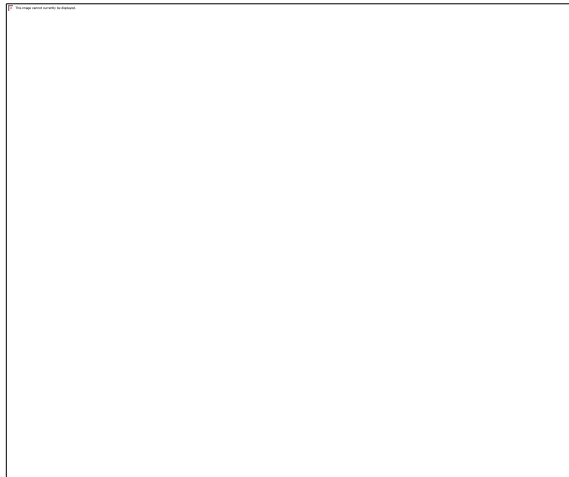


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY STUDIES



**INVESTIGATING THE EFFICACY OF EXISTING LAWS AND POLICIES IN
COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ZIMBABWE. A CASE STUDY OF
MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE (2023-2025).**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
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DEDICATION FORM

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Family and God the Creator. Without their support this dissertation would not have been a success.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the efficacy of current laws and policies in combating human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe between 2023-2025. The study used a pragmatic philosophy and convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected from 55 respondents including Zimbabwe Republic Police officers, NGO staff, community members and local government officials through mixed questionnaires and qualitative data from nine in-depth key informant interviews. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages, means and standard deviations were presented in pie charts, bar graphs and tables while qualitative findings were presented as verbatim quotes. The findings revealed poverty, unemployment and economic instability as the main push factors for human trafficking compounded by corruption, porous borders, low public awareness and lack of education. Legislative instruments such as the Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25] and its 2023 Amendment and the National Plan of Action were rated as only partially to moderately effective, exposing a significant implementation gap. The main challenges identified were acute resource scarcity, systemic corruption, weak inter-agency coordination, inadequate victim support services and insufficient specialised training. The research found that Zimbabwe has relatively strong laws against trafficking, but operational failures and shortfalls in political will to invest in enforcement and protection undermine their effectiveness. Recommendations highlighted the need for increased state funding, mandatory anti-corruption measures, ongoing specialised training, institutionalised coordination and the creation of provincial victim shelters to narrow the gap between legislation and lived reality.

Key words: Human trafficking, anti-human trafficking laws, policies and initiatives, policy efficacy, Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights that continues to afflict numerous countries worldwide, Zimbabwe included. This chapter introduces the research on the efficacy of existing laws and policies in combating human trafficking in Zimbabwe focusing on Mashonaland Central province as a case study. The chapter outlines the background to the study and delineates the research problem as well as highlighting the purpose of the study. The chapter also presents the research objectives and the research questions to be answered in the study. In addition, the chapter highlights on the significance, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes by giving operational definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Human trafficking, particularly that of women and girls, is nothing new (Motseki & Mofokeng, 2022a; Vhumbunu, 2020). Research indicate that the crime existed since the slave trade era where Africans were being taken to Europe and America to work as forced labourers (Mabvurira et al., 2022). The phenomenon has assumed many different forms throughout history, but in the context of globalization, it has taken on startling new dimensions (Motseki & Mofokeng, 2022). Human trafficking is a worldwide issue that transcends national boundaries, although its profound effects are seen inside specific nations (Mugari & Obioha, 2021). Human trafficking remains one of the most profitable and clandestine criminal enterprises globally, generating an estimated \$150 billion in illicit profits annually (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2024).

According to the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2024), the detection of victims globally increased by 25% in 2022-2023 as the world moved past the COVID-19 pandemic, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The report emphasises that women and girls continue to be the majority of victims (61%) and that child trafficking has increased by one-third over the past three years (UNODC, 2024). Scholars say trafficking in human sex is a serious public health concern in the United States. The United States is the second-largest market for sex-trafficked women, but there are not many healthcare therapies specifically geared toward women (Lepianka & Colbert, 2020).

In Africa, it is driven by economic instability, armed conflict and climate induced migration. According to the African Union (AU), most cases involve intra-continental trafficking, with victims often trafficked from rural areas to urban or mining areas (African Union, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, the extractive industries and domestic servitude are in crisis because of forced labour. Statistics reveal that despite the existence of policy frameworks such as the AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa, implementation is hindered by porous borders and limited forensic capacity (UNODC, 2024). This migration complex has many aspects of human trafficking of both adults and children (Ogunniyi & Idowu, 2022).

In West Africa, trafficking frequently exhibits gender and age trends. According to a recent study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), children make up more than 75% of trafficking victims in West Africa (Ogunniyi & Idowu, 2022). Research shows that human trafficking is a prevalent form of transnational organized crime, which is deeply ingrained throughout West Africa (Ogunniyi & Idowu, 2022). The extra-regional reach of human trafficking in West Africa is confirmed by the fact that 17% of trafficking victims found in North Africa and 7% of victims in East Africa are from West Africa. (Ogunniyi & Idowu, 2022). Additionally, it is estimated that 3.5 million Africans are victims of human trafficking at any given time, with 99% of victims found in West Africa being trafficked within their own nation or subregion.(Knight & Kagotho, 2023).

Even though human trafficking is a worldwide problem, it has been particularly more pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, with South Africa being one of the continent's epicentres (Bello & Olutola, 2022a; Mginindo et al., 2025; Motseki & Mofokeng, 2022; Vhumbunu, 2020)According to the US Department of State, most victims and perpetrators of human trafficking originate, travel through and end up in South Africa. In the 79 human trafficking cases that were pending in South African courts in 2021, almost 400 victims were identified (Mginindo et al., 2025). Even though the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states have implemented several institutional, legislative and policy measures to combat human trafficking at the subnational, national and regional levels, the crime still constitute a thriving industry. The terrible and devastating reality is that human trafficking undoubtedly poses a severe danger to regional security, regional integration, regional development and the socioeconomic standing of residents (Vhumbunu, 2020).

To combat human trafficking in the region, however, SADC member states have been putting various strategies into practice, including policies, laws, regional interventions, and action plans like the 10 Year SADC Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2009-2019) (Mginindo et al., 2025; Vhumbunu, 2020). The SADC 10-year Strategic Plan to Combat Trafficking emphasizes harmonizing laws across borders. However, countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe remain Tier 2 on the global monitoring scale, indicating that while they make significant efforts, they do not yet fully meet the minimum standards for elimination (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Regional migration corridors, particularly those linking Zimbabwe to Mozambique and South Africa, remain high-risk zones for smuggling-turned-trafficking (SADC, 2024).

In Zimbabwe, the UNODC has estimated that over 5,000 victims enter or transit through Beitbridge each year, in addition to approximately 10,000-15,000 cases of internal trafficking within Zimbabwe (UNODC, 2021). In 2017 alone, Zimbabwean authorities identified 179 trafficking victims at Beitbridge, a notable increase from previous years, with 135 adults and 44 children predominantly from neighbouring Mozambique and South Africa (UNODC, 2021). Forced labour and sex trafficking were found to be the most common forms of exploitation. In addition, It is estimated 70-80% of victims in Zimbabwe are female, with 25% children and majority of them are trafficked through Beitbridge Border Post, with trafficking increasing after countries socio-economic challenges escalated (ZimStat, 2018). Internal trafficking is fuelled by migration and poverty, with common forms being sexual exploitation (90%) and forced labour (10%) (Siziba, 2012). Perpetrators include criminal networks and corrupt officials motivated by profit and power (USDOS, 2021).

Despite media reports of trafficking in Zimbabwe, the cases have consistently fizzled out without adequate prosecution of criminals (Dodo & Dodo, 2012; Mabvurira et al., 2022). Particularly worrisome is that Zimbabwe is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children who are trafficked either internally or into nations like South Africa, China, Egypt, Mozambique, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Zambia (Mabvurira et al., 2022). Considering the scourge, Zimbabwe has recently undergone a major legislative overhaul to address these the challenges. The Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act of 2023 was promulgated to align national law more closely with the Palermo Protocol, specifically broadening the definition of exploitation and increasing penalties for offenders (Government of Zimbabwe, 2023). In 2023 alone, the government identified 54 victims, a significant increase from the zero victims reported in the

previous two-year cycle and initiated 10 new investigations (U.S. Department of State, 2023; Mabvurira et al., 2022). Furthermore, the government launched the 2023-2028 Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (NAP), which decentralises anti-trafficking efforts by establishing provincial task forces (AfricLaw, 2025).

However, human trafficking continues to persist despite the existence of what appear to be strong legislative and policy frameworks to combat the problem in Zimbabwe. This raises the question of whether the laws are enough or if the operational aspects of police and court enforcement are the problem. Even though there is a vast literature on the problem of human trafficking, not much has been done about the efficacy of existing policies and laws to deal with the problem especially in Zimbabwe (Mugari & Obioha, 2021). Conversely, Zimbabwe is a major source of victims of human trafficking, whose vulnerability has been made worse by severe economic difficulties. This study sought to address the literature gap by examining the efficacy of anti-human trafficking policies in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on Mashonaland Central province.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the enactment of anti-trafficking legislation over a decade ago, Zimbabwe continues to experience high rates of human trafficking characterised by weak enforcement and inadequate victim support services (USDOS, 2020; ZimStat, 2018; Mugari & Obioha, 2021). While global and regional discourse on the subject is extensive, there remains a pronounced dearth of empirical literature focusing on the specific legislative efficacy within Zimbabwe's provincial territories. In Mashonaland Central Province, human trafficking problem is exacerbated by the province's unique geography. Bordering Mozambique and hosting significant artisanal mining, the province serves as both a source and a transit point for labour and sex trafficking.

Reports suggest that the proliferation of illegal mining shams and the porosity of the Mukumbura and Mt Darwin border areas create an environment where exploitation thrives under the radar of traditional policing (AfricLaw, 2025). Mashonaland Central Province serves as a strategic transit and destination zone, yet its unique challenges remain largely undocumented in contemporary academic research. This significant research gap, obscures the operational reality of provincial law enforcement and policy performance. Consequently, this study sought to bridge the existing literature gap and provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the national anti-trafficking response.

1.3 Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of measures taken to combat human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province. The specific objectives were as follows:

- 1.3.1. To identify factors promoting human trafficking in Mashonaland Central province.
- 1.3.2. To assess the efficacy of existing laws, policies and initiatives in combating human trafficking in Zimbabwe.
- 1.3.3. To explore the major challenges impeding effectiveness of policies that are aimed at addressing human trafficking in Zimbabwe.
- 1.3.4. To recommend strategies which can be employed to effectively combat human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions were proposed;

- 1.4.1. What are the factors promoting human trafficking in Mashonaland Central province?
- 1.4.2. How effective are existing laws, policies and initiatives aimed at combating human trafficking in Zimbabwe.
- 1.4.3. What are the major challenges faced when implementing policies aimed at addressing human trafficking in Zimbabwe?
- 1.4.4. In what ways can the existing anti-human trafficking policies and initiatives be enhanced to curb human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance in addressing the pressing issue of human trafficking in Zimbabwe. Findings of this study would contribute to the existing knowledge on combating human trafficking at the national and international levels. The study's recommendations will assist policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organisations in formulating evidence-based strategies and interventions to prevent and combat human trafficking effectively.

To Policy makers

The study is significant to those charged with developing anti-trafficking policies of Zimbabwe as it provides valuable information on the effectiveness of current policies and strategies to combat human trafficking in Zimbabwe. This informs policy by identifying areas for improvement and make policy decisions that are more effective in combating human trafficking.

To the citizens

The study is significant for the citizens of Zimbabwe because it can help them to understand the issues around human trafficking and the government's efforts to address them. This knowledge can empower citizens to advocate for better policies and programs that benefit them. At the same time the study raises awareness to the general populace of Zimbabwe about the risk of being trafficked hence they become more diligent and avoid becoming victims.

To the researcher

This study is significant for the researcher because it can provide valuable insights into the issue of human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province and contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic. Additionally, the researcher can use the findings of the study to inform future research on human trafficking in Zimbabwe and other countries.

To the University

The university can benefit from this study in several ways. First, the study can contribute to the body of knowledge on human trafficking, which can inform future research and policies. Second, the study can help to raise awareness of human trafficking among students and staff, which can lead to more informed action and advocacy. Third, the study provides an opportunity for the university to collabourate with other institutions and organisations working on this issue.

1.6 Assumptions

- Data and information from government reports, academic literature and expert interviews are reliable and valid.
- Findings of the study can be generalized to other contexts.
- The participants have adequate knowledge of human trafficking.
- Participants involved in the study will provide honest and accurate responses.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This research is time specific and covers the period from 2023-2025. The participants of the study include members from the ZRP, human right organisations and the community in Mashonaland Central Province. The study acknowledges that human trafficking is a complex and multifaceted issue, and its thorough exploration may require further in-depth research beyond the scope of this study. This cross-sectional study employed a mixed methods approach. Questionnaires, interviews and document analysis were the main sources of data and literature. Other data collection tools outside this scope were not considered in this study. Theoretically, the study was delimited to the

1.8 Limitations

1.8.1 Limitation of the Cross-Sectional Design

This study was cross-sectional and data were collected at one point in time. Thus, it could not capture changes in the implementation of anti-trafficking laws and policies, or changes in trafficking patterns, over the research period (Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2016). To combat this, the researcher triangulated primary data with documentary evidence from multiple years (2023-2025) and asked interview participants to reflect on recent trends and historical practices within the province.

1.8.2 Limitations of Self-Reported Data and Social Desirability

The study was based on self-reported perceptions of law enforcement officers, NGO staff, community members and local officials. Given the sensitivity and criminal nature of human trafficking, such data may have been impacted by social desirability bias, fear of implicating colleagues, or unwillingness to expose institutional weaknesses (Podsakoff et al., 2012). To minimise this threat, strict confidentiality and anonymity were assured, all questionnaires were anonymised and interview data was pseudonymised. Findings were also verified by using secondary sources such as official reports and policy documents.

1.8.3 Geographical Limitation

The study was limited to the Mashonaland Central Province only. This allowed for an in-depth exploration of a strategically important trafficking transit and destination zone, but the results may not be readily generalisable to other provinces of Zimbabwe with differing border,

economic and social dynamics (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The province was selected purposively to address this in part, given its substantial share of informal cross-border movement and artisanal mining activity. The study provides contextual descriptions that enable readers to assess transferability to similar settings.

1.8.4 Data Access and Sensitivity Restrictions

The intrinsic challenges of studying human trafficking is the access to complete and accurate data. Some records on investigations and prosecutions were not obtained in full due to the secretive nature of the crime and institutional reluctance to release sensitive operational information. Additionally, ethical and security considerations prevented the direct participation of trafficking survivors. To address this challenge, the study drew extensively on the multiple stakeholder categories and cross referenced all available documentary evidence to build as complete a picture as possible.

1.8.5 Time and Resource Limitations

The study was conducted over a short period of time and a small budget. These limitations affected the total number of participants and limited the geographic scope of data collection within the province. A mixed-methods design was applied to optimise the use of the available resources with a focus on depth from key informants as well as breadth from questionnaire respondents. Data collection was strategically centred on high-risk districts.

1.9 Definition of key terms

Table 1.1: Definition of key terms

Key Term	Definition
Human trafficking	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of person by means of threat, force, coercion, fraud or deception for the purpose of exploitation, including forced labour and sexual exploitation (UN General Assembly, 2000).
Anti-trafficking framework	The combined set of legislation, policies, institutional mechanisms and strategic plans established by a state to prevent trafficking, protect victims, prosecute offenders and coordinate multi-sectoral responses in line with international standards (UNODC, 2023).

Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25] (201	Zimbabwe's primary anti-trafficking legislation that domesticates the Palermo Protocol, criminalising all forms of human trafficking and establishing a framework for prosecution, protection, prevention and partnership (Government of Zimbabwe, 2014).
Exploitation	The act of taking unfair advantage of a person's vulnerability for labour sexual or other purposes, constituting the core purpose element of the crime of human trafficking under international and domestic law (UN General Assembly, 2000).
Implementation gap	The persistent discrepancy between the existence of anti-trafficking law and policies, and their actual enforcement and operationalisation on the ground, frequently caused by resource shortages, corruption and weak inter-agency coordination (Mugari & Obioha, 2021).

1.10 Organisation of the study

This dissertation was structured into five sequential chapters. Chapter One introduced the study background, problem statement, objectives, and significance. Chapter Two reviewed relevant literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter Three described the research methodology, including design, sampling, and data collection procedures. Chapter Four presented the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter Five provided a summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

1.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter provided an overview of human trafficking including the background, and the problem statement. It also highlighted on the purpose and significance of the study as well as the assumptions, delimitations and limitations of the research. Overall, this chapter provides a foundation for the rest of the study and sets the stage for a deeper examination of the issue of human trafficking. The following chapter focuses on literature review to draw the research gap which justifies the current study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical synthesis of related literature by examines previous researches on human trafficking. The chapter also lays down the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Examining existing studies helps to demonstrate what is already understood and what is not understood about human trafficking. Thus, reviewing prior studies helps to identify gaps which the current study sought to cover.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This section focuses on the dependent and independent variables of the study. These variables are conceptualised below.

2.1.1 Conceptualising human trafficking

The terms trafficking in persons and human trafficking have been used interchangeably to refer to the act of recruiting, housing, transporting, delivering, or procuring a person for forced labour or commercial sex acts by means of coercion, fraud or force (Barner et al., 2014). Other scholars define human trafficking as the recruitment and transportation of people for the purpose of exploitation, usually through coercion, force, or deception (Oram et al., 2012). According to Simmons (2018), trafficking is a complex transnational crime and gross human rights violation. At its core, trafficking involves the acquisition and movement of individuals through coercion or deception for exploitation. It undermines the dignity and freedom of its victims. The UN Palermo Protocol, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000 and entered into force in 2003, defines trafficking in persons, as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (UN General Assembly, 2000).

The Trafficking in Persons Act (Chapter 9:15), which was passed by Zimbabwe for the first time in June 2014, defines trafficking in persons as the act of transporting a person into, out of, or

within Zimbabwe against their will using any of the following methods; force, violence, or threats; administering drugs to subdue the victim or causing the victim to become addicted to drugs; abduction or detention of the victim, fraud, extortion, or giving inducements to the victim or a person in control of the victim voluntarily for an unlawful purpose (Mabvurira et al., 2022).

