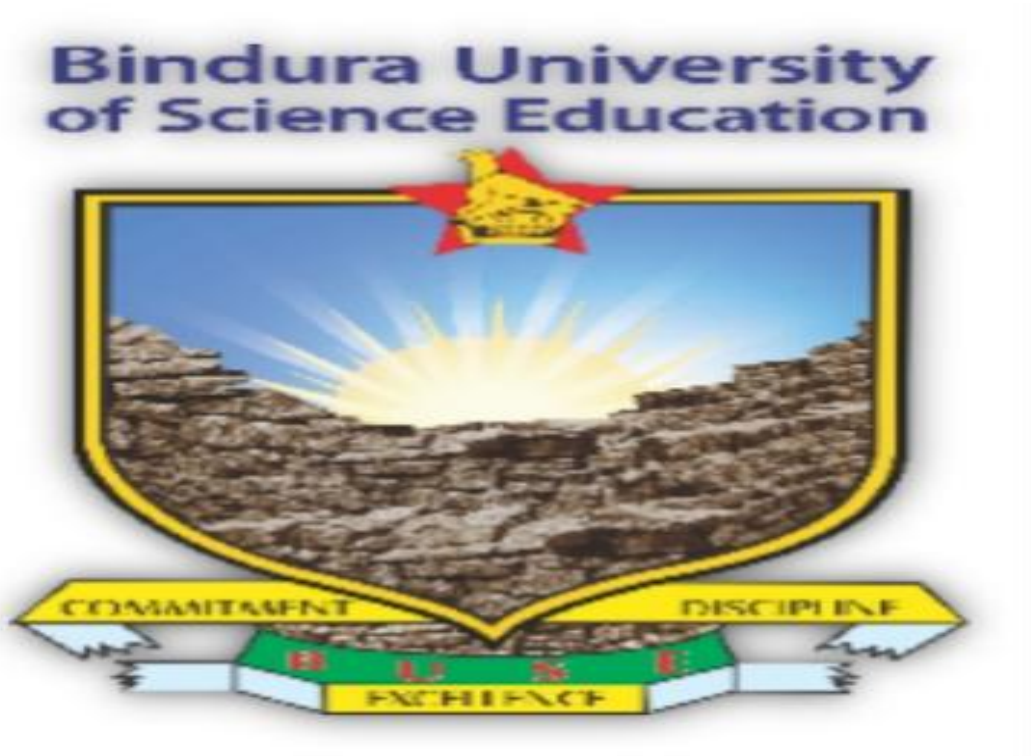


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Faculty of Science

Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences

Developing Intervention Strategies to Enhance Financial Sustainability and Resilience of Kwekwe United FC.

Gobo Tinotendashe

B223929B

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES DEGREE.

JUNE 2026

Declaration

I, student (B223929B) declare that a study entitled "**Developing Intervention Strategies to Improve Financial Sustainability and Resilience of Kwekwe United FC"** is my original work and it has not been submitted before for any Degree programme or examination in any university. I am aware that Bindura University of Science Education has strict academic writing rules and I understand the consequences of breaking such rules. I further declare the work is original and all sources are properly cited. I did this work by myself and with the help of my assigned research supervisor.

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FACULTY OF SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES

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Programme: HBScSSM	**Submission date:** **04/09/2026**

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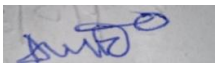
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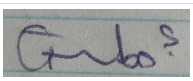
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Dedication

The research is dedicated to my family, friends and all the participants who gave their time and shared experiences to make this research a success.

