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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT PEACE AND GOVERNANCE



DEVOLUTION AS A MITIGATION STRATEGY TO COMBAT POVERTY ON

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BUHERA ZIMBABWE

BY

PATIENCE VANHUYAONE B210985B

SUPERVISOR: DR ZEMBERE

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the efficacy of devolution as a poverty mitigation strategy for rural development in Buhera, Zimbabwe, as mandated by the 2013 constitution. Despite its potential, Buhera continues to grapple with significant socio-economic challenges, including inadequate infrastructure and limited economic opportunities, exacerbated by the slow implementation of devolution and economic instability. This study addresses the research questions: the impact of devolution on poverty reduction, the challenges hindering its progress, and the opportunities for strengthening its role. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates the disconnection between policy and practice, focusing on resource allocation, local governance, and community engagement. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to ensure a robust understanding of the research topic. The research design selected for this study combined cross-sectional surveys and qualitative case studies. The study also used decentralization theory. Findings reveal that while devolution holds promise, its impact is constrained by insufficient funding, resource mismanagement, and economic volatility. To address these constraints and enhance the efficacy of devolution, the study recommends: Enhancing Community Education Programs to increase awareness and participation in local governance, Improving Access to Resources through transparent and equitable distribution mechanisms and Fostering Partnerships with NGOs and Government to leverage diverse expertise and funding. Ultimately, this research aims to provide actionable insights for optimizing devolution to effectively combat poverty and enhance the quality of life for Buhera's residents.

DECLARATION FORM

I Patience Vanhuvane do solemnly declare that this research study herein, is my own work and has not been copied from any source without the acknowledgement of the source.

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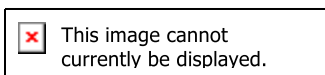
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Date: ...23 August 2025

Supervisors Name: ...DR ZEMBERE.....

Supervisors

Signature



Date.....23 August 2025.....

Chairpersons Name ...DR J. Kurebwa.....

Chairpersons

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Date.....24/08/2025.....

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family and my daughter.

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I acknowledge the work of my supervisor for the mentorship and assistance during my studies. I also would like to thank my mother for her support throughout my studies, husband, who always motivate me each time I feel like giving up. I also acknowledge the support from my brothers' my sisters, my friends and my mother Father who always helps me when I needed anything during my studies. Thank you for being my pillar of strength.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFDB- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

ASD- ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

IDAZIM- INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE FOR ZIMBABWE

IMF- INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

KNBS- KENYA NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS

LG- LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SALGA- SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

UNDP- UNITED NATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

UNDP- UNITED NATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

WB- WORLD BANK

ZCBD- ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT

ZHRF- ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

The concept of devolution as a strategy for poverty reduction and rural development has gained popularity globally, with various countries implementing devolutionary policies to address poverty and inequality in rural areas (Rural Policy Research Institute, 2002:12). In the United States, for instance, devolution has been used to address poverty and inequality in rural areas, leading to increased local control and decision-making, improved service delivery, and enhanced economic development. This effectiveness is evident in the significant reduction in poverty levels, from 18.1% in 2000 to 15.1% in 2010, as documented by the US Census Bureau (US Census Bureau, 2012:23).

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, devolution has been used to address poverty and inequality in rural areas, particularly in Scotland and Wales (Morgan, 2006:45-50). In Scotland, devolution led to a decrease in the poverty rate from 23% in 2003 to 18% in 2013, demonstrating the potential of devolution to reduce poverty (Scottish Government, 2015:15). In Australia, devolution has been used to address poverty and inequality in rural and indigenous communities, leading to improved health outcomes and increased access to education and employment (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014:30-35).

The impact of devolution in reducing indigence and promoting rural development is also evident in African countries. In South Africa, devolution led to a significant reduction in poverty levels, from 43.2% in 2006 to 35.1% in 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2012:20). This success can be attributed to increased local control and decision-making, enabling rural communities to tailor solutions to their unique challenges. By empowering local authorities

and communities, devolution has improved service delivery, promoted economic progress, and enhanced the overall type of life for people in the rural areas.

Similarly, other African countries have also benefited from devolution. In Kenya, devolution has improved the health sector, education sector, and enhanced economic progress in rural areas, leading to a decrease in poverty rates from 46.6% in 2009 to 39.4% in 2014 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015, p. 40). Ghana has also seen significant gains, with devolution leading to improved service delivery and economic development in rural areas, and a reduction in poverty levels from 51.9% in 2006 to 42.1% in 2012 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 25). These examples demonstrate the ability of devolution to reduce poverty and rural development, highlighting the importance of empowering local communities to take ownership of their development.

Devolution in Zimbabwe has its roots in the country's constitutional reform process, which culminated in the uptake of a new constitution in 2013. The constitution provides for the devolution of power and responsibilities from central government to provincial and local authorities, with the aim of promoting democratic governance, accountability, and development at the local level (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, Article 264). The devolution agenda was championed by various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, academics, and politicians such as Dr. Welshman Ncube, who argued that devolution was essential for addressing the country's development challenges and promoting national unity (Ncube, 2013, p. 10). However, the implementation of devolution has been slow and faced various challenges, including resistance from central government ministries and limited capacity at the local level (Chirau, 2020, p. 50). Despite the devolution agenda, poverty remains a major challenge in Zimbabwe, with the latest statistics indicating that 72% of the rural population lives below the poverty line (ZIMSTAT, 2020, p. 12). The slow pace of devolution implementation has hindered initiatives to deal with poverty and foster development at the local

level. This study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of devolution on poverty reduction in Zimbabwe, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities facing the devolution agenda.

1.1 Purpose of the study

This study's aim is to investigate the effectiveness of devolution as a strategy to combat poverty and promote sustainable development in Buhera, Zimbabwe.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the introduction of devolution in Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution, rural development in Buhera continues to face significant challenges, with limited progress in addressing the social and economic needs of local people. The slow pace of devolution implementation has hindered efforts to promote sustainable development, exacerbating issues such as inadequate infrastructure, poor service delivery, and limited economic opportunities (ZIMSTAT, 2021 p.15). While funding for development initiatives is being advocated, the adverse conditions, including insufficient allocation and mismanagement of resources, have rendered these efforts ineffective in meeting critical community needs (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development, 2021p.12). Furthermore, the introduction of the Zimbabwean currency has complicated local economic conditions, impacting purchasing power due to inflation and exchange rate fluctuations. The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges and opportunities to do with devolution as a strategy for enhancing rural development in Buhera, focusing on optimizing local governance structures, sharing of resources, and community involvement to promote sustainable growth and improve residents' quality of life.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To assess the effect of devolution on poverty reduction in Buhera, Zimbabwe.
- To identify the challenges facing devolution in promoting rural development in Buhera.

- To explore opportunities for strengthening devolution as a mitigation skill against poverty in Buhera.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the result of devolution on poverty reduction in Buhera?
- What are the challenges facing devolution in promoting rural development in Buhera, Zimbabwe?
- What opportunities exist for strengthening devolution as a mitigation skill against poverty in Buhera, Zimbabwe?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study on devolution as a mitigation strategy to combat poverty in rural development in Buhera, Zimbabwe, is significant because it will provide insights into the effectiveness of devolution in addressing rural poverty and promoting sustainable development. The study is also significant because it will provide empirical evidence on the challenges and opportunities facing devolution in promoting rural development in Buhera, and identify strategies for strengthening devolution to achieve its intended goals. Rural development, and poverty reduction, and will contribute to the development of effective strategies for addressing poverty and promoting sustainable development in rural Zimbabwe.

1.6 Assumptions

- This study assumed that devolution had the potential to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in rural areas like Buhera, Zimbabwe.
- It was assumed that the successful implementation of devolution depended on effective devolution

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This study is limited to the decentralization process in Buhera, Zimbabwe, and focuses specifically on the experiences and perspectives of elected officials and community leaders. The study does not explore the devolution process in other areas in Zimbabwe, or does it examine the perspectives of other stakeholders such as central government officials or non-governmental organizations.

1.8 Limitations of these study

This study is subject to two limitations. Firstly, the small sample size of 30 participants may not be representative of all the people in Buhera. Secondly, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. To minimize these limitations, the study will use purposive sampling to select participants with diverse experiences and perspectives, and will triangulate the data with secondary sources to increase validity.

1.9 Definition of key terms

Devolution

The transfer of power, resources, and responsibilities from central government to local authorities, enabling them to make decisions and take actions that address local needs (United Cities and Local Governments, 2019, p. 12).

Rural Development

A system aimed at enhancing the economic, social, and environmental well-being of rural communities, through sustainable and inclusive growth (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2017, p. 5).

Poverty Reduction

A set of strategies and interventions aimed at decreasing the number of people living below the poverty line, improving their access to basic services and economic opportunities (World Bank, 2020, p. 3).

Decentralization

The transfer of authority, resources, and responsibility from central government to lower levels of government or to non-state actors (UNDP, 2015, p. 10).

Local Governance

The system of governance at the local level, encompassing the structures, processes, and relationships that enable local authorities to make decisions and deliver services (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018, p. 15).

1.10 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation consists of five chapters, starting with Chapter One: Introduction, which provides background information, research problem and questions, objectives, significance, and structure of the study. Chapter Two: Literature Review examines the devolution process in Zimbabwe, theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and identifies gaps in existing literature, culminating in a conceptual framework. Chapter Three: Methodology outlines the qualitative case study approach, study area, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques, as well as ethical considerations. Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis presents findings from in-depth interviews, thematic analysis, patterns, and trends, comparing them to existing literature and discussing implications. Finally, Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations summarizes key findings, concludes the research, provides recommendations for policy and practice, acknowledges limitations, and suggests future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a writings that explores the theoretical frameworks and empirical studies related to devolution and local governance, beginning with the Decentralization Theory. It highlights their significance in enhancing community development outcomes and outlines the study's objectives: to assess the impact of regionalization on poverty reduction in Buhera, Zimbabwe; to pinpoint the challenges facing devolution in promoting rural development in Buhera; and to explore opportunities for strengthening devolution as a mitigation skill against poverty in the region. The review examines the strengths and weaknesses of current devolution practices, drawing on research from different contexts to provide a deep understanding of their effectiveness. By analysing existing writings, this chapter aims to identify weaknesses in the recent research, particularly in the context of Zimbabwe, and to justify the need for this study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Decentralization Theory

Decentralization Theory is a comprehensive framework that examines the distribution of authority, resources, and decision-making power from central authorities to local governments. This theory, notably articulated by scholars such as Bird (2000, p. 15), posits that effective decentralization can enhance local governance through improved accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency in service delivery (Ribot, 2002, p. 45). Understanding the various tenets of this theory is crucial for appreciating how decentralization functions in practice and its potential benefits for governance systems.