According to Article 3 of the UN Trafficking Protocol, there are three basic elements that characterise human trafficking. These are the act, means and purpose of exploitation (Mhlanga & Mhlanga, 2021). These elements are diagrammatically exposed below.

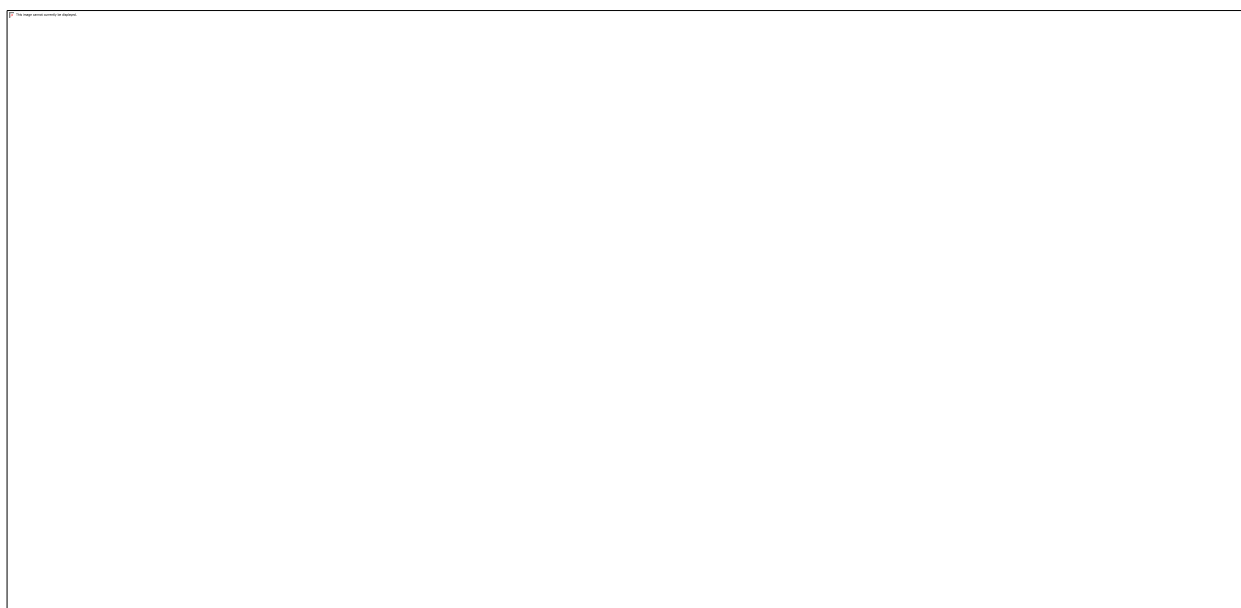


Figure 2.1: Elements of Human Trafficking

Source: United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol

Above all, human trafficking denies freedom and inflicts dehumanising treatment on vulnerable populations for criminal profits (Mhlanga & Mhlanga, 2021). Though related, it involves distinct criminal means and ends compared to irregular migration and must be addressed accordingly.

2.1.1.1 Trafficking-Migration Nexus

Trafficking has become a major issue globally, regionally and locally that requires consideration in policymaking, especially around immigration. Friesendorf (2009) suggest that trafficking and migration are interrelated though distinct phenomena. To some degree, human trafficking correlates with increased human mobility and desires to migrate in search of better opportunities

(Essien, 2022). However, tight migration controls can also exacerbate trafficking by limiting safe options and forcing some to turn to irregular channels where they face higher risks of exploitation. According to Beeks et al (2006), before 2000, trafficking was often misunderstood and conflated with concepts like smuggling and illegal migration due to lack of clarity. Migrant workers also share experiences of deception, abuse and forced labour with trafficking victims, blurring the lines.

More recently, trafficking is viewed as a subset of the broader migration picture, occurring alongside legal and illegal streams (Schendel et al., 2012). It represents the dangers of human movement while safe migration can enrich lives. Still, the relationship is complex, as transferring and transporting people are core to trafficking definitions, implying migration is part of trafficking not just the reverse. While coordination is needed, policymakers should not reduce trafficking solely to a migration problem given their distinct focuses on labour versus human rights (Yea, 2025).

2.1.2 Laws, Policies and Initiatives to combat human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

This section focuses on the laws, policies and initiatives that are in place to fight human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

2.1.2.1 The Palermo Protocol (The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children)

The Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was supplemented by the Palermo Protocol, which was created on December 12, 2000, but it didn't go into effect until December 25, 2003 (Teya & Kurebwa, 2019). Zimbabwe ratified the Palermo Protocol and made considerable efforts to abide by its provisions. According to Article 3 (a) of the Palermo Protocol, trafficking in persons is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of individuals using force, threat, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or the giving and receiving of money in order to obtain the consent of a person in control of another individual for the purpose of exploitation.

According to Dube (2012), the Protocol was the most extensive attempt by the international community to address human trafficking in its contemporary incarnations. States were asked to fight trafficking, particularly against women and children, protect and aid victims of trafficking,

encourage international cooperation aimed at preventing trafficking and prosecuting traffickers, provide victims with physical, psychological, and social recovery, provide victims with physical safety, and strengthen border controls (Teya & Kurebwa, 2019). However, the Protocol is one of the international agreements that can lessen the escalation of human trafficking if it is carefully followed (Mhlanga & Mhlanga, 2021; Teya & Kurebwa, 2019). According to Article 2 of the Palermo Protocol, its goals are to prevent and combat human trafficking, with a focus on women and children; to protect and assist victims of such trafficking with full respect for their human rights; and to foster cooperation among State Parties in order to achieve these goals. Furthermore, Article 9 of the Protocol mandates that states parties create programs and policies to stop human trafficking, including data gathering, research and awareness-raising initiatives.

2.1.2.2 The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in Africa

The Protocol is a multilateral, legally binding addition to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The heads of state of Africa adopted it in 2003. By 2009, 27 of the 53 African Union countries have ratified it (Viljoen, 2009). The Protocol grants women several rights, including the freedom from discrimination, the right to dignity, the right to life, integrity, and personal security, the right to be free from harmful practices, the right to access justice and equal protection before the law, the right to participate in political and decision-making processes, the right to peace, and the rights of women in armed conflicts (Teya & Kurebwa, 2019).

The aforementioned rights are in line with Article 5(g), which prohibits and denounces human trafficking, prosecutes those who engage in it, and safeguards the most vulnerable women. Additionally, states parties are required by the Protocol to offer remedies to women whose rights have been violated. Women in armed conflict must be shielded from all forms of abuse, including sexual exploitation, according to Article 11. Nevertheless, the Protocol has not yet been fully domesticated or adopted by state parties. As a result, the Protocol's function is still restricted.

2.1.2.3 The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act (2013)

The Constitution serves as the normative anchor for all anti-trafficking efforts in the country. Specifically, Section 54 provides a non-derogable right by explicitly stating that no person may be subjected to slavery or servitude and prohibits forced or compulsory labour (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). This supreme law brings Zimbabwe in line with international human rights

standards creating a mandatory obligation on the part of the state for the protection of individuals from exploitation (Mhlanga & Mhlanga, 2021). The academic analysis indicates that the Constitution offers a strong rights-based framework, but its implementation is frequently dependent on subsidiary legislation that transforms these broad protections into enforceable criminal charges (Global Organised Crime Index, 2025).

2.1.2.4 Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25] (2014)

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Act is the main legislation that criminalises the recruitment, transportation and receipt of persons for exploitation. It domesticates the Palermo Protocol and provides a legal definition of trafficking that takes into account the 4Ps approach: Prosecution, Protection, Prevention and Partnership (Government of Zimbabwe, 2014). This Act's significant advantage is that it offers for extraterritorial jurisdiction which allows Zimbabwe to prosecute its nationals for trafficking offences committed outside the country. However, academics have criticised the original text for a perceived movement bias, with law enforcement sometimes struggling to prosecute cases of exploitation without explicit evidence of physical transport, a loophole that has required later legislative amendments (AfricLaw, 2025).

2.1.2.5 Labour Relations Amendment Act (2023)

The amendment of the Labour Act in 2023, greatly improved the legal response to labour trafficking, which remains a prevalent issue in Zimbabwe's mining and agricultural sectors (Mhlanga & Mhlanga, 2021). The legislation increased the maximum sentence for forced labour and child labour from a mere two years to a ten-year prison sentence, signifying a more appropriate judicial response to the seriousness of the crime (U.S. Department of State, 2024). The Act also empowers labour inspectors to identify exploitative recruitment practices and hold fraudulent labour brokers accountable by tightening the definitions of forced labour (Mhlanga & Mhlanga, 2021). Despite these achievements, the effectiveness of the Act is hampered by the informal nature of the Zimbabwean economy where many victims of trafficking are hidden in domestic work or unregulated small-scale mines (Mugari & Obioha, 2021).

2.1.2.6 The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]

The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] is the main penal code under the current criminal justice system of Zimbabwe and is largely in accordance with the provisions of the 2013 Constitution on protection of minors. The Act defines a "young person" as any child under the age of 18 years, and ensures that all cases of sexual or labour exploitation of minors are treated with the highest severity, regardless of the gender of the victim. The current law notably removes legal technicalities that previously allowed traffickers to argue "consent" or "lack of movement" in cases involving children. As a result, Zimbabwe's substantive criminal law mirrors a modern conception of human trafficking by sufficiently criminalising the

psychological pressure and control that traffickers often use to exploit vulnerable children (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2026).

2.1.2.7 National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) 2023-2028

The National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) for 2023-2028 serves as the strategic roadmap for the country's multi-sectoral response. It focuses on decentralising anti-trafficking efforts by establishing provincial task forces and increasing public awareness through targeted media campaigns (UNODC, 2023). The NAPLAC is credited with improving the state's Tier 2 ranking in international reports, as it outlines clear timelines for government action on victim identification and the training of judicial officers. However, academic evaluations often point out that the plan's implementation is frequently stalled by budgetary constraints as the government continues to rely on international donors for the majority of the plan's operational funding (U.S. Department of State, 2025).

2.1.2.8 Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (ATIMC)

Established under the 2014 TIP Act, the ATIMC is the central coordinating body composed of high-level officials from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Justice, Labour and Social Welfare. Its primary role is to ensure a whole-of-government approach which prevents the siloed operations that often allow traffickers to exploit bureaucratic gaps (Government of Zimbabwe, 2014). The committee's effectiveness was demonstrated in 2025 through its successful coordination of a cross-border rescue mission for Zimbabwean women trafficked to the Middle East. Nevertheless, its reach is often limited by a lack of a permanent, dedicated secretariat, which some analysts suggest reduces its ability to provide consistent monitoring and evaluation of provincial activities (Global Organized Crime Index, 2025).

2.1.3 Factors promoting human trafficking

Vast research has shown that there are plenty of factors which drive human trafficking and chief among them is poverty. Scholars argue that there is a direct link between poverty levels in source countries an individual migrant's financial situation and their likelihood of being trafficked (Mginindo et al., 2025; Mugari & Obioha, 2021; Vhumbunu, 2020). Potential migrants who lack access to information about legal migration options and lack funds for migration costs face higher risks than other groups. Surtees (2008) argues that revealed that when employers can

exploit irregular migrants without consequences, it encourages continued trafficking. Friesendorf (2009), clearly showed that the substantial financial gains were quantified to be in the billions, demonstrating there are strong criminal incentives perpetuating the trafficking of migrants seeking work abroad. Keo et al. (2014) suggest that the lack of education that is associated with poverty can also make people more vulnerable to being trafficked.

Inequality in the form of having less access to education, employment, and other opportunities has been underlined as a major driver of human trafficking (Khan et al., 2023). This inequality can make women and girls more vulnerable to being trafficked. Additionally, some communities in Zimbabwe have less access to resources and services, which can also contribute to inequality and make people more vulnerable to being trafficked (Barner et al., 2014; Jahic & Finckenaue, 2005; Stöckl et al., 2021).

More so, Yunus and Jolis (2003) argue that education plays a big role in human trafficking, both as a cause and as a solution. On the one hand, a lack of education can make people more vulnerable to being trafficked, as they may be unaware of the risks and may not have the skills to protect themselves. Firstly, a lack of education can lead to a lack of awareness about the risks and signs of human trafficking. Secondly according to a study by UNESCO (2006), it can lead to a lack of economic opportunities, which can make people more likely to accept dangerous or exploitative job offers. Thirdly, it can lead to a lack of access to social services and support, which can make people more vulnerable to being taken advantage of. On the other hand, education can be a powerful tool for prevention and protection against human trafficking, as it can increase awareness and give people the skills they need to protect themselves. Truong and Angeles (2005), supported that education can also empower people to seek help and report cases of human trafficking.

Other scholars have attributed human trafficking to corruption which In Zimbabwe, is viewed as a widespread problem that affects all levels of society, including law enforcement and border control. Claramunt (2002), supported that traffickers may be able to bribe officials to turn a blind eye to their activities, or to help them cross borders with their victims. Victims of corruption may also find it difficult to obtain help, as they may not trust the authorities or fear retaliation (Blanton et al., 2020). Cho et al. (2012) propose the need to enhance transparency and accountability in government and law enforcement. This can be done by anti-corruption commissions, public audits and independent media. Providing training and resources to law enforcement and border

control officials to help them recognise and respond to human trafficking is also important (Spalding, 2017).

Economic instability is another major factor that contributes to human trafficking in Zimbabwe. Powell et al (2018), highlighted that when the economy is unstable, people may lose their jobs or their livelihoods, and this can lead to a desperate search for work. This can make people more vulnerable to being trafficked, as they may be willing to take any job that is offered to them, even if it is exploitative or unsafe. Economic instability can also lead to increased crime and violence, which can further fuel human trafficking. Poor economic condition can also lead to a breakdown in social services, such as healthcare and education (Mugari & Obioha, 2021). When people don't have access to these services, they may be more likely to fall into situations of vulnerability that can lead to human trafficking.

The Peel Institute on Violence Prevention's Report (2017), highlighted that GBV can take many forms, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and forced marriage. In Zimbabwe, GBV is a significant problem, and it can lead to women and girls being trafficked. GBV can also lead to other problems, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and homelessness, which can further increase the risk of being trafficked. GBV is often underreported in Zimbabwe, which makes it difficult to know the true scale of the issue. The issue of gender-based violence is closely linked to child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) in Zimbabwe. In fact, these practices often increase vulnerability to human trafficking (Chiweshe, 2021).

2.1.4 Challenges in implementing policies addressing human trafficking.

According to Mugari and Obioha, (2021) Zimbabwe does have several laws and policies in place to address human trafficking, but these efforts are often not well coordinated. This can lead to confusion and a lack of effective action, as different organisations may be working at cross-purposes. For example, the police may investigate a case, but the social services department may not be aware of it. This can lead to important information being lost, and can prevent victims from getting the help they need (Mwamba, 2016). The lack of a coordinated response is a major challenge in implementing policies addressing human trafficking in Zimbabwe. This lack of coordination can lead to confusion, delays, and a lack of effective action. It is important for all relevant agencies to work together in order to effectively address this issue (Oram et al., 2012).

In addition, corruption is a major problem at all levels of society and it can have a major impact on efforts to address human trafficking (Teya & Kurebwa, 2019). Zhang (2007) emphasised that corrupt officials may be involved in the trafficking industry themselves, or they may accept bribes in exchange for ignoring cases of trafficking. This corruption can make it very difficult to prosecute cases of trafficking and to provide justice to victims. Corruption can impact efforts to address human trafficking is through the misappropriation of funds (Okech, 2018). Lastly, corruption can have several negative impacts on efforts to address human trafficking in Zimbabwe. These impacts include the misappropriation of funds, the involvement of corrupt officials in the trafficking industry, and a lack of trust from victims (Munamati, 2022).

Okech et al (2018) argues that the lack of a comprehensive legal framework leads to confusion and misunderstanding about the nature of human trafficking. While Zimbabwe does have some laws in place to address human trafficking, these laws are often not comprehensive or well-enforced (Mugari & Obioha, 2021). This means that there are loopholes that traffickers can exploit, and victims may not be able to get the protection they need (UNODC, 2014). In Zimbabwe, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act does not define human trafficking in a comprehensive way. It does not include all the elements that are necessary to effectively address the issue, such as the concept of consent and the recognition of psychological coercion (Mwamba, 2016). This lack of a comprehensive legal framework makes it difficult to investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking, and it leaves victims unprotected.

Availability of many porous borders has been touted as a major challenge defeating anti human trafficking efforts. Tighter control of national boundaries is a persistent challenge that traffickers can exploit (Mugari & Obioha, 2021). Zimbabwe faces significant obstacles in controlling and monitoring its long international borders, undermining anti-trafficking policies (Mginindo et al., 2025). The country shares over 2,000 km of borders with neighbouring South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. Managing such lengthy borderlines is inherently difficult and costly. Large stretches of the borders traverse rugged, remote bushland, thick forest or mountainous areas that make cross-border smuggling of victims highly feasible (UNODC, 2012).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was rooted in three theories namely, Push-Pull Theory, Structural Violence Theory and Supply and Demand Theory. The theories are explained below.

2.2.1 Push-Pull Theory

The Push-Pull Theory of migration, originally formulated by Everett Lee in the 1950s to explain rural-to-urban population shifts, has since been extensively adapted to analyse international migration and human trafficking (Del Carpio & Yang, 2020). The theory posits that human movement is driven by a combination of negative push factors in the country of origin such as pervasive poverty, conflict or systemic violence and positive pull factors in destination countries, including job opportunities, safety and the prospect of an improved standard of living. When applied to human trafficking, this theory illustrates how the desperation to escape adverse domestic conditions intersects with the deceptive allure of foreign opportunities which creates highly vulnerable population that traffickers can easily exploit.

In this study, the push-pull dynamics vividly explain the heightened vulnerability of its citizens to both labour and sexual exploitation. Severe and prolonged economic crises function as aggressive push factors, driving individuals out of the country due to political instability, violence and a critical lack of social services (Chikanda, 2005). With staggering unemployment rates and an estimated 85% of the population living in poverty in Zimbabwe, the sheer desperation for economic survival forces individuals to accept immense risks, making them highly susceptible to traffickers offering fraudulent employment (Campbell, 2014). Simultaneously, these vulnerable populations are pulled toward neighbouring economic hubs, such as South Africa, by the promise of legitimate work, established family networks, and the perception of a better life.

