimbabwean literature highlights multiple drivers of recidivism among street children in Harare's CBD, including economic instability, family disintegration, and institutional shortcomings (Medrala, 2025). Mella (2012) indicated that, removal campaigns lack long-term economic sustainability, leaving children with no viable options beyond returning to informal street economies such as vending, scavenging, or begging. Additionally, Gunhidzirai and Tanga (2020) argued that, institutional care models fail to address psychological well-being, as children often experience abuse or neglect within welfare systems. Therefore, the combination of social rejection, lack of individualized support, and absence of structured follow-ups contributes significantly to repeated homelessness cycles.

2.4.3 Measures to reduce recidivism by street children in Central Business District.

International research underscores the effectiveness of holistic intervention models in tackling recidivism. Coren et al. (2013), highlighted that, in Canada, they combined economic empowerment, education, and mental health services which leads to higher rehabilitation success rates. Suyuti et al. (2024) highlighted that, mentorship and peer-based programs improve reintegration outcomes by fostering trust and long-term engagement. For example, the Islamic Educational interventions on improving well-being and integration of the street children. This method or program included, community-centered, religious-based education appears which are vital in addressing the unique challenges faced by street children (Suyuti et al., 2024). Such initiatives can promote sustained methods to reduce street children's recidivism as they work on improving their socio-economic activities and support the overall integration of street children into society.

Studies in Nigeria showcased community-based reintegration approaches, where children are rehabilitated within local family structures rather than institutionalized settings (Oladiti, 2015). Nyambane (2017) emphasized that, partnership of non-governmental organizations with the

government is also a key strategy for preventing recidivism. For example, the Good Samaritan Children's Home and Rehabilitation Centre helped Kenya to rehabilitate street children. In contrast, countries such as Kenya still struggle with policy inconsistencies that hinder effective rehabilitation efforts (Chepngetich, 2018).

According to Mizeck (2012), multi-sectorial collaboration that involve government agencies, NGOs, and local communities in designing reintegration strategies has greater impacts as it reduces recidivism of street children. Mhizha et al. (2021) suggested that, resilience-based interventions such as structured vocational training programs, educational support, and psychosocial services could significantly reduce recidivism rates. Additionally, there the need to fund institutions that take in street children such as Department of Social Development, Ministry of Women Affairs, and other Children's Homes to preventing repeat cycles of homelessness.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

Besides several researches on street children's recidivism, several gaps remain, particularly in understanding the long-term effects of forced removal, the lack of Zimbabwe-specific studies, and the insufficient exploration of psychological factors influencing recidivism. Most existing studies focus on the immediate consequences of forced removal but fail to assess how these interventions shape children's survival strategies and reintegration trajectories over time. Without long-term assessments, policies risk becoming reactive rather than sustainable. Additionally, while global and regional perspectives offer valuable insights, there is limited localized research addressing Zimbabwe's distinct socio-economic, legal, and institutional dynamics that affect street children's experiences. This gap makes it difficult to formulate interventions that are truly tailored to the realities of Harare's urban landscape. Furthermore, while studies highlight economic and social drivers of recidivism, they often overlook critical psychological dimensions, such as trauma, coping mechanisms, and attachment disruptions that influence children's decisions to return to the streets. Understanding the interplay between psychological resilience and institutional failures could significantly improve reintegration efforts. Addressing these gaps through longitudinal, context-specific, and multidisciplinary research is essential for developing more effective and sustainable solutions to street children's recidivism in Harare.

2.6 Summary

The chapter has explored the literature that can help to understand street children's recidivism. The chapter explained the conceptual framework which provided key elements of the street children's return to the urban streets. The theoretical framework was also explored, it examined various theories that are relevant to the research and the Strain Theory was selected as a suitable theory for the rresearch. Literature was reviewed basing on the objectives of the study using the funnel approach (from global perspective to local context) and the chapter ended with identification of the gaps in the reviewed literature. This chapter created a better foundation for the chapter 3 which is the methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature on the topic that examines the recidivism of street children. Chapter 3 will focus on the research methodology. It starts by describing the study area. This chapter will introduce the methods and materials that will be used in undertaking this research. The research design will be outlined succeeding the introduction of the chapter, clearly outlining how data will be gathered, collated and analysed to realise the causes, nature and possible ways to enable success of dealing with recidivism of street children in Harare's CBD within the project. The materials that will be used in the study will then be listed and explained in the succeeding paragraphs of the chapter. The data collection methods and procedures, as well as the analysis procedures will then be clearly detailed in the next sections of the chapter. The chapter will conclude by giving a scope of the study, in particular the study area, before summarising the entire chapter.

3.2 Study Area

The research will be conducted in Harare's Central Business District (CBD), Zimbabwe, and an urban environment where a fundamental population of street children resides. Harare's CBD serves as a central hub for economic activity, social interactions, and institutional outreach programs, making it an ideal setting for examining the challenges street children face, their survival strategies, and the impact of intervention efforts. The area's high visibility, accessibility, and presence of NGOs and welfare organizations provide a rich context for qualitative inquiry, ensuring that insights gathered reflect real-world experiences and systemic influences affecting street children's reintegration efforts.

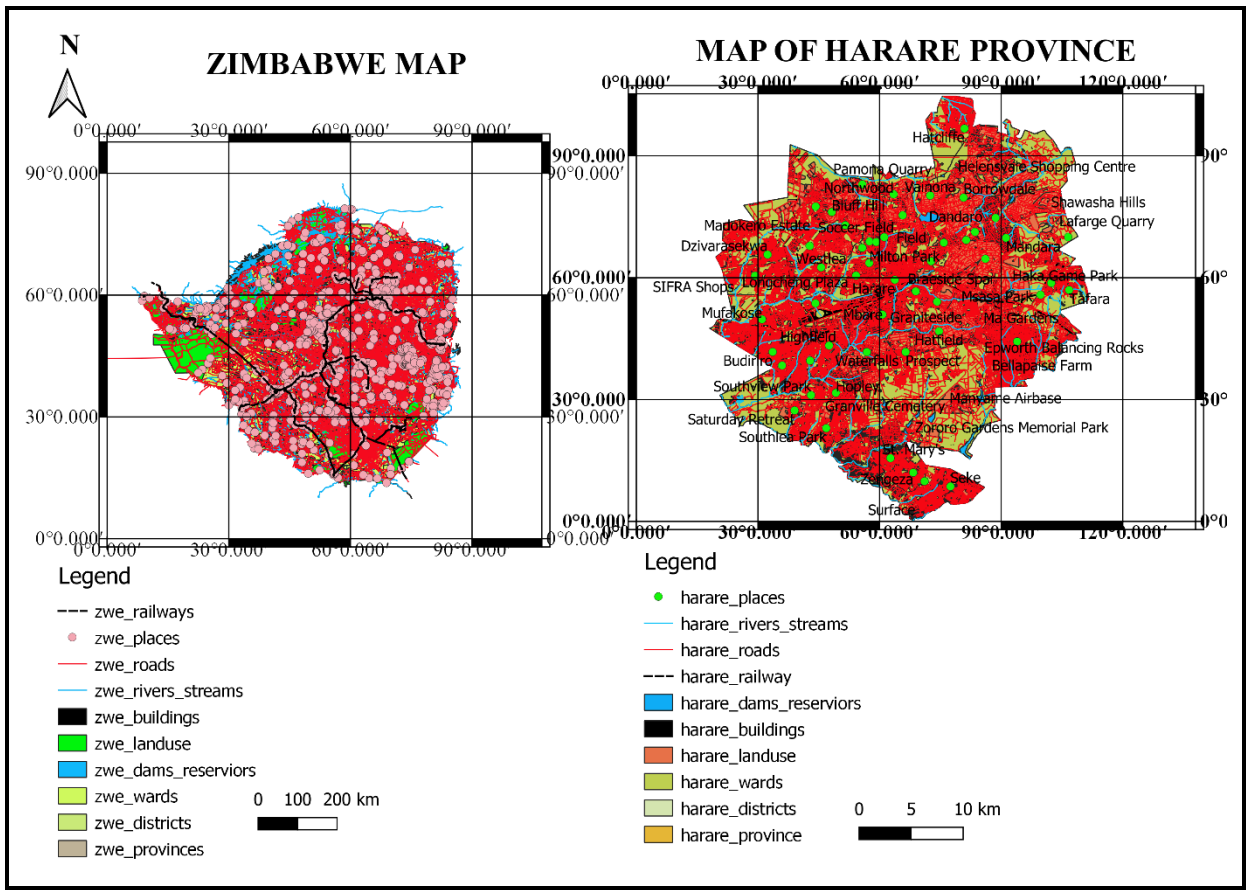

Figure 3.1 Study Area Map (Harare) (Source: Author)

3.3 Research Philosophy & Paradigm

A research philosophy can be defined as a set of beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired. For this particular study, the philosophy employed is interpretivism, as it is a philosophy that emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings and lived experiences of individuals. Since recidivism among street children is a complex social issue involving personal, social, and environmental factors, interpretivism allows for the exploration of the perspectives of the children themselves, social workers, community members, and other stakeholders. This philosophy would guide qualitative methods like interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to uncover why the children return to the streets, the challenges they face, and how they perceive their situations.