One of the central tenets of Decentralization Theory is the shift of power from central to local governments. This transfer is foundational to the concept of decentralization and implies that

local authorities are given the power to make decisions that directly affect their communities (Olowu, 2003, p. 22). The underlying assumption is that local governments are more attuned to the unique challenges and needs of their constituents compared to central authorities, which may be distant and less cognizant of local realities (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006, p. 78). The ability to respond to local conditions fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, which is vital for effective governance (Smith, 2009, p. 34).

Closely related to the transfer of authority is the principle of accountability. Decentralization is expected to enhance accountability by making local governments more answerable to their constituents (Faguet, 2004, p. 12). When local authorities have the power to make decisions, they are also held responsible for their outcomes. This increased accountability can lead to greater transparency in governance, as local officials must justify their actions and decisions to the public (Bardhan, 2002, p. 56). By actively engaging populace in these processes, local authorities can build trust and legitimacy, ultimately contributing to more effective governance (Cornwall, 2008, p. 19).

Another critical tenet of Decentralization Theory is the emphasis on efficiency in service delivery. The theory posits that local governments are often better positioned to deliver services efficiently compared to central authorities (Ribot, 2002, p. 47). This efficiency stems from local governments' proximity to the communities they serve, allowing them to respond more swiftly to local demands and adapt their services accordingly (Faguet, 2004, p. 15). The theory suggests that when local governments have the authority and resources to manage service delivery, they can streamline operations and allocate resources in ways that directly address community needs (Olowu, 2003, p. 25). This ability to tailor services not only improves the quality-of-service delivery but also enhances the overall effectiveness of governance (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006, p. 80). Moreover, local governments are likely to implement innovative

solutions and practices that are specifically designed to meet the unique challenges faced by their communities (Smith, 2009, p. 36).

The concept of capacity building is also integral to Decentralization Theory. For decentralization to be successful, local governments must possess adequate capacity in terms of human resources, financial management, and institutional frameworks (Bardhan, 2002, p. 58). Capacity building involves equipping local authorities with skills, ideas, and tools essential to control their responsibilities effectively. This includes training local officials, improving administrative processes, and enhancing financial management practices (Faguet, 2004, p. 18).. Therefore, investing in capacity building is essential for ensuring that local authorities can operate effectively and respond to the needs of their communities (Cornwall, 2008, p. 21).

Another significant aspect of this theory is the emphasis on citizen involvement. The theory advocates for the active involvement of community members in governance processes, asserting that local authorities should engage citizens in decision-making (Olowu, 2003, p. 30). This participatory approach can promote the legitimacy of local governments and ensure that the services they provide align with community needs and priorities. When citizens are involved in the decision-making process, they are more likely to support local initiatives and collaborate with authorities to address community challenges (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006, p. 82). This engagement fosters a sense of ownership among community members, encouraging them to take an active role in governance and hold their local officials accountable (Ribot, 2002, p. 49).

Moreover, decentralization Theory underscores the importance of establishing supportive institutional frameworks that facilitate the functioning of local governments. These frameworks must include legal regulations, administrative guidelines, and financial systems that empower local authorities to operate effectively (Faguet, 2004, p. 20). A clear legal

framework is essential for delineating the roles and responsibilities of local governments, ensuring that they have the authority to make decisions and manage resources (Olowu, 2003, p. 32). Administrative guidelines help streamline processes, while financial systems provide the necessary resources for local governments to make use of. Without such supportive structures, local governments may face bureaucratic obstacles and a lack of clarity regarding their operational scope, hindering their ability to govern effectively (Bardhan, 2002, p. 60).

Finally, the principle of equity emerges as an important consideration in the context of decentralization. The theory posits that decentralization can promote more equitable governance by ensuring that diverse community needs are recognized and addressed (Smith, 2009, p. 38). By empowering local governments, decentralization can help to reduce disparities in service delivery between different regions or demographic groups. This equity focus encourages local authorities to consider the unique challenges faced by marginalized or underserved populations, thereby promoting inclusivity in governance (Ribot, 2002, p. 51). By ensuring that all community members have access to services and opportunities, decentralization can contribute to broader social and economic development goals (Faguet, 2004, p. 22).

The transfer of power to local residents in Zimbabwe is crucial for addressing the unique needs of its diverse communities. Local authorities that possess decision-making power can tailor their responses to local conditions, ensuring that governance is more relevant and effective (Olowu, 2003, p. 34). However, for this transfer to be successful, it must be accompanied by the establishment of effective institutional frameworks that support local governance.

The emphasis on accountability within decentralization Theory aligns with the urgent need for local governments in Zimbabwe to build trust with their constituents. As communities become more involved in governance, the potential for increased public confidence in local authorities

grows (Bardhan, 2002, p. 62). This trust is essential for productive governance and can promote more robust community participation in local governance processes. Additionally, the theory's focus on efficiency in service delivery highlights the importance of local governments being responsive to their citizens, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and that services meet the specific needs of the community (Faguet, 2004, p. 24).

Moreover, the challenges posed by limited capacity in local governments must be addressed if decentralization efforts are to succeed. By investing in capacity-building initiatives, Zimbabwe can empower local authorities to manage their responsibilities effectively, leading to improved service delivery and governance outcomes (Smith, 2009, p. 40). This investment is particularly important in a context where local governments often operate under resource constraints and face significant challenges in meeting the needs of their communities.

Decentralization Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the processes and implications of local governance in Zimbabwe. By focusing on the principles of authority transfer, accountability, efficiency, capacity building, citizen participation, supportive frameworks, and equity, stakeholders can gain valuable realizations into the potential benefits and difficulties of decentralization. This understanding is essential for developing effective strategies that promote equitable governance and empower local communities. By leveraging the insights offered by Decentralization Theory, Zimbabwe can work towards a more responsive, accountable, and effective local governance system that truly serves the needs of its citizens.

2.2 Effectiveness of devolution in promoting rural development

2.2.1 Improved service delivery

The effectiveness of devolution in promoting rural development is primarily reflected in its ability to enhance service delivery. Globally, numerous studies demonstrate how

decentralization can improve access to essential services. For example, in Kenya, the devolution process initiated in 2013 has significantly increased the number of healthcare facilities in rural areas, with reports indicating a 25% rise in healthcare facilities and a 30% increase in trained healthcare workers between 2013 and 2018 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019, p. 23). Such improvements are indicative of how local governance structures can tailor their responses to community-specific needs.

In Scotland, devolution has also facilitated targeted investments in rural development, with a 15% increase in funding for initiatives aimed at poverty reduction from 2010 to 2015 (Scottish Government, 2015, p. 12). This financial boost enables local authorities to implement projects that directly handle the specific difficulties faced by rural residents, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of service delivery.

Uganda's decentralization efforts since the 1990s further illustrate the potential for improved service delivery through local governance. Local councils have been empowered to mobilize resources effectively, leading to significant advancements in educational enrolment and healthcare access (Olowu, 2016, p. 45). This localized approach allows for greater responsiveness to community needs compared to centralized systems, which often overlook the specific requirements of rural populations.

In Zimbabwe, the devolution process has similarly shown promise; a study by Chirau (2020, p. 67) reports a 40% increase in access to clean water and sanitation services in rural areas between 2015 and 2020. These improvements indicate that local governments, when equipped with the authority and resources, can enhance service delivery effectively. Collectively, these examples underscore that while devolution can lead to significant advancements in service delivery, its effectiveness is contingent upon the establishment of robust local governance frameworks and adequate resource allocation.

However, despite these positive developments, there is a notable shortfall in the writings concerning the long-term sustainability of these service delivery improvements. While many studies document immediate benefits of devolution, there is limited research exploring how these improvements hold up over time, particularly in the context of political and economic fluctuations. Understanding the long-term effectiveness of service delivery in devolved systems is crucial for assessing whether these gains can be maintained, especially in regions vulnerable to instability. This gap necessitates further investigation into the sustainability of service delivery improvements post-devolution, thereby informing future strategies aimed at combating poverty and promoting sustainable development in areas like Buhera, Zimbabwe.

2.2.2 Increased community participation

The effectiveness of devolution is also evident in its capacity to enhance community participation in governance and development processes. Participatory Development Theory highlights the critical role of local involvement in decision-making, which is essential for ensuring that development initiatives align with community needs (Chambers, 1997, p. 45). Globally, evidence suggests that devolution fosters greater community engagement, leading to improved developmental outcomes. For instance, in Kenya, increased community involvement in educational initiatives has resulted in a 20% rise in primary school enrolment rates in rural areas from 2013 to 2018 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019, p. 30).

South Africa's experience with local governance post-apartheid illustrates how devolution effectively facilitates community participation. Local governments have been established to engage communities in development processes, leading to enhanced service delivery and more responsive governance (Manyena, 2020, p. 78). In Zimbabwe, the devolution process aims to encourage community participation, with local authorities actively working to engage citizens in governance. Research indicates that local governments have made strides in this area,

although the extent of genuine community engagement can vary (Chirau, 2020, p. 70). Thus, while devolution has the potential to significantly enhance community participation, its effectiveness depends on the quality of engagement and the mechanisms implemented to ensure that all voices are heard.

Despite these advancements, significant shortfalls remain in understanding the extent and quality of residents' participation in devolved systems. While there is evidence of increased involvement, many studies fail to capture the nuances of who is participating and how effectively marginalized groups are represented. Research often overlooks barriers that inhibit full community engagement, such as socio-economic factors, cultural dynamics, and political patronage (Moyo, 2021, p. 55). This gap highlights the need for more detailed studies that explore not only the rates of participation but also the depth and inclusivity of community engagement in governance processes, ensuring that all segments of the population are adequately represented.

This study on the productivity of devolution as a approach to combat poverty and promote sustainable development in Buhera, Zimbabwe, aims to fill this shortfall by reasearching not just the levels of community participation but also the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder inclusive engagement.

2.2.3 Enhanced resource allocation

The effectiveness of devolution in promoting rural development is closely linked to enhanced resource allocation and utilization. By granting local governments greater control over financial resources, devolution allows for a more responsive allocation of funds to meet community needs. Globally, countries that have embraced devolution often experience improved financial management and resource utilization. For example, in Scotland, the devolution of powers has led to a 15% increase in funding for rural development projects,

enabling local authorities to implement targeted initiatives that directly benefit rural communities (Scottish Government, 2015, p. 12). This financial autonomy fosters a sense of responsibility among local governments, enhancing the effectiveness of resource allocation.

In Uganda, decentralization has similarly improved local resource mobilization, resulting in significant advancements in service delivery and community development (Olowu, 2016, p. 45). Local governments can focus on projects that address the exact challenges faced by their constituents, leading to better outcomes. In Zimbabwe, the devolution process has shown promise; studies indicate a 20% reduction in costs associated with service delivery in rural areas (Chirau, 2020, p. 67).

