

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING**

**DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCE**

**Developing Interventions To Optimize The Performance Of The Zimbabwe  
Cricket Senior Men's Team In International Competitions**

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**A RESEARCH SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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## ABSTRACT

Performance in international competitions is the most sought after aspect for any national senior men's cricket team playing under the International Cricket Council banner. Zimbabwe Cricket, with their vision and mission, are no exception although it is emerging that the desired performance is not tallying with their actual performance. Henceforth, the purpose of this study was to identify and develop interventions that have direct impact on the optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions. A qualitative approach using in-depth interviews was used for this study. The study also rode on the Grounded Theory Approach as its primary research strategy with the in-depth interviews being recorded from 12 participants in data collection. Only participants who have been involved with cricket for 10 to 30 years were purposively selected in the study by virtue of them being well versed with performance and operations of the game. The NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis software (2020 version) was used to analyse, organise and visualise the findings. From the findings, thematic analysis of the interviews gave birth to themes such as grassroots development, proper structures, talent identification, incentives, factors that shape performance and scientific antecedents of performance. The results of the study provided the interventions that can be developed towards the optimisation of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team performance. Conclusions also showed practical and theoretical implications as well as area of further research for Zimbabwe Cricket in order to improve their performance in the international competitions.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BUSE	-Bindura University of Science Education
DLS	-Duckworth, Lewis and Stern
DRS	-Decision Review System
ICC	-International Cricket Council
ODI	-One Day International
SRC	-Sport and Recreation Commission
T20I	-Twenty20 International
ZC	-Zimbabwe Cricket

## CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

### 1.1 Introduction

This study looked at the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions, between 2017 and 2021, and sought to have interventions that can optimise performance going forward. This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, structure of the study and chapter summary.

### 1.2 Background of study

The study focused on the interventions that can be put in place to optimise the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions. In the last two decades, there have been growing concerns over the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions where success has been short-lived and not perpetuating towards the desired performance. It is suggested that inconsistency is the name of the new cancer that has attacked the Zimbabwe cricket team so much that it may take a new generation of players to cure the disease (Muchinjo, 2010). This trend has caused a reality gap between the actual performance and the desired performance thus giving reason for this study.

Concerns over the performance across all the three formats -Test, One Day International (ODI), and Twenty20 International (T20I) - grew rapidly in most recent years and as such the study reviewed Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's performance between the period 2017 and 2021. Table 1.1 showed Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team performance in the period under review.

**Table 1.1:**

*Zimbabwe Cricket team performance from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021*

<b>FORMAT</b>	<b>MATCHES</b>	<b>WINS</b>	<b>DEFEATS</b>	<b>DRAW/TIE</b>	<b>NO RESULT</b>
<b>TEST</b>	14	2	10	2	0
<b>ODI</b>	59	16	40	2	1
<b>T20I</b>	42	11	30	1	0
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

As Kundu (2019) highlighted, that in an age where many other disciplines are giving the 'Gentleman's Game' stiff competition in the race for survival, the decline of a major power of yesteryear is a blow to the game, its game, and the romantics of this sport. This then became the motivation to have a closer look at the performance in international competitions.

The researcher came to know about the performance through public outcry, fan disgruntlement at matches, the social media as well as reports and articles from the media that is newspapers, radio and television. Brickhill (2018) chronicled how Zimbabwe fans at Harare Sports Club put up banners expressing their dissatisfaction, turned on their team and ironically cheered the opposition during an international match against Australia.

Symptoms that gave rise to this study include the win percentage in bilateral series', continuous seeding in Qualifier(s) for qualification to One Day International and Twenty20 International global tournaments, missing out on the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup for the first time since 1983, giant cricket nations either seeing no value in touring Zimbabwe or sending second-string sides, emerging nations frequently requesting for tours to Zimbabwe to prove their mettle and constant ranking outside the top 10 on the International Cricket Council (ICC) Team Rankings. The African nation of Zimbabwe finds itself languishing at the bottom of the ICC rankings in all three formats. From a team that was once touted to enjoy major success in their future, Zimbabwe cricket's steady decline ever since the 2000s has been a cause for concern for enthusiasts across Zimbabwe (Viswanath, 2019).

There was no literature related to this study that could be found in the Zimbabwean context. However, elsewhere in England and Sri Lanka, there was literature available on factors affecting performance in cricket. Literature was reviewed in Chapter Two and was built on theories and scientific antecedents of performance such as technology, physiological factors, scientific talent identification and development. Efforts have been made to try and address the problem by embarking on grassroots development and talent identification programmes to increase competitive player base with further efforts to try and financially motivate the playing and technical personnel through lucrative contracts, incentives, allowances, match fees and winnings bonuses. It is important to address the problem as this study can help Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) realise existing gaps, bridge those gaps and optimise the senior men's team performance in international competitions.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Purpose of this study was to identify and develop interventions that have direct impact on the optimisation of performance of the senior men's team in international competitions. There was



discord on Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team actual performance and their desired performance thus creating a gap giving rise to this study. Zimbabwe Cricket have embarked on interventions to optimise performance by having youth policy where there has been blending of experienced and budding players in the team and introduction and re-enforcement of sound domestic cricket structures for competition and availability of player base. There has not been practice done on this topic in Zimbabwe implying that not much is known. Essentially, this research topic was not covered in literature hence gaps existed in this area. The study sought to provide interventions and probable solutions to the existing gap(s) on Zimbabwe's performances in international competitions. The study also sought to bridge these gaps by looking at the interventions and comparatively the best practices at play in other developed countries.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Zimbabwe Cricket, particularly the technical department, comprising of coaches and performance analysts, can greatly benefit from this study as it can help them know the causes limiting their performance and why there have been gaps between the actual performance and the desired performance. These interventions can also help to optimise the issues surrounding this topic in international cricket. The study brought on practical benefits as the outcomes can be implemented to optimise the performance while the theoretical benefits can stand as foundation for future research. This study can also bridge the literature gap by providing the theoretical frameworks which can then be implemented at Zimbabwe Cricket's discretion. The review of related literature on factors affecting performance stood out to be of significance as Zimbabwe Cricket could gain knowledge on how other countries are doing it and how they have gone past this hurdle. The data collected, analysed and presented could be a huge turning point for Zimbabwe Cricket as they can get to know of how other stakeholders in the game think and are relating to the current team's performance.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

##### **1.5.1 Primary research question**

- What interventions can be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?

### **1.5.2 Subsidiary research questions**

- How can the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in the last five years be described?
- What factors have shaped the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?
- What interventions can be developed in optimising the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?

### **1.6 Research objectives**

#### **Purpose**

- To find out interventions that can be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?

#### **Specific objectives**

- To determine how the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team can be described?
- To ascertain interventions that can be developed in optimising the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?
- To find out factors that shape the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?

### **1.7 Delimitations of the study**

The subject scope of the study was to identify and develop interventions towards the optimisation of performance of the senior men's cricket team in international competitions. The study was confined to Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE), ZC and was done at Harare Sports Club, Old Hararians Sports Club and surrounding areas within the Harare Central Business District.

### **1.8 Structure of the study**

This study carried five chapters. The opening chapter was introductory which showed the map of study and gave reason for the research problem through the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of study and its delimitations. Chapter Two focused on reviewing related literature to the study whilst Chapter

Three tucked into the research methodology. Chapter Four was fixed on data analysis, presentation and discussions as Chapter Five concluded the study with summary and recommendations.

### **1.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced the entire study covering key areas such as the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, research objectives, and delimitations of the study before detailing the whole structure of the study. The next chapter, Chapter Two, focused on review of literature which is related to this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

There are numerous reasons that impact on performance in general in international competitions. In Zimbabwe, there has not been specific research in regards to this study but there have been researches on team performances in other cricket nations and other sporting disciplines. To clearly bring out the research objectives, theories, thematic literature review and methodological review were used to describe and explain the research problem at the same time determining interventions to optimise the performance.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.2.1 Black Swan Theory**

A black swan event is a surprising event for the observer that has great impact (Higgins, 2014). Essentially, it is an extremely rare and unpredictable event(s) beyond normally expected situation and has potentially severe impact and results. As such, most sports performances are influenced by black swan events that tend to bring out either major winning or losing streaks. Therefore, for this study, the black swan theory came into effect and looked at some unpredictable events that have impacted on the performance pathway of the senior men's cricket team. Performances of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in the last five years were linked to the black swan theory. The following qualified as black swan events that have impacted on the performance of the senior men's cricket team in the period under review:

- The sudden downturn of general state of Zimbabwean economy in 2018.
- The Heath Streak-gate in 2018.
- The Government/SRC interference in 2019.
- The ICC suspension in 2019.
- The COVID-19 pandemic 2019 to date.

All these events brought about unexpected and unbearable consequences which adversely impacted on performance of the senior men's cricket team in international competitions.

#### **2.2.2 Grand Unified Theory (GUT)**

This theory is basically used for measurement and presentation of sports performance and also sports science. Glazier (2017) notes that the GUT provides a basis for the integration of sub-disciplines of sports science that measure up sports performance. The concept behind the GUT is that it centres on the combination of self-organisation and constrains to determine sports

performance. In this study, the GUT looked at the facets of sports science that were combined to make up for the performance of the senior men's cricket team. The Grand Unified Theory can be responsible for shaping the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. Additionally, interventions can be developed from the Grand Unified Theory towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

### **2.2.3 Time Perspective Theory**

Stolarski et al. (2019) found out that the time perspective theory provides a robust conceptual framework for analysing human behaviour in the context of time. This theory provides a vivid conceptual framework that focuses on the analysis of human behaviour in the context of time. The concept basically gives reasons for performance in the passage of time. It proposes that time perspectives influence psychological functioning and performance of athletes through magnitude and persistence of sport motivation and resulting athlete management. Therefore, this theory came in handy in the analysis of players behaviour in time context; a stance that has had an impact on the performance of the senior men's cricket team. Strategies can be drawn from the Time Perspective Theory and used to influence the adoption of the developed interventions by Zimbabwe Cricket as player behaviour in the context of time is critical.

### **2.2.4 Heuristic Framework**

Basically, heuristics are ways of finding out answers to situations, problems or questions and making strategies thereof in sports. Raab (2012) highlights that heuristics are based on the building blocks of decision making on how to search for information, stop information search, and decide quickly and accurately. Raab op. cit. notes that it seeks to give an understanding behind decisions made by athletes, coaches, referees, managers and fans in tasks involving high uncertainty such as predicting tournament outcomes. In essence, the heuristic framework looks at solving problem(s) using a fixed set of rules that cannot vary. Therefore, for this study, heuristic were applied for the development of interventions and strategies for the optimisation of the senior men's cricket team's performance in international competitions. The heuristic framework can be helpful for the technical staff in particular the coaches and the performance analysts in coming up with strategies that can shape the performance.

