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DEPARTMENT PEACE AND GOVERNANCE



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THE EFFECTS CAUSED BY COVID 19 ON RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS.A CASE

OF GURUVE

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the effects caused by the COVID 19 pandemic on rural women and girls. The objective of the study were to to assess the challenges faced by rural women and girls during the COVID 19 pandemic in Gurube, to assess why women and girls were the most affected gender during the COVID pandemic in Gurube, to assess the economic, environmental and social COVID 19 impact on rural households with women breadwinners in Gurube, to proper strategies that can be utilised to improve lives of women and girls to gain their lives back. The study also discussed the impacted caused by COVID pandemic economic, social effects. For data presentations tables were used for data presentation. The study employs a mixed methods approach quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to gather data on socio-economic, health and educational impacts experienced by female population during the pandemic.

DECLARATION AND RELEASE FORM

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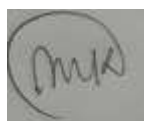
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the researcher's family and friends for their priceless efforts and contributions to the researcher's entire academic life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is a result of the efforts many people who stood by me throughout the research project. Expressing my gratefulness alone won't be just enough, but allow me to take this opportunity to pass my gratitude to those inline by making this research study a success. I am thankful to my supervisor Dr Chipaike who sacrificed his time and effort in supervising me this research project. I would also like to thank my parents also for all the support they gave me through this journey.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Virus
COVID 19	Corona Virus Infectious Disease 2
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
SADC	Southern Africa Development Committee
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
STDs	Sexual Transmitted Disease
SRHS	Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
UNICEF	Unite Nations Childrens Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

The COVID-19 virus was formally announced a world-wide pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. By that time, significant effects had already been experienced locally and later extended to Europe and United States of America. Within SADC region, Zimbabwe recorded its first case on 11 March. Even prior to the pandemic's arrival in Southern Africa, regional authorities had already introduced policies and interventions aimed at preventing infections, managing the health of those infected, and mitigating the broader socio-economic and political repercussions of both the virus and the government responses to it. It was expected that some of these regulations and measures would conflict with human rights standards, as outlined in both international human rights frameworks and the national constitution. COVID 19 pandemic had a greater effects on females in third world countries, especially those who lived in rural in African continents according to Journal of Humanitarian Affairs (2021) approximately 75-80% of women and girls faced severe challenges during the covid 19. Nyabeze and Chikoko (2021) stated that, pandemics by their troublesome nature, inevitable expose weakness in the similar manner they generate opportunities. The movement restrictions which was announced in order to curtails the spread of Covid 19 negatively disrupted the lives of women according to United Nations (UN) findings ‘ while everyone is facing unprecedented challenges, women are bearing the burnt of economic and social fall out of covid19 (UN Women 2020).

Generally, people's lives living in rural areas in Zimbabwe became difficult for them ever since the lockdown was announced. Most people faced food insecurity, there was disruption in agricultural input supply chains, leading to shortage of seeds, fertilisers and other essentials for farming.it increased in food insecurity and malnutrition, especially among vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and those living with disabilities. There was also strained

infrastructure and Service deliver, challenges in delivering social protection programs and humanitarian aid to remote communities due to movements' restrictions. economic challenges. Decline in cross border trade and informal economic activities increased in poverty and food insecurity as the pandemic exacerbated the existing economic challenges faced by rural households. Social and educational impacts. There was disruption of education with many rural schools lacking the resources and infrastructure to transition to remote learning. There was also existing gender inequalities as the pandemic intensified the strain of unpaid caregiving responsibilities on women and girls in rural households. There was shortage of medical supplies in rural areas, making it difficult for to respond effectively to the pandemic. Reduced access to routine healthcare services, as resources were diverted to COVID 19 response.

During the COVID 19, rural women and girls in Gurube faced severe economic hardships because the Corona virus pandemic had exacerbated the challenges of an already struggling economy. Increased care burden, added responsibilities for childcare and house hold chores due to school closure. Hamadani et al. (2020) emphasize that the stay-at-home directives during this period adversely affected economic stability and mental well-being, while also heightening the risks of food security and intimate partner violence. Women suffered Gender based violence in their homes, women were prone to abuse due to lockdowns and confinement measures. Women in Gurube faced health challenges, disruptions in access to essential healthcare services, including maternal and reproductive health care. They also faced social isolation and mental health, feelings of isolation due to disrupted social networks and support systems. Young females also suffered during the COVID 19 pandemic, in some rural communities the economic hardships led to an increase in child marriages as families alleviate financial burdens. Rural girls faced a higher risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking as job opportunities and social support system were disrupted. Rural girls in Gurube in Gurube faced school disruptions many girls were unable to continue with their education during the

pandemic, increasing the risk of dropping and falling behind in their studies. According to the World Trade Organisation (2020), many of the ways in which COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women are rooted in existing gender inequalities such as wage and education disparities, restricted access to financial resources, the overrepresentation of women in informal employment, and prevailing social limitations, these factors collectively heighten their vulnerability during economic downturns. This suggests that women occupy what Butler (2006) describes as precarious space and as precarious beings, their experiences of suffering are often more pronounced than those of men.

1.2 AIM

To evaluate the impact caused by COVID 19 pandemic on young girls and women living in rural areas and produce an alternative care plan on how they can build back their lives.

1.3 Statement of the problem.

There was a high rate of gender based violence, school dropouts, early child marriages and also high rate in STDs in young women which was a result of covid 19 lockdown. Young girls were forced into marriages because of poverty in their homes. A high rate of school drop outs occurred since there was lockdown restrictions which made parents fail to pay school fees because of financial constraints. Women suffered abuse in the lockdown since they were close to their abusers and they could not get help in different social groups. Young women and girls were forced to indulge in sexual actives during the lockdown due to poverty which increased a high rate of STDs. They then faced challenges in accessing sexual reproductive services to find contraceptives because of financial constraints and travelling restrictions. Zimbabwe healthy system still faces challenges in the providing of sexual and reproductive health services to young adults. In effort to address challenges n sexual and reproductive health, the National Healthy Policy of Zimbabwe of 2006 was developed was developed by government of

Zimbabwe which to date plays an important role in policy formulation of health policies including the National Health Strategy of the 2006-2020. However, the sexual and reproductive needs of young adults were not captured in the policy, as noted by Choruma (2007), the needs of young adults remains a peripheral issue.

1.4 Objectives

1. To assess the challenges faced by rural women and girls during the COVID 19 pandemic in Guruve.
2. To assess why women and girls were the most affected gender during the COVID pandemic in Guruve.
3. To assess the economic, environmental and social COVID 19 impact on rural households with women breadwinners in Guruve
4. To proper strategies that can be utilised to improve lives of women and girls to gain their lives back.

1.5 Research questions.

1. What are the challenges that were faced by women and girls during the covid 19 in Guruve?.
2. Why women and girls were most affected gender during the COVID pandemic in Guruve.
3. What are the social, economic and environmental impacts of COVID 19 on rural households with women breadwinners in Guruve?
4. How can the government help women and girls to get back on their feet after the COVID 19 Era Guruve.

