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Developing A Context-specific Psychological Resilience Framework for Semi-professional Football Players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One, Zimbabwe.

By

PRECISE BIZA

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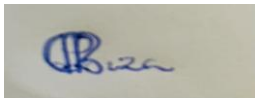
A RESEARCH SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) IN SPORTS SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT

JUNE 2026

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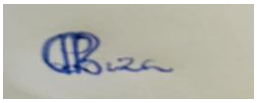
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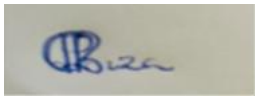
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to myself and my family, whose unwavering support and belief in me made this journey possible.

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the resilience challenges experienced by players, identify individual, team, organizational, and community factors influencing resilience, examine coping strategies and support systems utilized by players and technical staff, and develop a practical resilience model tailored to the local football context. The selected clubs in the Mashonaland Central Province included Trojan Stars FC, Jumbo Giants FC, Shamva Mine FC, and Batanai FC. Guided by the psychological resilience theory, Cognitive Resilience Theory, and the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, together with the Soci-Ecological Model , the research employs an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. The research integrates qualitative data collected through 28 semi-structured interviews with players, coaches, technical staff, and management stakeholders which were also involved in the validation process hiand quantitative self-administered questionnaires from 152 participants (93.1% response rate). Qualitative data were coded and analyzed thematically using NVivo 15, while quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26) for statistical patterns, and the mixed method phase utilized joint display analysis and data triangulation, with results visually presented to identify prevalent resilience challenges, contributing factors, and effectiveness of current coping mechanisms. The integration facilitated the development and evaluation of the context-specific psychological resilience model. Analysis revealed the current challenges, coping mechanisms, and possible solutions. The findings revealed that the current strategies and coping mechanisms were significantly affected by areas such as financial constraints, performance pressures, career uncertainty, and injury setbacks. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of team support, access to psychological services, and goal setting. To preserve the integrity of the study and honor participants, ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing confidentiality, and safeguarding participant privacy, were carefully observed during the whole research process. The study provides valuable, context-specific insights, recommendations, and the proposed context-specific resilience model for semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One, Zimbabwe.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. APA – American Psychological Association
2. CAT – Cognitive Appraisal Theory
3. FC – Football Club
4. PRM – Psychological Resilience Model
5. PRT – Psychological Resilience Theory
6. RFA – Regional Football Association
7. SEM – Socio-Ecological Model
8. SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
9. ZIFA – Zimbabwe Football Association
10. ZPSL – Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Athlete	A participant engaged in organized football activities within the Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League.
Career Uncertainty	The inability of athletes to predict or control future career outcomes due to factors such as contract instability, injuries, deselection, retirement, or financial insecurity.
Coping Strategies	Cognitive and behavioural efforts used by individuals to manage stressful situations and challenges.
Football Player	A registered athlete participating in competitive football at a professional or semi-professional level.
Goal Setting	The process of establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives to enhance performance and motivation.
Mixed-Methods Research	A research approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study to provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon.
Positive Self-Talk	The use of constructive internal dialogue to enhance confidence, motivation, and emotional regulation.
Problem Solving	A coping strategy involving the identification and implementation of practical solutions to challenges.
Psychological Resilience	The capacity to adapt positively, recover, and maintain psychological well-being when faced with adversity, stress, or career-related challenges.
Psychological Resilience Model	A conceptual framework developed from the study findings that explains factors influencing resilience among football players facing career uncertainty.
Qualitative Data	Non-numerical information collected through interviews, observations, and open-ended responses to explore participants' experiences and perceptions.
Quantitative Data	Numerical information collected through structured questionnaires was analysed statistically.
Social Support	Emotional, informational, or practical assistance received from family, teammates, coaches, friends, and other significant individuals.

Term	Definition
Spiritual Coping	The use of religious beliefs, faith, prayer, or spiritual practices to manage stress and adversity.
Stressor	Any event, condition, or circumstance that creates psychological pressure or challenges an individual's well-being.
Theme	A recurring pattern or central idea identified during qualitative data analysis.
Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League (ZPSL)	The highest level of professional football competition in Zimbabwe is the context of this study.

CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the context and era of modern football, the success of teams depends not only on the physical and technical ability but also on an athlete's psychological capacity to cope or adapt to pressure, adversity, and uncertainty. Therefore, psychological resilience has become a very important aspect and concept in sport psychology because of its influence on an athlete's ability to maintain performance, recover from setbacks, and sustain psychological well-being in demanding environments (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). In sports, specifically in football, resilience enables players to adapt and manage injuries, poor performance, criticism, deselection, and competitive pressure while maintaining confidence, motivation, emotional control, and concentration (Bryan et al., 2019). This study, therefore, seeks to identify resilience challenges, examine the factors influencing resilience, assess coping strategies and support systems, and develop a context-specific psychological resilience model for the players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Psychological resilience has become one of the most important areas of study within contemporary sport psychology since athletes are increasingly exposed to competitive, organizational, social, and emotional stressors that affect both performance and psychological well-being. According to Sarkar and Fletcher (2014), psychological resilience in sport refers to the ability of athletes to maintain or regain psychological functioning and performance when faced with adversity, stress, pressure, or significant challenges. More recent literature views resilience not as a fixed personality trait, but a dynamic and developable process shaped by interactions between athletes and their environments (Hill et al., 2018). Studies conducted and developed over the past decade suggest and outline that the resilience of players is influenced by interconnected factors, including personality characteristics, personal behavior, coping strategies, social support systems, team culture, coaching behaviour, organizational structures, and environmental conditions (Gucciardi

et al., 2017). Athletes who possess strong resilience are often better able to regulate emotions, maintain focus, recover from setbacks, and adapt positively to difficult situations. Resilience is therefore increasingly regarded as a protective psychological resource that enables athletes to sustain performance and well-being despite exposure to adversity. Players in football often experience performance pressure, injury, criticism from supporters and coaches, fear of failure, deselection, loss of form, and uncertainty concerning career progression. While the mentioned stressors affect athletes at all levels of competition, the semi-professional players in Mashonaland Central often face additional pressures due to limited financial security, unstable contracts, inadequate organizational support, and restricted access to psychological services (Gouttebarge et al., 2019).

In semi-professional football, stressors differ significantly from fully professional football because, with some clubs, players often manage to balance football participation with employment, education, or family responsibilities. The semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central often find it hard to manage their lifestyle, which significantly affects their psychological resilience. According to Stambulova & Wylleman (2019), this is referred to as a dual-career lifestyle, which is the simultaneous pursuit of sport participation alongside education, employment, or another vocational pathway, requiring athletes to balance the demands of both sporting and non-sporting roles. In Mashonaland Central, the dual career lifestyle creates competing demands that may increase stress and reduce recovery opportunities. Players usually train intensively while simultaneously dealing with employment obligations, transport challenges, academic pressure, and financial responsibilities. Consequently, psychological resilience becomes essential for managing these multiple stressors effectively. Within these community-sponsored football clubs in Mashonaland Central, such as Trojan Stars FC, Jumbo FC, Batanai FC, and Shamva Mine FC, the resilience is also influenced by social and cultural expectations. The community-sponsored clubs rely heavily on emotions, social, and financial support from local communities for survival and organizational sustainability. These create a sense of oneness between club and community as clubs become symbols of community pride, identity, and unity. The players who play for such clubs are therefore expected not only to perform competitively but also to uphold community expectations and social identity. Research by Henriksen et al. (2020) suggests that athletes operating within close-knit community environments often experience blurred boundaries between

sport and personal life because they remain constantly visible to supporters and community members. The semi-professional players residing within their communities may therefore experience persistent and constant public evaluation, criticism, and pressure even outside the football context. The poor performance of players exposes them to negative community reactions, while successful performances may elevate community admiration and expectations. The organizations in the study exhibit a solid relationship between football and the community because the clubs are deeply rooted within Mashonaland Central, particularly the Bindura communities. Players, therefore, feel obliged to represent community hopes and expectations, which affect their psychological resilience. Such community pressure intensifies during important matches, periods of poor team performance, or promotion campaigns. Recent literature identified economic instability as a significant effect. on athlete resilience and coping effectiveness. In developing football environments, delayed salaries, inadequate welfare support, poor infrastructure, and financial uncertainty may increase psychological stress among players (Brown et al., 2021). This outlines the idea that semi-professional football players experience anxiety related to financial survival, family obligations, and career insecurities, all of which negatively affect concentration, confidence, and emotional regulation.

Among other factors, organisational stressors such as lack of leadership support, poor communication, unclear player roles, and unstable management structures may weaken the psychological resilience of semi-professional players. Research indicates that supportive coaching relationships, positive team culture, and effective organisational structures can strengthen resilience by enhancing emotional support, motivation, confidence, and coping capacity (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). Despite the growing international research on resilience in sport, only a few limited studies have specifically focused on resilience within the context of semi-professional football in Africa. Existing psychological resilience models are based on professional sporting systems found in Europe, North America, and Australia, where athletes have greater access to sports psychologists, financial security, advanced facilities, and well-structured welfare systems. Due to the environment and location of the already existing models, the psychological resilience models fail to capture properly the realities and stressors encountered in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One in Zimbabwe, especially with the fact that most clubs in the area are community-sponsored. Because the semi-professional clubs operate in Zimbabwe, where the

economy is unstable, their functions and structures are characterised by inadequate sponsorship, poor infrastructure, limited welfare systems, and inconsistent administrative support. These community-sponsored clubs depend heavily on local support structures, therefore making players vulnerable to both positive and negative forms of community influence. In Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One, the absence of a context-specific resilience framework creates challenges for coaches, administrators, and sport practitioners attempting to support athletes effectively within Zimbabwean football environments. Consequently, there is a need for research capable of generating locally relevant and reliable knowledge regarding resilience development within the community-sponsored football clubs.

This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to sports psychology literature by examining the resilience experiences of semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central and developing a context-specific psychological resilience model that reflects the social, organisational, cultural, and economic realities of Zimbabwean semi-professional football.

1.2.1 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature on psychological resilience in sport, significant gaps remain regarding the understanding of resilience among semi-professional football players in Zimbabwe. Existing research has primarily focused on elite athletes, professional footballers, and athletes competing in developed sporting systems, leaving limited evidence regarding resilience processes within resource-constrained semi-professional football environments. The current study seeks to address these shortcomings through the development of a context-specific psychological resilience model for football players competing in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League.

1.2.2 Empirical Gap

Although psychological resilience has been extensively studied among elite athletes in Europe, North America, and Australia, there is limited empirical evidence examining resilience among Zimbabwean semi-professional football players. Existing studies have largely focused on professional athletes, university athletes, or elite performers competing within well-resourced sporting systems. Consequently, little is known about the specific psychological challenges, resilience factors, and coping mechanisms utilised by football players competing in Zimbabwe's

Division One football structures. This lack of empirical evidence limits the development of interventions tailored to the realities of Zimbabwean football. Therefore, this study seeks to generate empirical evidence on the resilience experiences of semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One.

1.2.3 Contextual Gap

Most existing psychological resilience models have been developed and validated within European, North American, and Australian sporting contexts where athletes generally have access to structured welfare programmes, professional contracts, sports psychologists, advanced medical support, and stable organisational systems. In contrast, Zimbabwean semi-professional football players operate within environments characterised by financial uncertainty, limited institutional support, inadequate rehabilitation services, and strong community expectations. Consequently, resilience models developed in Western contexts may not adequately capture the socio-cultural, economic, and organisational realities influencing resilience among Zimbabwean football players. This study, therefore, seeks to develop a model grounded in the lived experiences of players within the Zimbabwean football context.

1.2.4 Theoretical Gap

Existing resilience research has predominantly utilised individual-centred approaches that emphasise personal traits such as mental toughness, optimism, and self-efficacy. While these perspectives contribute valuable insights, they often overlook the broader environmental and social factors that influence resilience development. Limited research has integrated psychological resilience theory, cognitive appraisal processes, and socio-ecological influences within the context of Zimbabwean football. Consequently, there is a need for a multidimensional understanding of resilience that incorporates both individual and environmental determinants. This study addresses this theoretical gap by integrating Psychological Resilience Theory, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and the Socio-Ecological Model in developing a context-specific resilience framework.

1.2.5 Practical Gap

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of psychological resilience in athlete development and performance, no documented psychological resilience model currently exists for Zimbabwean Division One football. As a result, coaches, administrators, sport psychologists, and club managers lack an evidence-based framework to guide resilience development programmes, player support systems, and psychological interventions within semi-professional football environments. The absence of such a model limits the effectiveness of athlete welfare initiatives and resilience-building strategies. Therefore, this study seeks to develop a context-specific psychological resilience model that can be utilised by football stakeholders to enhance player well-being, adaptation, coping capacity, and performance.

1.2.6 Summary of the Research Gap

In summary, there is a lack of empirical evidence on psychological resilience among Zimbabwean semi-professional football players (empirical gap), existing resilience models are largely based on Western sporting contexts (contextual gap), resilience research has insufficiently integrated individual and environmental resilience processes within Zimbabwean football (theoretical gap), and there is currently no context-specific resilience model available for Division One football clubs in Zimbabwe (practical gap). The present study seeks to address these gaps through the development of a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players competing in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Semi-professional football players competing in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One operate within a highly demanding sporting environment characterised by competitive pressure, financial uncertainty, organisational instability, and strong community expectations. While clubs such as Trojan Stars FC, Shamva Mine FC, Jumbo Giants FC, and Batanai FC continue to pursue promotion to the Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League (ZPSL), evidence from club records, player welfare reports, and administrative observations suggests that players are frequently exposed to challenges that may compromise their psychological well-being and performance.

For example, club administrative records from the **2024–2025** seasons indicate recurring delays in the payment of player allowances, inadequate transport arrangements for away fixtures, and limited access to specialised medical and rehabilitation services following injury. Because of the informal contracts issued to the players by their clubs, none of them could sue the club for breaching the contracts or report actual delays in allowances. Due to this, during the mid-season break, when the player transfer window opened, about fifteen (15) players were recorded to have left the club, including ten (10) key players in search of greener pastures in all the clubs in the study. The evidence was assessed through document analysis and interviews with club administrators and technical staff, further revealing that many players balance football participation with employment, tertiary education, or informal income-generating activities due to inadequate financial support from their clubs. Such conditions create additional psychological demands that extend beyond normal competitive football pressures.

Furthermore, player welfare concerns have become increasingly evident within semi-professional football environments. Injury records maintained by the clubs' medical personnel indicate that several players missed substantial portions of the competitive season due to injuries. With the clubs under study, most of their players were recorded to have had an average of two months duration of injury-related absence. At the same time, limited rehabilitation support often delayed their return to play as well. In addition, player turnover records show that some athletes either transferred to other clubs or temporarily withdrew from football because of financial constraints, employment commitments, or dissatisfaction with organisational conditions. These observations suggest that players are exposed to significant psychosocial and organisational stressors that may negatively affect their confidence, motivation, emotional regulation, coping effectiveness, and overall psychological resilience.

The community-sponsored nature of football clubs in Mashonaland Central further intensifies these challenges. Local communities, businesses, and supporters invest considerable emotional and financial resources in their clubs and often expect positive performance outcomes in return. Consequently, players are frequently subjected to public scrutiny, criticism following poor performances, and pressure to meet community expectations. Such pressures may create additional

psychological strain and increase vulnerability to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and reduced performance consistency. Despite growing international recognition of psychological resilience as a critical determinant of athlete well-being and performance, existing resilience models have largely been developed within professional sporting systems in Europe, North America, and Australia. These models may not adequately capture the socio-economic, organisational, cultural, and community-related realities experienced by semi-professional football players competing in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence examining how financial instability, organisational challenges, community expectations, and social support structures interact to influence psychological resilience among Zimbabwean semi-professional football players.

As a result, coaches, administrators, and sport practitioners currently lack a contextually relevant framework to guide psychological support and resilience development within Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One football clubs. Therefore, there was need to develop a context-specific psychological resilience model that reflects the lived experiences and environmental realities of semi-professional football players in Zimbabwe. Such a model may provide evidence-based guidance for enhancing player well-being, coping capacity, emotional adaptation, and sustainable performance within community-sponsored football environments.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This was a significant research study that aims to help provide the psychological resilience needs of the semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central who are part of a community-funded football association. Players competing in semi-professional football have multiple stressors that affect their performance and can have severe outcomes on their psychological well-being. Currently, in Zimbabwean football, there is no locally defined psychological resilience framework(s) that guides clubs, coaches, and sports psychologists who work with semi-professional players. Therefore, this study can contribute to the practical and academic understanding of resilience in semi-professional football. The context-specific psychological resilience model developed through this research will help the Mashonaland Central football teams develop practical means of understanding, supporting, and creating resilience for their players who are being exposed to football and community-based stressors. The model will provide the clubs with the ability to identify psychological risk factors that are compromising their players and

develop better support systems to help improve their sport-related performance and overall psychological well-being. This study will identify strategies for coping, protective factors, and sources of resilience that will help players with positive adaptation to adversity, such as criticism, injury, performance pressure, and organizational instability. This improvement in players' psychological resilience will enhance their emotional regulation, self-confidence, focus, motivation, and ability to recover from setbacks, which will in turn improve their performance in both football and non-football settings. Coaches and technical staff may better understand how organizational behavior, communication style, leadership type, and team culture impact athlete resilience based on findings from the study. Consequently, coaches may become increasingly knowledgeable of the value of providing psychological support, using positive reinforcement, providing emotional support, and considering athlete welfare to assist their players in developing resilient behavior. Through this study, club administrators and other individuals interested in football and other football stakeholders may gain a better understanding of the relationship between organizational conditions and psychological functioning. The findings of this research may result in priorities placed on athlete welfare, enhanced athlete support systems, and the incorporation of psychological resilience development into the structure of football management. At the community level, the relationship between the Mashonaland Central clubs and their communities may grow through healthier and more constructive methods of supporting players. Because community-based football clubs receive a significant portion of their emotional and financial support from their communities, the results of this study may help to create a supportive rather than extremely pressuring environment where stakeholders will support their clubs as well as the players within those clubs. This research adds to the body of knowledge about the field of Sport Psychology and the empirical evidence for psychological resilience in Zimbabwean semi-professional football. Most of the current literature on resilience is based on research from Europe, North America, or Australia and does not adequately cover the resilience of football environments in Africa, specifically the Zimbabwean context. This research adds context-specific African perspectives to the current body of research available on resilience.

In addition, this research may provide future researchers with a basis to further investigate the resilience of athletes, coping mechanisms, organizational cultures, the mental health of players, and the impact a community may have on an African athlete's performance. The proposed model

for resilience may also be adapted for other semi-professional football clubs with similar social, economic, and organizational problems besides the ones in Mashonaland Central.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Main Research Question

How can a context-specific psychological resilience model be developed for semi-professional football players competing in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One?

1.5.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

1) What psychological resilience challenges are experienced by the semi-professional players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League?
2) How do individual, team, organizational, and community factors influence the development and maintenance of psychological resilience among semi-professional players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One?
3) What coping strategies and support systems are used by players and technical staff to promote psychological resilience?
4) To what extent are the resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems identified during the qualitative phase evident among semi-professional football players?
5) What components should be included in a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League?
6) How do stakeholders perceive the feasibility and acceptability of the proposed psychological resilience model?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 Purpose of the Study

To develop a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives

1) To explore the psychological resilience challenges experienced by semi-professional football players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League.

2) To explore how individual, team, organisational, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological resilience among semi-professional football players.
3) To explore the coping strategies and support systems used by players and technical staff to promote psychological resilience.
4) To assess the prevalence and perceived importance of resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems identified during the qualitative phase.
5) To integrate qualitative and quantitative findings in developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players.
6) To evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of the proposed psychological resilience model among relevant stakeholders.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study aimed to gain insight into the concept of psychological resilience at the level of semi-professional football clubs, specifically the ones in Mashonaland Central, namely Trojan Stars FC, Batanai FC, Jumbo Giants FC, and Shamva Mine FC. These clubs are located around Bindura, Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe, and operate as semi-professional football clubs. For this study, the focus was on the senior male squads of the clubs. Additionally, the study included only members of the technical staff responsible for day-to-day football operations at the clubs, and a small number of female players selected from the developing clubs. Therefore, individuals involved in the club but outside the sample - junior players, supporters, and outside stakeholders- did not have their data included in the study.

This study also considered resilience within a psychological context and excluded extensive consideration of other psychological constructs related to the psychological impact of participating in semi-professional football, such as mental toughness, motivation, anxiety disorders, and general mental health issues. However, references to these other psychological constructs were made when relevant to either resilience development or coping strategies. The geographical scope of the study was limited to residents mainly in Bindura and the areas surrounding the town that foster football development in Bindura and Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe, and was expected to provide

insight into the socio-economic conditions and cultural context within which these community-supported semi-professional football clubs operate.