3.3.1 The Research Paradigm

The study employed the interpretivism research paradigm. According to Chimdessa (2022), engaging with street children through interviews or focus groups can reveal their perspectives, motivations, and challenges. According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), the interpretivism research paradigm emphasizes the importance of context. Furthermore, by focusing on the narratives of street children, interpretivism amplifies their voices, enabling them to share their

experiences and challenges, which can lead to more effective interventions. Interpretivist approaches are advantageous in that they allow for adaptive methodologies, enabling researchers to adjust their focus based on emerging insights during data collection (Elbardan et al., 2017).

3.4 Research Design

A research design is defined by Kothari (2009) as a comprehensive plan that outlines how a study will be conducted. A qualitative research design was chosen for this project to thoroughly explore street children's recidivism of street children in Harare's CBD. A qualitative research design is a research approach that including collecting and analysing non-numerical data, such as text, images, and observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This approach is particularly valuable in understanding complex social phenomena, such as causes of recidivism, which are difficult to quantify (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This design serves as a comprehensive plan that outlines the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the necessary information (Bell, 1995). In the context of recidivism among street children, qualitative research design can provide a deep understanding of the underlying reasons that contribute to recidivism.

3.4.1 Advantages of Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research design has numerous merits that make it an effective approach in understanding recidivism among street children. Firstly, it allows for an in-depth exploration of the research topic, enabling researchers to gain a rich understanding of the complex causes of such phenomenon as street children recidivism (Creswell, 2013). Secondly, qualitative research design allows for the use of multiple data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, and focus groups, which can provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Patton, 2002). Finally, qualitative research design is particularly useful in understanding the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups, such as street children, who may have limited access to education and healthcare (Kvale, 1996).

3.4 Sampling design and target Population

Target population is defined as the total elements from which the analyst aims to inferences that can be generalized. Silverman (2013). According to Creshel (2015) and Cassell (2020), it is a subset of the population that is of interest to the researcher. In this research, the population target includes street children, social services and the community.

3.4.1 Sample Population

The population of interest will be street children in Harare's CBD, and the sample will be drawn from a variety of sources, including street children's organizations, social services, and community-based projects.

3.4 Sampling Methods

A sampling method refers to the systematic procedure utilized to select a subset of individuals, items, or events (a sample) from a larger population for the purpose of making statistical inferences about the population. Sampling methods can be broadly categorized into probability sampling (where every member of the population has a known chance of being selected) and non-probability sampling (where selection is not based on random chance) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The two key types of sampling techniques are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, every member of the population has a known, non-zero chance of being selected. Common techniques under probability sampling are simple random sampling, systematic sampling stratified sampling, cluster sampling, and multistage sampling. In non-probability sampling, not every individual has a known or equal chance of being selected. This method is often utilized when probability sampling is not feasible. In this research non-probability sampling will be utilized, using Non-Probability Sampling techniques namely purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

According to Shamsudin (2024), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that includes deliberately selecting respondents who have specific knowledge, experience, or expertise related to the research topic. In this research, 10 officials from NGOs and other organizations that work with street children will be identified as key respondents. This approach ensures that data is collected from individuals who have direct involvement, and advocacy efforts concerning street children. Targeting such experts, the research aims to gain detailed insights into institutional interventions, challenges, and best practices in reintegration efforts.

3.6.2 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method, often employed when the target population is hard to reach (Bacher et al., 2019). It relies on existing respondents to refer to other individuals who meet the study criteria (Parker et al., 2019). In this research, 10

participants from welfare organizations who work directly with street children will be selected through referrals from initials participants. This technique is particularly useful for engaging grassroots social workers, counsellors, and outreach personnel, who may not be easily identified through formal databases but play a critical role in direct intervention efforts. Leveraging networks within welfare organizations, the study ensures that participants have real-life experience in working with street children and can offer valuable perspectives on the effectiveness of interventions.

3.6.3 Quota Sampling

Quota Sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher divides the population into exclusive subgroups (quotas) and then selects participants non-randomly within each subgroup until quotas are met (Kumar, 2025). Quota sampling will be used for the research on street children's recidivism in Harare's CBD, because the sample included multiple distinct groups inclusive of street children, City of Harare officials, NGOs, and welfare organizations. Quota sampling can be highly effective when combined with other techniques, that is utilising snowball for street children, and purposive for officials, to ensure a balanced sample is realised from all relevant groups.

3.6.4 Justification of Quota Sampling

Since there is a definitive objective to ensure representation from key subgroups according to predefined proportions or numbers quota sampling would be an appropriate sampling method.

Given that there are multiple distinct groups, there is need to elicit information from several stakeholder categories (street children, officials, NGOs), therefore quota sampling allows setting and meeting targets for each group. Quota sampling is practical and structured, as such it helps ensure that each subgroup is adequately represented in the sample. Quota sampling provides flexibility in that within each quota, you can use convenience or purposive sampling to select participants, which is useful if no sampling frame exists.

Sample Quota

Table 3.1 Sample Quota

Subgroup	Participants within Quota	Sampling Approach
Street Children	50 participants	Snowball sampling
Officials	10 participants	Purposive sampling (target key officials) NGOs

Welfare Organizations	10 participants	Purposive sampling (select relevant organisations)

3.4 Data Collection Procedures and Protocols

A number of collection tools and techniques will be used to collect information within each sample strata from the research population. The materials that will be used to undertake the comprehensive study of recidivism of street children in Harare's CBD, will include semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions.

3.7.1 Data Collection Protocols

Obtaining ethical approval is the first step in data collection. Ethical approval will be sought from relevant committees like the Department of Sustainable Development (Bindura University). This ensures that the researcher adheres to the principles of respect, and confidentiality. Then there is identification of participants using sampling methods mentioned in 3.5. A pilot study will be conducted using research tools namely interviews and focus group discussions with a small group of participants to test their validity and reliability (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, these instruments were crafted to be culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs of the street children, considering their level of education and literacy. After that there is administering of research instruments to participants. Data will be stored in protectively, followed by data cleaning, presentation, interpretation, and discussion.

3.7.2 Data Types and Data Collection Methods

This study will collect data from primary sources. Primary data refers to the original data gathered first hand for a specific research purpose (Ajayi, 2017). It is collected directly from sources through methods such as surveys, interviews, experiments, and observations (Mazhar et al., 2021). This data type has a lot of advantages such as providing data that is real-time which offers accurate and relevance to the study's objectives, proving findings that directly address research questions (Karunarathna et al., 2024). It also allows for greater control over variable during data gathering, leading to more precise and reliable results (Karunarathna et al., 2024). Primary data will be collected by interviews. Interviews can be categorized into structured, semi-structured, and group formats, depending on the degree of flexibility in questioning (Karatsareas, 2022). Structured interviews follow a predetermined set of questions, ensuring consistency across responses but limiting depth (Rashidi et al., 2014).

3.7.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection method that utilizes a flexible interview guide with predetermined questions which allow for natural conversation, follow-up inquiries, and exploration of emerging themes (Naz and Aslam, 2022). This approach is particularly useful for gathering in-depth insights from participants while maintaining a structured focus on relevant topics. Semi-structured interviews, which are employed in this study, offer a balance between structure and adaptability, permitting respondents to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining relevance to the research objectives (Ruslin et al., 2022. The rationale for choosing a semi-structured interview lies in its ability to examine the lived experiences of street children in Harare's CBD, facilitating meaningful discussions on their challenges and perceptions.

As recommended by Patton (2002), qualitative interviews should be designed to be non-threatening, empathetic, and respectful, fostering rapport and trust between the researcher and participants. Open-ended questions will be incorporated, encouraging narrative-driven responses that provide rich, descriptive insights (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, a semi-structured interview guide will ensure consistency while allowing for adaptability based on participant responses (Groves et al., 2004). Each interview session will last between 30 to 60 minutes, engaging participants in conversations that explore their background, experiences, and perspectives on street life. The interview process is designed to ensure that participants have the opportunity to share their experiences in an open and structured format, enhancing the depth of qualitative data collection. The study's approach is informed by best practices in qualitative research, including recommendations by Dillman (2000) on ensuring clarity in interviews and Creswell's (2013) emphasis on narrative inquiry. This method aligns with the study's objective of examining the factors that contribute to street children's experiences and societal reintegration challenges.