Consequently, this theory argues that for anti-trafficking laws to be genuinely efficacious, policymakers cannot rely solely on border control or criminal prosecution. Instead, they must design holistic strategies that actively rebuild domestic economic infrastructure and social safety nets, thereby neutralizing the underlying push factors that force citizens into the hands of traffickers in the first place. The theory helped to understand the motivations behind human trafficking and develop strategies to curb the crime.

2.2.2 Supply and Demand Theory

In addition to the push-pull theory, the Supply and Demand Theory, originally developed by Gary Becker in the 1970s and later applied to human trafficking by scholars like Picarelli (2015), provided a critical economic lens for evaluating the efficacy of anti-trafficking laws and policies.

The theory posits that human trafficking is not merely a criminal enterprise but a market-driven phenomenon resulting from a profound mismatch between labour supply and demand. On the supply side, a surplus of vulnerable individuals often driven by push factors such as poverty, conflict, or systemic lack of opportunity creates a pool of people willing to undertake high-risk migrations (Dottridge, 2008). On the demand side, various economic sectors like agriculture, construction and domestic work generate a pull for cheap, exploitable labour to maximise profit margins (Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005).

In this study, the theory was critical as it helped to illuminate why legislative efforts often struggle to gain traction. The relevance of this theory to the study was further underscored by the role of intermediaries the recruiters and smugglers who bridge the gap between supply and demand. Furthermore, the theory's versatility allowed it to be applied beyond labour to sex trafficking, emphasising that all forms of exploitation are fueled by a demand that policies must actively suppress (Brunovskis, 2007). Thus, for laws to be truly effective, they must shift from being purely reactive to being holistically preventive, addressing the root causes of supply while aggressively dismantling the economic benefits that drive demand.

2.2.3 Structural Violence Theory

Structural violence takes place when institutions, allocation of resources and hierarchies of power systematically block individuals and groups from achieving their potential, and it often presents as entrenched poverty, discrimination, lack of education and political marginalisation (Farmer et al., 2019). However, it is often invisible and normalised, unlike direct violence, and operates through everyday social organisation rather than identifiable perpetrators (Hopper, 2022). It is the theory that it is these structural arrangements that create predictable and disproportionate vulnerability among already disadvantaged populations. That is, harm is built into the fabric of society rather than being the result of individual criminal intent .

The theory explains why certain groups, especially women, girls and the economically marginalised, are persistently vulnerable to exploitation when it is applied to human trafficking. Cameron and Newman (2022) argue that trafficking is fundamentally enabled by structural conditions such as gender inequality, restricted access to education, and inadequate legal protection, which function as forms of institutionalised violence. As Kiss et al. (2015) demonstrate, entrenched cultural norms can normalise the subjugation of women, permitting exploitation to continue under the radar of law enforcement. Lee (2019) provides another

example of how structural violence operates at multiple levels simultaneously: macro-level economic inequalities and restrictive migration policies funnel vulnerable populations towards exploitative labour markets; meso-level weak institutions and corruption lower traffickers' risks; and micro-level patriarchal structures and domestic violence strip individuals of protective resources. As Gacinya (2022) adds, these dimensions are self-perpetuating because poverty limits education, which restricts economic opportunity, which in turn drives risky migration into trafficking situations.

In the Zimbabwean context, the theory illuminates how the prolonged economic crisis, high unemployment, gendered power imbalances and weakened rule of law actively produce conditions conducive to trafficking rather than just correlating with it. Chiweshe (2021) observes that structural adjustment and economic decline have eroded social safety nets leaving women and children disproportionately vulnerable as they seek survival strategies outside state protection. Mugari and Obioha (2021) affirm that existing legislative frameworks become ineffective when structural violence renders institutions underfunded, corrupt, and incapable of enforcement. This theory was central to the current study in guiding the identification of systemic factors contributing to trafficking in Mashonaland Central, contextualising the evaluation of laws and policies within their structural setting and informing the development of strategies to deal with the problem.

2.3 Empirical Literature

This section focuses on the existing empirical studies on human trafficking and law enforcement. The studies are presented following the order of the research objectives.

Objective 1: Factors Promoting Human Trafficking

Motseki and Mofokeng (2022) analysed the causes and contributing factors to human trafficking using a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews with law enforcement and NGO officials in South Africa. The study found that while trafficking is a complex global phenomenon, its primary drivers in the Southern African region are socio-economic, specifically rooted in high levels of poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and the search for better economic opportunities, which are then exploited by syndicates. The researchers recommended that governments must move beyond legal enforcement to address the systemic "push factors"

by implementing robust socio-economic empowerment programs and intensive public awareness campaigns to reduce the vulnerability of marginalized populations.

Complementing the study above, Mginindo, Obioha and Mugari (2025) explored the scourge and emerging trends of human trafficking with a focus on identifying forms and contributory factors through a quantitative research design and closed-ended questionnaires in South Africa. Their findings revealed that the demand for organ harvesting has emerged as a significant driver alongside sexual exploitation and forced labour, exacerbated by the victims' desperate pursuit of civil liberties and economic freedom. The study recommended that anti-trafficking strategies must be updated to account for these emerging trends, particularly the increasing prevalence of organ-related trafficking, through enhanced surveillance and specialized investigative techniques.

Macaveiu, Wong, and Guarcello (2024) performed a qualitative systematic review of 238 empirical studies (2010–2022) using thematic coding and stakeholder consultations. Findings from the review show that the most common factors associated with promoting vulnerability to human trafficking are socio-economic conditions, particularly poverty, reduced income and family instability. These are often studied in relation to migration pathways. The study found that criminality and corruption in the countries of origin and limited gender equality and societal biases against women increased vulnerability, particularly for sexual exploitation. Labour exploitation was also linked to precarious living conditions, violence and lack of protective measures. Findings show that these factors occur in both origin and destination countries, with destination contexts being more shaped by social and economic conditions that shape forced labour and sexual exploitation.

Objective 2: Efficacy of Laws, Policies and Initiatives to deal with human trafficking

Research by Vhumbunu (2020) assessed the efficacy of laws and policies to combating human trafficking within the SADC region, including Zimbabwe, through a comprehensive literature and documentary review. The study found that while most SADC member states have domesticated the Palermo Protocol and implemented the 10-Year SADC Strategic Plan of Action (2009–2019), the effectiveness of these laws is hampered by uneven implementation, slow economic growth, and the lack of specialized institutional capacity. Vhumbunu recommended the institutionalization of regional information-sharing platforms and the harmonization of legal

frameworks across borders to ensure that traffickers cannot exploit legal loopholes between neighbouring states.

In addition to the study above, Mabvurira, Zengeni, and Chigevenga (2022) examined the processes and policies surrounding child trafficking in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on legislation and policy gaps through a qualitative approach involving 22 participants in border towns. Their findings indicated that the Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25] remains inadequate because it is often conflated with child smuggling, leading to a failure in protecting victims who are instead treated as illegal migrants. The study recommended a critical amendment of the current legislation to clearly distinguish between trafficking and smuggling, alongside the development of a specific national policy for the protection of children in transit.

Similarly, Ogunniyi and Idowu (2022) assessed the implementation of international and regional normative standards in West Africa using a comparative analysis of domestic legal frameworks. Although the study focused on Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, its findings provide a critical comparative lens for Zimbabwe, showing that the mere ratification of the Palermo Protocol does not translate to effectiveness due to a "domestication gap" where local laws lack the necessary procedural depth for victim support. The authors recommended that states move beyond "symbolic compliance" and invest in the financial and human resources required to operationalize the mandates of international treaties at the local level.

Teya and Kurebwa (2019) evaluated The Effectiveness of State and Non-State Actors in Combating Human Trafficking and Ensuring Safe Migration Concerns of Zimbabwean Women. The findings of the study revealed that human trafficking in Zimbabwe thrives in vulnerable environments brought on by several reasons, including poverty, a lack of educational opportunities, unfavourable economic conditions, gender and age. In addition, the study found inadequate adherence to the Palermo Protocols, a lack of close interaction between the government and non-governmental organizations, and an increase in human trafficking were also revealed. The study concluded that, Although Zimbabwe has several laws that address human trafficking, putting these laws into practice is still difficult. Human trafficking instances from Zimbabwe to neighbouring nations, especially South Africa, have increased as a result.

Objective 3: To Explore major challenges impeding effectiveness of policies

Mugari and Obioha (2021) aimed to evaluate the challenges encountered by criminal justice players in responding to human trafficking through a literature and documentary survey focused on investigative and prosecutorial hurdles. Their research identified that the complexity of human trafficking cases, coupled with a lack of specialized training for police and prosecutors, leads to low conviction rates and the frequent re-traumatisation of victims during the legal process. The study recommended the establishment of specialised, multi-disciplinary task forces that include social workers, specialised investigators and dedicated prosecutors to manage the unique evidentiary requirements of trafficking cases.

Complementing the study above, qualitative research by Bello and Olutola (2022) evaluated the efficacy of anti-trafficking legislation in South Africa and describing the law as a toothless bulldog. The study found that the primary challenges impeding policy effectiveness are a lack of political will, deep-rooted corruption within the criminal justice system, and a narrow focus on criminalization that ignores the underlying humanitarian needs of victims. They recommended that for policies to be effective, they must be integrated into a broader holistic framework that prioritizes victim rehabilitation and addresses the systemic corruption that allows trafficking syndicates to operate with impunity.

More so, Khan, Kamaluddin and Rajamanickam (2023) conducted a scoping review to synthesize existing research on the prevalence, causes and impacts of human trafficking across various Asian countries. The findings of the study revealed that trafficking remains highly pervasive in Asia, driven primarily by systemic push factors such as extreme poverty, lack of educational opportunities and political instability (Khan et al., 2023). The impacts identified are profound, ranging from severe physical and psychological trauma for victims to the degradation of socio-economic structures in their home communities. Consequently, the authors recommend that Asian nations move beyond isolated domestic policies to prioritize regional cooperation, strengthen legal enforcement against traffickers and implement targeted socio-economic interventions to mitigate the root causes of vulnerability.

Objective 4: To Recommend Strategies to Combat Human Trafficking

Knight and Kagotho (2023) conducted a scoping review of faith-based responses to human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa to identify alternative intervention strategies. Through a meticulous review of literature on the role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), the study found that FBOs possess unique grassroots reach and moral authority that can be leveraged for

prevention and victim reintegration, yet they are often excluded from formal government strategies. The authors recommended that national anti-trafficking plans in countries like Zimbabwe should formally partner with faith communities to provide safe houses and spiritual support, which are critical for the long-term recovery of survivors.

Van der Watt (2018) explored the nature and future of human trafficking in the Southern African context using a complex-systems perspective. The findings suggested that trafficking is an adaptive system that evolves in response to traditional policing therefore, static legal responses are destined to fail. The researcher recommended a whole-of-society approach that involves real-time data monitoring, community-led surveillance, and the use of technology to disrupt the financial flows of traffickers, moving the strategy from reactive policing to proactive disruption.

In their cross-national study Blanton, Blanton and Peksen (2020) examined how a state's administrative and coercive capacity influences the prevalence of human trafficking. Analysing a global sample of countries from 2000 to 2011, the study found that higher state capacity specifically strong bureaucratic quality, extractive capabilities, and the rule of law acts as a significant deterrent against trafficking. The findings suggest that states with robust institutional infrastructure are better equipped to monitor borders, enforce regulations, and prosecute offenders, thereby increasing the costs for traffickers. The study recommended that international policy shifts focus away from narrow, issue-specific trafficking laws and instead prioritise long-term institutional building and the strengthening of core government functionality to effectively dismantle trafficking networks.

2.4 Research gap

While the reviewed literature provides a comprehensive overview of the drivers, legal frameworks and challenges of human trafficking in the SADC region, several critical gaps remain that this study sought to address. These gaps are categorized into geographical-contextual, temporal-legislative and methodological dimensions. Existing empirical literature in Zimbabwe, notably Mabvurira et al. (2022), has focused predominantly on child trafficking within border towns, highlighting the conflation of trafficking with smuggling. While their work is vital, it leaves a significant void regarding inland provinces like Mashonaland Central. This province possesses unique socio-economic dynamics, including a high concentration of informal artisanal gold mining and large-scale commercial agriculture. On the same note, research by Motseki and Mofokeng (2022) highlighted general push factors such as poverty, but there is a lack of

empirical evidence on how the resource curse and artisanal mining in Mashonaland Central specifically facilitate internal trafficking or recruitment for cross-border exploitation. This study fills this gap by shifting the lens from a purely border-centric analysis to a provincial-contextual analysis.

A significant portion of the literature evaluates the effectiveness of the Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25] of 2014 (Vhumbunu, 2020; Mabvurira et al., 2022). However, Zimbabwe has recently undergone a critical legislative shift, including the Labor Relations Amendment Act (2023) and the Criminal Laws Amendment Bill which were designed to address the very domestication gaps. There is currently no academic study that evaluates the efficacy of these specific 2023/2025 updates to the trafficking in persons laws. Much of the existing Southern African research (Mugari & Obioha, 2021) remains at a macro-level, looking at criminal justice players generally or using literature surveys. There is a dearth of localised case studies that combine the whole-of-society perspective advocated by Van der Watt (2018) with the specific administrative realities of a Zimbabwean province. Using Mashonaland Central as a case study, this research moves away from broad regional generalisations to provide local in-depth perspectives.

While research by Knight and Kagotho (2023) provides a scoping review of the continent, there is little evidence of how grassroots strategies are integrated within the formal legal frameworks. This study seeks to bridge this conceptual gap by investigating the extent to which law enforcement in Mashonaland Central collaborates with locals and community-led surveillance to disrupt the adaptive systems.

Overall, while existing literature identifies general socio-economic drivers of human trafficking in the SADC region, there is absence of empirical research evaluating the efficacy of Zimbabwe's recent efforts to curb human trafficking. While studies have extensively explored the scourge in other parts of Zimbabwe, no research has been done in Mashonaland Central Province. Furthermore, current studies focus heavily on border-town smuggling, leaving the internal trafficking dynamics and the performance of provincial-level task forces under-researched. This study addresses these gaps by providing a localised, contemporary assessment of the legal and policy frameworks in Zimbabwe.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesised previous research on efforts to combat human trafficking. The theoretical framework underpinning the study was clearly explained. In addition, the empirical literature provided baseline understanding of anti-trafficking laws and policies in Zimbabwe and globally. The research gap was drawn from the empirical studies. The subsequent chapter focuses on the research methodology that guided the study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to examine the effectiveness of current laws and policies are at fighting human trafficking in Zimbabwe. It describes the research philosophy, research approach, research design, study population and sampling procedures, data source and instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis techniques as well as reliability & validity. This chapter also explains the ethical considerations that were observed throughout the research process.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is set of beliefs about how information about a phenomenon should be collected, analysed and used (Saunders et al., 2019). The research philosophy employed in this research was pragmatism. Pragmatism is a problem-oriented philosophy that focuses less on how the data will behave and more on what combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can be combined during research to solve difficult types of research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Human Trafficking in Mashonaland Central is a multifaceted issue involving law enforcement, social vulnerability, institutional coordination and community awareness. Through a pragmatic paradigm, the study was able to encompass broad patterns alongside the nuanced views of participants who experienced or had direct experience with human trafficking. Pragmatism values for diverse forms of knowledge which made sure that the results were both actionable and situated in the reality of the province.

3.2 Research Approach

Research approach refers to the underlying logic by which research is conducted (Mertens, 2023). Abductive research was employed in this research. The process of abduction is characterized by first developing an interest in a specific practical puzzle-the inconsistency between the extensive anti-trafficking legislation and actual trafficking rates in Mashonaland Central. In as much as the under-researched area has necessitated the adoption of a practical relevant research approach such as abduction the logic is to be used to generate plausible explanation to the gap between the existence of an in-depth anti-trafficking legislation and the proliferation of the crime in

Mashonaland Central, continually feeding information generated during data collection with existing legal frameworks and knowledge.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is the strategy or plan which is used to connect your research question to your data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The convergent parallel mixed methods research design was employed for this study. This design involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, which are then analysed separately and combined during interpretation to build a more understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design was selected, as it allowed the researcher to simultaneously collect numerical patterns of individuals' perceptions of the legal framework's efficacy and instances of factors that drive trafficking while also generating nuanced understandings and the rationale behind how laws are performing, from those who play key roles in enacting the legal framework within one research study. Structured questionnaires generated numeric data from the study participants which allowed for breadth and comparisons across groups while the researcher generated rich, narrative data from semi-structured interviews and analysis of existing literature. This convergence facilitated the triangulation of findings, ameliorated the weaknesses inherent in a single method and provided a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of anti-trafficking interventions in the province.

3.4 Sampling Strategy

This section outlines the population, sampling techniques employed and the sample size for the study.

3.4.1 Target Population

A target population is defined as the total group or group of elements having a common attribute that is or could become the object of a research study (Saunders et al., 2019). In this case the research intended to achieve information from three sets of stakeholder groups who are inherently impacted by human trafficking operations in Mashonaland Central Province. These include the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) officers who are involved in counter-human trafficking efforts, border management, victim support units and investigations of cases of trafficking in persons. Representatives of various human rights organisations and non-

governmental organisations (NGOs) and members of the community in Mashonaland Central province constituted the target population for the study.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

The study employed a combination of purposive and quota sampling strategies to select participants for the qualitative and quantitative components respectively.

3.4.2.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method whereby participants were intentionally selected by researchers because of their knowledge, experience, or familiarity with the phenomenon being researched (Ghauri et al. 2020). For qualitative in-depth interview sessions, a heterogeneous purposive sampling strategy was applied to ensure maximum variation of the views and to encompass as many different types of participants as possible by selecting various key actors. Ten key informants including four (4) senior officers from the ZRP, three (3) programme officers or legal professionals from the non-profit organizations involved in human rights in the area, and three (3) community leaders from the high-risk districts were intentionally sampled. The sample size was informed by the data saturation principle where the research continued until no significant new thematic data appeared.

3.4.2.2 Quota Sampling

For quantitative research, the study employed stratified quota sampling, a non-probability technique intended to approximate a proportional sampling in known population sub-groups without having an adequate frame of sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Using the set criteria of significant stake groups in relation to the study, the researcher stipulated minimum counts (quotas) to collect data from all these stakeholder groups and, within each stratum, respondents were recruited on a convenience basis as opportunities arose during the data collection phase, in consideration of physical accessibility of the border communities and mining sites to collect quantitative data.