Time and resource constraints that accompany undergraduate research limited this study. Therefore, the development of a context-specific psychological resilience model was largely developed from the experiences, perceptions, and contextual realities of the semi-professional clubs surrounding Bindura, in Mashonaland Central, rather than from a national comparative or large-scale approach.

1.8 STUDY ONLINE

CHAPTER ONE: The study's background information, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, and the overall structure of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical models and the empirical literature on psychological resilience, coping strategies, and organisational/community influences on psychological resilience in semi-professional football contexts.

CHAPTER THREE: Research design, research philosophy, target population, sampling procedure, data collection method, data analysis method, ethical considerations, and validity and reliability measures for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings from participants; the thematic structure of the data; the relationships of themes to the related literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: The summary of findings, conclusions, and general recommendations; presentation and discussion of a psychological resilience model for Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One players.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduces the research study that develops a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One, Bindura, Zimbabwe. There is considerable research indicating that football players'

performance is a function of physical and technical ability, but the players' psychological resilience is also a factor in determining their performance. Based on the background of this study, the players experience both community-based stressors and competitive football-related stressors because of the clubs' community-supported structures. The problem statement of this research identifies the absence within the Zimbabwean semi-professional football environment of contextualized psychological resilience frameworks (models) that address the challenges faced by players. The chapter sets out the importance of this study, sets out the objectives and questions of the study, focuses on identifying the challenges related to resilience, the factors influencing resilience, the players' coping strategies, and the development of a contextualized resilience model. Finally, the chapter lists the delimitations and flow of the overall research.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to review existing literature related to the development of psychological resilience amongst semi-professional football players, specifically concerning community-sponsored football environments located within Zimbabwe. Relevant literature was reviewed to identify key issues relating to resilience development; these include organisational stressors, socio-economic difficulties, coping mechanisms, social support systems, and resilience interventions within football environments. Research has demonstrated that psychological resilience is becoming an important factor that influences athletes' ability to cope with adversity, perform consistently, and protect their psychological well-being (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). The chapter is organised into three sections: the literature review, the theoretical framework, and thematic review of psychological resilience among semi-professional football participants in Mashonaland Central. Through this process, gaps in the available literature were also identified, including a lack of research focusing on psychological resilience in semi-professional football in Zimbabwe, which justified the need for a context-specific model of psychological resilience for players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The conceptual review provides important insights into all the major concepts that will be used to guide the current study. Creswell (2018) suggests that one function of conceptual reviews is to help researchers identify and define important concepts within a particular research environment to help ensure that all variables are measured in a consistent manner. This is true in the context of sport psychology research since the definitions of some psychological constructs vary significantly depending on the specific demands of the sporting context. This conceptual review provides context for researchers to understand psychological resilience as it relates to semi-professional football; specifically, this study will use the four Northern Region Division One League teams as

illustrations. Furthermore, the conceptual review will help identify how the realities of the environment affect the experiences of football players in Mashonaland Central Province.

2.2.1 Psychological resilience

In the modern era, psychological resilience in sport psychology is a very significant construct because athletes frequently experience stressful and demanding as well as unpredictable situations through their sport. In their work, Fletcher and Sarkar (2012) define psychological resilience as the role of one's mental processes and behaviour in facilitating personal resources such as strengths and assets while also protecting against the detrimental impact of stressors. More recently, resilience has been defined as the individual's ability to endure, adjust, and successfully recover from challenges and adversity and is positively associated with psychological well-being and performance effectiveness (Gucciardi et al., 2017; Sarkar & Fletcher, 2017).

Resilience was historically conceptualised as a stable personality trait found within people who are "naturally" mentally tough. Early research on resilience dealt largely with identifying individual personality characteristics, such as toughness, persistence, and emotional stability. However, contemporary sport psychologists are increasingly adopting a developmental and interactive perspective on resilience, one that is primarily based upon the dynamic and evolving nature of its development. In fact, Richardson (2018) argues that an individual's resilience develops because of the continuous interaction between the individual and the environment. Evidence supporting this perspective is provided by Bryan et al. (2019), who assert that resilience is a product of the athlete's experiences through facing adversity, successfully adapting to it, and learning from it within the context of their sport.

Psychological traits: In a football environment, resilience consists of several psychological traits that are interrelated, including emotion-regulation, attentional control, confidence, optimism, coping ability, motivation, persistence, adaptability, and self-belief (Gucciardi et. al.,2017). Emotion regulation helps players cope with frustrations, anxiety, disappointment, and anger while competing. Attentional control enables an athlete to remain focused in the face of distractions caused by hostile crowds, tactical pressure, or criticism by fans. Confidence and optimism help players recover from setbacks such as injuries, losses, poor performance, etc. (Cowden et. al., 2021).

Research by Hill et al. (2018) suggests that resilience develops progressively, through continued exposure to challenge, and followed by successful adaptation to that challenge. Resilience is strengthened when a footballer successfully recovers psychologically, following the experience of injury, being dropped from a team, experiencing poor performance, receiving negative support from others, or facing competitive challenges (Galli & Gonzalez, 2015). Therefore, the development of resilience is significantly impacted by one's environment, such as coaching behaviours, team culture, organisational support, family relationships, and peer support networks (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2017; Wagstaff et al., 2020).

Resilience regarding African athletes is also influenced by factors such as social connection, a sense of belonging to a community, spirituality, and cultural values associated with "Ubuntu." Ubuntu is about the collective humanity of us all, an example of the way we can support each other, as well as share in the interconnectedness of our social fabric. Researchers (Hartley et al., 2022) argue that many African athletes derive their psychological strength from their family, community, and cultural identity as well as spirituality. In a similar vein, Sorkkila et al. (2020) have stated that resilience should be analyzed from a wider social or cultural context, not just through the lens of an individual psychological trait.

For those athletes playing in Northern Region Division One-level football teams in Mashonaland Central Province, psychological resilience encompasses more than just competition-related stressors; it also includes the capacity to adapt to socio-economic and organizational challenges that are common among semi-professional football players in Zimbabwe. These challenges can include irregularity in financial support, limited access to quality sporting facilities, difficulty in securing transportation, and limitation in access to both medical and rehabilitative services, uncertainty regarding injury, and balancing football participation with other employment and educational responsibilities (Kuettel & Larsen, 2020). As such, players must constantly adjust their responses and behaviors to deal with both sporting and non-sporting issues. There is a strong association between athletes' mental health and well-being and psychological resilience; therefore, athletes with high levels of resilience are more capable of coping with emotional pressures than those who have low levels, and demonstrate a lower vulnerability to symptoms of anxiety, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and psychological distress (Gouttebarge et al., 2019).

Resilience refers to a protective factor supporting long-term psychological functioning and maintaining an athlete's performance level for the long term, regardless of the difficulties faced during participation in the sport of football (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2017). Resilience also impacts how leaders communicate with team members, collaborate with different teams or groups, and maintain discipline in their tactics and procedures, as well as in their physical fitness. Players who exhibit a high level of resilience will generally show a lot of emotional control, even when faced with stressful situations such as conceding goals, having to take penalty kicks, losing players due to injury, and playing away from home in high-pressure environments. These players will typically have the confidence to continue supporting their teammates and will tend to contribute positively to a team's performance under pressure (Cowden et al., 2021).

According to the literature, psychological resilience has multidimensional, dynamic, and context-dependent characteristics (Gucciardi et al., 2017). While most current models of resilience provide a useful framework for understanding how athletes adapt to different types of adversity, most of the research conducted to date has been on elite professional footballers and football teams competing in Europe, North America, and other developed sports systems. There has been little research into how resilience is developed among Zimbabwean semi-professional football teams, particularly teams within the Northern Region Division One League. This indicates a need for research to develop an understanding of resilience in the context of the organizational, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental conditions faced by footballers in the Mashonaland Central Province.

2.2.2 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies refer to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural efforts that individuals employ to manage internal and external demands that are perceived as stressful or exceeding their available resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Within sport psychology, coping strategies enable athletes to adapt to competitive pressures, injuries, performance setbacks, organisational challenges, and personal life stressors. Coping is generally categorised into problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance coping. Problem-focused coping involves directly addressing the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping seeks to regulate emotional responses to stressful situations (Nicholls & Polman, 2007). Research suggests that resilient athletes frequently utilise

adaptive coping strategies such as goal setting, positive self-talk, seeking social support, emotional regulation, and problem-solving, which contribute to enhanced performance and psychological well-being (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). In contrast, maladaptive coping styles like withdrawal, denial, substance use, and behavioural disengagement have been correlated with lower levels of psychological well-being and decreased performance efficacy. In semi-professional football in Zimbabwe, coping may be particularly significant given that these athletes face numerous challenges, including financial insecurity, lack of resources, fear of injury, need to work outside the football context, and pressure from the community. Therefore, an understanding of the coping strategies used by players is important for developing an applicable psychological resilience framework. In this study, coping strategies are seen as an important resource that helps semi-professional footballers to cope with various adversities and remain focused on performance in a challenging environment.

2.2.3 Social Support Systems

Social support is the extent to which an individual is embedded in supportive relationships that provide instrumental, emotional, informational, or appraisal support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Social support systems are an important buffer against the effects of stress and an important determinant of mental well-being for athletes. Support sources in sporting situations include family members, team-mates, coach, friends, sport authorities, club staff, mentors, or local communities. From a socio-ecological model approach, resilience is determined not only by individual factors but by the individual's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Those athletes who perceive themselves as having greater support from others are likely to cope effectively with stress and to maintain motivation when things are not going according to plan (Rees & Hardy, 2004). Social support can enable access to many instrumental helps such as money, sports material, and advice on health problems (Arvinen,2010). As for semi-professional football in Zimbabwe, formal athletic welfare programmes may be of limited value, and players may be heavily reliant on support from coach, team-mates, family members, and local communities (Peden et al., 2020). So, the present study considers the social support system as one of the contextual factors for resilience in Zimbabwean semi-professional football.

2.2.3 Mental Preparedness

Mental preparation can be defined as the mental conditions that an athlete needs to have to compete and effectively control their emotions, concentrate, and perform under pressure (Jones et al., 2007). It encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes that enable athletes to approach competition with confidence, focus, and self-control. Mental preparedness is often associated with psychological skills such as goal setting, imagery, self-talk, attentional control, emotional regulation, confidence building, and pre-performance routines. Athletes who are mentally prepared are generally better able to cope with uncertainty, adversity, and performance pressure (Weinberg & Gould, 2023). Although mental preparedness and psychological resilience are related constructs, they are conceptually distinct. Mental preparedness primarily concerns readiness for performance situations, whereas psychological resilience refers to the broader capacity to adapt positively to adversity, setbacks, and prolonged challenges. Nevertheless, mental preparedness may contribute to resilience development by enhancing athletes' ability to manage stressful situations effectively. In the present study, mental preparedness is considered one of the psychological resources that may support resilience among semi-professional football players operating in demanding competitive environments.

2.2.4 Community Identity

Community identity refers to a person's feeling of membership, to which he or she belongs in his or her communities, as well as a sense of loyalty and psychological attachment toward these communities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In community-owned clubs, athletes establish strong bonds with community fans, locals, sponsors, and administrators; the team and players serve as the symbols of collective life, identity, and social pride. Community identity has the potential to provide a sense of belonging and support that can bolster motivation and confidence; on the other hand, community loyalty can create a great deal of performance pressure, particularly when teams need promotion or face a string of losses (Giulianotti, 2015). Given that in community sport settings, athletes compete under more frequent observation, scrutiny, and accountability to fans, locals, community administrators, and other supporters. In Zimbabwean Division One football, local community support, sponsorship, and fundraising are significant, leading to a closer community connection. In the present study, community identity will serve as a social and cultural

phenomenon that shapes both challenges and supports as semi-professional footballers navigate the environment.

2.2.5 Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's overall state of mental health, life satisfaction, emotional functioning, and positive psychological adjustment (Ryff, 1989). Psychological well-being encompasses dimensions such as self-acceptance, purpose in life, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships, and personal growth. In sport settings, psychological well-being has gained increasing attention because athletes frequently encounter stressors that may negatively affect mental health, including injury, performance pressure, organisational uncertainty, career transitions, and financial challenges (Gouttebarge et al., 2019). High levels of psychological well-being are associated with greater resilience, enhanced coping effectiveness, improved performance, and lower risk of burnout.

Recent resilience research emphasises that resilience should not only be evaluated in terms of performance outcomes but also in terms of athlete well-being and quality of life (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). Consequently, resilience-building interventions increasingly aim to promote both athletic success and psychological wellness. In this study, psychological well-being is viewed as an important outcome of psychological resilience, whereby resilient football players are expected to demonstrate better emotional adjustment, coping capacity, and overall mental health despite exposure to adversity.

2.2.6 Semi-professional football

Semi-professional soccer is a classification of play in which athletes can receive some type of financial compensation for playing soccer but do not fully rely on soccer as their sole source of income (Charumbira, 2016). Semi-professional players, therefore, exist in the space between amateurism and professionalism, with many players being expected to perform at a professional level without receiving adequate monetary and welfare safety-net resources. Globally, semi-professional soccer occupies a significant level of development within the global structure of soccer because it fills the gap between the grassroots level of soccer and the elite professional level of soccer. Unfortunately, semi-professional soccer environments are usually marked by limited

financial resources, unstable organisational structures, and inadequate welfare systems. Roderick (2024) states that because of the unpredictability of career conditions, semi-professional soccer players will often deal with insecurity, uncertainty, and emotional instability.

The country of Zimbabwe has semi-professional football represented at the national level through national leagues called Division 1 football in each region (Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Central), which serves as a second tier in the national football pyramid under the Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League (ZIFA, 2024). Each region's Division 1 league is operated by a Regional Football Association (RFA), as is the case for the Northern Region Division 1 League. The clubs playing in these leagues are dependent on their local mining companies, local authorities, and private sponsorships for their financial survival, and thus, their financial resources are directly affected by the economic conditions surrounding their communities and industries.

According to Mpofu (2014), many of the semi-professional football clubs in Zimbabwe operate using allowance-based employment systems instead of traditional employment contracts. This can sometimes include the provision of allowances, winning bonuses, travel to and from their games, and help with accommodation, but in many cases, it is sporadic and not even enough to satisfy basic living costs. Thus, most players in football either alongside their formal employments or their study schedules, working in the informal sector, or supporting their families. Stambulova et al. (2024) call such a situation a dual career situation, whereby an athlete simultaneously has an athletic career as well as a non-sporting one.

For the semi-professional player, the demand placed on both physiological and psychological systems is heightened in juggling serving training requirements and preparations for competitions, simultaneously trying to satisfy demands from their respective other employment or educational institutions and fulfil their other familial duties.

As such, the level of demand will consequently impact their ability to recover between sessions, ability to concentrate and focus during their other work and/or study, control emotions, and will thus affect overall well-being. Football clubs in the mining communities of the province of Mashonaland, such as Shamva Mine or Trojan Stars FC, operate within an environment where the conditions of local mines and the surrounding business or institutional base dictate the level of the

clubs' economic conditions through funding. A situation of high economic distress will impact the players ' transport needs, their lodging, feeding, and the availability of sports equipment. And hence uncertainty as regards payments, medical treatment, sports equipment, as well as future employment.

Organisational instability often characterises semi-professional football environments. Frequent changes in head coach, poor communication, administrative disputes, and inadequately structured governance systems are examples of organisational issues that adversely affect the confidence and emotional security of players. In a study conducted by Arnold et al. (2017), the authors found that organisational factors often highlight emotional exhaustion and psychological distress in athletes. In the Mashonaland Central teams, players are expected to demonstrate high levels of discipline, commitment, and performance despite challenging environmental conditions. Given that there is emotional pressure on players to represent their community of Bindura while trying to overcome socio-economic challenges, developing psychologically strong players is vital within the football club.

One other critical aspect to note concerning semi-professional football relates to the limited availability of professional sport psychology services that are typically available at elite levels of sport, for example, the clubs employing psychologists, counsellors, and sports scientists. Most Division One Clubs in Zimbabwe do not have any formalised psychological support services. Consequently, players must rely on their teammates, coaches, family, spirituality, and their own coping strategies to assist with managing emotional stressors. Literature shows that semi-professional football environments create unique psychological realities that necessitate context-specific resilience interventions. Existing sport psychology models that have been developed in elite football environments may not suit all organisational and socio-economic barriers that once existed for semi-professional footballers in Zimbabwe.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework defines and describes both the scientific and the philosophical bases of the study. Specifically, the theoretical framework provides an overview of how an individual develops psychological resilience through adaptation to adversity in an intense sporting environment. Maree (2020) highlights the importance of a theoretical framework in assisting

researchers to make sense of their results and to describe the relationships between variables. The present research employs the Psychological Resilience Theory as its principal theory, which is also supported by the Cognitive Appraisal Theory and the Socio -Ecological Model of the individual. Thus, these three theoretical principles combine to give a more complete understanding of how football players experience and cope with stress, respond to adversity, interact with their environmental systems, and build psychological resilience in semi-professional football contexts.

2.3.1 Psychological Resilience Theory

Psychological Resilience Theory has been developed to explain how individuals have the capacity to retain positive adaptation and act in a positive manner after experiencing hardship, high levels of stress, trauma, or a traumatic event. Resilience within the context of sport is comprised of psychological factors referred to as protective factors that enable an athlete to cope with an outside source of stress and maintain emotional stability and performance (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2014). Specifically, the Psychological Resilience Theory proposes that resilience develops because of a mutual interaction between an athlete and his or her environment. Protective factors that contribute to an athlete's resilience include, but are not limited to, confidence, emotional control, concentration, optimism, motivation, coping skills, social support, and a positive team culture. Athletes with these factors typically have a greater capacity to positively adapt during periods of stress.

The key premise of this theory is that difficulties can have a positive impact on the psychological development of the athletes if the athlete has the necessary coping resources and support system. Athletes who have been exposed to the difficulty of injury, defeat, criticism, financial difficulty, or de-selection can develop greater resilience if they have been able to adapt and recover. Resilience is the capacity of a football player to control their emotions and exhibit tactical discipline when faced with difficult situations such as losing a match, competing in a hostile environment, sustaining an injury, being subjected to poor officiating, and receiving negative criticism from the public (Cowden et al., 2021). A resilient athlete can quickly recover from their mistakes and continue to contribute positively to the success of the team.

Therefore, this theory aligns with the position of the Mashonaland Central Northern Region teams in the study, as the players operate in challenging environments with low levels of organisational

stability, high socio-economic uncertainty, significant community pressure, and minimal psychological support systems. This theory further supports the assertion that the resilience of players cannot be viewed in isolation from the environmental realities of the club.

2.3.2 Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Cognitive Appraisal Theory, proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (2015), is a theory of the way in which people perceive or interpret a stressful situation and how such perceptions impact their emotional and behavioural responses to that situation. The theory posits that the experience of stress is largely due to cognitive evaluation, and not the events themselves. Primary evaluation refers to the process of assessing whether an event is threatening, harmful, or challenging. Secondary evaluation refers to the process of assessing whether they have sufficient coping resources available to effectively manage the event. Generally, athletes who positively respond to stressful events tend to be better able to maintain their emotional stability and resilience.

Within a football environment, players continually evaluate many different variables such as criticism, tactical pressure, injuries, competitive demands, and hostile or unsupportive fans. Players' perceptions of these variables will influence their confidence, concentration, emotional reactions, and how they cope. By way of example, players at the clubs in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One may perceive the expectations of the local community to be positive motivation or negative, overwhelming pressure. Injuries may also be viewed as a temporary setback or a significant threat to their career. As a result, it is necessary that resilience-building strategies promote positive cognitive appraisal within players.

This theory is particularly relevant to semi-professional football in Zimbabwe because players generally perform in high-emotion environments marked by uncertainty and instability. Therefore, it becomes important to understand how players cognitively appraise adversity to create a suitable resilience model for Zimbabwe.

2.3.3 The Socio-Ecological Model

The socio-ecological model explains that human behaviour and psychological outcomes arise because of multiple and interacting systems that arise from the environment (McLeroy et al., 2018). These systems consist of individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and societal influences. The environmental context of football is an environment composed primarily of the

personal, psychosocial characteristics of an individual athlete, but also extends to their interactions with coaches, teammates, fans, club management, family, and community. Therefore, football athletes do not exist in isolation but instead as a part of complex networks of interconnected social systems that shape one's ability to cope with emotions and adapt to them while playing the sport.