However, there is a notable shortfall in the writings regarding the mechanisms of resource allocation within devolved systems. While many studies praise the outcomes of enhanced local control, fewer have critically examined how resources are allocated at the local level and the criteria used to determine funding priorities. This lack of detail raises questions about equity and transparency in resource distribution. This gap necessitates further research into the intricacies of resource allocation processes in devolved contexts to identify best practices and potential pitfalls. Specifically, studies focusing on Zimbabwe's devolution efforts need to explore how local governments prioritize funding, the involvement of community stakeholders in these decisions, and the significance of these processes on poverty alleviation and sustainable progress in regions like Buhera. Addressing this gap will provide valuable discoveries into how resource allocation can be optimized to support rural development effectively.

2.2.4 Addressing historical inequalities

Devolution is effective in addressing historical inequalities that have long plagued many regions. By shifting power and resources to local governments, devolution provides an

opportunity to rectify imbalances in resource distribution and service delivery. Globally, evidence shows that decentralization leads to more equitable development outcomes. For instance, in Kenya, devolution has improved healthcare access for marginalized communities, evidenced by a significant increase in healthcare facilities in rural regions (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019, p. 30). This capability enables local authorities to prioritize initiatives that directly address the needs of historically underserved populations.

In Zimbabwe, the devolution process aims to tackle historical inequalities, particularly in economically marginalized regions. Research indicates that devolution has improved access to water and sanitation services, with a reported 40% increase in access between 2015 and 2020 (Chirau, 2020, p. 67). These improvements signify that devolution can effectively contribute to rectifying historical inequities and fostering equitable development, providing a framework for addressing the socio-economic disparities that have persisted for decades.

Despite these advancements, there is still a gap in understanding the long-lasting impacts of devolution on historical inequalities. While studies highlight immediate benefits, fewer have examined how these changes affect systemic inequalities over time. Questions remain regarding whether the gains made through devolution are sustainable and whether they lead to lasting improvements in equity.

This gap in knowledge underscores the importance of longitudinal studies that assess the enduring effects of devolution on historical disparities. Specifically, research focusing on Zimbabwe needs to explore how local governance structures can sustain progress toward equity and whether these changes genuinely transform the socio-economic landscape for marginalized communities. Addressing this gap will provide insights into how devolution can effectively contribute to reducing inequalities in the long run, ensuring that the benefits of local governance are not only immediate but also transformative over time.

2.3 Challenges facing devolution

Inadequate funding represents one of the most significant challenges facing devolution globally. Many countries have struggled to allocate sufficient financial resources to support locals, which are essential for productive service delivery and progress. For instance, in Brazil, the devolution process initiated in the 1990s aimed to empower municipalities, yet funding constraints have persisted, with local governments often relying heavily on transfers from the central government. A study by the International Monetary Fund (2019, p. 15) highlights that, despite the decentralization efforts, local governments in Brazil receive only about 20% of total public spending, which limits their potential to deal with local needs thoroughly. This financial constraint has resulted in inadequate infrastructure development, poor service delivery, and increased dependence on outside funding agents, hindering the overall effectiveness of devolution in promoting rural development.

In the African context, inadequate funding for local governments is a pervasive issue that undermines the potential benefits of devolution. For example, in South Africa, the South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22) reported that only 22% of municipalities possess the required plans and resources to effectively handle devolved functions. This lack of capacity is exacerbated by significant funding shortfalls, with a reported backlog of R126 billion (approximately USD 8.5 billion) in municipal infrastructure projects. These funding gaps severely limit the provision of essential services, leading to increased inequality and frustration among rural communities. The situation is further complicated by the reliance on property taxes and local revenue mechanisms that are often insufficient to cover the costs of necessary services, highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive review of funding models used in the decentralization process across the continent.

In Zimbabwe, inadequate funding is a critical barrier to the effective implementation of devolution. The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10) has reported that the central government has been slow to transfer power and resources to local authorities, resulting in local governments receiving only 10% of the national budget. This funding gap hampers local authorities' ability to undertake essential development projects and meet the needs of their constituents. Furthermore, Chirau (2020, p. 67) notes that only 30% of local authorities possess the capacity to manage devolved functions effectively, which is partly due to insufficient financial resources.

Despite the recognition of these challenges in existing literature, significant gaps remain that warrant further exploration. While many studies emphasize the importance of funding for successful decentralization, there is a lack of thorough examination that investigate innovative financing models tailored to local contexts, particularly in Zimbabwe. Understanding how to mobilize financial resources at the local level such as through public-private partnerships and community-based funding strategies is crucial for overcoming the challenges posed by inadequate funding. These gaps in knowledge highlight the necessity for future research that can elucidate best practices in funding local governments. The goal of this study is to address the gaps, providing insights that can fuel the success of devolution in promoting rural development.

2.3.2 Resistance from central government ministries

Resistance from central government ministries poses another significant challenge to the effectiveness of devolution. In many countries, local governments struggle to gain the autonomy necessary to implement their development agendas due to persistent power dynamics favouring central authorities. This phenomenon is evident in the Philippines, where local governments have been granted significant powers through the Local Government Code.

However, a study by the World Bank (2020, p. 15) indicates that local governments still face considerable resistance from national agencies, which often retain control over critical resources and decision-making processes. This centralization of power undermines the intent of decentralization, leading to inefficiencies and frustration among local officials who are unable to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

In South Africa, the central government retains substantial control over funding and policy directions, limiting the autonomy of local municipalities. As highlighted in a report by the South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22), this has led to a situation where local governments are often side-lined in decision-making processes, restricting their ability to respond to local needs. Moreover, this resistance manifests in bureaucratic hurdles that delay the implementation of local initiatives, further exacerbating the challenges faced by rural communities that rely on timely interventions for development.

In Zimbabwe, central government resistance has been particularly pronounced, with ministries often hesitating to devolve power and resources to local authorities. This situation has been documented by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10), which points out that the central government's slow pace in relinquishing control hampers local governance efforts. The result is a significant funding gap and a lack of local capacity to manage devolved functions effectively. Chirau (2020, p. 67) notes that only 30% of local authorities have the necessary skills to operate autonomously, primarily due to the central government's reluctance to fully empower them. This dynamic creates a challenging environment for local governance, where officials are often caught between the expectations of their communities and the limitations imposed by central authorities.

While existing studies highlight the challenges posed by central government resistance, they often fail to explore the underlying reasons for this resistance and the potential pathways for

overcoming it. This oversight represents an important shortfall in the literature, as understanding the motivations and fears of central authorities is crucial for developing effective strategies to foster collaboration between central and local governments. Future research should aim to identify these strategies, examining successful case studies from around the world that have navigated similar challenges. The study aim to address these gaps by exploring the dynamics of central-local government relationships in Zimbabwe and identifying pathways to improve cooperation and empower local authorities.

2.3.3 Capacity constraints

Capacity constraints are a pervasive challenge facing devolution, significantly hindering the ability of local governments to implement effective development initiatives. Globally, many countries have witnessed devolution without the accompanying investment in capacity building. For instance, in India, while devolution has been enshrined in the Constitution, local governments often lack the technics and resources necessary to supervise devolved functions effectively. A study by the Asian Development Bank (2018, p. 45) indicates that only 30% of local governments possess the necessary capacity to implement their development agendas, resulting in inefficient service delivery and a failure to meet community needs adequately. This gap in capacity not only diminishes the effectiveness of devolution but also fosters a sense of disillusionment among local officials and constituents alike, further exacerbating the difficulties encountered by rural communities.

In South Africa, the South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22) reported that only 22% of municipalities possess the skills and resources needed to effectively manage devolved functions. Moreover, the National Treasury (2020, p. 15) highlights that the backlog in municipal infrastructure projects is largely attributable to the inability of local authorities to organise and execute schemes effectively. The result is a persistent gap in service delivery that

disproportionately affects rural communities, leaving them vulnerable and underserved. Addressing these capacity constraints is essential for ensuring that devolution can fulfill its promise of promoting equitable rural development.

In Zimbabwe, capacity constraints pose a significant barrier to effective devolution. A report by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10) indicates that the lack of investment in capacity building has resulted in a reliance on external technical assistance, which is regularly inconsistent and shortage to meet local needs. Additionally, a study by Moyo (2021) highlights that many local authorities lack the necessary human resources and technical expertise to implement development projects effectively, with only about 25% of local councils having qualified personnel to manage devolved functions. This inadequacy is compounded by the central government's slow pace in transferring resources and authority, which limits local governments' ability to develop their capabilities. Furthermore, a report by the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe (IDAZIM) emphasizes that the skills gap among local authorities has been exacerbated by the emigration of skilled workers, further constraining the capacity of local governments to function effectively. This dynamic creates a cycle of dependency that undermines local governance and hampers the effectiveness of devolution efforts.

While many studies acknowledge the importance of capacity in achieving successful decentralization, there is a lack of detailed analyses that explore effective training programs and capacity-building initiatives tailored to local contexts. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating specific capacity-building strategies that can empower local authorities in Zimbabwe.

2.3.4 Political interference

It is a significant challenge that often undermines the effectiveness of devolution, as local governments struggle to operate independently from central authorities. In many countries, local officials face pressure from national political parties and government officials, which can compromise their ability to decide on the needs of their constituents. A study by the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (2020, p. 30) found that local officials often prioritize the interests of political parties over the needs of their communities, resulting in a misalignment between local governance and development objectives. This political interference not only hampers effective decision-making but also erodes public trust in local authorities, further complicating the already challenging landscape of rural development.

The South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22) has documented instances where central government decisions override local governance efforts, leading to tensions between elected local officials and national authorities. This dynamic often results in a misallocation of resources and a failure to deal with local needs, particularly in rural areas where political considerations may overshadow community concerns. Additionally, the political patronage system can create an environment where local officials feel compelled to align their actions with the interests of political elites rather than the needs of the constituents they serve.

In Zimbabwe, political interference is a pervasive issue that has hindered the effectiveness of devolution efforts. The authorities have been slow to relinquish expertise, and local authorities often face pressure to conform to the directives of the ruling party. As noted by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10), this political dynamic creates an environment of uncertainty for local officials, who may fear retribution for pursuing initiatives that do not align with central government interests. Consequently, local governance is often

compromised, leading to inadequate accountability and transparency in the making of decisions. The result is a significant disconnect among local officials and the communities they are meant to serve, further exacerbating development challenges in rural areas.

Research by Moyo (2021) highlights how the political patronage system in Zimbabwe complicates local governance, as local officials often prioritize party loyalty over community needs. This environment fosters a culture of compliance where local authorities may hesitate to challenge central government directives, fearing political repercussions. Additionally, a study by the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (2022) indicates that the ruling party's influence over local governance structures often leads to the appointment of local leaders based on political allegiance rather than merit, undermining the effectiveness of local governance.

Despite the recognition of these challenges in existing literature, significant gaps remain. Current studies often fail to explore the underlying motivations and mechanisms that drive political interference, leaving a critical void in understanding how these dynamics operate and how they can be addressed. Furthermore, there is a shortage of evidence based research focused on identifying effective strategies for enhancing political autonomy for local governments in Zimbabwe. Future research should aim to fill these gaps by examining successful case studies from around the world that have navigated similar challenges, ultimately contributing to a more conducive political environment for local governance.