### **2.2.5 Talent Identification and Development Models**

Talent identification has become of major importance in modern day sport. If properly done, talent identification and its subsequent development brings a host of benefits to the sporting

organisations that include development of promising athletes –a situation that later on translate to peak performance of team sport at international level. As such, some landmark talent identification models were looked at as part of the interventions that could be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team.

#### **2.2.5.1 Gimbel Model (1976)**

This landmark model of German origins tackles talent identification from three angles namely trainability, motivational aspects and morphological and physiological considerations. The model stresses that talent is comprised of environmental and genetic components for athlete development which adds up to team performance. Gimbel suggested that promising athletes be identified at 8-9 years before commencement of their growth sport (Hugo, 2004). The strength of this model, which can be used for the optimisation of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team performance, was used to look at the genetic make-up of an athlete which is important in achieving sport excellence and peak performance when combined into a team. It also touches on athlete development from a young age which Zimbabwe Cricket can use to boost their grassroots and development structures for age group cricket and developed interventions to optimise the performance.

#### **2.2.5.2 Jones and Watson’s Model (1977)**

According to Hugo (2004), this model was based on procedures used in psychological studies. Jones and Watson’s Model is premised on four elements which have an analysis of performance in order to identify the predictors of success. The four talent identification elements in the model are:

- Identification of target performance
- Selection of a criterion to represent the target performance
- Selection of potential performance predictors and the verification of predictive power of these variables and
- Application of results to determine which sport is recommended for which individual.

The strength of this model lies in talent identification which can be used to draw on interventions and strategies that can be developed or adopted towards optimisation of the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team.

### **2.2.5.3 Bompa Model (1985)**

This landmark talent identification model was derived from Eastern Europe. It seeks to put forward the benefits of talent identification which are:

- Coaches get to instruct athletes with more talent
- Increase in self-confidence if individuals are chosen
- Individuals take less time to reach top levels of performance.

Bompa maintained that comprehensive talent identification is not solved in one attempt but is accomplished over several years in three main phases of participation (Hugo, 2004). Hugo op. cit. adds that in each phase a scientific effort is made to identify performers with potential which blurs the distinction between talent identification and talent selection. Bompa concluded that each sport needs to have its own model. The advantage of this model, which can be spurred for performance optimisation of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team, is that there are greater levels of uniformity among athletes of a specific sport which leads to performance enhancement.

### **2.2.5.4 Regnier's Model (1987)**

According to Hugo (2004), Regnier came up with six principles to guide a formal approach for talent identification after a thorough review of the talent identification models. Among the principles was one that talent identification must take into account the dynamic aspect of sport performance including changes in performance contexts and situations. This point aptly equates to the research question which seeks to describe the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team while lurking for interventions that can be developed towards optimisation of performance.

## **2.3 Methodological review**

In previous related studies by Maldeniya and Weerasiri (2019), in-depth interviews of a small sample population of four were used to gather data. Strength of this method is that the researcher gets up-close and personal with participants and get the most detail. The weakness though is that the sample population is too small thus the information will be limited to just four people.

However, this study was slightly different as it used the grounded theory approach. As such, in-depth interviews were used and as many as 12 participants were interviewed. Having many participants allowed for there to be new views and insights. This study involved

the methods used in the study and the theories or principles behind them in order to develop an approach that matches the objectives of the study.

## **2.4 Thematic literature review**

### **2.4.1 Interventions developed towards performance optimisation**

di Fronso et al. (2017) indicated that interventions can be developed towards optimisation of performance in sport although this comes down to the psychophysiological approach. The quartet are of the view that psychophysiological monitoring is a multidimensional and multimodal approach that can be used to investigate performance. di Fronso et al., op. cit., also highlighted that psychophysiology was not devoted to a better knowledge of isolated components of the body but rather it was addressed to gain insight of the functioning of the entire organism (e.g., attention-effort-optimal performance relationship) for performance optimization. The implication is that application of psychophysiology is an intervention that can be developed towards optimisation of performance in sport.

### **2.4.2 Factors shaping performance**

There are factors responsible for shaping performance in sport across four major dimensions namely skill, strength, endurance and recovery. High performance in any sport requires a characteristic blend of these dimensions, although individual sports differ widely in that balance (Handelsman, 2016). The implication is that those four dimensions are factors that can be responsible for shaping peak performance in modern day sport.

## **2.5 Scientific antecedents of performance**

### **2.5.1 Technology**

Isaac (n.d) surmises that technological advancement have made an extremely positive impact on modern sport. As such, technology of varying degrees and makes has improved the analysis of sport performance, aided coaches with vital information, increase accuracy and measurement for match officials which then helps teams, improve design of sport equipment thus adding to protection and giving fans better view of sport performance. For this study, the use of the Decision Review System (DRS) which comprises of Hawk Eye, Ultra edge and Ball tracking are all technologies that can be used to optimise the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions. Additionally, the use of the Duckworth-Lewis and Stern (DLS) for match results, Pitch Vision and i-cricket for match analysis provides interventions and strategies for optimisation of performance.



### **2.5.2 Physiological factors**

Physiology plays a mega role in sports performance with physiological variables such as attention, self-confidence, self-control, anxiety, motivation, emotional self-regulation among others being critical. Physiological factors have an influence on sports performance hence all this needs to be addressed and well taken care of for optimal performance. For this study, focus on physiological factors can assist in the development of interventions and strategies for optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

## **2.6 Thematic analysis: Factors affecting performances**

### **2.6.1 Incentives**

Incentives are a form of payment, in monetary or non-monetary, meant to stimulate a greater output or result in the field of specialty. In sport, worldwide, players and teams get to reach peak performance and excel in international competitions through incentives. Regardless of the sporting code, incentives have become a trend and vital contributor in as far as attainment of top performances is concerned. Maldeniya and Weerasiri (2019), in their conceptual review of Sri Lankan Cricket, highlighted that monetary and non-monetary incentives will get the best performance out of the Sri Lankan players. Through their study, Maldeniya and Weerasiri (2019) added that monetary and non-monetary incentives were the driving force behind Sri Lanka winning the 1996 ICC Cricket World Cup. Therefore, in regards to this study, incentives can be identified as something that could be used as interventions to optimise the performance of a team.

### **2.6.2 Strategy and tactics**

Gabriel (2014) notes that knowledge of strategy and tactics are important aspects towards attainment of optimal performance in sport. Gabriel op. cit. defines tactic as an action carefully planned to achieve a specific end while strategy as a plan designed to achieve a long-term aim. In world sport, successful teams base on their strategies making their tactics be in sync on each outing. Maldeniya and Weerasiri (2019) indicate that knowledge of the correct strategy and tactic, its communication to the players and the act according to the developed strategy create the winning combination. The implication is that, the game plan must ride on the strategy and tactical approach hence all the players should get better knowledge of strategy and tactics and play according to the plan in order to achieve the required success.

### **2.6.3 Psychology**

In modern day sport, the mental attitude and welfare of athletes now play a leading role in performance. Stewart (2011) supports this view by noting that sport psychology helps to create the cricketers for the best performance. Sanctuary et al. (2010) point out that psychological factors perceived by the players impact on their performance. This sums up why most international teams now have a sound reasoning to have a psychologist to oversee the mental state and psyching of players for attainment of optimal performance.

### **2.6.4 Facilities**

In modern sport, athlete and team performance has been optimised through physical and technical skills training. Successful team performance has been brought about through investments in High Performance Centres where aspects to do with the physical, technical, tactical, mental skills and dietary habits have been kept in check. This has been a major difference between top performing teams and poorly performing teams in international competitions. Therefore, investment in High Performance Centres has become a trend in sport as this has greatly optimised the performance of teams.

### **2.6.5 Administration and organisational performance**

The barebones of organisational and leadership management highlight that the success of any sport stems from the manner in which it is administered. O'Boyle (2014) states that effective performance management systems are essential in any successful organisation both commercial sport business and not-for-profit sport organisations. However, the pressure to follow international best practice in performance management has grown significantly in recent years. The notion to this factor is that performance parameters impact on sport organisations and introduce key issues such as individual performance management through to board-level governance structures, presenting extended real-world case studies and practitioner perspectives. As such, it offers the most clear and complete outline of performance management in sport organisations

### **2.6.6 Team selection**

Team selection, in any sport, plays a critical role towards performance of the team in international competitions. Hartigh et al. (2018) notes that sports performance prediction is critical for the selection of athletes. Hartigh, Niessen, Frencken and Meijer op. cit. also

highlight that team selection is situational and may be aimed at short-term goals, such as the selection of players for the next match but it may also be aimed at long-term outcomes. Therefore, team selection of individuals according to their strengths and weakness and team balance in regards to opposition plays an important role to team performance.

## **2.7 Trends in literature**

Conclusions can be drawn that the bulk of the literature is based on the Americentrism, Asiacentrism and Eurocentric points of view where the scientific antecedents are playing huge roles in sport performance. The trends have been on how the established organisations have gone about their business in regards to sport team performance, the scientific antecedents of performance, factors impacting sport performance and the talent identification models used to develop interventions and strategies towards the optimisation that performance. From the trends, it is emerging that science is having a huge impact on team sport performance. Therefore, the scientific antecedents of performance like technology, psychology and physiology are playing an enormous roles in driving modern day sport performance.

## **2.8 Gaps in literature**

There is no literature on interventions to optimise the performance of the senior men's cricket team in international competitions in Zimbabwe. However, the globe is filled to the brim with literature focusing on sport performance and its interventions in Europe, America and Asia. Still there is no research on this study from a Zimbabwean context thus creating a gap. This gap also becomes a limitation to this study that much of the literature is foreign. Also the literature is not quite stressing the need for having a strong financial muscle to sustain sport performance. Financial funding is the root for successful sport performance –a thing that's creating a gap in Zimbabwe's performance.

## **2.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter prudently touched on the theoretical framework, thematic literature review and methodological review linked to the research topic. The literature review highlighted the background of the theories as well as avenues in which the study can help the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team optimise their performance in international cricket. Furthermore, there was a touch on the scientific antecedents of performance before a further deep into generalised factors impacting sports performances in the globe. The chapter concluded with

the trends and gaps of the literature reviewed. Chapter Three will look at the methodology which is the scientific way of how this research will be done.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter looked at how the research was done scientifically. It focused on theoretical foundations of research such as research purpose, research philosophy, approaches to theory development, time horizons, research strategy, research methods, data analysis and quality issues and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Research Purpose**

An exploratory study was used for this research. An exploratory study was used to gain new insights to the topic under investigation. Exploratory research is a methodology approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth (George, 2021). Through exploratory research, the study sought to gain familiarity with the research question by exploring into uncharted territory thus investigating a problem that was not studied before.