At the individual level, the psychological dimensions of resilience are related to self-efficacy, skill, and strategy for coping with adversity, emotional regulation, and personality characteristics. At the interpersonal level, relationships with coaches, teammates, and family members can facilitate or inhibit an athlete's ability to receive emotional support and to find the intrinsic motivation to continue to be active in football. At the organisational level, leadership, internal and external communication, physical infrastructure, and welfare systems are important factors that impact an athlete's resilience. The community also has an impact on an athlete's resilience because of the expectations of supporters, the local community's unique identity, the culture of the community, and the degree to which the community is socially interactive, all of which affect an athlete's resilience as well. The relationship between the athlete and the greater community can also impact an athlete's resilience. This is evident regarding the economic climate of the nation, the structure of football in the nation, and the cultural ideas about participation in sports.

The Socio-Ecological Model is highly applicable to the specific context of the Mashonaland Central teams because the players play within community-sponsored football environments within systems of different layers of the environmental context that all influence one another. In addition to football competition and game performance, players' experiences of emotions during games are affected by community expectations, organisational instability, economic conditions, and social relationships. Thus, the development of resilience interventions targeted at both individual coping skills and environmental support structures is appropriate for the development of semi-professional football within Zimbabwe through the Socio-Ecological Model.

2.3.4 Integrated Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This study is guided by an integrated theoretical framework comprising Psychological Resilience Theory, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and the Socio-Ecological Model. Individually, each theory provides valuable insights into athlete adaptation and functioning under adversity. However, no

single theory adequately explains the complex interaction between individual, cognitive, social, organisational, and environmental factors that influence psychological resilience among semi-professional football players. Therefore, the integration of these theories provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding resilience development within Zimbabwean football contexts. The integrated framework assumes that psychological resilience is not merely an individual personality trait, but a dynamic process influenced by how athletes interpret adversity and the environmental resources available to support adaptation.

2.3.4.1 Psychological Resilience Theory

Psychological Resilience Theory serves as the primary theoretical foundation of the study. The theory proposes that resilience is the capacity to positively adapt, recover, and grow following exposure to adversity, stress, or challenging life circumstances (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). The underpinning theory of this study is Psychological Resilience Theory, which is viewed as a definition for the ability to positively adapt, bounce back, and develop after the experience of adversity, stress, and difficult circumstances (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). In comparison to other resilience theories, where it was seen as a personality characteristic, newer resilience theories perceive resilience as dynamic; it's a process in relation to the individuals' environments and them. In the football context, these stressors would encompass issues such as injury, money problems, poor game performances, deselection, organizational, and community issues. It suggests that with resilience, individuals can still function and perform adequately, and, for this study, it is used to explain the outcome, which was psychological resilience.

2.3.4.2 Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Resilience theory explains what happens at the end product and why these athletes might respond well to some difficult situations, while others might not. The Cognitive Appraisal Theory, as formulated by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), is therefore introduced. Cognitive Appraisal Theory is the theory that individuals do not experience an event, but rather their cognitive interpretations of events. According to the theory, individuals engage in two appraisal processes:

Primary Appraisal

Athletes evaluate whether a situation is:

- Threatening
- Challenging
- Beneficial
- Irrelevant

Secondary Appraisal

Athletes evaluate whether they possess sufficient resources to cope with the situation.

Within semi-professional football, two players may experience the same challenge, such as delayed allowances or injury. However, one player may view the situation as manageable while another may perceive it as overwhelming. Consequently, cognitive appraisal influences coping responses and resilience outcomes. The theory, therefore, explains how football players interpret adversity and how those interpretations influence resilience development.

2.3.4.3 Socio-Ecological Model

Although Psychological Resilience Theory and Cognitive Appraisal Theory explain individual adaptation processes, they provide limited attention to broader environmental influences. Therefore, the Socio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is incorporated to explain how multiple environmental systems shape resilience. The model proposes that individual behaviour and development are influenced by interactions occurring at multiple levels:

Individual Level

- Personality
- Motivation
- Confidence
- Psychological skills

Interpersonal Level

- Family support
- Teammate support
- Coach-athlete relationships

Organisational Level

- Club management
- Welfare systems

- Medical support
- Financial support

Community Level

- Supporters
- Sponsors
- Community expectations

Societal Level

- Football structures
- Economic conditions
- Cultural norms

The model is particularly relevant because semi-professional football players in Zimbabwe operate within resource-constrained environments where organisational and community factors often influence athlete well-being and performance.

2.3.4.5 Integration of the Three Theories

The three theories complement one another and collectively provide a comprehensive explanation of psychological resilience among semi-professional football players. Psychological Resilience Theory explains the process and outcome of resilience development. Cognitive Appraisal Theory explains how athletes interpret and respond to adversity. The Socio-Ecological Model explains how environmental factors facilitate or constrain resilience processes. Together, the theories suggest that resilience develops when athletes encounter adversity, cognitively appraise those challenges as manageable, utilise effective coping strategies, and receive adequate support from their social and organisational environments. Consequently, psychological resilience is conceptualised as a dynamic interaction between:

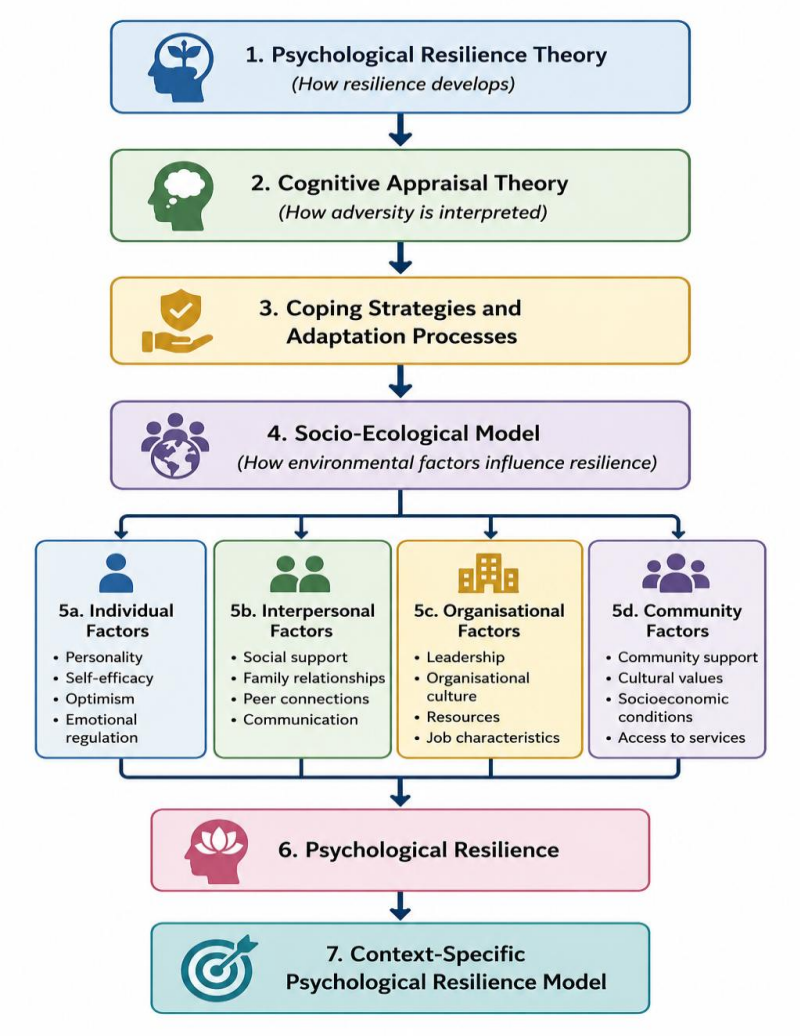
- Adversity exposure,
- Cognitive appraisal processes,
- Coping responses,
- Social support systems,
- Organisational resources,
- Community influences.

This integrated perspective provides the theoretical foundation for developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players competing in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League.

2.3.4.6 Relevance of the Integrated Framework to the Current Study

The integrated theoretical framework informs the entire study. It guides the identification of resilience challenges, the examination of individual and environmental resilience factors, the exploration of coping strategies, and the development of a context-specific psychological resilience model. Furthermore, it provides a theoretical basis for understanding how semi-professional football players navigate adversity within the unique socio-economic and organisational realities of Zimbabwean football.

Figure 2. 1: Integrated Theoretical Framework



2.4 THEMATIC REVIEW

2.4.1 Psychological Resilience in Football

As competitive football becomes increasingly competitive and emotionally taxing, psychological resilience has emerged as one of the most extensively studied constructs in psychology related to competitive sport. Players experience continual performance pressures, injury, criticism, uncertainty, exhaustion, deselection, tactical stresses, and disappointment. According to Fletcher and Sarkar (2016), resilience is defined as the ability of an athlete to maintain or regain their

psychological well-being and performance despite the adversity they face. Resilience in football is demonstrated by a player's ability to respond to the disappointment of having conceded a goal by recovering quickly from that event, rebounding from a loss, reestablishing a routine following an injury, or being criticized publicly by supporters or coaches.

Resilience can be understood as a multidimensional construct that, in the field of sport psychology, is developed cumulatively through a variety of psychological, environmental, and social influences. Alternatively, contemporary scholars have come to believe that resilience is not an innate quality or characteristic but, instead, that it develops over time because of repeated exposure to adversities and utilising effective coping methods to respond positively to these experiences. As stated by Galli and Vealey (2018), athletes grow in psychological resilience through repeatedly encountering and responding positively to adversity. Within the context of football, resilience has strong connections with emotional regulation and attentional control. Players must consistently make quick tactical decisions under conditions of physical fatigue, crowd pressure, and emotional stress throughout competition. Players who cannot recover quickly from adverse situations lack focus, panic after making a mistake, or show signs of emotional instability that adversely affect their performance. On the contrary, players who can demonstrate resilience will continue to be focused on the situation, show emotional control, and maintain tactical discipline through difficult times during games.

Resilient football players have been shown to demonstrate greater levels of confidence, emotional stability, motivation, and the ability to cope with adversity than their non-resilient counterparts. This was illustrated in research done by Gupta and McCarthy (2022), who found that resilience has a positive relationship with long-term performance sustainability because resilient athletes recover from emotional distress and stressful events more effectively than their counterparts. The findings of their study were consistent with the findings of Ventaja-Cruz et al. (2024), whose research demonstrated that the level of resilience among football players serves as a significant predictor of emotional adaptation to situational demands, self-regulation, and athletic performance during competitive events. The importance of resilience is magnified in semi-professional football environments where the pressure on the player is increased due to the presence of stressors outside of the competition. Semi-professional athletes often experience workplace instability, irregular salaries, poor welfare systems, inadequate facilities, and uncertain contracts and restricted access

to medical and psychological services, requiring players to manage the competing pressures of sport and sustainable economic beings.

The influences of resilience in Zimbabwean football are primarily determined by the economic realities of players and clubs in their respective communities. Semi-professional football players often work to support themselves and their families while competing in a football league. Zimbabwe's semi-professional football players regularly play in environments where passion for the game greatly exceeds the monetary reward. These environments contribute to the players' feelings of emotional fatigue, uncertainty, and psychological stress, which require substantial levels of resilience to navigate appropriately (Charumbira, 2016). With the clubs in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One, the significance of resilience is pronounced as the players compete within a community-supported football environment, which ties the players' performance outcomes to the community's identity, as well as to the community's expectations of how the players are to perform.

Although players are expected to maintain their psychological fortitude, they encounter a number of challenges, including the unstable nature of their organization, financial constraints, facing injuries, dealing with criticism, and the pressure placed on them to achieve promotion to the higher divisions of football. Therefore, the emotional weight of representing the designated community is either further enhanced through collective support by the players, or players' emotional stability can be weakened because of players viewing the expectations set upon them as excessive.

Aside from the emotional burden of representing a community, resilience within football also includes the recovery from injury. The injury experience is one of the most psychologically distressing events that occurs in a football player's career, as injuries impede a player's ability to participate, lessen a player's confidence, and result in uncertainty regarding his future performance (Wadey et al., 2019). Resilient athletes are typically able to navigate their rehabilitation process more effectively than those who are not resilient, as resilient athletes remain optimistic, persistent, and exercise emotional control during the rehabilitation process. Therefore, when a player is injured and possesses resilience, he is more likely to comply with the rehabilitation process and successfully return to play.

Acar & Serin (2024) further highlight that the adequacy of resilience as an intervention for decreasing the state of emotional exhaustion, referred to as risking burnout, and reducing emotional fatigue in athletes. Burnout is generally characterized by an emotional state that includes emotional exhaustion, a decrease in applied motivation, and psychological withdrawal from participating in sports. Semi-professional soccer player types tend to be at greater risk of experiencing burnout than other athlete types due to the significant amount of stress created by attempting to balance semi-professional soccer with finding and maintaining employment, continuing education, and fulfilling family obligations. Resilience, therefore, is an important psychological factor in protecting players from emotional breakdown.

In Africa, resilience is similarly connected to collective identity and social support systems. The Ubuntu philosophy promotes social support, solidarity, and connectedness amongst individuals. Hartley et al. (2022) illustrate how many African athletes receive their emotional strength and resilience from their family support, collective identity, spiritual beliefs, and community. This aspect of collective resilience is particularly salient for soccer players in Zimbabwe, as football clubs are closely connected to the lives of individuals living in the community. Consequently, the body of evidence indicates that psychological resilience is necessary for long-term sustainability of performance, including emotional adjustment, recovering from injury, and the long-term mental well-being of football players. Nevertheless, to this point, most studies that explore resilience have been conducted on elite-level professional soccer players in both North America and Europe. There is little research regarding how resilience is developed in Zimbabwe's semi-professional football environment, which is characterized by economic instability, community-supported organizations, and limited access to psychological support for players.

This current investigation builds upon existing literature to develop a context-specific psychological resilience model for the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One clubs and similar football clubs in Zimbabwe, thereby closing an identified gap in the literature.

2.4.2 Psychological Stressors in Semi-Professional Football

Psychological stressors are external pressures placed on athletes that potentially disrupt an athlete's emotional stability, coping ability, and psychological functioning, which are those internal to the athlete. Football players face multiple stressors throughout their participation as both players and

competitors that can be detrimental to confidence, concentration, motivation, and performance. Arnold et al. (2017) classify football stressors into two broad categories of stressors, competitive stressors and organisational stressors. Competitive stressors are directly related to performance or display of ability in a match, they include, but are not limited to, fear of failure, pressure to win, tactical demands, criticism of performance, hostile crowds, injury, fear of removal from playing, or team deselection. Football can be an emotionally taxing experience due to the constant assessment of each athlete by coaches, supporters, teammates, and club management. Additionally, mistakes made by players while engaged in the act of playing a match are frequently displayed publicly, often resulting in immediate criticism. Thus, football players are frequently exposed to heightened levels of anxiety and emotional stress because of performance expectations. Semi-professional football players also encounter a range of organisational stressors that create challenges beyond that of being a competitor. Organisational stressors refer to the pressure of organisational structures like hierarchy, financial systems like. Unpaid wages, leadership, communication, and general welfare conditions. According to Hanton et al. (2015), organisational stressors may be more damaging to an individual than stressors associated with actual competition due to the cumulative effects, or chronic nature, of emotional strain placed over a long duration of time.

Organisational stressors faced by semi-professional footballers are often common across many of the teams in Zimbabwe's competition. Players often deal with several forms of organisational stress, such as delayed allowances, lack of adequate transport, poor accommodations, unstable contracts, lack of medical support, and lack of adequate training facilities. Charumbira (2016) indicates that many of the semi-professional football clubs are financially strapped, which serves to have a significant negative impact on their players' welfare and psychological well-being. With the clubs in Mashonaland Central, players could experience anxiety and emotional distress associated with financial uncertainty, balancing the time requirements of football with employment and education, and community expectations. Additionally, due to the failure of most semi-professional clubs to develop proper medical insurance programs, players could also experience anxiety over injuries due to fears of interrupted careers, income loss, and uncertainty concerning the future.

Research by Gouttebarge et al. (2019) indicates that football players who are chronically exposed to stress and disorganisation are more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Rice et al. (2016) established that the lack of adequate psychological support systems contributes to the emotional distress of football players. Another important psychological stressor for semi-professional footballers is career unpredictability. Semi-professional footballers at many different teams with frequently unstable contracts and salaries experience uncertainty around contract renewal, financial security, and future opportunity. Such uncertainty could negatively affect their concentration, ability to play with confidence, and emotional stability.

There is a significant prevalence of social evaluation stressors in community support, which is also the sponsorship for players of the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One teams. Bryan et al. (2019) identify that athletes perceived psychological pressure due to the expectation to avoid failure or disappointing their supporters, coaches, family, and local stakeholders. As the clubs in context's players play in a highly visible environment to both the community and to themselves, where their performance on the field is socially and emotionally linked with their community's pride and expectations, it would be reasonable to suggest that some players may become fearful of failure, as well as experience emotional stress and tension before and during important matches.

Football clubs in Mashonaland Central Province depend on community sponsorship and support from local businesses to remain financially solvent. Therefore, the economic challenges facing all levels of the community have an obvious impact on football and, more broadly, affect the welfare of the players. Consequently, players may have even further emotional stress placed upon them during periods of economic downturn because of the lack of or inadequate resources, unpaid allowances, and uncertainty regarding the existence of their clubs. Furthermore, research indicates that psychological stressors negatively impact the decision-making, attention control, emotional regulation, and tactical discipline of athletes during competition. Athletes who are under significant amounts of stress are more prone to lose concentration, become emotionally reactive, and be inconsistent during performances. For these reasons, implementing effective coping strategies and resilience training will be critical components of supporting semi-professional football players.

The literature indicates that the various types of psychological stressors faced by the semi-professional football players are multidimensional and significantly influenced by the structure of the organization of the team, the economic climate, and the social and emotional dynamics associated with the community in which the player resides. The existing studies about semi-professional athletes from Zimbabwe do not provide a great deal of information about how the semi-professional footballers handle or cope with the stressors they may come across during their time in the sport. As a result, this study will investigate the psychosocial factors created by the players in the Mashonaland Central Teams, as well as look to create some form of interventions to assist the players in becoming more resilient to the demands of football in Zimbabwe.

2.4.3 Social Support and Community Identity

Social support is largely viewed as one of the strongest and most significant protective factors related to an athlete's overall psychological health and resilience. Social support is defined as the provision of supportive emotional, informational, logistical, or motivational products or resources to a social role played by individuals such as coaches, teammates, family members, fans or supporters, and club management. Relative to the findings by Rees & Hardy (2014), those in sport who have access to support have been shown to develop greater emotional stability, confidence, coping ability, and resiliency when faced with distressing events. In football, the support provided to players acts as an important protective mechanism against stress or negative emotions. Athletes in football are faced with emotional stressors from injuries, lack of performance, criticism from any source, or unstable environments that can lead to athletes being unable to manage through their adversity and return to a fair state of optimum level of functioning.

According to Davis et al. (2023), social support has a significant positive impact on athletes' self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and resiliency. In addition, those athletes who receive positive encouragement and emotional support from their team members and coaches were found to have greater capabilities to manage through stressful competition environments.

Cohesion among teams is another significant contributor to developing resilience. Typically, a team's cohesion level demonstrates how well teams can communicate, trust one another, share responsibility for their actions as part of a larger group, and have emotional ties to one another when faced with adversity. According to Carron et al. (2022), integrated teams exhibit greater

emotional adaptation and contribute to the overall resilience of their athletes. In African Sporting systems specifically, support from the community often plays an integral role in the success of an athlete. As discussed by Hartley et al (2020), support within the African context is generally based on the communal identity and Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasise belongingness, sense of togetherness, and interdependence of the people. As explained by Hartley et al (2020), athletes in Africa generally gain emotional strength from their families, community relationships, spirituality, and a collective identity.

With regards to the clubs in Mashonaland Central, providing social support to players through their supporters and the community as a whole can have an overall positive impact on the resilience of a player by creating an environment where they feel encouraged, accepted, and motivated. Supporters can be an excellent source of psychosocial reassurance for players when experiencing difficult times, such as a loss or injury or instability within the organisation. On the flip side of that, social support can become a source of psychological pressure in community-supported football organisations. For example, the excessive amount of expectation that players sense from their supporters, local businesses, and community leaders can cause players to feel higher levels of fear of failure and emotional stress. Consequently, the community identity can serve as both a shield and stimulus for psychological stress within community-supported football organisations, specifically the ones in Mashonaland Central.

The literature, therefore, indicates that it is of utmost importance to maintain an equitable system of social support within community-supported football environments. Excessive pressure on players will negatively affect their psychological well-being, whereas, on the other hand, positive emotional support will strengthen resilience in players. The study aims to explore how community-sponsored football environments in Zimbabwe affect the resilience and emotional adaptation of players.

2.4.5 Organisational Challenges and Player Welfare in Zimbabwean Semi-professional Football

As discussed previously, one of the major factors affecting football players in Zimbabwean semi-professional football is the organisational challenges they encounter daily. Organisational stressors are defined as pressures arising from the structure, administration, management, and operational

systems of sporting organisations (Hanton et al., 2015). Organisational stressors, therefore, are those that arise from the football environment rather than being influenced by competitive stressors, as they come from the environment of football; organisational stressors are harmful to players' emotional well-being, players' self-confidence, players' ability to concentrate, and players' ability to perform.