1.6 Assumption of the study

- i. This research study is also based on the assumptions that young girls who were involved and are still involved in sexual activities may not participate in the research being afraid of judgments.
- ii. The study may assume that rural women and girls experienced disproportionate economic hardship due to job losses, reduced income and disruptions of agricultural/small business activities.
- iii. The study may assume that rural women and girls faced compounded challenges due to pre-existing socioeconomic, cultural and geographic vulnerabilities.

1.7 Significance of the study

Since the outbreak of the COVID 19 researchers were mainly focusing on how the covid pandemic affected the urban people. This study would contribute to filling the gap in literature by providing in depth insight into the particular situation faced by rural women and girls by highlighting the unique challenges faced by rural women and girls, the study could contribute to advocating for more equitable and inclusive development policies and programs. They could identify community based coping strategies and support system that can be leveraged to enhance the resilience of rural women and girls in the face of future crisis. The findings could inform the design of more contextually relevant and support rural communities.

Due to the lockdown restrictions where no social activities were being conducted to that led to women and girls to suffer more this study would foster informing policy and practice. The findings could inform the design and implementations of targeted support program, services, and infrastructure for rural women and girls. It could help policy makers and development practitioners to better understand the needs and priorities of this vulnerable group and develop

more effective crisis response strategies. Also the study would involve the integration of perspectives from various discipline, such as public health, gender studies, rural development and social policy. This interdisciplinary approach could foster cross- cutting knowledge exchange and collaborative problem solving

1.8 Delimitations

The study targets the population of 13years to 45 years of age. This study will be focusing in the district of Guruve in Mashonaland Central in Zimbabwe. In terms of subjects the study will be targeting only women and girls. This study is mainly centres on the obstacles that were faced by women and girls during the COVID 19 pandemic.

1.9 Limitations

Due to high level of abuse perpetrated by the community and media at large, most young adults fear to express themselves freely for the fear of being victimized. There is need of rapport building the young adults so as to build trust and create a room for discussion (Fook) 2020. Furthermore, due to high levels of illiteracy, respondents might fail to interpret questions properly. There is need to be knowledgeable about and use of language that is understood by respondents. Some respondents might be reluctant to be interviewed for data collection. On the focus area, the study focuses on the effects of COVID 19 on rural females in Guruve. Therefore findings cannot be generalised because the study will be confined in Guruve rather than Zimbabwe as a whole.

1.10 Definition of key terms.

COVID 19

Is also known as Coronavirus disease (COVID 19) which relate to an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. COVID 19 is also a highly infectious disease triggered by new

coronavirus and can spread from one person to the other through sneezing and coughing droplets (Church, Gasner & Elliot 2020). While the virus presents symptoms that resemble those of the common cold, it poses a significant health threat and if not promptly identified and treated by medical professionals, it can lead to severe illness and, in some cases, death (Olliveria & Carvaiho (2021). According to Siminetti, Pias & Sani, (2020) COVID 19 is a new respiratory syndrome that emerged in late 2019 and is known as COVID 19.

Woman

A woman is defined as an adult human female, while the term girl typically refers to a female individual during childhood or adolescence, prior to reaching adult hood.

Young adult

Tough adult constitutes an age group of people that ranges from 18 years to 25 years. Stocking 2016 under the World Health Organisation defines young adults as any person between 10 to 19 years while young people are those who ranges from 10 to 24 years. W. H.O (2009) defines adolescents and young as people between the ages of 10 to 19 years.

1.11 Dissertation outline

Chapter One: Introduction

The chapter serves as the introduction to the dissertation and focuses on the background of the research, the problem statement, research purpose, the study objectives, research questions, significance of the research, the limitations of the research, the delimitations of the research, ethical considerations, the structure of the dissertation and the chapter summary. The chapter serves as a dissertation's basic structural framework and lays out the overall direction of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The chapter will review relevant literature and evaluate the contribution of street vendors in the economy and society in the country. The chapter will also focus on the theoretical framework which will shed light on what other researchers have researched related to the study. The literature review carried out to highlight on how women faced challenges during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter centers on the methodology of the research, with particular attention paid to the study design and data collection tools. Additionally, the research population and study area are discussed. Qualitative and quantitative researches will be employed to improve the research's objectivity and trustworthiness. A detailed explanation of the ethical considerations that the researcher adhered to throughout this study will be provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of findings

The themes that emerge from the data are reflected in the results and a discussion on the findings. Results and discussions are in two categories which involve the respondents' characteristics and study findings of women and girls in Gurube.

Chapter Five: Summary

This chapter is the summary of the whole dissertation. It sums up the findings presented in chapter four of the dissertation, which also serves as the dissertation's conclusion. The researcher will then make recommendations for how to strengthen the national policies and livelihood strategies especially women in their favor to fight poverty.

CHAPTER TWO: LITRATURE REVIEW THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

COVID 19 pandemic has had far reaching effects across various social statistics with girls and rural women experiencing unique challenges that needs thorough examination. This literature review aims to examine the effects of the pandemic on rural women and girls focusing on social, economic and health related dimensions. Rural women often occupy a vulnerable position in society, characterised by limited access to resources healthcare and education. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities that leads to increased economic instability as many rural sectors, such as small-scale enterprises and agriculture faced disruption. The pandemic has intensified issues related to domestic violence mental health and social isolation. Lockdown restrictions confined women to environments where they were in abuse, while the loss of community support system has hindered their ability to seek for help. The mental health implications of prolonged isolation and stress were profound and rural women were exhibited high levels of anxiety and depression. In terms of health access to medical care limited in rural areas complicating the situation for women who often bear the burden of caregiving roles. The global crisis disrupted routine health services including maternal and reproductive health care, posing risks to women's health outcomes.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

2.2.1 Sustainable Livelihood Approach

This study will use two theories because the researcher believes that they are the ones that defines everything that this research is seeking out observe, which to notice the effects caused by COVID 19 on rural female individuals. This study uses the sustainable livelihoods approach to appreciate the implications of pandemic on livelihood in common and COVID 19 in specific. The sustainable livelihood approach is an approach established to support and examine the

means of support of the underprivileged (Hlungwani & Sayeed, 2018; Srar, 2017). These underprivileged people also involve females who are exposed and face numerous shocks like occurrence of diseases that threatens business and activities. This presents an integrated, strengths-based structure for examining poverty and guiding poverty reduction initiatives. The theory improves the appreciation of the multifaceted matters of poverty in the sense that it supports to examine the relations of livelihood possibilities and the regulating policy. The framework also provides a theory that helps comprehend the key reasons that affect exposed livelihoods and this in turn accelerates the organisation and execution of more effective development.

This theory enhances the understanding of livelihoods among the poor by systematically organizing the factors that improve livelihood opportunities. This approach however helps to understand how rural women in Guluve suffered during the pandemic. It also helps in dictating on how women and girls were deprived of opportunities with the lockdown restrictions imposed by the government. The sustainable livelihood framework serves to organize the factors that enhance opportunities for rural women and to explain how these elements interconnect. A key principle of the framework is that households possess varying degrees of access to livelihood assets, which the approach aims to strengthen and expand. Sustainable livelihood approach centres on the strengths and assets of individuals and communities. That is this theory enables to identify resilience and coping strategies amongst rural women and girls.