3.4.3 Sample Size/Constituency

The sample constituency for the quantitative component comprised 60 respondents drawn from four stakeholder categories: Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) officers, NGO and human rights organisation staff, community members, and local government officials as shown below.

Table 3.2: Sample Constituency

Stakeholder Category	Number Sampled	Percentage (%)
ZRP Officers	30	50.0%
NGO/Human Rights Staff	15	25.0%
Community Members	10	16.7%
Local Government Officials / Other	5	8.3%
Total	60	100%

The sample was intentionally chosen to be balanced across all the major stakeholder groups. The study included 30 ZRP Officers (50.0%) because law enforcement personnel are the primary implementers of anti-trafficking laws and policies at the provincial level and have first-hand knowledge of reported incidents, challenges in investigations and policing responses. This was offset to some extent by the large number of NGO/Human Rights Staff (25.0%) present, who brought expertise in victim support, advocacy and community-based interventions, providing a useful balance of enforcement and protection orientations. The increase in representation of Community Members (16.7%) ensured the adequate capture of grassroots perspectives and lived experiences as communities are often the first point of contact with trafficking dynamics and their insights are critical for the understanding of local vulnerabilities. The research data was also diversified by including Local Government Officials and other respondents (8.3%).

3.5 Data Sources

The study drew on both primary and secondary data to achieve triangulation and to ground the findings in a robust evidence base.

3.5.1 Primary Data

Primary data was collected by the researcher himself, from the original source for the purpose of this research (Ajayi, 2017). The research instruments used for collection of the primary data included the structured questionnaire which was distributed to the quota sample, and the semi-structured interview guide which was used for data collection with the purposively sampled key

informants. These primary data were used for capturing directly from people perceptions, experience, recommendations from those in interaction with the framework of anti-trafficking in the field.

3.5.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to that information which already exists and was previously collected for another purpose (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Several sources of secondary data were used, among others, Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25] and the 2023 Amendment; 2023-2028 National Plan of Action (NAPLAC); Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act; Reports from UNODC; US Department of State TIP Report; Journal articles, and Policy briefs of local human rights organisations. They were employed to assist in placing the primary findings in perspective' assessing the legislative framework and benchmarking the performance against an international perspective.

3.6 Research Instruments

To effectively fulfil the research objectives, three research instruments namely the Structured Questionnaire, In-depth interview guide and Document analysis were used.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The study used a self-administered mixed online questionnaire developed through Google Forms consisting of closed and open-ended questions, distributed to a sample of 60 respondents (Saunders et al., 2019). The instrument was structured into five parts, corresponding to the research objectives: Section A provided the demographic profiles of the participants; Section B was used to measure the baseline awareness of human trafficking dynamics and relevant anti-trafficking laws, policies and initiatives; Section C was used to assess perceptions of the socio-economic factors driving trafficking; Section D was used to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of Zimbabwe's anti-trafficking framework on a five-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree); while Section E looked at structural barriers to policy implementation.

Google Form was used to distribute the questionnaire, offering unique efficiencies both methodologically and logistically. The closed-ended items were administered in a fixed, standardised order to minimise instrumentation error and to permit rigorous statistical comparisons across cohorts, whereas the open-ended items generated unconstrained qualitative

insights that provided much-needed contextual depth. Operationally, the web-based format avoided regional geographical barriers and allowed for rapid data aggregation in a short time frame. This digital interface created a data pipeline for clean data, automatically collating closed-ended data for smooth import into SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis, and consolidating text answers for qualitative thematic analysis. Most importantly, the remote self-administered format offered increased privacy, which given the sensitive nature of human trafficking reduced social desirability and interviewer biases to elicit more candid institutional and public critiques.

However, the instrument had the challenge of harvesting shallow data from closed items. In order to ensure empirical depth, the survey was methodologically combined with a separate qualitative in-depth interview guide. To proactively address potential threats to construct validity stemming from complex legal terminology or deficits in digital literacy among rural community members, a pre-test pilot study was undertaken which allowed for refinement and simplification of ambiguous terminology prior to implementation.

3.6.2 In-depth Interview Guide

An in-depth interview guide is an instrument comprising a carefully predetermined number of specific, open-ended interview question and the discretion to probe additional relevant responses (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). In this study, an in-depth interview guide to collect qualitative information was developed, guided by the four research objectives and the question were designed to be such that detailed response regarding driving forces, legal and policy approaches, implementation problems and ways of remedying them.

The format of a detailed, indepth interview had several important advantages. This allowed the researcher to follow unexpected but relevant lines of enquiry as they arose and to explore complex issues in greater depth than would be possible with a standardised questionnaire. The interactive nature of the interviews allowed participants to share rich, contextualised information about their direct experiences and perceptions, and therefore to capture the subtleties of trafficking dynamics, operational constraints and institutional relationships that are often lost in purely quantitative instruments. The guide's combination of structure and openness also meant that core topics were covered in a consistent manner across all interviews, and yet each conversation was able to be tailored to the participant's individual vantage point.

Despite its strengths, the use of an in-depth interview guide did not come without its challenges. The flexibility inherent in the semi-structured approach resulted in variability of data collected, which required a careful thematic analysis to identify patterns while not losing the nuance of individual accounts. The interpersonal nature of the interview process created a risk of interviewer bias or social desirability bias where participants adjusted their response to what they believed the researcher wanted to hear. To counterbalance this, the researcher adopted an impartial, empathetic stance and explicitly reassured participants that all opinions were equally valued. Furthermore, the transcriptions of long interview recordings were coded and analysed thematically, which was time-consuming and resource-intensive. These challenges were addressed through systematic data management, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) rigorous six-phase thematic analysis framework.

3.6.3 Document Analysis

A document review was used to extract necessary data on the provisions and implementation of legislation and policies, corporate strategies, as well as reports published by various institutions. The checklist consisted of items for collecting details about definitions of terms used, the duties of institutions involved, data on investigations and prosecutions as recorded in the documents, issues identified and the intended policy goals. The documentation analysis aimed at the triangulation and verification of primary sources of evidence, to inform the historical dimension of the development of policy and support the dialogue with concrete factual documents.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected in a rigorous, sequential, and phased approach. The research first acquired ethical approval from the Bindura University of Science Education and then a formal approval from ZRP provincial headquarters and respective directors from the chosen NGOs. Having attained permission from these organizations, a pilot test was conducted involving eight respondents (two ZRP officers, two staff members of NGOs and four community members, excluding them from the final study) to test the questionnaire and interview guide. This phase allowed the researcher to gauge clarity, length, and relevance of the tool and resulted in some small modifications like simplification of the legal terminologies, including the re-ordering of questions to enable better flow.

Main data collection was spread over a month with the quantitative aspect the researcher handed out the questionnaires to accessible respondents under the respective quota to allow time for respondents to clarify as need be. The questionnaires were collected back after an average of 3-5 days from the time of distribution. Qualitative interviews were simultaneously conducted with key participants. All efforts were made to arrange the interviews at times and locations which were convenient to both the researcher and the respondent, in locations which provided utmost privacy. Interviews took 35 to 55 minutes and were audio recorded following attainment of participant's consent to ensure precision of transcriptions.

Notes were taken by the researcher throughout the field exercise, to capture some details that could be missed by the recorder including nonverbal behaviours. Key documents relevant to the study were systematically collected throughout the entire data collection period. The research was careful in collecting data in ways that maintained confidentiality, therefore, all digital data was saved on a password encrypted Laptop and all hard copies of the data were stored in a locked office cabinet.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the research findings was central throughout the study. Different strategies were applied for the quantitative and qualitative strands. For the quantitative component, reliability, the consistency and stability of a measurement instrument (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019) was assessed by computing Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the multi-item Likert scales using SPSS. An alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered indicative of satisfactory internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Validity, the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019), was addressed through content validity. Content validity was established by grounding the questionnaire in a thorough review of anti-trafficking literature, consulting the supervisor, and refining the instrument through a pilot study that eliminated ambiguous items and ensured respondent comprehension.

Within the qualitative strand, traditional notions were reframed as trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of interview, document, and survey data, alongside member checking with participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Reliability was ensured by keeping a comprehensive audit trail of raw data, coding decisions, and evolving interpretations. Confirmability was safeguarded through

reflexive journaling and peer debriefing with the supervisor to minimise researcher bias. Transferability was addressed by providing thick, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and processes, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings.

3.9 Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed independently and then integrated at the interpretation stage to answer the research questions comprehensively.

3.9.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) were used in the analysis to summarise the perceptions and experiences of respondents. The data were summarised in tables, pie charts and bar graphs for ease of visual interpretation. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for Likert scale items measuring effectiveness and severity of challenges to determine central tendencies and the spread of responses, with a mean score of 3.0 serving as the midpoint for interpretation. Cronbach's Alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of the multi-item scales. A cut off of 0.70 was considered acceptable.

3.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from both the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis in six phases as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis started with familiarisation where all the recorded interviews were transcribed, read and re-read. This was followed by Generating initial codes in which all the data were coded systematically. Codes included explicit mention and implicit reference to any part of the data that related to the questions in this study. The researcher then reviewed themes against the dataset and subsequently defined and named the themes. The process concluded with production of the report where use of verbatim, anonymised, extracts were employed to support each theme. Findings were woven together to formulate a story relating to the research question. Quantitative results were then triangulated by the qualitative themes which enriched the findings of the study. The qualitative data corroborated

the quantitative analysis and the two were integrated during the interpretation phase to obtain a complete insight into the findings of the research.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics encompass the standards of conduct that protect the rights, dignity and welfare of participants and other stakeholders affected by the study (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the sensitive nature of human trafficking research, ethical protocols were thoroughly observed.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

Prior to participation, an information sheet outlining the study rationale, the participant role, the procedure, associated risks and benefits to participant, confidentiality protocols of the study, was given to each potential participant and written informed consent obtained from each of them. To cater for community participants with literacy problems, the information was read in Shona. Each participant was reassured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

3.10.2 Respect for Participants

Participants were treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity to their culture. The researcher was non-judgmental and was observant and careful, especially when speaking with community members whose lives may have been directly or indirectly impacted by trafficking.

3.10.3 Privacy and Confidentiality

Questionnaires were anonymised, interview transcripts were pseudonymised. Personal data was not stored in any format. Data was stored electronically in encrypted files and in a locked cabinet controlled by the researcher. Care was taken in any so as not to give any information which would lead to the identification of a participant.

3.10.4 Beneficence and Non-Maleficence

The study was designed to maximise benefits by generating knowledge to inform policy while minimising potential harm to the participants. Questions were carefully phrased to avoid causing distress. No participant was placed at physical, psychological or social risk.

3.10.5 Integrity and Transparency

The research was conducted honestly, and findings were presented truthfully. All external sources were properly cited in the recommended style. No data were fabricated or manipulated, and the research process and any constraints were transparently explained.

3.10.6 Debriefing

All participants were debriefed following each session regarding the purpose of the research and were given an opportunity to ask any questions. Brief findings were subsequently distributed to the host institutions and community leaders as a courtesy and means of informing them about the general direction of the study.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology that guided the study. The philosophical underpinnings of the study were pragmatic and an abductive logical approach guided the methodology. A convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed in this study. The primary methods of data collection namely the structure questionnaire and a semi-structured interviewer guide were explained in this chapter. In addition, statistical analysis method that include descriptive statistic for quantitative analysis and thematic analysis for qualitative data were described. The chapter also provide a rigorous explanation of reliability and validity as well as the ethical procedures observed in the study. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of research findings.

CHAPTER IV

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of primary data collected through questionnaires and indepth interviews with officers of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), officials of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community members and legal professionals operating in Mashonaland Central Province. Quantitative data are presented using descriptive statistics (percentages, means and standard deviations). Qualitative data are presented as verbatim quotes. The analysis is structured around the four research objectives that guide the study.

4.1 Response rate

Structured questionnaires were administered to a total of 60 targeted respondents who were drawn from the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community members and local government officials working in Mashonaland Central Province.

Table 4.3: Questionnaire Response Rate

Instrument	Distributed	Returned	Response Rate (%)
Questionnaire	60	55	91.7%

Out of 60 questionnaires distributed, 55 were filled and returned. This gives a response rate of 91.7%. This high response rate is considered highly satisfactory in social science research and significantly reduces non-response bias, thereby improving the representativeness and generalisability of the quantitative findings (Hair et al., 2019). The online nature of the instrument further allowed respondents to complete the questionnaires at their convenience, thereby reducing the likelihood of incomplete or rushed responses (Saunders et al., 2019).

Table 4.4: Interview Response Rate

Stakeholder Category	Planned	Conducted	Response Rate (%)
ZRP Officers	4	4	100%
NGO/Human Rights Staff	3	3	100%
Community Leaders	3	2	66.7%
Total	10	9	90%

In-depth interviews were planned with 10 purposively selected key informants, including senior ZRP officers, programme officers from human rights organisations and community leaders from high-risk districts within the Mashonaland Central Province. Of the 10 participants targeted, 9 consented and participated in the interviews, representing a response rate of 90%. One participant declined due to work commitments. The high response rate indicated the readiness of key stakeholders to participate in the research and helped to enrich the qualitative data generated. This robust participation enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.2 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

4.2.1 Gender distribution



Figure 4.2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

The sample was slightly gender balanced and inclusive with 65.5% male respondents and 34.5% female respondents. Although the sample was male dominated, an important strength was that more than a third of the respondents are females and, thus, allows for a meaningful inclusion of women's views on human trafficking. This level of female engagement was important for a study conducted in settings where professional stakeholder positions can be a male-dominated area. Including both genders enriched the data and allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of trafficking awareness across different social backgrounds.

4.2.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

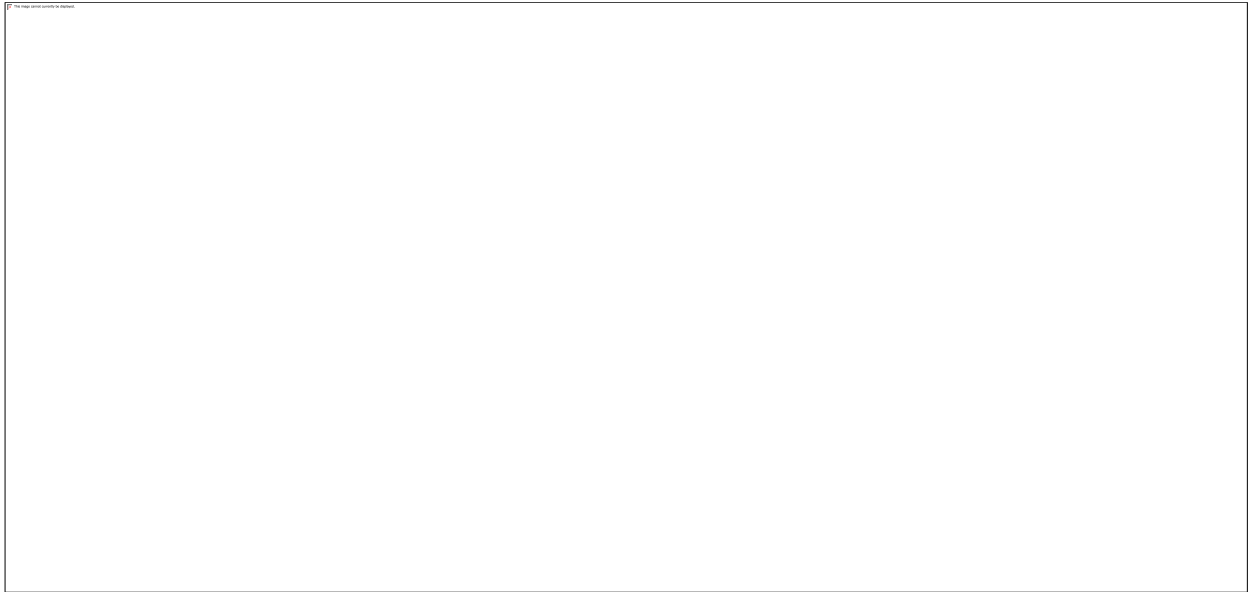


Figure 4.3: Age Distribution of Respondent

The age distribution of participants was characterised by experienced mid aged participants. The dominant group were respondents aged 36–45 years (49.1%), and second were those aged 46–55 years (34.5%). The age group 26–35 years was represented by 9.1% of respondents, while the remaining 7.3% were 18–25 years and 56 years and above combined. The inclusion of respondents from all five age groups, including the elderly participants guaranteed that the study consisted of a wide range of views, adding depth to the overall results, without skewing the data towards any particular age group.

4.2.3 Stakeholder Category

The stakeholder composition of the respondents was a well targeted distribution for the study of human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province. The majority of ZRP Officer representation (58.2%) ensured the study benefits from direct law enforcement perspectives including firsthand knowledge of reported incidents, investigation challenges, and policing responses. This was complemented by the substantial presence of NGO/Human Rights Staff (25.5%) that provided expertise in victim support, advocacy and community-based interventions, thus creating a valuable balance between enforcement and protection orientated viewpoints. The input from Community Members (9.1%) brought in real grassroots perspectives, and the Local Government Officials and “Other” respondents (7.2%) added more diversity to addressing the research questions.

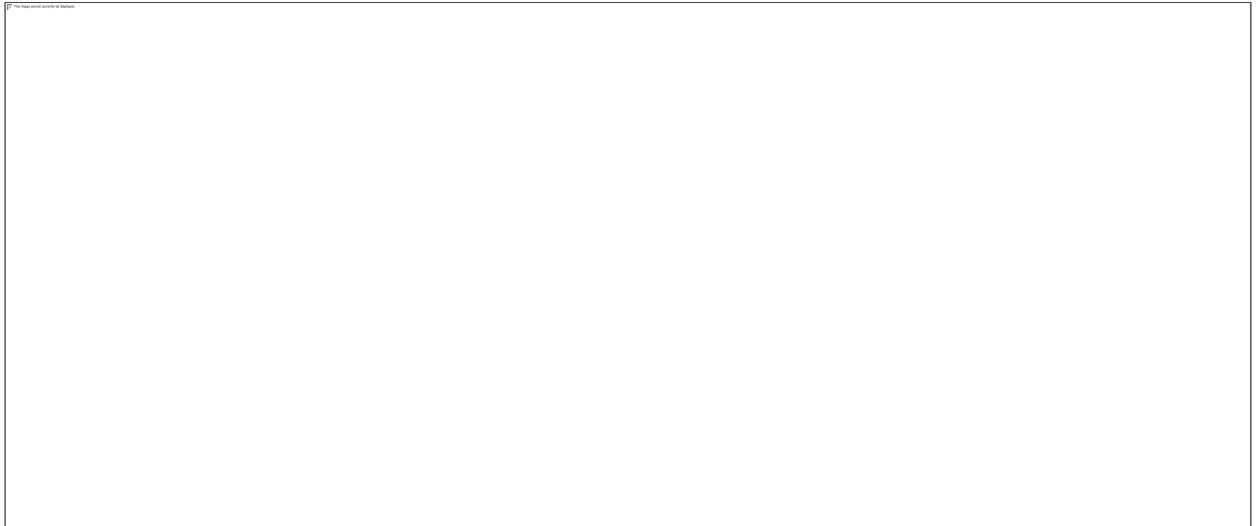


Figure 4.4: Stakeholder Category

4.2.4 Experience in current role / capacity

The majority of respondents (76.4%) indicated having over 10 years of experience in their current role or capacity. A much smaller proportion (10.9%) indicated 7-10 years of experience. The remaining 12.7% of respondents were spread across the other three experience brackets (Less than 1 year, 4-6 years, and 1-3 years, respectively). This finding indicates that most of the sample was made up of experienced individuals. This concentration was important as the respondents had deeper, longer-term familiarity with local patterns of human trafficking. The overall distribution suggests that the findings largely reflect the views of experienced personnel.

