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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DEVOLUTION POLICY IN ADDRESSING
COMMUNITY CHALLENGES. THE CASE OF MARONDERA RURAL DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND
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ABSTRACT

Devolution has been widely promoted as a governance strategy to enhance local development, improve service delivery and empower communities by decentralizing decision-making and resource allocation. This study examines the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's devolution policy in addressing community challenges, with a specific focus on Marondera Rural District Council. The research assesses the extent to which devolution has improved service delivery, promoted local participation and enhanced socioeconomic development in the district. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collects data from local government officials, community members and other stakeholders through surveys, interviews, and document analysis. Findings reveal both successes and challenges in implementing the devolution policy, including issues related to funding, capacity building, political dynamics and community engagement. The study concludes that while devolution has the potential to address local challenges effectively, its success depends on adequate financial support, institutional capacity and inclusive governance structures. Recommendations are provided to enhance the effectiveness of devolution in Marondera and similar rural districts.

DECLARATION

I, Mashame Lauren, hereby declare that this research titled "The Effectiveness of the Devolution Policy in addressing community challenges, the case of Marondera Rural District Council" is my original work and has not previously been submitted, in whole or in part, to any other university or institution.

I confirm that all sources of information utilized in this work have been properly acknowledged and that I followed the ethical principles and standards required for doing research. Any support obtained during the development of this research has been reported, and all sources used are properly referenced according to academic traditions.

This work is a true reflection of my efforts, and I accept full responsibility for any errors or omissions found here.

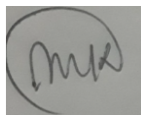
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, Godknows Mashame whose dedication and faith in me made the journey easier. I express my heartfelt gratitude to my cherished family for their love, encouragement, support, sacrifice and inspiration in allowing me to follow my aspirations and also to my friend Merit for her encouragement to my fellow students, whose assistance has been a constant source of motivation throughout the academic journey. I hope that my juniors and those who come after me may find motivation in this work and use it as a point of reference as they pursue their academic goals. Lastly, I dedicate this work to God who has graciously bestowed upon me the intellect, courage and perseverance to pursue my academic dreams. May his name be praised forever.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Devolution, a form of decentralization that involves the transfer of powers, responsibilities and resources from central to local governments, has gained significant attention globally as a means to promote local governance and enhance public service delivery. According to the World Bank (2019), successful devolution has been linked to improved service delivery, increased accountability and enhanced citizen participation in various countries, including Kenya, New Zealand and South Africa. However, the effectiveness of devolution varies widely depending on factors such as political will, institutional capacity and the level of community engagement (Faguet & Pöschl, 2015).

Devolution has similarly been employed to enhance local governance and address the challenges associated with centralized systems, countries like United Kingdom. The United Kingdom provides a notable example of devolution through its establishment of devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since the late 1990s, these regions have gained control over various local matters such as education, health and transport. The impact of devolution in the UK has been significant, with Scotland, for instance, developing its education policies tailored to regional needs. However, disparities between regions persist and challenges such as the equitable distribution of resources remain (Keating, 2020). Devolution in New Zealand has generally been effective in addressing community challenges, with local councils successfully managing public services and infrastructure projects tailored to local needs. For instance, the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority was established to devolve powers to local authorities in response to the 2010-2011 earthquakes, leading to a more effective and community-focused recovery process (Cheyne, 2017). However, there are challenges, including disparities between urban and rural councils in terms of resources and

capacities. Rural areas sometimes struggle to keep pace with the infrastructural and service demands, leading to debates about the adequacy of funding and support from the central government (Reid, 2020).

On the African continent, devolution has similarly been employed to enhance local governance and address the challenges associated with centralized systems. Countries such as Kenya have made significant strides in implementing devolution, leading to improvements in service delivery at the county level, though challenges such as funding and capacity constraints persist (Oloo, 2018). Devolution in Nigeria has had mixed outcomes. In some states, it has led to improved governance and more responsive service delivery, particularly in education and healthcare. For example, states like Lagos and Rivers have seen significant infrastructure development and economic growth due to effective use of devolved powers (Suberu, 2019). However, challenges remain, including corruption, uneven resource distribution and varying capacities among states. In less developed states, limited financial resources and administrative inefficiencies have hindered the ability to address local challenges effectively. Moreover, political tensions between the central and state governments have sometimes disrupted governance and service delivery (Agbaje, 2020). In Southern Africa, South Africa's model of devolution, enshrined in its constitution, has led to notable advancements in urban service delivery, although rural areas continue to face significant challenges (Ntema, 2019).

The adoption of Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution marked a major shift towards decentralizing power, with devolution introduced to enhance local governance. This policy mandates the transfer of responsibilities and resources from the central government to provincial and local authorities, aiming to create more inclusive governance, improve service delivery and promote local development. Devolution empowers communities by giving them a greater voice in decision-making and ensuring more equitable resource allocation. Local authorities have since

been responsible for various functions, including infrastructure development, health services, education and economic growth. While this has led to initiatives like building roads, schools and clinics and boosting agricultural productivity, the results have been mixed. Some areas have seen improvements, but others continue to struggle with challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption and limited local government capacity.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges within Marondera Rural District Council, examining its implementation, the extent to which it has met its objectives and the obstacles that have limited its success. By focusing on Marondera, the research will offer insights into the practical outcomes of devolution at the grassroots level, contributing to the broader discussion on local governance and development in Zimbabwe. The background also explores the historical context of local governance in Zimbabwe, highlighting the shift from a highly centralized system that marginalized local communities to the introduction of devolution as a means to decentralize power and foster inclusive governance. In Marondera Rural District, devolution has brought various initiatives, such as the construction of schools, clinics, roads and efforts to improve agricultural productivity and resource management. However, the success of these initiatives has been uneven, with some communities experiencing significant progress while others continue to struggle. This study will analyze these varied outcomes, exploring the factors behind the successes and challenges of devolution in Marondera Rural District.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Marondera Rural District Council (MRDC) faces significant challenges in effectively implementing the devolution policy, which has been in place since 2013 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). Despite this policy's intention to improve local governance and service delivery, only 45% of the targeted infrastructure projects, such as roads and schools, have been

completed within the district (World Bank, 2020). This underperformance has resulted in continued poor service delivery, with approximately 60% of the population lacking access to clean water and 40% of local clinics suffering from inadequate medical supplies (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021).

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that 70% of the council's budget is allocated to recurrent expenditures, leaving insufficient funds for development projects (Marondera Rural District Council, 2022). This misallocation of resources is a problem because it hinders the council's ability to address critical community needs, such as improving infrastructure and providing essential services. The direct impact is felt by the 150,000 residents of Marondera Rural District, particularly those in remote areas where infrastructure and services are most lacking (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency [ZIMSTAT], 2020).

The effects of this problem are widespread and severe. Poor infrastructure has led to high transportation costs, making it difficult for farmers to access markets, which in turn affects their income (Agricultural Marketing Authority, 2021). Additionally, the lack of basic services such as clean water and healthcare has resulted in increased incidences of waterborne diseases, contributing to a rise in the district's morbidity rates by 25% over the past five years (Ministry of Health and Child Care, 2023). Furthermore, the lack of progress in implementing devolution effectively undermines public confidence in local governance, leading to lower citizen engagement and participation in local development initiatives (Chigwedere & Mutema, 2021).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges in Marondera Rural District Council.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the challenges faced by Marondera Rural District Council in the implementation of the devolution policy.
2. To assess the implementation of the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council.
3. To explore the perceptions of local communities regarding the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing their challenges.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the devolution policy in improving infrastructure development and service delivery in Marondera Rural District.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What challenges have been encountered in the implementation of the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District?
2. How has the devolution policy been implemented in Marondera Rural District Council?
3. How do local communities perceive the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing their challenges?
4. What has been the impact of the devolution policy on infrastructure development and service delivery in Marondera Rural District?

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

1. The study assumes that the devolution policy has been implemented in some form within Marondera Rural District Council.
2. It is also assumed that there is a measurable impact of the devolution policy on infrastructure development and service delivery in Marondera Rural District.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, it contributes to the ongoing discourse on devolution in Zimbabwe by providing empirical evidence on its effectiveness at the grassroots level. By focusing on Marondera Rural District, the study offers a detailed case analysis that can be used to understand the broader implications of devolution in similar rural districts across the country. This is particularly important for policymakers, local authorities and development practitioners who are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of decentralization policies.

Second, the findings of this study have the potential to inform future policy adjustments and interventions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of devolution in Zimbabwe. By identifying the challenges and successes associated with the implementation of devolution in Marondera Rural District, the study will provide actionable recommendations that can be used to improve local governance, service delivery and community development. This, in turn, can lead to more effective and responsive local governments that are better equipped to meet the needs of their communities.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study is the potential for incomplete or inaccurate data due to poor record-keeping at the local government level. Additionally, the scope of the research may be constrained by the willingness of stakeholders to participate, particularly in providing candid feedback on sensitive issues such as corruption and political interference.

1.8 Definition of Keywords

Devolution: The transfer of powers and responsibilities from central to local governments.

Service Delivery: The provision of public services such as healthcare, education and infrastructure.

Local Governance: The management of public affairs by local government institutions.

Decentralization: The redistribution of authority and responsibility from central to lower levels of government.

Community Development: Efforts to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of a community.

1.9 Dissertation Outline

Chapter One: Introduction and Background of the Study

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

1.14 Proposed Time Frame/Work Plan

Activity	Expected Completion Date
Chapter One: Introduction and Background	October 10, 2024
Chapter Two: Literature Review	November 15, 2024
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology	December 1, 2024
Data Collection	January 15, 2025
Data Analysis	February 10, 2025
Chapter Four: Data Presentation	February 25, 2025

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion	March 15, 2025
Final Submission	April 10, 2025

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

The chapter examines the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's devolution policy in addressing community challenges, with a specific focus on the Marondera Rural District Council. Devolution, as a form of decentralization, aims to transfer authority and resources from central to local governments, fostering greater local autonomy and enhancing service delivery (Bosire, 2015; Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). In Zimbabwe, devolution has been introduced with the intent to empower local councils in decision-making and resource management, yet its implementation faces numerous challenges including financial constraints, limited administrative capacity and political interference (Muchadenyika, 2018; Nhema & Zinyama, 2016). This literature review addresses key themes in the scholarship on devolution, including implementation barriers, community perceptions and the policy's impact on service delivery and infrastructure development in rural areas. By analyzing both theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, this review provides a foundation for understanding the complexities and potential of devolution in promoting sustainable development within Zimbabwean communities.