Abstract

This qualitative case study investigated the financial sustainability challenges facing Kwekwe United Football Club and developed context-specific propositions requiring longitudinal evaluation to improve the club's financial sustainability and resilience. The study was motivated by the club's disastrous 2025 Premier Soccer League season, characterized by unpaid salaries, player strikes, fixture forfeiture, and relegation. Data was collected through 19 semi-structured interviews from 19 April up to 31 May 2026 with club leadership, technical staff, players, sponsors, and external stakeholders, plus one focus group with 4 supporters. Document analysis of one media report titled “Nightmare continues for Kwekwe United players, coaches” (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11, December 2025) was analyzed using Nvivo and supported primary data. Thematic analysis based on participant reviews done using NVivo 15 revealed that Kwekwe United operates in a state of acute financial fragility, relying on a single unpredictable sponsor, with no financial reserves, no formal procurement systems, and governance concentrated in a single family that prohibits financial reform according to stakeholder’s perceptions. Participants identified seven interconnected barriers to financial sustainability: institutional weaknesses, lack of revenue diversification, absence of partnerships, poor fan turnout, governance deficits, poor financial policies, and economic instability. Participants proposed interventions that centered on grassroots development, revenue diversification across four locally achievable domains (match-day income, merchandising, corporate partnerships, and player development) supporter-led financing with monthly membership fees, financial literacy training, and independent audits as implementation and monitoring tools. The study proposed that financial sustainability at Kwekwe United may require phased governance reform as the foundation, followed by revenue diversification and professionalization of financial management.

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

1. **CAF-**Confederation of African Football
2. **CEO-**Chief Executive Officer
3. **CLFS-**Club Licensing and Financial Sustainability Regulations
4. **CSR-**Corporate Social Responsibility
5. **FFP-**Financial Fair Play
6. **FIFA-**Fédération Internationale de Football Association
7. **FSR-**Financial Sustainability Regulations
8. **HBC-**Hard Budget Constraint
9. **MPT-**Modern Portfolio Theory
10. **NVivo-**Qualitative data analysis software (QSR International)
11. **PSL-**Profitability and Sustainability Rules
12. **QDAS-**Qualitative Data Analysis Software
13. **RDT-**Resource Dependence Theory
14. **SBC-**Soft Budget Constraint
15. **S-Score-**Sustainability Score (financial distress prediction model)
16. **UEFA-**Union of European Football Associations
17. **UK-**United Kingdom
18. **USD-**United States Dollar
19. **ZIFA-**Zimbabwe Football Association
20. **ZPSL-**Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League

Term	Definition
Break-even Requirement	A regulatory rule requiring a football club's football-related expenditure (wages, transfers) not to exceed its football-related income (broadcasting, commercial, matchday) over a defined period, typically three years.
Case Study	A research strategy that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence. This study employs a single-case, holistic design focusing on Kwekwe United FC.
Club Licensing	A regulatory system administered by football associations (e.g., ZIFA, UEFA) that sets minimum standards for clubs in areas such as financial management, governance, infrastructure, and legal compliance.
Confidentiality	A research ethics principle ensuring that participants' identities and responses are not disclosed without their consent. In this study, all participants are anonymised using codes.
Confirmability	A criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research, ensuring that findings are grounded in participants' data rather than researcher bias.
Corporate Partnerships	Commercial relationships between a football club and businesses, including sponsorship agreements, in-kind support, and marketing collaborations.
Credibility	A criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research, established through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement with the research setting.
Cross-Sectional Study	A research design where data are collected at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the phenomenon under investigation.
Data Saturation	The point in qualitative data collection where new interviews or observations yield no new insights or themes, indicating that the sample size is sufficient.
Debt	Money owed by a club to external parties. In this study, debt is distinguished from liquidity: Kwekwe United's crisis is primarily a liquidity crisis (unpaid salaries, fines) rather than accumulated structural debt.
Dependability	A criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research, ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable, and consistently documented.

Document Analysis	A data collection method involving the systematic review of existing documents (e.g., media reports, club records, meeting minutes) to supplement primary interview data.
Donor Dependency	A club's reliance on external donations, grants, or philanthropic contributions rather than internally generated revenue, creating vulnerability to interruptions.
Financial Buffer	Cash reserves or accessible funds that a club can draw on during revenue interruptions to maintain operations without defaulting on obligations.
Financial Distress	A state where a club struggles to meet its financial obligations, evidenced by unpaid wages, overdue payables, and mounting debt.
Financial Fragility	A condition where a club has thin liquidity buffers and is exposed to short-term financial shocks, making it vulnerable to insolvency.
Financial Red Zone	Charumbira's (2022) classification for entities spending significantly beyond their sports-generated revenue, carrying the highest risk of financial failure.
Financial Resilience	A club's capacity to absorb financial shocks (e.g., loss of a sponsor, economic downturn) and continue operating without catastrophic failure.
Financial Sustainability	A club's ability to consistently generate sufficient revenue from diversified sources to cover all participation costs without relying on unpredictable donations, owner bailouts, or unsustainable debt.
Focus Group	A qualitative data collection method involving a moderated group discussion (typically 6–10 participants) focused on a specific topic, used to generate collective insights and identify consensus.
Gatekeeper	An individual or authority that provides access to a research setting or participants. In this study, the club chairman and CEO served as gatekeepers to club stakeholders.
Governance	The structures, processes, and practices through which a club is directed and controlled, including board composition, accountability mechanisms, transparency, and decision-making procedures.