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach helps to analyse the vulnerabilities and risks faced by rural women and girls. The vulnerability context refers to the instability in the well-being of individuals, households, and communities resulting from changes in their outside environment. Unlike poverty line indicators, the concept of vulnerability more effectively captures the dynamic processes of change. It encompasses multiple dimensions, involving external shocks

and the internal condition of defencelessness that stems from insufficient capacity or resources to respond and adapt to vulnerabilities such as shocks and critical trends. Therefore the vulnerable assessment helps to analyse the vulnerability and risks faced by rural women and girls during the pandemic, informing targeted support strategies. This SLA identifies five types of assets (human, social, natural physical and financial) that contribute to livelihood. The pandemic likely affected these assets for rural women and girls, for example lockdowns may have limited access to health care (human), disrupted social networks (social), and damage local economies (financial). This theory covers the vulnerability context, SLA framework considers external shocks that affect livelihood. Understanding how these shocks exacerbate existing vulnerabilities among rural women and girls can provide insights into their specific challenges during the pandemic.

2.2.2 Family system theory

In addition this study uses the family system theory. Family system theory (Kerr & Bowen, 1998) family unity is shaped by human behaviour and can be appreciated as a compound social system in which members interact and mutually influence each other's behaviour. Family system theory provides a framework for understanding human behaviour by exploring the patterns of interaction among family members and the relationship between the family unit and the broader social context in which it operates. Family system theory emerged during the late 1950s and staked its exclusive claim by proposing that psychopathy is triggered by a disturbed system of family relations rather than the individuals (Crossno, 2011).

Bourdieu (1985) stated that social capital theory is “the aggregate of actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of durable network of more or less institutionalized mutual acquaintance or recognition relations”. According to social theory, interpersonal

relationships can facilitate the development of human capital. For example, a supportive and stable family setting can foster education of valuable, marketable skills.

Marginalization, also known as social exclusion, describes the process by which individuals or groups are forced to the margins of society due to restricted access to fundamental rights, resources, and possibilities. This exclusion is a key driver of weakness, exposing affected populations to a range of risks while limiting their ability to respond effectively. Those who are marginalized often experience a loss of voice, identity, and social belonging. Such exclusion may stem from various factors, involving race, gender, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, and age. Individuals who belong to more than one marginalized group may encounter intersecting forms of disadvantage, which can deepen their marginalization.

This theories will help to look at how women breadwinner suffered and worked together with families and how they were able to provide for their families. This study will examine the impact of COVID-19 on families through the eyes of female breadwinners, exploring how the pandemic affected their social, economic, environmental, and educational well-being. By focusing on the experiences of women in Gurube, we'll analyze the social, economic, and cultural factors that influenced their lives during this time. The theory of marginalization will help us understand the economic and developmental challenges these women faced, shedding light on the complex dynamics that shape their realities. This theory will be useful because females were mostly marginalised. This theory provides a framework in communication patterns focus on how family members communicate and support one other.

2.3 How COVID 19 impacted on women

2.3.1Economic impacts

Well-being disasters triggered by COVID 19 pandemics nature were frequently accompanied by economic crisis in which females bear the brunt. Worldwide a lot of countries fell into

recession during the Covid 19 pandemic, with the world-wide economic fall by 4.4% (Jones, Palumbo & Brown, 2021). As a nation with an economy largely driven by informal activities, the recession was acutely felt. Zimbabwe has faced prolonged economic challenges for decades, and the downturn triggered a notable surge in the informal sector, especially in markets dominated by females, as opportunities for formal employment continued to decline. The Labour Force Survey of (2014) revealed that between those who are working in Zimbabwe, 94 percent are in the group of informal employment (Zimstats, 2014';UNICEF 2014). During the lockdown, informal markets were shutdown thereby upsetting the popular of females who depend on it for their survival. The economic condition of informal traders in Guruve exacerbated by the problems in traveling in the course of the lockdown. Police blockades all over cities made it difficult for women in rural areas to travel into cities. With the pandemic lockdown, females became destitute because of restricted involvement in informal trading. Rural females make up the majority of cross borders, rely on trades in rural community markets. This was deeply affected by the pandemic as borders remained closed to the public and informal traders (Mhetu,2020). This however shows that rural women were affected economically as they experienced financial constrains they could not be able to provide fully for their families.

Sexual and reproductive health

Furthermore, to fear and lockdown measures, the global crisis lessened people's ability to seek medical care in other means. Women have less power than means a result their health needs including sexual and reproductive health may be unmet (UNFPA,2020). In Zimbabwe 1.2million people are living with HIV than men UNAIDS, (2021). Many of rural females and girls living with HIV. Fear of contracting COVID 19 and lockdown methods made it stiffer for sexual and reproductive health workers in rural to travel in areas educating females. In January and February 2021, government report showed that nearly 5,000 teenage girls in rural areas

became pregnant with 1,800 entering in early marriages. This shows that rural women and girls faced sexual and reproductive health challenges due to the lack of proper medical attention in rural hospitals which resulted in levels child pregnancies and rate of people with HIV positive. The COVID 19 pandemic has had significant impacts upon vulnerable populations around the globe, including rural women and girls. A growing body of research has examined the unique challenges and disparities experienced by this demographic during the crisis. One key issue that has emerged is the disproportionate increase in unpaid care and domestic work for rural women. With school and child care for the sick family members, rural women have often been expected to shoulder a greater burden of house hold responsibilities (Allon et al, 2020, Rao, 2020). This has limited their ability to engage in income generating activities, exacerbating existing gender inequalities. The burden of unpaid care work has been a major factor driving women out of workforce during the pandemic.

2.3.2 Women and Gender Based violence

Rural women have faced heightened risk of domestic violence during the pandemic .lockdown and movement restrictions have trapped many in abusive households, while also reducing their access to support services and community networks (Peterman et al.,2020 UN Women 2020) compounding this , economic stress and job losses have made it more difficult for rural women to leave violent situations. Some women found cohabiting with their spouse challenging, particularly in situations they were not accustomed to. As daily proximity increased during retrenchment periods, underlying controlling behaviors surfaced, leading to instances of emotional and physical abuse. This strain contributed to a rise in divorce filings as females sought safety and independence in the face of intensified domestic tensions. (Roesh et al., 2020). A study by Roesh et al. (2020) highlighted a disturbing trend: in a rural county in China, reports of gender-based violence and domestic violence surged by 100% in February 2020

compared to the same period in 2019, with a staggering 90% of cases linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. This threatens to reverse hard-won gains in girls education and perpetuate the gender gap. Many rural girls also engage in early marriages because of poverty in their house-holds. Most of the parents could not cater for their families due to the financial constrains in the lockdown which, which led to most of young girl to elope to their husbands. In South Africa, it was observed that the risk of Common Mental Disorder (CMS) was nearly three times higher among women who had experienced psychological or sexual abuse. Many lost their lives a result of been violated by their partners also girls suffered rape and molestation in hands of their guardians.