3.7.4 Observation

Observation is a qualitative data collection method that involves systematically watching and recording behaviors, interactions, and environmental contexts without direct intervention (Cohen et al., 2017). It allows researchers to capture real-time actions, non-verbal cues, and situational dynamics, providing insights that may not be explicitly stated in interviews or surveys (Cohen et al., 2017). It complements verbal data by offering behavioral and contextual evidence, enhancing the credibility and richness of findings. Researchers may choose

participant observation, where they engage in interactions, or non-participant observation, where they remain distant to minimize influence on subjects.

In this study, observation will be employed during interviews with street children, enabling the researcher to capture non-verbal cues, emotional responses, and contextual interactions that may influence their narratives. Since street children may express discomfort, hesitations, or unspoken emotions when discussing sensitive topics, observation ensures that the research acknowledges these subtle behavioral patterns. This method allows for triangulation of data, where observational findings complement interview responses, ensuring a more comprehensive and validated understanding of their experiences (Morgan et al., 2017). The decision to integrate observation stems from the study's focus on real-life experiences and behavioral adaptations of street children in Harare's CBD. Verbal responses alone may not fully capture the depth of their challenges, as some emotions or situational realities may be difficult to articulate. By observing interactions, mannerisms, and environmental settings, the researcher gains an enriched perspective on their daily lives, improving the accuracy and authenticity of the findings.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures for the research included data preparation, data coding, categorization and theme development, data interpretation and presentation of findings.

3.8.1 Data Preparation

The data transcription process will be the first to be done once the data has been collected. There will be need to transcribe all interview recordings (from street children, officials, NGO reps) verbatim. The data was then organized by sorting transcripts and notes by participant groups and interview dates. After the sorting a familiarization process of the data was done by reading through all transcripts thoroughly to get an overall sense of the data.

3.8.2 Data Coding

Development of the initial codes was the first step of the data coding process, and this was done through open coding by identifying meaningful segments of text related to recidivism, causes, interventions, challenges, and perceptions. These codes were descriptive, that is they included codes such as "lack of family support," and "rehabilitation challenges". NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software was utilized to help organize and code data systematically. An iterative process was then undertaken to refine codes by merging similar codes or creating sub-codes as you examine more data.

3.8.3 Categorization and Theme Development

The codes were then grouped into categories, by combining related codes into broader categories such as "causes of recidivism," "interventions". The theme identification process was then undertaken, and higher-level themes were also developed that capture the main patterns across categories, such as "Structural Barriers," "Social Support Systems," "Policy Gaps," and "Street Children's Coping Mechanisms." Comparisons across groups were then done by analysing similarities and differences in themes between street children, city officials, and NGO representatives.

3.8.4 Data Interpretation

A contextual analysis will be carried out by interpreting findings in the context of Harare's social, economic, and political environment. Use of the participant quotes was then incorporated by integrating verbatim quotes to illustrate key themes and support interpretations. Triangulation of the data was then done by cross-validating findings by comparing insights from different groups (street children vs. officials vs. NGOs). Identification of patterns and relationships was then carried out through. Exploring how different factors relate to recidivism for instance. Poverty → lack of rehabilitation → return to streets.

3.8.5 Reporting Findings

The final part of the data analysis process included, organizing by themes, by presenting findings structured around key themes. The implications are then discussed with relation findings to existing literature and policy. Highlight Differences: Note any contrasting views among stakeholder groups. Provide Recommendations: Suggest practical steps based on insights.

3.8.6 Reliability and Validity of Data

The reliability and validity of the data will be ensured through the use of multiple data collection methods and data analysis procedures. Reliability refers to the consistency of the data collected, which is important to make sure that the results of the study are trustworthy and accurate. To ensure reliability, a pilot study, a test re-test reliability, data control measures as well as data cleaning and editing will be carried out. A pilot study will be conducted with a small sample of street kids to test the reliability of the data collection tools, including the interview guide and the data collection process. The same data collection tools will be utilized to gather data from the same participants at different times to assess the test-retest reliability of the data. Data quality control measures will be implemented to ensure that the data collected is accurate and reliable, including checking for inconsistencies and errors. The data will be cleaned and edited to ensure that it is free from errors and inconsistencies.

Validity will be carried out by making use of content validity, construct validity, face validity as well as criterion validity. Validity refers to the accuracy of the data gathered, which is essential to make sure that the results of the research are meaningful and relevant. The data collection tools will be designed to measure the factors influencing recidivism of street kids in Harare's CBD, ensuring that they are relevant and applicable to the research question. The data collection tools will be designed to measure the factors contributing to the recidivism of street children in Harare Central Business District (CBD) after their forced removal and reintegration, ensuring that they are accurately captured. The data collection tools will be designed to be clear and easy to understand, ensuring that they are face valid. The data collected will be compared to existing research and literature to ensure that it is criterion valid.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before data collection began, ethical standards will be established in line with expectations from the Bindura University of Science Education. Informed consent will also be obtained from all respondents, ensuring they understand the purpose of the research and their rights, involving the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Steps were taken to minimize any physical, emotional, or psychological harm to participants. This was achieved through being sensitive to the experiences of street children and avoiding triggering discussions. There will be absolute confidentiality in that there will be protection of the privacy of participants by anonymizing data and ensuring that personal information is kept confidential. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no coercion. Respondents will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences. Cultural Sensitivity will be encompassed, as the researcher will be aware of and respectful towards the cultural norms and values of the community.

3.10 LIMITATIONS

Most of the children in the CBD are always busy trying to get money, it can be difficult to buy time from them if there is no money or food in return for them to share the information. To encounter this limitation, the researcher will use food stuffs such as drinks, water, and bread for refreshments and let them know exactly why the researcher is conducting this research. Gathering reliable data from street children can challenging due to their living conditions, lack of trust in researchers, and reluctance to disclose personal information about recidivism. To solve this limitation, the research will collaborate with known organizations that are already known by street children such as Social Welfare.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter introduced the methods and materials that were used in undertaking this research. The research design was then outlined in the next section, clearly outlining how data was collected, collated and analysed to realise objectives of the project. The materials used in the study were then listed and explained in the succeeding paragraphs of the chapter. The data collection methods and procedures were then detailed in the following sections of the chapter. The analysis procedures were then detailed next section of the chapter. The chapter concluded by giving a scope of the research, in particular the study area, before summarising all the sub-sections of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the research methodology that informed this research. This chapter presents findings obtained through semi-structured interviews, structured by themes that align with the research objectives. Observational insights also supplement the findings, ensuring that behavioural and contextual interpretations support the interview narratives. The findings provide insight into the experiences of street children regarding forced removals, causes of recidivism, and interventions aimed at reducing recurrence.

4.2 Response Rate

Table 4.1 shows the response rate. The response rate reflected the number of respondents during the research.

Table 4.1 Participants Response Rate

Participant Group	Expected	Actual
Street Children	50	38
Government Officials	10	7
Welfare Representatives	10	8

Table 4.1 shows high engagement of street children (38), government officials (7) and welfare representatives (8).

4.3 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristic of the research participants highlighted in Table 4.2 show key variables such as age, and gender.

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Category	Age Range	Gender	Percentage (%)
Street Children	15-18	26 boys 12 girls	68% 32%
Government Officials	30-55	5 males 2 females	71% 29%
Welfare Representatives	28-50	3 males 5 females	38% 62%

The above table 4.2 shows that the majority of street children (26) were male, and, (74) were female.

4.4. Objective 1: Circumstances behind forced removal of street children from the Central Business District of Harare between 2020 and 2024

The first objective of this research sought to examine the accentuating circumstances behind the forced removal of street children from the Central Business District of Harare between 2020 and 2024. Findings in this theme are based on interviews with government officials and welfare representatives specifically, the study aimed to identify the policy justifications, economic and urban pressures, and social perceptions influencing these removals.

4.4.1 Government Policies and Regulatory Frameworks behind Forced Removals

The findings provide insight into how government regulations, business interests, and law enforcement priorities shape forced removals, as well as the differing perspectives of government officials, welfare representatives, and street children themselves. Government officials highlighted municipal regulations and crime prevention policies as the basis for removals, while welfare representatives critiqued these frameworks as failing to provide sustainable reintegration measures. . Government officials stated that forced removals are conducted under city management policies, framed as measures to maintain public order and prevent illegal street activities. They also cited complaints from business owners regarding theft, disruption, and sanitation issues, reinforcing that municipal directives prioritize clearing informal street populations to uphold commercial and security interests.