Grassroots Development	Investment in youth and community-level football programmes, including academies, coaching clinics, and junior leagues, which provide talent pipelines and reduce recruitment costs.
Informed Consent	A research ethics principle requiring participants to be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and rights before agreeing to participate.
Institutional Theory	A theoretical framework examining how organizations are shaped by regulations, norms, and cultural expectations in their environment. Applied to football, it analyses how ZIFA regulations and league norms influence club behavior.
Liquidity	A club's ability to meet its short-term financial obligations (e.g., salaries, fines, travel costs) using available cash or assets that can be quickly converted to cash.
Low Revenue Amber Zone	Charumbira's (2022) classification for clubs generating inadequate sports revenue to meet their expenditure, but not yet in the Red Zone.
Match day Income	Revenue generated on match days, including ticket sales, concessions, parking, hospitality, and programme sales.
Member Checking	A trustworthiness strategy where participants review research findings or interpretations to confirm accuracy and resonance with their experiences.
Merchandising	The sale of club-branded products (e.g., replica jerseys, scarves, training wear, souvenirs) as a revenue stream.
Modern Portfolio Theory (MPT)	A financial theory, developed by Harry Markowitz that advocates diversifying investments to reduce risk. In this study, MPT underpins revenue diversification strategies.
Negative Equity	A financial condition where a club's liabilities exceed its assets, indicating insolvency.
Non-Probability Sampling	A sampling approach where participants are not selected randomly but through non-random methods such as purposive or snowball sampling.

NVivo	A qualitative data analysis software tool used to code, organise, and retrieve textual data for thematic analysis.
Overdue Payables	Outstanding debts, including unpaid salaries, transfer fees, and tax liabilities that a club has failed to settle by the due date.
Participant Code	An anonymised identifier (e.g., P1, C2, and O3) used to protect participant confidentiality while enabling traceability of quotes in the analysis.
Participation Costs	The operational expenses of fielding a competitive team, including player wages, travel, equipment, match-day operations, and league fees.
Peer Debriefing	A trustworthiness strategy where a researcher discusses emerging findings and interpretations with a colleague not involved in the study to challenge assumptions.
Premier Soccer League (PSL)	The top-tier professional football league in Zimbabwe.
Professionalization	The process of adopting formal structures, transparent governance, professional financial management, and commercial practices in a club's operations.
Profit vs. Utility Maximization	A theoretical debate examining whether football clubs prioritise profit (like conventional businesses) or utility (sporting success, fan satisfaction, prestige).
Purposive Sampling	A non-probability sampling technique where participants are deliberately selected based on their ability to provide rich, relevant information aligned with research objectives.
Qualitative Research	A research approach that explores meanings, experiences, and perspectives through non-numerical data, emphasizing depth, context, and interpretation.
Response Rate	The proportion of planned interviews or participants that were successfully completed, expressed as a percentage.
Revenue Diversification	The development of multiple, distinct revenue streams to reduce dependency on any single source, spread risk, and increase financial stability.

Soft Budget Constraint (SBC)	A theoretical concept where organizations continue operating despite financial losses because they expect to be bailed out, reducing incentives for financial discipline.
Stakeholder Theory	A framework suggesting that organizations must consider the interests of all groups affected by their activities, not just owners or shareholders.
Thematic Analysis	A qualitative data analysis method involving the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns (themes) within data.
Transferability	A criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research, indicating the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts, supported by thick description.
Transparency	The practice of openly sharing financial information, governance decisions, and operational data with stakeholders, enabling accountability.
Triangulation	The use of multiple data sources, methods, or researchers to corroborate findings and enhance credibility.
Trustworthiness	The qualitative research equivalent of validity and reliability, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
Utility Maximization	In football, the pursuit of sporting success, prestige, or fan satisfaction as the primary objective, potentially at the expense of financial prudence.
Youth Academy	A structured programme for developing young players through coaching, education, and competitive matches, serving as a talent pipeline and potential revenue source through player sales.
Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA)	The national governing body for football in Zimbabwe, responsible for overseeing the Premier Soccer League, club licensing, and national team programmes.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 Introduction