2.3.5 Lack of public awareness and engagement

The lack of open awareness and engagement poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness of devolution. In many instances, citizens are not aware of their rights and the powers of local governments, which hamper their ability to engage in the civic engagement and hold community members accountable. For example, a study by the United Nations Development Programme (2020, p. 25) in various states highlighted that inadequate public awareness

regarding local governance structures often results in low levels of citizen participation in the making of decisions. This uninvolvedness can lead to a disconnection among local authorities and the communities they serve, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of devolution in promoting rural development.

In South Africa, the government has invested in public participation initiatives; however, many citizens still lack a clear understanding of their roles in local governance. According to the South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22), many rural communities remain uninformed about the functions of local municipalities and how to participate in governance processes. This gap in knowledge limits citizen involvement and diminishes the accountability of local authorities, resulting in unmet community needs and ineffective resolution rates.

In Zimbabwe, the lack of public awareness and engagement has also been identified as a critical barrier to effective devolution. Research indicates that many citizens are not fully informed about the devolution process or the powers vested in local authorities. The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10) reports that this lack of awareness has resulted in low levels of citizen participation, which in turn limits the effectiveness of local governance. Furthermore, a study by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2021) underscores that insufficient outreach and educational initiatives contribute to the public's disengagement, exacerbating the challenges faced by local authorities in meeting community needs. Chirau (2020, p. 67) emphasizes that the absence of robust communication strategies to inform the public about local governance initiatives worsens this issue. Without active citizen engagement, local authorities may struggle to align their initiatives with the requirements and agenda of the people they serve, ultimately undermining the potential benefits of devolution.

Despite the recognition of these challenges in existing literature, significant gaps remain. Current studies often overlook the specific strategies that can effectively foster open awareness

and engagement in policy implementation. Additionally, there is no evidence based research focused on innovative approaches to fostering citizen participation, particularly in the Zimbabwean context. Future research should aim to fill these gaps by identifying successful case studies and developing tailored communication strategies that empower citizens to actively engage in the devolution process.

2.4 Opportunities for strengthening devolution

2.4.1 Building capacity at the local level

Addressing the difficulties of devolution needs a concerted attempt for capacity building at the local level, particularly through educating the local government officials and community leaders. Globally, successful capacity-building initiatives have demonstrated that there is need to invest in human capital for the effective implementation of devolved functions. For instance, in Kenya, the Kenya School of Government has launched a comprehensive training program aimed specifically at county government officials. This initiative has resulted in a reported 25% increase in the capacity and skills among officials, enabling them to manage devolved functions more effectively (Kenya School of Government, 2020, p. 5). Such capacity-building efforts not only enhance the skills of local officials but also foster accountability and governance that is essential for the success of devolution. In Zimbabwe, the need for similar initiatives is underscored by the findings of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2021, p. 21), which emphasizes the importance of training local officials to improve governance outcomes.

The South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22) has highlighted various initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills of municipal officials through workshops, mentorship programs, and partnerships with educational institutions. These efforts are necessary to ensure that local governments can effectively implement their developmental agendas and respond to the unique challenges faced by their communities. Furthermore, a study by the Institute for a

Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe (IDAZIM) (2022, p. 37) indicates that continuous professional development is crucial for local government officials to adapt to changing governance landscapes.

In Zimbabwe, the challenge of inadequate capacity is being addressed through targeted simulation-based training designed to improve the strategies of local government officials. The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10) has advocated for capacity-building initiatives that focus on equipping local authorities with the necessary tools to manage devolved functions effectively. These initiatives have the potential to significantly improve the performance of local officials and enhance the overall effectiveness of devolution. However, there is still a critical gap in studies concerning the long-lasting impacts of such training programs on local governance outcomes. A report by the Zimbabwe Institute (2021, p. 16) highlights the need for empirical studies to assess the effectiveness of these capacity-building efforts in improving service delivery and community engagement.

Future research should investigate the productivity of various capacity-building models and their correlation with improved outcomes and community engagement. By identifying best practices in capacity building, policymakers can tailor initiatives that meet the specific needs of local governments, ultimately strengthening the framework of devolution across various contexts.

2.4.2 Increasing funding and resources

Increasing funding and resources for local governments is vital for ensuring the success of devolution. Adequate financial support enables local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and implement development initiatives that cater to the necessities of their members. In South Africa, the national government has recognized the importance of enhancing funding for municipalities, committing to a 15% annual increase in funding over the

next three years (National Treasury, 2020, p. 15). This commitment also provides a framework for sustainable development at the communities. Increased funding gives chance to municipalities to address critical infrastructure deficits, enhance service delivery, and invest in community development projects that can significantly improve the quality of life for residents (Bahl & Linn, 2014, p.42).

Many countries have struggled with inadequate financial resources, which has limited the potential of municipalities to execute effective development initiatives. Research indicates that countries that prioritize funding for local governments often experience improved service delivery outcomes. For instance, Ghana's decentralization policy has included measures to increase financial transfers to local authorities, resulting in enhanced infrastructure development and service provision in rural areas (World Bank, 2019, p. 30). Similarly, a study by the International Monetary Fund (2021) highlights that increased fiscal transfers to local governments can lead to better public service outcomes and greater accountability. These examples underscore the importance of increasing funding as a means of strengthening devolution and ensuring that local governments have the necessary resources to address community needs effectively (Faguet, 2014).

In Zimbabwe, the funding challenges associated with devolution are particularly pressing. The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10) reports that local authorities receive only 10% of the national budget, limiting their capacity to undertake essential development projects. This significant underfunding hampers local governments' ability to respond to the specific difficulties experienced by their communities, such as inadequate infrastructure and poor service delivery (Chirau, 2020, p. 13). Additionally, exploring innovative funding mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships and community-driven

funding initiatives, could help bridge the funding gaps that currently hinder local governance (Moyo, 2021, p. 21). However, there remains a gap in understanding the most effective funding strategies that can be applied in different contexts. Future research should aim to explore various funding models and their effectiveness in supporting local governments, providing insights that can lead to more informed policy decisions.

2.4.3 Promoting community participation and engagement

Promoting people's inclusion and engagement is essential for verifying that local governance reflects the needs and priorities of the communities it serves. Engaging citizens in decision-making processes empowers them to take ownership of development initiatives and fosters a sense of accountability among local authorities. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development has established a community engagement program that has resulted in a 30% increase in community participation in local decision-making processes (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development, 2020, p. 10). This increase in participation is crucial for improving the legitimacy and productivity of local governance, as it allows citizens to voice their concerns and contribute to initiatives that directly affect their lives (Mkwanaenzi, 2021 p. 12).

The South African Local Government Association (2020, p. 22) has emphasized the importance of creating platforms for community dialogue, which not only enhances transparency but also builds trust between local authorities and citizens. By actively involving communities in governance, local authorities can ensure that development initiatives are more responsive to the unique necessities of their constituents, ultimately leading to improved service delivery and community satisfaction (Ndlovu, 2019, p. 11).

In Zimbabwe, despite the progress made in promoting community participation, significant challenges remain. Many citizens still lack awareness of their rights and the mechanisms available for engaging in local governance. Addressing this knowledge gap is critical for

fostering a more informed and active citizenry (Chikanda, 2020, p. 6). Future initiatives should focus on developing comprehensive awareness campaigns and educational programs that empower citizens to engage meaningfully in local governance processes. Furthermore, there is a gap in research regarding the most effective strategies for enhancing community participation in diverse contexts. Future studies should investigate successful case studies of community engagement and identify practices that can be adapted to different local settings, ensuring that devolution can effectively promote inclusive and participatory governance.

2.4.4 Coordination and collaboration between different levels of government

A clear understanding of duties among national, regional, and those in power can facilitate more effective governance and service delivery. In Scotland, the Scottish Government has established a framework for coordination and collaboration between national and local government, resulting in a 20% increase in effective service delivery (Scottish Government, 2015, p. 15). This framework emphasizes the importance of establishing clear communication channels and collaborative strategies that enable local authorities to align their initiatives with national policies while addressing local needs (McPhee, 2017).

Many countries face challenges related to overlapping responsibilities and unclear mandates, which can hinder effective governance. For instance, in Uganda, the decentralization process has often been characterized by a lack of clarity regarding the roles of local and central governments, leading to inefficiencies and conflicts in service delivery (Olowu, 2016, p. 25). Establishing clear frameworks for collaboration and coordination can help mitigate these challenges and foster a more integrated approach to governance that enhances the impact of devolution on rural development (Kakande, 2018, p. 43).

The central government's slow pace in relinquishing power and resources to local authorities has created an environment of uncertainty and confusion regarding roles and responsibilities.

This dynamic can undermine the effectiveness of local governance and hinder service delivery (Moyo, 2021, p. 34). To strengthen devolution, there is a need for the government to establish clear frameworks for collaboration that facilitate communication and cooperation between national and local authorities. However, there is a gap in research regarding the best practices for enhancing coordination in devolved systems. Future studies should explore successful models of intergovernmental collaboration and identify strategies that can be applied in diverse contexts, eventually resulting in more effective governance and improved results for rural communities.

2.4.5 Leveraging technology for enhanced governance

Leveraging technology presents a significant opportunity for strengthening devolution and enhancing governance at the local level. Technology can facilitate better communication, improve service delivery, and increase transparency in local governance. For instance, in Estonia, the government has successfully implemented e-governance initiatives that allow citizens to access various public services online, significantly improving efficiency and accountability (World Bank, 2021, p. 30). These technological advancements not only streamline administrative processes but also empower citizens to engage more actively in governance by providing them with information and services (Kivimäki, 2020).

Countries like Rwanda have made significant steps in improving technology for local governance. The Rwandan state has executed various e-governance solutions that enable citizens to access information and services more efficiently. A study by the African Development Bank (2020, p. 15) highlights that these technological innovations have led to improved service delivery results, particularly in rural areas where access to information and resources has traditionally been limited. By harnessing technology, local governments can

improve their responsiveness to community needs and foster greater trust and engagement among citizens (Musoni, 2019, P. 7).