2.3.4 Women and education

In addition, the COVID 19 pandemic triggered the largest education crisis world-wide, with an entire generation of students incapable to go to school. School closures increased marriages risk by 25%, in nations where bride price is common, loss of household income increased the probability of marriage by 3%. due to the pandemic, an additional 10 million child marriages are expected before 2030, according to UNICEF. The pandemic has disrupted education opportunities for rural girls. With school closures and that shift to remote learning, many girls in rural areas have struggled to access the necessary technology, internet connectivity, and study space to continue their education (Bhamani et al., 2020, Malala Fund 2020). Due to the school closure, many rural girls had to engage in sexual activities. Girls were involved in prostitution so that they can be able to make ends meet. Some were forced into early marriages because their parents could no longer provide for the whole families due to financial constraints. Most of rural parents were mainly involved in many informal activities which was closed during the pandemic. Because of the lack of finances many young girls saw fit to engage

in selling their body so that they can be able to take care of themselves, other were sent off to their husbands at an early age.

In terms of livelihoods, it was assessed that the pandemic and worsened unfairness pushing 198 million people into intense poverty during 2022, delaying two decades of progress. An estimation of 100 million additional children were driven into poverty. This poverty surge widened the gender gap with more females pushed into more poverty than men. According to Oxfam (2020), there was \$800 billion in lost income for females around the globe. Rural women have experienced disproportionate job losses and income reductions, particularly in the informal sector where they are not represented UN Women (2020). Cross border women suffered financial constrain because of lock down restrictions that made all orders to be closed as a way of managing the spread of diseases in many countries. This caused economic crisis to many village because they could no longer take care and provide for their families. The pandemic has also disrupted agricultural production and supply chains, which are crucial sources of income for many rural women.

2.4 The gap that the study is trying to bridge

While existing research has explored the impacts of COVID- 19 on females, a significant knowledge gap remains regarding the unique experience of rural women, particularly in low and middle income countries. This study aim to bridge this gap by conducting a qualitative, participatory study examining the pandemic's results on rural women's livelihoods, health and well-being in rural areas particularly in Gurube. This study aims to address a critical knowledge gap identified by Mueller et al. (2020), who called for more research on rural communities, particularly in African countries. Specifically, Mueller et al. (2020) highlighted the need for studies on the impact of COVID-19 on rural households. Additionally, Phillipson et al. (2020) noted that the pandemic's effects vary significantly between men and women, underscoring the

importance of exploring these differences. By focusing on rural households, particularly those led by women, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the pandemic's impact on vulnerable populations. Research findings will be contributed to broaden the discussion to shape women policies and interventions in pandemic times. This study will focus on rural households in Zimbabwe.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the literature on regional and local phase on how women were affected during the COVID 19 pandemic in rural areas. The literature also discussed impacts of COVID 19 on women as the breadwinners of their homesteads, their duties at home overall impacts of the pandemic on females. This chapter also discussed the theoretical frameworks which are family systems theory and also Sustainable livelihood approach.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This dissertation adopted a qualitative research design which is well suited for exploring the complex experience of rural women and girls during the COVID 19 pandemic. Qualitative study allows a deep engagement with participants, enabling the exploration of their perceptions and lived experiences. The utilization of case study approach provided a detailed examination of specific context of Gurube, facilitating an understanding of unique challenges faced by the population.

3.1.2 Research methodology

A research methodology is a design according to which researcher obtains study respondents and gather information from them and describe what the researcher is going to do with the respondents with the view of reaching the conclusions about the problem, (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005) There are different kinds of methodologies that can be used in collection of data. There is quantitative method, qualitative method and mixed method. Nevertheless, in this research, the researcher will utilize qualitative method in the collection of data. A qualitative research methodology was adopted by the researcher to collect data about the area under study. Babbie & Mouton (2005) mentioned that qualitative research aims to develop a first-hand, general understanding of a phenomenon by employing flexible methods such as key informant interviews, questionnaires and in-depth interviews. In this context, a qualitative case study approach was deemed appropriate as it enabled the construction of a comprehensive picture, offering rich insights and better explanations of the life experiences and needs of young females from diverse perspectives.(Kendall et al, 2009) (Stake, 2005).

Qualitative research methodology is a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. The advantage of using qualitative research as noted

by Punch (2004) is that it is typically explanatory in nature. It will provide the researcher with a chance to question directly to the respondents so as to have a wide base of insight on which final course of action to recommend. Given the sensitive nature of the issue, a qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 on rural households led by women. This method allows for close interaction with respondents in their natural setting, providing rich and contextual insights into their experiences. By using a variety of empirical materials, this approach enables a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by these households.

3.2 Research Design

Study design used in this research is a case study since it is more affiliated with the qualitative research approach as it centres on producing rich data about the research. Hepper et al (1992: 15) defines a research design as “a plan or structure for an investigation or list of specifications and procedures for conducting a research project”. A case study design was utilized in this research. A case study gives the researcher a concentrated pool of information from a sizable population in a cost-effective way (Saunders, 2003). In this case, the case study was targeted to Gurube as an area that has high concentration of people and therefore suits the research design which was selected to come out with the results and also that it was the most cost effective design for the research.

Research Philosophy

Critical realism posits that there is reality independent of perceptions but reality is complex and layered. In context of Gurube the experiences of rural women and girls during the pandemic are shaped by various social structures, cultural norms and economic conditions. The research will seek to uncover the underlying mechanisms that have contributed to their situations, acknowledging observable events and deeper social process. This study will adopt a

constructivist approach to knowledge, recognising that understanding is socially constructed. The research will employ qualitative method such as interviews and focus groups, to capture the lived experience of rural women and girls. By engaging with participants the study aims to create knowledge that reflects their realities and perspectives.

3.2.3 What is A Case Study?

Case studies offer a nuanced understanding of a specific scenario or phenomenon by delving into the complexities of a single case (Johansson, 2007). This research approach involves a detailed examination of a particular individual, group, or situation over time, providing rich insights into the dynamics at play. By analyzing a specific instance, case studies can also illustrate broader principles or theories, making them a valuable tool in social sciences research. In this case a case study was taken in Guruve in Mashonaland Central Province over a period of 6 months through visiting the household and face to face interviews and various key informants by the researcher.

3.4 Target Population

Fairfax (2018) mentioned that in research target population is defined as the complete set of units for instance, individuals, organizations that are the focus of investigation and from which a sample is drawn. The research targets the young women and girls to see how they were affected socially and economic during the COVID-19 lockdown in Guruve, Mashonaland Central.

3.5 Sampling

Matthews & Ross, (2010) defined a sample as a substance of the population that is representative of the entire population. Sampling provides each unit equal probabilities of being picked out of the population for constituting a sample which represents the universe. In this

regard, the target sample would be having equal chances of being selected. The selected people in this research will be women and girls and living in Gurube.