‘Öner et al. (2024)’ identified financial sustainability as a club's ability to operate, service its debts and still be able to have room for growth without accumulating terminal debt. Recent systems distinguish sports entities into three "zones": the Financial Red Zone (unsustainable), Amber Zones (high spending or low income) and the Financial Green Zone (self-funding) (Bertheussen, 2023).The current financial entry to the world of football is opening up more and more requirements for the functioning of the game, which even the very best clubs in the competition struggle with (Ciechan-Kujawa & Perechuda, 2022). While elite clubs in major leagues often command substantial revenues through broadcasting rights, sponsorship, and merchandise, clubs operating in smaller or developing football nations face a persistent struggle for financial survival (Storm & Solberg, 2018). Participation costs encompassing player wages, travel, equipment, facility maintenance, and competition fees continue to rise, placing immense strain on club resources(Nazari & Azari, 2021). Therefore, without robust financial management and strategic intervention, many clubs face a precarious existence, threatening not only their immediate competitive participation but also their long-term viability and contribution to community development (Atghia & Nazarian, 2024). The research aims to help Kwekwe United FC to determine relevant strategies to adopt to help them become sustainable and resilient. The study focuses on the financial problems and opportunities of the Club as a means to a practical solution for the future to secure the Club's financial stability and buffer from shocks. The chapter opens with a description of the background of the study, the problem and the research question(s) which direct the study. These are followed by the research objectives that are aligned with the questions that the study desires to fulfill. Besides this, the study mentions the delimitations of the study, which clearly indicate what the study covers.

1.2 Background to the Study

This study aims to gain insight into the financial sustainability and financial resilience of football clubs that are financially constrained. For instance, the study chooses Kwekwe United Football Club, Zimbabwe as the case study. The paper looks at how a professional football club develops and implements innovative intervention strategies that generate enough revenue to cover the clubs' costs of participation as a way for the club to survive and be sustainable. This is a particularly relevant topic given the financial constraints that clubs are facing around the world that frequently result in overspending, indebtedness and even financial crises (Martín-Magdalena et al., 2024). Specifically, the tension between economic realities and social objectives, such as player development and community engagement, further complicates financial management for these entities (Machela, 2025). The following issues have emerged since it was realized that most football clubs, especially clubs from developing football countries are always in the danger of being bankrupt. These clubs are dependent on donations or short-term financing, which is not sustainable and contractual, for their main operations and for participation fees (Plumley et al., 2021).

The researcher is fascinated with this topic because the situation of Kwekwe United is dire, yet it reflects the situation of the majority of the other football teams that are struggling financially and others that don't have the same resource base as established top-tier organizations. Indeed, these clubs in developing countries face financial crises sometimes, and hence a need for developing financial models to ensure their sustainability (De Oliveira & Borba, 2021; Ndlovu, 2020)

Understanding how such clubs can build sustainable financial foundations became the driving motivation for this research, recognizing that without intervention, similar clubs will continue to cycle through promotion, financial crisis, and relegation, hence these clubs reappear, go through financial crisis, get relegated, and fall.

According to (Nhabomba et al., 2025), change in the behavior of clubs was triggered by the adoption of a series of regulations, including UEFA's financial fair play (FFP) rules, aimed at making clubs financially viable and to prevent financial doping. In addition to these measures, Germany's 50+1 rule may also be employed to regulate financial risk and ensure a level playing field by curbing spending and incentivizing sound financial practices (Yiapanas, 2025)

Based on (Swatson et al., 2025) owners of clubs contribute the most towards the total revenue, and transfer fees constitute the second biggest source of funds. The over-dependence on owners' funding and money from player sales shows lack of other means of generating income

as observed in most developed footballing economies. Besides that, clubs allocated a significant share of their finances on the acquisition of sports equipment and different modes of transportation. Also, the national football association failed to give adequate financial assistance. As a result, many clubs, being burdened with high running costs while according to few sources of income, are facing financial difficulties (Evans, 2024)