2.1 Devolution Policy and Community Development

Devolution is one form of decentralization that seeks to transfer decision-making authority, responsibility and financial resources from central to local governments. According to Rondinelli et al. (1989), devolution differs from delegation and deconcentration, as it involves establishing locally elected bodies with autonomous power to govern specific regions. While deconcentration only redistributes administrative functions within the central government and delegation entrusts particular tasks to semi-autonomous entities, devolution creates distinct local government units accountable to local electorates rather than central authorities (Litvack & Seddon, 1999). As a result, devolution promotes local democracy, increases citizen participation and enhances the responsiveness of governments to local needs (World Bank, 2000).

Devolution has long been considered a pathway to empower local communities, with expectations that it fosters accountability and responsiveness to local needs. According to Manor (1999), decentralizing governance aims to increase efficiency and local autonomy,

thereby leading to community-driven development. Empirical studies show that devolution allows communities to engage more closely with governance processes and can enhance local infrastructure, service delivery and participation (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Smoke, 2003). Globally, many developing countries have implemented devolution, aiming to address community needs by creating policies closer to the citizens they affect.

For example, in Kenya and Uganda, where devolution policies have been extensively applied, evidence suggests that community involvement in governance has strengthened, although success has been uneven. In Kenya, Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) observed improvements in service delivery and community participation in devolved areas. Similarly, Smoke (2003) highlights that devolution in Uganda led to improved infrastructure and social services, though political and financial limitations often impeded its full potential.

In Zimbabwe, devolution is structured under Section 264 of the 2013 Constitution, aiming to transfer governmental powers and responsibilities to local councils to address specific local issues. Scholars such as Makumbe (2011) argue that the devolution policy in Zimbabwe seeks to improve local governance and address socio-economic disparities in rural areas. However, research by Chigwata (2016) and Nhede (2020) finds that the practical implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe often faces significant challenges. While the policy's aims are commendable, limited funding, political interference and administrative capacity constraints hinder its success. These challenges can lead to ineffective governance structures that replicate the very inefficiencies devolution aims to overcome.

In the case of Zimbabwe, much of the research on devolution focuses on urban municipalities, leaving a gap in understanding its impact within rural district councils such as Marondera RDC. Machingura and Nyamwanza (2016) note that rural councils often face additional challenges, including limited financial and human resources. In these settings, devolved governance struggles to meet its objectives, as rural communities remain under-resourced, making effective policy implementation difficult.

2.2 Philosophical Debates in Devolution

The theoretical underpinning of devolution often rests on the principles of participatory governance, which assumes that local governance structures allow for more effective and responsive management of resources (Ostrom, 1990). Decentralization theory argues that local governments have a better understanding of community needs and, therefore, can make

decisions that better reflect those needs. Falletti (2005) proposes a sequential theory of decentralization, where political, administrative and fiscal powers are devolved to varying degrees, enhancing community-driven development.

However, some scholars argue that without adequate financial and administrative capacity, devolution may create decentralized inefficiencies rather than empowering communities (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006). In Zimbabwe, for instance, the national government retains substantial control over financial allocations to local councils, which limits the autonomy and efficacy of local governance (Chigwata, 2016). The discrepancy between devolved responsibilities and financial autonomy often leads to challenges in service delivery and governance at the local level. This has led some researchers, such as Makumbe (2011), to question the practical viability of devolution policies in countries with weak economic structures and high levels of political interference.

2.3 Conceptual Foundations of Devolution

Conceptual perspectives underpinning devolution policies include the Democratic Decentralization Theory and Fiscal Federalism. Democratic decentralization theory argues that devolution increases the accountability of leaders and promotes good governance through enhanced local participation in decision-making (Smith, 1985). Fiscal federalism further posits that local governments are better suited to address community needs due to their proximity to residents, allowing for efficient allocation of resources to specific local issues (Oates, 1999). Studies by Smoke (2003) support this view, suggesting that devolution improves resource management and service delivery when adequately supported by fiscal autonomy.

2.3.1 Global Perspectives on Devolution

Devolution policies have been widely adopted globally to promote inclusive governance. In the United Kingdom, devolution has allowed Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to exercise significant autonomy, especially in health, education and social services, resulting in policies that better reflect local needs (Keating, 2005). The UK's model demonstrates how devolution can balance national unity with regional autonomy, creating a government framework that is responsive to regional demands.

In India, devolution through the Panchayati Raj system has promoted rural development by empowering local councils (panchayats) to manage resources and make decisions on development priorities (Mathur, 2013). This model underscores the value of local governance

in fostering community participation and improving accountability. Similarly, Kenya's 2010 Constitution introduced county governments to promote local economic development and reduce regional disparities. Research shows that counties in Kenya have succeeded in improving healthcare, infrastructure and education, but challenges such as political interference and inadequate funding have limited the policy's full potential (Mwenda, 2010).

2.3.2 Devolution in Sub-Saharan Africa Case Studies of Devolution in Africa

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, the adoption of devolution policies has aimed to decentralize power, foster inclusive development and address long-standing inequalities. Kenya and South Africa offer two notable examples. South Africa's approach to devolution seeks to address post-apartheid socio-economic disparities by empowering local governments to make decisions related to resource allocation, health and education. Despite successes, challenges such as resource mismanagement and political tensions remain pervasive (Ayee, 2005).

Kenya's county governments have, since 2013, gained autonomy in planning and managing local resources, which has contributed to improved service delivery in healthcare and education (Bosire, 2015). Yet, Kenyan scholars emphasize that devolution's effectiveness depends on the political environment and the capacity of local officials (Cheeseman et al., 2016). These examples provide essential insights into how devolution can influence community challenges in Zimbabwe.

2.3.3. Devolution in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's devolution policy, enshrined in the 2013 Constitution, was a strategic response to promote local democracy and alleviate regional disparities (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). It aims to empower local authorities to manage natural resources, spearhead local development projects and make budgetary decisions that reflect local priorities (Munzwa & Wellington, 2014). The policy was also introduced as a means to reduce dependency on central government funds and facilitate sustainable economic growth through autonomous local revenue generation (Machingauta, 2010).

The Zimbabwean government has outlined a framework to operationalize devolution, focusing on fiscal autonomy, legislative independence and citizen participation (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). However, devolution in Zimbabwe has encountered significant obstacles, including inadequate fiscal resources, political resistance and weak administrative capacity at the local level (Chigwata, 2016). Several scholars have argued that these limitations stem from

the lack of political will and a highly centralized governance tradition, which hinders the effectiveness of devolution initiatives (Nhema & Zinyama, 2016).

2.3.4 Community Challenges in Rural Districts

Communities in rural Zimbabwe face numerous socio-economic challenges, including limited access to essential services, poor infrastructure and high poverty rates. The Marondera Rural District Council, like many rural councils in Zimbabwe, faces constraints in providing health, education and sanitation services due to budgetary and resource limitations (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2017). Studies highlight that community involvement and support from local authorities are crucial for addressing these issues effectively (Dube, 2014).

Rural districts in Zimbabwe are characterized by low economic development and under-resourced social services, often relying on agriculture and small-scale enterprises for income. Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor road networks, limited health facilities and insufficient school resources, also compound challenges in rural areas (Muzondo & Choguya, 2015). Addressing these issues requires not only financial investments but also a participatory governance structure that enables communities to have a say in developmental decisions (Muchadenyika, 2018).

2.3.5. Marondera Rural District Council Case Study

The Marondera Rural District Council (Marondera RDC) provides an important context for understanding how devolution can influence community development. Marondera RDC has faced challenges similar to those in other rural districts, including budget constraints, inadequate healthcare facilities and limited educational resources. Scholars argue that these challenges are compounded by a lack of effective local governance structures and insufficient support from the central government (Chigwata, 2016).

2.4 Challenges Faced by Marondera Rural District Council in the Implementation of the Devolution Policy

Research on the implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe highlights structural and operational challenges, which have been a major obstacle to realizing the policy's intended benefits. Notably, challenges such as financial constraints, limited administrative capacity and political interference are recurring themes.

2.4.1 Financial Constraints

A significant body of literature points to fiscal limitations as a major hurdle to effective devolution in Zimbabwe. According to Chigwata (2016), local governments, including rural councils like Marondera RDC, are heavily dependent on fiscal transfers from the central government. These funds are often delayed and insufficient, limiting the ability of councils to execute development projects autonomously. This financial dependency undermines the core objective of devolution, which is to empower local authorities financially and administratively to address local challenges (Machingauta, 2010).

Empirical data from Munzwa and Wellington (2014) show that in districts such as Marondera, budget allocations are insufficient for even basic infrastructure maintenance, let alone development projects. A recent report by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2018) underscores that over 60% of rural councils struggle to meet local demands due to budget shortfalls. This lack of resources impacts essential sectors like healthcare, education and road infrastructure, causing delays and inefficiencies in service delivery.

2.4.2 Administrative and Technical Capacity

Administrative inefficiencies are a further constraint on the devolution process. Studies show that local councils in Zimbabwe lack the skilled human resources necessary for policy planning, execution and financial management (Muchadenyika, 2018). Machingauta (2010) emphasizes that local governments often do not have specialized personnel, such as engineers, accountants and development planners, which hampers the councils' ability to manage devolved functions effectively.

Case studies on rural councils in Gokwe and Mutare reveal that gaps in technical expertise hinder the councils' ability to provide essential services. For instance, in Gokwe, the lack of technical personnel has resulted in substandard road construction and insufficient healthcare facilities, causing further challenges for the local community (Chigwata, 2016). These findings suggest that a similar situation likely affects Marondera, where skilled personnel shortages may constrain effective devolution.

2.4.3 Political Interference and Centralization of Power

Political interference remains a critical barrier to devolution. In Zimbabwe, central government authorities retain significant control over local councils, often dictating the distribution of funds

and overriding local decisions (Nhema & Zinyama, 2016). Chigwata and de Visser (2018) highlight that local government decisions are frequently influenced by central authorities, limiting the autonomy of councils like Marondera RDC. This centralized control contradicts the devolution mandate, which is supposed to empower local communities to make their own governance decisions.

One illustrative case is Bulawayo City Council, where political pressures from the central government delayed the council's independent planning initiatives for several years (Muzondo & Choguya, 2015). Similar issues likely affect MaronderaRDC, which may face restrictions in decision-making processes due to political influence, diminishing its ability to prioritize local needs over central directives.

2.5 Assessment of the Implementation of the Devolution Policy in Marondera Rural District Council

Assessing devolution implementation involves examining the mechanisms established to empower local councils and the degree to which councils like Marondera RDC can exercise their devolved powers.