3.5.1 Sampling Strategy

This research used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method which included snowballing. Purposive sampling involves the intentional selection of respondents based on specific characteristics or criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Punch, 2004). The sampling helped the researcher to reach respondents who reside in the location and willing to take part by answering the study questions. Purposive sampling permitted the researcher to find respondents utilizing the snowballing sampling technique.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select key informants for the research. This method was particularly suitable as it offered a variety of non-probability sampling techniques aligned with the study goals. For instance, critical case sampling could be used initially to assess the significance of a phenomenon, followed by expert sampling to explore specific issues in greater depth (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

3.6 Data Collection

This dissertation adopted a qualitative research approach, guided by a case study design and use of interviews. Qualitative research is a context-sensitive method that positions the researcher within the setting being studied. It enabled the use of flexible techniques such as respondent observation and face to face interviews to collect in-depth data (Hennink et al., 2020). As Bernard (2017) notes, data collection methods are instrumental in obtaining meaningful and relevant insights. In this study, interviews served as the primary data collection tool, defined as qualitative techniques that depend on open-ended questioning to elicit detailed responses. They involve two or more people, one of whom is the interviewer who asks the

questions and the other is the interviewee who answers them. Interviews can be classified based on their degree of structure into unstructured, semi-structured, and structured formats (Bernard, 2007). This research utilized semi-structured interviews, as their flexible format facilitated both guided conversation and consistent data collection, making the subsequent coding process more manageable.

Different research methods was used come with different data collection methods. As noted by Bryman (2012), these tools are essential for gathering information needed to generate themes related to the research problem. In this study, the primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews, guided by an interview protocol. Data collection refers to the procedures used to obtain meaningful information from participants. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to participants and emphasized their right to withdraw at any point. To add on, handwritten notes were taken to aid the researcher in reflecting on emerging themes during the interviews. According to Neuman (2006), in-depth interviews are valuable for their use of probing techniques, which allow respondents to seek clarification and provide richer, more detailed responses.

3.7 Research Instruments

To gather meaningful data, the research relied on instruments that were both practical and cost-effective, ensuring a feasible and efficient data collection process. According to Neuman (2006), data collection instruments are tools used to gather information within a study. In this research, the primary instrument was an interview guide, employed to conduct in-depth interviews with both key informants and respondents. The study utilized open-ended interviews, allowing for flexibility in how questions were posed rather than following a rigid order from the interview schedule. This approach enabled respondents to express their views freely, thereby providing the researcher with rich, detailed data that provided valuable in the

thematic analysis of the topic under investigation. In-depth interviews permitted the researcher to search for more information from the respondents by requesting for explanations on certain issues and asking sub questions so that you get a deeper understanding of the sample answers at hand.

3.8 Ethical consideration.

When collecting data, researchers must consider the ethical norms, values, and principles that protect the rights and dignity of individuals. According to Sobcan, Bertotti, and Strom-Gottfried (2019), ethical considerations involve safeguarding participants from harm and misconduct, ensuring that their rights are respected throughout the research process. In every location there are things they do and they do not do. The study made sure that participants' rights or ethical beliefs were considered. Durrheim et al. (2006) propose a comprehensive framework for upholding ethical standards in research, emphasizing that respondents must be fully informed and able to make independent decisions regarding their involvement. Moreover, respondents should be treated with dignity and safeguarded from any form of physical, psychological, or other harm. Aligned with these principles, each participant in this study was clearly briefed on the purpose of the research and the expectations surrounding their participation. Another important aspect that was considered was more to do with the beliefs of the population at hand such as that in Gurube there are a lot of religious beliefs. Ethics which were considered in this study include informal consent and anonymity, confidentiality and right to privacy.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

In this case, confidentiality related to the protection of the collected data. In confidentiality, the information shared within a professional relationship among professional and clients should not be shared outside that professional relationship (Groshong & Phillips, 2015).

Data collected was not be published using real name as well as age. Participants were assured with confidentiality and warned when confidentiality applied and also not applicable. The researcher also clarified the study purpose and level of confidentiality involved in the research to respondents who asked. All respondents were assured of the confidentiality of all information collected within the research and participants were treated fairly and equally. Privacy is an important aspect in research study's since participants want guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity in which most of the research participants termed privacy (Sobcan et al, 2019).

3.8.3 Respect individuals' autonomy.

Autonomy means the freedom to decide what to do by yourself. Participants were made aware that those who wish to withdraw from participating in the research are allowed even after signing the consent form. They were also made aware that they have the right to request that the data collected should not be used for the study.

3.9 Data Analysis

To uncover rich insights, researchers used diverse methods to collect and analyze data in qualitative studies (Bernard, 2017). In this research, thematic analysis was utilized, following a six-step framework: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme refinement, and report writing (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This approach is particularly useful for qualitative research, as it helps distill large amounts of data into meaningful patterns that align with the research goals and shed light on the phenomenon being studied.

Similar to grounded theory and the development of cultural models, thematic analysis requires the researcher's active engagement and interpretive input, especially through sustained interaction with respondents. This deeper involvement facilitates a more comprehensive analysis. Notably, thematic analysis goes further than counting explicit words or phrases, it

enables the identification and interpretation of both implicit and explicit ideas, which are then organized into coherent themes. The identified themes were typically represented by codes, which served as summary markets and were applied to the raw data for subsequent analysis (Guest et al., 2014). According to Birks and Mills (2015), theoretical sampling is an iterative process involving constant comparison of data, wherein additional information is sought until theoretical saturation is reached. In line with this, the researcher engaged deeply with the data, striving to interpret each piece of information without bias or preconceived judgment.

3.10 Limitations

Due to high levels of abuse perpetrated by the community and media at large, most young adults feared to express themselves freely for fear of being victimized. People in Gurube in some areas are more marginalized and one of the limitations are that some participants were not willing to participate for free and wanted the researcher to offer them something in return. High levels of illiteracy in the area was also another challenge, as some of the participants were not able to interpret the question properly and in trying to explain, it took more time than expected. There is need to be knowledgeable about and use language that is understood by the respondents. Some respondents were reluctant to be interviewed for data collection and would have a lot of questions on why they would do the interview. The areas of study have limited statistical data due to a lot of illegal structures. Hence the study sample may represent a true representation of the actual number of young women and girls in Gurube. On the focus area, the study focuses on the impacts of COVID-19 in females in their day to day living in Gurube.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the research methodology, detailing the approach, design, and population studied. It explains how the sample was selected, the methods used to collect data, and the procedures for analyzing it. The chapter also addresses ethical considerations, limitations, and

provides a summary of the research design. Essentially, it provides a roadmap for how the study was conducted, laying the groundwork for the findings presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction.

Chapter 4 delves into the research findings on the devastating effects of COVID-19 on rural women and girls in Gurube. The results are laid out, followed by an in-depth discussion that explores the implications, limitations, and key takeaways. The chapter also contextualizes the findings within the broader landscape of existing research and theoretical frameworks, shedding light on the pandemic's far-reaching consequences. The results were analysed and presented thematically using thematic analysis as proposed by Bruan and Clark (2006). The chapter presents the answers to the following research questions:

- What are the challenges that were faced by women and girls during the COVID 19 in Gurube?
- What are social, economic impacts of COVID 19 on rural households with women breadwinners in Gurube.
- How can government help women and girls to get back on track after the pandemic?