Players associated with Zimbabwean semi-professional football experience a range of organisational instabilities, financial challenges, inadequate infrastructure, poor sponsorship, inconsistent payment of salaries and allowances, inadequate medical treatment, and poor communication between management and players. Charumbira (2016) states that many Division One football clubs are unable to maintain stable welfare systems for their players due to a lack of financial resources and their dependence on community sponsorships or donations from local businesses. Such organisational instability leads to a level of uncertainty for players in terms of their ability to progress in their careers, financial security, and long-term welfare. Semi-professional football clubs like Trojan Stars FC and Shamva Mine FC, which operate within Mashonaland Central Province and other teams from the Northern Region Division One, often have limited financial resources; therefore, they place a greater emphasis on the ability to remain in business than on taking care of their players' long-term welfare as far as welfare systems are concerned. Players frequently face issues such as delayed allowances, poor training facilities, inadequate transportation arrangements, and no rehabilitation resources after an injury. Such difficult circumstances may create additional emotional stress, which may adversely affect players' motivation, coping skills, and ability to adjust psychologically to their situation.

Arnold et al. (2017) pointed out that mental stressors in an organisation could be more destructive to a player mentally than competition itself, as players spend a long period of time interacting with rapidly changing sports environments. When players of football are concerned about allowance, contract, transportation, accommodation, or rehabilitation following injury, they may be affected by cognitive distraction, decreased concentration, and emotional exhaustion. This type of strain could lead to anxiety, burnout, and decreased performance over time. At the selected clubs in Mashonaland Central, community expectations and the need to compete at a high level in the Northern Region Division One League create added pressure on the organisation and the organisation's players to consistently perform despite the players working in an environment that

is financially and resource-limited. Players' growth in resilience is, therefore, primarily dependent on their ability not only to respond to the pressure of competition but also to respond to adversity and challenges within the organisation in which they play.

In their analysis of sport psychology, Wagstaff et al. (2018) assert that the culture of sport organisations has a profound influence on an athlete's psychological well-being. A positive organisational culture that promotes communication, emotional support, openness, and involvement of players will enhance an athlete's ability to build resilience and emotionally adapt to circumstances. On the other hand, when there are high levels of uncertainty, criticism, poor leadership, and a lack of adequate support systems in the sporting environment often decreases an athlete's confidence and ability to cope with adversity. Thus, enhancing the organisational structure of semi-professional soccer in Zimbabwe will have a major effect on the development of psychological resilience in soccer players.

2.4.6 Injury, Rehabilitation, and Psychological Resilience

Football injuries are one of the greatest sources of stress for soccer players due to their impact on both physical performance and psychological well-being. According to Wiese-Bjornstal et al. (2015), injuries in sport will produce emotional responses such as fear, frustration, anxiety, anger, and difficulty controlling emotions. These emotional responses produce a lot of uncertainty for soccer players regarding the length of time they will be away from their sport, their future performance, whether they will be selected to play, and the potential sustainability of their football careers. Within semi-professional soccer, the experience of stress associated with injuries is usually amplified by the lack of adequate rehabilitation resources and financial instability. According to Gouttebarge et al. (2019), athletes who participate in financially unstable soccer environments are more vulnerable to emotional distress from an injury because the injury results in a reduced income and undermines their ability to sustain a career. In Zimbabwe, most semi-professional soccer players do not have adequate health insurance, physiotherapy, or psychological rehabilitation resources.

The psychological aspects of injury recovery are critical to the rehabilitation of any athlete (Arvinen-Barrow & Walker, 2019; Podlog et al., 2023). Injured players may be faced with additional emotional discomfort due to the competition for their position, as well as the fear of

losing their place on the roster. Many athletes rely on their football allowances to supplement their income; therefore, injuries may impose extra financial burdens along with the emotional toll. These additional pressures can cause athletes to experience increased vulnerability to anxiety, decreased confidence, and emotional fatigue. As a result, the role of psychological resilience is crucial in injury rehabilitation, as athletes who exhibit resilience will have a greater ability to stay motivated, remain optimistic, and maintain emotional stability throughout their rehabilitation process. Podlog & Eklund (2023) reported that athletes with adaptive coping mechanisms and social support are more likely to have positive experiences during rehabilitation and to have greater confidence about returning to participate in football.

The availability of social support from coaches, teammates, family, and the community has a significant impact on an athlete's psychological recovery from injury. Encouragement, reassurance, and positive communication from others can assist in building an athlete's confidence and motivation during rehabilitation. Thus, in community-based football programs such as the ones in Mashonaland Central, community support may have a supportive influence on an athlete's recovery from injury and emotional adjustment to an injury. Recent research by Arvinen-Barrow and Walker (2019) indicates that athletes who utilize psychological strategies during rehabilitation, including goal setting, emotional regulation training, relaxation techniques, and positive self-talk, achieve improved rehabilitation results to improve their function after injury. As a result, incorporating psychological support systems into injury rehabilitation programmes may promote resiliency and enhance long-term athlete well-being in semi-professional soccer in Zimbabwe.

2.4.7 Coaching Behaviour and Resilience Development

The behaviours of coaches have a significant impact on the athlete's ability to be psychologically resilient and the emotional coping mechanisms that are developed within their football environment. Coaches are responsible for creating team culture, providing an emotional climate, the communication style of the team, and the motivational aspect of their respective players. According to Ntoumanis and Standage (2009), positive coaching behaviours provide athletes with the ability to develop self-confidence as well as strong coping strategies; they also improve emotional regulation and increase the ability to develop psychological resilience. Athletes who

function in a supportive coaching environment will receive constructive feedback, will be encouraged to express their emotions, will have the opportunity to communicate effectively, will be treated fairly, and will be empowered to achieve success as a result of the support received from their coach. Athletes who receive support from their coach will be more likely to maintain their emotional stability and the ability to be resilient when faced with difficulties.

However, coaching behaviours characterized by controlling behaviours and excessive criticism, such as punishment, intimidation, or setting unrealistic expectations on athletes, will negatively impact the psychological well-being of the athlete. Jowett et al. (2017) found that athletes who work in hostile coaching environments will develop anxiety, burnout, and experience emotional fatigue, along with having a reduced coping ability. In the semi-professional Football League of Zimbabwe, coaching has many weaknesses stemming from poor structural organisation, lack of finances, and pressure from club stakeholders, for example, Supporters and Club Management. Coaches who are engaged in an unstable football system can also have higher degrees of emotional exhaustion, causing the coach to impact the interaction with the athlete. This can result in a team having an emotionally unstable environment, which impacts the development of resilience in the athletes.

The coaches of Mashonaland Central have a significant role in assisting athletes with organisational challenges, the pressures of competition, and the expectations set by the community. Coaching behaviours can enhance resilience through establishing emotional support, communication, the development of self-confidence, and team cohesiveness. Therefore, resilience interventions in football need to include coaches and the management structures, in addition to the athletes themselves.

2.4.8 Football Culture, Community Expectations, and Resilience in Mashonaland Central

In the Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe, the football culture has a major influence on the psychological state of a player, his emotional development, and the development of resilience among footballers. In communities such as Bindura, Shamva, Mt. Darwin, and Mazowe, most football clubs closely link their teams to the identity, pride, and social cohesion of their local community. A community-sponsored football environment, therefore, creates a highly emotionally charged environment for the athletes to perform, making the athletes the symbol of collective

aspirations and the representation of their communities. The football-consuming culture developed in Zimbabwe establishes a strong influence on the supporters to impact the emotional experiences of the athletes. The positive encouragement provided by the supporters creates a positive impact on the motivation, develops confidence, and provides the athlete with emotional security.

Excessive criticism, unrealistic expectations, and pressure for instant success can negatively affect the emotional well-being and resilience of players. According to Bryan et al. (2019), social evaluative stress occurs when an athlete feels under pressure not to disappoint some important social group.

In the case of players in a Mashonaland Central football environment, there is often added emotional pressure related to the association of successful football with community good reputation and pride. Therefore, losing games or performing poorly will attract both criticism and emotional disappointment from the supporters and other stakeholders associated with that football club. At the selected clubs in Mashonaland Central, players play in an environment of passionate football where the community has high expectations of success and promotion for that team. Therefore, the players must demonstrate high levels of commitment, discipline, and consistent performance irrespective of the socio-economic and organisational challenges in and around the team they perform for. These expectations of them can either increase their resiliency due to motivation and emotional support or decrease their emotional stability due to excessive pressure and anxiety.

The Ubuntu philosophy of African communities has an important influence on the development of an individual's resiliency (Mugumbate 2020). The Ubuntu philosophy focuses on the development of a collective identity, unity, emotional support, and shared responsibility. Hartley et al. (2022) further support the idea that the Ubuntu philosophy contributes to African athletes' emotional connection to others and coping ability24. Players who are involved with strong community support systems are better equipped to handle adversity and will recover from failure sooner than those players that do not. Positive experiences associated with anything that is used for sports will have both an effect on the sport and the community. In this case, it means that the psychological resources used for modern football culture and community expectations can be the

basis for developing context-specific interventions that would work in Zimbabwe's semi-pro football environment.

2.4.9 Resilience Training Programmes (Rtps) For Footballers

Resilience training programmes (RTPs) are structured psychological interventions used to develop psychological resilience in athletes. A modern concept in sport psychology is that psychological resilience is not just a natural trait players have, but rather it is a skill set that can be systematically developed through specific interventions. According to Sarkar and Fletcher (2017), RTPs focus on developing protective psychological factors such as optimism, self-belief, attentional control, emotional regulation, and problem-solving capacity in the athlete. RTPs and football players who are involved in RTPs will perform better when under pressure and have greater levels of consistency in competing at high levels despite experiencing stressful situations.

Some common RTPs are mindfulness, stress management, goal setting, emotional regulation, relaxation training, mental imaging, cognitive restructuring, and positive self-talk. RTPs increase an athlete's ability to cope with pressure, recover from failure, and maintain an even keel during competition. Gucciardi and colleagues (2017) conducted research that demonstrated the positive impacts of structured psychological skills training, with respect to confidence, emotional control, coping skills, and performance in the sport of football. Additionally, research has shown that resilience training can enhance adaptability and recovery from injuries, defeats, and organisational adversity. Even though there is a global movement toward establishing resilience training programmes, Zimbabwean semi-professional football clubs do not have structured psychological support systems in place to assist their players.

Most clubs are primarily focused on developing players' physical strength and tactical knowledge with little emphasis on their psychological growth. Zimbabwean football semi-professional clubs do not have structured psychological support systems to back up players with mental issues. Most of the clubs emphasize players' physical condition and tactical skills, and have given less or no attention to the mental state of the players. Lack of funds, lack of well-trained sports psychologists, and lack of awareness on matters relating to mental health are contributing factors to this dilemma.

If the Mashonaland Central-based teams are going to make use of resilience training programs, chances are high that their players' emotionality and coping skills under extreme circumstances will be sharpened, and self-confidence in difficult football scenarios will improve. By applying psychological intervention programmes to the club's training structures, the Mashonaland Central clubs' players' mental ability will likely improve in the long run, as well as their ability to perform consistently in the entire duration of the Northern Region Division One Soccer League season.

2.5 Model Development in Sport Psychology

Model development in sport psychology has gained increasing attention, as research continues to move beyond merely describing phenomena to the development of practical frameworks explaining, predicting, and enhancing athlete outcomes (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). Models represent simplified descriptions of complex psychological phenomena and provide a means for researchers, sport psychology practitioners, sport governing bodies, and coaches to examine how individual differences, organizational structures, and social environments interact to shape individual adjustment and performance in sport (Wagstaff et al., 2021). Contemporary sport psychology has increasingly sought to build on these established models and generate new perspectives that enhance understanding of multifaceted sport psychology constructs, including sport resilience.

Within this line of research development, there has been a gradual shift away from context-free models towards context-specific models, which explicitly incorporate environmental and social factors. For example, many earlier conceptualizations of sport resilience draw upon psychological models that, although robust in Western settings (Galli & Gonzalez, 2015), do not necessarily account for sport contexts from different socio-cultural environments. It has been suggested that models that define sport resilience solely on individual psychological attributes like mental toughness, self-discipline, and optimism provide an incomplete account of the complex dynamics of resilience, particularly within sport contexts in the global south, where resilience often involves communal and shared practices, spiritual practices, cultural values, and structural barriers (Ryba et al., 2020).

Several popular sport psychology models have shaped contemporary research on sport resilience, including Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) Psychological Resilience Model, which describes the process by which personal resources interact with protective environmental influences and positive appraisals in the context of adverse life events. Galli and Vealey's (2008) model explains sport resilience as a multi-dynamic process that encompasses Adversity, Protective Factors, coping Processes, and positive Adaptations. A more recent ecological framework to resilience has also emerged, which recognizes the complexity of individual, interpersonal, organizational, and environmental systems contributing to an individual's adaptive capacity (Ungar, 2021).

The process of model development typically involves conceptually identifying specific constructs, exploring them through empirical means, relating constructs to current theory, constructing the model based on this data and theoretically grounded constructs, and validating and refining the model (Meleis, 2018). Early in the process of sport resilience model development, qualitative data typically play an important role because they help researchers explore the lived experiences of athletes and identify context-specific relevant constructs. These findings are usually interpreted, combined with existing theory, to establish a conceptual model to explain the phenomena and inform further intervention. Contemporary sport psychologists have increasingly advocated for culturally grounded sport resilience models development, proposing that valid and robust psychological models be grounded in the context where athletes compete rather than imported from a different socio-cultural region (Ryba et al., 2020; Schinke et al., 2022), echoing the decolonial scholars' call to develop contextually rich Indigenous knowledge.

Despite the progress in sport psychology literature surrounding the development of context-specific models, there has been a dearth of literature focusing on context-specific sport resilience models for athletes in Africa. Furthermore, little evidence exists that addresses models that explicitly integrate female gendered cultural expectations, resource limitations, community factors, and sociopolitical influences within the context of predominantly male sports in Africa, especially in countries like Zimbabwe, due to the importation of predominantly male models to contexts that were not congruent with their social, environmental, and sociopolitical realities. This has culminated in a considerable empirical and contextual void that this research will fill.

The present study, therefore, aims to generate a contextually specific, psychologically focused resilience model within the context of women athletes playing exclusively male-dominated sport codes in Zimbabwe based on their life experiences. This model is expected to combine the best individual psychological resources, appraisal processes, coping, social supports, the influence of organizations, and sociocultural contexts to offer an evidence-based framework for theory building, intervention design, policy, athlete support, and gender inclusion initiatives in sport contexts within Zimbabwe.

2.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter reviewed current literature about psychological resilience in an environment of semi-professional football, focusing specifically on the psychosocial environments of the selected Mashonaland Central teams and the Northern Region Division One League. The review examined the key concepts, theories, and empirical studies underpinning resilience development in football environments. The Psychological Resilience Theory, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and Socio-Ecological Model provided the theoretical foundation for the understanding of how players respond to adversity and adapt to challenging circumstances. This chapter also reviewed that semi-professional players face challenges such as financial constraints and injuries, and the importance of emotional regulation and coping strategies in strengthening resilience, to also identify the lack of context-specific resilience models for Zimbabwean semi-professional football.

CHAPTER THREE
MATERIALS AND METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a research strategy adopted to develop and validate a context-specific Psychological Resilience Model for semi-professional football players competing in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League in Zimbabwe. The chapter outlines the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, model development and validation processes, and ethical considerations.

The study adopted an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design consisting of four interconnected phases. The first phase involved qualitative exploration of psychological resilience challenges, influencing factors, coping strategies, and support systems experienced by semi-professional football players. Data obtained from the qualitative phase served to inform the design of a quantitative instrument, which was administered in phase two to establish the prevalence and salience of these identified resilience factors. Phase three resulted in the integration of qualitative and quantitative data to form a context-specific psychological resilience model, while the fourth phase aimed at validating this model via stakeholders' review and expert feedback. The rationale for the design choice of the study stems from the acknowledgement that psychological resilience is a multifaceted phenomenon with various influences of a contextual nature, which no single methodology can comprehensively address.

Hence, the application of a mixed method approach will grant an in-depth understanding of resilience in the semi-professional football context and will allow the development of the empirical and contextually driven psychological resilience model.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (QUAL → QUAN → Integration → Validation). Creswell and Plano Clark (2023) describe exploratory sequential mixed

methods research as a design in which qualitative data are collected and analysed first, followed by quantitative data collection and analysis informed by the qualitative findings. In this study, this design was appropriate because the overarching purpose of the study was not simply about assessing psychological resilience, but more importantly, for the construction and validation of a psychologically resilient model specific to the context. The collection and analysis of qualitative data first provided a deep understanding of the players' resilience issues and growth within the semi-professional environment, which was used to generate an instrument to use in a quantitative design to assess levels and salience of different resilience aspects.

Mixed Methods have been integrated in this study, primarily for the increase in data reliability, validity, and the practical significance of findings, for example, by combining in-depth qualitative investigation with the ability to ascertain relationships and generalizing across contexts.

This design also permits the Researcher to start to gain some evidence as part of a qualitative study before the quantitative aspect, thus ensuring the proposed psychological resilience model is derived from the real-life experience of players involved in football.

Mixed Methods Diagram (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2. 2 MIXED METHOD DIAGRAM



3.2.1 The Semi-Professional Football Context in Mashonaland Central

The semi-professional football context in Mashonaland Central is one of severe limitations. Football in the region faces considerable adversity, including precarious finances, lack of essential sport resources and infrastructure, minimal accessibility to sport psychology expertise, sporadic and unreliable remuneration of athletes, and intense public pressure on clubs and individual players. Clubs participating in the Northern Region Division One League regularly contend with resource shortfalls that inevitably compromise the well-being and performance levels of their players.

Consequently, footballers within the region are often compelled to confront a spectrum of psychological adversities such as the pressure to succeed, stress resulting from injuries, fear of non-selection, uncertainty over career progression, and the challenges of balancing sport demands with family, educational, and occupational responsibilities. This multifaceted context highlights the critical significance of psychological resilience as a prerequisite for sustained participation and optimal performance. Psychological resilience in sport is defined as an individual's ability to adjust, bounce back, and continue functioning in a positive manner when faced with the difficulties, stress, and hardships associated with athletic endeavor (Wade, Frielick, J. P., and Eklund, A.). K., 2016).

The extant body of literature suggests that psychological resilience is a dynamic phenomenon that is developed through the interplay of individual characteristics, coping abilities, the social support network of an athlete, environmental influences of the sport organization, and even community factors (Wade et al., 2016; Andersen, 2005; Henriksen, Larsen, C. H., and Pedersen, 2017).

In view of the peculiar context of semi-professional football in Zimbabwe, there arises a compelling need for the construction of a contextually appropriate model for psychological resilience rather than exclusively using models developed in Western regions (Europe, USA, and Australia).

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study was guided by the pragmatic research paradigm, which is considered the most appropriate philosophical foundation for mixed methods research. Pragmatism is based on the view that the choice of research methods should be driven primarily by the nature of the research problem and the objectives of the study rather than by adherence to a single philosophical position

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Unlike paradigms that are exclusively associated with either qualitative or quantitative research, pragmatism recognises that different methods provide different but complementary perspectives for understanding complex phenomena. The present study sought not only to explore the psychological resilience experiences of semi-professional football players but also to quantify the prevalence of the identified resilience factors and subsequently develop and validate a context-specific psychological resilience framework. Achieving these objectives required both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative phase provided rich insights into players lived experiences, resilience challenges, coping strategies, and support systems, while the quantitative phase enabled the researcher to confirm and measure the importance of these factors across a broader population. The integration of findings from both phases informed the development of a practical and evidence-based resilience framework.

Pragmatism was therefore appropriate because it supports the integration of multiple sources of evidence to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. It acknowledges that reality is multifaceted and that combining qualitative and quantitative methods can produce more meaningful, credible, and useful findings than relying on a single methodological approach. Furthermore, pragmatism places emphasis on generating practical solutions to real-world problems, which aligns with the primary aim of this study: to develop a context-specific psychological resilience framework that can be implemented to support the psychological well-being and performance of semi-professional football players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League. Accordingly, the pragmatic paradigm provided the philosophical foundation for adopting an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design, where qualitative findings informed the development of the quantitative instrument, and the integration of both datasets led to the development and validation of the final psychological resilience framework.

Figure 2. 3 PRAGMATIC PARADIGM



3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study followed four sequential phases.

3.4.1 Phase 1: Qualitative Exploration

The first phase focused on exploring psychological resilience experiences among semi-professional football players. This phase addressed the following objectives:

Objective 1: To explore the psychological resilience challenges experienced by semi-professional football players.