### **3.3 Research Philosophy**

This study used the interpretivism research philosophy. This was due to the fact that the research topic's reality was socially constructed and experiential with multiple realities and meanings. This was in line with Zukauskas et al. (2018) who are of the view that interpretivist research philosophy is based on the principle which states that the researcher performs a specific role in observing the social world. Zukauskas et al. op. cit. note that with this research philosophy, the research is based and depends on what the researcher's interests are.

Essentially, there was focus on narratives, perceptions, interpretations given from participants' point of view at the same time there being new understandings and world view's contributions. Additionally, the study was also grounded on the transformational philosophy as there was conveying of vision and creation of action for change thus integrating human interest.

### **3.4 Approaches to Theory Development**

Since this was an exploratory study, the approach to theory development was inductive reasoning which translated to it being qualitative in nature. As the process leading to the theory development, there was observation of operations at the host organisation under study with patterns followed. This, as part of the process, led to tentative hypothesis which was eventually given out as a theory as the end product. The implication was that the researcher was going out there to collect data, analyse the data and develop a theory or explanation towards the phenomena. This was in line with the view of Streefkerk (2019) who found out that inductive

reasoning aims at developing theory and it moves from specific observations to broad generalisations.

### **3.5 Time Horizons**

This study was cross-sectional. This time horizon was chosen as it was a snapshot of characteristics associated with the research topic in the period under review. Cross-sectional studies are used to describe what is happening at the present moment. This type of research is frequently used to determine the prevailing characteristics in a population at a certain point in time (Cherry, 2019). As such data was collected at a particular point in time and there was no follow up post on this study as it was also qualitative in nature.

### **3.6 Primary Research Strategy**

The study used grounded theory approach as there was not a theory offering explanation for the phenomenon under research. This was in line with Corbin and Holt, quoted in Sanctuary et al. (2010), who highlighted that grounded theory is the development of a theory based on actual data gathered through qualitative research. As such grounded theory was used to explore what was happening and why it was happening. As a result, this qualitative method allowed the researcher to siphon as much information as possible from cricket experts in Zimbabwe including the people central and surrounding the organisation linked to the research topic. The process involved asking questions with intent to get open-ended answers that were critical to the study.

### **3.7 Population and Sampling**

This study had a population of 15 people who are quite versed with the game of cricket at all levels. However, the study had 12 participants consisting of players, administrators, coaches, analysts and journalists who all got interviewed. According to Rathbun (2008), the use of intense and in-depth interviews can help to establish motivations and preferences. The participants of this study were selected on the basis that they have been involved with cricket for a minimum of at least a decade. As a result, all participants were purposively recruited to participate in this study. According to Hennink et al. (2011), quoted in Kubayi et al. (2015), purpose recruitment was used as it looks at a diverse range of participants who can provide a variety of experiences on the topic under study.

### 3.8 Data Collection

The principle researcher conducted all the interviews. The participants were identified during matches, training sessions and meetings. An interview format with open-ended questions was chosen as the best fitting way of getting in-depth information regarding the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. An interview schedule was developed and kept in check with the audit trail. There was employment of the day two journalism concept to other interview questions that proffered new insights. The interviews lasted between an average of 5-10 minutes.

#### 3.8.1 Pilot study

About five participants were invited and interviewed to test run the process in Harare. The participants were also asked to make comments on what was missing, what was not clear and what they thought needed to change.

#### 3.8.2 Main study

The grounded theory approach was used to analyse responses and transcripts from the interviews which featured subjects who were heavily involved, highly knowledgeable about the game and privy to on-goings at the host organisation. The main study was conducted as with Table 3.1. However, this largely depended on the responses where if new or different information was received then the interviews would continue.

**Table 3.1:**

***Main Study***

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
In-depth interviews	-Currently players -Former players -Administrators -Coaches -Analysts -journalists	Use of Grounded Theory: -Organisation of codes. -Organisation of themes.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data was analysed thematically through the NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis software (2020 version). The analysis process comprised of reading the transcripts and generating codes so as to identify emerging and meaningful themes. This is in line with the view of Braun and Clarke (2006) who noted that qualitative data ought to be analysed thematically.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was confirmed through the Lincoln and Guba's Four Criteria which include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as shown in Table 3.2. Transferability was guaranteed through purposive sampling and a complete dense description of the method of conducting the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was facilitated through member checking which was achieved by providing a verbatim transcript of the interview from two participants as verified the accuracy of the recordings.



**Table 3.2: Lincoln and Guba’s Four Criteria for Trustworthiness.**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Probable techniques</b>	<b>Techniques in Main Study</b>
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Member checks</li> <li>-Peer debriefing</li> <li>-Prolonged engagements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Researcher works with Zimbabwe Cricket and has experience as an umpire (2009 to date) and has worked as a journalist (2009-2019).</li> <li>-Data collection was done through recordings from in-depth interviews. Verbatim was verified by two participants.</li> <li>-Data was analysed on NVivo Software 2020 version.</li> </ul>
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provision for database reader judgment and potential transferability.</li> <li>-Provision of description in abundance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Researcher transcribed interviews and craft the interview questions.</li> <li>-Researcher made use of coding of interviews and transcriptions on NVivo Software 2020 version.</li> </ul>
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Credibility confirmation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Researcher works with Zimbabwe Cricket and has experience as an umpire (2009 to date) and has worked as a journalist (2009-2019).</li> </ul>
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Audit trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Checklist was ticked upon meetings with subjects.</li> <li>-Interview recordings and transcripts were kept.</li> </ul>

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical clearance to carry out the study was attained from Zimbabwe Cricket. Participants were informed through a letter that their participation was voluntary and their responses would remain a secret. Aligned to this, participants signed informed consent forms and confidentiality forms. The participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time they wished to do so. Additionally, the interviews were recorded with permission of the participants.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at the research methodology which translated to the scientific way of studying research. In the same street, the chapter also looked at the research methods which referred to the techniques used to collect and analyse data. The data collected and analysed was presented in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the response rate, demographic data and findings linked to the research objectives.

### 4.2 Response rate

This study used the Grounded Theory Approach as its primary research strategy which entailed the conduction of as many interviews until a time when new information from respondents was no longer achieved.

**Table 4.1:**

*Interviews response rate*

<b>Interviews planned</b>	<b>Interviews successful</b>	<b>Interviews not successful</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
15	12	3	80

Table 4.1 showed that the research had an initial soft benchmark of 15 interviews planned to observe the feasibility of the Grounded Theory Approach which required the interviewing of many participants until a time when new information was no longer obtained. However, 12 interviews were successfully completed while three interviews failed to materialise for the reasons that the targeted audience was involved in domestic competitions i.e. Logan Cup, Regional 5-Day games and the Women's Fifty50 Challenge at the time of data collection. Also these domestic competitions were being played in bio-secure environments which brought in the aspect of physical inaccessibility and online connectivity.

### 4.3 Demographic data

The group of participants whose socio-economic characteristics are featured in Figure 4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 were an appropriate sample for this study because their age ranges presented a mature background that of knowing what was good or bad, what was required of them and what the game of cricket needed. Their educational background was apt translating to them having an understanding from the basic level to the highest level including the development of strategies and interventions that can optimise performance. The geographical location was also

ideal as in recent years all cricket, whether domestic or international, has largely been played in Harare owing to logistical and financial constraints at Zimbabwe Cricket.

**Figure 4.1**

*Participants' ages*

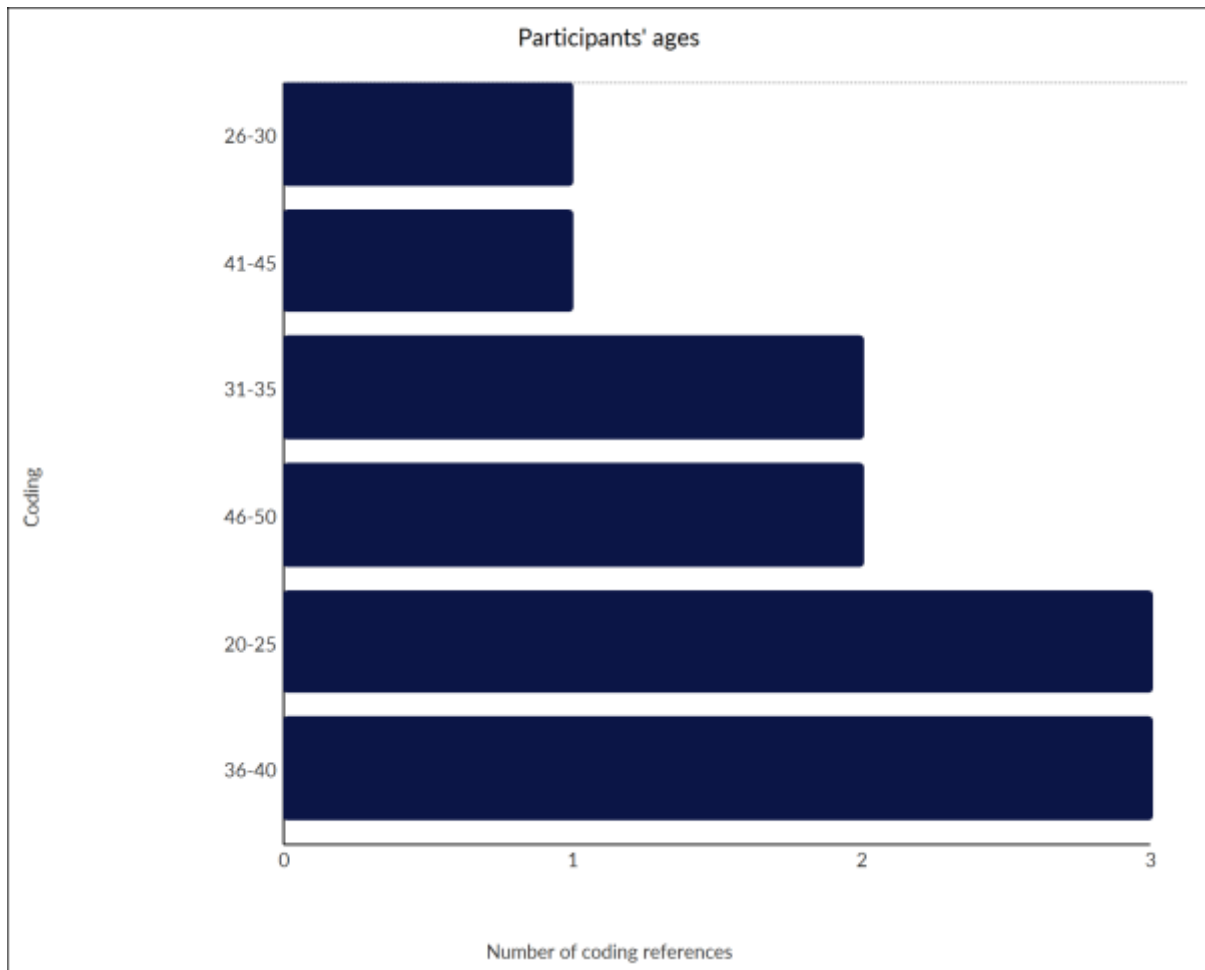


Figure 4.1 presented the respective ages of the participants in this study. The age group of 20-25 and 36-40 had the most representation with three participants while ages 31-35 and 46-50 all shared two respondents each. There was one representation apiece for ages 26-30 and 41-45. All the ages signify maturity and establishment in the game of cricket which was appropriate for this study. In addition, all these ages were actively involved with cricket.