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Table 1 Study participants

Participants of the study	Frequency	Percentage
In-depth interview participants	21	70%
Key informants	9	30%
Total	30	100%

From the table above 70% were in-depth interview participants while 30% were key informants.

4.2.1 Table 2

Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
15-25	18	60%
25+	12	40%
Total	30	100

From the above table 60% were between the age of 15 to 25 years. Only 40% were above 25 years of age.

4.2.3Table 3

Marital status

Age	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
15- 20	6	0	0	0
20- 25	1	5	0	0
26- 30	1	7	0	0
30+	1	2	3	5

4.3 Presentation of the Findings

When asked about the challenges they faced during COVID 19 when trying to access sexual reproduce health services, the majority of young adults reported that they faced physical

inaccessibility. The young adults and the key informants concurred that there was a major challenge related to physical accessibility of sexual health reproductive health services due to COVID 19 lock down which prohibited movement of people from place to place. The young adults informed that the authorities could not accept this health need as a pass through their lockdown checkpoints. One of the participants had this to say:

“even if the sexual health reproductive services were necessary, the police and soldiers controlling the lockdown checkpoints could not allow anyone to pass through to go to clinic for such reasons, it was this physical inaccessibility which posed the most challenge towards getting the sexual health reproductive services”.

The study has found that women and girls faced more during the COVID 19 pandemic. The mainstream of female respondents were of the opinion that there was poor provision of health reproductive services since there was a lock down which prohibited them from accessing these services. One of the young ladies had to say this:

“we could not access sexual health reproduction service due to many circumstances, Provision in this area were poor and very ineffective to an extent that many of us could not go back to school because they became pregnant”.

This was also supported by the key informants who suggested that surely women and girls faced challenges during the pandemic.

“Obviously, women and girls faced health care challenges because most of them faced financial hardships, and also there was limited resources in hospital to cater for everyone”.

Other key informants goes on to states some health challenges that were faced by women.

“women faced some of challenges such as reduced access to contraceptives, also Increase in maternal mortality and there was increase to stress and anxiety that was increased because of gender based violence”.

The study also found out a significant changes in households responsibilities for women and girls such as food preparation management and also increase in care workload since there was no way they could go and hustle for their families because of the lockdown which were announced almost the whole year which was one of the challenges. One of the participants commented that

“ I had to send my kids to the village so that they I could send groceries at once so as to cut expenses of feeding two families at once.”

As part of pandemic containment measures, nationwide curfews were imposed, significantly restricting the movement of female entrepreneurs. These restrictions disrupted essential supply chains, limiting women’s ability to restock and sell their goods. Participants reported that their mobility was severely curtailed, preventing them from delivering products to clients. In addition, customers were unable to collect or purchase needed items, as female entrepreneurs operating in the informal sector were not recognized as important service workers. One of respondents had to say:

“Lockdown restrictions destroyed my business because as a vendor I needed to collect vegetables and tomatoes from market in Guruve Center,

This is evidence of effects of the pandemic on projects initiated by women. Whilst some farmers got letters clearing them to move their products to markets, transports was another challenges they faced. High transport costs were a big challenge as service providers took advantage of the pandemic to fleece the farmers from their hard earned income. In agreement with above, Musvanhiri 2020 argued that countries of the south had their supply chain hugely affected by shutdown of factories in China which to a greater extent affected their profit.

4.3.1 What are social economic impacts faced by women and girls during the pandemic

This research points out a theory that helps to understand how women were impacted and able to copy during the COVID 19 pandemic. The research uses the sustainable livelihood approach to understand the implications of pandemic on livelihood in general and COVID 19 in specific. This is an approach developed to help and analyse the livelihoods of women, the vulnerable. The vulnerable women and girls faced several shocks such as outbreak of diseases that threatens business and actives. The framework also provides a theory that helps understand the main factors that affect vulnerable livelihoods. This theory analyse the vulnerabilities and risk faced by rural women and girls.

When asked about economic challenges they faced during the pandemic in trying to survive and providing for their families participants expressed how the pandemic really affected them economically they responded in a similar way. Women particularly in sectors like hospitality, retail, and care giving faced significant job losses. Many of these jobs are low wage and part time, leaving women vulnerable to economic shocks. The pandemic also caused a rise in unpaid labour as women took on increase responsibilities for child care and household tasks during lockdowns. Women often have less access to financial resources and credit than men. During the pandemic this gap widened making it harder for women entrepreneurs to sustain their businesses or seek new opportunities. One of the participants had to say:

“As a cross boarder trader it become so difficult for me to take a good care of my family because all boarders were closed we could not travel that made it difficult for me to cater for my family needs”.

The key informants also gave the same sentiments that on how women suffered in providing for their families because off strict restrictions that were imposed all over the country.

The key informant had to say

“Due to the pandemic there were reduced market, with markets closed that made women to struggle to sell their products”.

The study also found out that women also faced financial hardships that made them to take some risk and go against countries restrictions as they did cross the boarders illegally. One of the vendors had to say:

“during the pandemic we used to cross the boarders by sailing in Zambezi River, it was the only way we had to cross to the other side, it was risker but we had to do it in order to provide for our families”.

Family livelihoods were hugely affected to the extent that some female headed families ended up surviving on one meal a day. Due to the continued restriction in movement which affected most of informal sector participants it became difficult to get a decent meal. The participant had to say:

The situation worsened to the extend that I had to artio the little available

foods that I and my kids would only eat at night because I was no longer able to secure funds to sustain the family due to limited movements”

Based on the accounts shared by participants, the pandemic's impact on women's livelihoods in Guruve was dire, with some families going without food. As noted by Mavhinga (2020), the COVID-19 mitigation measures sometimes compromised human rights, exacerbating the vulnerability of women entrepreneurs. Their usual livelihood strategies proved inadequate in shielding them from the pandemic's harsh effects, leaving them struggling to make ends meet.

It emerged from the study that school closures impacted thousands of girls, with many facing barriers to remote learning due to lack of access to technology and household responsibilities. Economic pressure led families to prioritise boys education over girls, increasing the risk of dropouts rates among girls. The trend likely to have long term effect on women economic opportunities and empowerment. One of the key informant had to say:

“they has been a disproportionate in marginalised communities, lack of government support has widened the gender gap in education”.

The pandemic took a toll on mental health with women reporting higher levels of anxiety and depression due to isolation economic insecurity and caregiving burdens. It also emerged that lockdowns and economic stress heightened the risk of domestic violence with many women unable to seek help or escape abusive situations due to confinement.

The key informants had to say:

“due to lockdowns women lived in harsh environments with abusers that caused a rise in domestic violence and increase stress and anxiety”

4.3.2 How can government help women and girls to get back on track after the pandemic?

The study found out that mainly the key informants are suggesting that the government should pay more attention to rural communities in order to build the communities back to normal in all areas. The government can implement a variety of strategies to support rural women and girls recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. The government can improve in health care services, ensure women have access to land and farming tools implement cash transfer programs to support families focusing on those led by women.