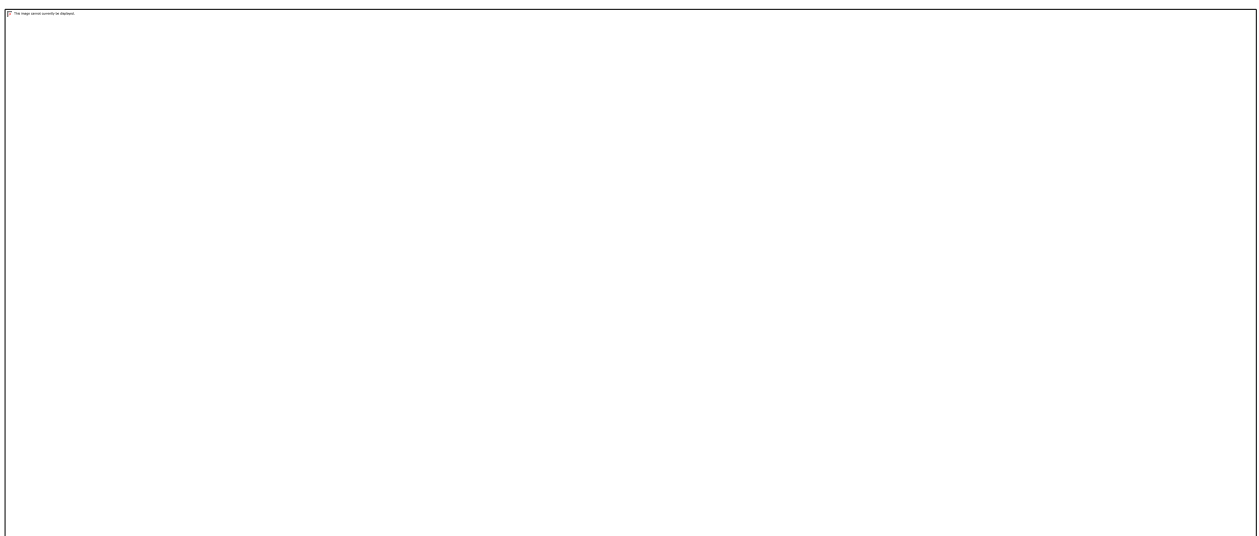


Figure 4.5: Experience in current role / capacity

4.3 Research findings and Discussion

4.3.1 Awareness of Human Trafficking and Anti- Trafficking Laws and policies in Zimbabwe.

Respondents were asked if they had ever seen or heard about a human trafficking incident in their local area. An overwhelming majority (90.9%) of respondents inclined to indicate they had heard of the phenomenon. A high proportion of ‘yes’ responses indicate that trafficking is perceived as a widespread problem in the region or that awareness campaigns have been successful in making incidents visible to local communities.

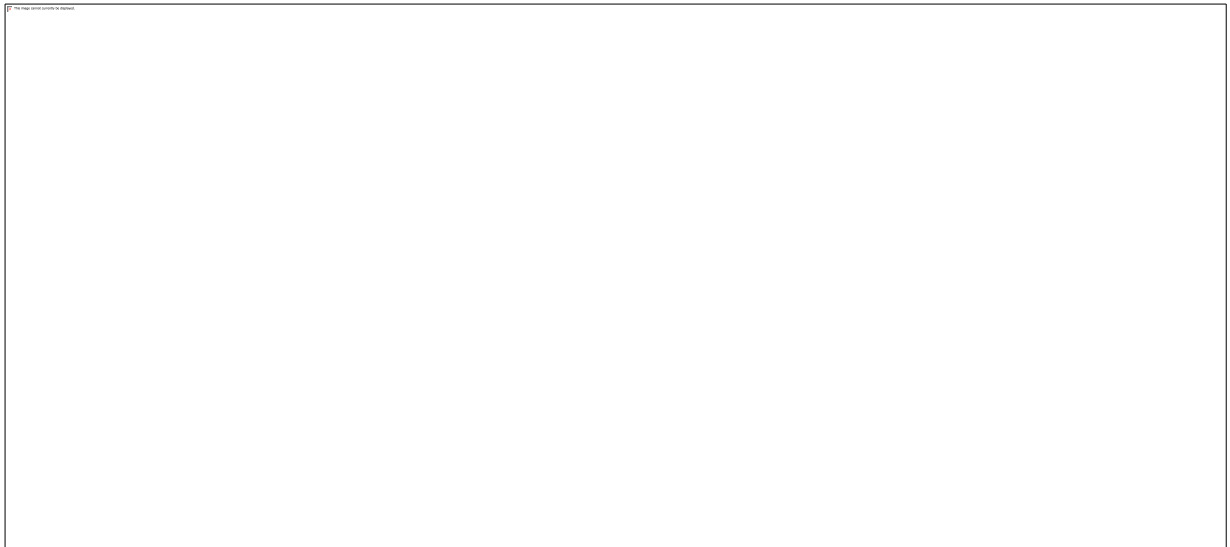


Figure 4.6: Awareness of Human Trafficking and Anti- Trafficking Laws and policies in Zimbabwe.

Figure 4.7: Awareness of forms of prevalent human trafficking forms

The respondents were asked about their knowledge of human trafficking and laws and policies in place to fight it in Zimbabwe and the findings are presented in the Figures above. The most commonly recognized type of trafficking was sex trafficking (52.7%) of respondents while 38.2% of the respondents pointed out forced labour in mining and child labour for exploitation were prevalent forms of trafficking in humans in Mashonaland Central Province. Forced in agriculture ranked forth as indicated by 30.9% of the respondents while domestic servitude came tightly close in fifth position as indicated by 29.1% of the respondents. Awareness of organ harvesting was the lowest (14.5%) among the different forms of human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province. The relatively low percentages for agricultural forced labour, domestic servitude and organ harvesting may reflect information gaps or lower perceived prevalence of these forms in Mashonaland Central Province.

Through the interviews, all nine interviewees agreed that awareness is incomplete, though with different intensity in their assessments. Participant #3, a ZRP officer: *"Most of our officers know there is a Trafficking in Persons Act because we have a copy at the station, but deep*

understanding is very limited.” Participant #7, a community leader added: *“In my village, people know about smuggling goods but not trafficking of people. They don’t see it as a crime.”*

The existence of a major awareness deficit among stakeholders has immediate practical implications. It means that victims may not be identified at key moments, that reports may be misclassified, and that prevention at the community level remains weak. This finding is supported by Mawere (2019) who stated that lack of awareness is a major contributing factor to trafficking vulnerability in Zimbabwe. Mujinga (2022) found that many victims did not realise they were being exploited until long after it had happened. Theoretical consistency with the Structural Violence Theory also suggests weak awareness as an information asymmetry systematically built into institutional and community structures, leaving potential victims without the knowledge to protect themselves.

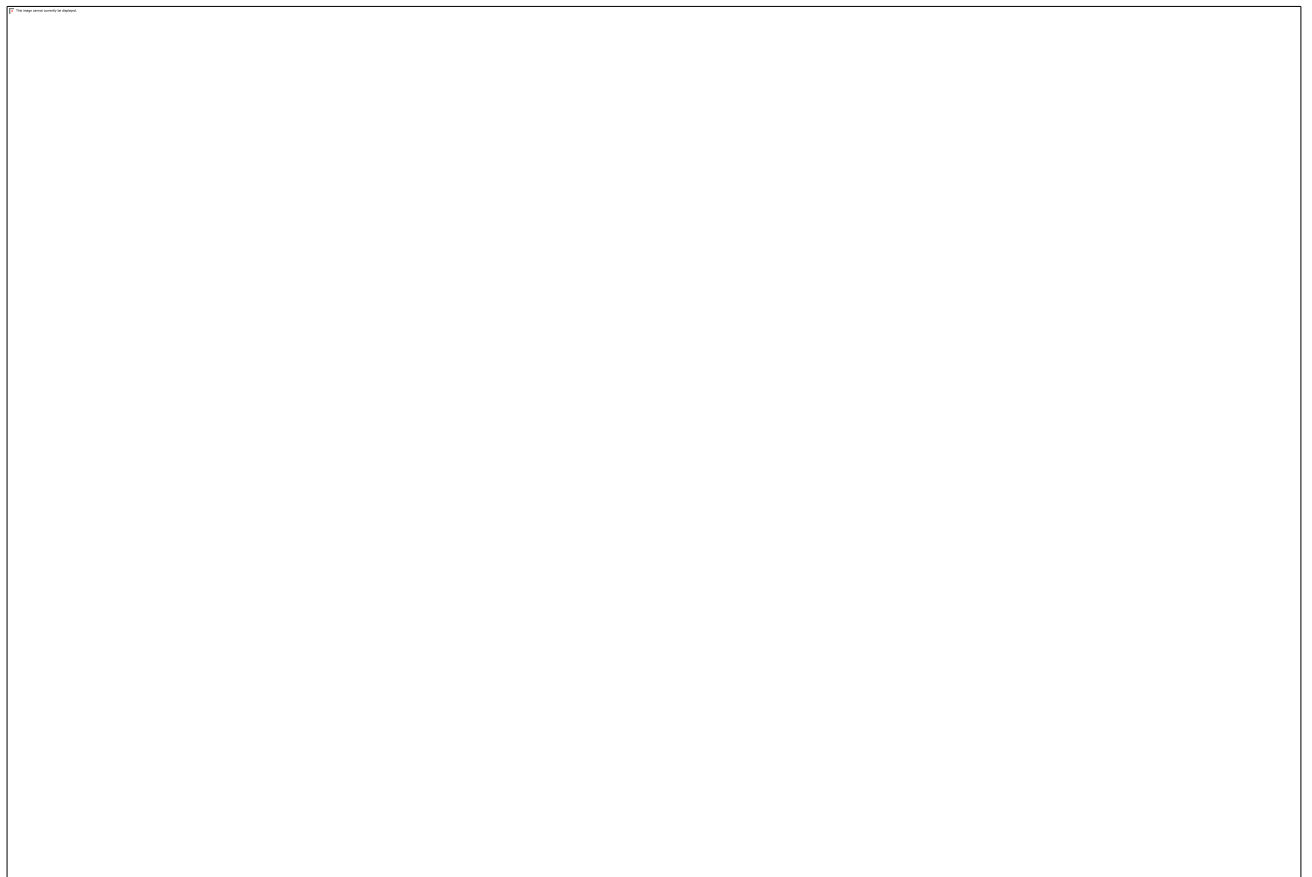


Figure 4.8: Familiarity with existing Laws, policies and initiatives to curb human trafficking.

The findings indicate that there is a wide variation in the level of awareness of the anti-trafficking laws and policies in Zimbabwe. The most known law is the Trafficking in Persons Act (Chapter 9:25) with 81.8% of people knowing it, thus the main law people refer to when dealing with this

crime. Another layer of legislation sits in the middle: the Labour Relations Amendment Act and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act are each recognised by 58.2% of respondents, which suggests many people also associate trafficking with labour issues and general crimes, while the Constitution’s prohibition on slavery is known by a slim majority of 54.5%. But the biggest surprise is the very low awareness of National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) 2023-2028 at 16.4%. This difference indicates that the people are very familiar with the written laws that exist, but very few people know the real strategy of the government in implementing these laws and policy initiatives.

4.3.2 Objective 1: Factors Promoting Human Trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe.

4.4.2.1 Poverty and unemployment



Figure 4.9: Poverty and unemployment

There was unanimous consensus (100%) that poverty and unemployment underpin trafficking vulnerability and hence economic deprivation was established as the primary enabling condition for victimisation in Mashonaland Central Province. This finding agrees with Motseki and Mofokeng (2022), Macaveiu et al. (2024) and Teya and Kurebwa (2019), who found that socio-economic hardship is the main push factor that keeps trafficking going in Southern Africa, with unemployment creating a ready pool of recruits for traffickers to exploit. The Push-Pull Theory theoretically underpins this observation, suggesting that the extreme economic desperation forces people to take high-risk migration offers, thus creating a vulnerable supply pool that

traffickers systematically exploit through fraudulent employment promises. The consensus across all respondent categories was universal in that anti-trafficking interventions that do not address economic redress risk being perceived by local stakeholders as disconnected from lived realities and fundamentally incomplete, thus necessitating the integration of socio-economic empowerment programmes within the national anti-trafficking framework.

4.4.2.2 Porous borders



Figure 4.10: Porous borders

Physical and regulatory deficiencies were cited as the main operational enablers of transnational trafficking. For example, 94.5% of survey respondents agreed (almost unanimously) that porous borders with Mozambique enabled the movement of victims. This finding is in line with Mudziwapasi (2014) who concluded that Zimbabwe's rugged and lengthy borderlines make cross-border smuggling very feasible and hence nullify national enforcement efforts. Theoretically, this is supported by the Push-Pull Theory which suggests porous boundaries to be the main conduit through which strong economic push factors drive vulnerable populations to perceived opportunities in regional hubs, perpetuating the trafficking-migration nexus. The overwhelming consensus therefore pointed to an unambiguous operational failure which required urgent bilateral security intervention along the Mozambican frontier.

4.4.2.3 Informal/Artisanal mining settlements

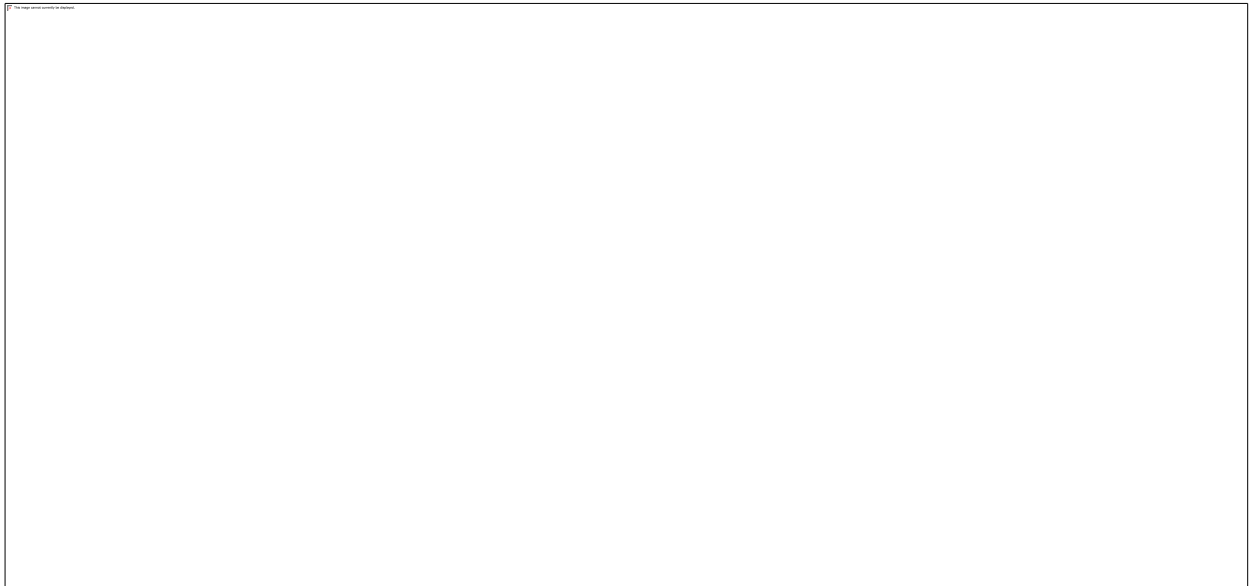


Figure 4.11: Informal mining settlements

Respondents were asked if informal mining settlements hid trafficking and exploitation. The findings showed a strong majority agreement, with 87.3% confirming the statement. This is consistent with the findings of Mugari and Obioha (2021) who concluded that the effectiveness of anti-trafficking laws in Zimbabwe is critically hampered by the informal economy where victims are often hidden in unregulated small-scale mines, effectively out of reach of routine labour inspections and traditional policing. This finding is also in line with the Structural Violence Theory, which posits that systemic institutional neglect, lack of resources and lack of state oversight actively create permissive environments where exploitation occurs undetected,

especially in peripheral extractive zones. The minimal dissent further reinforced the idea that these settlements are key points of vulnerability, highlighting the urgent need for targeted regulatory audits, community-based surveillance and specialised labour inspections to dismantle systemic conditions that facilitate such exploitation.