**Figure 4.2**

*Participants' gender*

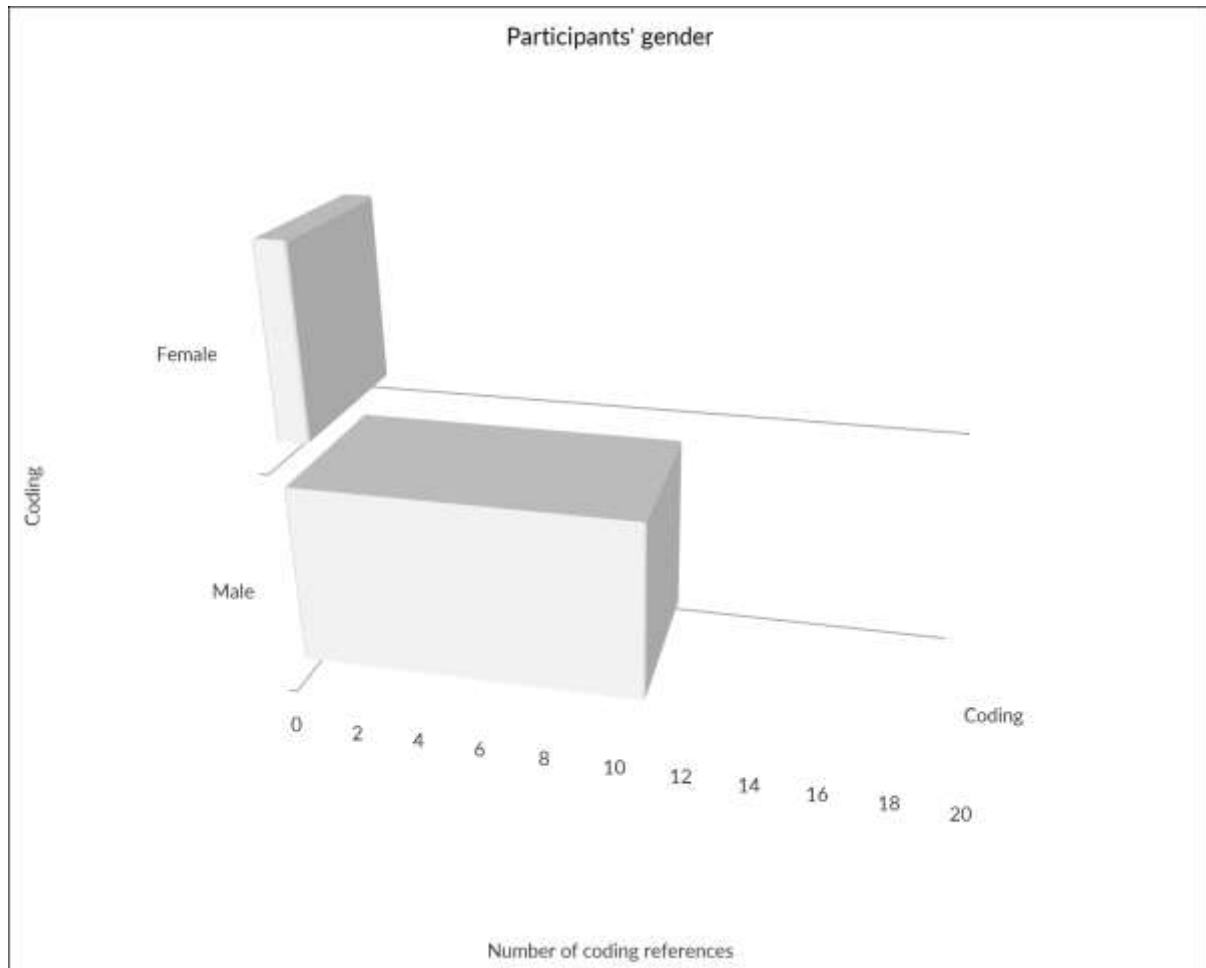


Figure 4.2 shows that there were more male participations amounting to 11 against one female. This was due to the fact most women turned down interview requests and those who promised to participate never showed up for the interviews. However, the male response rate was significant for this study considering that men's cricket has been the pinnacle of cricket in Zimbabwe for years while women's cricket is still in its infancy hence the level of understanding could be a concern.

**Figure 4.3**

*Level of literacy*

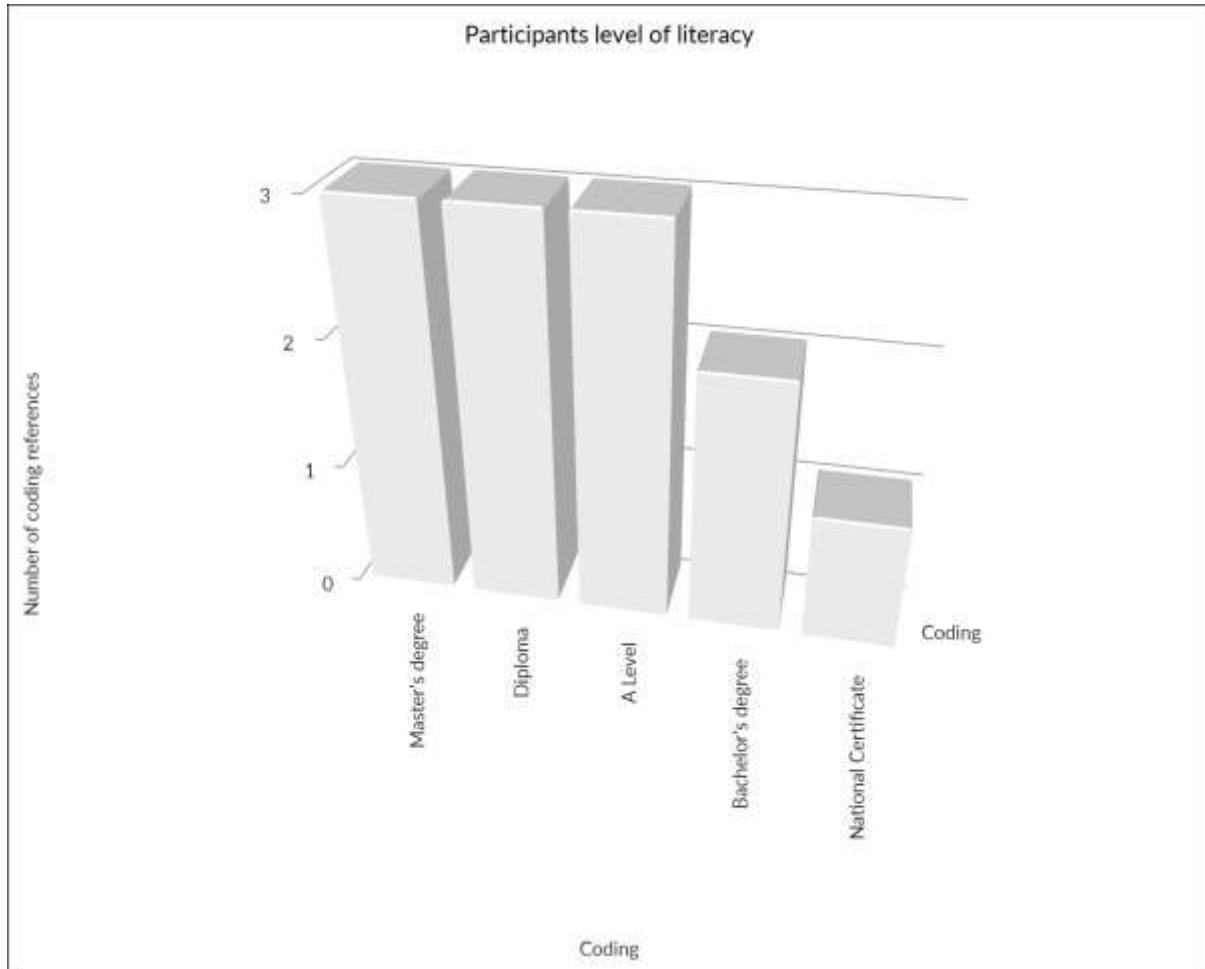


Figure 4.3 indicated that the participants have some educational qualifications and reached certain levels of education. The education qualifications brought in the level of literacy which made it easy for reading, understanding, interpretation and application of interview questions into realistic context in sync with the study. Cricket is a complex game hence it requires some level of literacy to interpret statutes, laws and playing conditions.

**4.3.4 Geographical location**

This study was conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe. The capital city, Harare, has become the heart and soul to Zimbabwean cricket due to various situation and circumstances hence the research made use of this and had interviews at Harare Sports Club, Old Hararians Spots Club and areas surrounding the Central Business District.