Swatson et al., (2025) also noted that clubs can gain strategic advantage in their Ghanaian research by improving structures and systems, active involvement in their communities, partnership with innovations and professional conduct. In addition, the study really went on to suggest that clubs diversify their revenue by projects. Clubs could for instance, embark on farming activities, cooperate with companies based in the locality, and seek professional counsel on investment opportunities. This regional example shows that the greater challenge for the football industry globally is the financial imbalance between small clubs and top clubs. While the smaller clubs rely on player sale, they also face debt issues, the elite clubs through control of broadcasting rights or transfer activities have a competitive edge (Gupta-Rawal & Ahsan, 2025).

Similarly, in a Mozambican study, (Nhabomba et al., 2025) recommended the adoption and monitoring of instruments that promote development and economic stability for the management of football, highlighting the promotion of long-term projects, for example, youth development, building infrastructure and sports academies. The proposed ideas acknowledge that the sustainable development of football in the African-assessed context cannot simply be a copy of European paradigm, rather it needs to be tailored to the local economic reality.

The case of Kwekwe United presents an opportunity to examine financial crisis in real-time and design practical interventions which are informed by theory and specific Kwekwe United context.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Kwekwe United Football Club exhibits documented operational financial constraints, characterized by recurring shortfalls in meeting monthly expenditure obligations and volatility in available working capital, observed over multiple recent reporting periods, this condition affects a defined set of stakeholders including players, technical staff, administrative personnel, and local supporters. This has produced tangible consequences such as routine operational disruptions, deferred facility and equipment maintenance, and an elevated risk of non-compliance with competitive league participation requirements. This unjustified financial

position, characterized by a lack of economic diversification, results in chronic instability, jeopardizing the club's long-term viability and its ability to participate effectively in competitive leagues (Millar et al., 2023;Mosola, 2017).However, the existing evidence base (Millar et al., 2023; Mosola, 2017) does not provide a systematic quantification of the revenue-expenditure gap, nor does it empirically test the relationship between the concentration of funding sources and the frequency or severity of these financial shortfalls, leaving a critical gap in evidence needed to design targeted fiscal interventions.

This issue manifests as chronic liquidity shortages with loans being the lifeline of the club, payments of bonuses and wages are now an issue and not only are they not competing, but they aren't even paying their bills on time. Practices have been initiated to solve the systemic issues in the game of football in Zimbabwe, however, these responses remain impact on clubs like Kwekwe United is yet to be realized (Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023)

According to (Thompson et al., 2023) a lack of clear strategic planning processes, inadequate governance structures, and limited financial incentives in Zimbabwean soccer clubs play a role in the success of soccer. Therefore with this in mind, the following measures have been suggested in the research paper, such as educating and training, coaching business, ethics in leadership, transparency holding a businessman accountable; these are instrumental in making soccer development in Zimbabwe a success. However, despite all these efforts, the problem at Kwekwe United has yet to be addressed with changes to practice.

According to (Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023) , historical challenges of funding and a lack of disaster preparedness, and the COVID-19 pandemic entrenched and worsened the already existing economic and political challenges facing football in Zimbabwe, which include a lack of financial sustainability of clubs, poor administration, corruption, lack of sponsorship, and a general malaise of the sport. Kwekwe United is just one among many football teams isn't the only one suffering crisis as these are just the surface manifestations of deeper underlying systemic problems.

According to (Swatson et al., 2025) , club owners contributed the largest proportion of total revenue, with transfer fees constituting the second largest funding source, and warned that owners' inability to diversify revenues poses a serious threat to sustainability and represents a waste of talent. A study in Mozambique found that clubs do not publish their revenue and expenditure statements transparently, that the clubs have wage-to-revenue ratios that exceed the limit, and that clubs that have a negative revenue (expenditure is larger than the revenue)

are not publishing their financial reports transparently (Nhabomba et al., 2025). A common indicator of financial difficulties in sports, particularly football, is when clubs become too reliant on the owners' funds and fail to tap in other revenue streams. All have helped in the shallow economic model to make the African leagues economically unstable as the majority of the African leagues are unable to keep their operational stability and ensure their sustainable development (Ndakaripa, 2021).