> *"...businesses constantly report theft, drug-related cases, and general disruption. We enforce removals to maintain urban order."* (Government Official)

Another Government Officials pointed to public safety concerns, arguing that some street children engage in petty crimes that warrant periodic clearance operations.

> *"...we do not remove them arbitrarily. Our policies emphasize protecting public spaces, but enforcement remains challenging."* (Government Official)

However, Welfare representatives argued that these policies focus on displacement rather than intervention, leading to cycles of removals without structured rehabilitation efforts. They pointed out that shelters often lack capacity, meaning that removed children frequently return to the streets within days or weeks.

> *"...removal policies prioritize clearing spaces rather than addressing why children are living on the streets. Without intervention, these removals repeat endlessly."* (NGO Representative)

4.4.2 Economic and Business Pressures Influencing Street Clearance Operations

Government officials also revealed that business sectors play a direct role in influencing city-wide removal efforts, with complaints regarding loitering, informal vending, and crime leading to increased enforcement during peak commercial seasons.

> *"...whenever business conferences or tourism events approach, we receive heightened pressure to clear the streets. For example, in 2024 the country hosted the 44th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government"* (Government Official)

To add on, authorities noted that government policies align removal operations with economic cycles, ensuring that central business districts remain commercially viable.

> *"...we enforce clearances before major retail and holiday seasons to align with urban planning priorities."* (Government Official)

However, welfare representatives argued that business interests often take priority over social welfare, leading to street children being moved to unregulated areas without structured support.

> *"...economic visibility determines these removals. The focus is on clearing public spaces, not on providing alternative livelihoods."* (NGO Representative)

4.4.3 Social Perceptions Leading to Removals

This section presents findings on the role of social perceptions in forced removals. The study question addressed was how societal attitudes contribute to the removal of street children? Findings in this theme are based on interviews with welfare representatives, and law enforcement officials.

Law enforcement officials indicated that public complaints regarding visibility, arguing that ssafety shape the urgency of removal operations. They stated that concerns over drug use, theft, and intimidation influence enforcement strategies.

> *"...the public frequently requests intervention when groups of street children gather in certain areas, especially near retail spaces and also people complained about theft in the CBD."* (Law Enforcement Official)

However, welfare representatives argued that social stigma heavily influences the treatment of street children, saying:

> *"...public perceptions shape policies, street children are viewed as a problem to be removed, not as vulnerable individuals needing support."* (NGO Representative)

4.5 Specific causes of recidivism by street children in Harare's Central Business District (CBD) between 2020 and 2024

This section presents findings on on objective 2 which explored reasons why street children return to street life despite reintegration efforts. The study found economic hardship, structural gaps in rreintegration programs and social and psychological barriers.

4.5.1. Economic hardship

One of the most dominant factors leading to recidivism is economic hardship. During interviews, many street children showed that they struggle to find employment, and with no formal education or vocational skills, they see street survival as their only option.

One of the street children said that:

> *"...I tried leaving, but there's no work for people like us. No school, no skills, how do I survive?"*

Basing on interviews, most of the street children displayed resignation and frustration. For example, when discussing employment struggles, some often lowered their voices or shaking their heads.

4.5.2 Structural Gaps in Reintegration Programs

Although reintegration programs exist, many fail due to inadequate follow-ups, lack of funding, and inconsistent policy enforcement. As a result, street children often leave shelters due to insufficient support, leading them to return to street life.

Government officials acknowledged that economic reintegration is difficult, given that street children often lack formal qualifications. While some programs attempt vocational training, the scale of the problem exceeds available resources. One of the government officials highlighted that:

> *"...Shelters help for a while, but without job training, most return to the streets. We need stronger economic programs to help them transition."*

During interviews, Welfare representatives emphasized that vocational training and micro-business support could significantly reduce recidivism. They argued that street children need structured income-generating pathways, not just temporary placement.

> *"...Most programs focus on shelter, but if these kids had real work opportunities, they wouldn't need to beg or scavenge."*

Another government official from Department of Social Development acknowledged the limitations of reintegration frameworks, citing insufficient resources and staff shortages as factors that hinder long-term success. One of the officials said that:

> *"...We aim to support street children, but capacity challenges make it difficult to track progress and ensure sustainability."*

However, a Welfare representative pointed out that many reintegration programs lack psychological and social mentorship, making it hard for children to transition successfully. One of the representatives highlighted that:

> *"...We don't just need shelters here, we also need structured counselling, mentorship, and follow-up programs to make reintegration sustainable."*

However, dduring interviews, Street children reported that reintegration programs do not provide lasting solutions. Many felt that institutional efforts were temporary and disconnected from their real needs. One of the street children had to say:

> *"...They put us in shelters, which are not in good conditions and also we do nothing, no going to school."*

4.5.3 Social and Psychological Barriers to Reintegration

Beyond economic and institutional challenges, street children cited institutional mistrust. They explained past experiences with forced removals and failed interventions. Of the street children had to say:

> *"...I don't trust shelters. We are just numbers to them. I feel safer on the streets where there are structures that protect us such as the elders we live with."*

During interviews, Government officials admitted that many children resist reintegration efforts, often due to past negative experiences with law enforcement and shelters. Officials mentioned that:

"...Some street children reject help because they have seen interventions fail before. Trust-building is a challenge."

Welfare representatives argued that trauma counselling and peer mentorship should be prioritized to help street children overcome social barriers. Representatives had to say:

"...These children need emotional support. Without counselling, they will always see the streets as their safest place."

During interviews with street children shrugged off reintegration discussions. Observations exhibited avoidance behaviour.

4.6 Measures to reduce recidivism by street children in Harare Central Business District

This section presents findings on objective number 3 which focused on strategies that can reduce street children's recidivism. Interviews with street children, government officials, and welfare representatives revealed that successful reintegration requires long-term support structures, beyond simply removing children from the streets. Sustainable solutions include education, economic opportunities, psychological counselling, and strong community involvement.

4.6.1. Education and Vocational Training and as Sustainable Solutions

Findings indicated that lack of education and employment pathways directly contribute to recidivism. During interviews, street children emphasized that education and job training would help them become financially independent and reduce reliance on street survival. One of the street child mentioned that:

"...If I learn how to fix cars or weld, I won't need to beg. Training is the key to getting off the streets."

Interview with key informant interviewees, a government official also revealed that vocational training could be an effective reintegration tool, but budget constraints limit program availability. This official mentioned that:

"...we recognize that skill-building is crucial, but funding challenges make it hard to establish long-term training centres."

Welfare representatives advocated for practical skill-building programs, arguing that shelters alone do not provide the long-term stability needed for reintegration. One of representatives highlighted that:

"...Rehabilitation needs more than food and shelter. These children need real-world skills to escape street life permanently."

Observations revealed that, Street children displayed enthusiasm when discussing job training, showing hope for vocational opportunities.

4.6.2 Family Reunification and Psychological Support

Findings suggest that successful reintegration requires emotional support and family involvement. Many street children struggle with abandonment, trauma, and distrust, making psychological counselling essential for recovery.

During interviews, some street children expressed willingness to reconnect with their families, but emphasized that family environments must be safe and supportive. One of the street children mentioned that:

"...I would go back home if I knew things would be better. Some of us ran away because life there was worse."

Government officials admitted that family reunification programs exist, but noted that many children do not want to return due to broken family structures.

"..We try to place children back with their families, but some cases are complex, and reintegration does not always work."

During interviews, welfare representatives advocated for psychological counselling as an essential intervention, arguing that healing trauma is just as important as economic stability. One of the representatives have to say:

"...We must address psychological wounds before reintegration, otherwise, these children will always feel safer on the streets."

Observations showcased that, Street children exhibited mixed emotions about family reunification, with some hopeful but others resistant.

4.6.3 Integration strategies

The study found out that there are interventions and strategies that can be implemented to enhance reintegration. During interviews, many street children viewed community integration as valuable, believing that mentorship and role models could help them transition into stable environments. One the street children had to say:

"...If older kids who left the streets helped us learn skills, we would trust them more. I want to see people like me succeed."

Government officials recognized that community involvement improves reintegration outcomes, but stated that engagement levels need to be increased. One of the government officials had to say:

"...Community programs work, but not enough people participate. Businesses and NGOs must step up in mentorship efforts."

Welfare representatives emphasized the need for grassroots interventions, advocating for local partnerships that create opportunities for street children. One of the NGO representative said that:

"...reintegration works best when the community is invested in mentorship, training, and housing support must come from local efforts."