Objective 2: To explore how individual, team, organisational, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological resilience.

Objective 3: To explore the coping strategies and support systems used by players and technical staff to promote psychological resilience.

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with players, coaches, technical staff, and club administrators. The qualitative findings generated themes and sub-themes that informed the development of the quantitative instrument.

3.4.2 Phase 2: Quantitative Assessment

The second phase involved a quantitative assessment of resilience factors identified during the qualitative phase. This phase addressed **Objective 4**: To assess the frequency and perceived importance of resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems identified during the qualitative phase. A questionnaire was developed based on themes emerging from the qualitative phase. The quantitative phase enabled assessment of the prevalence and perceived importance of resilience factors among a larger sample of semi-professional football players.

Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale (CD-RISC-10) and Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) provided the two main quantitative measures as they are two of the most widely used and established reliable measures of resiliency in research related to resiliency.

- **Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale (CD-RISC-10)**

The CD-RISC-10 assesses how well an athlete can handle stress, recover from adversity, work under pressure, and maintain their psychological stability.

The CD-RISC-10 has 10 items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (0-4) of:

• 0=Not true at all.

• 4=True nearly all the time.

Higher scores from the CD-RISC-10 will be indicative of higher levels of psychological resiliency.

- **Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)**

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) is used to measure how well players rebound after stress, adversity, injury, and emotional pressure. This measure consists of 6 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1-5):

• 1=strongly disagree.

• 5=strongly agree.

Using both instruments strengthened construct validity and provided a thorough assessment of resiliency in semi-professional football players.

3.4.3 Phase 3: Model Development

The third phase focused on developing the context-specific psychological resilience model.

This phase addressed **Objective 5: To integrate qualitative and quantitative findings in developing a context-specific psychological resilience model.**

Model development followed five stages:

Stage 1: Identification of psychological resilience challenges.

Stage 2: Identification of resilience factors.

Stage 3: Identification of coping strategies and support systems.

Stage 4: Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings.

Stage 5: Development of the draft psychological resilience model.

The model was guided by Psychological Resilience Theory, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and the Socio-Ecological Model.

3.4.4 Phase 4: Model Validation

The fourth and final phase of the study focused on validating the proposed Psychological Resilience Model developed from the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings. Model validation is an essential stage in model development as it enables researchers to determine whether the proposed model is relevant, practical, acceptable, and applicable within the context for which it was designed. This phase addressed **Objective 6: To evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of the proposed psychological resilience model**. A stakeholder validation workshop was conducted involving players, coaches, technical staff, club administrators, and sport psychology experts. Participants assessed relevance, feasibility, practicality, acceptability, and sustainability. Feedback was incorporated into the refinement of the final model.

3.5 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The study was guided by the Pragmatic Research Philosophy. Pragmatism was considered appropriate because the study sought practical solutions to real-world challenges affecting semi-professional football players. According to William James (1907), the philosophy permits the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches and emphasises the use of methods that best address the research problem. Pragmatism recognises that both subjective experiences and objective measurements contribute valuable knowledge. Consequently, qualitative exploration and quantitative assessment were combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of psychological resilience.

3.6 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The study employed an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Strategy.

Figure 3. 1: Exploratory sequential Mixed Methods Strategy



This strategy ensured that the quantitative instrument and final resilience model were grounded in the participants' lived experiences.

3.7 TIME HORIZON

The research was designed with a cross-sectional time horizon. A cross-sectional time horizon provided the researcher with the opportunity of capturing participants' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour at one particular moment in time without having to re-sample the same set of data for some variables of the study, on more than one occasion. For this research, a cross-sectional time horizon was suitable because the researcher intended to find out the psychological resilience challenges, resilience factors, copings, mechanisms, and sources of support amg the semi-professional football player within the 2025-2026 particular competitive season within the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League and that data collection from

participants would only be done at one point in time, thus the data could only afford to show the current resilience experiences and influencing circumstances rather than the trends that could be drawn if followed over time. Moreover, the cross-sectional study design was relevant and suitable to measure, at a single point in time, the frequency and significance of factors impacting resilience, which had been developed through the qualitative study, and which, in the quantitative part, could be statistically verified.

This approach was suitable because the study aimed to develop a context-specific psychological resilience model based on current experiences and perceptions rather than investigating changes in resilience over time. Cross-sectional designs are widely used in mixed methods sport science research because they are cost-effective, less time-consuming, and appropriate for examining relationships among variables within a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Although cross-sectional studies do not establish causal relationships, they provide valuable information for understanding phenomena and informing model development and intervention design (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, the adoption of a cross-sectional time horizon enabled the researcher to efficiently collect both qualitative and quantitative data required for the development and validation of the proposed psychological resilience model.

3.8 Population and Sampling

3.8.1 Population

According to Asmiah et al (2017), the target population refers to a group of individuals or objects that researchers have an interest in generalising the conclusions, whereas the accessible population is the subset of the target population that the researchers have accessible reach to. Participants consisted of registered semi-professional football players, coaches, technical personnel, and club administrators who were all participating in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League during the 2026 season. It was not possible to undertake a census of the entire population because of the financial, logistical, and temporal constraints involved. Accessible population was the approximate 250 members (players, Coaches, technical and administrative staff members) of the four targeted football clubs that fulfilled the target population.

3.8.2 Sampling Procedures

Following the Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design used in this study, the sampling procedures employed to collect data in the qualitative and quantitative phases differed because of the contrasting objectives of each phase and required distinct participant selection methods

Qualitative Phase

In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was utilized.

This sampling approach was useful in selecting participants who possessed direct and rich knowledge of the phenomenon under consideration (28 participants).

These participants for this phase include semi-professional football players, coaches, technical personnel, and administrators in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League as information-rich samples as a result of their direct engagement with the sport. Their personal involvement in the sport has allowed them to glean information related to resilience, challenges, and coping with these in a semi-professional football context, with criteria like years of experience in football, league involvement, willingness to participate, and position played in the league as the basis of selection. Players came from different clubs to be assured of variation in their responses, and coaches, technical personnel, and administrators also came from these clubs due to their respective positions on the management side of their clubs, as head coaches are important and technically astute coaches responsible for psychological development and club administrators are also responsible for the holistic development of the club as whole including players and technical staff members. Data will be collected until a point of saturation has been reached, where the researcher reaches an extent of no new themes, patterns, or categories appearing in their work. Approximately 25- 30 participants from the identified clubs are expected.

The selected sample includes senior and key players from each club, head coaches, technical staff responsible for the mental and overall welfare of players, and all administrators of the selected club

Quantitative Phase

Stratified random sampling procedures were used to ensure representation from each player subgroup (club, playing position), which might have different responses to the questionnaire (Saunders et al. 2019), as semi-professional footballers may have variations concerning club,

position, and experience, which may result in differences regarding their psychological resilience experience. The target population was estimated at 250 registered players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League. Cochran's (1977) formula for a finite population was used in determining the adequate sample size for the quantitative phase.

The Cochran's formula to determine sample size for a large population (an infinite population is defined as larger than 20,000 people), is as follows:

Using Cochran's formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- (n_0) = initial sample size
- (Z) = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence level)
- (p) = estimated proportion of the population possessing the characteristic of interest (0.50)
- (q) = 1 – p (0.50)
- (e) = desired margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n_0 = \frac {(1.96)^2(0.50)(0.50)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25} {0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = 384.16$$

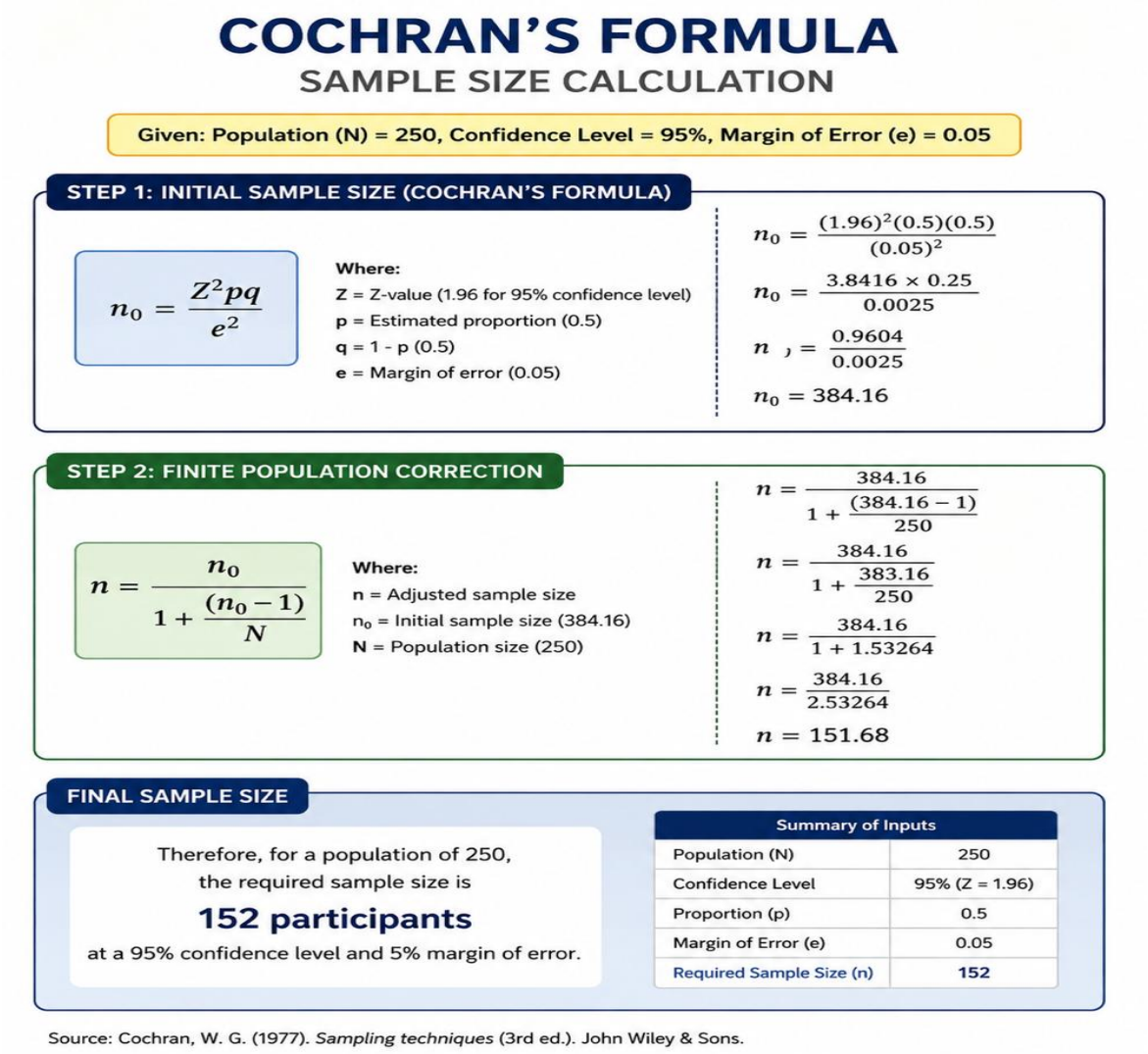
Since the target population was finite (N = 250), the sample size was adjusted using Cochran's finite population correction formula:

$$n = \frac {n_0}{1+\frac{(n_0-1)}{N}}$$

Where:

- (n) = adjusted sample size

- (n_0) = initial sample size (384)



Source: Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

- (N) = population size (250)

Substituting the values:

[n = \frac{384}{1+\frac{383}{250}}]

[n = \frac{384}{1+1.532}]

[n = \frac{384}{2.532}]

[n = 151.66]

[n \approx 152]

Figure 3. 2`: COCHRAN'S FORMULA

Therefore, a minimum sample size of 152 players was necessary for the quantitative stage of the research. After calculating a sample size, the population was then stratified into club affiliation, playing position, and playing experience. It was deemed important that club affiliation be represented in the sampling process to include all participating teams within the league. Playing positions (i.e., goalkeeper, defender, and midfielder, forward) were included as playing positions may represent varied demands placed upon player performance and stress. Also considered was playing experience, as the nature of experiences of resilience may be different in players with lower levels of playing experience compared to those with greater experience.

The population was stratified into the variables mentioned above, and stratified random sampling was conducted for participants within each stratum. Stratified random sampling is an approach where the population is divided into relevant strata, and then sampling is performed separately from each stratum. This method was used for the following reasons: firstly, the minimum size of participants is greater than that required for simple random sampling. A greater than normal sample of this kind should reduce sampling errors and make the sample more representative. Secondly, the stratification of this kind makes representation from minority strata within the population more possible. While purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain rich and detailed insights into psychological resilience experiences during the qualitative phase, stratified random sampling provided broader quantitative evidence regarding the prevalence and importance of resilience factors among semi-professional football players. Together, these sampling approaches strengthened the comprehensiveness, credibility, and applicability of the study findings.

Justification for the Sequential Sampling Strategy

The use of this strategy has increased the representativeness of the sample by making proportionate selection of individuals from relevant subgroups more possible; it also reduces sampling bias and should increase the likelihood of findings reflecting generalizable knowledge that could be used across the semi-professional football population.

The use of Purposive and Snowball Sampling in the Qualitative Stage and Stratified random sampling in the Quantitative phase aligns with the Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design that this research adopts. The rationale for adopting a stratified random sample during this quantitative phase is that this research adopted an Exploratory sequential mixed methods design where qualitative inquiry begins, then the quantitative research phase builds on the qualitative phase to answer questions (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2018). Consequently, both the sampling procedures differ because both phases serve a different methodological purpose.

For example, during the Qualitative Phase, Purposive and Snowball sampling were deemed most appropriate to answer rich, detailed, experience-based information from participants who are experts of the phenomenon of interest – Psychological Resilience in semi-professional sport. Purposive sampling is a technique where the researcher deliberately selects participants who can give information to serve the purposes of the researcher (Patton, 1990). In this instance, it was used to purposefully select players, coaches, team managers, and administration staff with the relevant expertise of psychological resilience within the semi-professional Football context. Snowball sampling was used in addition to the purposive approach, with participants suggesting individuals who have considerable knowledge of the topic of research. The qualitative Phase was continued until data saturation was achieved, whereby no significantly new thematic information emerged from further participants (Bowen et al. 2011).

After a detailed qualitative exploration of the research phenomena has been completed, the themes that have arisen will inform the structure of the Structured Questionnaire to be completed during the Quantitative phase. The purpose of the Quantitative phase is not exploratory, but confirmatory in that the themes arising from the qualitative research are used to construct a questionnaire which is designed to collect statistically representative data that can test the prevalence and salience of these identified phenomena from the wider semi-professional player population.

Therefore, stratified random sampling was conducted to establish a representative sample that reduced the biases that can occur with non-probability methods (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2018). Stratification by club affiliation, playing position, and playing experience ensures a spread of

diverse backgrounds and perspectives relevant to resilience within the semi-professional game are adequately represented within the quantitative sample. A stratified sample design reduces the amount of sampling error to the minimum possible when comparing any set of sampling estimates. Such as a reduced amount of sampling error increases the precision of statistics that are derived from them (Thurston & Young, 1990). Using the purposive and snowball sampling procedures in the Qualitative Phase and Stratified random sampling in the Quantitative Phase strengthens the credibility and generalisability of the study by informing its various research phases with both depth of experience and breadth of generalizability, respectively (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021).

The purpose of employing this approach of research methods has been to ensure the researchers gained rich insight from direct personal experiences during the qualitative phase and gathered statistical information to generalise the phenomena within the semi-professional football participants. Stratified Random Sampling has been employed to ensure that each segment or subgroup from the population is properly identified and represented within the sample. Moreover, stratified random sampling helps to provide a more representative sample of subgroups if any variation exists within these subgroups in the population.

The division of samples was based on club affiliation, player position, and playing experience. The use of the same set of variables that defined stratification during the simple random sample during qualitative and quantitative samples ensures the relevance and consistency of the samples. Simple Random Sampling was used to represent a fair and impartial distribution of participants from each of the sub-groups while ensuring each member was allotted a chance to participate.

3.8.3 Inclusion Criteria

In order to ensure participants' provided knowledge and experience relevant for this study, selection criteria were developed and adhered to during data collection. Each potential participant had to be actively registered with a club playing within the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League and playing regularly at the semi-professional level during the period of data collection. Players needed to have played in a full competitive season in the league, indicating they

had considerable experience playing in semi-professional football. Coaches, team staff, and club executives also needed to be actively involved with their respective teams. They had to be present during the data collection process and be willing to provide detailed insights into their experiences and perspectives. Lastly, participants had to be willing to offer their informed consent to participate in the study, having been thoroughly informed of the research's purpose, methods, potential benefits, and ethical considerations.

3.8.4 Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the robustness and relevance of this research, participants were excluded based on any condition or circumstance that would prevent or impair their ability to provide meaningful information. Any participant who was unavailable during the proposed dates and times for data collection or was unable to allocate the time required to participate fully in research protocols was excluded. Anyone unwilling to provide informed consent, after being provided comprehensive information about the study, was automatically disqualified. Similarly, individuals who were not engaged in active football at the semi-professional level with the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League during the timeframe of the research were not eligible.

In addition, individuals who were receiving professional treatment for severe mental health conditions that could affect their capacity to participate honestly or comprehensively in interviews or questionnaire completion were not invited to join the study to safeguard their well-being and avoid undue influence on the research findings.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

3.9.1Pilot Study

To ensure the validity, reliability, and feasibility of research instruments, including interviews, the use of technology for data collection, and methods for informed consent and data management, a pilot study was completed before the main data collection process. A non-participating semi-professional Football club (BUSE LIONS FC) was selected to conduct the pilot study so that Participants possessed traits that reflected the target audience of the research, but that they would also have no knowledge or preconception that the study was related to them, as it would give an

unbiased outlook from the Participants. Approximately 10-15 semi-professional football players and 2 to 3 team management staff were recruited from this club; these participants were chosen on a similar set of criteria to those applied to the main study.

The purpose of this study was to test the procedure for collecting data, participant recruitment, equipment, and the informed consent process for the study.

After the completion of the pilot study, minor adjustments to wordings were made to selected interview questionnaires and questions for the Mendeley document based on the feedback from participants so that the main study could proceed in the best possible and most informative manner.

3.9.2 Main Study

This study followed a sequential approach of four phases, in line with the Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design. These phases provided a structured process of first understanding psychological resilience within semi-professional football players, then measuring the identified factors using quantitative methods, and finally developing and testing a psychological resilience model that is specific to this context.

Phase 1: Qualitative Exploration

The first phase of the study comprised qualitative data collection aimed at exploring the psychological resilience of semi-professional football players. This phase involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a selection of players, coaches, technical staff, and club administrators within the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League. These interviews explored, amongst others, psychological challenges experienced by players, factors influencing resilience development, coping strategies applied during adversity, and support systems available. All interviews were carried out in locations convenient to the participants and were audio recorded with their consent. Field notes were taken concurrently to capture any non-verbal signals and the context of the interactions. The process of data collection continued until saturation was achieved in thematic terms. Upon completion, the interview recordings were transcribed and analysed thematically using the NVivo software. The results derived from the thematic analysis served as the foundation for the development of the quantitative instrument that was used in the second phase of the study.

Phase 2: Quantitative Assessment

The second phase involved quantitative data collection through the use of a questionnaire, which was developed from themes generated during the first phase. The questionnaire was structured to address all aspects explored during the qualitative data collection, including psychological resilience challenges, factors of resilience, coping mechanisms, and support structures. Several standardized resilience measurement tools (e.g., Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale - CD-RISC-10 and Brief Resilience Scale – BRS) were included in the questionnaire to reinforce measurement of psychological resilience.

This survey tool was then administered to a larger sample of semi-professional football players using a suitable sampling technique. All data collection was done under the direct supervision of the researcher and was undertaken in a controlled environment. The completed questionnaires were checked for integrity, and the data were then captured into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 26) software. Data analysis for quantitative information was performed using descriptive statistical techniques to establish descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as inferential statistics to assess the perceived relevance and influence of the identified resilience factors.

Phase 3: Integration and Model Development

The third phase of this study aimed at integrating the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases in order to create a unified and comprehensive understanding of psychological resilience among semi-professional football players. This was achieved by means of joint display analysis, where the qualitative themes and the quantitative findings were juxtaposed to identify convergences and complementary aspects as well as divergences between the datasets. Using the information that emerged from this integrated data analysis, a psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players was developed. The model was designed to encapsulate all critical components of resilience-challenges, influential factors, coping strategies, support systems, and outcomes-and to depict how they interact within the specific context of semi-professional football.

Phase 4: Model Validation

The final phase of the study focused on the validation of the developed model. This phase involved the organisation of a stakeholder workshop. Participants in this workshop were a mix of semi-professional footballers, coaches, technical personnel, administrators, and sport psychology practitioners.

These stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the developed model based on its accuracy, practicality, usefulness, and applicability to the context of semi-professional football.

The feedback received during the validation workshop was analyzed and used to modify and finalize the psychological resilience model, resulting in the final validated psychological resilience model for semi-professional footballers. The iterative process across all four phases guaranteed that the final psychological resilience model was grounded in the actual lived experiences and perceptions of the players and other stakeholders, supported by evidence obtained through appropriate data analysis and validated for practical utility and applicability.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

3.10.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews and group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis, assisted by the NVivo software. Thematic analysis was chosen for this study as it is a rigorous and flexible method of analysis that systematically identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns (themes) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This was achieved through the following five iterative phases: familiarization of the data through reading the entire transcriptions of interviews and group discussions; open coding to identify, code and categorise segments of text relevant to psychological resilience; theme generation by identifying related codes and group them to form broad categories of emerging themes; refinement of themes by grouping and consolidating codes to develop and organize themes and their sub-themes; and final interpretation and reporting of themes in relation to the research questions and objectives through descriptive narratives supported by direct quotations from participants.

3.10.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data generated from the second phase study were entered into and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Before entry, completed questionnaires were screened for completion and accurately entered into the software. Descriptives of the demographic profile and response patterns were conducted using frequencies and percentages.

Means and standard deviations were used to demonstrate the central tendencies and variability of the data about perceived resilience factors, coping mechanisms, and support systems.

Internal consistency for the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, and a value of .70 and above was accepted as an indication of acceptable reliability (Taber, 2018). Finally, correlations were calculated to ascertain the strength and direction of relationships between psychological resilience and its proposed influential factors. The results of this quantitative analysis are presented to integrate with the qualitative findings.

3.10.3 Integration Analysis

Integration of qualitative and quantitative data was performed through joint display analysis. This method provides a systematic display that aligns and compares the qualitative theme with related quantitative results, making it possible to integrate the data effectively (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2023).

The study's themes and sub-themes that were derived from the qualitative phase were then juxtaposed against the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire survey, in order to identify convergence, complementarity, and divergence between the two sets of results. Convergence where the results from the two phases supported each other, enhancing credibility. Complementarity, where findings from one phase complemented, expanded, or explained findings from the other, creating a fuller picture of psychological resilience.

Divergence occurs when the results from the two phases contradict or are different, and the researcher explores possible explanations for these differences.

Through integrating, results were analyzed not in separation, but holistically, thus allowing me to reach a rich understanding of the resilience challenges, factors that influence resilience, coping, and support for semi-professional players that goes beyond simply the interpretation of both results

separately. The outcome of this integration will provide an empirical basis for the development of the context-specific psychological resilience model and thus be integrated into the final model.

3.10.3 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

A key characteristic of an exploratory sequential mixed methods design is that the quantitative component of the design is specifically informed by the findings of the qualitative phase. For the present study, qualitative data were first collected and analysed to gain insight into the experiences of semi-professional players in relation to their psychological resilience. Through thematic analysis of interview and focus group data using NVivo, several themes emerged in relation to factors that influence resilience, as well as challenges that influence it. These themes were used to formulate items for the questionnaire. Subsequently, these themes and corresponding sub-themes were examined and rephrased in a quantitative context, with each major theme and its sub-themes being transformed into questionnaire items to ensure that the developed tool captured the richness of players' lived experiences and the context of semi-professional football in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League. Rather than taking an existing psychological resilience instrument, the researcher developed an instrument tailored to the current context, ensuring that the items measured the construct of psychological resilience in a manner relevant to the context of study participants, with high content validity.

For example, the major themes that arose during analysis regarding factors affecting the psychological resilience of semi-professional footballers included 'financial stress, injury concerns, performance pressure, and career uncertainty'. These were adapted to Likert-scaled items asking respondents to what degree each affected them and to what extent their football activity was influenced by these challenges. Other themes, such as 'confidence, determination, optimism, motivation, family support, coach support, teammate support, goal setting, positive self-talk, problem-solving, and spiritual coping', were translated into appropriate questions to allow participants to rate the extent of usage or relevance of these items within their lives and within the game.

The questionnaire in effect represented an extension of the previous qualitative data and thus not merely a separately deployed information gathering instrument, thereby allowing for a more

consistent study methodology between its two phases. By allowing the previous findings to guide the subsequent data collection phase of the study, the present research was able to gain quantitative evidence to validate the patterns and relationships identified during the qualitative investigation and enhance contextual specificity within the research process.

The integration process is summarised in Table 3.1, which illustrates how qualitative themes informed the development of the quantitative questionnaire.

Table 3. 1development of Questionnaire Items from Qualitative Findings

Qualitative Theme	Sub-theme Identified	Questionnaire Construct	Example Questionnaire Item
Psychological Challenges	Financial stress	Financial stress	Financial challenges affect my ability to perform well in football.
Psychological Challenges	Injury concerns	Injury-related stress	Fear of injury affects my confidence during competition.
Psychological Challenges	Performance pressure	Performance pressure	I feel anxious because of expectations to perform well.
Psychological Challenges	Career uncertainty	Career concerns	Uncertainty about my football career causes me stress.
Resilience Factors	Confidence	Self-confidence	I remain confident even after poor performances.
Resilience Factors	Determination	Determination	I continue working hard despite setbacks.
Resilience Factors	Optimism	Optimism	I believe difficult situations will improve with effort.
Coping Strategies	Goal setting	Goal-setting behaviour	Setting personal goals helps me overcome challenges.
Coping Strategies	Positive self-talk	Positive thinking	I use positive self-talk to manage pressure.

Coping Strategies	Spiritual coping	Spiritual support	My faith helps me cope with football-related challenges.
Support Systems	Family support	Family support	My family provides emotional support during difficult times.
Support Systems	Coach support	Coach support	My coach helps me deal with psychological challenges.
Support Systems	Team support	Peer support	My teammates encourage me when I experience setbacks.

3.11 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Given the mixed methods nature of this study, separate but complementary procedures were employed to ensure the quality, credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research. Ensuring methodological rigour was important in enhancing confidence in the findings and ensuring that the developed psychological resilience model accurately reflected the experiences and perspectives of semi-professional football players.

Quantitative Strand

For the quantitative phase, several measures were implemented to ensure validity and reliability of the research instrument. Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted using participants drawn from a club that was not included in the final sample. The pilot study enabled the researcher to assess the clarity, relevance, comprehensibility, and practicality of the questionnaire items, while also identifying potential challenges that could arise during data collection. Feedback obtained during the pilot phase was used to refine the instrument and improve its overall quality.

To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was conducted. Cronbach's Alpha measures the degree to which questionnaire items consistently assess the same construct, with values of 0.70 and above generally considered acceptable for research purposes (Taber, 2018). This procedure helped ensure that the instrument produced reliable and consistent measurements of psychological resilience and its associated factors. The questionnaire was further subjected to expert review by specialists in sport psychology, research methodology,

and sports science. The experts evaluated the appropriateness, clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire items in relation to the study objectives and research questions. Their recommendations were incorporated into the final instrument before administration.

Content validity was also established by ensuring that the questionnaire adequately covered all dimensions of psychological resilience identified during the qualitative phase and reflected concepts emerging from the literature review and theoretical framework. The use of qualitative findings to inform questionnaire development strengthened the relevance and representativeness of the instrument, thereby enhancing its validity.

Qualitative Strand

To ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, several strategies were employed in line with the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Member checking was conducted by sharing summaries of interview findings and interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the information and ensure that their views had been represented correctly. The qualitative section includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This process enhanced the credibility of the findings by allowing participants to verify the researcher's interpretations. Peer debriefing was also utilised throughout the research process. The researcher engaged with supervisors and colleagues who critically reviewed coding decisions, emerging themes, and interpretations. This process helped minimise researcher bias and improved the dependability of the findings.

An audit trail was maintained throughout the study to document all stages of the research process, including methodological decisions, coding procedures, theme development, and data interpretation. The audit trail enhanced transparency and allowed the research process to be traced and evaluated by other researchers. Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple data sources and participant groups, including players, coaches, technical staff, and club administrators. The inclusion of diverse perspectives enabled the researcher to compare and corroborate findings across different sources, thereby strengthening the credibility and confirmability of the results.

Finally, reflexivity was practised throughout the study. The researcher continuously reflected on personal assumptions, experiences, and potential biases that could influence data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Reflective notes were maintained throughout the research process to enhance self-awareness and minimise subjective influence on the findings. Collectively, these procedures enhanced the validity, reliability, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and overall quality of the study, thereby strengthening confidence in the findings and the resulting psychological resilience model.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are fundamental to research involving human participants as they help safeguard participants' rights, dignity, safety, and well-being throughout the research process. Prior to the commencement of data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university research ethics committee. In addition, permission to conduct the study was sought from the appropriate football authorities, club management structures, and other relevant gatekeepers responsible for overseeing activities within the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League. Data collection only commenced after all necessary approvals and permissions had been granted.

The principle of **informed consent** was upheld throughout the study. Participants were provided with a detailed information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, research procedures, expected duration of participation, potential risks and benefits, and the intended use of the findings. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification before deciding whether to participate. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaire completion, and validation activities.

Participation in the study was entirely **voluntary**. Participants were informed that their involvement was based on their free choice and that they were under no obligation to participate. Furthermore, participants were assured that choosing not to participate or withdrawing from the study would not result in any penalties, loss of benefits, or negative consequences within their clubs or sporting environments. The study also ensured the protection of participants' **confidentiality and anonymity**. Personal information collected during the research process was

treated with strict confidence and used solely for academic purposes. Participants were assigned identification codes or pseudonyms instead of using their real names in transcripts, data files, reports, and publications. This ensured that individual participants and their respective clubs could not be identified from the findings presented.

Participants were informed of their **right to withdraw** from the study at any stage of the research process without providing a reason. They were also informed that they could decline to answer any question they considered uncomfortable or sensitive. This right was emphasised during recruitment and prior to each data collection activity to ensure that participation remained voluntary throughout the study. To ensure **data protection and security**, all interview recordings, transcripts, questionnaires, and electronic data files were securely stored. Hard-copy documents were kept in locked cabinets accessible only to the researcher, while electronic files were password-protected and stored on secure devices. Data will be retained for the period stipulated by university regulations and thereafter securely destroyed in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

Given that football players below the age of eighteen years may be involved in organised football competitions, additional ethical safeguards were applied where necessary. For participants under the age of eighteen years, **parental or guardian consent** was obtained prior to participation, while the participants themselves provided informed assent indicating their willingness to take part in the study. This ensured compliance with ethical standards governing research involving minors.

Finally, the researcher remained sensitive to participants' psychological well-being throughout the study. Since discussions related to psychological resilience could potentially evoke memories of stressful or emotionally challenging experiences, participants were informed that they could pause or terminate their participation at any time. Where necessary, participants requiring additional support would be referred to appropriate counselling or support services. By adhering to these ethical principles, the study sought to protect participants while maintaining the integrity, credibility, and professional standards of the research process.

3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the methodology adopted to develop and validate a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League. The study adopted an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design consisting of qualitative exploration, quantitative assessment, model development, and model validation phases. Data collection, sampling, analysis procedures, validity measures, and ethical considerations were described. The next chapter presents the findings generated from the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents in-depth research analyses, presentations, and discussions of the findings obtained from the study on developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Division One Northern Region, Zimbabwe. This chapter provides a detailed presentation and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative findings that were applicable and organized in six sections corresponding to the six research objectives through the mixed methods approach, with outcomes gathered through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and stakeholder consultants. The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 and NVivo 15 for the interviews to assess emerging similarities, patterns, and the major stressors associated with the psychological resilience of the players in semi-professional football. This chapter is structured into three key sections: the study's response rate, the demographic information of respondents, and the analysis of findings in relation to the research questions.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS CHARACTERISTICS

4.2.1 Qualitative participants

A total of 28 participants took part in the qualitative phase of the study, comprising 16 semi-professional football players, four coaches, four technical staff members, and four club administrators. Participants had between one and ten years of football experience.

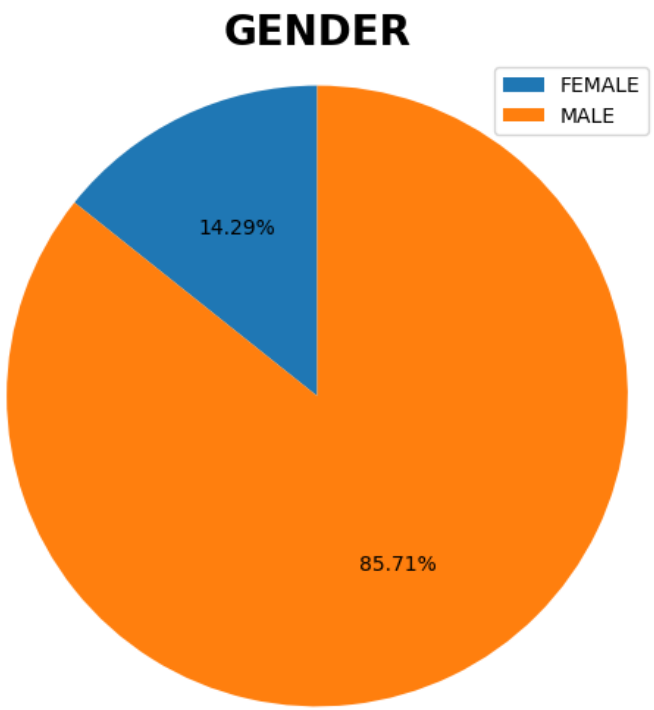
4.2.2 Demographic data

This section presents an analysis of the key participants' demographics, with a focus on gender and age. Understanding these characteristics was essential for profiling the respondents, thereby enhancing the credibility and relevance of the insights they provided and improving understanding of the study population.

4.2.3 Demographic Characteristics of Qualitative Participants

4.1 GENDER OF QUALITATIVE PARTICIPANTS

Figure 4. 1 Gender of Qualitative Participants



4.1.1 Gender Respondents' Interviews

Table 4. 1 Gender Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	4	14.3	14.3	14.3
Male	24	85.7	85.7	100
Total	28	100	100	

The results in Table 4.1 indicate that out of the 28 interviewed participants, 24 (85.7%) were male, while 4 (14.3%) were female. Though the interviews were male-dominated, the inclusion of female participants ensured that diverse perspectives were represented in the qualitative data

4.2.3 Quantitative Participants

A total of 152 semi-professional football players completed the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 92.7%.

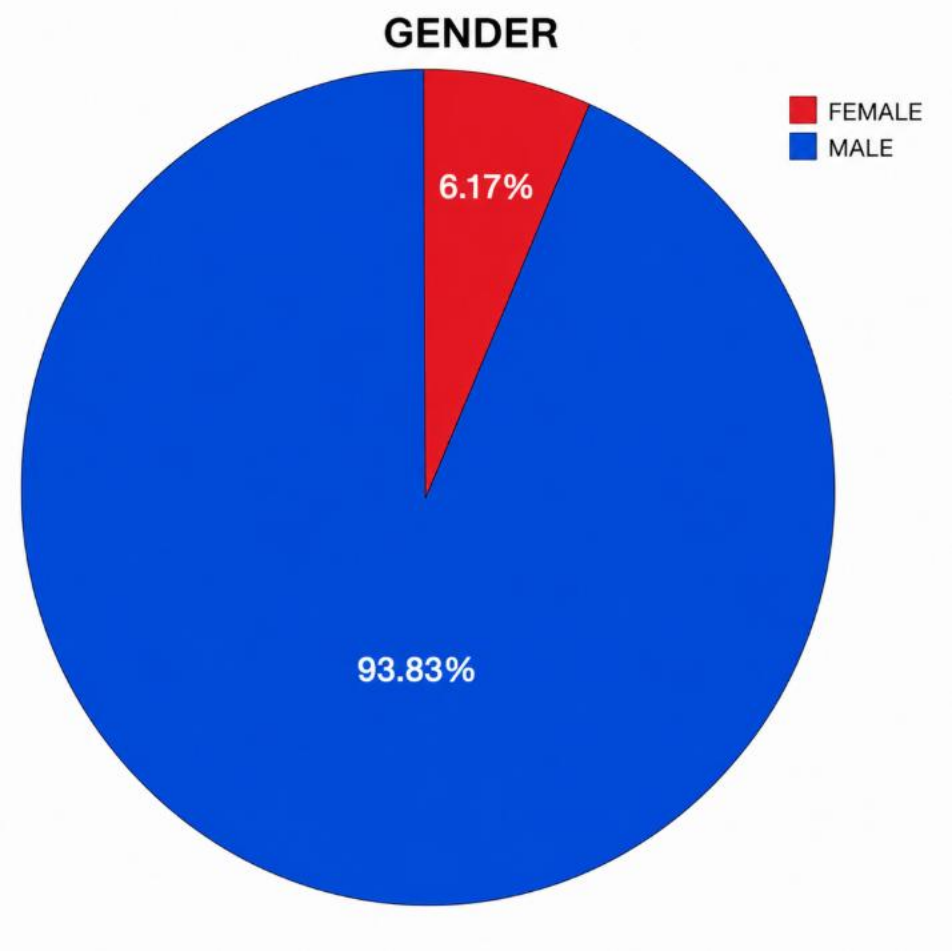
4.2 GENDER OF QUANTITATIVE PARTICIPANTS

TABLE 4.2 below shows the gender composition of the questionnaire of respondents.

Table 4. 2 Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	10	7.3	7.3	7.3
Male	142	92.7	92.7	100
Total	152	100	100	

Figure 4. 2 Gender of Participant



The above figure illustrates that respondents constituted 92.7% of the total sample in the study, while female respondents represented 7.3%. The proportion of male respondents to the female respondents reflects the male-dominated nature of Division One football clubs, where most players and technical personnel are men. Furthermore, the gender distribution in the study is representative of the target population and provides an accurate reflection of the demographic composition of semi-professional football clubs included in the research.

4.2.4 Response rate

This section presents the response rate proportion compared to one of the questionnaires that were distributed, and the interviews carried out, completed, and returned by the participants and respondents involved in the study. A high response rate was important in ensuring the reliability, credibility, and representation of the data collected from semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One.

4.3.1 Interview response rate

Table 4. 3 Interview Response Rate

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Interviewees Targeted	28	100
Interviewees Participated	28	100
Interviewees Decline\Not Available	N\A	N\A
Total	28	100

Table 4.3 shows the response rate for the interviews conducted with the selected key individuals and informants from the four Northern region Division One Football clubs in Mashonaland Central. A total of 28 participants were selected and targeted for the interviews, and all 28 successfully participated, resulting in a response rate of 100%. No interviewees declined participation or were unavailable during the data collection period.

4.3.2 Questionnaire response rate table

Table 4. 4 Questionnaire Response Rate

Response category	Frequency	Percentage %
Questionnaires Distributed	164	100
Questionnaires Returned	152	93.1
Questionnaires Not Returned	12	6.9
Total	164	100

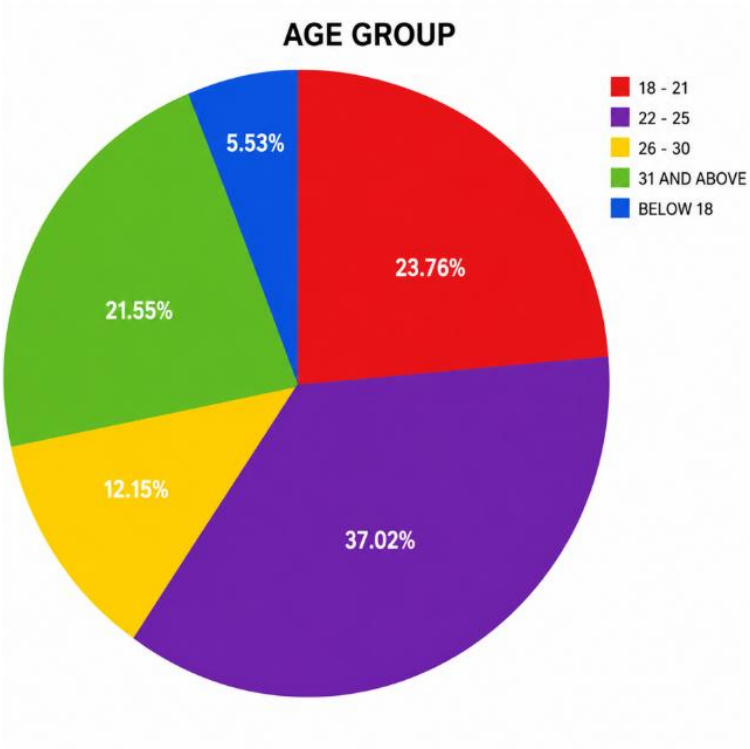
The data and findings displayed in Table 4.4 indicate that from the 164 questionnaires distributed to the respondents across the four Division One football clubs in Mashonaland Central Northern Region, 152 questionnaires were successfully returned and completed, therefore resulting in a

response rate of 93.1%. Therefore, no questionnaires were lost or left unanswered during the data collection process. The high response rate witnessed demonstrates and indicates a strong level of willingness, cooperation, and commitment by the semi-professional players, providing sufficient data for reliable statistical analysis and interpretation.