For clarity, very useful studies, but all research always has its limits. Research is inclined to identify problems rather than come up with specific intervention strategies or testing these interventions. There are still very few studies on the Zimbabwean football market, which is undoubtedly less developed than football markets in Europe or indeed other African market economies, and is subject to the effects of fluctuating currency. Coming up with a plan for clubs, in particular those that have just been promoted and have limited resources, to move away from being dependent on benefactors to achieving sustainability is something that literature hardly ever covers.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study goes beyond football finance and sustainability as applied to Kwekwe United FC, as it has implications for policy, practice and theory in the domain of football finance and sustainability in general.

Policy Implications and Contributions

The results of the study have important consequences for football governance and policy at various levels, adding to evidence based policymaking in Zimbabwean sport.

Club-Level Policy Development

The study, at the most direct level, serve as a part of Kwekwe United's internal policy framework. Governance tools, financial management systems and the strategies for engaging with stakeholders developed within the research will be formal club policies and procedures, ensuring the continuity of good practice beyond any one individual administrator.

League-Level Policy Recommendations

The study proposes recommendations for the Premier Soccer League on the criteria for promoting to and demoting from the league, financial monitoring and early warning systems.

ZIFA Policy Contributions

The study aims to offer first-hand information on how clubs experience ZIFA's professionalization initiatives, revealing the challenges to the implementation of these initiatives, as well as the possibility of improvement. The national programs can be fine-tuned through such feedback. Due to that, the results obtained from this research will be used as a basis for negotiations on the appropriate revenue-sharing model between ZIFA, the PSL and member clubs, including the levy on match-day revenues which may be six per cent. In addition, the study will help develop club licensing criteria, which are relevant to the Zimbabwean context, without compromising the highest standards on the one hand, or the practicality on the other.

Government Policy Implications

Knowing the financial difficulties of local clubs may enable the Government to determine the amount of money actually being spent on sport. The government can help clubs as a community asset as well as private donors. This research points out the importance of football in creating local economy by the spending on the match-day, employment generation and tourism etc. This would help the policy makers to acknowledge the role of sport in development process as an instrument.

Theoretical Contributions and Knowledge Gaps Addressed

Most of the theories that have been developed in the context of financial sustainability in football have been developed in Europe and rely on certain assumptions regarding the revenue streams, regulatory frameworks and governance structures which may not be present in many football types from Africa (Goslin & Mosola, 2020). The present study contributes to the construction of theory by experimenting and making modifications to resilience theory and stakeholder theory & revenue diversification in a limited environment.

Framework for Comparative Analysis

The study makes a framework to analyze the financial sustainability of football clubs which can be adopted in other football context in Africa. The framework of the diagnostic assessment, the best practice comparison, the stakeholder's analysis, and the development of an intervention offers a blueprint for future research across the continent.

Dissemination of Findings

Comprehensive Club Report

The primary output is be a clear report which outlines Kwekwe United's financial position, its governance structures and operating issues and subsequently make comparisons to the industry and other comparable. Apart from this, a wide range of intervention strategies are provided, along with a robust implementation guidance, together with templates and tools for revenue diversification, governance reform and financial management, and a monitoring and evaluation system to assess the progress over time will be included.

Gray Literature and Other Dissemination Platforms

In addition to publications in journals, the researcher will utilize gray literature to ensure wide dissemination of research results, and to ensure that practitioners who do not receive journal articles can access the results of the research. The entire dissertation will be deposited in the university's institutional repository. This will be ensuring that it is always accessible to researchers, students and practitioners in open access. This is both an academic goal and a larger goal for a project which seeks to make access to knowledge.

Digital and Social Media

The researcher plans to use the power of the digital platforms to promote his research findings by writing articles on LinkedIn geared towards sports management practitioners, tweeting his results using appropriate hashtags and engaging with online forums and communities around Zimbabwean football and African football.

1.5 Research Questions

These questions are intended to systematically explore the club's current financial situation to understand any disparity between current practice and best practice; understand the perspectives of stakeholders; and develop and validate contextually-appropriate intervention strategies.

Main Research Question

The study is guided by one overarching research question:

How can context-specific intervention strategies be developed to improve the financial sustainability and resilience of Kwekwe United FC, enabling the club to consistently cover its participation costs?