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings on forced removals causes of recidivism, and reintegration strategies and their sustainability. It was found that forced removals are carried out as urban management interventions but lack sustainable follow-ups, leading to recurrence. Economic hardship remains a primary driver of recidivism, as street children struggle without education or employment pathways. Structural gaps in reintegration programs result in limited follow-ups and inadequate long-term support, while psychological and social barriers, such as mistrust and trauma, further hinder successful reintegration. Vocational training and education are essential for breaking the cycle of homelessness, yet funding limitations restrict access to these programs. Family reunification must be approached cautiously, ensuring safe environments and emotional support to prevent further displacement. Additionally, community-based interventions, including mentorship programs, local business collaborations, and NGO support, have been identified as effective strategies for enhancing reintegration outcomes. The next chapter will focus on recommendations for improving reintegration efforts and reducing recidivism.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the findings related to the forced removals of street children in Harare's Central Business District (CBD), the causes of recidivism, and proposed interventions aimed at improving reintegration strategies. The discussion critically engages with Strain Theory as the study's guiding framework, alongside global, regional, and local literature, to assess whether the findings align with established trends or introduce new perspectives in urban child welfare and governance.

5.2 Circumstances behind Forced Removal of Street Children from Harare's CBD (2020-2024)

The forced removals of street children in Harare's CBD have been a recurring phenomenon, particularly before major business summits and urban development projects, highlighting the intersection between governance priorities and economic interests. This section examines the specific circumstances that drive these removal operations, focusing on government policies, economic pressures, and societal perceptions. Findings are compared with global case studies to assess whether Harare follows established urban displacement trends or presents unique governance models.

5.2.1 Government Policies and Regulatory Frameworks behind Forced Removals

Findings reveal that municipal by-laws targeting loitering, vagrancy, and unauthorized vending serve as the legal foundation for forced removals. Government authorities frame these operations as necessary to maintain city order and prevent crime, responding to business complaints about theft, public nuisance, and unsanitary conditions. However, welfare representatives argue that these removals do not address the root causes of streetism, as displaced children return shortly after removal, highlighting policy gaps in structured reintegration efforts.

Studies conducted in New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro confirm similar patterns, where forced removals are often conducted under urban renewal projects rather than sustainable interventions (Lamba, 2022). In South Africa and Tanzania, municipal policies criminalize street children's presence, portraying them as threats to public safety rather than vulnerable individuals needing protection (Berckmans et al., 2012). These studies emphasize that removals alone do not break cycles of urban homelessness unless complemented by long-term welfare programs addressing economic and social needs.

Strain Theory provides valuable insights into these findings, illustrating how systemic barriers prevent marginalized groups from achieving economic stability, forcing them into alternative survival strategies such as street life (Merton, 1938). Since forced removals do not offer employment pathways or stable housing, street children remain locked in cycles of urban displacement, with no access to formal livelihood opportunities. The study's findings strongly align with global trends where forced removals prioritize visibility and urban aesthetics over sustainable reintegration strategies.

However, Harare's approach differs slightly from cities such as Cape Town and Nairobi, where removal efforts are accompanied by partial welfare interventions, including temporary shelter and food assistance (Makau Mwende, 2023). Zimbabwe's lack of structured reintegration frameworks represents a governance failure, reinforcing street children's reliance on informal urban survival mechanisms rather than providing meaningful alternatives.

These findings are not unusual, but they emphasize that forced removals in Harare do not address the underlying socio-economic conditions that contribute to streetism. The absence of rehabilitation programs distinguishes Harare's approach from cities that attempt basic interventions, presenting an urgent need for policy shifts toward comprehensive urban child welfare strategies.

5.2.2 Economic and Business Pressures Influencing Street Clearance Operations

Findings suggest that economic factors significantly dictate the timing and intensity of forced removals, with operations escalating before major business events such as the SADC Summit (2024). Government officials acknowledge that these interventions aim to beautify urban spaces for investors and tourists, prioritizing city image over the welfare of street children. Welfare organizations argue that such removals reinforce systemic neglect, failing to provide long-term solutions.

International studies support these patterns, demonstrating that street removals peak before global economic summits, reflecting efforts to project urban progress rather than solve homelessness issues (Aufseeser, 2014). Research in Zimbabwe further confirms that removal campaigns are often linked to commercial development efforts, rather than social rehabilitation programs (Ndlovu & Tigere, 2022).

Strain Theory contextualizes these findings by explaining that economic exclusion forces marginalized populations into survival behaviours outside formal systems (Merton, 1938).

Since removal operations do not provide economic alternatives, street children return shortly after displacement, perpetuating cycles of street dependency.

The findings are expected, as they align with documented urban governance trends prioritizing economic visibility over human-centred interventions. However, Zimbabwe lacks vocational training or financial support programs, presenting a governance gap compared to cities that implement limited economic interventions alongside displacement efforts (Makau Mwende, 2023).

5.2.3 Social Perceptions Leading to Removals

Findings reveal that negative public perceptions of street children as disorderly or criminal influence removal urgency, with urban residents and businesses viewing them as threats to safety and commerce. Law enforcement confirms that removals are frequently conducted in response to public pressure, rather than structured social welfare policies.

Studies from South Africa and Ethiopia confirm that societal stigma reinforces exclusionary policies, leading to repeated displacement cycles (Zewele et al., 2024). Research in New Delhi and Lagos highlights that street children are often labelled as urban nuisances rather than people needing structured intervention (Taiwo, 2023).

Strain Theory offers additional explanations, demonstrating how social exclusion prevents marginalized groups from accessing reintegration opportunities, reinforcing displacement rather than intervention (Merton, 1938). Since street children face hostility rather than support, removals remain punitive rather than rehabilitative.

These findings are expected, confirming established research that public attitudes strongly influence removal urgency. However, Zimbabwe lacks awareness initiatives to shift societal attitudes, reinforcing governance models that react to complaints rather than proactively addressing systemic gaps.

5.3 Causes of Recidivism among Street Children in Harare's CBD (2020-2024)

Despite removal operations targeting street children in Harare's Central Business District (CBD), findings indicate that a significant proportion return to urban spaces within weeks or months of displacement. This section examines the reasons behind these repeated returns, exploring the role of economic hardship, structural gaps in reintegration programs, social and psychological barriers, and institutional mistrust. The discussion compares findings with global studies to determine whether Zimbabwe's patterns align with international trends or highlight unique governance deficiencies in reintegration policies. The Strain Theory framework helps

contextualize the data, explaining how economic exclusion and systemic barriers force marginalized individuals into adaptive survival mechanisms, reinforcing their reliance on street life.

5.3.1 Economic Hardship

Findings reveal that lack of employment opportunities, limited access to education, and financial instability are major drivers of recidivism. Many street children struggle to sustain themselves outside informal urban economies, leading them to return to begging, scavenging, or vending for daily survival. Welfare representatives argue that economic deprivation leaves street children with no viable alternatives, forcing them back onto the streets where informal work provides immediate sustenance despite the risks.

Studies conducted in China and Mozambique confirm that economic instability significantly contributes to failed rehabilitation efforts, as street children with limited job prospects often return to the streets despite intervention attempts (Yu et al., 2019; Salokangas, 2010). Research in Nigeria and Ethiopia further validates these trends, showing that without structured employment programs, reintegration efforts remain ineffective (Zewele et al., 2024).

Strain Theory explicitly supports these findings, illustrating how economic exclusion compels marginalized populations to seek alternative survival pathways (Merton, 1938). Since formal employment opportunities remain inaccessible, street children return to informal economies, reinforcing recidivism cycles.

These findings are expected, as they align with global research demonstrating that economic deprivation remains a central factor driving street children's return to urban spaces. However, Zimbabwe's governance framework lacks structured entrepreneurship or vocational training programs, distinguishing its policies from cities that attempt microfinance interventions as part of reintegration strategies (Makau Mwende, 2023).

5.3.2 Structural Gaps in Reintegration Programs

Findings indicate that weak reintegration frameworks, inconsistent follow-ups, and limited resources prevent successful rehabilitation. Welfare organizations acknowledge that most reintegration efforts lack long-term sustainability, resulting in high relapse rates where children return to street life due to inadequate post-removal support.

International case studies support these findings. Research from Kenya and Ethiopia reveals that underfunded welfare programs and inconsistent intervention policies lead to high recidivism rates, reinforcing patterns of urban homelessness (Zewele et al., 2024; Oladiti,

2015). Studies in South Africa confirm that reintegration efforts remain largely ineffective when they fail to address individualized needs such as vocational training, emotional support, and social reintegration (Gunhidzirai & Tanga, 2020).

Strain Theory contextualizes these findings, explaining how systemic failures prevent marginalized individuals from reintegrating into mainstream society. Since formal institutions lack the capacity to support long-term rehabilitation, street children return to urban spaces where survival mechanisms are more predictable (Merton, 1938).