4.4.2.4 Corruption

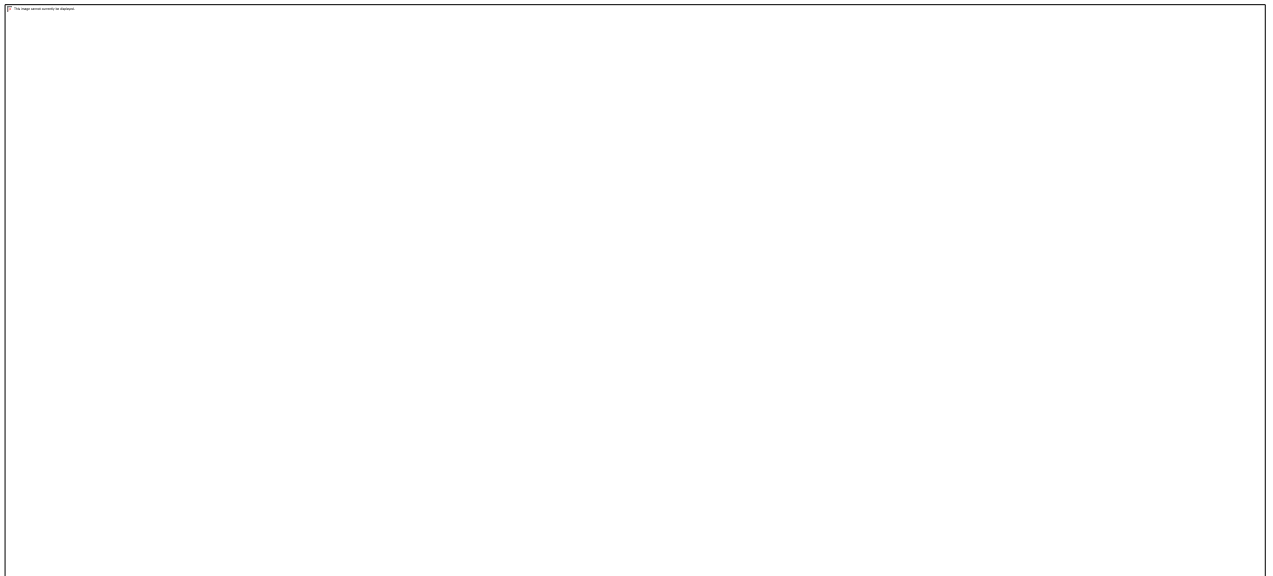


Figure 4.12: Corruption among officials

Institutional malfeasance was identified as the primary lubricant of trafficking operations by the near-unanimous agreement (92.7%) of the respondents that corruption among officials allowed traffickers to operate with impunity. In line with Bello and Olutola (2022), who found that deep-rooted corruption within the criminal justice system effectively neutralises legislative efforts, making anti-trafficking laws toothless. The Structural Violence Theory is also in support of this, claiming that systemic institutional failure and the normalisation of bribery generate an environment of impunity where traffickers are exposed to reduced legal risk. There was therefore a widespread consensus that there was an urgent need for strong anti-corruption reforms and independent accountability mechanisms.

4.4.2.5 All factors promoting Human Trafficking with ranking.

Poverty and unemployment emerged as the most common drivers (90.9%) of human trafficking in Mashonaland Central province as supported by an overwhelming majority of respondents (90.9%). This finding was reinforced by all nine interviewees who seemed to confirm that poverty drives many people to become victims of human trafficking.



Figure 4.13: Factor promoting human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province

One of the participants had this to say; *“Poverty is the biggest driver, no doubt,”* (Participant #1). Participant #5 added, *“When a trafficker offers to take a young person to the United States for a ‘job’, that family sees it as an opportunity, not a crime. Households that suffered hunger are four times more likely to have a member attempt irregular migration.* The finding is well justified theoretically by the Push-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966; Del Carpio & Yang, 2020), which argues that severe economic deprivation is a strong push factor. This is in line with the findings of Motseki and Mofokeng (2022) that socio-economic drivers, especially poverty and unemployment, are the main contributors to trafficking in Southern Africa. In the same vein, Mginindo, Obioha and Mugari (2025) found that victims’ desperation to attain economic

freedom aggravates trafficking vulnerability. This means that anti-trafficking strategies that do not tackle economic vulnerability at source will be not adequate.

4.4.2.5.1 Lack of Awareness and Education

Lack of Awareness and Education ranked second as a major factor promoting human trafficking in Zimbabwe as 78.2% of the respondents highlighted the factor. On the same note, all nine interviewees seemed to agree that educational deficits increase susceptibility of residents to trafficking activities. Participant #9 said, *“Educated people know their rights.” They can verify contracts and registration of a company. But in rural areas, fees are causing many children to drop out of school after 7th grade. These uneducated children cannot differentiate between a legitimate recruiter and a trafficker.*” This finding is firmly supported by the Structural Violence Theory which suggests that unequal access to education is a form of systemic violence that places individuals in a position of vulnerability to exploitation. This also confirms the finding of Mabvurira et al. (2022) that educational deprivation increases the vulnerability of children to trafficking. Also, lack of education was found to be critical by Motseki and Mofokeng (2022) because uneducated populations cannot identify trafficking schemes. This indicates that campaigns to retain and raise awareness of rural schools are important investment in prevention over the long term.

4.4.2.5.2 Economic Instability and Porous Borders

Tied for third place, economic instability and porosity of borders were indicated to be major drivers of human trafficking as indicated by 58.2% of the respondents each. Through the interviews, seven interviewees distinguished it clearly from static poverty. Participant #2 said, *“Economic instability perpetuates poverty. Even with a job, inflation can erode a person’s salary and make him desperate. The traffickers are also targeting these vulnerable persons.”* This finding is not surprising as similar findings were reported by Mginindo, Obioha and Mugari (2025) who found that economic instability has led to widespread vulnerability which is made worse by the demand for organ harvesting, sexual exploitation and forced labour in Southern Africa. This is also akin to Mugari and Obioha (2021) who found economic instability as a major driver in Zimbabwe. The finding is further supported by the Push-Pull Theory which states that the macroeconomic volatility is a push factor even for the employed, thus increasing the pool of victims.

Similarly, 58.2% of the respondents concurred that porous borders promote human trafficking in Mashonaland central Province. Around half of the interviewees seemed to emphasise the challenge of porous borders. Participant #9 said: *"We have very few vehicles for a long border. Victims are trafficked at night and in the rainy season when patrols are reduced. The border is not a wall, it is simply a line on a map."* This result is in line with findings by Mudziwapasi (2014) who documented porous borders as a major driver of human trafficking. This suggests that the resourcing of border management is key to victim protection.

4.4.2.5.3 Corruption

The fifth most common driver of human trafficking was identified to be corruption as highlighted by 56.4% of the respondents and was identified by all nine interviewees as a pervasive enabler. One of the participants had this to say; *"Corruption is the fuel of human trafficking, A trafficker pays off a border guard, a victim passes unchallenged. Or a case is reported but the investigating officer is bribed to lose the file."* (Participant #1). Participant #7 added, *"We tried to report a suspected trafficker, and the officer asked for 'transport money' to investigate and we did not have the money."* This is consistent with Bello and Olutola (2022) and supports Teya and Kurebwa (2019) who found that prosecution is hindered by corruption.

Motseki and Mofokeng (2022) also identified corruption as a major enabler of human trafficking in South Africa. This means that all other investments in anti-trafficking are at risk of neutralisation without strong anti-corruption mechanisms. Theoretically, this theory argues that corruption reduces expected costs for traffickers, thereby increasing trafficking supply. This finding is further supported by the Structural Violence Theory which explains corruption as institutional failure that renders legal frameworks and policies ineffective to deal with human trafficking.

4.4.2.5.4 Other factors

Family breakdown and orphanhood ranked sixth in the survey, selected by 41.8% of respondents. This was closely followed by conflict and political instability (32.7%) and mining settlements (30.9%). However, the interviews showed a different trajectory on how these three factors often intersect in specific places. In mining towns, for example, the combination of no family support, local conflict and a constantly moving workforce creates highly dangerous trafficking risk.

In contrast, gender inequality and gender-based violence tied for last place in the survey, with each only being selected by 14.5% of respondents. Yet interviewees told a different story, with seven of the nine citing gender issues as a key driver of trafficking. The interviewees described domestic violence as an immediate trigger that compels women and girls to flee abusive homes. *“Most of our trafficking victims are women and girls because they have fewer economic opportunities and are often subjected to domestic violence. Traffickers provide them an escape route and then exploit them.”* Participant #7 explained. These findings are consistent with research by Mginindo, Obioha & Mugari (2025). Who found that child marriage and violence lead to increased vulnerability to trafficking. Future anti-trafficking programs must specifically protect women and include support services for victims of domestic abuse because women running away to find safety and freedom often end up falling into the hands of traffickers (Mginindo et al., 2025).

4.3.3 Objective 2: Efficacy of existing Laws, policies and initiatives to deal with human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

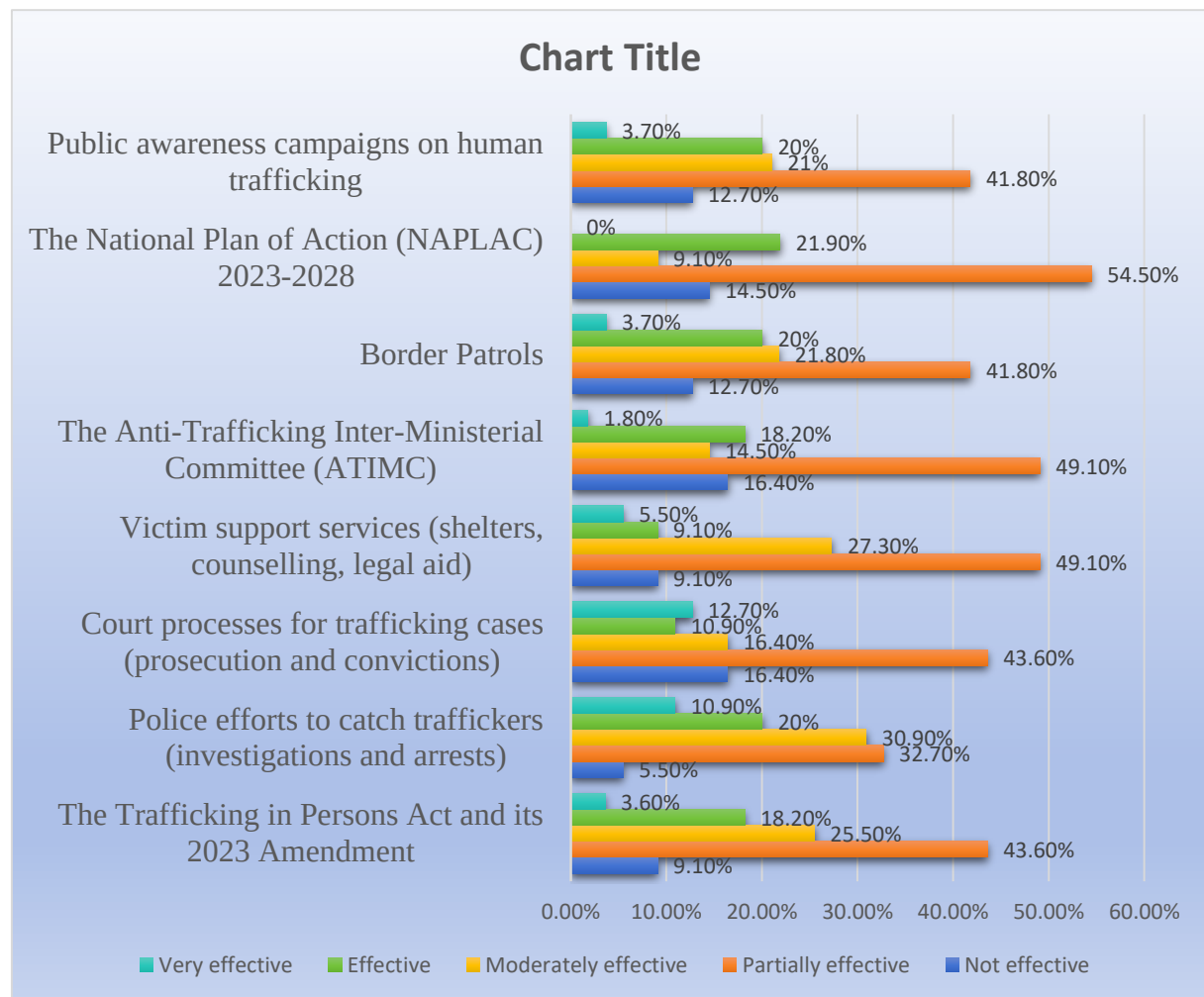


Figure 4.14: Effectiveness of existing Laws, policies and initiatives to deal with human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

The evaluation of specific legal and policy instruments as indicated in figure 4.14 exposed a significant gap between the legal text and the implementation reality. This gap is reflected in the Trafficking in Persons Act and its 2023 Amendment, where the majority of respondents to the questionnaire (43.60%) rated its effectiveness as only partially effective, Qualitative evidence from eight of the nine interviewees indicated the amendments were a significant improvement in terms of legislation, but all nine interviewees had substantial concerns about implementation. Participant #5 said: *“The amendments are a big step forward on paper, especially in how they now define exploitation and the convictions have not grown because the whole system of support for the law is still not provided with resources. The law is only as good as the people and tools*

you give it.” Participant #1 echoed similar sentiments stating “Yes, now we can prosecute internal trafficking cases that were invisible before. But we don't have the personnel or the money to do evidence extraction or the capacity to carry victims through a trial. The legal authority is there but the operational authority is not.” This finding is a mirror reflection of the work of Ogunniyi and Idowu (2022) who found a domestication gap in which local laws lack procedural depth and resources to go beyond symbolic compliance.

Likewise, the state’s coordination and strategic frameworks reveal the gap between the design of policies and their practical implementation. The findings on effectiveness of the National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) 2023–2028 shows that it is mostly seen in the lower ranks of effectiveness, with a distinct majority of 54.50% rating it as partially effective. *“NAPLAC is a good written plan but there is no real budget behind it. Our provincial task force has met twice in two years because there is no money for transport and other logistical needs to make the plan operational.”* (Participant #6). This observation is also supported by Vhumbunu (2020) who finds that even where states adopt strategic plans, weak institutional capacity and lack of dedicated resources critically undermine implementation. The Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (ATIMC) also received similarly low ratings in with a majority of respondents (49.10%) rating it as partially effective. This finding echoes the findings of Teya and Kurebwa (2019) who found a direct relationship between poor coordination between government and NGOs and a rise in trafficking occurrences.

The most obvious operational weaknesses are on the front lines of enforcement and victim protection. The finding on Border Patrols exhibit a similar trend of underperformance, with the largest share of respondents (41.80%) rating them as partially effective. All interviewees inclined to indicate that they had severe shortages of equipment. *“It’s not laziness, it’s lack of tools, we patrol miles and miles of border with no drone, no night vision, and a vehicle that barely runs. Traffickers meanwhile are better equipped and better informed. We are sent to do a job with our hands.”* (Participant #9). This operational deficit corroborates the findings of Ruwanpura (2016) on the negative effects of poor infrastructure on border monitoring. This is in line with the boarder porosity context that Teya and Kurebwa (2019) identify as facilitating trafficking from Zimbabwe into neighbouring states. Some of the greatest challenges to implementation are faced by victim support services.

The findings suggest that the largest single group of respondents (49.10%) believed these critical services to be only partially effective. Participant #8, a victim support worker, said: *“There is only one shelter for trafficking victims in the whole country and it is in Harare. “When we rescue someone in Mashonaland Central, we have no safe place to put them.”* This finding is not surprising as Vhumbunu (2020) also found that dire resource constraints hamper the delivery of protective services, leading to a cycle where rescues do not lead to prosecutions and trafficking continues with impunity.

4.3.3.1 Overall effectiveness of laws and policies to deal with human trafficking in Zimbabwe



Figure 4.15: Overall effectiveness of laws and policies to deal with human trafficking in Zimbabwe

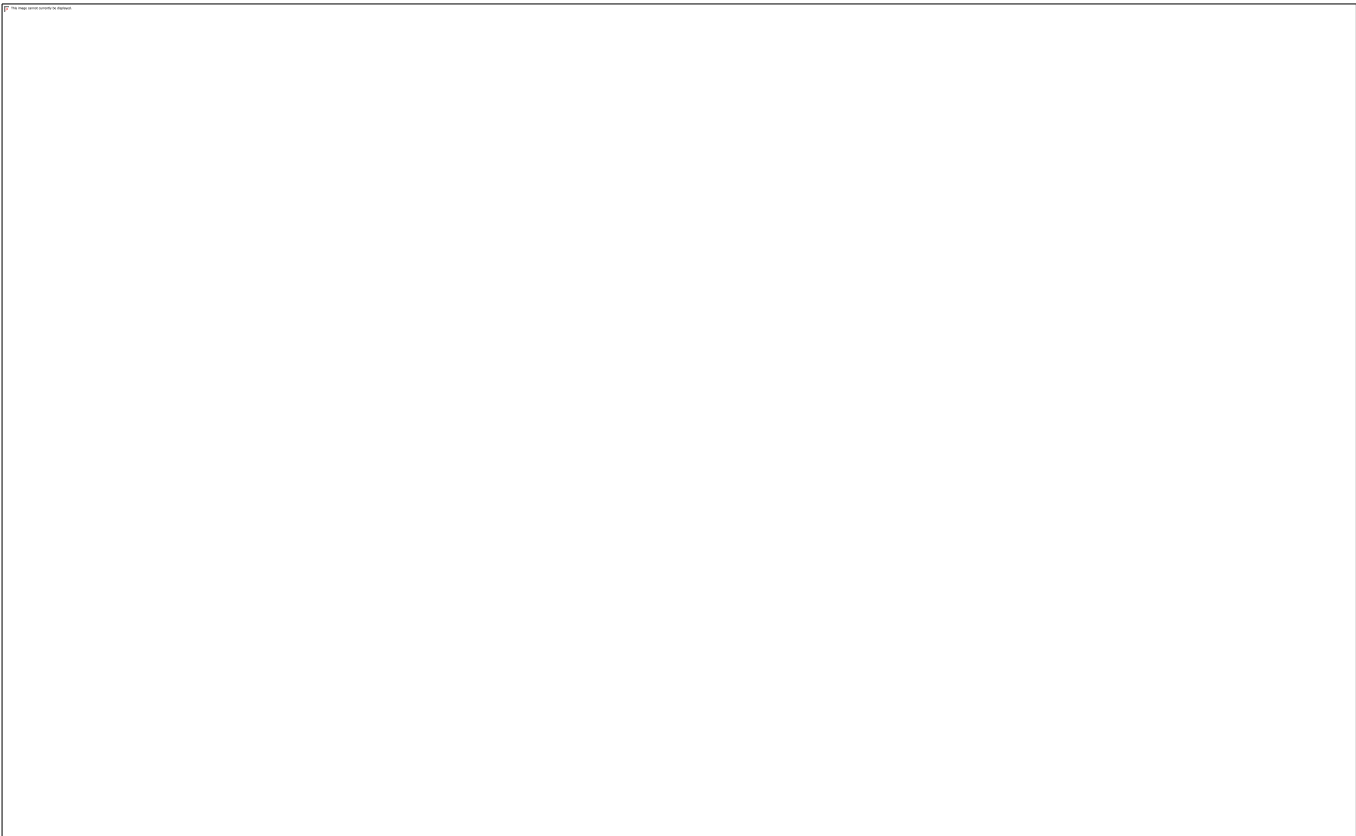
The findings show that when asked to rate the effectiveness of the anti-trafficking framework as a whole, a slim majority (54.6 per cent) rated the framework positively, from moderately effective to very effective, while 45.4 per cent rated the framework as partially effective or not effective at all. Interview participants inclined to suggest that the laws and policies are partially effective as five interviewees leaned toward “moderately effective,” and four toward “partially effective.” Participant #3 stated; *“Our laws are pretty much good enough now. It is not the law that is the problem. The problem is the space between law and reality. We don't need more legislation. We need to enforce the laws that we have.”* These sentiments reveal a major

implementation gap, a gap between legislative intent and operational reality, a finding consistent with Teya and Kurebwa (2019) who found that Zimbabwe has anti-trafficking legislation but the implementation of these laws is the main challenge.