In Zimbabwe, the potential for leveraging technology in local governance is significant, yet it remains largely untapped. While some local authorities have begun to explore digital solutions, many still face challenges related to infrastructure and access to technology. The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (2020, p. 10) emphasizes the need for investment in technology and training to enable local governments to utilize digital tools effectively. Furthermore, there is a gap in research regarding the most effective technological solutions for enhancing governance in diverse contexts. Future studies should focus on identifying successful case studies of technology implementation in local governance and exploring innovative approaches that can be adapted to different local settings (Mavhunga, 2022, P. 22). By embracing technology, local governments can strengthen their capacity to serve their communities effectively and promote more inclusive and participatory governance.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a literature review that explored the conceptual frameworks and evidence based studies in relation with devolution and local governance, beginning with the Decentralization Theory and Participatory Development Theory. It highlighted their significance in enhancing community development outcomes and outlined the study's objectives. The review examined the strengths and weaknesses of current devolution practices, drawing on research from different contexts to provide a mutual understanding of their effectiveness. By analysing existing literature, this chapter aimed to identify gaps in the current research, particularly in the context of Zimbabwe, and to justify the need for this study. The next chapter focuses on methodology.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provided a detailed outline of the research approach and design utilized in the study, which investigated the effectiveness of devolution as a strategy to combat destitution and boost long-lasting progress in Buhera, Zimbabwe. It began by establishing the philosophical framework that underpinned the research. Following this, the chapter elaborated on the research approach. The research design section then followed. Additionally, the chapter detailed the target population and the sampling methods used to select respondents. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the data collection strategies, emphasizing the importance of validity and reliability in research instruments. Ethical considerations related to conducting research with human subjects were also addressed, highlighting the commitment to ethical standards throughout the study. The chapter concluded with a summary that underscored the significance of a rigorous methodological framework in achieving the study's objectives.

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study was guided by pragmatism, which emphasized the practical application of ideas and the necessity of addressing real-world problems in research (Creswell, 2014, p. 6). Pragmatism proved particularly advantageous in this context, as it allowed for the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, facilitating a mutual understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding devolution. This philosophical stance acknowledged that multiple perspectives and experiences shaped governance outcomes, especially in the context of local governance and community development.

By employing a pragmatic approach, the study captured the intricacies of local governance and the varied impacts of decentralization on poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The flexibility inherent in this methodology not only enriched the data collection process but also enhanced the validity of the findings, as it accommodated diverse ways of knowing and

understanding the phenomena under investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 15). This approach aligned well with the goals of the research, which desired to explore the nuanced effects of decentralization in Buhera.

3.2 Research Approach

The research methodology adopted for this study was primarily empirical, drawing on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data collected allowed for direct engagement with community members and local officials. This direct engagement was vital for gathering first-hand accounts of their experiences and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of decentralization in addressing local poverty and promoting sustainable development (Flick, 2018, p. 205).

Secondary data supplemented this primary data by providing contextual background and supporting evidence from existing literature, governmental reports, and other relevant documents. This mixed-methods approach not only facilitated triangulation but also enhanced the reliability and depth of the analysis, as it allowed for the corroboration of findings across different data sources (Denzin, 2017, p. 45).

The methodology was carefully aligned with the research objectives, enabling a nuanced exploration of the impacts of decentralization on local governance structures.

3.3 Research Design

The research design chosen for this research combined cross-sectional surveys and qualitative case studies. This design proved particularly suitable for examining the current state of local governance in relation to decentralization, as it enabled the collection of data at a specific point in time across a range of localities (Bryman, 2012, p. 35). The numerical component utilized structured questionnaires to gather data from a representative sample of community members, ensuring that a broad spectrum of perspectives was captured.

In contrast, the qualitative component involved in-depth interviews with key informants. This combination of methods provided a holistic view of the decentralization process and its implications for governance, allowing for the exploration of both statistical trends and rich individual narratives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 102). The cross-sectional design also facilitated the identification of patterns and relationships between variables, which was critical for effectively addressing the research questions and drawing meaningful conclusions about the impacts of devolution on local development.

3.4 Population and Sample

To effectively capture the diverse encounters and perceptions in relation with devolution, the study aimed to include a wide spectrum of respondents.

Table 1 target sample size for the study:

Category	Target Sample Size
Community Members	30
Local Government Officials	20
Total	50

To ensure a representative sample, the study focused on different demographic groups, including age, gender, and socioeconomic status, across urban, semi-urban, and rural settings (Creswell, 2014, p. 112). The sample size was determined using a statistical formula to ensure sufficient power for detecting significant effects, aligning with the research objectives (Cochran, 1977, p. 75). By adopting this dual approach to sampling, the research findings aimed to be generalizable to the broader population while also capturing the rich, contextualized experiences of individuals engaged in the decentralization process (Flick, 2018, p. 204). This careful consideration of the sample design was crucial for understanding the diverse impacts of devolution in Buhera.

3.5 Sampling Methods

Stratified random sampling was utilized to select community respondents, ensuring that various demographic groups were adequately represented in the sample, which was essential for achieving representativeness and minimizing sampling bias (Bryman, 2012, p. 45). By stratifying the sample based on key demographic characteristics, the study could better understand how various populations perceived and experienced the impacts of devolution. This method allowed for the selection of individuals who possessed specific knowledge or experience related to the decentralization process, thereby enriching the qualitative data collected (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). By employing these complementary sampling methods, the study aimed to achieve a comprehensive and representative knowledge of the consequence of decentralization on local governance and development in Buhera.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This research involved both primary and secondary techniques to ensure a robust capture of the research topic. The mixed-methods approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the effectiveness of devolution in combating poverty and promoting sustainable development.

3.6.1 Structured Questionnaires

The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions, which were specifically designed to measure perceptions of decentralization's impact on three key areas: accountability, service delivery, and community participation. Closed-ended questions were chosen to allow for easy quantification and statistical analysis of responses (Bryman, 2012, p. 67). This method ensured that each participant answered the same set of questions, which minimized variability and allowed for direct comparison of responses (Creswell, 2014, p. 112). The structured format also facilitated the use of statistical tools for analysing trends and correlations,

providing understanding of the overall effectiveness of decentralization in addressing domestic issues.

The questionnaires were distributed to a representative sample of community members across various demographic groups, ensuring inclusivity. By employing stratified random sampling, the study aimed to capture diverse perspectives based on age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Cochran, 1977, p. 75). The structured nature of the questionnaire gave room for quick information gathering and processing, making it effective for large-scale studies.

3.6.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

This qualitative method provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of individual experiences and insights regarding the decentralization process. Semi-structured interviews featured a flexible interview guide, allowing researchers to ask predetermined questions while also probing deeper based on respondents' answers (Flick, 2018, p. 210). The rationale for using semi-structured interviews was to capture the complexities of local governance and the multi-faceted impacts of decentralization that might not be fully captured through quantitative methods. This qualitative approach enabled the researchers to obtain rich, descriptive data that provided context to the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 102). By allowing for open-ended responses, the interviews encouraged community members to contribute their views and insight in their own words, yielding insights into the nuances of the decentralization process.

This targeted approach ensured that the data collected was relevant and provided a comprehensive understanding of the local governance landscape (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). The adaptability of the open-ended format gives researchers chance to explore emerging themes and issues that arose during the interviews, making it a valuable complement to the structured data collected through questionnaires.

3.6.2 . Secondary Data Sources

Secondary information was gathered from existing literature, policy documents, and governmental reports. This data served to provide a broader context for the study and supported the analysis of primary data. The review of existing literature included academic articles, books, and relevant studies that offered insights into the theoretical underpinnings of decentralization and its impacts on development (Creswell, 2014, p. 112).

The inclusion of secondary data was essential for situating the research within the broader academic discourse and for validating the findings from primary data collection (Flick, 2018, p. 210). By reviewing policy documents and governmental reports, the study was able to access empirical evidence and contextual information that informed the analysis of decentralization in Buhera. The integration of secondary data not only complemented the primary data but also enhanced the credibility and robustness of the research findings (Denzin, 2017, p. 78).

Secondary data was systematically gathered from reputable sources, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic databases. This process involved a thorough literature review to identify relevant studies and policy documents that could provide insights into the operational framework of decentralization. The information gathered from these sources assisted to contextualize the primary findings and supported the overall analysis of the effectiveness of devolution in addressing poverty and promoting sustainable development.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity referred to the extent to which an instrument measured what it was intended to measure, while reliability pertained to the consistency of the results obtained (Creswell, 2014, p. 155). To enhance the validity of the instruments, the research tools underwent a rigorous

development process, including expert reviews and pilot testing to ensure their clarity and appropriateness (Bryman, 2012, p. 85).

The reliability of the quantitative measures was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable for ensuring internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, p. 54). For qualitative data, triangulation was employed, comparing data from different sources to confirm findings and enhance credibility (Denzin, 2017, p. 78). By addressing these vital aspects of validity and reliability, the research targeted to produce outcomes that were both consistent and general to same contexts, ultimately contributing to the rigor and integrity of the study.

3.8 Data Presentation and Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires was analysed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS or STATA) to perform descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis to identify relationships between variables (Field, 2018, p. 92).

The sample size was sufficiently large to enable the detection of statistically significant differences and trends, allowing for robust conclusions. Qualitative data from interviews was transcribed and analysed thematically, enabling the identification of recurring patterns and insights related to the decentralization process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose and nature of the research, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences (Bryman, 2012, p. 95).

Confidentiality was maintained through the anonymization of responses and the secure storage of data to protect participants' identities. Additionally, the research was designed to avoid any

potential harm to participants by ensuring that the questions posed were sensitive to their experiences and did not provoke distress.

Ethical approval was sought from the relevant institutional review board before starting to gather information, ensuring compliance with established ethical standards in research (Creswell, 2014, p. 178). By prioritizing ethical considerations, the study aimed to build trust with participants and integrity.

3.10 Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined the research methodology and design that guided the study on the effectiveness of devolution in combating poverty and promoting sustainable development in Buhera, Zimbabwe. The selected research design, population, and sampling methods were justified in terms of their ability to provide robust and representative data. This methodological framework provided a starting point for analysing the impacts of decentralization on local governance, ultimately contributing to more understanding of the forces at play in Zimbabwe's evolving political landscape.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses results from the information gathering procedures. Findings will be presented according to the study objectives.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

Category	Expected Responses	Actual Responses	Non-Responses	Response Rate (%)
Community Members	30	25	5	83.3%
Local Government Officials	20	15	5	75%
Total	50	40	10	80%

Table 2 Table 4.1 Response Rate Field data, 2025

The data presented in the table above summarizes the reaction rates for the research, detailing the engagement from both Community Members and Local Government Officials. For Community Members, out of an expected 30 responses, 25 were received, leading to a response rate of 83.3%. In contrast, Local Government Officials had an expected 20 responses, with 15 completed questionnaires returned, resulting in a reaction rate of 75%. The overall number of expected responses was 50, with 40 actual responses, yielding an overall reply rate of 80%. This indicates an active participation from the community, particularly among Community Members, which is crucial. Ultimately, 40 questionnaires were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 80%, which is considered ideal for generalizing findings (Mugenda, 2003).