2.5.1 Legislative and Policy Framework

Zimbabwe's devolution framework, outlined in the 2013 Constitution, mandates the establishment of local governance structures with clear administrative, legislative and fiscal autonomy (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). However, researchers like Muchadenyika (2018) argue that the framework lacks specific legal provisions that would enable effective operationalization of devolution. For instance, fiscal decentralization laws are vague, leading to confusion about revenue-raising powers for local councils.

A study by Chigwata (2016) notes that without well-defined policies, councils such as Marondera RDC are restricted in their capacity to manage devolved resources. In Marondera, for example, the unclear demarcation of revenue collection responsibilities between local and central governments leads to disputes over financial management, impacting the council's operational effectiveness (Chigwata & de Visser, 2018).

2.5.2 Community Participation in Decision-Making

Citizen participation is an essential element of devolution, intended to increase transparency and responsiveness. However, research shows limited community involvement in policy-

making processes in Zimbabwe. Dube (2014) highlights that local councils rarely hold public consultations or community forums, which restricts residents' engagement in decision-making. Empirical studies in Mashonaland East Province, including Marondera, reveal that only a small fraction of the population participates in council meetings due to limited awareness and accessibility issues (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2017).

This limited engagement affects the effectiveness of devolution by disconnecting councils from the communities they are meant to serve. For instance, Marondera residents reported feeling excluded from decision-making processes, which fosters a lack of trust in local authorities and reduces the effectiveness of devolution initiatives (Muzondo & Choguya, 2015).

2.6 Perceptions of Local Communities Regarding the Effectiveness of the Devolution Policy

Community perceptions are a critical measure of the success of devolution, as they reflect how well the policy aligns with local needs and expectations. Studies indicate mixed perceptions among Zimbabwean communities regarding the benefits of devolution.

2.6.1 Positive Perceptions and Support for Local Governance

In communities where councils have demonstrated tangible improvements, such as in Chipinge and Masvingo, residents report positive perceptions of devolution (Machingauta, 2010). In these districts, local councils implemented infrastructure improvements, particularly in road maintenance and water supply, which generated community support and reinforced local councils' credibility. These cases highlight that visible outcomes of devolution, such as improved service delivery, significantly influence community attitudes.

For Marondera, an Marondera RDC-driven initiative to repair local roads, if effectively communicated, could enhance residents' support for devolution policies. Muchadenyika (2018) notes that even minor improvements in service delivery can shift community perceptions positively, fostering greater support for devolution.

2.6.2 Negative Perceptions Due to Limited Outcomes

However, communities often view devolution skeptically due to the limited visible benefits, particularly in rural areas like Marondera. Research by Muzondo and Choguya (2015) suggests that residents' perceptions are primarily shaped by local governments' inability to meet essential needs, which they attribute to ineffective devolution. Surveys in Mashonaland East

show that over 70% of respondents believe that devolution has not improved their quality of life due to persistent issues with water supply, sanitation and healthcare services (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2017).

For Marondera RDC, overcoming these negative perceptions will require a deliberate effort to improve service delivery and actively engage the community in planning processes. Positive interactions and community empowerment initiatives could improve perceptions, as seen in other regions where local councils have prioritized resident engagement (Dube, 2014).

2.7 Effectiveness of the Devolution Policy in Improving Infrastructure Development and Service Delivery in Marondera Rural District

One of the key objectives of devolution in Zimbabwe is to enhance local governments' capacity to provide critical infrastructure and services. In the case of Marondera, empirical studies and comparisons with other rural councils offer insights into the effectiveness of devolution in these areas.

2.7.1 Infrastructure Development

Devolution aims to improve infrastructure by empowering local councils to oversee and manage development projects. According to Chigwata and de Visser (2018), rural councils in Zimbabwe have made limited progress in infrastructure development due to resource constraints and insufficient planning capacity. In Marondera, infrastructure projects are often stalled due to inadequate funding and limited technical expertise, which impedes council efforts to construct and maintain roads, schools and healthcare facilities.

A case study of Mutoko District found that devolved funds enabled local authorities to upgrade several health centers, demonstrating the potential for infrastructure improvements under devolution when resources are available (Muchadenyika, 2018). However, without sustained financial support, rural councils like Marondera RDC struggle to achieve similar outcomes, suggesting the need for more robust fiscal policies to support local infrastructure development.

2.7.2 Service Delivery

In terms of service delivery, devolution has had mixed effects across Zimbabwe. In Gweru City Council, devolution facilitated improvements in water management, as the local government successfully developed community-based water projects (Bosire, 2015). This success contrasts with Marondera's challenges in providing reliable water and sanitation services, where lack of

funds and administrative inefficiencies continue to impact service quality negatively (Chigwata, 2016).

For Marondera RDC, enhancing service delivery under devolution requires targeted investments in capacity-building and resource management. Studies indicate that when local governments are trained in resource allocation and service management, service delivery outcomes improve (Munzwa & Wellington, 2014). Thus, capacity-building programs for Marondera RDC could yield significant improvements in essential services, helping address residents' needs effectively.

2.8 Solutions for Enhancing Devolution in Zimbabwe

Empirical evidence suggests several approaches to improving the effectiveness of devolution in Zimbabwe, including:

Increased Fiscal Autonomy: Granting councils greater control over revenue sources would reduce dependency on central government funds (Muchadenyika, 2018). Allowing Marondera RDC to generate local revenue through taxes or service fees could enhance financial sustainability.

Capacity-Building Initiatives: Training programs for local officials in financial management, urban planning and infrastructure development would empower councils to manage devolved functions effectively (Machingauta, 2010).

Community Participation Programs: Encouraging active community engagement in decision-making fosters transparency and strengthens public support (Dube, 2014). Marondera RDC could improve community relations by involving residents in policy discussions and project planning.

In summary, devolution's effectiveness in Zimbabwe's rural councils, including Marondera, remains constrained by financial, administrative and political challenges. However, with strategic reforms focused on increasing fiscal autonomy, building administrative capacity and enhancing community engagement, devolution has the potential to improve service delivery and infrastructure in rural districts, aligning with the policy's ultimate goal of fostering sustainable local development.

2.9. Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis of Zimbabwe's devolution policy with those in other Sub-Saharan African countries reveals important insights. In contrast to Kenya's robust county governments, Zimbabwe's local councils remain financially dependent on the central government, which limits their decision-making power. Kenya's experience demonstrates the importance of granting local authorities fiscal independence and political support to ensure successful devolution outcomes (Bosire, 2015). Similarly, South Africa's approach to devolution underscores the importance of a supportive legislative framework and strong local government institutions for effective decentralization (Ayee, 2005).

2.10 Empirical Studies on Devolution in Zimbabwe

Research on devolution within Zimbabwe has been extensive, though it predominantly focuses on urban governance. Studies by Nhede (2020) and Sithole and Mombeshora (2019) reveal that while urban councils have experienced some success in implementing devolved governance, rural councils remain underrepresented in empirical studies, highlighting a gap that this study aims to address. Chigwata (2016) conducted a critical analysis of devolution in Zimbabwe, noting that political patronage significantly influences the decision-making process in local governance, which hampers transparency and accountability in policy implementation.

Makumbe (2011) explored devolution in Zimbabwean local authorities, finding that while the policy seeks to decentralize power, the lack of clear legal and institutional frameworks limits its effectiveness. For example, Marondera RDC faces challenges in executing its developmental agenda due to bureaucratic delays and unclear policy guidelines from the central government. Chigwata (2016) also points out that political influence over local councils leads to tensions between councilors and local traditional leaders, which further complicates devolution efforts. This observation aligns with Moyo and Chambati's (2013) findings that central government controls over land and resource allocation have historically undermined local governance structures in Zimbabwe.

2.11 Limitations in Existing Research

Despite the depth of research on devolution, significant gaps exist in understanding its implementation in Zimbabwe's rural settings. Current studies, such as those by Machingura and Nyamwanza (2016), often focus on broader implications of devolution without examining the specific experiences of rural councils, including Marondera. This leaves a gap in

understanding the practical challenges these councils face, particularly in areas like resource mobilization, community engagement and infrastructure development.

Furthermore, empirical studies predominantly rely on qualitative data, which limits the generalizability of findings to diverse rural contexts. This dissertation will address these limitations by employing a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of devolution's effectiveness in Marondera. By doing so, the study will offer an in-depth view of local challenges and community perspectives on devolution, bridging the gap between theoretical assertions and on-the-ground realities.

2.12 Identifying Gaps and Point of Entry

This study's point of entry lies in addressing the gap in empirical studies focused specifically on rural district councils in Zimbabwe. Given the limitations of previous research, this study will explore how local councils, such as Marondera RDC, are affected by resource constraints, political dynamics and community participation in implementing devolution policies.

A major gap in the literature is the lack of data on how rural communities perceive and engage with devolution. Existing research, such as Sithole and Mombeshora (2019), emphasizes that community participation is critical to the success of devolved governance. However, the extent to which community members in Marondera actively participate in decision-making processes and how this participation influences policy outcomes, remains unexplored. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by analyzing the extent and quality of community involvement in Marondera RDC and assessing its impact on policy success.

Additionally, the study will address gaps related to the financial sustainability of devolution in rural areas. While scholars such as Smoke (2003) discuss fiscal decentralization, few studies focus on the specific funding challenges faced by Zimbabwean rural councils. The limited revenue generation and dependency on national government allocations hinder the capacity of councils like Marondera RDC to fully implement devolution. By investigating these financial challenges, the study will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the financial realities facing rural councils under devolution policies.

2.12.1 Critical Review of Current Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

The literature on devolution often presents conflicting perspectives on its effectiveness in addressing local challenges. Theoretically, devolution promises increased local autonomy and accountability, yet empirical studies suggest that without financial independence and adequate institutional support, devolution may result in decentralized inefficiencies (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006; Falleti, 2005). In Zimbabwe, the central government's control over local resources has been a significant barrier to devolution, with scholars like Chigwata (2016) and Moyo and Chambati (2013) critiquing the policy's potential for genuine empowerment.

Ostrom's (1990) work on participatory governance provides a foundation for understanding the role of community involvement in policy implementation. Yet, this theoretical framework assumes a level of community capacity and interest that may not align with rural Zimbabwean realities. Makumbe (2011) argues that while participatory governance is ideal, rural communities often lack the resources and knowledge to engage fully in policy processes. This study will test these theoretical assumptions by examining the level of community involvement in Marondera and its implications for devolution's success.