#### 4.4 Presentation and analysis

Figure 4.4

##### *Experience in cricket*

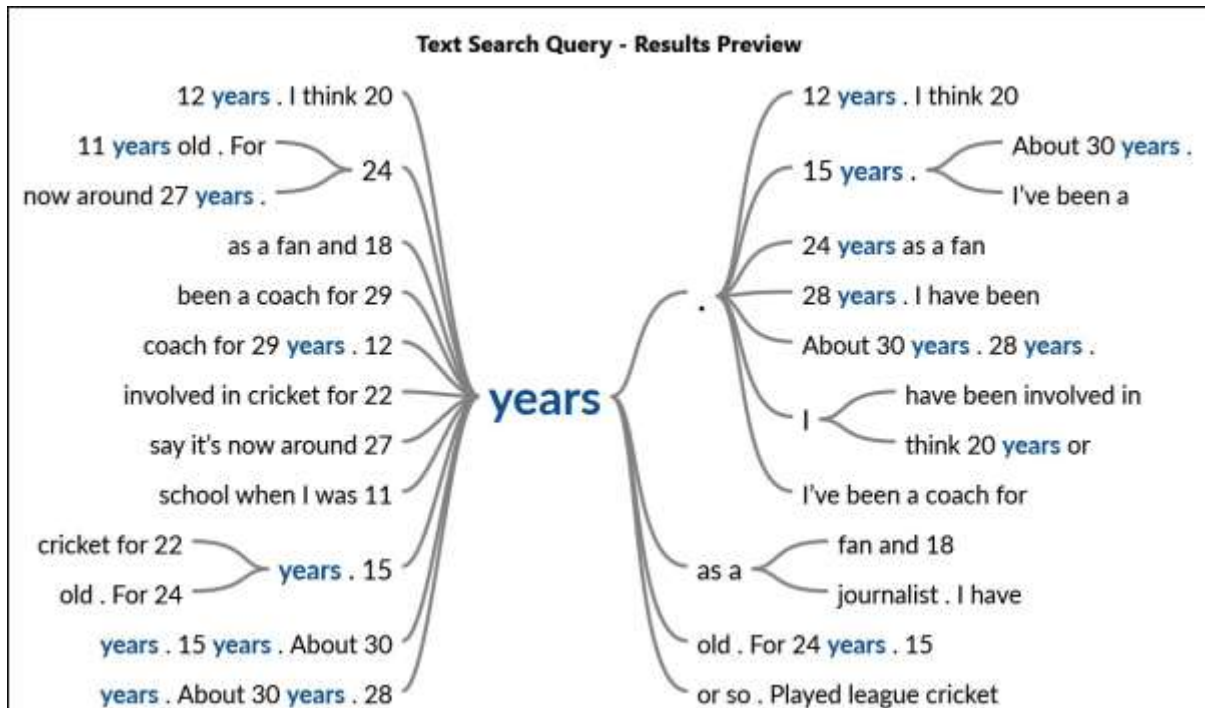
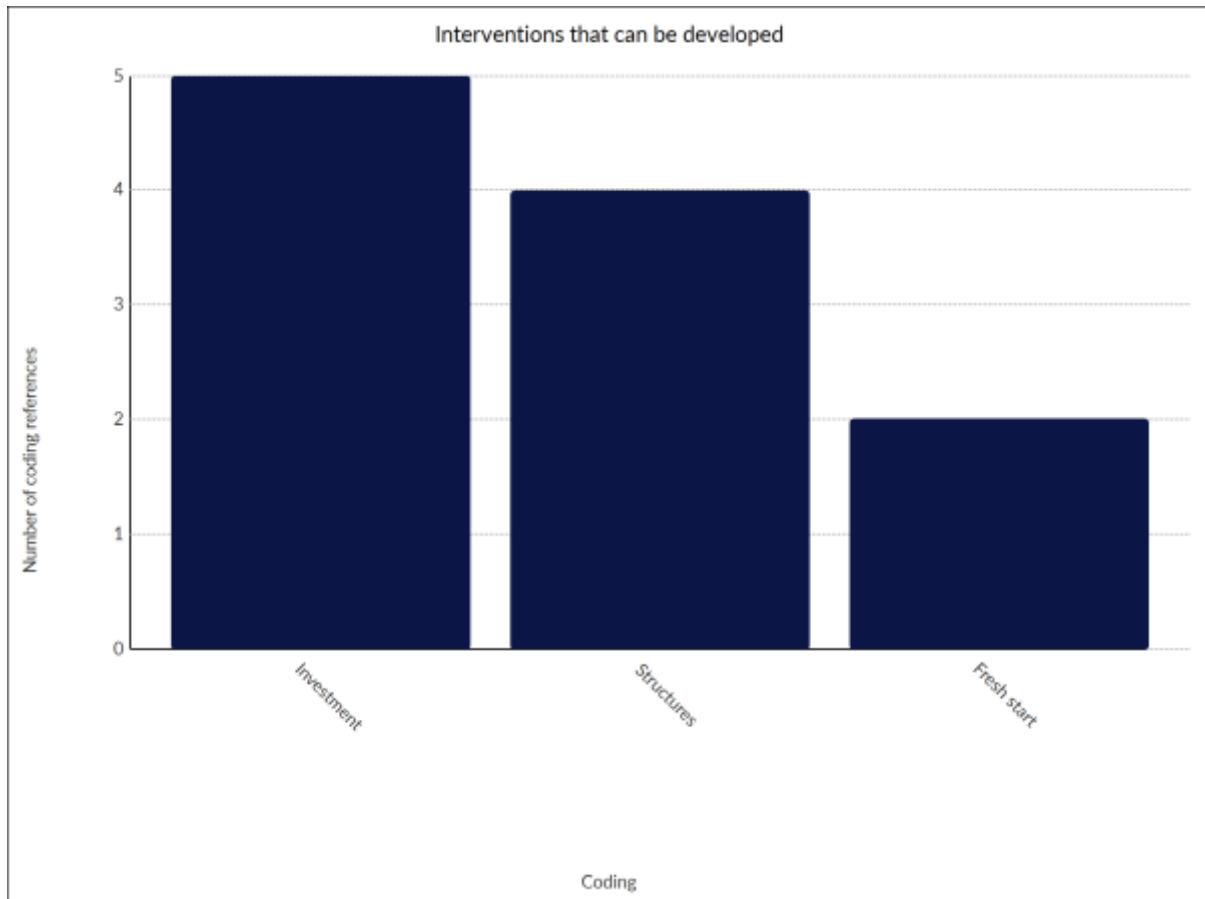


Figure 4.4 revealed the number of years that each participant has been involved with the game of cricket. In essence, Figure 4.4 detailed the experience that each participant has in cricket which was quite central to achieving the main research objective of developing interventions for the optimisation towards the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. Most participants in this study have been around for between 15 and 30 years.

**Figure 4.5**

*To find out interventions that can be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.*



### **Investment**

Investments towards growth of the game, players, coaches, equipment, facilities and more games were identified as interventions that can be developed towards optimization of the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions. This was highlighted with the following excerpts:

*Zimbabwe Cricket has potential to have more following and be bigger than what it is. Spread the game to every province of Zimbabwe, engage all stakeholders.*  
(Participant 1)



*Invest in the game through players, keep them motivated and they push to prove their mettle. (Participant 4)*

*I recommend the prioritisation of player development. Coaches' education to improve the standard of coaching. Improve and build infrastructure in schools and training centres. Invest in training and playing equipment, particularly for less privileged areas. Return the scholarship system. Introduce cricket at tertiary institutions through offering scholarships to players in universities. (Participant 7)*

*Zimbabwe Cricket need to invest more in coaching at all levels of the game, because that is the biggest contributor to players not performing at international level. (Participant 10)*

*To have more game time. (Participant 11)*

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## **Structures**

Putting in place new structures and resuscitating old but sound structures that can improve performance was identified as an intervention that can be developed towards optimization of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. This was established in the following excerpts:

*They need good structures for about 5 years or so if they want to start winning against top teams and they are no short cuts to success. They must also not hesitate to spend money on players' development since in the end it will bring in the corporate world when the team performs well. (Participant 3)*

*Resuscitate grassroots cricket and keep grooming players all around the country. Put the house in order and start afresh. Revisit what was done years back in as far as youth development is concerned and start from there. (Participant 5)*

*Those structures central to the grooming of players need to be active so that there is a wide player selection. There must be competition for players and not those who own places. (Participant 6)*

*A holistic approach to everything, i.e. youth programmes, viable leagues, centres of excellence, academy set ups, A sides, board XI, age groups under 11 to under 19s, preparations, funding and scouting using provincial structure and selection. (Participant 9)*

### **Fresh start**

Opening a new chapter, i.e. starting afresh after clearance of the legacy debt and with former players in influential positions, was indicated as one of the interventions that can be developed towards optimization of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

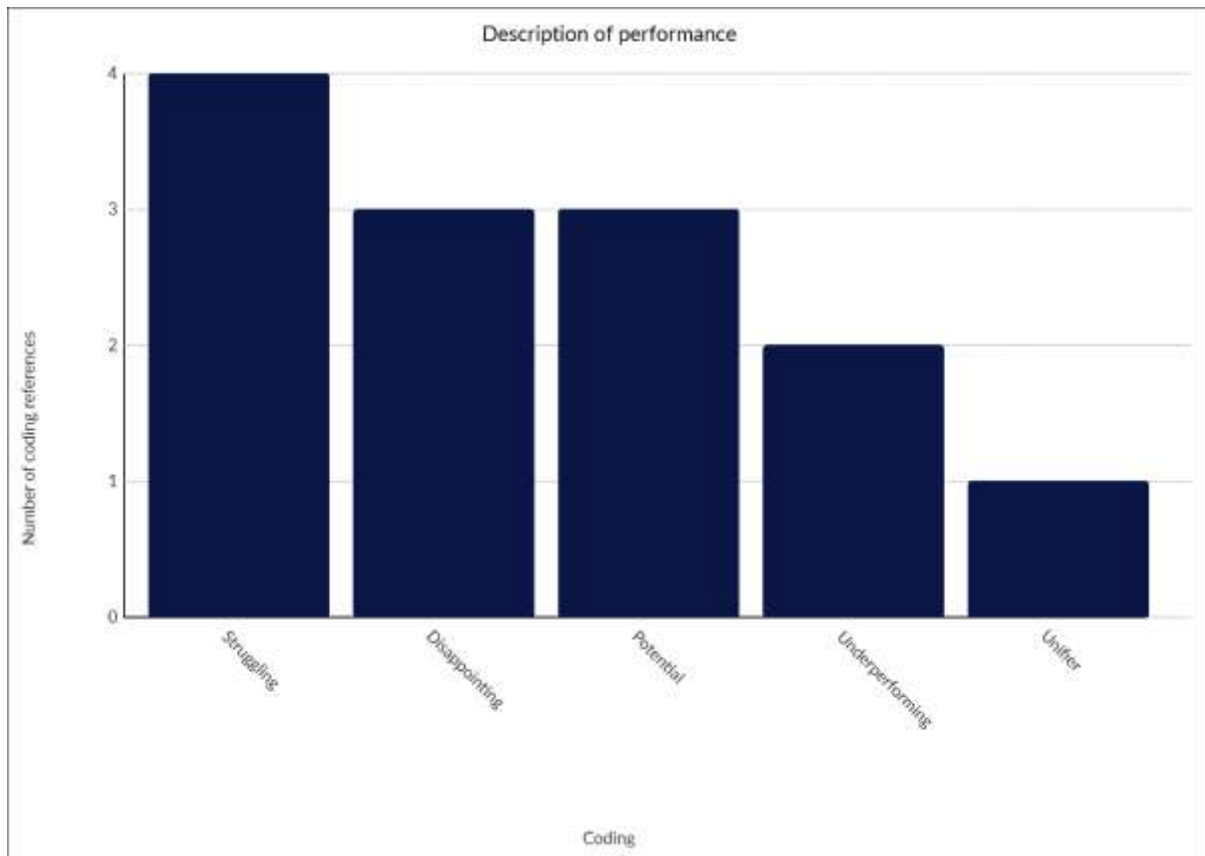
*Zimbabwe cricket is starting all over, debt free, young team, former national team players in key positions. They have been presented with an opportunity to chart a new pathway from grassroots to the national team. There has to be vision 2030 cricket blueprint which should be followed religiously, this should be made plain to all the constituencies within the game.*