4.2. Demographics

4.2.1 Gender

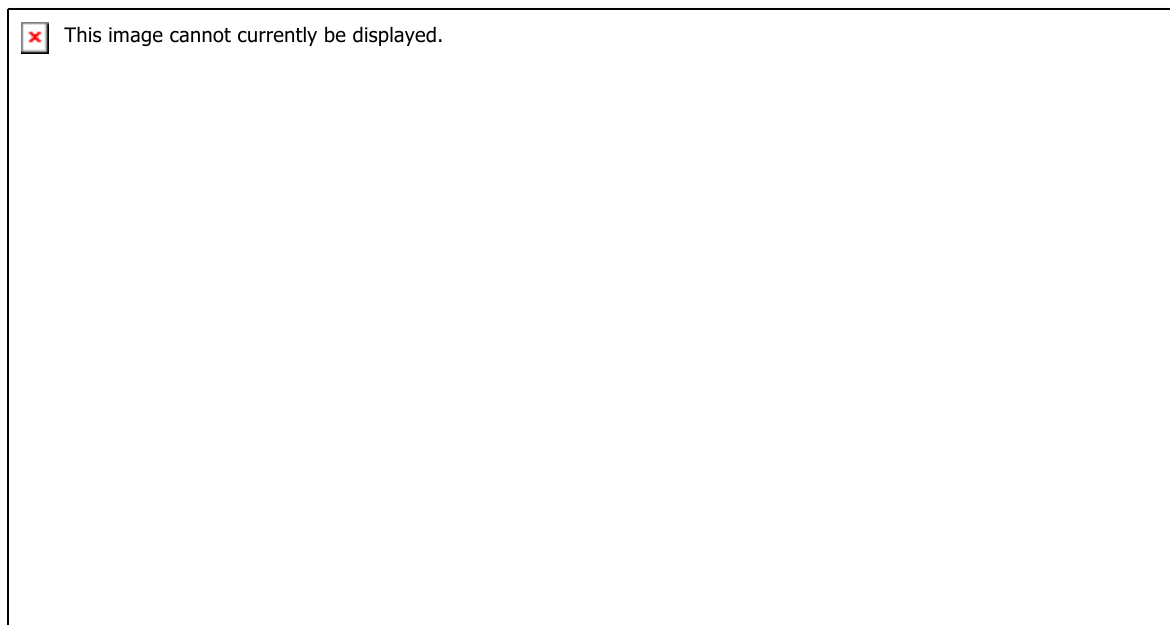


Figure 4.1 Gender Distribution

The analysis reveals that 26 (65%) of the participants were male, while 14 (35%) were female. Women may have opted out due to issues to do with secrecy and the labeling associated with discussing sensitive issues related to devolution and its impacts on poverty. Cultural and social norms, personal experiences, and perceived negative perception might also have affected their willingness to participate. This gender distribution is crucial for getting to know the wider implications of devolution strategies in Buhera and how they may be perceived and experienced differently across genders.

4.2.2 Age Distribution

Table 4.2 Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-24	12	30%

25-34	12	30%
35-44	8	20%
45-54	6	15%
55+	2	5%
Total	40	100%

The findings indicate that 12 (30%) of the participants were in the 18-24 age group, and another 12 (30%) were in the 25-34 age range. A smaller portion, 8 (20%), belonged to the 35-44 age group, while 6 (15%) were in the 45-54 category. Lastly, 2 participants (5%) were aged 55 and above. This statistical concept suggests that a notable portion of answerers involved in the investigation of devolution's effectiveness as a strategy to combat poverty and promote sustainable development are younger, particularly within the 18-34 age range. The significant representation of respondents aged 18-34 in the investigation of devolution's effectiveness can be attributed to their heightened engagement with social issues, driven by a desire for change and empowerment. This demographic often possesses greater educational exposure to concepts of governance and sustainability, is more adept with technology for participating in research, and maintains a strong global awareness of poverty and development challenges (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Understanding this demographic insight is crucial, as these younger individuals may hold different perspectives and experiences regarding the efforts of devolution on reducing poverty. Tailoring strategies to engage with this demographic could promote the success of devolution initiatives in Buhera.

4.2.3 Education Level

Understanding the education level of the answerers is crucial for analysing their perspectives on devolution and its effectiveness in combating poverty.

Table 4.3 Educational Attainment

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	10	25%
Secondary	15	37.5%
Tertiary	15	37.5%
Total	40	100%

Of the 40 answerers, 25%(10) had attained a Primary education level, while 37.5%(15) had Secondary level education as their highest educational qualification. Additionally, another 37.5%(15) reported having a Tertiary education. This distribution highlights a varied educational background among participants, with the majority possessing at least a Secondary education level. The diverse educational qualifications of respondents suggest that they are likely to have informed opinions on the productivity of decentralization as a way to combat poverty and promote sustainable development in Buhera. Their insights can provide valuable perspectives on the difficulties and prospects to do with devolution, thereby enhancing the reliability of the study's findings. Understanding the educational landscape is essential for tailoring interventions and policies aimed at maximizing the benefits of devolution for poverty alleviation.

4.2.4 Employment Status

Understanding this is vital for analysing their perspectives on devolution and its impact on poverty reduction.

Table 4.4

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	18	45%
Unemployed	10	25%

Student	8	20%
Retired	4	10%
Total	40	100%

Of the 40 community members, 45% (18) were employed, while 25%(10) were unemployed. Additionally, 20%(8) were students, and 10%(4) were retired. This distribution reveals that an important portion of participants are employed, which may influence their views. The presence of unemployed respondents also highlights the challenges that devolution must address to promote sustainable development. This distribution reveals that a significant portion of participants are actively engaged in employment, which may influence their views on the effectiveness of devolution as a strategy for poverty alleviation (Tagart, 2019). The presence of unemployed respondents also highlights the challenges that devolution must address to promote sustainable development (Moyo, 2020). Understanding the employment landscape is crucial for tailoring interventions aimed at maximizing the benefits of devolution in Buhera, as the employment status of participants directly relates to their experiences and perspectives on poverty reduction strategies.

4.3 Presentation of Findings

They will be presented as per the questions outlined in the introduction.

4.3.1 The Impact of Devolution on Poverty Reduction in Buhera, Zimbabwe

When asked about the impact of devolution on poverty reduction, respondents evaluated several statements related to their economic situation, access to government services, and job opportunities in their community.

Table 4.5: Impact of Devolution on Poverty Reduction

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Devolution has led to improvements in my household's economic situation.	2 (5%)	6 (15%)	8 (20%)	12 (30%)	12 (30%)
Access to government services has improved since devolution was implemented.	4 (10%)	8 (20%)	6 (15%)	12 (30%)	10 (25%)
I believe that devolution has created more job opportunities in my community.	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	10 (25%)	10 (25%)	10 (25%)

Table 3

The findings reveal a nuanced understanding shaped by both quantitative and qualitative data. Most respondents 24 (60%) indicated that devolution has improved their household's economic situation (12 agree and 12 strongly agree). This suggests a generally positive perception of the economic benefits associated with devolution, which aligns with Olowu (2016), who emphasizes the duty of local governance in enhancing community development economically. However, the 8 (20%) who remained neutral or disagreed indicate that experiences with devolution may vary among households, suggesting that some households may feel marginalized or disconnected from these benefits.

In terms of access to government services, 22 (55%) of participants felt improvements had occurred since devolution was implemented, yet 12 (30%) disagreed or remained neutral. This mixed response highlights ongoing concerns regarding the effectiveness of these services,

echoing Chirau (2020), who found that improved access to government services is critical for the success of devolution. The dissatisfaction expressed by a portion of respondents signals that significant shortcomings in service delivery still exist.

Opinions on job opportunities were more divided: 20 (50%) of respondents agreed that devolution has created more jobs, while 10 (25%) remained neutral and another 10 (25%) disagreed. This disparity suggests that although some initiatives may have spurred job creation, many community members perceive the overall impact as insufficient. This aligns with Manyena (2020), who reported varying levels of satisfaction with job creation initiatives in different regions, indicating that Buhera still grapples with challenges that hinder robust employment growth.

Qualitative insights gathered from interviews provided a deeper understanding of these quantitative findings. Many participants expressed optimism about economic improvements linked to devolution. One respondent stated,

"Since devolution, I've seen more support for local businesses, which has helped my family."

This optimism reflects a shift in community perceptions and aligns with the quantitative data showing that a significant percentage of respondents felt their economic situations had improved.

However, alongside this positivity, some participants voiced concerns about persistent challenges. One remarked,

"There are still not enough jobs available. We need more initiatives," highlighting a critical gap between expectations set by devolution and the reality of job creation. This sentiment underscores the necessity for further initiatives aimed at job creation, indicating that while progress has been made, it is not sufficient to meet community aspirations. This aligns with the

findings of Moyo (2020), who noted that communities often experience a disconnect between the intended benefits of devolution and the actual outcomes.

Additionally, concerns regarding access to government services were prevalent in the interviews. One participant pointed out,

"Sometimes the services are still slow and inadequate,"

reflecting mixed perceptions about the effectiveness of government services following devolution. This critique suggests that, despite improvements, significant shortcomings affect residents' daily lives, reinforcing the quantitative findings that indicated some respondents felt access to services had not improved significantly since devolution was implemented. This observation is consistent with the work of Chikodzi (2021), who highlighted that service delivery remains a critical challenge in many devolved governance contexts.

While quantitative data show a generally positive outlook on economic improvements linked to devolution, qualitative insights reveal a more complex reality where optimism coexists with significant concerns about job availability and service quality. The quantitative analysis shows that 60% of answerers consider that devolution has led to improvements in their household's economic situation, while qualitative feedback underscores the need for further initiatives to address gaps in service delivery and employment opportunities. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing community engagement, effective governance, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to realize the full benefits of devolution in addressing poverty.

4.3.2 The Challenges Facing Devolution in Promoting Rural Development

This section presents the findings related to the challenges faced in promoting rural development through devolution.

Table 4.6: Challenges Facing Devolution in Promoting Rural Development

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
There are significant barriers to accessing resources provided by local government.	4 (10%)	8 (20%)	6 (15%)	12 (30%)	10 (25%)
Corruption within local government has hindered the effectiveness of devolution.	2 (5%)	6 (15%)	8 (20%)	14 (35%)	10 (25%)
The lack of citizen engagement in policy decisions is a challenge to devolution.	3 (8%)	5 (12%)	10 (25%)	12 (30%)	10 (25%)

Table 4 Challenges Facing Devolution in Promoting Rural Development

The findings related to the challenges faced in promoting rural development through devolution reveal significant obstacles that must be addressed. The quantitative data indicates that 22 (55%) of answerers ratified or strongly ratified that significant barriers exist to accessing resources provided by local government (12 agree and 10 strongly agree). This suggests a pervasive perception of obstacles hindering the effective utilization of resources, which is crucial for rural development initiatives. This aligns with Chikozho (2019), who found that barriers to accessing resources are a common challenge in many rural areas, indicating that community members often face difficulties when attempting to access support from local authorities.

In terms of corruption, the study found that 24 (60%) of respondents believe that corrupt practices have hindered the effectiveness of devolution (14 agree and 10 strongly agree). This high percentage underscores the concern that corruption undermines trust in local institutions and negatively impacts service delivery. Moyo (2018) emphasizes that corruption is a significant barrier to effective governance and rural development, resonating with the current study's findings regarding the detrimental impact of corrupt practices on devolution. The perception that corruption affects resource allocation diminishes the community's faith in the devolution process itself.