Subsidiary Research Questions

1. What is Kwekwe United FC's current financial position, governance and sustainability challenges?
2. What are the established best practices in financial management, governance for football clubs operating in comparable contexts, both within Zimbabwe and in similar African football economies?
3. What intervention strategies can be developed to address the identified gaps, drawing on best practices while accounting for Kwekwe United's specific constraints and opportunities?
4. What implementation plans and monitoring frameworks can help the club track progress toward financial sustainability and identify emerging challenges?

1.6 Research objectives

Alignment of Research Questions with Study Objectives

The research questions are designed to operationalize the study objectives, ensuring systematic investigation of each dimension.

Research

1. To assess Kwekwe United FC's current financial position, governance structures, and sustainability challenges aligned with theme one question.
2. To identify best practices in financial management and sustainability from comparable football clubs aligned with theme two question.
3. To develop context-specific intervention strategies for improving financial sustainability aligned with theme three question.
4. To develop implementation plans and monitoring frameworks for sustained impact aligned with theme four question.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

Geographical Delimitation

This study is delimited to Kwekwe United Football Club, a professional football club based in Kwekwe, a city in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The research focuses specifically on this single club rather than adopting a multi-club comparative approach or examining football financial sustainability at a national level.

Justification for Geographical Delimitation

The choice of Kwekwe United as the sole case study is both purposeful and strategic. First, the club represents an extreme or exemplary case of the phenomenon under investigation. This extremity makes the case particularly valuable for understanding the causes and consequences of financial unsustainability and for developing interventions that address deep-seated problems.

Furthermore, focusing on a single club enables the depth of analysis necessary for developing context-specific interventions. Financial sustainability is shaped by unique local factors: the specific economic conditions of Kwekwe, the club's particular history and supporter base, its relationships with local businesses and government. Understanding these factors sufficiently to develop tailored interventions requires intensive engagement that would not be possible across multiple sites. The researcher's location and resources make Kwekwe accessible for repeated site visits and sustained engagement. Proximity facilitates the participatory action research approach, which requires ongoing interaction with stakeholders. A geographically dispersed study would be logistically challenging within dissertation constraints.

Subject Scope

The study is limited to investigating financial sustainability and resilience at Kwekwe United FC, with a specific focus on the club's ability to cover participation costs. Within this broad subject area, the research addresses particular dimensions while excluding others.

Included Dimensions

i. **Revenue analysis and diversification:** The study examines the club's current revenue sources, their reliability and adequacy, and opportunities for developing new income streams through corporate partnerships, merchandising, match-day enhancements, and community engagement.

ii. **Expenditure patterns and cost management**: The research analyzes how the club allocates resources, identifies major cost drivers (particularly player and staff salaries), and explores opportunities for cost optimization without compromising competitiveness.

iii. **Governance structures and financial management systems**: The study investigates the club's decision-making processes, ownership structure, financial planning and reporting practices, and how these influence sustainability.

iv. **Stakeholder relationships**: The research examines the club's engagement with key stakeholders: players, supporters, local businesses, government, and football authorities and how these relationships affect financial health.

v. **Gap analysis**: The study compare Kwekwe United's current practices with established best practices from comparable contexts, identifying specific areas for improvement.

vi. **Intervention development**: The research focuses on developing practical, context-specific strategies for addressing identified gaps, validated by stakeholders and supported by implementation planning.

Justification for Subject Scope:

This scope is carefully calibrated to ensure the study remains focused on its core purpose while acknowledging relevant contextual factors. The emphasis on revenue, expenditure, governance, and stakeholder relationships reflects the key determinants of financial sustainability identified in the literature. Excluding dimensions such as on-field performance or fan sociology recognizes that these, while important, are not the primary focus and would extend the study beyond feasible boundaries. The scope maintains depth on financial sustainability while providing sufficient contextual understanding to develop meaningful interventions.

Participant Delimitation

The study delimits participation to specific stakeholder groups directly involved with or relevant to Kwekwe United's financial sustainability.

Included Participant Groups

Club management and leadership

Senior officials responsible for financial and operational decisions./

Technical staff

Coaches and team managers who have insight into operational needs and the relationship between financial resources and team performance.