2.13 Chapter summary

This literature review highlights significant prior research on devolution policies, their successes and limitations and identifies gaps that underscore the need for a focused study on the Marondera RDC. Through a critical synthesis of existing theories and empirical findings, this dissertation will contribute to the literature by offering a nuanced understanding of the practical challenges and theoretical implications of devolution in addressing community-specific challenges. Addressing the limited focus on Zimbabwe's rural councils, this study will evaluate the effectiveness of devolution policies with a particular emphasis on Marondera's unique socio-economic landscape, ultimately offering insights that may inform future policy formulation and implementation strategies.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges in Marondera Rural District Council. It details the research design, population, sampling methods, data collection instruments and the ethical considerations observed during the research process. The reliability and validity of the instruments, pilot study procedures and data analysis methods are also discussed.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs and assumptions that guide how data is collected, analyzed and interpreted. This study adopts an interpretivist research philosophy, which emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals within their social context. According to Creswell (2014), interpretivism seeks to explore how people make sense of their realities, making it particularly suitable for studying complex social processes such as the implementation and effects of devolution policies.

Interpretivism is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the perspectives of those who experience it. Rather than seeking objective, generalizable facts, this philosophy values rich, detailed insights into human behavior, emotions and interactions. This study, therefore, focuses on exploring the lived experiences, perceptions and interpretations of community members and local government officials in Marondera Rural District Council regarding the devolution process. This philosophical approach is appropriate for the study because it allows the researcher to investigate how devolution is understood and experienced by different stakeholders, paying attention to local meanings, values and context. The goal is not to measure or quantify, but rather to interpret and understand the underlying motivations, beliefs and narratives that shape community engagement and policy implementation.

By adopting an interpretivist stance, the research prioritizes in-depth engagement with participants through methods such as interviews, focus groups and observations. These qualitative techniques allow the researcher to capture the complexity and diversity of

viewpoints, providing a nuanced understanding of how devolution affects local governance and development.

3.2 Qualitative Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the environmental and governance impacts of devolution policies in the Marondera Rural District Council. The qualitative approach is well-suited to uncovering detailed, context-specific insights into how individuals and communities experience and interpret the effects of policy changes. Qualitative research focuses on depth rather than breadth, aiming to understand why and how certain outcomes occur rather than merely assessing what is happening. It is especially valuable when studying complex social issues where human perspectives, interactions and meanings are central. In this study, qualitative methods enable the exploration of themes such as participatory governance, service delivery and the social dynamics of local development under devolution.

According to Creswell et al. (2018), qualitative research provides a flexible framework for capturing emergent themes, adapting to new information as it arises during the data collection process. Methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation will be used to gather rich data from various stakeholders, including local residents, council officials and community leaders. This approach enables the researcher to build a deep, empathetic understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with devolution, guided by participants' narratives and real-life experiences. The insights generated through this qualitative study will help inform more contextually appropriate and socially responsive policy recommendations.

3.3 Research Design

When conducting research, the choice of research design depends on the study's objectives and the nature of the problem being investigated. According to Saunders et al. (2009), common research designs include exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, diagnostic, experimental and hypothesis-testing designs. A research design acts as a blueprint for the study, guiding how data will be collected, analyzed and interpreted in a systematic and coherent manner. Creswell (2018) defines it as the overall plan that integrates the various components of the research to

effectively address the research questions. Similarly, Bairagi and Munot (2019) highlight that a strong research design is essential for shaping the methodology and ensuring the success of the study.

This study adopts a qualitative case study design with an exploratory approach. The case study method is appropriate because it allows for a detailed, in-depth examination of a specific context in this case, the Marondera Rural District Council. This design helps uncover rich insights into how devolution is implemented and experienced at the local level. The exploratory nature of the study is suitable because it aims to investigate a relatively under-researched area by exploring stakeholders' perceptions, challenges, and the opportunities created by the devolution policy, particularly in relation to rural governance and service delivery.

3.3 Population and Sampling

3.3.1 Population

A research population refers to the entire group of individuals, organizations, or elements relevant to the study. According to Rubin and Babbie (2007), a population is an aggregation of elements from which a sample can be drawn. The population for this study includes community members, local government officials, council representatives and other key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council. As Kahn and Best (as cited in Udoba, 2014) explain, a population consists of people or items with certain shared characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying. Salkind (2012) similarly defines the population as the full set of elements that meet the criteria to participate in the research. In this study, the population includes a broad range of stakeholders to capture both grassroots perspectives and official insights into how the devolution policy has impacted local governance, infrastructure, service delivery and community engagement in Marondera Rural District Council.

3.3.2 Sampling

Sampling in qualitative research involves selecting participants who can provide rich, detailed and relevant information related to the research topic. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative

studies typically use non-probability sampling methods, where participants are selected based on their knowledge, experience, or relationship to the issue being studied. Common qualitative sampling techniques include purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience sampling (Berndt & Petzer, 2011).

For this study, purposive sampling will be the primary method used to select participants who have direct experience with or insight into the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council. These may include local government officials, council members, community leaders, and ordinary residents who have interacted with or been affected by the policy. Participants will be chosen based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to provide meaningful, context-specific perspectives. In addition, snowball sampling may be used to identify further key informants through referrals from initial participants. This approach is particularly useful for accessing individuals with specialized knowledge or those in hard-to-reach groups. Overall, the sampling strategy is designed to ensure depth and diversity of viewpoints, capturing a broad range of experiences and perceptions related to the implementation and impact of the devolution policy.

3.3.3 Sample size

In qualitative research, the aim is not to achieve statistical generalizability but to gain in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives and social contexts. According to Malhotra (2010), determining an appropriate sample size depends on factors such as the study's objectives, the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation and the diversity of the target population. For this study, a total of 70 participants will be purposively selected to reflect a broad spectrum of views related to the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council. The sample will consist of:

- 40 community members
- 10 local government officials
- 8 representatives from relevant government ministries and departments (e.g., Ministry of Local Government and Public Works)
- 5 elected councilors

- 7 local leaders, such as traditional chiefs or village heads

This sample size is considered sufficient for qualitative inquiry, as it enables thematic saturation the point at which no new insights emerge from additional data. The inclusion of various stakeholder groups ensures data triangulation and enriches the study by incorporating multiple perspectives on how devolution is experienced and implemented at the local level. Additionally, the sample size remains manageable for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which are central to qualitative data collection. The variety and number of participants strike a balance between capturing diverse voices and maintaining depth of analysis, which is essential for a robust qualitative study.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection is a crucial component of the research process, as it involves gathering relevant information to answer the research questions and meet the study's objectives. In qualitative research, data collection emphasizes understanding participants' lived experiences, perspectives and social contexts. Therefore, the methods used are designed to elicit in-depth, descriptive and context-rich information rather than numerical data. This study employed three primary qualitative data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were used to engage local government officials, council members and representatives from relevant ministries. These interviews allowed for open-ended responses, enabling participants to share detailed insights about their experiences with the devolution policy. Focus group discussions were conducted with community members to explore collective perspectives, encourage interaction, and uncover shared challenges and concerns related to local governance and service delivery. Observation involved the researcher attending community meetings and local government sessions to gain contextual understanding of participatory governance and interactions between stakeholders. The combination of these methods ensured a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the devolution policy's implementation in Marondera Rural District Council. Each method was chosen to suit the exploratory and interpretive nature of the study, enabling the collection of rich, meaningful data aligned with the qualitative research approach.

3.4.1 Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are a qualitative data collection method that involves guided conversations with a group of participants who share similar characteristics or experiences related to the research topic. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), Focus Group Discussions are effective in exploring people's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs through interactive dialogue. In this study, Focus Group Discussions were conducted with community members from various wards within Marondera Rural District Council. Each discussion group consisted of 6 to 10 participants, allowing for a manageable yet diverse range of opinions. Focus Group Discussions were particularly valuable in gaining collective insights into community experiences, practices, and perceptions regarding the implementation of the devolution policy. The discussions were facilitated using a pre-developed Focus Group Discussion guide, which included open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives. This guide ensured consistency across groups while allowing flexibility for emergent themes and spontaneous dialogue. The group setting also encouraged participants to build on each other's responses, leading to deeper exploration of shared views and potential disagreements. Discussions were audio-recorded with participant consent and later transcribed for thematic analysis. While Focus Group Discussions provide rich and interactive data, they also present challenges such as groupthink or dominance by vocal individuals. To mitigate these issues, the facilitator employed strategies to ensure inclusive participation and managed the discussions neutrally.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a widely used qualitative technique that allows researchers to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in depth, while maintaining some structure through an interview guide. As noted by Bradley et al. (2018), semi-structured interviews strike a balance between guided inquiry and open-ended exploration, making them ideal for examining complex social issues. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as local government officials, council representatives, and traditional leaders within Marondera Rural District Council. These interviews aimed to uncover in-depth insights into the planning, implementation, and impact of the devolution policy at the local level. The interview guide comprised open-ended questions designed to elicit rich narratives and allow participants to reflect on their experiences. Follow-up and probing questions were used to clarify responses and explore emerging themes. Interviews were conducted in-person where possible, and in settings that allowed for privacy and candid discussion. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim for

analysis. Semi-structured interviews offer several advantages in qualitative research, including the ability to adapt to participant responses and explore sensitive topics in a respectful manner. However, they require skilled interviewing techniques and are time-intensive. To enhance the credibility of the data, the researcher maintained a neutral posture and ensured consistency in the use of the interview guide across all participants.

3.4.3 Observation method

The observation method is a qualitative research technique that involves systematically observing people's behaviors, interactions and activities in their natural environment. According to Babe (2020), observation can be conducted either as direct observation, where the researcher remains an external observer, or as participant observation, where the researcher actively engages in the participants' activities. In this study, direct observation was employed to gather data on community engagement and participation in local governance activities. This method allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the real-life dynamics and interactions within the community, providing context to the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. By observing community meetings, public consultations and service delivery processes, the researcher was able to capture non-verbal cues, group dynamics and other aspects that may not be easily conveyed through verbal responses. Despite its advantages, the observation method also presents certain challenges. Patton (2019) argues that observations can be influenced by the researcher's biases, making it difficult to obtain fully objective data. Additionally, observations are often time-consuming and may be affected by confounding variables, such as changes in the environment or participants' behaviour when they are aware of being observed. To address these challenges, the researcher maintained detailed field notes, followed ethical guidelines and triangulated the observational data with findings from the questionnaires and interviews. Patton (2019) emphasizes that, despite its limitations, the observation method remains a powerful tool for collecting rich, contextualized data that can enhance the overall validity and reliability of qualitative research.

3.5 Validity and reliability of research instruments

To ensure that the research instruments used in this study were both valid and reliable, the researcher conducted a pilot study. This pilot exercise aimed to assess the effectiveness and consistency of the instruments in measuring the intended variables.