The key informants had to say:

“the government can strengthen rural women, improve access to education for girls and also improve access to clean water”.

4.4 Discussion findings

4.4.1 What are social and economic impacts faced women and girls;

(a). Gender based violence

Then study found out that women and girls were impacted socially and economically. The COVID 19 lockdowns exacerbated gender based violence in rural areas .With limited access to support services and law enforcement women and girls were more vulnerable to domestic abuse , sexual violence. During the strict lockdown, many females were trapped at home with their abusers. Because of the movement restrictions, they had little change to escape or get help, and the power imbalance made things even worse.

The pandemic saw a surge in gender-based violence, as highlighted in Chapter Two. This finding aligns with research by Roesch et al. (2020), which revealed that lockdowns and economic stress led to increased tensions at home, with some women experiencing emotional

and physical abuse at the hands of their partners who were struggling to cope with job loss. In fact, a rural police agency in China reported a doubling of domestic violence cases in February 2020 compared to the previous year, with 90% of cases linked to COVID-19 (Roesch et al., 2020). This trend is consistent with global statistics, which show that violence against women is a pervasive human rights issue, affecting millions of women worldwide (UN, 2019; WHO, 2021).

(b). Health care systems

The pandemic strained healthcare system, limiting access to essential service including maternal and reproductive health services in Gurube district. Women in Gurube communities were often unable to access prenatal care, family planning services medical assistance during birth which increased health risks for women and children. Literature comments that rural areas grieved massively due to cracks in the healthcare system and that this has affected females because they are the ones who are mainly caregivers (OECD Gender Data Portal, 2020).

The pandemic highlighted the disproportionate caregiving burden on women, both in the formal care sector and at home. As COVID-19 brought new challenges, women faced increased responsibilities, juggling childcare, household duties, and caring for sick family members amidst job losses and limited access to healthcare. The quality and availability of healthcare services are crucial, but in Gurube, the healthcare system fell short, placing an even greater burden on women who had to step in to care for their loved ones. This situation underscores the need for robust healthcare systems that support families, especially women, during times of crisis.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, the study explored the challenges effects of COVID 19 on rural females, highlighting both immediate and long term consequences. The findings indicated that rural

women faced economic hardships due to job losses and income. The closure of schools led to disruption in education for girls often resulting in increased dropout rates. Health services already scarce in rural areas became more inaccessible compromising well-being of women and girls. This chapter also revealed a rise in domestic violence and mental health issues. Despite challenges rural women demonstrated resilience taking leadership roles in communities to support recovery efforts.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Introduction

The chapter presents a summary of the research's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The main aim of the research was to examine the effects caused by COVID 19 on rural women and girls in Guruve regarding the effects of the Coronavirus on their households and their coping strategies. The study explored the socioeconomic status of these households prior to COVID-19, assessed the economic, environmental, and social impacts of the pandemic, and examined how these women perceived their households' responses to these challenges. To gain a deeper understanding of the pandemic's impact, this study, presented in Chapter 5, employed a qualitative approach and case study design, focusing on the experiences of rural African women in Guruve. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted to gather rich, detailed insights. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, following a six-step process: familiarization, coding, theme identification, review, definition, and reporting. This analysis will inform the discussion of key findings, highlighting the pandemic's effects on these women's lives and the changes they underwent.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Chapter 1

In this first chapter of the dissertation, the topic was introduced whilst providing the background information pertaining the effects caused by COVID 19 pandemic on rural women and girls in Guruve and also in Zimbabwe as a whole. The chapter also highlighted the significant of the research, statement of the problem , objectives of the research, assumptions of the research and delimitations.

5.2.2Chapter 2

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the literature on regional and local phase on how women were affected during the COVID 19 pandemic in rural areas. The literature also discussed impacts of COVID 19 on women as the breadwinners of their homesteads, their duties at home overall impacts of the pandemic on females. The chapter also discussed the theoretical frameworks which are family systems theory and also Sustainable Livelihood approach.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

This chapter outlined the research methodology, including the approach, design, population, sampling, data collection methods, and analysis procedures. It also discussed ethical considerations and limitations. Essentially, this chapter explained how the research was conducted, setting the stage for the presentation of findings in the next chapter.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

In this chapter, the study explored the challenges impacts of COVID 19 on rural females, highlighting both immediate and long term consequences. The findings indicated that rural women faced economic hardships due to job losses and income. The closure of schools led to disruption in education for girls often resulting in increased dropout rates. Health services already scarce in rural areas became more inaccessible compromising well-being of women and girls. This chapter also revealed a rise in domestic violence and mental health issues. Despite challenges rural women demonstrated resilience taking leadership roles in communities to support recovery efforts.

5.2.5 Chapter 5

The final chapter of the dissertation summarized the key findings of the research and drew conclusions based on the research objectives. The chapter is a discussion of the findings

relation them to theories and literature and the researchers opinion based on the findings. The chapter points out on how the COVID 19 affected and impacted the rural women and girls in rural areas. It also shed light on areas of further research.

5.3 Conclusions

The data gathered for this research highlighted complex effects of the Coronavirus on African female breadwinners and their responses to these challenges. Participants illustrated a reality filled with hardships, poverty, stress, job losses, and a lack of quality healthcare in their geographical context to address COVID-19. Notably, the findings challenged some stereotypes in existing literature that suggest women passively accept negative impacts due to rural or cultural circumstances (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). As noted by Mueller et al. (2020), in many African households, men are traditionally seen as the heads of the family, even posthumously, which perpetuates inequality that existed before the pandemic. However, participants demonstrated their agency by striving for a better quality of life, creatively utilizing their surroundings to grow vegetables for their families. Some even established businesses based on these gardens. Rather than resigning to their poverty, many of these women sought ways to supplement their incomes and embraced their roles as breadwinners with pride and determination. According to Phillipson et al. (2020), women in rural areas are often the entrepreneurs who adapt farming initiatives to accommodate their caregiving responsibilities.

There is a notable lack of discussion in the literature regarding African rural women as breadwinners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many studies overlook the impact of the pandemic on households led by these women, as well as the strategies they employed to cope with the challenges they faced. Additionally, little is documented about the roles of local governments, traditional leaders, and community stakeholders in supporting rural women during this time. Understanding the experiences of these women is crucial for governments to

offer appropriate services tailored to the specific challenges they encountered. This study aims to raise awareness among local governments, traditional leaders, and community members globally about the pandemic's effects on households headed by African women, as well as the strategies these women adopted. Ultimately, the findings will help governments better understand the needs of rural households and provide more effective support.

5.3.1 Impacts of COVID 19 on rural women and girls in Gurube

The research suggested that COVID-19 came with different effects on the female who brings something on the table Gurube location and these females dealt with these effects in a different way.

During the pandemic, women faced a multitude of fears and challenges, including losing loved ones, job insecurity, contracting the virus, limited access to medical care, domestic violence, food insecurity, and increased caregiving responsibilities. Despite these struggles, many women found solace in activities like gardening, which helped distract them from stress. They also prioritized family time and made exercise a part of their daily routine, finding moments of connection and resilience amidst the uncertainty.