Another critical challenge identified in the quantitative data is the lack of locals engagement in making of decisions, with approximately 22 (55%) of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that this lack of involvement is detrimental to the effectiveness of devolution (12 agree and 10 strongly agree). This finding highlights the importance of active participation from community members in shaping policies and initiatives that affect their lives. Without such engagement, the potential benefits of devolution may not be fully realized, which echoes the findings of Nyoni (2021), who noted that community involvement is essential for successful governance.

Qualitative insights from interviews further illuminate these challenges. Many respondents expressed frustration regarding accessibility to resources, citing bureaucratic hurdles imposed by local authorities as significant impediments. One participant articulated,

"It's difficult to get the support we need from local authorities; there are too many requirements."

This statement encapsulates a broader concern shared among community members and reflects the quantitative findings indicating substantial barriers to accessing resources (Chikozho,

2019). The complexity of the requirements often leaves individuals feeling overwhelmed and disillusioned, stifling their engagement in development initiatives.

Participants also highlighted a disconnect between the expectations set by devolution and the reality they experience regarding access to essential services. One respondent noted, *"Devolution was supposed to help us, but sometimes services are still out of reach."*

This observation underscores a critical gap in the implementation of devolution policies, where anticipated benefits do not materialize for many community members, leading to frustration and a sense of betrayal. This sentiment aligns with Moyo (2018), who argued that unmet expectations can erode trust in governance.

Concerns regarding corruption also emerged during discussions, with participants frequently mentioning the mismanagement of funds. One remarked, "We hear about funds being mismanaged, and it makes us lose hope." This sentiment reflects the quantitative data revealing that a significant percentage of respondents believe corruption hinders devolution's effectiveness (Moyo, 2018).

When comparing these findings to previous studies, several parallels and distinctions can be drawn. Moyo (2018) emphasizes that corruption is a significant barrier to effective governance and rural development, resonating with the current study's findings regarding the detrimental impact of corrupt practices on devolution. Similarly, Chikozho (2019) found that barriers to accessing resources are a common challenge in many rural areas, aligning with the 55% of respondents in this study who reported significant obstacles. However, a notable difference arises when considering Nyoni (2021), who reported that some communities have successfully navigated these challenges through enhanced community engagement and transparency initiatives. This suggests that while some areas may have developed effective strategies to

mitigate these barriers, Buhera continues to struggle with fundamental challenges that hinder optimal rural development through devolution.

These findings reveal three main challenges: accessibility to resources, corruption, and lack of community engagement. Each of these barriers significantly impacts the effectiveness of devolution in promoting rural development. The comparison with previous studies shows that while the issues of corruption and resource access are widely recognized, the degree of community engagement varies across regions (Nyoni, 2021). This divergence highlights the need for tailored strategies in Buhera to enhance community involvement and address corruption, ultimately realizing the ability of devolution in fostering rural development.

4.3.3 The Opportunities for Strengthening Devolution as a solution Against Poverty in Buhera

This section explores the potential opportunities for enhancing devolution as a solution to combat penury in Buhera. The responses to specific statements regarding community involvement, training programs, and partnerships are below.

Table 4.7: Opportunities for Strengthening Devolution

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Potential for more community involvement in local governance initiatives.	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	14 (35%)	14 (35%)

Training programs for local leaders can improve the effectiveness of devolution.	2 (5%)	2 (6%)	8 (20%)	16 (40%)	12 (30%)
Partnerships between local government and NGOs can enhance the impact of devolution.	1 (3%)	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	18 (45%)	14 (35%)

Table 5 *Opportunities for Strengthening Devolution*

The quantitative data indicates significant opportunities for strengthening devolution in Buhera. Regarding community involvement in local governance initiatives, 28 (70%) of answerers consented or strongly consented that there is potential for increased participation (14 agree and 14 strongly agree). This finding suggests that community members are eager to engage in governance processes, which could lead to more effective implementation of development initiatives. Zulu (2017) emphasizes the role of community participation in enhancing the effectiveness of devolution, supporting the notion that increased engagement can lead to better outcomes in governance.

The data also revealed that 28 (70%) of participants believe that training programs for local leaders can improve the effectiveness of devolution (16 agree and 12 strongly agree). Mwonzora (2019) found that training initiatives for local leaders are vital for improving governance, aligning with the support for training programs identified in this study.

Furthermore, regarding partnerships between local government and NGOs, 32 (80%) of answerers approved that such collaborations can enhance the impact of devolution (18 agree and 14 strongly agree). This highlights the importance of fostering relationships between various stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and networks that can significantly

improve development outcomes. Collaborative efforts can create synergies that amplify the effectiveness of devolution initiatives.

Qualitative insights from interviews further illuminate these opportunities. Many respondents emphasized that community involvement is pivotal for ensuring that development initiatives are tailored to local needs. One participant stated,

"When people are involved in decision-making, they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes."

This perspective aligns with the quantitative findings, reinforcing the notion that greater community engagement can lead to more effective and sustainable development efforts, echoing Zulu's (2017) emphasis on participation.

Participants also discussed specific programs that have been effective, highlighting local agricultural cooperatives as successful examples of devolution efforts. Many noted,

"The cooperatives have empowered farmers by providing training and access to markets." This aligns with Mwonzora's (2019) findings that emphasize the effectiveness of localized initiatives in promoting economic development.

In terms of strategies to overcome challenges faced in devolution, participants suggested enhancing communication. One respondent proposed,

"Regular community meetings can help bridge the gap and ensure everyone is informed and involved."

This suggestion reflects a desire for transparent governance practices that foster trust and collaboration, underscoring the need for effective communication highlighted by Banda

(2021), who noted that some regions have struggled to engage communities despite available training.

Regarding partnerships between local government and NGOs, interviewees stressed the importance of mutual understanding and shared objectives. One participant noted, "NGOs can bring expertise and resources, but both sides need to work together toward common goals." Strengthening these partnerships could enhance the effectiveness of devolution by ensuring that interventions are well-coordinated and relevant to the community's needs, further supporting Mwonzora's (2019) findings on collaborative governance.

Looking forward, participants expressed optimism about the opportunities for further strengthening devolution as a strategy against poverty in Buhera. One respondent remarked, "If we can build on the successes we've had and learn from our challenges, there is great potential for growth." This forward-looking perspective highlights the community's resilience and readiness to actively engage in the devolution process, reinforcing the need for ongoing engagement as noted by Banda (2021).

In summary, the integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings reveals three main opportunities: enhancing community involvement, improving training for local leaders, and fostering partnerships between local governments and NGOs. These opportunities, when effectively leveraged, could significantly strengthen devolution as a strategy for poverty alleviation in Buhera. The comparison with previous studies highlights the importance of community engagement and effective training while indicating the need for proper approaches to tackle local challenges. Addressing these opportunities will be essential for elevating the gains of devolution in promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty in the region.

4.4 Chapter Summary

It presented the results from the data collection procedures, revealing important insights related to the study objectives. It assessed that devolution had a beneficial effect on alleviating poverty in Buhera, although challenges such as resource accessibility, corruption, and lack of community engagement hindered its effectiveness. Additionally, the findings identified significant opportunities for strengthening devolution, including increased community involvement, enhanced training programs for local leaders, and improved partnerships between local government and NGOs. Overall, the chapter highlighted both the potential of devolution as a strategy against poverty and the critical areas that require attention to enhance its success in promoting rural development in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

It serves as a thorough summary of the research discoveries regarding the power of devolution as a way to combat hardships in rural development in Buhera, Zimbabwe. In particular, it synthesizes the research objectives, the methodologies employed, and the significant insights gleaned throughout the research process. The chapter also emphasizes the intricate relationships between devolution and rural development, highlighting the social and economic and cultural dynamics that affect these issues within the local context. Furthermore, actionable recommendations are outlined for stakeholders involved in addressing these pressing issues, thereby contributing to more effective policymaking and implementation strategies that can enhance rural development initiatives.

5.1 Summary of the Whole Project

The study commenced with a clear articulation of the pressing issue of poverty in Buhera, exacerbated by the challenges of governance and resource allocation. The primary aim was to explore the challenges encountered in its implementation, and identify potential opportunities for strengthening its role as a mitigation strategy.

Chapter 1

The introductory chapter effectively laid the groundwork for the research by providing a comprehensive overview of the concept of devolution. It established its relevance to rural development and outlined the challenges facing its implementation in Zimbabwe. The problem statement highlighted the pressing need to understand how devolution can be leveraged to improve economic conditions in rural areas. By establishing a solid theoretical and contextual

foundation, this introductory chapter set the stage for a detailed exploration of devolution's potential as a poverty alleviation strategy in rural Zimbabwe.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, a thorough research synthesis was presented, concentrating on the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study. The chapter delved into Decentralization Theory and Participatory Development Theory, analysing how these concepts relate to enhancing community development outcomes. The literature review also critically assessed empirical studies related to devolution and rural development, identifying both strengths and weaknesses in current practices. By synthesizing insights from various contexts, the chapter highlighted the gaps in existing research, particularly within the Zimbabwean context. This critical examination justified the need for the current study, underscoring the importance of context-specific strategies that consider local socio-economic dynamics.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology and design, which were meticulously crafted to guide the study. The pragmatic research philosophy adopted a mixed-methods approach to address the research questions comprehensively. The chapter also shows ways of gathering information, emphasizing the importance of validity and reliability measures, as well as ethical considerations that guided the research process. This methodological framework provided a strong base for analysing the impacts of decentralization on local governance, ultimately contributing to more insight of the mechanics at play in Zimbabwe's evolving political landscape.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, the findings from the data collection procedures were presented, revealing crucial insights related to the study objectives. The breakdown indicated that devolution had a positive effect on poverty reduction in Buhera, with approximately 60%(24) of respondents reporting improvements in their household economic situations. However, the findings also highlighted significant challenges, including resource accessibility, corruption, and a lack of community engagement, which hindered the effectiveness of devolution initiatives. The data suggested that while many community members recognized the potential benefits of devolution, the reality of their experiences often fell short of expectations. Furthermore, the findings identified several opportunities for strengthening devolution, such as fostering increased community involvement, enhancing training programs for local leaders, and improving partnerships between local government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Overall, the chapter underscored both the ability of devolution as a strategy to combat indigence and the critical areas that require attention to enhance its success in promoting rural development in Buhera.

5.2 Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this research align are hand in glove with the research objectives focused on assessing the impact of devolution on poverty reduction, identifying the challenges faced, and exploring opportunities for strengthening its effectiveness.

5.2.1 Impact of Devolution on Poverty Reduction

The research findings reveal that devolution has been instrumental in economic insecurity reduction in Buhera, with 60% (24) of respondents acknowledging improvements in their economic situations. This positive perception is indicative of how local governance structures can facilitate access to resources and services that directly impact households. Nevertheless, the study also uncovered a mixed sentiment regarding job creation and access to government services, with approximately 50%(20) of respondents expressing doubts about the overall

effectiveness of devolution in creating sustainable employment opportunities. This disparity suggests that while certain initiatives associated with devolution may have spurred positive changes, many community members still feel disconnected from the benefits of these governance reforms. The findings emphasize the need for continued efforts to enhance job creation initiatives and ensure that government services are reliable and accessible to all community members.