3.5.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of a research instrument in producing stable and uniform results over repeated trials or with similar participants. Patsanza (2014) emphasizes that a research tool is considered reliable if it yields the same outcomes when applied multiple times under similar conditions. Essentially, reliability is a measure of the research tool's dependability and its capacity to consistently capture relevant data without significant variance. For this study, reliability was tested during the pilot phase to ascertain whether the research instrument provided consistent data across different respondents. To enhance reliability, the questionnaire and interview guide were tested multiple times to check for coherence and consistency. Ambiguous questions were revised and adjustments were made to minimize misinterpretation by participants. This ensured that the instrument would yield uniform responses under similar circumstances, thus increasing the robustness of the findings.

3.5.2 Validity

Validity, on the other hand, determines whether a research instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. Tuckman (2013) highlights that validity is concerned with whether the research tool captures the key issues under investigation and generates authentic, accurate and meaningful results. In essence, a valid instrument should provide accurate information that corresponds to the research questions and objectives. To enhance validity, the researcher carefully developed and tested the questionnaire and interview guide to ensure they were aligned with the objectives of the study. Construct validity was tested by reviewing the questions against the conceptual framework and study objectives to verify their relevance. Face

validity was also evaluated by engaging research experts to assess whether the instruments appeared to measure the intended variables.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to pre-test the research instruments and identify any potential issues before the main data collection exercise. According to Ferrell (2009), a pilot study is essential in assessing the feasibility, reliability and validity of research tools. It allows the researcher to detect and correct any ambiguities, errors, or unclear items that may hinder data collection. For this study, the pilot exercise was carried out in Marondera to evaluate the suitability and acceptability of the research instruments. Participants were drawn from a sample similar to the target population to ensure that the findings were relevant and applicable to the main study. The pilot study helped determine the extent to which respondents understood the questions and provided meaningful feedback. Based on the participants' responses, the researcher made the necessary corrections to improve the clarity, coherence and overall effectiveness of the instruments. This enhanced the reliability and validity of the research tools, ensuring they were well-suited for the main data collection in Marondera.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a crucial aspect of any research process, as they ensure that the study is conducted in a manner that respects the rights, dignity and well-being of participants. Ethics, according to Greener (2008), refer to the moral principles that guide human behavior and help distinguish between right and wrong actions. Summer (2007) adds that ethics encompass values related to human conduct, such as fairness, honesty and respect, which are essential in ensuring that research activities are carried out with integrity.

In this study, the researcher adhered to key ethical principles to protect participants' rights and ensure that the research process was fair, transparent and respectful. Creswell (2014) outlines

several ethical standards that must be followed in research, including informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality and voluntary participation. The following ethical considerations were observed in this study:

3.7.1 Informed consent

The researcher provided participants in Marondera with clear and detailed information about the study's purpose, objectives and procedures. This was done verbally and in writing to ensure that participants fully understood their role in the research. Only those who voluntarily gave their informed consent were included in the study.

3.7.2 Harm and Risk

The researcher prioritized the safety and well-being of participants by minimizing any potential risks associated with the study. Participants were assured that they would not be subjected to any physical, psychological, or emotional harm. Measures were put in place to protect participants from any form of distress and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences.

3.7.3 Honesty and Trust

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the researcher maintained honesty, transparency and integrity. Participants were assured that their responses would be accurately recorded and reflected in the study. They were also given the option to receive a copy of the study findings if they wished to learn how their contributions were used.

3.7.4 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher took steps to safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality. All data collected were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Participants' identities were anonymized to protect their privacy and no personal information that could identify them was included in the final research report.

3.7.5 Voluntary participation

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants were informed that they were under no obligation to take part in the research and that they could withdraw at any stage without providing a reason. The researcher emphasized that the study was conducted purely for academic purposes and that their participation would not have any impact on their personal or professional lives.

In addition to these ethical considerations, the researcher took steps to address issues of academic integrity and plagiarism by properly acknowledging all sources and adhering to ethical guidelines for academic research. Before conducting the study, permission was obtained from relevant authorities in Marondera and assurances were given that participants' rights and well-being would be protected throughout the research process. Although some of the questions asked during the focus group discussions had the potential to cause psychological discomfort, no such effects were observed based on the feedback received from participants.

3.8 Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of systematically examining, transforming and interpreting data to draw meaningful conclusions and inform decision-making (Smith, 2019). It involves the application of various statistical methods to explore relationships, detect patterns and predict outcomes. In the context of this study on the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges in Marondera, data analysis plays a critical role in identifying the key factors influencing policy outcomes and assessing the impact on local communities.

Winter (2017) highlights several common approaches to data analysis, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and machine learning techniques, all of which are used to enhance the reliability and depth of research findings. Descriptive statistics help summarize the

basic features of the data, while inferential statistics provide insights into the relationships between variables and the broader applicability of the findings. For this study, data will be analyzed using SPSS, a powerful statistical software that facilitates complex statistical analyses such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which will help test the significance of differences in perceptions, experiences and outcomes among various stakeholder groups in Marondera.

The analysis will focus on both qualitative and quantitative data to capture a comprehensive understanding of the policy's effectiveness. Quantitative data will be examined to assess the extent to which the policy has achieved its objectives, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions will be analyzed thematically to explore the nuanced perspectives of community members and local officials. This mixed-methods approach aims to enhance the robustness of the study's conclusions and provide actionable recommendations for improving policy implementation.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology and design used to evaluate the effectiveness of the devolution policy in Marondera. It outlined the study's exploratory design, the adoption of a mixed-methods approach and the pragmatic research philosophy guiding the investigation. Key aspects of the methodology, including the research population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and data collection process, were discussed in depth. Steps taken to enhance the validity and reliability of the research instruments and findings were also highlighted, alongside ethical considerations designed to safeguard participants' rights and ensure the integrity of the research process. These ethical principles included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, minimizing potential risks and promoting voluntary participation. The next chapter will focus on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the collected data. It will examine key trends, patterns and relationships

emerging from the data, providing a detailed account of the devolution policy's effectiveness in addressing community challenges in Marondera and identifying areas for potential policy improvement.

CHAPTER 4

DATA REPRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This section provides a thorough and in-depth summary of the research methodology and key findings of the investigation. The information presented can guide the development of effective interventions and strategies for addressing community challenges through devolution policy. By decentralizing governance and empowering local authorities such as the Marondera Rural District Council, devolution aims to enhance service delivery, promote local economic development and improve governance at the grassroots level. Additionally, this section outlines the data analysis process, including the statistical techniques used and any challenges encountered in validating the data. Ethical considerations, such as data privacy and confidentiality, are also discussed. The study provides contextual information on how devolution has influenced local governance, examining its impact on service provision, infrastructure development and community participation in decision-making. It explores the

social, economic and political dynamics that shape the effectiveness of devolution in addressing community needs. Furthermore, the study highlights the limitations and potential gaps in the Marondera Rural District Council's capacity to implement devolution policies effectively, assessing both the opportunities and challenges that arise under the current framework.

4.1 Demographic information of participants

Having demographic information about the participants aids in contextualizing the data and enables the identification of potential patterns and trends in the implementation of devolution policy. For example, factors such as age, gender, occupation, education level and role in local governance can help identify differences in perspectives on the effectiveness of devolution in addressing community challenges, (Adams & Hayes, 2022). Analyzing the data in relation to these demographic factors allows researchers to understand how different groups perceive and experience devolution and how local governance structures influence service delivery, resource allocation and decision-making processes.

The participants' list in the tables below includes those who took part in open-ended/unstructured questionnaires and interviews (both formal and informal). The questions for the in-depth interviews varied, with some being asked more frequently based on their relevance to the study. The Appendix section contains the full responses to these queries. The participants provided insights on the impact of devolution, its successes and challenges at the community level. A sample questionnaire is also included in the Appendix.

4.1.1 Interviews Response Rate

Respondents	Target Respondents	Actual Respondents	Number of Non-Respondents	% of Actual Respondents
Community Members	15	10	5	67%
Local Government Officials	10	7	3	70%
Business Owners	12	8	4	67%
Total	37	25	12	68%

The table above presents the response rates for the questionnaires and interviews conducted in this study. The community members, local government officials and business owners were the target respondents, as they are key stakeholders in devolution policy implementation in Marondera Rural District Council.

A relatively high response rate of 68% was achieved, indicating that the findings can be generalized to a broader audience within the district. The 32% non-response rate was mainly due to busy schedules of local government officials and business owners and some community members' reluctance to participate in governance discussions. Despite this, the collected data provides valuable insights into how devolution has influenced local governance, service delivery and economic opportunities in Marondera Rural District.

4.1.2 Questionnaire Response Rate

Respondents	Target Respondents	Actual Respondents	Number of Non-Respondents	% of Actual Respondents
Community Members	12	7	5	58%
Local Government Officials	15	13	2	86%
Business Owners	10	8	2	80%
Total	37	28	9	74%

The questionnaire responses indicate that local government officials and business owners were more actively engaged in the survey than community members. This higher response rate from officials suggests a greater awareness of devolution policies and their impact on local governance.

However, the low response rate among community members (58%) could indicate that public participation in devolution matters is still limited. The fear of speaking against authorities, lack of understanding of local governance structures, or apathy towards governance issues may have contributed to this lower engagement. To strengthen grassroots participation in devolution, there is a need for more public awareness campaigns and community consultations to ensure that residents are actively involved in decision-making processes at the district level.

4.1.3 Distribution of Participants by Age

Age Range	Number of Participants	Percentage
Below 18	3	15%
18–30	10	50%
31–50	7	35%
Above 50	0	0%
Total	20	100%

The age distribution of participants reveals that the majority (50%) were between 18–30 years old, followed by 35% in the 31–50 age group. This suggests that youths and working-age adults are the most engaged in devolution matters, likely due to their direct involvement in economic activities and local governance.

However, the lack of participants above 50 years may indicate that older generations are less involved in local governance discussions. This could be due to traditional perceptions of governance, lack of digital literacy for accessing information, or a belief that devolution mainly affects younger generations and business owners.

These findings suggest that youth engagement strategies should be prioritized to ensure that *devolution policies* reflect the interests and aspirations of the younger population.