*This is thing of attaining success by mistake has no place in modern sport. Zimbabwe has to be deliberate about everything, every cent spent should be justified by the cricket blue print which should outlive the lives of an elected board. (Participant 2)*

*Have competent people in key areas to drive the vision of the organisation. (Participant 8)*

**Figure 4.6**

*To determine how the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team can be described.*



### **Struggling and lacking good structures**

Struggling and lacking good structures were identified as playing key roles in the description of the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's cricket team. Participants highlighted that the team struggled in international competitions as a result of not having sound development structures. This was indicated in the following excerpts:

*I think it is a team which requires some serious transformation, they need good structures from age groups cricket all the way to the top. (Participant 3)*

*I feel it's a team which will always struggle to face teams which are ranked higher than them because of some structures which are not place e.g. there is no*

*national Academy, lack of A side Cricket, lack of foreign based players in their domestic set up. (Participant 4)*

*The team is struggling to compete particularly against top cricket sides. It seems we stalled, in terms of improving as a team. This is evident with many of the teams that were previously behind us edging past us. (Participant 8)*

*Underperforming and lacks substance in terms of structure and direction. They seem to be no clear pathway. (Participant 9)*

### **Potential**

Potential was identified as one of the ways to describe the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's cricket team. This was derived through the second interview question that asked participants about their impressions of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*Zimbabwe cricket senior men's side has the potential to become the best supported national team if they start winning consistently and closing out matches against teams that are perceived to be better than them. (Participant 2)*

*A team that has so much talented players with potential to excel in world cricket. (Participant 5)*

*It is a team that can cause serious upsets in world cricket and there have been glimpses of their potential to thrill and kill over the years. (Participant 6)*

### **Disappointing**

Some of the participant described the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's cricket teams as disappointing. The performance was described and rated as unsatisfactory thus bring great disappointment as highlighted in the following excerpts:

*Just like most Zimbabwean national teams, they are a disappointment in international sport. (Participant 10)*

*Bunch of losers. (Participant 7)*

*Impression of not having the national pride. (Participant 11)*

### **Underperforming**

The participants viewed and described that the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team was underperforming. The impressions from the participants were that the actual performance and desired performance were far off. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*Underperforming and lacks substance in terms of structure and direction. They seem to be no clear pathway. (Participant 9)*

*They strike me as a team that can do better but they have underperformed. (Participant 12)*

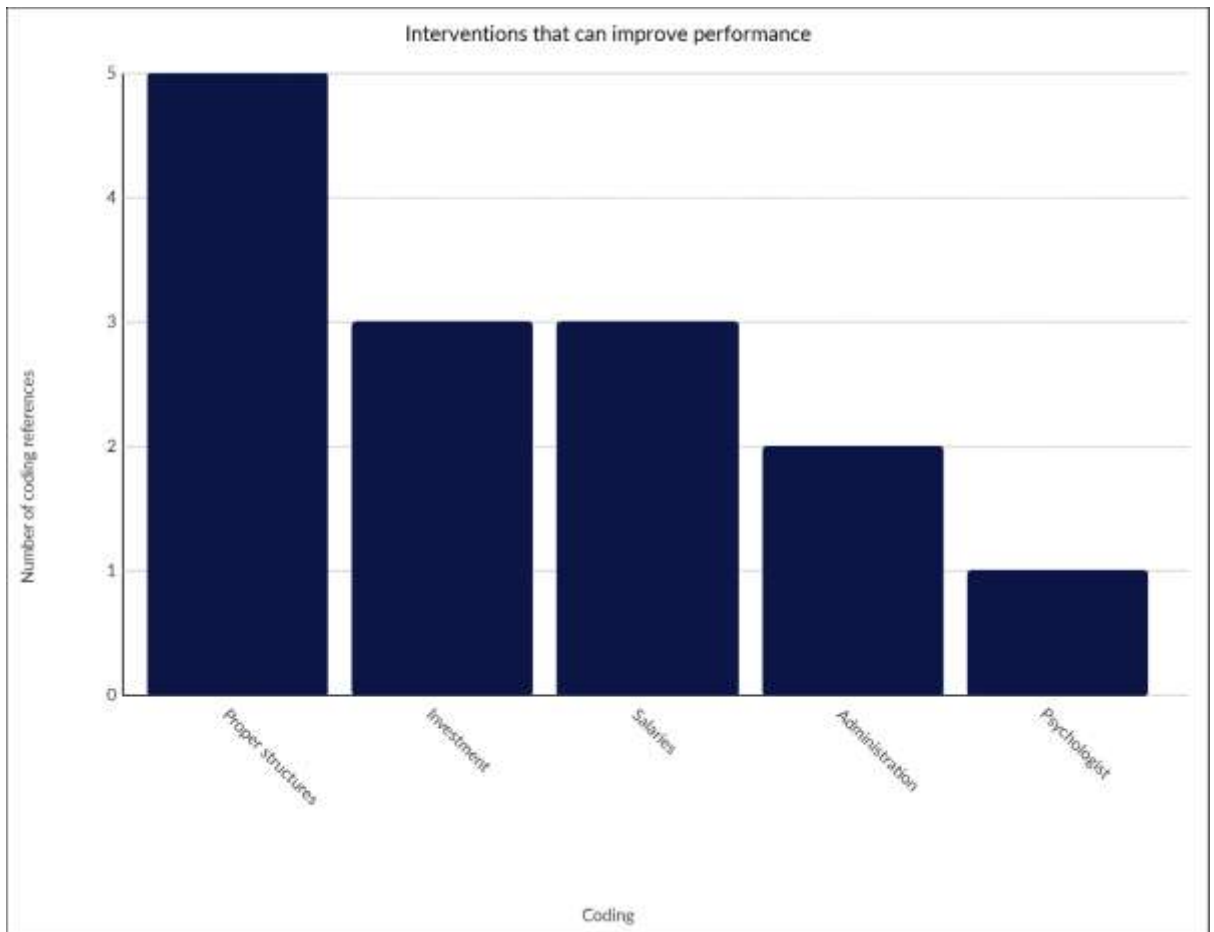
### **Unifier**

There was also an impression that the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team is a unifying force for all races and to the entire nation. The participant noted the performance of the team to be one that brings the nation together. This was highlighted in the following excerpt:

*It's one of the most diverse team in the world when it comes to player's backgrounds and race. For the team it's a small challenge and for the nation it's the best sport to unite the nation. (Participant 1)*

**Figure 4.7**

*To ascertain interventions that can be developed in optimising the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team?*



**Proper structures**

Having proper structures in place was identified as crucial in ascertaining interventions that can be developed in optimizing the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*Zimbabwe Cricket needs to have a different structure from what they have at the moment. Maybe if they can have the stakeholders involved in restructuring.*  
(Participant 1)

*Player development pathway needs to be addressed, starting with development coaching, national age groups, First Class and Zimbabwe A side. These have not been functional mainly owing to the lack of prioritisation, therefore insufficient funding has been directed to these areas. (Participant 8)*

*Bring back the scholarship programme to the schools and set up centers of excellence within the traditional cricketing school and newly interested ones with the help of Zimbabwe Cricket funding in terms of coaching staff, grounds and equipment etc. (Participant 9)*

*There is a need to invest more on coaching, having the right structures to coach players from junior level up to international level. When a player is not performing at international level, they need to go back to playing first class cricket with proper structures in place. When they struggle at first class level, they should be sent to club cricket where they should have structures in place. (Participant 10)*

*Start by changing the school season, play cricket all year round, create tertiary leagues, take players into HPCs. (Participant 12)*

---

## **Investment**

Investment into the different structures and components of game was seen as another intervention of that can lead towards the optimization of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's performance. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*We need to start investing more in our T20. Identify players who will only play that format only, this has the potential of putting Zimbabwe back on the cricket map. The shorter the game the chance for an upset. This also allows your players to play in different T20 tournaments around the World earning some extra money. You do not neglect the other two formats. (Participant 2)*

*We need to know our brand of cricket for example type wickets we should be playing on from our domestic cricket up to international. All those structures I spoke about must be in place. (Participant 3)*

*Treat cricket as a business and open up financial avenues. Source for funding aid the grant from the International Cricket Council. (Participant 4)*

### **Salaries**

Payment of salaries on time and having standardised contracts was picked as one of the best ways to improve the performance through ascertaining the interventions towards the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*Have standardized contracts that do not show an imbalance of rewards. Participant 5)*

*Players must be paid on time for them to perform better without any worries about money. (Participant 10)*

*Timeous salaries, commitment, serious practice and playing in other countries. (Participant 11)*

---

### **Good administration**

Good administration was pointed as one of the ways to improve the status-quo of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. A sound administration that looked at all aspects and advocated for change was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*Clean administration that has cricket and players at heart. It all starts from proper administration and then it flows down. In addition, there needs to be change of attitude right round. (Participant 6)*