A response rate of 93.1% is considered excellent in a survey because the likelihood of non-response bias is minimized, enhancing and improving representativeness, reliability, and validity of the findings. According to Nayak and Narayan (2019), high response rates improve data quality by ensuring that the views of the target population are represented sufficiently in the research. Therefore, regarding the psychological resilience model for the semi-professional players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One, the response rate achieved is adequate for drawing valid conclusions.

4.3.4 Age of respondents (qualitative and quantitative)

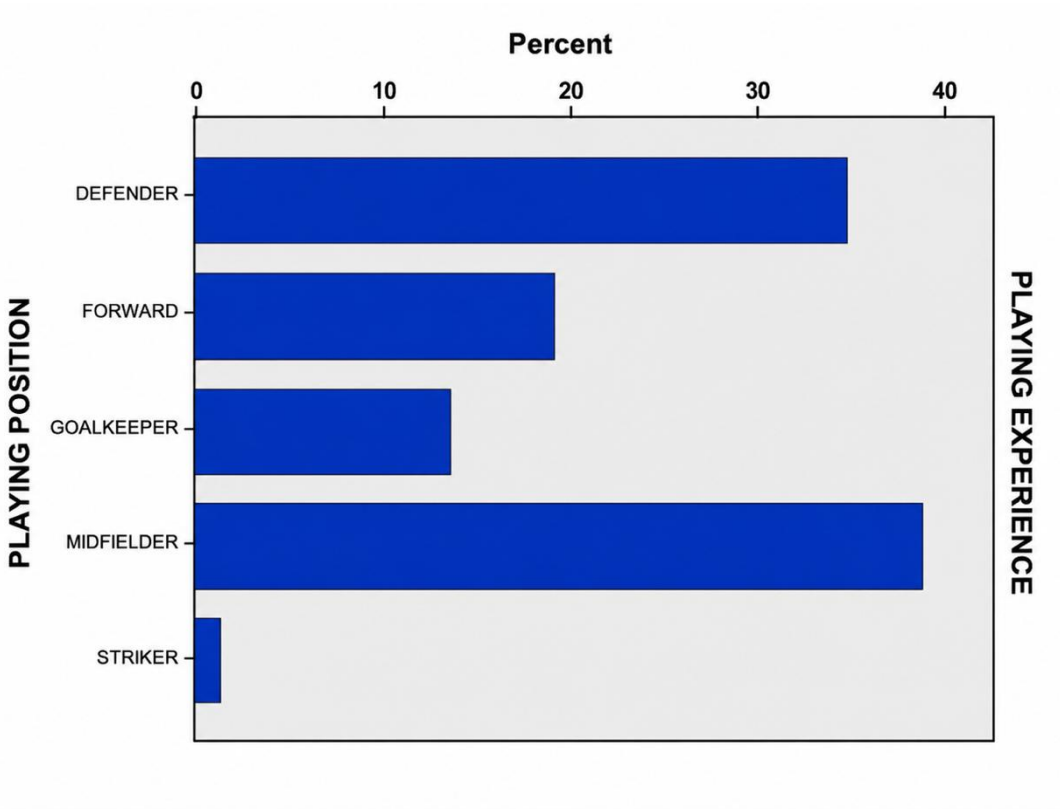
Figure 4. 3 Age Group of Participants



The findings presented in Figure 4.3. show that the largest proportion of respondents aged 22-25 years accounts for 37.02% of the total respondents, both in the questionnaires and interviews. The second largest group of respondents was the age of 18-21 years (23.76%), followed by those aged 31 years and above (21.55%). Respondents aged 26-30 years constituted 12.15%, while those below 18 years represented the smallest proportion at 5.53%. The results above typically indicate that most respondents were young adults between 18 and 25 years, therefore reflecting the typical age profile of semi-professional football players who are actively involved in the four teams in Mashonaland Central. The selected respondents are at the peak of their football careers and, therefore, well-positioned to provide insights into psychological resilience.

4.3.5 Playing positions

Graph 4. 1: Playing Position



4.4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA LINKED TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective 1:

To explore the psychological resilience challenges experienced by semi-professional football players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One League.

INTRODUCTION

The first objective sought to outline and identify the psychological resilience challenges experienced by the semi-professional players. Using Nvivo analysis tool, the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups were derived to examine respondents' perceptions of the challenges affecting psychological resilience in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One teams. Thematic analysis is shown in Table 4.5 below

NVivo Thematic Analysis

Table 4. 5 Nvivo Thematic Analysis

Theme	Description	Sample Interview Extracts	Frequency of Mentions
Financial Constraints	Challenges related to low salaries, unpaid allowances, and lack of financial security.	"Sometimes we go for months without receiving allowances, which affects our concentration and motivation."	22
Performance Pressure	Pressure from coaches, supporters, teammates, and expectations to perform consistently.	"The pressure to win every match can be overwhelming, especially when supporters expect results."	18

Injuries and Physical Setbacks	Psychological effects of injuries, rehabilitation, and fear of losing playing opportunities.	"Being injured for a long time affects confidence and makes you worry about your future in football."	16
Career Uncertainty	Concerns and stress expressed by players about their future within football	"I try to focus on training and matches, but I often think about what I will do if football fails."	14

The qualitative findings revealed that financial constraints were the most frequently mentioned challenge affecting the psychological resilience among the Northern Region Division One players in Mashonaland Central. The participants highlighted that delays in salary distribution, inadequate allowances, and financial insecurity were major sources of stress that negatively affected their mental well-being and performance. The findings demonstrate that financial difficulties, injuries, performance pressure, and career uncertainty constitute major resilience challenges. Similar findings have been reported among semi-professional athletes in South Africa and Kenya (Moyo & Ncube, 2022; Wanjala et al., 2021). These findings support Psychological Resilience Theory, which suggests that adversity forms the basis upon which resilience develops.

4.5 OBJECTIVE 2

Objective 2: **To explore how individual, team, organisational, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological resilience among semi-professional football players.**

INTRODUCTION

The second objective sought to explore how individual, team, organisational, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological resilience of the players

competing at a semi-professional level. Using the NVivo analysis tool, the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups were derived to examine respondents' perceptions of the influence of the mentioned factors on psychological resilience in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One teams. Thematic analysis is shown in Table 4.6 below:

TABLE 4. 6 OBJECTIVE 2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Theme	Description	Sample Participants Response	Frequency of Mentions
Teammate support	Emotional, social, and motivational support provided by teammates.	"My teammates encourage me when I am struggling and help me stay focused."	21
Organizational Factors	The role of coaches and other staff in motivating, guiding, and building players' confidence.	"A supportive coach helps players remain positive even after poor performances."	16
Community Factors	Family and community support strengthen resilience	"The support I receive from my family and the community motivates me to work harder"	15
Individual Factors	Players' dedication to training and self-improvement despite challenges.	"Even when I have personal problems, I try to attend training and give my best."	19

Table 4.6 presents the themes that were consistent and identified through NVivo analysis regarding the factors influencing the psychological resilience of the Mashonaland Central players. Teammate support was the most frequently mentioned theme with 21 mentions, which is an indication of the importance of encouragement and support from fellow players coping with challenges. The findings demonstrate that resilience is influenced by multiple ecological systems. These results support the Socio-Ecological Model, which emphasizes interactions between individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community environments.

4.6 OBJECTIVE 3

Objective 3: **To explore the coping strategies and support systems used by players and technical staff to promote psychological resilience.**

INTRODUCTION

The third objective sought to explore the coping strategies and support systems used by players and technical staff to promote the psychological resilience of the players competing at a semi-professional level. Using the NVivo analysis tool, the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups were derived to identify the strategies used. Thematic analysis is shown in Table 4.7 below:

TABLE 4. 7 OBJECTIVE 3 NVIVO ANALYSIS

Theme	Description	Sample Participant Response	Frequency of Mentions
Goal Setting	Participants frequently reported using goal setting.	"I usually set my own goals so that l stay focused and motivated in reaching targets"	22
Positive Self-Talk	Many players relied on positive internal dialogue.	"When I make a mistake during training or a match. I	20

		remind myself that I can do better."	
Problem Solving	Players described actively seeking solutions to challenges.	"When I face challenges, I try to find ways to improve instead of giving up. Solutions help overcome setbacks."	18
Spiritual coping	Religious faith was an important coping mechanism.	"I pray before matches and whenever I face challenges because it helps me stay calm and hopeful."	17
Support Systems	Family members, teammates, and coaches provided support.	“The encouragement I get from my family, teammates and coaches help me to stay strong and keep moving forward.	19

The findings suggest that resilience is maintained through both personal coping mechanisms and social support structures. These findings support Cognitive Appraisal Theory, which emphasises the role of cognitive and behavioural responses to adversity.

4.7 OBJECTIVE 4

Objective 4: **To assess the frequency and perceived importance of resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems identified during the qualitative phase.**

INTRODUCTION

The fourth objective sought to assess the prevalence and perceived importance of resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems identified during the qualitative phase. psychological resilience of the players competing at a semi-professional level. Using the SPSS analysis tool, the data were quantified using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis.

To obtain and develop an organized and convincing analysis of the quantitative data, each item was evaluated using a 5-point Likert Scale to allow clear interpretation of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements related to psychological resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems.

For the 5-point Likert scale the responses were as follows:

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

To facilitate the interpretation of the descriptive statistics, a decision rule based on the mean scores of the Likert scale responses was adopted. The mean score ranges and their corresponding interpretations are presented in Table 4.8

Table 4. 8 Mean Scale

Mean Range	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.80	Strongly Disagree
1.81 - 2.60	Disagree
2.61 - 3.40	Neutral
3.41 - 4.20	Agree
4.21 - 5.00	Strongly Agree

- This scale was used to interpret the extent to which respondents perceived various factors as influencing psychological resilience among the northern Region Division One players in Mashonaland Central

Table 4.9 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

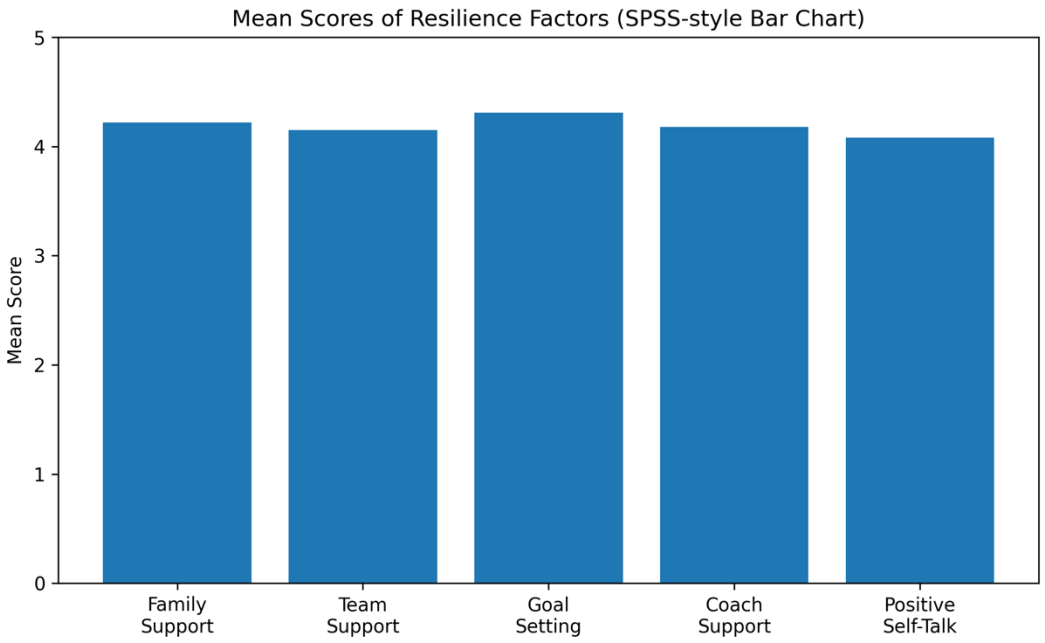
Table 4. 9 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
Family Support	152	1	5	4.22	0.79	0.62
Team Support	152	1	5	4.15	0.84	0.71
Goal Setting	152	1	5	4.31	0.75	0.56
Coach Support	152	1	5	4.18	0.81	0.66
Positive Self-Talk	152	1	5	4.08	0.82	0.67

Among the variables identified in Table 4.9 the goal-setting variable recorded the highest mean score, meaning participants perceived it as the most important resilience factor. Although the positive self-talk variable recorded the lowest mean (M=4.08), it remained above the agreement threshold. The results justify the need for and importance of the proposed context-specific resilience model.

Mean Scores of Resilience

Figure 4. 4 Mean Scores of Factors



4.7.4 Reliability test results

The Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted using SPSS to assess the internal consistency of the resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the extent to which the questionnaire items measured the same underlying construct. The results of the reliability analysis are presented in Table 4.10

Table 4. 10 Case Processing Summary

CASES		
	N	%
Valid	152	100
Excluded	0	0
Total	152	100

TABLE 4. 11 RELIABILITY STATISTICS

Cronbach's Alpha	**Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized items**	**N of items**
.861	.873	5

The reliability analysis was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The analysis of the selected 5 variables produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.861, indicating good internal consistency. This suggests that the variables were measuring the same underlying construct and were sufficiently reliable for use in the research. According to Taber (2018), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable, while values above 0.80 indicate good reliability. Therefore, the obtained value of 0.861 confirms that the research instrument was reliable and suitable for the research study.

The quantitative findings confirmed the importance of resilience factors identified during the qualitative phase, demonstrating strong convergence between datasets. The questionnaire used during the quantitative phase was developed directly from the themes identified during the qualitative phase. Consequently, the quantitative findings presented in this chapter represent a statistical confirmation of the resilience challenges, resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems that emerged from participants' lived experiences.

4.8 OBJECTIVE 5

Objective 5: **To integrate qualitative and quantitative findings in developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players.**

INTRODUCTION

Objective five sought to integrate the qualitative and quantitative research findings to develop a context-specific psychological resilience model for the semi-professional players competing in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One. The integration process identified major themes generated from Objective 1-3, identified factors that received the highest ratings in Objective 4, and combined the qualitative and quantitative findings in a joint display analysis.

Table 4. 12 Joint Display Analysis

Qualitative Theme	Quantitative Finding	Interpretation	Model Implication
Financial challenges create stress	87% reported financial stress	Strong convergence	Include financial stress as resilience challenge
Family support promotes resilience	Family support M=4.22	Strong convergence	Include family support component
Team cohesion improves coping	Team support M=4.15	Strong convergence	Include team environment component
Goal setting enhances resilience	Goal setting M=4.31	Strong convergence	Include coping strategies component
Coaches provide emotional support	Coach support M=4.18	Strong convergence	Include coach support system
Community expectations affect players	Community influence M=4.12	Moderate convergence	Include community factors

The joint display analysis revealed substantial convergence between qualitative and quantitative findings. Both datasets demonstrated that psychological resilience among semi-professional football players is influenced by a combination of individual, interpersonal, organisational, and community-level factors. Family support, team cohesion, coach support, and adaptive coping

strategies emerged consistently across both phases of the study. These findings suggest that psychological resilience is not solely an individual characteristic but is shaped by multiple interacting systems. Consequently, these factors were incorporated into the development of the proposed context-specific psychological resilience model.

4.8.2 Data Triangulation

A section of data triangulation was employed to compare results from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. The process of data triangulation compared information from four different sources: players, coaches, technical staff, and questionnaire results.

Table 4. 13 Data Triangulation

Issue	Players	Coaches	Technical Staff	Survey Findings	Conclusion
Financial stress	✓	✓	✓	82% agree	Major resilience challenge
Family support	✓	✓	✓	M=4.22	Key resilience factor
Team support	✓	✓	✓	M=4.15	Important support system
Goal setting	✓	✓	✓	M=4.31	Effective coping strategy
Community pressure	✓	✓	✓	M=4.12	Influential contextual factor

4.8.3 Development of the Draft Psychological Resilience Model

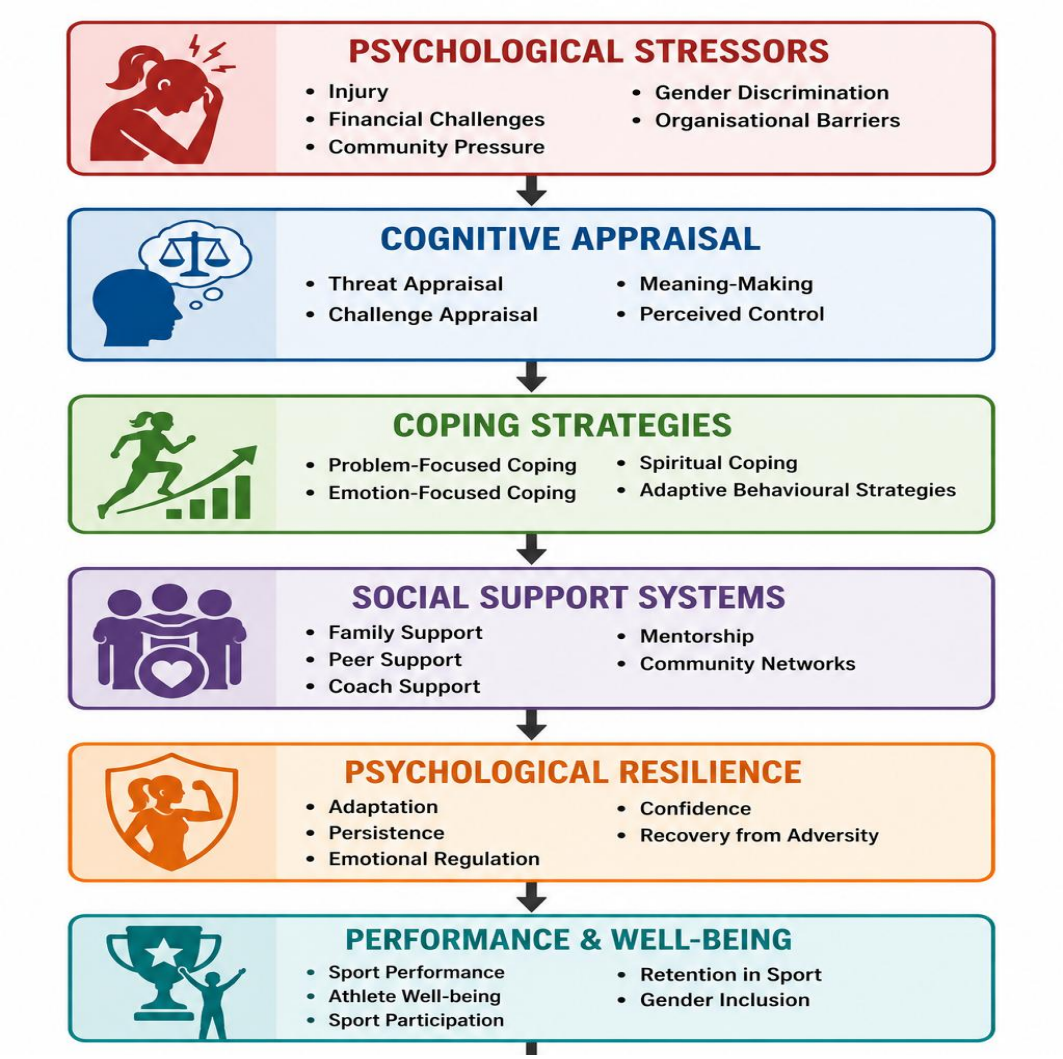
INTRODUCTION

The draft psychological resilience model was developed based on the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings in the research. For the players participating in the Northern Region Division One in Mashonaland Central, the key resilience factors and coping mechanisms identified were synthesized to create the proposed framework.

4.8.3 Proposed Model Draft

The integrated findings suggest that psychological resilience among semi-professional football players develops through interactions between resilience challenges, resilience resources, coping mechanisms, and support systems. Financial difficulties, injuries, performance pressure, and career uncertainty emerged as major challenges. These challenges are moderated by individual resilience factors such as self-confidence, optimism, and determination, as well as by support systems including family, teammates, coaches, and the broader community. The model proposes that players who access effective support systems and utilise adaptive coping strategies are more likely to develop psychological resilience, resulting in improved well-being, sustained participation, and enhanced football performance.

Figure 4. 5 Proposed Model Draft



The integrated findings suggest that resilience emerges through interactions between challenges, resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems.