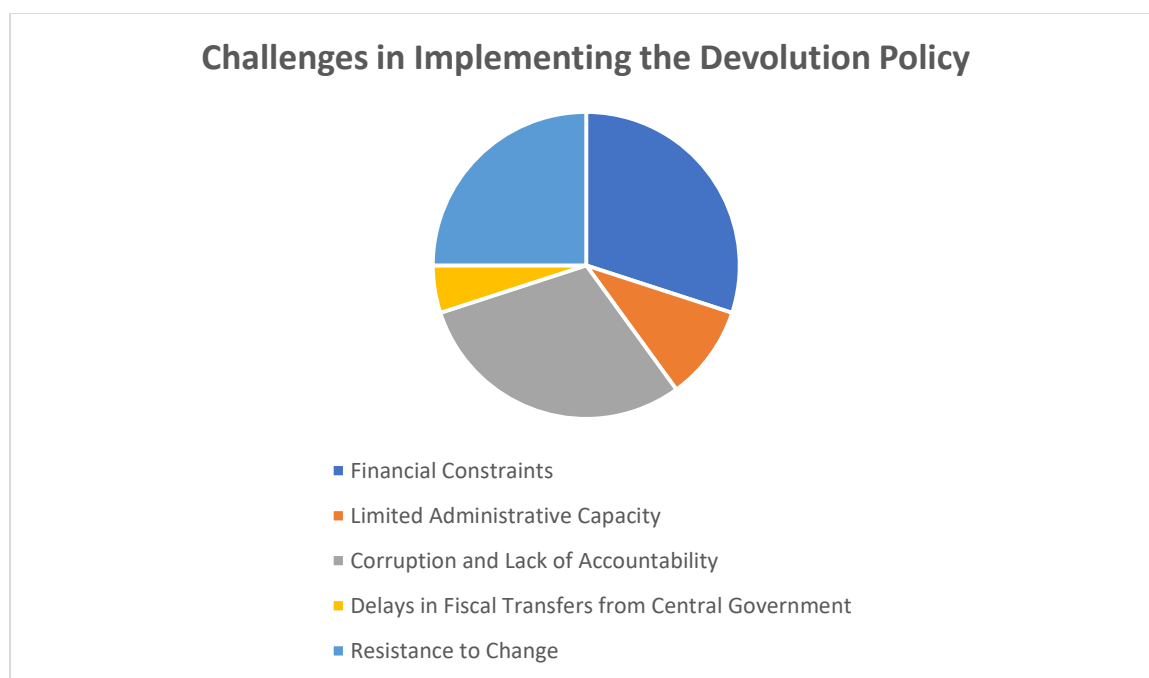
4.1.4 Community Members & Youths' Level of Education

Highest Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	2	16.7%
Primary education	1	8.3%
Secondary education	5	41.7%
Tertiary education	4	33.3%
Total	12	100%

The educational background of participants shows that 75% had at least a secondary or tertiary education, suggesting that those with higher education levels are more likely to participate in governance discussions. However, the presence of respondents with no formal education (16.7%) and only primary education (8.3%) highlights the need for more inclusive governance approaches in the devolution process. Policies should be simplified and made accessible to individuals with lower literacy levels to ensure broader public participation.

4.2 Challenges in Implementing the Devolution Policy

The devolution policy aims to decentralize power and decision-making, empowering local authorities to address community challenges more effectively. However, despite its potential benefits, the policy's implementation has been hindered by various challenges. This section highlights the key obstacles faced by local authorities and communities in implementing the devolution policy, shedding light on the gaps and areas for improvement. All the people interviewed and questionnaires returned highlighted the challenges shown by the pie chart below:



4.2.1 Financial Constraints

The data revealed that financial constraints are a major challenge in implementing the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council. Respondents, including local government officials and business owners, indicated that limited fiscal resources restrict the council's ability to implement development projects, provide essential services and carry out

infrastructure improvements. This finding aligns with the views of Chigwata (2016), who emphasized that rural councils in Zimbabwe are often financially constrained, making it difficult for them to fulfill the objectives of devolution. Respondents noted that the limited revenue base, delays in disbursements from central government and inadequate funding mechanisms have left many local projects incomplete or abandoned.

4.2.2 Limited Administrative Capacity

Community members and local government officials who participated in the interviews and returned questionnaires cited limited administrative capacity as a critical challenge in implementing devolution. Respondents highlighted that some officials lacked the technical skills and knowledge required to effectively manage devolved functions, which negatively impacts project planning, resource allocation and service delivery. Muchadenyika (2018) similarly observed that limited administrative capacity hinders the effective implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe's rural districts. Participants suggested that there is a need for more training and capacity-building programs to strengthen local government institutions and improve the competence of council employees.

4.2.3 Corruption and Lack of Accountability

Corruption emerged as a recurring theme in interviews and questionnaire responses. Both business owners and community members expressed concerns about corruption and mismanagement within the local council, which they believed undermines the goals of devolution. Some respondents argued that resources meant for development projects are often misallocated or misused due to lack of transparency and accountability mechanisms. This aligns with findings by previous researchers, who have noted that corruption in local governance is a barrier to effective decentralization and community participation. Respondents recommended that anti-corruption measures, such as the introduction of audit committees and stronger oversight mechanisms, be implemented to improve accountability and restore public trust in local government institutions. Many business people were arguing saying that:

“We hear about funds being allocated, but we don’t see anything on the ground. Where is the money going? We need accountability and clear things”,

4.2.4 Community Engagement and Participation

Respondents from all three groups community members, local government officials, and business owners indicated that inadequate community engagement is a significant challenge in the implementation of devolution. Community members reported feeling excluded from decision-making processes and noted that their voices are often overlooked when local development priorities are set. This aligns with the findings of Cheema and Rondinelli (2007), who argue that effective decentralization requires meaningful participation from local populations in decision-making processes. Koehler and Aragon (2016) also emphasize that when communities are excluded from planning and governance, development initiatives often fail to meet local needs and can perpetuate inequities. Participants in this study argued that increasing community participation could enhance the effectiveness of devolution by ensuring that local projects reflect the real needs and priorities of the people. As Cohen and Uphoff (1980) suggest, participatory development is crucial in ensuring that policies are not only inclusive but also responsive to the specific needs of local communities. The introduction of more community meetings, public consultations, and participatory planning processes could foster greater inclusivity and transparency in local governance. Bishop and Davis (2002) support this view, noting that such processes allow for a more democratic and accountable decision-making structure, which can lead to more sustainable and relevant development outcomes.

4.2.5 Lack of Awareness and Education on Devolution

Many community members, especially in rural areas, highlighted a lack of awareness and understanding of devolution as a significant challenge. Respondents noted limited knowledge about how devolution operates, the powers transferred to local councils, and how to hold leaders accountable. This lack of awareness was particularly evident among older respondents, echoing the findings of Bardhan (2002), who argues that the success of decentralization depends on the local population's understanding of the governance system. Participants suggested implementing awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities under devolution, which aligns with Faguet's (2014) view that education and information dissemination are key to ensuring the effective functioning of devolved systems.

4.2.6 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change was identified as a key challenge in implementing devolution, particularly by local government officials. Respondents noted reluctance from central government actors and traditional leaders to transfer power and resources to local authorities, driven by fears of losing control. This resistance has delayed implementation and caused tensions between different levels of government. Similar findings are discussed by Bardhan (2002), who argues that decentralization often faces opposition from those who perceive it as a threat to their power. Participants suggested that clear communication, stakeholder engagement, and trust-building initiatives are essential to overcoming these challenges, which aligns with Rondinelli's (1981) emphasis on the importance of addressing resistance through inclusive governance strategies.

4.3 Assessment of the Implementation of the Devolution Policy in Marondera Rural District Council

The implementation of the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council (MRDC) has been both progressive and challenging, reflecting a mixture of successes, ongoing efforts and barriers. This section assesses key areas of progress, institutional readiness, capacity-building efforts and challenges that have affected the policy's effective implementation.

4.3.1 Progress in the Implementation of Devolution

Progress in the implementation of the devolution policy in MRDC has been noted in several key areas. Respondents highlighted that the decentralization of certain functions, such as local resource allocation and planning, has commenced. This has allowed the council to exercise more authority in decision-making at the district level, which previously relied heavily on central government directives. Projects aimed at infrastructure development, including road maintenance, school rehabilitation and healthcare improvements, have also been initiated, although their completion is often hindered by financial delays. One council official had this to say:

"We have seen some progress, especially in terms of local infrastructure projects. However, limited funding and delays in fiscal transfers slow down the momentum."

Despite the progress, respondents acknowledged that the devolution process is still in its early stages, similar to findings by Faguet (2012), who points out that the full realization of decentralization benefits takes time and continued effort.

4.3.2 Institutional Readiness for Devolution

Institutional readiness is vital for devolution's success. MRDC has set up frameworks like local development committees and budget review boards, promoting local decision-making. However, challenges persist in technical expertise, infrastructure, and human resources, all crucial for decentralization. Respondents also noted confusion about the roles and responsibilities of central and local governments, delaying institutional readiness. This aligns with Cheema and Rondinelli (2007), who emphasize that effective decentralization requires clear institutional structures and adequate resources to function efficiently.

4.3.3 Capacity-Building and Training Initiatives

Capacity-building and training are essential for effective devolution. MRDC has implemented some training programs on financial management and governance, aimed at equipping officials with the necessary skills. However, respondents indicated that these programs are limited, with only a few officials receiving training, leaving broader staff and community leaders underprepared. World Bank (2017) highlights that continuous, comprehensive training is necessary to build local capacity and ensure the success of decentralization, especially as new challenges emerge.

4.4 Perceptions of Local Communities Regarding the Effectiveness of the Devolution Policy

This section examines the perceptions of local communities regarding the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing their challenges. The analysis focuses on community awareness, engagement, trust in local government, expectations, perceived benefits and challenges as expressed by respondents in Marondera Rural District.

4.4.1 Awareness of the Devolution Policy Among Local Communities

The level of awareness among local communities is crucial for the success of the devolution policy. The findings suggest that while some community members are aware of the devolution policy, many lack a thorough understanding of its objectives, processes, and intended outcomes. This limited awareness hampers the community's ability to engage meaningfully in devolved governance. Respondents highlighted that awareness campaigns are inconsistent, with most information being disseminated through local leaders, NGOs, or informal channels. This observation resonates with Pittman (2009), who notes that for decentralization to succeed, it is essential that communities are well-informed and actively involved in the process. Smoke

(2003) further emphasizes that effective awareness and communication strategies are integral to ensuring community participation and enhancing the success of devolution.

4.4.2 Community Engagement and Participation

Community engagement and participation are critical for the success of devolution. The research findings reveal that while some community members actively participate in local decision-making processes, such as budget consultations and development planning meetings, others feel excluded due to inadequate communication and limited opportunities for meaningful involvement. One respondent noted, *"We attend the meetings, but we are not given enough opportunity to contribute meaningfully to decisions."* This is consistent with Cornwall (2008), who emphasizes that for devolution to be effective, community participation should not be a mere formality, but a process that is inclusive and provides genuine opportunities for influence. The study also highlighted that community engagement tends to be top-down, with limited feedback mechanisms. As Moser (2009) suggests, the absence of mechanisms that reflect community views in policy implementation can significantly hinder the effectiveness of decentralization efforts.