These findings are expected, as they align with documented trends in urban child welfare policies. However, Zimbabwe's approach differs in its complete absence of structured follow-up mechanisms, presenting a governance failure compared to cities that incorporate partial reintegration initiatives despite economic challenges.

5.3.3 Social and Psychological Barriers to Reintegration

Findings suggest that institutional mistrust, trauma, and lack of emotional support significantly hinder reintegration efforts. Many street children express scepticism toward welfare programs, viewing them as temporary holding spaces rather than pathways to stable livelihoods. Welfare organizations highlight that past negative experiences with shelters and reintegration centres contribute to resistance toward formal interventions.

Studies conducted in South Africa and Ethiopia confirm that street children are often unwilling to engage in reintegration efforts due to prior mistreatment, abuse, or neglect (Zewele et al., 2024). Research in New Delhi and Lagos highlights that some street populations deliberately avoid institutional care due to their distrust of government-led programs, reinforcing their dependency on informal urban networks (Taiwo, 2023).

Strain Theory offers additional insights, explaining how institutional exclusion creates survival dependencies, reinforcing distrust between marginalized individuals and formal intervention programs (Merton, 1938). Since reintegration efforts fail to build trust-based engagement models, street children remain hesitant to accept support, perpetuating cycles of displacement.

These findings are expected, aligning with documented research showing that mistrust remains a major barrier to reintegration across global urban environments. However, Zimbabwe's approach differs in its lack of trauma-informed care models, presenting a policy gap in structured rehabilitation efforts compared to cities implementing trust-building initiatives in reintegration centres.

5.4 Suggested Measures to Reduce Recidivism

This section discusses solutions for reducing street children's recidivism, including education and vocational training, psychological counselling, and mentorship programs. Findings are compared with global models to assess their relevance in Zimbabwe's urban governance framework.

5.4.1 Education and Vocational Training as Sustainable Solutions

Findings indicate that limited access to education and employment opportunities is one of the primary factors contributing to recidivism among street children in Harare's CBD. Street children highlighted that formal education or vocational training would allow them to acquire practical skills, attain financial independence, and reduce reliance on street survival mechanisms. Similarly, welfare representatives emphasized that shelters alone do not provide long-term stability, advocating instead for practical skill-building programs aimed at breaking the cycle of dependency.

These findings align with global research, as studies conducted in China and Mozambique confirm that street children often struggle to reintegrate successfully when rehabilitation efforts fail to provide structured job training and educational opportunities (Yu et al., 2019; Salokangas, 2010). In Nigeria and Ethiopia, research further suggests that lack of employment pathways limits children's ability to sustain reintegration, increasing their likelihood of returning to the streets (Zewele et al., 2024).

Strain Theory supports these findings, illustrating how economic exclusion forces marginalized individuals into informal economies, reinforcing cycles of homelessness (Merton, 1938). Since street removals do not provide skill development or employment alternatives, street children return to urban spaces where informal economic activity remains their only viable option.

These findings are expected, as they align with established research showing that vocational training and structured educational pathways improve reintegration success. However, Zimbabwe's approach lacks formalized skill-development programs specifically tailored to street children, limiting its ability to address economic vulnerability as a key driver of recidivism compared to cities that incorporate microfinance and vocational training initiatives into rehabilitation frameworks (Makau Mwende, 2023).

5.4.2 Family Reunification and Psychological Support

Findings suggest that emotional and social stability play a crucial role in successful reintegration, as many street children struggle with trauma, abandonment, and institutional

mistrust. Several children expressed willingness to reconnect with their families, but emphasized that family environments must be safe and supportive for reintegration to work. Welfare organizations highlighted that psychological counselling is a critical intervention, arguing that healing trauma is equally as important as achieving economic stability.

Studies in Ethiopia and Kenya confirm that psychological support and structured family mediation significantly improve reintegration outcomes, ensuring that street children transition into safe and supportive home environments (Zewele et al., 2024; Chepngetich, 2018). Research in South Africa and Latin America further suggests that children who receive trauma-focused interventions are more likely to remain integrated and avoid returning to the streets (Gunhidzirai & Tanga, 2020; Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2014).

Strain Theory offers additional insights by explaining that social exclusion reinforces dependency on informal survival mechanisms, particularly when marginalized individuals experience emotional neglect or psychological distress (Merton, 1938). Since many street children lack emotional support frameworks, they often feel safer remaining on the streets despite the risks, reinforcing urban homelessness cycles.

These findings are expected, confirming global research showing that psychological counselling and family reunification significantly enhance rehabilitation success. However, Zimbabwe's current welfare system lacks structured trauma-informed care models, presenting a gap in intervention strategies compared to cities implementing comprehensive emotional well-being programs within rehabilitation centres.

5.4.3 Integration Strategies to Improve Reintegration Outcomes

Findings indicate that community participation plays a vital role in reducing recidivism, as street children expressed enthusiasm for mentorship-based programs where former street children or local role models help guide reintegration efforts. Government officials acknowledged that community involvement improves reintegration success, but noted that engagement levels remain low, requiring stronger partnerships between local businesses, NGOs, and social workers.

Studies conducted in South Africa and Nigeria confirm that community-based interventions improve rehabilitation outcomes, ensuring that street children receive practical guidance and mentorship from individuals who have successfully reintegrated (Gunhidzirai & Tanga, 2020; Nyambane, 2017). In Latin America and Kenya, research highlights that peer-led engagement

strategies foster trust and encourage sustained reintegration, reducing feelings of alienation within structured welfare programs (Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2014).

Strain Theory contextualizes these findings by demonstrating that marginalized individuals build alternative support networks when formal institutions fail, reinforcing dependency on informal urban spaces (Merton, 1938). Since community-based interventions establish trust and personalized engagement, they create structured pathways toward reintegration, reducing reliance on urban survival mechanisms.

These findings are expected, as they align with established research indicating that peer mentorship programs and grassroots interventions strengthen rehabilitation outcomes. However, Zimbabwe's current reintegration model lacks formalized mentorship programs or community-led engagement structures, limiting efforts to transition street children into stable support networks beyond institutional care frameworks.

The research highlights critical gaps in policy frameworks governing street children's welfare in Zimbabwe, which often focus narrowly on removal rather than holistic reintegration (Chirisa & Nyamadzawo, 2018). The identified gaps in policy implementation and coordination between government and NGOs reflect concerns raised by Wernham (2006) about fragmented approaches. The study reveals that street children often face stigmatization, social exclusion, and lack of acceptance from their communities, which significantly undermines reintegration efforts (Chirisa & Nyamadzawo, 2018). Community attitudes that label street children as delinquents or burdens contribute to their marginalization and alienation, pushing them back toward the streets.

Moreover, community involvement in monitoring and supporting reintegration enhances accountability and sustainability. For example, peer support groups and community mentors provide social capital and role models that are crucial for children's psychosocial well-being and resilience (Embleton et al., 2016). Policy reforms are necessary to establish comprehensive, child-centred approaches that prioritize protection, rehabilitation, and social inclusion. A key area for reform includes strengthening legislation to protect street children's rights and ensure their access to education, health services, and social protection. Muzvidziwa (2014) argues that without sound policies and adequate funding, interventions remain fragmented and ineffective. Policy reforms should also promote sustainable livelihood programs and integrate street children into broader poverty alleviation initiatives.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth examination of the significant findings from the research on the recidivism of street children in Harare's Central Business District after forced removal and reintegration initiatives. The investigation highlighted that the main factors contributing to forced removals are the intention to preserve public order and city image, enforcement of legal regulations, By-Laws, and limitations in resources within social welfare organizations. These structural elements signify a governance-centred perspective that neglects the fundamental social challenges. Moreover, the discourse pinpointed key factors of recidivism including poverty, lack of job prospects, family instability, abuse, and the impact of peer influences on the streets. The chapter stressed that enduring solutions are rooted in holistic social support, family therapy, vocational education, and community-driven initiatives. The insights correspond with theories such as Strain Theory and Social Disorganization Theory, indicating that unless systemic disparities and social disintegration are tackled, attempts to address streetism will be futile. The next chapter will be on Recommendations.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the research titled "Exploring Street Children's Recidivism in Harare's Central Business District after Forced Removal and Reintegration." The study was motivated by the observation that although forced removals of street children are regularly conducted by authorities in Harare, there remains a persistent return of these children to the city centre. This raised questions about the effectiveness of current approaches and exposed a gap in localized research exploring the cyclical nature of recidivism through the lived experiences of the children, service providers, and policymakers directly involved. While streetism and juvenile vulnerability have been explored in broader African contexts, few studies have specifically focused on the Harare CBD and how perceptions, policy practices, and social structures contribute to continued displacement and return.