The research found that some females faced gender-based violence (GBV) as they were coerced into sexual relations when their husbands returned home full-time after losing their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With an unexpected surplus of time and no plans for being home, many women found themselves without income. Some were unable to work, while others faced permanent job loss or had their wages reduced due to fewer working hours and days. As domestic violence and caregiving responsibilities increased, these women had to manage childcare, care for sick family members, handle household chores, and maintain submissive roles towards their husbands. However, the data indicates that many of these

women did not succumb to the negative effects of the pandemic; instead, they developed coping strategies to deal with the significant challenges they faced.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the study's findings and conclusions. This research specifically examined the experiences of rural women in Gurube during COVID-19. The researcher suggests conducting further studies on the pandemic's effects on rural households in Gurube and other municipalities, focusing on both genders to determine which was more affected, as this study only addressed women, particularly African breadwinners.

Additionally, every COVID-19 response plan, recovery package, and resource allocation should consider the gender-related effects of the pandemic. This involves centring females and their organizations in the response, changing the injustices of unpaid care work into an inclusive care economy, and developing socio-economic plans that prioritize the lives and futures of females. Placing females at the heart of economic strategies will lead to better, more sustainable development outcomes for all, facilitate a quicker recovery, and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Governments should respond quickly to COVID-19 and future crises, prioritizing women's needs. This includes providing support for work-life balance, financial assistance, aid to small businesses, and services for survivors of violence. Policymakers must consider the unique challenges and perspectives of women when developing crisis responses.

Family support during challenging times is crucial and should be promoted. Having loved ones nearby can alleviate difficulties, making it easier for individuals to seek help from family members. Normalizing this practice can lead to greater comfort and support within families, acknowledging that circumstances vary widely among them. This highlights the need to

incorporate family values into anthropological studies related to medical, cultural, and economic anthropology.

Economic, clinical, and cultural anthropology should incorporate modules focused on stress management, such as helping communities discover hobbies to cope with stress. The study revealed that participants managed stress by maintaining a consistent daily routine, exercising, showering, meditating, journaling, tidying their homes, and checking in on loved ones. Thus, the research suggests that engaging in one or two hobbies can keep individuals occupied and reduce stress, aiding in the management of COVID-19 and its various effects.

Awareness programs that are effective and accessible must be readily available to communities across all geographical contexts, including rural areas and low-income populations. The government should enhance the provision of programs that keep rural households informed about various diseases, including newly discovered ones, to prevent feelings of neglect. This could involve training local individuals to attend classes and then return to educate their communities. This approach calls for a re-evaluation of how the state engages with rural areas, particularly those inhabited by indigenous Africans and marginalized women.

5.5 Areas for further research

This research centred on the effects of COVID 19 on rural women and girls, a case of Gurube. However there are areas which needs further research. On areas of further research could focus on how the pandemic influenced access to healthcare services for females in rural areas, including maternal and reproductive health services. Also one might research on government and NGO response to address the specific needs of rural females during the pandemic and evaluate their effectiveness.

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Interview Guide for Key Informants



INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide for Key Informants

I am a student at Bindura University registered as B211256B currently studying for Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Peace and Governance. I am carrying a research on Effects Caused by COVID 19 on Rural Women and Girls in Guruve. I am kindly asking for your contribution in my dissertation research project. The participants shall remain anonymous and they will be sorely used for the purpose of this study

1. Can you tell me about your role in the community and your background?.....

.....

2. How long have you been working in this area?.....

.....

3. From your perspective, what were the immediate effects of COVID-19 on the rural community in Guruve?.....

.....

4. How did the pandemic specifically affect women and girls in the community?
.....
.....
.....
5. What changes have you observed in the economic activities of women and girls during the pandemic?.....
.....
.....
6. Have there been any significant changes in household responsibilities for women and girls?.....
.....
.....
7. How has access to healthcare services been affected for women and girls during the pandemic?
.....
.....
.....
8. What specific health challenges have you noticed that women and girls are facing as a result of the pandemic?.....
.....
.....
9. What impact has COVID-19 had on the education of girls in Gurube?.....
.....
.....
10. Have there been any long-term implications for girls' education that you foresee as a result of the pandemic?.....
.....
.....
11. How have women and girls in the community coped with the challenges posed by COVID-19?.....
.....
.....
12. Are there any initiatives or programs that have emerged to support women and girls during this time?.....

.....
.....

13. What recommendations would you provide to policymakers to better support rural women and girls in future crises?

.....
.....
.....

14. In your view, what are the critical areas that require immediate attention to help women and girls recover from the impacts of COVID-

19?.....
.....
.....

Annexure 2: Interview Guide for Participants

Interview Questions

Demographic Information

1. Age:
2. Educational Background:
3. Occupation:
4. Household Composition:
5. Location within Gurube:

General Experience of COVID-19

6. How did you first hear about COVID-19, and what were your initial thoughts or feelings?
7. What changes did you observe in your community when the pandemic began?

Socio-Economic Impact

8. How has the pandemic affected your ability to work or earn an income?
9. Have you experienced changes in household income during the pandemic?
10. What support systems (e.g., family, community) have been available to you during this time?

Health and Well-being

11. How has your access to healthcare services changed due to the pandemic?
12. What concerns do you have regarding your health or the health of your family during COVID-19?
13. How has the pandemic affected your mental health and well-being?

Education and Learning

14. How has the pandemic impacted your children's education?
15. What challenges have you faced in supporting your children's education during this period?

Coping Strategies and Resilience

16. What strategies have you used to cope with the challenges brought by the pandemic?
17. Can you share any positive experiences or lessons learned during this time?

THANK YOU

Annexure 3: Approval Letter

 **FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**
P. Bag 1020
Bindura
Zimbabwe
Tel +263-6621622
DR J. KUREBWA
+263772121563
jkurebwa@buse.ac.zw

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

28 November 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

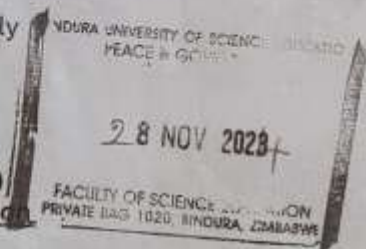
RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, FAITH T CHIWIRO, Student
Registration Number B 2112 56 R, who is a HBSC PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your
area/institution.

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

Yours respectfully

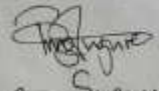

J. KUREBWA (DR)
Acting Chairperson





Nb To whom it may concern

THIS SERVES TO NOTIFY THAT THE BEARER IS REALLY A STUDENT WITH THE
ABOVE INSTITUTION AND WISHES TO CARRY OUT HER RESEARCH IN THE DISTRICT
FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSE ONLY. MAY YOU KINDLY ASSIST HER AS AUTHORITY HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY THE UNDERSIGNED

MUTSIRENSURI INNOCENT T 
A/ DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR - GURUVE

Annexure 4: Plagiarism Report

TinasheDI-1.docx			
SIMILARITY REPORT			
9%	4%	2%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
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	Student Paper		
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