*There needs new leaders with fresh thinking to save our game. (Participant 7)*

### **Psychologist**

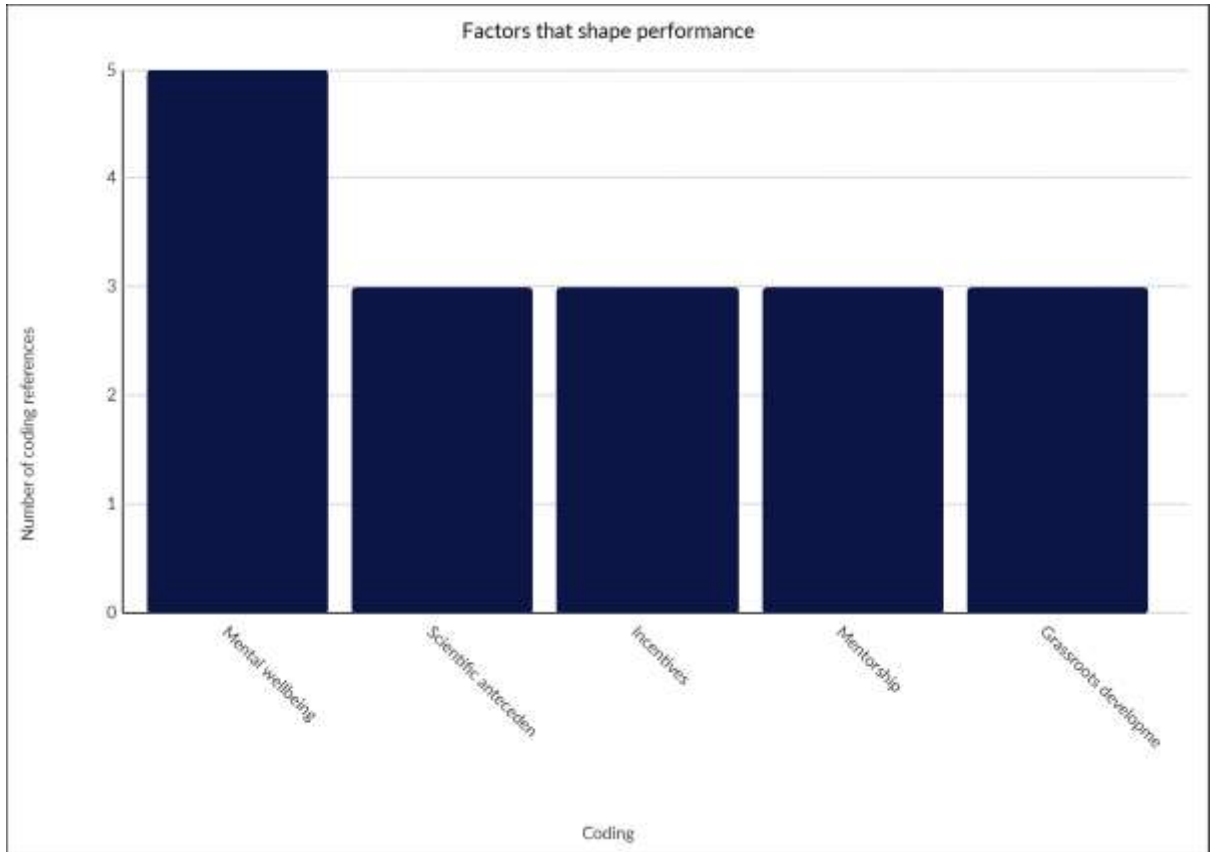
Hiring a psychologist was recognised a way to improve the performance of the Zimbabwean team. The mental stability of players was identified as critical as was exemplified in this excerpt:



*Zimbabwe Cricket must move with the times and invest in a psychologist to work with players because the game is now played more in the mind. (Participant 10)*

**Figure 4.8**

*To find out factors that shape the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team?*



### **Mental wellbeing**

The mental state of players was recognised as heavily contributing towards optimization of the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men’s team. This was shown by the following excerpts:

*Performance is first determined by defining and accepting where you are first. Cricket is 10 percent skill and 90 percent mental. Coaches on the modern game play the role of a manager that of bringing out the best of the available resources. (Participant 2)*

*Sports Science and psychology is key to good performances in modern day sport. (Participant 6)*

*Psychological factors. These refer to player mental well-being. There is need for motivation and security. (Participant 8)*

*Fitness. Individual seriousness through practicing. Having a winning mentality. (Participant 11)*

*Practice, support structures, exposure, mental aptitude. (Participant 12)*

### **Grassroots development**

Grassroots development was identified as playing a key role in shaping the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. Grassroots was seen as the foundation for the game hence a strong base created a stable mid and fluent top that produced performing players from grassroots. This was witnessed in the following excerpts:

*Firstly development at grassroots and to make our domestic more competitive to maintain that professionalism from Zimbabwe Cricket and the players to play more competitive games against good teams. (Participant 1)*

*Good development structures where there is continuous breeding of talent young players passing through each and every stage of the game. (Participant 4)*

*Put money into the game development and facilities. (Participant 7)*

### **Mentorship**

Mentorship was identified as one of the most important aspects in optimizing the performance of the Zimbabwean cricket. This was highlighted in the following excerpts:

*A side Cricket to prepare upcoming players for the highest stage. We need high profile players from other countries to mentor our upcoming*

*players in our domestic set up... Our senior players mustn't completely retire from all forms Cricket in their mid-30s, they should continue playing domestic cricket for mentorship. (Participant 3)*

*Structure of the team composition, pathway i.e. from under age groups recruitment to centres of excellence and Zimbabwe A sides representation. (Participant 9)*

*Proper coaching, the right structures in place, remuneration. (Participant 10)*

## **Incentives**

Incentives play crucial roles in improving players' performance. The participants showed that it was important for the governing body to provide players with incentives. It was also highlighted that incentives are important as they cater for the players' basic needs. This was exemplified by the following excerpts:

*Incentives for players like match fees at Domestic level and proper match fees at International level. (Participant 3)*

*Good incentives that bring job and food security to the players so that they continue giving it their all. (Participant 5)*

*Pay the players who do more work and make the organisation get money and not the administrators. (Participant 6)*

## **Scientific antecedents of performance**

The scientific antecedents of performance were acknowledged as factors crucial to the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

*Physiological factors. These refer to player fitness and physical well-being. This also includes anthropometric factors. Technical (biomechanical) factors. These refer to player ability to execute a skill, most efficiently. Tactical factors. These refer to player ability to apply*

*learnt skill in a given situation. Nutritional factors. The body's nutritional demands play a key role in a player's performance.* (Participant 8)

*Fitness. Individual seriousness through practicing. Having a winning mentality.* (Participant 11)

*Practice, support structures, exposure, mental aptitude.* (Participant 12)

## **4.5 Discussion**

During the interviews, the participants recognised factors that were affecting the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team as well as identifying interventions that can be developed to optimise the performance. From the thematic analysis, the themes that arose were grassroots development and structures, talent identification, incentives, factors that shape performance i.e. mental wellbeing, mentorship and scientific antecedents of performance.

### **4.5.1 Talent identification**

Talent identification and grassroots development were topical in the interview responses with participants highlighting that these were stepping stones towards the development of interventions to optimise performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. Talent development and grassroots development can be traced to traditional models in Chapter Two where the Jones and Watson's Model of 1997 outlined the talent identification elements in the model. According to Hugo (2014) the Jones and Watson's Model is premised on four elements which have an analysis of performance in order to identify the predictors of success. The four talent identification elements in the model are identification of target performance, selection of a criterion to represent the target performance, selection of potential performance predictors and the verification of predictive power of these variables and application of results to determine which sport was recommended for which individual. Therefore, talent identification and grassroots development as highlighted in both Chapter Two and Four can be drawn to the research objective of finding interventions that can be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

#### **4.5.2 Psychophysiological Approach**

Psychology and physiology play pivotal roles in improving performance in modern day sport and so these were similar views shared by the participants. As highlighted in Chapter Two, the psychophysiological approach that was used to investigate performance in sport. di Fronso et al. (2017) indicated that the psychophysiological approach looked at interventions that can be developed towards optimisation of performance in sport. The Psychophysiological approach is a multidimensional and multimodal approach that can be used to investigate performance while looking at the attention-effort-optimal performance relationship. The implication was that application of psychophysiology was an intervention that can be developed towards optimisation of performance in sport.

#### **4.5.3 Factors shaping performance**

The participants pointed out several factors that shaped performance which include sound development structures and programmes, technical, tactical, psychological, physiological, technological and nutritional factors, incentives and mentorship. All these factors are responsible for shaping performance in sport across four major dimensions namely skill, strength, endurance and recovery. This was also highlighted in Chapter Two by Handelsman (2016) who is of the view that high performance in any sport requires a characteristic blend of these dimensions, although individual sports differ widely in that balance. The implication is that these factors can be responsible for shaping performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

#### **4.5.4 Financial rewards**

The participants appeared to be in agreement that financial rewards in form of better pay, timeous pay outs, lucrative contracts and incentives played significant roles in the optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. In Chapter Two, Maldeniya and Weerasiri (2019) highlighted that monetary and non-monetary incentives would get the best performance out of the Sri Lankan players. Therefore, in regards to this study, financial rewards can be identified as something that can be used as interventions to optimise the performance of a team.

#### **4.6 New insights**

Findings from this study differ from other studies in that the responses are from participant who are attached to the host organisation hence they are fully aware of issues that are

backtracking optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team. This study's findings came from 12 participants suggesting it was an exploration of a wide area that was covered in the purpose of the study which is to find interventions that can optimise the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

#### **4.6.1 Investment**

Investment into the key result areas of cricket in Zimbabwe emerged as a new insight from the study. Investment into grassroots cricket, development structures, mentorship programmes, player growth, coaching development, equipment and facilities was identified as a new insight that could be taken towards the optimisation of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's performance. Investment into a cricket business venture like that other ICC Full Members are doing will go a long way as an intervention to improve performance. This investment new insight was supported by the following excerpts:

*We need to start investing more in our T20. Identify players who will only play that format only, this has the potential of putting Zimbabwe back on the cricket map. The shorter the game the chance for an upset. This also allows your players to play in different T20 tournaments around the World earning some extra money. You do not neglect the other two formats. (Participant 2)*

*We need to know our brand of cricket for example type wickets we should be playing on from our domestic cricket up to international. All those structures I spoke about must be in place. (Participant 3)*

*Treat cricket as a business and open up financial avenues. Source for funding aid the grant from the International Cricket Council. (Participant 4)*

#### **4.7 Conceptual framework**

From the findings, a conceptual or structural model on grassroots and development of cricket in Zimbabwe was developed by the researcher in Table 4.2. Many of the responses rued the absence of sound grassroots and development structures that, if in place, can give Zimbabwe Cricket the competitive edge and excellence it requires in optimisation of performance.