6.2 Recap of the Central Question and the Research Objectives

This study explored the underlying forces behind the continued return of street children to Harare's Central Business District besides repeated removals and reintegration efforts. The central research question that guided the research was: What are the reasons behind recidivism of street children in Harare's CBD following forced removal and reintegration attempts? This question shaped both the focus of the data collection and the structure of the analysis, directing attention toward the views and lived realities of street children, as well as the institutional positions of government officials and welfare organizations. In line with this, the study pursued three main objectives. The first was to examine the circumstances surrounding the forced removal of street children from the CBD between 2020 and 2024. The second was to investigate the specific causes of recidivism by street children during the same period. The third objective aimed to propose practical strategies that could reduce recidivism and promote successful reintegration of these children into society. Each of these objectives provided a thematic lens through which the broader research question was explored.

6.3 Summary

The study was guided by Strain Theory, a framework that explains how individuals resort to alternative behaviours when legitimate means of achieving success such as education, employment, and stable housing are inaccessible. This theory offered a valuable lens to interpret the survival strategies of street children and the institutional failures that leave them with limited options. Methodologically, the research adopted a qualitative research design

within the interpretivism paradigm, enabling a rich, in-depth understanding of respondents' experiences and perspectives.

To recruit participants, the study used purposive, snowball, and quota sampling techniques, ensuring a diverse sample that included street children, government officials, and representatives from welfare organizations. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews tailored to each group and supported by direct observation within Harare's CBD. These methods allowed the study to triangulate perspectives and uncover common threads across different stakeholders. The qualitative approach was particularly suitable for exploring sensitive, context-specific themes such as institutional trust, emotional resilience, community disconnection, and systemic exclusion all central to understanding why street children return to the streets after removal.

6.4 Results Summary and Conclusion

This section provides a summary of the results that emerged from each study objective. Clear conclusions are also presented to highlight the main insights of the study.

6.4.1 Objective 1

In relation to Objective 1, which focused on understanding the circumstances behind the forced removal of street children from Harare's Central Business District between 2020 and 2024, the study found that removal operations were influenced by a combination of policy enforcement, economic interests, and negative societal perceptions. Government officials often justified removals as part of urban management and crime prevention, while also responding to pressure from businesses concerned about street visibility during key economic events. Additionally, societal stigma played a key role, with many residents perceiving street children as a threat to cleanliness and public safety. The study concludes that forced removals in Harare are driven more by economic and political objectives than by concern for the welfare of the children. These operations are rarely accompanied by long-term support or reintegration plans, which contributes to the ongoing presence of children in the city centre.

6.4.2 Objective 2

In relation to Objective 2, which investigated the specific causes of recidivism by street children in Harare's CBD, the study found that economic instability, institutional mistrust, and the lack of effective rehabilitation programs are the core drivers of repeated return to street life. Street children reported that without access to income, skills training, or safe home environments, they had little choice but to return to the streets for survival. Reintegration efforts were often temporary, with limited follow-up, while previous experiences with shelters and

institutions were sometimes described as punitive or unwelcoming. The study concludes that recidivism is primarily driven by systemic failures like economic hardship, inadequate reintegration frameworks, and the emotional and psychological barriers children face in the absence of consistent and caring support. Without meaningful social and economic alternatives, removal interventions alone are insufficient.

6.4.3 Objective 3

In relation to Objective 3, which explored strategies to reduce the recidivism of street children, the study identified three critical approaches: education and vocational training, family reunification and psychological counselling, and community-led integration. Street children highlighted the importance of skills training as a pathway to financial independence. Additionally, emotional healing and rebuilding of family connections were seen as vital for stable reintegration. Stakeholders further emphasized the need for grassroots community support and mentorship, especially involving individuals who had successfully transitioned out of street life. The study concludes that reducing recidivism requires a multi-faceted approach combining economic empowerment, psychosocial support, and inclusive community structures. One-dimensional interventions such as removal or shelter alone are inadequate. A coordinated model involving government, NGOs, families, and local communities is essential to address the root causes and sustainably reintegrate children into society.

6.5 Relevance of the Theoretical Framework

The research was guided by Strain Theory, a framework that offered valuable insight into the structural and economic pressures that contribute to the recidivism of street children. This theory proved highly relevant as it provided a structured lens to understand how limited access to education, employment, housing, and family support systems places immense strain on children, pushing them toward adaptive survival strategies such as street life. Strain Theory allowed the research to move beyond surface-level observations and examine how systemic failures shape behavioural outcomes.

It was also instrumental in shaping interview questions and analysis, ensuring the study captured the deeper institutional factors that influence recidivism, such as gaps in child welfare policies, the lack of long-term reintegration programs, and the minimal community support systems. The theory's ability to link macro-level institutional issues with micro-level choices made it particularly well-suited for a study grounded in qualitative inquiry. While the study acknowledged that personal and psychological factors also play a role, Strain Theory's focus

on structural exclusion was central to interpreting why reintegration efforts consistently fail in the Harare CBD context.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

While the research was successfully completed, it encountered several limitations during the research process. One of the key limitations was gaining access to some government and welfare officials proved challenging due to their busy schedules. To manage this, interviews were conducted during their lunch breaks, and some participants were given interview guides to complete at their convenience. Another limitation emerged in building trust with street children. While semi-structured interviews helped create a more relaxed atmosphere, some participants were initially hesitant to open up fully due to previous negative experiences with authority figures or researchers. This required extended engagement and observation before some interviews could proceed comfortably. Despite these challenges, the study was able to gather rich and meaningful data through persistence and ethical flexibility.

6.7 Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are proposed to assist policymakers, child welfare agencies, and community stakeholders in addressing street children's recidivism in Harare's CBD:

- Integrate Vocational Training into Reintegration Programs: Government and welfare organizations should prioritize long-term skill-building programs that equip street children with practical livelihood options, reducing economic dependence on street survival.
- Strengthen Psychosocial Support and Trauma Counselling: Reintegration strategies should include consistent emotional and psychological care. This includes employing qualified social workers trained in trauma-informed care and family mediation.
- Enhance Family Reunification Programs: Family tracing and mediation should be strengthened, with reintegration efforts targeting the restoration of safe, functional household environments. Government must also address the root causes driving children out of their homes, such as abuse or neglect.
- Establish Community-Based Mentorship Initiatives: Engage individuals who have successfully exited street life as mentors to current street children. Local businesses and faith-based organizations can support this through apprenticeship programs and transitional housing efforts.

- Coordinate Multi-Stakeholder Reintegration Frameworks: Local councils, national agencies, NGOs, and community leaders should collaborate through a shared reintegration framework. Fragmented interventions should be replaced with unified case management and resource mobilization strategies.

6.8 Further Research Implications

This research identified several areas for future exploration that could deepen the understanding of street children's recidivism and improve urban child welfare interventions.

- Investigate the role of informal economies in shaping street children's survival and assess how policy interventions can balance regulation with protection.
- Evaluate the long-term outcomes of children placed in existing reintegration programs, including metrics related to housing stability, employment, and social well-being.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STREET CHILDREN

Focus: Their lived experiences, perceptions of forced removal, reasons for recidivism, and ideas for intervention

1. Experiences with Forced Removal

- Demographic Information: Age, gender, years on the streets, previous living situation.
- Can you describe how you were removed from the streets by authorities?
- What was the reason given for your removal?
- How did you feel about being taken away?
- Where were you taken after removal? How were you treated there?

2. Factors Contributing to Recidivism

- What made you return to the streets after being removed?
- What challenges did you face while trying to stay off the streets?
- Did you receive any help or support to stay off the streets?
- What difficulties prevent children from staying in shelters or reintegration programs?

3. Strategies for Sustainable Reintegration

- What do you think could be done to help street children stay off the streets permanently?
- What kind of support (education, skills, family reunification, etc.) do you think would work best?
- If you had a choice, where would you prefer to live and why?
- What message would you like to give the government or welfare organizations about street children?

APPENDIX 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Focus: Policy-driven interventions, institutional challenges, and strategies to address recidivism

1. Policy and Legal Justifications for Forced Removal

- Demographic Information: Age, gender, years working with street children, department/role.
- What are the official reasons behind the forced removals of street children from Harare's CBD?
- What legal or policy frameworks guide these removals?
- What steps are taken by your department to ensure the protection of street children during these removals?
- What are the immediate measures taken after street children are removed (e.g., placement in shelters, rehabilitation programs)?

2. Challenges in Preventing Recidivism

- How successful have reintegration programs been in preventing recidivism among street children?
- What challenges has your department encountered in ensuring street children do not return to the streets?
- Are there specific gaps in welfare programs that make children more likely to return to street life?
- How does the government track children after reintegration efforts?