5.2.2 Challenges Facing Devolution

Several key challenges that impede the productivity of devolution in promoting rural development in Buhera. A notable 60%(24) of respondents indicated that corruption within local government has negatively affected the implementation of devolution, undermining trust in local institutions and compromising service delivery. This high percentage underscores the urgent need for transparency and accountability mechanisms to address corrupt practices that hinder progress. Approximately 55%(22) of participants agreed that insufficient involvement of community members in governance matters detracts from the effectiveness of devolution. Qualitative insights from interviews further illuminated these challenges, revealing frustrations regarding bureaucratic hurdles and a disconnect between community expectations and the realities of resource accessibility. These findings point to the necessity of fostering a more participatory approach to governance that involves everyone in the making of policies.

5.2.3 Opportunities for Strengthening Devolution

The findings from this study also reveal significant opportunities for strengthening devolution as a strategy against poverty in Buhera. Notably, 70% (28) of respondents expressed a strong desire for increased community involvement in local governance initiatives. This enthusiasm indicates a readiness among community members to engage in governance processes, which could lead to more effective implementation of development initiatives tailored to local needs.

Moreover, the overwhelming support for training programs for local leaders—expressed by 70% of participants—highlights the necessity for capacity-building initiatives. Additionally, the study found that 80% (32) of respondents believe partnerships between local government and NGOs can significantly enhance the impact of devolution. This underscores the importance of fostering collaborative relationships among various stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and networks that can improve development outcomes.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Enhance Community Education Programs

To effectively address the identified gaps in awareness and understanding surrounding devolution and its implications for poverty reduction, it is crucial to develop targeted educational initiatives. These programs should aim to increase awareness among community members about the benefits of devolution and the importance of their active participation in governance processes. Workshops and outreach programs should be designed to engage residents actively in discussions about the significance of local governance and sustainable development practices. It is essential that these educational initiatives are tailored to the cultural context of Buhera, utilizing local leaders and influencers to promote key messages that resonate with the community. These programs can significantly enhance participation and improve overall outcomes in the fight against poverty.

5.3.2 Improve Access to Resources

Efforts must be made to ensure that community members have continued and equitable access to resources provided by local government. This can be achieved through the implementation of transparency initiatives that foster accountability in resource allocation and service delivery. Additionally, establishing community support networks that facilitate access to information and resources can empower families to navigate bureaucratic hurdles more effectively.

Creating safe and supportive environments for community engagement will encourage individuals to voice their concerns and advocate for their needs. By addressing barriers to resource accessibility, the community can enhance its capacity to leverage devolution for poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

5.3.3 Foster Partnerships with NGOs and Government

Encouraging collaboration between local government and NGOs is crucial for developing community-driven ventures that thoroughly address poverty and promote rural development. By leveraging the unique resources and expertise of NGOs, local governments can enhance public awareness campaigns and implement more effective strategies for improving access to resources. Establishing these partnerships will facilitate greater resource mobilization, ensuring that solutions are designed to address particular needs of families in Buhera. Collaborative efforts should focus on integrating educational programs with economic development initiatives, thereby creating comprehensive support systems that empower families to prioritize their children's education and overall well-being.

5.3.4 Strengthen Community Support Systems

Establishing robust support services for families facing poverty is essential for mitigating factors that contribute to ongoing challenges in the community. Programs that provide financial assistance, resources for sustainable agriculture, and mental health support can help families navigate economic challenges without resorting to detrimental coping mechanisms. Additionally, creating community support networks that connect families with available resources will foster resilience and empower parents to prioritize their children's education and future prospects. By building strong support systems, communities can create an environment in which families feel equipped to make informed decisions that enhance their quality of life.

5.3.5 Monitor and Evaluate Interventions

Frequent monitoring and evaluation of implemented strategies are of great importance for assessing their effectiveness and making necessary adjustments. Utilizing community feedback will ensure that interventions remain relevant and responsive to the needs of families. Establishing clear metrics for success and conducting periodic assessments can offer valuable perspectives on the impact of various programs. Continuous monitoring will promote accountability among all stakeholders involved to address both poverty and the challenges associated with devolution.

5.4 Areas for Further Studies

Future research can also focus on:

1. Investigating the long-term impacts of devolution on poverty and rural development outcomes.
2. Exploring specific community programs aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of devolution.
3. Examining the role of local governance in addressing poverty and promoting sustainable development.

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APPENDIXES 1 Interview Guide for Local Government Officials

Introduction

Hello! My name is Patience Vanhuvaone, and I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am conducting a research study on the effectiveness of devolution as a strategy to combat poverty and promote sustainable development in Buhera, Zimbabwe. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your insights are invaluable to this study, and your responses will be kept confidential.

Interview Questions

1. What is your Age?
2. Are you employed at the moment?
3. What level of education did you attained?
4. Can you describe the key objectives of devolution as implemented in Buhera?
5. What improvements have you observed in poverty reduction since the implementation of devolution?
6. What challenges or barriers have you encountered in promoting rural development through devolution?
7. In your opinion, how has devolution affected access to essential services in your community?
8. What role do you believe community engagement plays in the success of devolution initiatives?
9. Can you identify any specific programs or initiatives that have been particularly effective in promoting development through devolution?
10. What strategies do you think could be implemented to overcome the challenges faced in devolution?
11. How can partnerships between local government and NGOs be strengthened to enhance the impact of devolution?
12. Looking forward, what opportunities do you see for further strengthening devolution as a mitigation strategy against poverty in Buhera?

Appendix 2 Questionnaire for Local Community Members

Introduction

Hello! My name is Patience Vanhuvaone and I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am conducting a research study on the effectiveness of devolution as a strategy to combat poverty and promote sustainable development in Buhera, Zimbabwe. Your

participation is vital to this study, and your responses will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and insights.

Demographic Information

Please provide the following information by ticking the appropriate box:

Demographic Information	Options
1. Age	18-24 ☐
	25-34 ☐
	35-44 ☐
	45-54 ☐
	55+ ☐
2. Gender	Male ☐
	Female ☐
	Other ☐
3. Level of Education	Primary ☐
	Secondary ☐
	Tertiary ☐
4. Employment Status	Employed ☐
	Unemployed ☐
	Student ☐
	Retired ☐

Questions

5. **Devolution has led to improvements in my household's economic situation.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. **Access to government services has improved since devolution was implemented.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. **I believe that devolution has created more job opportunities in my community.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. **There are significant barriers to accessing resources provided by local government.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. **Corruption within local government has hindered the effectiveness of devolution.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)

Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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10. **The lack of community engagement in decision-making processes is a challenge to devolution.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. **There is potential for more community involvement in local governance initiatives.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. **Training programs for local leaders can improve the effectiveness of devolution.**

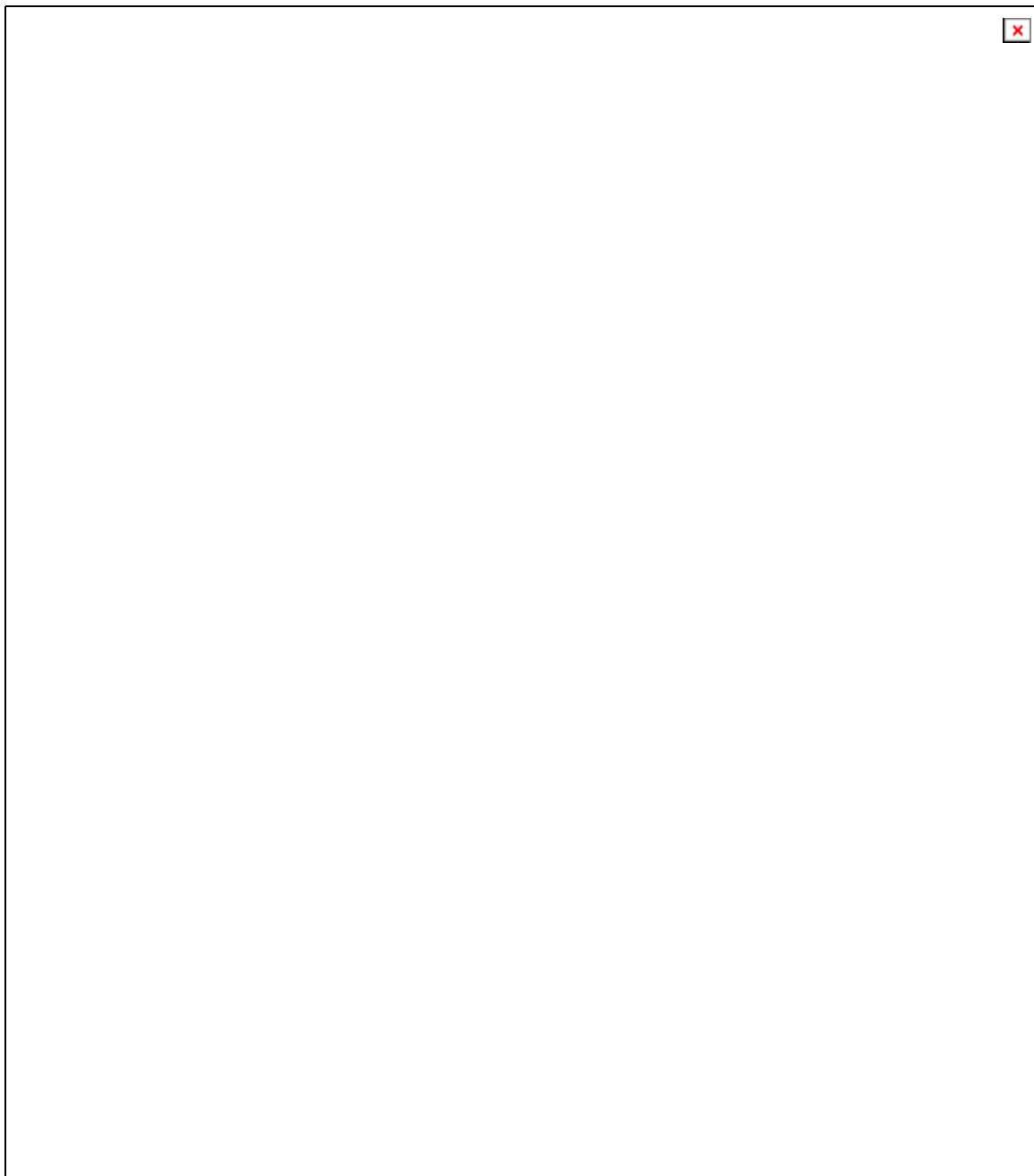
Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. **Partnerships between local government and NGOs can enhance the impact of devolution.**

Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Tick Here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX (TWO) Approval letter



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