4.3.4 Objective 3: Challenges faced in dealing with human trafficking in Mashonaland central Province, Zimbabwe.

The participants of the study were asked to rate their views on the challenges undermining efforts to curb human trafficking in Zimbabwe and the findings are presented in the table below.

Table 4.5: Challenges faced in dealing with human trafficking in Mashonaland central Province, Zimbabwe.



4.4.4.1 Corruption

The most intensely rated obstacle was corruption, with the highest mean score of 3.96 (SD = 0.816) and formally designated as a major challenge. Corruption was rated as an acute barrier by 72.8% of the sample combined. The quantitative gravity of this was fully reflected in the qualitative interviews, where all nine key informants described corruption as pervasive. For example, Participant #2 when asked about the challenges had this to say: “Corruption is

everywhere. A trafficker bribes his way over the border, a victim makes it over. Files get “lost” in courts. Sometimes the police tip off traffickers before they raid.” This finding is similar to the empirical findings of Bello and Olutola (2022) who evaluated the efficacy of anti-trafficking law in South Africa and labelled the law as a “toothless bulldog” because of the deep-rooted corruption in the criminal justice system that allows trafficking syndicates to operate with impunity. In addition, the finding echo findings by Teya and Kurebwa (2019), who discovered that statutory investment in anti-trafficking infrastructures will be inevitably hijacked by criminal networks unless it is accompanied by credible independent accountability mechanisms and holistic reforms that target institutional corruption.

4.4.4.2 Weak border controls

Weak border controls ranked second major challenge that stifle anti trafficking efforts with the second highest mean of 3.93 (SD = 0.940) and were seen as major challenges. Notably, a total of 72.7% of the respondents perceived border porousness as a significant barrier, with 43.6% indicating it as a major challenge and 29.1% as a severe challenge. This finding was in line with the feedback from the interviews where five interviewees reported that the borders were effectively were not well managed or controlled. Participant #9, bemoaned that they were not fully capacitated to carry out frequent border patrols. This was supported by another participant who had this to say; *traffickers have better equipment and information frontline officers are sometimes deployed without adequate equipment.*” This operational deficit directly supported the empirical work of Mudziwapasi (2014) who lament that weak border controls promote trafficking in Zimbabwe.

Structurally, the persistence of this flaw suggested that the current system of border management cannot rely solely on the traditional logic of putting more boots on the ground, but instead, it required a radical departure from the status quo by investing smartly in modern surveillance technology and shifting to intelligence-led, data-driven border operations. This dynamism also reflected broader international trends; as Khan et al. (2023) observed in a scoping review, trafficking remains highly pervasive globally due to systemic weaknesses and regional vulnerabilities, requiring states to go beyond isolated domestic enforcement to strengthening multilateral legal enforcement and tightening border architectures.

4.4.4.3 Resource scarcity

Despite ranking third, resource scarcity underpinned almost all functional failures within the

anti-trafficking apparatus with a mean score of 3.80 (SD = 0.826) and being categorized as a major challenge. A massive combined majority of 74.5% of the surveyed sample recognised limited resources as an acute barrier, with 60.0% marking it as a major challenge and 14.5% as a severe challenge. Qualitatively, all nine interviewees explicitly pointed to resource limitations as the fundamental root problem from which all other subsequent institutional deficiencies stemmed. Participant 3 summarised the sentiment by stating: *“the major challenge we are facing is resource limitation. We cannot be effective without resources such as cars for patrols and other basic facilities to deal with trafficking cases.”* This view was strongly complemented by Participant #5, who elaborated that *“The laws are there to deal with the challenge but convictions have not increased because the entire system that supports the law remains under-resourced.”* The participant concluded that the law is only as good as the people and the tools you give it, noting that government funding was minimal and that sustainability remained a distant dream due to an over-dependence on donor support.

This finding is theoretically supported by the Structural Violence Theory which buttresses structural underfunding of protective state apparatuses which, by structural design and not by accidental omission, effectively leaves vulnerable citizens completely exposed to predatory networks. This finding strongly corroborated findings by Mugari and Obioha (2021) who discovered that a severe lack of resources acts as a primary, challenge for law enforcement personnel attempting to operationalise anti-trafficking protocols.

4.4.4.4 Lack of coordination

The structural fragmentation of institutional actors created wide operational cracks, as reflected by poor organizational coordination which achieved a mean score of 3.65 (SD = 0.821) and was classified as a moderate challenge. A combined 61.8% of respondents identified it as a critical barrier, comprising 49.1% who rated it as a major challenge and 12.7% as a severe challenge. All nine interviewees endorsed this breakdown with specific examples of systemic friction. Participant #6 highlighted an ongoing information blackout between civil society and the state, noting: *“There was a victim identified by an NGO but they didn’t tell us. By the time we knew it, the trail was cold.”* In tandem, Participant #4 described a bureaucratic labyrinth, recounting being sent in circles between police, social welfare, and non-governmental organizations. This view was further corroborated by Participant #2, who noted that for the committee, *“there is no permanent office, there is no dedicated staff and there is no budget. Meetings are infrequent*

because each ministry has to fund itself from already tight funds.” Traffickers exploit those coordination gaps because nobody has the whole picture.”

These findings are consistent with the scholarship of Mwamba (2016) who observed that the absence of a common collaborative response model is a fatal flaw in Zimbabwe’s domestic counter-trafficking architecture. To this end, the structural flaws identified strongly reinforce the recommendations of Mugari and Obioha (2021) who recommended the formation of specialised multi-disciplinary task forces made up of social workers, dedicated investigators and specialised prosecutors to bridge these operational chasms and effectively manage the unique evidentiary demands of trafficking offences.

4.4.4.5 Other Challenges

The capacity of the state to process trafficking cases was further diminished by low specialized knowledge and weak political will. Both the lack of specialized training among officials and the lack of political will or weak enforcement of laws posted an identical mean score of 3.60 (with standard deviations of 0.807 and 1.148, respectively), classifying both as moderate challenges. For specialized training, a combined 58.2% of respondents viewed it as a major or severe challenge, with 47.3% choosing major and 10.9% choosing severe. This structural deficit was echoed by all nine interviewees, with Participant #3 highlighting that *“in basic police training, human trafficking is covered in one or two lectures.”* This informant argued that that's not enough, because officers don't learn how to interview traumatised victims or gather digital evidence. This finding was expanded by Participant #1, who noted that the justice system simply lacked the trained staff and resources required to carry victims through a trial.

This capacity gap was highly relevant to the absence of political will and weak enforcement, which 65.5% of respondents considered a major or severe challenge. The lack of political will was directly linked to low prosecution rates, which was qualitatively identified by six of the interviewees. Participant #2 noted: *“Trafficking cases are complicated. Victims are afraid to speak up and this result in human trafficking cases not punished or investigated.”* These interconnected dynamics directly echo the findings of Mugari and Obioha (2021), who found that the complexity of trafficking cases, combined with an absolute lack of specialised training for police and prosecutors, inevitably results in low conviction rates and the systemic re-traumatization of victims during legal proceedings. These structural gaps support Structural Violence Theory and tip the supply and demand balance in favour of traffickers by neutralising

the threat of legal punishment.

Socio-cultural and protection barriers further compounded these institutional deficits, heavily impacting the community and victim environment. The finding people did not report trafficking because of fear or stigma achieved a mean score of 3.53 (SD = 1.069), with a combined 61.8% of survey respondents categorizing this as a major challenge. This ambient fear was heavily exacerbated by witness intimidation or retaliation, which carried a mean of 3.36 (SD = 1.007), with 54.6% of the respondents identifying it as a major challenge. These socio-legal anxieties directly impacted the available infrastructure for victim protection. Five interviewees, lamented on the lack of adequate victim support. Participant #8 detailed the structural geographic inequality of victim support, pointing out: *“There is no adequate victim support services for trafficking victims in our beloved country. When we rescue someone, a victim, we have no safe place to send them to.”*

Finally, the institutional neglect was further compounded by the lack of public knowledge, with an average score of 3.02 (SD = 1.09, 76.3%). All nine interviewees identified that limited public awareness remained a persistent vulnerability, with Participant #8 noting: “Many people in rural areas don’t know what human trafficking is. They think it’s just about moving children across borders.” This trend was supported by Participant #6, who reported that localised provincial task forces were paralysed from conducting outreach, causing strategic instruments to suffer because “the plan lay in a drawer.” Push-Pull Theory heavily contextualises this lack of awareness as a form of structural vulnerability. As synthesised by Khan et al. (2023), pervasive trafficking is fundamentally driven by systemic push factors such as extreme poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and socio-economic instability, which leave communities vulnerable to predatory recruitment.

The qualitative and quantitative findings of this study concur with the empirical findings of Vhumbunu (2020) and Mawere (2019) (2014) and the global assertions of Khan et al. (2023) that deficits in awareness and protection are not just informational gaps but severe structural vulnerabilities that traffickers actively exploit in a low-risk market, supporting the conclusion that effective anti-trafficking responses must integrate legislative enforcement with targeted socio-economic and humanitarian interventions to address the root causes of vulnerability.

4.3.5 Objective 4: Strategies which can be employed to effectively combat human trafficking in Zimbabwe.

The most frequently touted strategy across all nine interviews was to government increase funding and resources. All participants without exception highlighted no other intervention would be successful without adequate financial, human and material resources. Participant #1 had this to say; *“The government should provide adequate funding. Nothing works without resources. We need vehicles, fuel, communication equipment and dedicated personnel.”* Participant #5 stated: *“Government funding is minimal and project-based donor support results in fragmentation and interruptions.”* A common theme was that the current anti- trafficking budget is so woefully inadequate that it cannot even meet the most basic operational needs such as fuel for patrol vehicles, salaries for dedicated officers and maintenance of existing equipment.

Responses to the open-ended questionnaire also reinforced this finding with recurrent recommendations on providing for motor vehicles, drones, human resources, funding of initiatives, transport, monetary and human resources” and financial resources to law enforcement agencies. This finding is empirically in agreement with Vhumbunu (2020) and Mugari and Obioha (2021) who argued that the bottom line on policy is that funding must be a first-order priority, not an afterthought.

The second most urgent strategy recommended by the participants was strengthening anti-corruption measures, cited by all nine interviewees and echoed in many open-ended responses. Without tackling corruption, participants argued, more money and better laws would just be captured by the same corrupt networks. Participant #2 remarked; *“Investigate corrupt officials, prosecute them, increase salaries to reduce temptation. No other efforts to combat corruption will succeed. There will always be a way out for the trafficker who can bribe a border guard or a police officer.”* Open-ended responses included calls for politicians not to interfere with law, separation of politics from law enforcement, proper remuneration of officials and measures to reduce corruption through proper remuneration. This finding is in line with findings by with Bello and Olutola (2022) and Teya and Kurebwa (2019) who concluded that enforcing anti-corruption policies is not a parallel track, but a prerequisite to effective anti-trafficking action.

It was also universally agreed that law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges should receive specialised, on-going training. All interviewees (9) emphasised that training should be mandatory and ongoing, not a one-off workshop. Participant #6 suggested that specialised

training is also necessary for police officers, prosecutors and judges because without judicial understanding of trafficking dynamics, even well-prepared cases can fail. This was also complemented by the open-ended responses where an overwhelming majority of respondents suggested that police officers should be trained regularly on Human Trafficking, hold workshops for the law enforcement agents and continuous evaluation of the existing laws and policies. These recommendations were consistent with recommendations by Mugari and Obioha (2021).

More so, eight of the nine interviewees supported better stakeholder coordination, but emphasised that coordination needs an institutional home, not just goodwill. Participant #5 stated: *“We need a permanent, well-funded coordinating body with a clear mandate. Information must be shared. Joint operations must be planned together. No single agency can combat trafficking by itself.”* A recurring theme was that the absence of a working coordinating body allows traffickers to exploit the gaps between police, immigration, social welfare and NGOs. Open-ended responses mentioned inter-agency liaison between security organisations, all stakeholder approach, teamwork with all stakeholders and joint operations, recommendations reiterated by Mugari and Obioha (2021) and Vhumbunu (2020).

All nine interviewees seemed to suggest public awareness campaigns, although some warned that awareness alone is insufficient without the addition of economic and law enforcement measures. *“Awareness campaigns must reach every village, educate people about trafficking, the signs, how to report. The best defence is an educated community. But if people are still hungry and unemployed, awareness will only go so far.”* stated Participant #8, a community leader. This finding consistent with findings of Mawere (2019) and the Push-Pull Theory which suggest that awareness campaigns should be integrated in a multi-pronged strategy rather than stand-alone activities to address the economic push factors and law enforcement gaps simultaneously.

Complementing the recommendations above, seven of the nine interviewees were in favour of deploying technology such as drones, CCTC cameras and secure databases, while two had concerns about cost and maintenance. *Drones can patrol areas vehicles can’t get to. CCTV can be installed at border posts to track crossings. Databases can track patterns securely. We need to buy new technology. Technology needs training, maintenance and integration it can’t just be bought and left.”* Participant #9 stated. Drones, CCTV, e-policing gadgets were also consistently touted as crucial to combat human trafficking in open-ended responses. This result accords with the finding of Van der Watt (2018) who argued that investment in technology must be matched

by budgets for capacity building and maintenance, or the expensive equipment is rendered useless and the investment lost.

The proposal to change existing laws attracted more scepticism than support. Seven of the nine interviewees explicitly stated that the laws are sufficient, and that other amendments would be a distraction. Participant #3 concluded, *“We need to enforce the laws we do have. The problem is not the law but the implementation. The main gaps were already filled by the amendments in 2023. More laws will not bring us more vehicles or more shelters.”* This was a recurring strong theme across all stakeholder groups: legal reform is not a priority. Open-ended responses from the questionnaire were consistent. While a few called for “bill amendments” or “new legislation”, the vast majority focused on implementation, resourcing and enforcement. This finding is in line with the position expressed by Bello and Olutola (2022) that the problem is mainly in the implementation and not the absence of laws. This implies that political will and resources should be redirected from more legislative drafting to the necessary task of making the existing anti trafficking framework function.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the key findings of the study in line with the research objectives. Findings were visualised through pie charts tables and bar graphs. The results were also meticulously interpreted and discussed using empirical literature and supported with the theoretical frameworks. The following chapter focuses on summarising the findings, drawing conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by synthesising the key findings, drawing conclusions and proposing actionable recommendations. The study was conducted to explore the effectiveness of the legal and policy framework of Zimbabwe to combat human trafficking in the Mashonaland Central Province. The inquiry had four objectives which are, to identify factors that contribute to human trafficking; to assess the perceived efficacy of current laws, policies and initiatives; to identify challenges that hinder effectiveness; and to obtain strategies to improve the anti-trafficking response. Limitations of the study are discussed and directions for future research are proposed.

5.1 Summary Findings

5.1.1.1 Objective 1: Factors Promoting Human Trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province.

All eight factors examined were perceived as significant with poverty (mean=3.62), unemployment (mean=3.51) and economic instability (mean = 3.49) being the three most powerful push factors. These quantitative findings were supported by qualitative evidence as all nine interviewees identified poverty as the root driver of human trafficking. Lack of education, corruption, porous borders, weak rule of law and gender-based violence were also rated highly, with means above 3.0 and levels of agreement above 81 per cent. The interviewee accounts corroborated these findings, detailing how unemployment creates a ready pool of recruits, how inflation erodes the resilience of even the employed, how corruption lubricates trafficking operations and how unguarded border stretches facilitate the movement of victims. Taken together, the findings suggest that trafficking in Mashonaland Central is not a function of one cause but of an interlocking set of structural vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit with precision.

5.1.2 Objective 2: Efficacy of existing anti-human trafficking laws, policies and initiatives

The second objective measured perceived effectiveness on a four-point scale. The effectiveness of all components of the anti-trafficking framework was rated as partially to moderately

effective. The highest mean was for the Trafficking in Persons Amendment Act (M=2.60) followed by the original Act in 2014 (M=2.49). Lower ratings were given to the National Plan of Action (M=2.27), Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (M=2.24), border patrols (M=2.29), and victim support services (M=2.15). The overall framework received a mean of 2.38, with 54.6 per cent of the respondents rating it as moderately to very effective and 45.4 per cent rating it as partially or not effective at all. The key finding from qualitative data was a distinct implementation gap: interviews stressed enforcement, resourcing and institutional capacity lagging way behind statutory intent, while there was consistent perception of the legislative instruments being reasonably robust on paper. The general sentiment was that there is no need for more law reform and that the first priority is to enforce the laws that already exist.

5.1.3 Objective 3: Challenges to effectiveness of anti-human trafficking laws, policies and initiatives

The third aim was to identify barriers to the intended functioning of the framework. The most serious problem was the lack of resources (mean = 3.58). All nine interviewees said that this was the basic limitation which made it impossible to do training, coordination, victim support and border patrols at the same time. Corruption was second (mean = 3.45), not as an occasional aberration but as a systemic feature facilitating trafficking and eroding public trust. Weak coordination, porous borders, lack of specialised training, inadequate victim support, low prosecution rates and limited public awareness all scored above 3.0, confirming that these are seen not as peripheral irritants but as core impediments. One of the key findings was the interconnectedness of these challenges: resource scarcity fuels corruption, weak coordination and inadequate training; corruption then syphons off the few resources available; and the absence of victim support weakens prosecution, which then signals impunity to traffickers. The challenges thus become an unbreakable cycle that no single intervention can break by itself.