4.9 OBJECTIVE 6

Objective 6: **To evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of the proposed psychological resilience model among relevant stakeholders.**

4.9.1 Validation Workshop Findings

The model was presented to the players, coaches, technical staff, and sport psychology experts to assess the model's relevance, practicality, understandability, feasibility, and its possible use. The participants generally viewed the model as relevant, practical, and applicable.

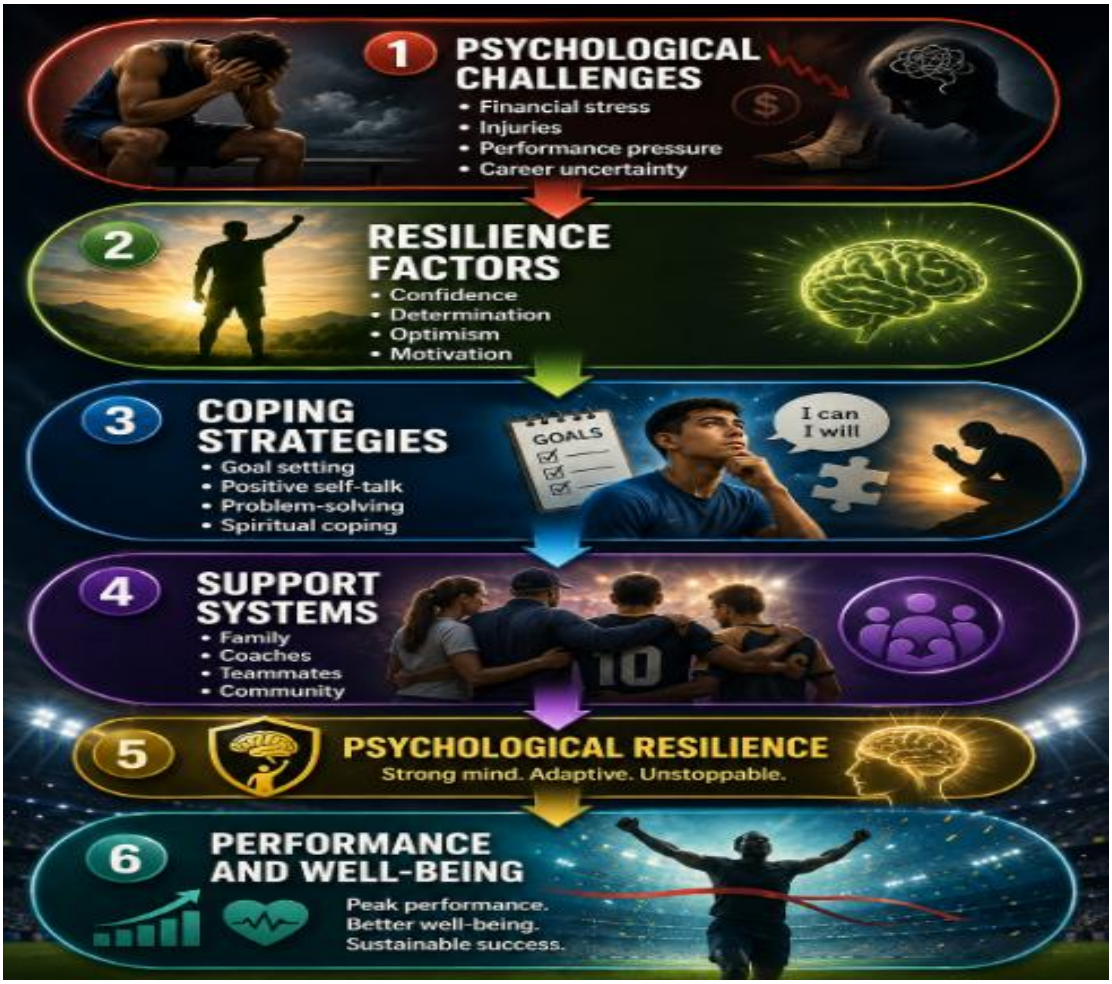
Table 4. 14 Validation Results

Criterion	Positive Responses
Relevance	95%
Practicality	90%
Feasibility	88%
Clarity	93%
Acceptability	91%

Stakeholders generally perceived the proposed psychological resilience model as relevant, practical, and applicable within the semi-professional football environment. Participants indicated that the model accurately reflected the challenges experienced by players and incorporated important resilience factors identified within the football context. Several stakeholders recommended strengthening the family support component and providing clearer implementation guidelines for clubs. These suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the model.

4.9.3 Final Psychological Resilience Model

Figure 4. 6 Psychological Resilience Model



Stakeholder feedback confirmed the relevance and practical applicability of the proposed model within semi-professional football settings.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings according to the six research objectives. The findings revealed that financial challenges, injuries, performance pressure, and career uncertainty were major resilience challenges. Individual, team, organisational, and community factors influenced resilience development, while coping strategies and support systems played important roles in helping players adapt to adversity. Quantitative findings confirmed the importance of these factors. The integrated findings informed the development of a context-specific psychological resilience

model, which was subsequently validated by stakeholders and found to be relevant, feasible, and acceptable for use in semi-professional football environments.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Summary of findings according to research objectives

5.1.1 Objective 1: To explore the psychological resilience challenges experienced by semi-professional football players.

It was found that semi-professional football players experience multiple challenges in their football career, including financial challenges, injury, performance pressure, lack of resources, and uncertainty of future progression. The main financial challenge affected motivation, well-being, and commitment towards participation. Psychological resilience among semi-professional football players develops in reaction to various adversities encountered within the sport that create a demand for structured resilience development.

5.1.2 Objective 2: To explore how individual, team, organisational, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological resilience.

Findings showed that individual, team, organisational, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological resilience among semi-professional football players. These include individual factors such as self-belief, determination, and positive outlook, teamwork, support, and camaraderie from fellow players, coaches, leadership support from the technical team, and community support, such as from family members. Psychological resilience is influenced by inter-relationships of individual, team, organizational, and community resources. It supports the socio-ecological model of resilience, as resilience is not exclusively linked with individual character.

5.1.3 Objective 3: To explore the coping strategies and support systems employed by the players and the technical staff to promote psychological resilience.

Findings indicate that the participants employ several ways in coping with various adversities, such as through setting goals, problem-solving, spiritual practices, and maintaining a positive

outlook. Support for the players came from different stakeholders, such as coaches, family members, friends, teammates, and the community.

Psychological resilience is reinforced through employing adaptive ways of coping and building strong networks of social support as a key component of personal adjustment to hardship.

5.1.4 Objective 4: To determine the frequency and perceived importance of the selected resilience factors, coping strategies, and support systems identified in the qualitative phase. Quantitative results of the study validated findings of the qualitative part. Family support, team support, coach support, goal-setting, and a positive attitude were the most commonly found resilience factors and coping strategies as reported by respondents. The study yielded a statistically significant reliability coefficient for the research instrument. The quantitative part of the study further demonstrated the presence and perception of importance among these resilience factors.

5.1.5 Objective 5: To develop a context-specific psychological resilience model by integrating the qualitative and quantitative results.

Through conjoint display and triangulation methods of integrating the results of the qualitative and quantitative parts, there was considerable agreement on the core components of the psychological resilience that should feature in the context-specific model. The resilience factors, the challenges, the coping strategies, and support systems proved essential. In essence, findings of the study provided enough data and evidence to develop a context-specific resilience model appropriate for the context of semi-professional football players in the Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One league.

5.1.6 Objective 6: To evaluate the acceptability and feasibility of the proposed psychological resilience model.

The psychological resilience model developed in the study was evaluated as acceptable, feasible, and relevant by the relevant stakeholders.

The participants concluded that the model reflects the actual condition of the semi-professional football league.

5.2 FINAL CONTEXT-SPECIFIC PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE MODEL

Figure 5.1 Final Psychological Resilience Model

Psychological Challenges

Financial stress

• Injuries

• Performance pressure

• Career uncertainty

↓

Resilience Factors

• Confidence

• Determination

• Optimism

• Motivation

↓

Coping Strategies

• Goal setting

• Positive self-talk

• Problem solving

• Spiritual coping

↓

Support Systems

• Family

• Coaches

Teammates

• Community

↓

Psychological Resilience

↓

Performance and Well-being

Figure 5. 1 Final Psychological Resilience Model



5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study contributes to knowledge in several ways.

5.3.1 Empirical Contribution

The study provides evidence regarding psychological resilience among semi-professional football players in Zimbabwe.

5.3.2 Theoretical Contribution

The study integrates Psychological Resilience Theory, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and the Socio-Ecological Model in understanding resilience development.

5.3.3 Methodological Contribution

The study demonstrates the application of Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design in sport psychology research.

5.3.4 Practical Contribution

The study develops a context-specific psychological resilience model that can be used by coaches, clubs, and sport administrators

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Recommendations for Clubs

Establish player welfare programmes.

- Provide psychological support services.
- Promote positive team environments.
- Strengthen coach-athlete relationships.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Coaches

- Integrate resilience training into coaching programmes.
- Encourage goal setting and positive self-talk.
- Provide emotional and motivational support.
- Monitor athlete well-being regularly.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Football Administrators

- Develop policies supporting player mental well-being.
- Invest in resilience development programmes.
- Facilitate access to sport psychology services.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Families and Communities

- Provide emotional support to players.
- Encourage participation in football.
- Promote positive community attitudes towards athletes.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted within one football league, and therefore, findings may not be generalisable to all football populations. The study also relied partly on self-reported data, which

may be influenced by participant perceptions and recall bias. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of data collection.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted within one football league, and therefore, findings may not be generalisable to all football populations. The study also relied partly on self-reported data, which may be influenced by participant perceptions and recall bias. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of data collection.

5.7 Recommendations for future Research

Future studies should

- Validate the model in the other football leagues
- Test the model among female football players
- Conduct longitudinal studies on resilience development
- Evaluate the effectiveness of resilience interventions
- Examine resilience across different sporting codes

5.8 Conclusion

Overall, this research conducted a successful examination of the psychological resilience of semi-professional football players and developed a context-specific model of psychological resilience based on evidence from quantitative and qualitative data. Overall, several interconnected psychological and social factors, as well as personal resources and traits, combine to produce resilience. This model is practical insofar as it provides a practical strategy which could be applied to facilitate psychological resilience, as well as athlete well-being and continued engagement in football within a semi-professional setting

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONSENT LETTER

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES

1 June 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST FOR ORGANISATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

This letter confirms that PRECISE BIZA (Student Number: [B225064B]) is a registered Bachelor of Science Honours in Sports Science and Management student in the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Bindura University of Science Education.

The student is conducting a research project entitled: "DEVELOPING A CONTEXT-SPECIFIC PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE MODEL FOR THE SEMI-PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN MASHONALAND CENTRAL NORTHERN REGION DIVISION ONE, ZIMBWABWE" under the supervision of the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences. The study is an essential requirement for completing the degree programme.

We kindly request your organisation's cooperation in facilitating the collection of data relevant to the study. Your participation will contribute significantly to the successful completion of this academic research and to the generation of knowledge that may benefit the sport industry and related sectors.

Participation is voluntary, and all information obtained will be treated as strictly confidential. Organisations and participants will remain anonymous in all reports and publications unless explicit written consent is granted.

A copy or summary of the completed study may be made available to participating organisations upon request.

For any clarification, please contact:
Dr. Lysias Tapiwanashe Charumbira
Chairperson, Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences
Email: lcharumbira@buse.ac.zw
Tel: +263 772 916 712

Thank you for your valued support and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Lysias Tapiwanashe Charumbira
Chairperson
Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PLAYERS



QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Precise Biza; I am a fourth-year student studying Sports Science and Management at Bindura University. I am conducting a research project on developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for the semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One. I have prepared a few questions to gather your insights and experiences, which are very important for my studies. Your responses will remain confidential, and I truly appreciate your time and help.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick (✓) the appropriate response.

1. Age
   - □ 18–20
   - □ 21–25
   - □ 26–30
   - □ 31 years and above
2. Playing Position
   - □ Goalkeeper
   - □ Defender
   - □ Midfielder
   - □ Forward
3. Playing Experience
   - □ 1–2 years
   - □ 3–5 years

□ 6–8 years

□ More than 8 years

4. Highest Educational Qualification

□ Primary

□ Secondary

□ Certificate

□ Diploma

□ Degree

5. Club Affiliation

_____

6. Marital Status

□ Single

□ Married

□ Divorced

□ Widowed

SECTION B: PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE CHALLENGES

Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
Financial challenges affect my football performance.	□ □ □ □ □
Fear of injury causes psychological stress.	□ □ □ □ □
Competition pressure affects my mental well-being.	□ □ □ □ □
Uncertainty about my football career causes anxiety.	□ □ □ □ □
Lack of resources creates psychological challenges.	□ □ □ □ □
Balancing football and personal responsibilities is stressful.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION C: INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE FACTORS

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
I remain focused during difficult situations.	□ □ □ □ □
I am confident in my ability to overcome setbacks.	□ □ □ □ □
I learn from failures and mistakes.	□ □ □ □ □
I maintain a positive attitude during adversity.	□ □ □ □ □

I adapt well to changing circumstances. □ □ □ □ □

I recover quickly after disappointing performances. □ □ □ □ □

SECTION D: TEAM FACTORS

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
My teammates support me during difficult periods.	□ □ □ □ □
Team unity strengthens my resilience.	□ □ □ □ □
Teammates motivate me when I face challenges.	□ □ □ □ □
Positive team relationships help me cope with stress.	□ □ □ □ □
I feel valued within my team.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION E: ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
Club management supports player welfare.	□ □ □ □ □
My club provides adequate psychological support.	□ □ □ □ □
Club leadership encourages resilience.	□ □ □ □ □
Communication within the club is effective.	□ □ □ □ □
The club environment promotes mental well-being.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION F: COMMUNITY FACTORS

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
My family supports my football career.	□ □ □ □ □
Community encouragement motivates me.	□ □ □ □ □
Community recognition strengthens my confidence.	□ □ □ □ □
My social networks help me cope with challenges.	□ □ □ □ □
Community support contributes to my resilience.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION G: COPING STRATEGIES

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
I set personal goals to overcome challenges.	□ □ □ □ □
I seek advice from coaches when facing difficulties.	□ □ □ □ □
I discuss challenges with teammates.	□ □ □ □ □
I use positive self-talk during stressful situations.	□ □ □ □ □
I use relaxation techniques to manage stress.	□ □ □ □ □
I seek professional support when necessary.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION H: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
Coaches provide emotional support.	□ □ □ □ □
Family members support me during difficult periods.	□ □ □ □ □
Teammates provide encouragement when needed.	□ □ □ □ □
Club administrators support player well-being.	□ □ □ □ □
I have access to people who help me cope with adversity.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION I: BRIEF RESILIENCE SCALE (BRS)

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

Statement	1 2 3 4 5
I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.	□ □ □ □ □
I have a hard time making it through stressful events.	□ □ □ □ □
It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.	□ □ □ □ □
It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.	□ □ □ □ □
I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.	□ □ □ □ □
I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks.	□ □ □ □ □

SECTION J: OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

1. What do you consider the most important factor influencing psychological resilience among semi-professional football players?

2. What recommendations would you make to improve psychological resilience among players in your club?

Thank you for participating in this study.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COACHES, TECHNICAL STAFF AND CLUB ADMINISTRATORS



INTRODUCTION

Good morning/afternoon

My name is Precise Biza; I am a final-year student studying Sports Science and Management at Bindura University. I am conducting a research project on developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for the semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One.

I kindly invite you to participate in this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without consequences. The interview is expected to last no longer than 30 minutes. The information gathered will only be used for academic purposes.

To ensure confidentiality, codes will be used to identify participants. During the interview, please do not disclose your name, position, or organization. With your consent, the interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PLAYERS

Introduction

The purpose of this interview is to understand the experiences of semi-professional football players regarding psychological resilience. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your personal experiences and opinions. All information shared during this interview will be treated confidentially and will only be used for research purposes.With your permission, this interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age: _____
2. Playing Position:
   - Goalkeeper
   - Defender
   - Midfielder
   - Forward
3. Number of years playing football:_____
4. Club:_____
5. Highest level achieved in football:_____

SECTION B: PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE CHALLENGES

Linked to Objective 1

Research Question 1

What psychological resilience challenges are experienced by semi-professional football players?

Main Questions

1. Tell me about your experience as a semi-professional football player in the Northern Region Division One League.
2. What are the biggest challenges that football players face in this league?
3. What situations do you find most stressful as a player?
4. Have you ever experienced setbacks in football? Please explain.

Probing Questions

- Financial difficulties?
- Injuries?
- Poor performance?
- Team conflicts?
- Selection issues?
- Family pressures?
- Career uncertainty?

5. How do these challenges affect you psychologically?

6. What emotions do players commonly experience when facing these challenges?

SECTION C: FACTORS INFLUENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE
Linked to Objective 2
Research Question 2
How do individual, team, organisational, and community factors influence the development of psychological resilience among semi-professional football players?

Individual Factors
1. What personal qualities help players remain mentally strong during difficult times?
Probes
- Confidence
- Motivation
- Determination
- Self-discipline
- Goal setting
- Optimism

2. What personal characteristics make it difficult for some players to cope with challenges?

Team Factors
3. How do teammates influence psychological resilience?
Probes
- Team cohesion
- Team support
- Team communication
- Team culture

4. Can you describe a situation where your teammates helped you overcome a challenge?

Organisational Factors
5. How does your club influence player resilience?
Probes
- Leadership
- Communication
- Player welfare
- Financial support
- Training environment

6. What club-related factors strengthen resilience?
7. What club-related factors weaken resilience?

Community Factors
8. What role does family support play in helping players cope with football challenges?

9. How does the local community influence player resilience?

Probes

- Community expectations
- Community support
- Fan behaviour
- Social recognition

10. How important is family support in your football career?

SECTION D: COPING STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Linked to Objective 3

Research Question 3

What coping strategies and support systems are used by players and technical staff to promote psychological resilience?

Coping Strategies

1. How do you normally deal with difficult situations in football?

Probes

- Problem solving
- Goal setting
- Positive thinking
- Emotional regulation
- Self-talk

2. What strategies have been most effective for you?
3. Are there any strategies that do not work well?

Support Systems

4. Who do players usually turn to when facing challenges?

Probes

- Coaches
- Family
- Teammates
- Friends
- Religious leaders
- Club officials

5. Which support systems are most important?
6. Are there support systems that are currently lacking?

Resilience Development

7. In your opinion, how is psychological resilience developed among football players?
8. What helps players remain resilient over time?
9. What prevents players from developing resilience?

SECTION E: MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Linked to Objective 5

1. Based on your experiences, what factors should be included in a psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players?

Probes

- Individual factors
- Team factors
- Club factors
- Community factors
- Coping strategies
- Support systems

2. How should clubs support player resilience?
3. What recommendations would you make for improving psychological resilience among football players?

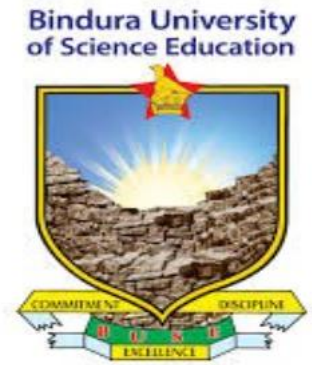
Closing Question

Is there anything else you would like to share about psychological resilience among semi-professional football players that we have not discussed?

Thank You

Thank you for your participation. Your contribution is valuable and will help develop a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players in Zimbabwe.

APPENDIX D: **INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS**



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a study which seeks to develop a context-specific psychological resilience model for the semi-professional players in Mashonaland Central Northern Region Division One.

Conditions for Participation

1. I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by the Sports Science student at Bindura University of Science Education
2. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation
3. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind
4. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially
5. I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous
6. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research report and subsequent publications
7. I agree to my interview being audio- recorded
8. I understand that my identity will be protected

9. By signing this form, I am attesting that I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research, and I freely give my consent to participate in the study
10. I have been given a copy of this consent form

Name of Research Participant…… Signature …… Date ……

Name of Investigator…… Signature ……..Date……

APPENDIX E: **CONSENT FORM FOR PLAYERS**

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am a fourth-year student at Bindura University; I am conducting a research project focused on developing a context-specific psychological resilience model for semi-professional football players in Mashonaland Central Northen Region Division One. The purpose of this study is to gather valuable insights and experiences regarding the current psychological resilience coping strategies and the development of new ones among semi-professional football players. Your players' participation is crucial for the success of this research, and I assure you that all responses will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. By signing this consent form, you agree to allow your players to participate in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary, and your players can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Consent:

I, the undersigned, consent to my player's participation in this study

Coach/Agent/Manager Signature…….

Date …….