4.4.3 Trust in Local Government Authorities

Trust in local government authorities plays a crucial role in the success of devolution. The findings show that trust levels vary among community members, with some expressing confidence in their local leaders, while others raised concerns about corruption, favoritism, and a lack of accountability. One respondent stated, *"How can we trust the local government when we see projects being started but never completed? We need more accountability and regular updates on how resources are being used."* This aligns with Hetherington (2005), who argues that trust in government is essential for cooperation and participation in decentralization processes. Respondents who trusted local authorities pointed to successful community-driven projects like the rehabilitation of local clinics, schools, and roads. However, as Fukuyama (2004) notes, even small instances of corruption or mismanagement can severely erode public trust and undermine the success of local governance initiatives.

4.4.4 Community Expectations and Perceived Benefits

Local communities have high expectations for the devolution policy, particularly regarding its potential to improve service delivery, infrastructure development and economic opportunities.

Respondents cited better access to healthcare, education, water and sanitation as some of the key benefits they hoped to gain from devolution.

Some community members acknowledged progress in certain areas, such as road repairs, the provision of school materials and the construction of boreholes. However, others expressed dissatisfaction, noting that their expectations had not been fully met due to slow implementation and limited impact on their livelihoods.

4.4.4.1 Assessing the Impact of Devolution on Service Delivery

Community Satisfaction with Service Delivery

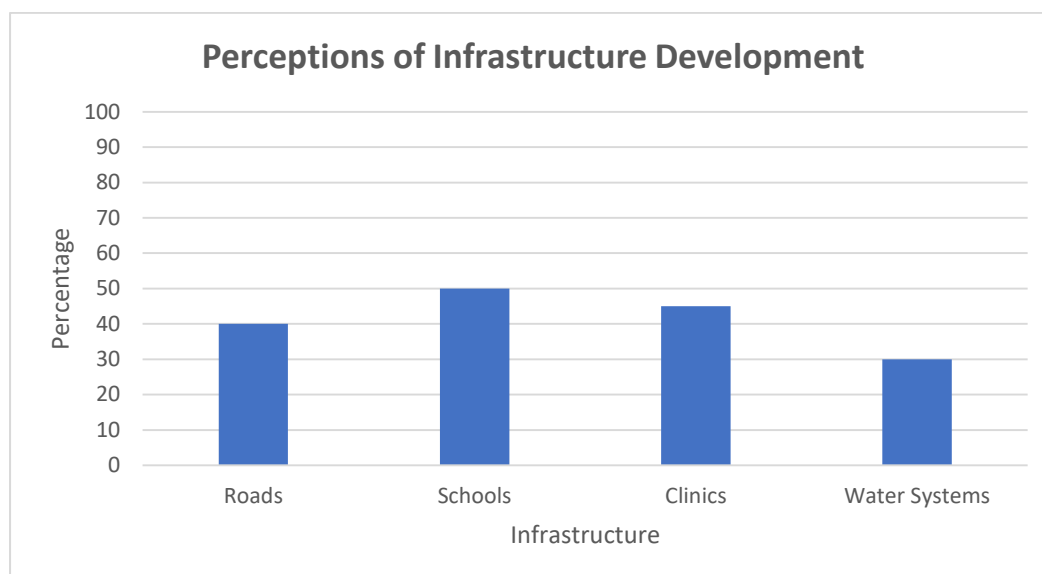
Service	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Healthcare	20	30	20	25	5
Education	25	35	20	15	5
Water Supply	15	10	25	35	15
Road Infrastructure	10	15	30	25	20

These findings suggest that while the devolution policy has made some progress in improving service delivery, there is still significant room for improvement. The low satisfaction rate with water supply services, for instance, highlights the need for increased investment in this sector. Similarly, the low satisfaction rate with road infrastructure underscores the need for improved maintenance and upgrading of roads.

Perceptions of Infrastructure Development

Community perceptions of the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council are mixed, reflecting both optimism and frustration. This duality is consistent with the literature on devolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, where success often depends on local context and stakeholder engagement (Bosire, 2015). These findings suggest that community perceptions of devolution policies can be influenced by various factors, including local context and

stakeholder engagement. A bar graph showing the percentage of respondents who reported improvements in infrastructure, categorized by type: roads, schools, clinics and water systems.



Perceptions of Infrastructure Development

The survey reveals that respondents reported improvements across various sectors, with schools showing the highest improvement rate, as 50% of respondents indicated enhancements in school infrastructure. Clinics and roads also showed notable improvements, with 45% and 40% of respondents reporting progress in these sectors, respectively. Water systems, however, had the lowest reported improvement, with only 30% of respondents noting improvements in this area. These findings align with Smoke (2003), who discusses the critical role of decentralized governance in promoting infrastructure development, particularly in sectors like education, health, and transportation. The significant improvements in education and health infrastructure reflect a successful devolution process in these sectors, as highlighted by Faguet (2014), who notes that decentralization often leads to improved public services at the local level.

However, the low improvement rate in water systems underscores the challenges faced in certain areas of service delivery. Ahmad et al. (2005) note that, while devolution has proven effective in some sectors, there are persistent challenges in infrastructure such as water supply, especially when resources are limited and local governments lack adequate technical capacity to implement large-scale projects. Similarly, Manor (1999) argues that effective decentralization requires not only increased financial resources but also improved coordination

and management at the local level, particularly in sectors like water and sanitation, which are highly resource-intensive.

The need for increased investment and better coordination, particularly in the water supply and road infrastructure sectors, resonates with the findings of Bardhan (2002), who emphasizes that devolution must be accompanied by adequate resources and clear implementation mechanisms for it to be successful in infrastructure development. To address these challenges, it is essential to enhance investment and strengthen institutional frameworks at the local level to better manage the decentralized resources and responsibilities.

4.5 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Devolution Policy in Infrastructure Development and Service Delivery

This section evaluates the effectiveness of the devolution policy in improving infrastructure development and service delivery in Marondera Rural District. The assessment is based on improvements observed, efficiency in service delivery, the role of collaborative efforts, community satisfaction and barriers hindering effective implementation.

4.5.1 Improvements in Infrastructure Development

One of the primary objectives of the devolution policy is to enhance infrastructure development at the local level. The findings indicate that some progress has been made in sectors such as roads, schools, clinics, and water infrastructure. Respondents provided examples of projects initiated under the devolution framework, such as borehole drilling, classroom construction, and road repairs. These improvements align with Faguet (2014), who notes that decentralization is often associated with localized improvements in infrastructure as local governments are better positioned to address the specific needs of their communities. As one community leader stated:

“We have seen some new infrastructure projects in our ward, like the repair of roads and the construction of additional classrooms, but there is still a long way to go.”

Despite these advances, respondents highlighted challenges such as slow progress in infrastructure development due to funding delays, lack of technical expertise, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. These challenges resonate with Manor (1999), who discusses how decentralization often leads to slower infrastructure development when local governments lack

adequate resources or technical capacity. Smoke (2003) also emphasizes that successful infrastructure projects under devolution require clear implementation plans and robust financial management, which have often been hindered by these bottlenecks.

4.5.2 Service Delivery Efficiency and Accessibility

The devolution policy also aims to improve service delivery efficiency, particularly in healthcare, education, water, and sanitation. While respondents reported improvements in healthcare services, such as refurbished rural clinics and availability of essential medicines, concerns remained about ongoing shortages of services, long waiting times, and inadequate staffing. Bardhan (2002) argues that decentralization often leads to improvements in service delivery, but the effectiveness of such initiatives is heavily dependent on adequate resource allocation, which, according to respondents, remains inconsistent across rural and remote areas. One respondent shared:

“We’ve had improvements in healthcare, but we still face long waiting times, and the clinics are not adequately staffed.”

This underscores the need for Ahmad et al. (2005), who stress the importance of addressing resource allocation issues and improving monitoring systems to ensure more consistent service delivery across different regions.

4.5.3 Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and Collaborative Efforts

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and collaboration with NGOs have played a significant role in enhancing infrastructure and service delivery in Marondera Rural District. Respondents noted that partnerships with NGOs helped in constructing water infrastructure, providing educational materials, and supporting healthcare services. Mikesell (2003) highlights the importance of such partnerships in decentralized governance, particularly in resource-constrained areas. One participant mentioned:

“NGOs have helped with water projects and clinic supplies, but we need more structured partnerships with the private sector to scale up these efforts.”

However, respondents emphasized the need for greater private sector involvement and transparent partnership frameworks. Sharma (2004) discusses the importance of effective

public-private collaboration for fostering sustainable development, and such feedback reflects a need to strengthen these partnerships for improved outcomes.

4.5.4 Community Impact and Satisfaction with Services

The ultimate goal of devolution is to improve the quality of life for local communities. While some respondents reported satisfaction with improvements like better road access, reliable water supply, and refurbished schools, others expressed dissatisfaction due to continued service gaps. Faguet (2014) notes that while decentralization can enhance local satisfaction when infrastructure improves, disparities often arise, particularly in areas with minimal progress. One respondent expressed frustration:

“We’ve seen a few improvements in our area, but others have barely seen anything, and that’s disappointing.”

This suggests that while devolution holds promise, there is a need for more balanced development across all regions, a point raised by Smoke (2003), who argues that the benefits of decentralization should be evenly distributed to avoid frustration and inequalities.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the findings on the implementation of the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council have been discussed and analyzed in relation to the study’s objectives. The chapter provided insights into the progress made under the devolution framework, highlighting achievements in infrastructure development, service delivery and collaborative efforts with external stakeholders. The analysis revealed that while some tangible improvements have been made, including road rehabilitation, clinic renovations and improved water supply, several challenges continue to hinder the full realization of the policy’s objectives. Key challenges include delays in the disbursement of fiscal transfers from the central government, limited technical capacity among council staff, corruption and inadequate community engagement in local governance and project implementation. The chapter also explored community perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the devolution policy. It was found that while some residents acknowledged positive changes, others expressed dissatisfaction due to service delivery gaps and unmet expectations. Additionally, community trust in local authorities was noted to vary depending on the transparency, accountability and inclusivity of local governance

processes. Overall, the chapter underscores the need for addressing the identified barriers through enhanced funding mechanisms, capacity-building initiatives, increased transparency and accountability and greater community participation. These measures are critical to ensuring that the devolution policy achieves its intended goals of empowering local communities, improving service delivery and fostering sustainable development in Marondera Rural District.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the research on the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges, using Marondera Rural District Council as a case study. It summarizes the key findings from the previous chapters, drawing conclusions on the successes and limitations of the devolution policy in enhancing service delivery, infrastructure development and community empowerment. Recommendations are provided to address the challenges identified and enhance the policy's implementation for sustainable development.