**Table 4.2: Conceptual Framework on grassroots and development of cricket in Zimbabwe derived from the findings.**

Age Group Under 13-15	Age Group Under 16-19	High Performance Centre (HPC)	Developmental National Teams	Senior men's team
<p><b>Schools cricket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Primary schools.</li> <li>✓ Secondary schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>District and zones</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Inter-schools cricket tournaments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Provincial cricket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ District Select sides cricket tournament.</li> </ul> <p><b>National cricket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provincial cricket festival</li> </ul> <p><b>Zimbabwe U13 Schools</b></p> <p><b>Zimbabwe U15 Schools</b></p>	<p><b>Schools cricket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Secondary schools.</li> <li>✓ Junior clubs.</li> </ul> <p><b>District and zones</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Inter-schools cricket tournaments.</li> <li>✓ Inter-club cricket tournaments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Provincial cricket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ District Select sides cricket tournament.</li> </ul> <p><b>National cricket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provincial cricket festival</li> </ul> <p><b>Zimbabwe Under-16 Schools</b></p> <p><b>Zimbabwe Under-19</b></p>	<p><b>High Performance Centre</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Centre of excellence</li> <li>✓ Zimbabwe Under-19</li> </ul> <p><b>National League</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Club cricket</li> <li>✓ Tertiary cricket</li> </ul>	<p><b>Zimbabwe A</b></p> <p><b>Zimbabwe Academy</b></p> <p><b>Zimbabwe Development Under-23</b></p> <p><b>Zimbabwe Chairman's XI</b></p> <p><b>Zimbabwe President's XI</b></p>	<p><b>Zimbabwe</b></p>

#### **4.7.1 Practical implications**

The practical implications of this conceptual framework is that it can bring the competitive aspect at all age groups in the Zimbabwe Cricket playing circuit. At every level, there will be competitive cricket being played which will make available a huge player base for selection and eventual competition for places. Now if that trend is maintained, each age group will be active and will feed into the next age group way up to the respective national teams. Such an intervention will surely bring competition and optimise the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

#### **4.7.2 Theoretical implications**

The theoretical implication of this conceptual framework is that if these anticipated outcomes continue happening they can bring about a basis for further learning and reference to such phenomenon. The theories can stand out and still be used as guidelines for future references. The conceptual framework can be further developed.

#### **4.7.3 Limitations**

The biggest limitation that Zimbabwe Cricket can encounter is funding. The game of cricket requires a huge financial muscle to run all its programmes and projects at once hence this can be a tall order for the organisation. As such skilled personnel such as development coaches can be required across all its 10 Provinces sub divided into districts and zones. There will also be demand for proper facilities for matches and practice.

The other limitation can be that of ownership of schools cricket which seems to be in the hands of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education as opposed to the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation. In essence, Zimbabwe Cricket will not have direct control of schools cricket and the national schools cricket calendar.

#### **4.8 Chapter summary**

Chapter Four was all about data presentation and analysis. As such, data was presented visually and analysed through the NVivo software 2020 version in sync with research objectives. There was also discussions on response rate, findings and creation of conceptual framework aligned to the research. Up next is Chapter Five which focuses on summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the summary, conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions will address the four research questions outlined in Chapter One. Recommendations for practice and further study will also be suggested in this chapter.

### **5.2 Summary**

Purpose of this study was to identify and develop interventions that have direct impact on the optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in international competitions.

The research objectives set out for this study were:

- To find out interventions that can be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.
- To determine how the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team can be described.
- To ascertain interventions that can be developed in optimising the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.
- To explore factors that shape the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team.

The main deductions from the literature reviewed suggested that there are theories which look at the optimisation of performance in sport. There are talent identification models which look at the development of athletes and how this development impacts on their performance. Literature was also reviewed on the scientific antecedents of performance in psychology, physiology and technology as well as factors which affect performance in sport in general such incentives, administration, black swan events et cetera. Chapter Two closed up on the gaps and trends in literature linked to the study. The primary research strategy used was the Grounded Theory Approach since it was an area of study that was unknown and the researcher wanted to explore more. The population used consisted of players, administrators, coaches, analysts and journalists. By virtue of using the grounded theory approach, there was no decision on sample size. Data collection method used was through in-depth interviews. The information gained from data collection was organised, analysed and visualised using the NVivo Software (2020 version).

## **5.3 Conclusions**

### **5.3.1 Research question 1**

**What interventions can be developed towards optimisation of performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?**

The interventions that can be developed include spreading the game to every corner of the country followed up the setting up of good grassroots and developmental structures with a futuristic plan. Investment in the personnel such as players and the facilities can ensure quality assurance in both performance and the standard of the game. Incentives and good contracts can act as motivation for players to stay put and give their all on the field of play. Application of the scientific antecedents of performance in psychology, physiology and technology add up as more interventions that optimise the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men' team.

### **5.3.2 Research question 2**

**How can the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team in the last five years be described?**

The description of the performance was on the negative side with impressions identifying the team as the whipping boys of international cricket. In their description, the participants identified the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team to be constantly struggling, disappointing and underperforming. The performance was described as stagnant and so there was real struggle to catch up, or at least match up, the most competitive sides that continue to advance in world cricket. The team often blew hot and cold translating to them having glimpses of good performances and bad ones which ultimately resulted in great disappointment. There was inconsistency in the performance which all but brings negative perceptions and impressions on the team. However, other themes emerged as the Zimbabwean team was seen to have potential to improve their performance and be a unifying force for the nation.

### **5.3.3 Research question 3**

#### **What factors have shaped the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?**

There are factors crucial to performance which include physiology referring to player fitness and physical well-being, psychological factors referring to the player mental well-being, technical or biomechanical factors referring to player ability to execute a skill, most efficiently, tactical factors referring to player ability to apply learnt skill in a given situation and nutritional factors referring to body's nutritional demands. All these factors have shaped the performance of the team. There were also other factors which included good remuneration of players, good grassroots and development structures and proper coaching.

### **5.3.4 Research question 4**

#### **What interventions can be developed in optimising the performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?**

As an intervention, the responsible authority would need to identify the brand of cricket that it is known by and make investments. Participants also identified the need for there to be proper development and mentorship structures, timeous salaries, good administration and employment of a psychologist. There should be transformation to a business nature in running the game with more investments taking place in player development, coaching and facilities at large. Resuscitation of the scholarship development programmes and setting up of High Performance Centers. Therefore if the base or foundation is strong, it will produce a stable performing top.

## **5.4 Implications/recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Implications for practice**

- Zimbabwe Cricket now need to have a performance road map and pathway that lays out the cricket strategic plan whose vision and mission will be adhered to religiously.
- There needs to be grassroots cricket development coming up through the various ranks. The game starts at the basement and so a strong foundation makes the top be stable and steady.
- Talent identification and selection of budding players that will be fed into the scholarship development structures.

- There needs to be standardisation of contracts with a base price such that it stands out as a motivation to all players to push for more.
- Improve and build infrastructure in schools and training centres. Invest in training and playing equipment particularly for less privileged areas.

#### **5.4.2 Implications for Future Research**

- The cricket business model can further be studied. How other nations are running the game as serious business needs to be studied. This is important because a balanced financial model will stabilise all key result areas including managing the performance of the team.
- The coaching pathway needs further study. Checking the role of coaches' play in the development of cricketers and their impact at various levels of cricket. This is important as it builds performing cricketers and eventually aid the overall performance of the team.
- Area of psychology needs further study. Modern day sport now heavily relies on the mental aspect and so it is crucial for there to be further study on this. This is because performance is central to the mental state of the player and so has to be taken seriously.

#### **5.5 Limitations of the study**

The study used interviews and they presented challenges of their own. The population was made up of people employed or somehow linked to Zimbabwe Cricket so there was fear in their response to such an extent that some turned down the interviews. Most of the responses were filtered with a lot of censorship on information hence and the researcher did not really gain all the information.

The sample size was unlimited since the researcher used the Grounded Theory Approach but managed to interview 12 participants while there was reluctance of the subjects to wilfully participate in the study.

Gaining access to some of the targeted subjects was a challenge as well. Majority of the targeted audience was involved in domestic competitions i.e. Logan Cup, Regional 5-Day games and the Women's Fifty50 Challenge at the time of data collection. These domestic competitions were being played in bio-secure environments which brought in the aspect of physical inaccessibility and online connectivity.

The study was the first of its kind and so there was virtually no literature available or aligned to the study in the Zimbabwean context. Related literature was based on the American, Asian and European points of view thereby opening up a gap in literature.

However, in a bid to minimise impact of these limitations, the researcher ended up using digital technology through direct calls, social media platforms such as WhatsApp for video calls and audio whilst other respondents responded using audio recordings upon reading the interview questions.

The researcher used the Ground Theory Approach to get as many interviews and insights from the participants. There was use of the exploratory research that tried to explore into the new territory. There was also use of day two journalism to try and crack up the participants to speak out more.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter summarised what the study was all about as defined by the research objectives. Conclusions were made and given in accordance with the research questions from Chapter One. Recommendations for practice and further studies were suggested.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Interview questions**

- i. How long have you been involved with cricket?
- ii. What are your impression(s) of Zimbabwe Cricket senior men's team?
- iii. How can you describe their performance?
- iv. What are the factors crucial to performance?
- v. What do you think is affecting their performance?
- vi. How can the performance be improved?
- vii. What recommendations/conclusions can you give?

## Appendix 2

### Letter of Approval



GM/aep/30/11/21

30 November 2021

The Chairman  
Dr. LT Charumbira  
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Dear Sir/Madam

RE: MR PERCIVAL SIZARA - PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH STUDY AT ZIMBABWE CRICKET.

The above subject refers.

We acknowledge receipt of Mr. Percival Sizara's request seeking permission to undertake his research study at our organisation. We hereby grant Mr Sizara the permission to do research study at our organisation on the topic '*Developing Interventions to Optimize the Performance of the Zimbabwe Cricket Senior Men's Team in International Competitions*'.

We will assist him in any way possible and we believe that the research will also help us with the necessary interventions going forward.

Please note that dissemination of the research outcome will be subject to our approval.

I, Mr. Giveimore Mekoni, as the Managing Director, will oversee Mr Sizara's research work. Therefore, any questions from your organisation may be directed to me. My details are provided below.

Email: [givemorem@zimcricket.org](mailto:givemorem@zimcricket.org) phone: +263 712 456 955.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Giveimore Mekoni', written over a circular stamp.

GIVEMORE MAKONI  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
ZIMBABWE CRICKET