3. Institutional Recommendations for Long-Term Solutions

- What improvements could be made to current reintegration programs to make them more effective?
- What role should welfare organizations, local businesses, and community groups play in reducing recidivism?

- Are there alternative models (such as vocational training or family support) that could work better than the current strategies?
- What policy changes do you think should be implemented to ensure long-term success?

APPENDIX 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WELFARE ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

Focus: Intervention approaches, reintegration challenges, and proposed solutions

1. Role of NGOs in Reintegration Efforts

- Demographic Information: Age, gender, years working with street children, organization and role.
- From your perspective, what are the main reasons why street children are removed from Harare's CBD?
- How involved are welfare organizations in these removals?
- What happens to street children immediately after a removal operation?

2. Challenges Leading to Recidivism

- Why do some reintegration efforts fail? What are the common challenges faced?
- What specific social or economic barriers make street children more likely to return after being reintegrated?
- Do shelters and rehabilitation programs provide enough support to prevent recurrence? If not, what are the shortcomings?

3. Strategies for Effective Reintegration

- What interventions have proven effective in reducing recidivism?
- How can reintegration programs be improved? What specific measures do you suggest?
- What alternative support mechanisms (such as skill-building or mentorship) would help street children transition out of street life?
- How can government and welfare organizations collaborate more effectively?

APPENDIX 4: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

1. Objective of the Observation

To systematically capture behavioral indicators related to forced removal, recidivism, and related reintegration during interview sections in Harare CBD.

2. Key Areas of Observation

Table 1: Observation Checklist

Broad Concepts	Sub-concepts	Yes	No	Comments
Experience with Forced Removal	Does the child show nervousness or discomfort when discussing forced removals?			
	Are there visible emotional reactions (anger, sadness, avoidance) when recalling interactions with authorities)			
	Does the child display hesitation or guarded responses about where they were taken after removal?			
Causes of Recidivism	Does the child show frustration or resignation when discussing why they returned to the streets?			
	How does the child physically react when talking about reintegration programs (defensive, dismissive, hopeful?			

	Are there any patterns of avoidance or distress when mentioning shelter experiences?			
Suggested Measures for Reintegration	Is the child engaged and hopeful when asked about solutions to street life?			
	Does the child express clear preferences about reintegration models (family reunification vs. skill-building)?			
	Is there any noticeable shift in body language when discussing their future possibilities (confidence, anxiety, skepticism)?			

APPENDIX 5: AN APPROVAL LETTER OF RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES, DISASTER & DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BINDURA, ZIMBABWE
WhatsApp : +263773281212
E-mail: jbowora@buse.ac.zw

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

CHAIRPERSON'S OFFICE

Thursday 03 April 2025

TO WHO IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir or Madam

RE: RESEARCH SUPPORT LETTER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STUDENT

I am writing on behalf of the Sustainable Development Department requesting your collaboration on the research of our fourth-year student, FADZAI VHULENGOMA REGISTRATION NUMBER B213625B.

The student is studying for a 4-year Bachelor of Science (Honours) Degree in Development Studies (HBSc.DG). During the fourth year of study, students are required to do field research which require them to do their data collection for research purposes.

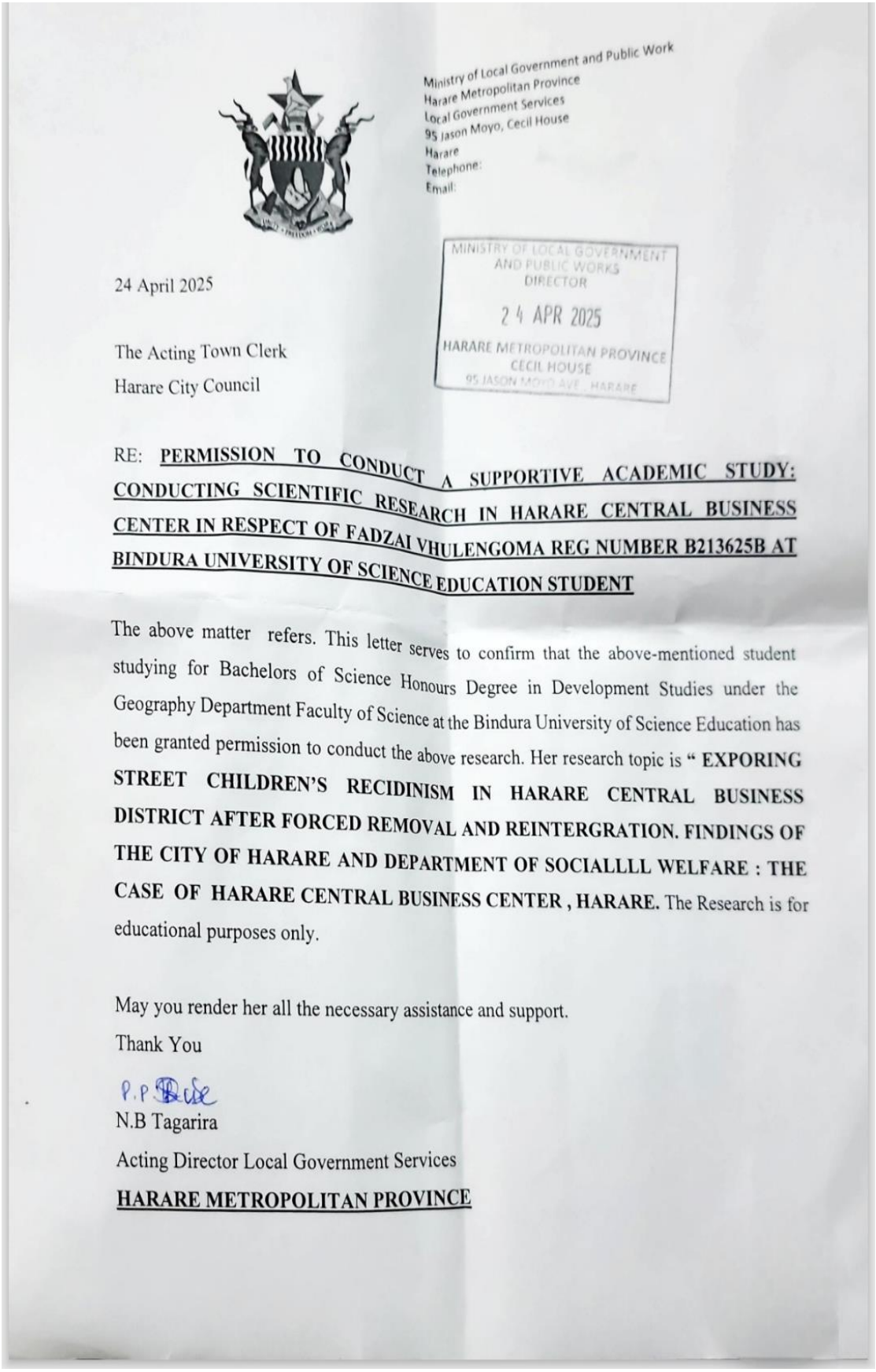
We will be highly obliged to furnish you with additional information about the research project if our request meets your favorable consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. J. Bowora
(Chairperson)

CHAIRMAN
GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

APPENDIX 6: THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORK (HARARE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT)



Ministry of Local Government and Public Work
Harare Metropolitan Province
Local Government Services
95 Jason Moyo, Cecil House
Harare
Telephone:
Email:

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
DIRECTOR
24 APR 2025
HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE
CECIL HOUSE
95 JASON MOYO AVE., HARARE

24 April 2025

The Acting Town Clerk
Harare City Council

RE: **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A SUPPORTIVE ACADEMIC STUDY: CONDUCTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN HARARE CENTRAL BUSINESS CENTER IN RESPECT OF FADZAI VHULENGOMA REG NUMBER B213625B AT BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION STUDENT**

The above matter refers. This letter serves to confirm that the above-mentioned student studying for Bachelors of Science Honours Degree in Development Studies under the Geography Department Faculty of Science at the Bindura University of Science Education has been granted permission to conduct the above research. Her research topic is " **EXPORING STREET CHILDREN'S RECIDINISM IN HARARE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT AFTER FORCED REMOVAL AND REINTERGRATION. FINDINGS OF THE CITY OF HARARE AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIALLLL WELFARE : THE CASE OF HARARE CENTRAL BUSINESS CENTER , HARARE.** The Research is for educational purposes only.

May you render her all the necessary assistance and support.

Thank You

P.P

N.B Tagarira

Acting Director Local Government Services

HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE

APPENDIX 7: PLAGIARISM REPORT

Fadzai Vhulengoma Dissertation.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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