5.1 Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the research by providing background information on the devolution policy and its relevance in promoting local governance, service delivery and infrastructure development. The chapter highlighted the research problem, which focused on the challenges faced by Marondera Rural District Council in implementing the devolution policy. The research objectives and questions were outlined and the significance of the study to policymakers, local communities and scholars was discussed.

Chapter 2 presented a review of existing literature on devolution and its impact on local governance. The chapter examined the theoretical foundations underpinning the study, including Decentralization Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which explain how devolved governance can enhance community participation and improve service delivery. Empirical studies were also reviewed, providing insights into global, regional and local experiences with devolution and identifying gaps in the implementation process, particularly in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 3 focused on the research methodology, describing the mixed-methods approach used to collect and analyze data. The chapter explained the use of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather perspectives from community members, local government officials and business owners. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation, were also addressed.

Chapter 4 presented and analyzed the findings from the study. The chapter explored the progress made in implementing the devolution policy, the challenges encountered by Marondera Rural District Council and community perceptions regarding the policy's

effectiveness. It was found that while the policy has led to some improvements in infrastructure and service delivery, challenges such as delayed fiscal transfers, limited administrative capacity, corruption and lack of community engagement have hindered its full implementation.

5.2 Conclusions

The research concludes that the devolution policy in Marondera Rural District Council has had mixed outcomes. On the positive side, the policy has contributed to some progress in infrastructure development, such as road rehabilitation and the construction of clinics and schools. Service delivery has also improved in certain areas, particularly in water supply and waste management.

However, several challenges have impeded the full realization of the policy's objectives. Financial constraints, caused by delayed fiscal transfers from the central government, have stalled many development projects. Limited technical capacity among council staff has affected the effective management of devolved functions, while corruption and lack of transparency have eroded community trust in local authorities. Additionally, insufficient community engagement and unclear policy guidelines have created confusion and reduced the policy's impact on local governance and service delivery.

Community perceptions regarding the devolution policy were also mixed. While some residents acknowledged improvements in infrastructure and service delivery, others expressed dissatisfaction due to unmet expectations, service delivery gaps and perceived corruption within local government structures.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges in Marondera Rural District Council:

5.3.1 Timely Disbursement of Funds

The central government should ensure timely and consistent fiscal transfers to local authorities to enable them to implement development projects without delays. Clear timelines for disbursements should be established and adhered to.

5.3.2 Capacity-Building Programs

Training and capacity-building programs should be provided for council staff to enhance their technical and administrative skills. This will improve the management of devolved functions and ensure efficient use of resources.

5.3.3 Strengthening Community Engagement

Local authorities should strengthen community engagement by holding regular consultations and feedback sessions with residents. This will enhance transparency, accountability and community participation in decision-making processes.

5.3.4 Improving Transparency and Accountability

Anti-corruption measures should be implemented to promote transparency and accountability in the management of devolved resources. This could include establishing independent oversight bodies, conducting regular audits and improving public access to information on local government budgets and expenditures.

5.3.5 Clarifying Policy Guidelines

The central government should provide clear and comprehensive guidelines on the implementation of the devolution policy to reduce confusion and ensure consistency in its application across different districts.

5.3.6 Promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Local authorities should explore opportunities for collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance service delivery and infrastructure development. PPPs can provide additional resources and technical expertise to support local development initiatives.

5.3.7 Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation

A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework should be established to track the progress and impact of the devolution policy. This will help identify gaps and areas for improvement and ensure that the policy remains aligned with local development priorities.

5.3.8 Addressing Community Expectations and Building Trust

Efforts should be made to manage community expectations by clearly communicating the scope and limitations of the devolution policy. Building trust in local authorities through transparent governance and effective service delivery is essential for fostering community support and engagement.

5.4 Future Findings

In light of the conclusions drawn from this study, future research on the devolution policy in Zimbabwe, particularly in rural districts like Marondera, could focus on the following areas to better understand its long-term impact and further enhance its implementation:

5.4.1 Impact of Timely Fiscal Transfers on Local Development

Future studies could explore the long-term impact of timely and consistent fiscal transfers on local governance and development. Researchers could investigate how the prompt disbursement of funds affects project completion rates, efficiency, and overall community satisfaction in Marondera Rural District and similar districts in Zimbabwe. A comparative analysis of districts that experience fiscal delays versus those that receive timely transfers could provide insights into the mechanisms that enhance or hinder effective local development.

5.4.2 Effectiveness of Capacity-Building Programs

Another potential area for future research would be to evaluate the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the technical and administrative capacity of local government officials. This research could track the progress of council staff before and after participating in training programs, measuring improvements in decision-making, project management, and service delivery. Understanding which types of training (e.g., financial management, governance, infrastructure development) yield the best results could guide future capacity-building efforts.

5.4.3 Role of Community Engagement in Enhancing Policy Effectiveness

While this study touched on the importance of community engagement, future studies could delve deeper into the various community engagement models and their effectiveness in improving the implementation of the devolution policy. This research could focus on specific strategies employed by local authorities to foster greater community involvement and assess

how these strategies influence community satisfaction, participation in local governance, and the overall success of devolved services.

5.4.4 Long-Term Effects of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Given the growing importance of PPPs in local development, future research could investigate the sustainability and impact of these partnerships on service delivery and infrastructure development in rural areas. This could involve analyzing case studies of successful and unsuccessful partnerships, identifying the factors that contribute to their success, and providing recommendations for scaling up PPPs to maximize their benefits in Marondera and other rural districts.

5.4.5 Expanding the Scope of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The development of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of the devolution policy. Future studies could focus on the design, implementation, and outcomes of such M&E systems at the local government level. Research could explore how M&E tools can be adapted to better capture the specific challenges and successes of devolution, with a particular focus on measuring the impact on rural communities. Furthermore, examining how feedback from M&E activities influences future policymaking could be valuable for improving the responsiveness and adaptability of the devolution policy.

5.4.6 Exploring the Long-Term Impact of Devolution on Community Empowerment

Finally, future research could track the long-term effects of the devolution policy on community empowerment, especially in terms of decision-making, local governance, and resource management. Research could explore how devolution has changed the political and social dynamics within rural communities and assess whether communities feel more empowered and able to address their own needs. This research could also assess how devolution impacts local economies and whether it fosters more sustainable and inclusive development practices.

By investigating these areas, future research could provide further insights into how devolution can be strengthened and optimized to better meet the needs of local communities in Zimbabwe, ultimately contributing to more sustainable and equitable development.

5.5 Areas for future research

1. Comparative Studies – Assessing how devolution outcomes in Marondera compare to other districts in Zimbabwe.
2. Political Influence – Examining the role of politics in shaping the success or failure of devolution.
3. Community Awareness – Investigating how public understanding of devolution impacts participation and governance.
4. Technology in Governance – Exploring how digital tools can enhance transparency and service delivery.
5. Gender & Social Inclusion – Analyzing how devolution affects marginalized groups, including women and youth.
6. Economic Impact – Study how devolution has influenced local entrepreneurship, employment, and development.
7. Corruption & Accountability – Identify corruption challenges in devolved governance and effective anti-corruption strategies.
8. Infrastructure Sustainability – Assessing whether infrastructure projects under devolution are sustainable long-term.
9. Climate Adaptation – Exploring how devolution supports climate resilience and disaster management in rural areas.
10. Social Impact – Measuring the effects of devolution on social trust, community well-being, and governance perceptions.

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ANNEXTURES

A Questionnaire on the Effectiveness of the Devolution Policy

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Highest level of education: _____
4. Occupation: _____
5. Length of residence in Marondera Rural District: _____

Section B: Awareness and Understanding of the Devolution Policy

1. Are you aware of the Devolution Policy? (Yes/No) _____
2. How would you rate your understanding of the policy? (Very good, Good, Average, Poor)

3. Do you believe the policy has been implemented in your community? (Yes/No)

Section C: Impact of the Devolution Policy

1. Has the policy improved access to local government services? (Yes/No)

2. Has the policy contributed to improved infrastructure? (Yes/No/Not sure)

3. Has the policy addressed socio-economic challenges? (Yes/No/Not sure)

Section D: Challenges in Implementing the Devolution Policy

1. What challenges have you observed in implementing the policy? (Check all that apply)

☐ Lack of resources

- ☐ Poor coordination
 - ☐ Lack of community participation
 - ☐ Insufficient training
 - ☐ Political interference
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
-

2. Has the policy faced resistance from local authorities or stakeholders? (Yes/No/Not sure)

Section E: Community Participation and Local Government Accountability

1. Are you satisfied with community consultation on policy issues? (Yes/No)

2. How would you rate local authorities' transparency and accountability? (Very transparent, Transparent, Average, Poor, Very poor)

Section F: Recommendations for Improvement

1. What recommendations do you have to improve policy implementation? (Please specify)

2. How can community participation be enhanced? (Please specify)

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET

Communications Should not be

addressed to individuals

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E-mail :
pomasfrees@gmail.com



ZIMBABWE

The Office of the Secretary for Provincial
Affairs and Devolution

Chr Morris Avenue/Second Street
(P.O BOX 445)
Marondera
ZIMBABWE

13 February 2025

District Development Coordinator
Marondera District

CLEARANCE TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN MARONDERA DISTRICT: MASHAME LAUREN

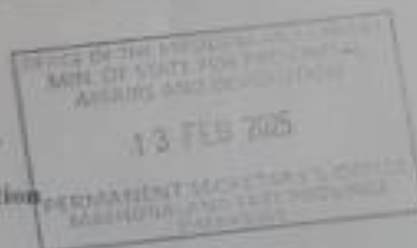
This letter serves to confirm that Mashame Lauren has been cleared to carry out a research in Marondera district. She is a student at Bindura University of Science Education carrying research titled: "The effectiveness of the devolution policy in addressing community challenges: The case of Marondera RDC." The research seeks to proffer recommendations on devolution in Zimbabwe, bringing pertinent literature to improve on devolution in the country.

Please kindly introduce the student to the Lower tier structure in the district.

(E. Chikomo)

For: Secretary for Provincial affairs and Devolution
Mashonaland East Province

cc: Mashame Lauren



LAUREN MASHAME CHAPTER 1-5.docx

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