5.1.4 Objective 4: Strategies to improve effectiveness of anti- human trafficking framework in Zimbabwe.

The mostly recommended strategy was to increase funding and resources and strengthening of anti-corruption measures, which was identified as a precondition for ensuring that new resources reach their intended destinations. There was widespread support for the need for specialised, ongoing training for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges, and for improving victim support services. The study also found widespread support for improved stakeholder coordination

through a permanent, well-funded secretariat, and for public awareness campaigns in local languages could go a long way in dealing with human trafficking. Deployment of technology such as drones was strongly endorsed to enhance surveillance of trafficking activities.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Conclusions on Factors Influencing Human Trafficking

The evidence points to the fact that the human trafficking in Mashonaland Central is not a product of individual choices, but rather a product of a set of structural vulnerabilities that are deeply entrenched. Poverty, unemployment and economic instability are the strongest push factors and create a pool of desperation, which traffickers exploit with false promises of employment and opportunity. Of concern is that, these economic drivers are underpinned by corruption, porous borders, weak rule of law, lack of education and gender-based violence, which together create a structure of systemic inequality. The bottom line is that unless anti-trafficking strategies address these structural conditions at their root, they will at best manage symptoms and not change the underlying dynamics that produce vulnerability.

5.2.2 Conclusions on the Efficacy of existing anti-human trafficking laws, policies and initiatives

The study finds that the anti-trafficking legal and policy framework in Zimbabwe has improved significantly, especially after the enactment of the 2023 Amendment Act, but the framework remains largely performative. Although the legislative instruments are moderately effective on paper, their operational effectiveness is severely limited. The main conclusion is that there is a large implementation gap between legislative intent and the reality of implementation. There are laws, but they are not uniformly enforced, policies are clearly defined, but lack the resources to be implemented and institutions are formally established but lack the capacity to function effectively.

5.2.3 Conclusion on challenges impeding effectiveness of anti-human trafficking framework

Regarding barriers to effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts, the study concludes that the barriers are multiple, mutually reinforcing, and systemic rather than incidental. Lack of resources was the main binding constraint that many other challenges flow from. The chronic underfunding

is the main binding constraint, cascading into poor coordination, superficial training and deficient victim services. Corruption compounds all the other weaknesses. To break that cycle, a holistic strategy is required that takes on all the nodes simultaneously rather than tackling individual challenges in isolation.

5.2.4 Conclusions on Strategies to Improve Effectiveness

The study concludes that the stakeholders most directly involved with the problem that is police officers, NGO officials, community leaders and legal professionals have a strikingly clear and consistent picture of what needs to be done. They are based on a practical understanding that the greatest deficit is not legislative, but operational. Connecting the dots by focusing on increased and sustained funding, strong anti-corruption measures, continuous specialised training, comprehensive victim support, institutionalised coordination and community-based awareness campaigns. What is lacking is not knowledge or legal instruments, but political will and budgetary commitment to translate that knowledge into action. The study concludes that a fundamental shift from a focus on legal drafting to a focus on resource allocation, institutional strengthening and accountability is needed to bridge the implementation gap. Without such a change, additional laws and policies will only add to the growing pile of well-meaning documents that are not implemented.

5.2.5 General Conclusion

The study concludes that Zimbabwe has reasonably sound legal instruments against human trafficking, but their effectiveness is fundamentally undermined by an entrenched implementation gap stemming from resource scarcity, corruption, and institutional fragmentation. Both quantitative and qualitative data support the need for a deliberate redirection of priorities from legislative symbolism to operational substance to bridge this divide. Until then, the anti-trafficking framework will be more protective in theory than in practice.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 To Governments and Policy Makers

- Significantly increase anti-trafficking budget that is, breaking away from donor dependency for predictable state funding for NAPLAC, ATIMC, law enforcement, prosecution and victim support including vehicles, fuel, equipment and personnel.

- Integrate anti-corruption measures into the anti-trafficking response by strengthening the capacity of the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission to conduct periodic audits of trafficking cases, border posts and victim funds, while also strengthening whistle-blower protection and increasing penalties for corruption related to trafficking.
- Integration of anti-trafficking objectives in economic and social policy, including mainstreaming of trafficking prevention in national development strategies, youth employment schemes and educational access programmes.

5.3.2 Recommendations for the Police and Judiciary

- Provide all police recruits, prosecutors and magistrates with regular, specialised training on trafficking dynamics, victim identification, trauma-informed interviewing, digital evidence and the trafficking-smuggling distinction, in collaboration with experienced NGOs.
- Set up specialised anti-trafficking units in the provinces of ZRP with trained officers who are kept in post for sufficient time to build up and retain expertise.
- Assign dedicated magistrates and prosecutors for trafficking cases and establish clear timelines for adjudication to combat delays that breed impunity.

5.3.3 Recommendations on Victim Support and Protection

- Recognise victim support as a core function of law enforcement. Establish at least one government-funded shelter in each province including Mashonaland Central with safe accommodation, medical support, psychosocial counselling, legal aid and skills training for reintegration.
- Set up a formal victim-witness protection programme, including safe housing, identity protection and relocation options to protect the testimony necessary for successful prosecutions.

5.3.4 Community Engagement and Awareness

- Develop sustained community-based awareness campaigns in local languages through radio, chiefs' meetings, churches, schools and markets, co-developed with community leaders and clearly differentiating trafficking from smuggling.
- Establish community anti-trafficking watch committees in border districts that are made up of trusted local leaders to act as first-line detection and referral structures linking communities with formal law enforcement.

5.3.5 Promote international and regional cooperation

- Strengthen bilateral and regional agreements with South Africa, Zambia and Mozambique on joint border patrols, real-time intelligence sharing and harmonised victim referral protocols to address the cross-border nature of trafficking.

5.4 Contribution to the Knowledge

The present study makes four main contributions. First, it offers a multi-stakeholder empirical account of anti-trafficking effectiveness in Mashonaland Central, a heavily affected yet under-researched region. Second, the mixed-methods design captures not only what stakeholders perceive, but why, offering richer understanding than single-method studies. Third, the study introduces the concept of implementation gap, which provides a frame to distinguish legislative adequacy from operational reality. Finally, the finding that frontline stakeholders prioritise implementation over law reform provides an evidence-based corrective to policy debates that have been disproportionately concerned with legislative drafting.

5.5 Limitations of the Research

The study is limited by its concentration on the Mashonaland Central Province which limits the generalisability of the study to other regions. Findings are based on self-reported perceptions, and do not include independently verified outcome measures. Ethical and access constraints limit the voices of trafficking survivors, leaving a large gap in understanding the victim experience. The cross-sectional design provides only one snapshot in time and thus limits the ability to track change over time.

5.6 Areas for further Research

Future research should be carried out in a multi-province comparative study to test the national applicability of these findings. Ethically sound research with survivors' perspectives would fill an important gap. A longitudinal study of the implementation of anti-trafficking could reveal if policy commitments result in measurable outcomes. Finally, comparative research within the SADC member states could identify best practices for closing the implementation gap.

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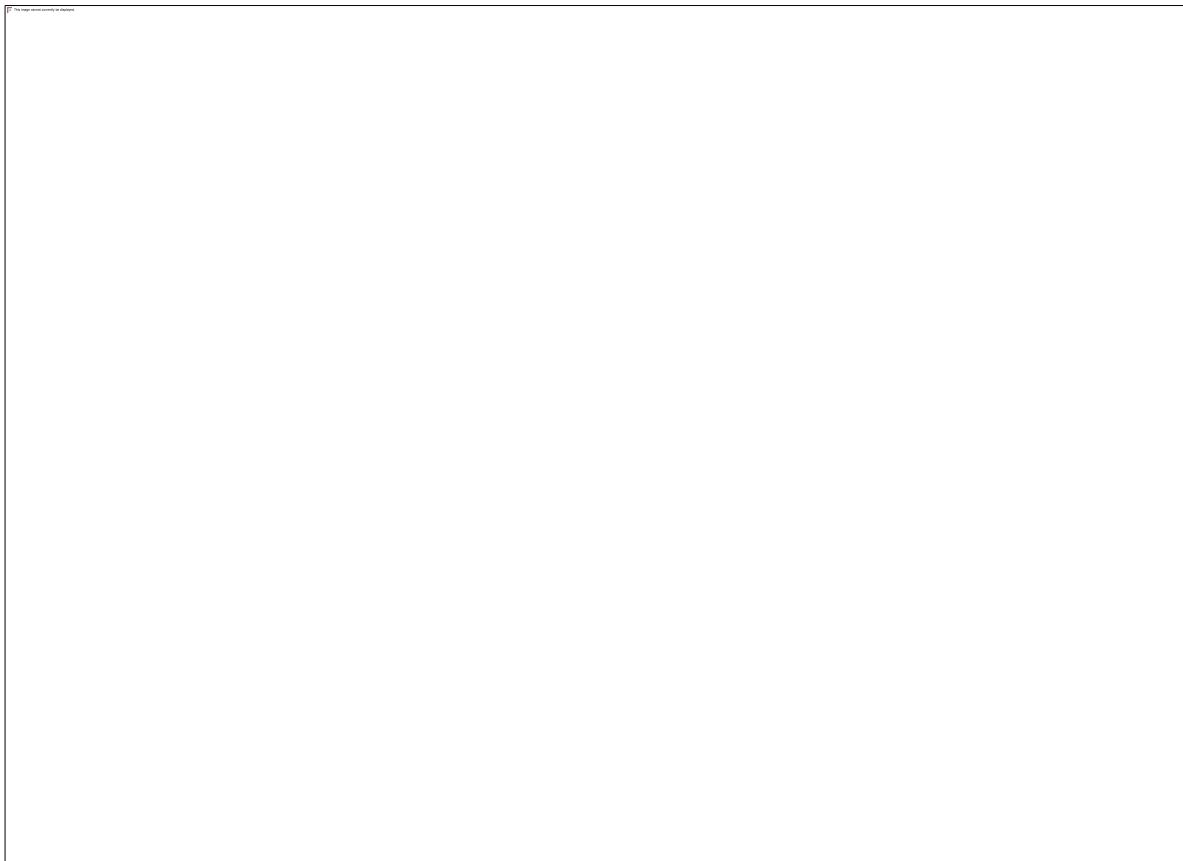
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LIST OF APPENDICES

TURNITIN REPORT



APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

INVESTIGATING THE EFFICACY OF EXISTING LAWS AND POLICIES IN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE (2023-2025).

Dear Respondent,

My name is Phineas Matubu (Registration Number: B232131B). I am an undergraduate student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration Honours degree in Police and Security Studies. I am carrying out a research titled, “Investigating the efficacy of existing laws and policies in combating human trafficking in Zimbabwe: A case study of Mashonaland Central Province (2023-2025).”

I would like you to help me answer a few questions concerning my research. Your identity will remain anonymous. Please be advised that your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can at any time decide to withdraw from the study without any prejudice.

The information will be confidential; your identity will not be disclosed to any third parties and will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Instructions:

1. Fill in the information required by ticking the appropriate box(es) or using the spaces provided.
2. For questions that say “*Tick all that apply*”, you may select more than one option.
3. For the 5-point scale, tick one number that best reflects your view.
4. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.

Informed Consent Form

I have understood the nature of the study and what is required of me. I am willing to participate.

Signature.....

Date

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick (✓) the appropriate space or fill in where required.

1. Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age range

18-25 years ☐ 26-35 years ☐ 36-45 years ☐ 46-55 years ☐ 56 years and above ☐

3. Stakeholder Category

ZRP Officer ☐ NGO/Human Rights Staff ☐ Community Member ☐ Local Government Official ☐ Other, specify

4. Years of experience in current role/capacity

Less than 1 year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-6 years ☐ 7-10 years ☐ Over 10 years ☐

SECTION B: KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Please answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box(es).

5. Have you ever witnessed or heard about a human trafficking incident in your area?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

6. Which forms of human trafficking have you ever heard of in Mashonaland Central Province? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Forced labour in agriculture
- ☐ Forced labour in mining (artisanal or commercial)
- ☐ Sex trafficking
- ☐ Organ harvesting
- ☐ Domestic servitude
- ☐ Child labour for exploitation
- ☐ Other, specify

7. Which of the following laws or policies against human trafficking are you aware of? **(Tick all that apply).**

- ☐ The Trafficking in Persons Act (Chapter 9:25)
- ☐ The Constitution of Zimbabwe (prohibition of slavery, Section 54)
- ☐ The Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2023

- The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act
- The National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) 2023-2028

SECTION C: FACTORS PROMOTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE

8. The table below shows statements about factors that promote human trafficking. Please indicate your response by ticking (✓) “Yes”, “No”, or “Unsure” for each statement.

Statement	Yes	No	Unsure
Poverty and unemployment make people vulnerable to traffickers.			
Porous borders with Mozambique allow traffickers to move victims easily.			
Informal mining settlements hide trafficking and exploitation.			
Corruption among officials helps traffickers operate without fear.			

9. Which factors do you think most promote human trafficking in your area? (*Tick all that apply*)

Factor	Tick
Poverty/Unemployment	
Gender inequality	
Lack of education/lack of awareness	
Economic instability	
Corruption	
Porous borders	
Mining settlements	
Gender-based violence / Child	
Family breakdown / orphanhood	
Conflict / political instability	
Other, specify	

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING LAWS, POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

10. The table below lists various anti-trafficking laws, policies and initiatives. Kindly rate their effectiveness by ticking (✓) one box per row:

1=Not effective at all; 2=Partially effective; 3=Moderately effective; 4=Effective; 5=Very effective

Law/Policy/Initiative	1	2	3	4	5
The Trafficking in Persons Act and its 2023 Amendment					
Police efforts to catch traffickers (investigations and arrests)					
Court processes for trafficking cases (prosecution and conviction)					
Victim support services (shelters, counselling, legal aid)					
Border control measures					
The Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (ATIMC)					
The National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) 2023-2028					
Public awareness campaigns on human trafficking					

11. Overall, how effective would you say current anti-trafficking laws and policies are in your local community? *(Please select the one option that best captures your overall assessment.)*

- ☐ Not effective at all
- ☐ Partially effective
- ☐ Moderately effective
- ☐ Effective
- ☐ Very effective

SECTION E: CHALLENGES IMPEDING EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES

12. Below is a list of challenges that may affect anti-trafficking efforts. For each challenge, kindly rate its severity using the following scale:

1 = Not a challenge, 2 = Minor challenge, 3 = Moderate challenge, 4 = Major challenge, 5 = Severe challenge. Tick (✓) one number per row.

Challenge	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of resources (funding, vehicles, equipment)					

Police and officials lack specialised training on human trafficking					
Corruption allows traffickers to escape justice					
Poor coordination among organisations (police, social welfare, NGOs)					
People do not report trafficking because of fear or stigma					
Witness intimidation or retaliation					
Weak border controls (porous borders)					
Lack of political will / weak enforcement of laws					
Inadequate victim identification and referral mechanisms					

SECTION F: RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING (OPEN-ENDED)

13. In your opinion, what can be done to reduce human trafficking in Mashonaland Central Province?

.....
.....

14. What resources or types of support are most urgently needed to help fight human trafficking in your area?

.....
.....

15. Do you have any other suggestions or insights on how existing anti-trafficking laws and policies could be improved?

.....
.....

Thank you very much for your participation.

APPENDIX B: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

INVESTIGATING THE EFFICACY OF EXISTING LAWS AND POLICIES IN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE (2023-2025).

Consent Statement for Interview Participants

Good morning/afternoon. My name is **Phineas Matubu** (Registration Number: B232131B). I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education conducting research on the efficacy of anti-human trafficking laws and policies in Mashonaland Central Province. You have been identified as a key informant because of your knowledge and experience in this area. I would be very grateful if you could spare approximately 25 to 40 minutes for this interview.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. With your permission, I would like to take notes of our discussion solely for the purpose of ensuring accuracy when I transcribe the conversation. The notes will be stored securely and will not be shared with anyone. All information you share will be treated with the strictest confidence; your name will not appear in any report and every effort will be made to ensure that nothing you say can be traced back to you.

Informed Consent Form

I have understood the nature of the study and what is required of me. I am willing to participate.

Signature

Participant

Date

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A: Knowledge and Awareness of Human Trafficking

1. In your own words, what is your understanding of human trafficking? Which specific forms of human trafficking have you come across or heard about in Mashonaland Central Province (e.g., forced labour in mining, sex trafficking, domestic servitude)?

2. Which laws or policies against human trafficking in Zimbabwe are you aware of, and what do you know about their main provisions?

Section B: Factors Promoting Human Trafficking in Mashonaland Central

3. Based on your experience, what do you consider to be the most critical economic, social, and cultural factors that push people into trafficking situations in this province?
4. In what specific ways do the porous border with Mozambique and the dispersed illegal mining settlements in Mashonaland Central facilitate the work of traffickers?
5. What role do harmful cultural practices such as child marriage and gender-based violence play in making people especially women and girls are more vulnerable to human trafficking?

Section C: Effectiveness of Existing Laws, Policies and Initiatives

6. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of Zimbabwe's anti-trafficking legal framework – including the Trafficking in Persons Act, the 2023 Amendment, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, and the National Plan of Action? Please explain why.
7. How effective are police efforts in investigating trafficking cases and arresting perpetrators in Mashonaland Central? What about court processes and convictions?
8. To what extent have public awareness campaigns changed community knowledge or reporting behaviour? How well do victim support services (shelters, counselling, legal aid) function in the province?

Section D: Major Challenges Impeding Policy Implementation

9. What are the most critical challenges that currently undermine your institution's ability to enforce anti-trafficking laws and support victims?
10. How does corruption affect anti-trafficking efforts in Mashonaland Central, and how would you describe the level of coordination among different stakeholders (police, social welfare, NGOs, the Inter-Ministerial Committee)?
11. What challenges do you encounter in gathering admissible evidence and securing witness cooperation in trafficking cases? How do these affect prosecution rates?

Section E: Recommendations to Strengthen the Anti-Trafficking Response

12. Based on your experience, what specific legislative or institutional changes would significantly improve anti-trafficking efforts in Mashonaland Central and Zimbabwe as a whole?
13. What practical steps would you recommend Zimbabwe take, in collaboration with Mozambique and other neighbouring countries, to disrupt cross-border trafficking corridors?
14. What resources or types of support (training, equipment, funding, infrastructure) are most urgently needed to help your organisation or community fight human trafficking more effectively?
15. Do you have any other suggestions or insights about combating human trafficking that we have not discussed?

Thank you very much for your time and valuable contribution to this research.