Player representatives

Current players who have experienced the consequences of financial instability firsthand, including unpaid salaries and uncertain working conditions.

Supporter representatives

Leaders of supporter groups or fans actively engaged with the club who can speak to the fan perspective on financial challenges and opportunities for enhanced engagement.

Local business representatives

Owners or managers of businesses in Kwekwe and the Midlands Province who might represent potential corporate partners or sponsors.

Football authority representatives

Officials from the Premier Soccer League or ZIFA who can provide perspective on the regulatory and institutional context.

Justification for Participant Delimitation:

The selected participant groups represent those with direct knowledge of and stake in Kwekwe United's financial sustainability. Their perspectives are essential for understanding the problem and developing feasible interventions. Excluding broader groups reflects the study's focus on depth of engagement with key stakeholders rather than breadth of coverage.

Time Delimitation

Temporal Scope:

Primary data collection occured over a period of approximately six weeks, from 19 April to 31 May 2026. The study focused on Kwekwe United's current financial situation and recent history, with particular attention to the 2025 Premier Soccer League season, during which the club's financial crisis became acute.

Justification for Time Delimitation:

The six-week data collection period was sufficient for conducting in-depth interviews, document analysis, stakeholder workshops, and iterative intervention development within dissertation constraints. Focusing on the 2025 season captures the most relevant period when the club's financial challenges were most visible and consequential.

1.8 Study Outline

This dissertation consists of five chapters that each touches on a different part of the research process and help to further the overall goal of creating interventions for financial sustainability of Kwekwe United FC.

Chapter One: Introduction This chapter puts the background to the study. It puts into perspective the financials of Kwekwe United in the Zimbabwean and African football landscape. The problem statement presents the primary problem that the club is encountering, and the evidence for the problem. The coming points the focus of the study, research questions objectives importance of the study demonstrate the relevance of study to practice, policy and theory. The areas of the study delineations are the working scope of the study. It helps to create a clear picture of the discussion the other will have.

In Chapter Two, literature review dissects current relevant knowledge to be used for research work. It discusses some structures in which the concepts of sustainability, financial management and governance in organisations are explored. The chapter examines the research that has been done on football finance in the African continent and other areas of the world that are similar to Africa, highlighting gaps that have yet to be addressed by other research. It also covers literature on best practices on revenue diversification, stakeholder engagement and financial resilience that will serve as a benchmark in measuring Kwekwe United's practices.

Chapter Three Research Method is used to collect the information, discuss the results, and achieve goals. Here, an explanation is provided as to why a qualitative case study that draws on participatory action research was chosen, the decision being that creating interventions that fit one's context needs stakeholders' involvement. The research environment refers to the methods that were used in selecting the study participants and data collection which involved interviews, documentation of interviews, and workshops.

Chapter Four: Findings is a representation of the results of collecting data to address the themes indicated. This starts with a comprehensive financial diagnostic report of Kwekwe United, which also reviews governance structures and stakeholders' perceptions. Discussion compares and contrasts the findings with the existing literature and theories. Then, there is a current practice vs. best practice gap analysis, pinpointing areas of weaknesses and where things are preventing sustainability. The chapter includes the outcome of Opportunity Mapping, revenue streams identified and Partner engagement estates.

Chapter Five: This section highlights what the results have shown in regard to the situation of Kwekwe United, reveals patterns and outlines the implications for designing the intervention. In fact the chapter fills the gaps identified in literature and also contributes to the theory in financial sustainability of African football contexts.

Conclusions and Recommendations this offers a global perspective on the contribution and concrete results of the study, with major study findings and implications discussed, and a sliding scale would be a threshold to implement the 15 bottom up ideas, plans for support and guidance would be formulated. This chapter also highlights the stakeholders who can implement the suggestions such as Kwekwe United, the Premier Soccer League, ZIFA, etc. This study has its own limitations and recommends future research, while simultaneously reflecting about the process of learning by which the researcher went through.

References offers an extensive bibliography of all the sources mentioned in the dissertation in APA 7th edition style.

Appendices provide additional information such as interview guides, consent forms, detailed intervention templates, partnership proposal samples, and other documents that complement the findings and recommendations of the study.

This format allows for a logical sequence of the problem, investigation and practical solution and is strictly of an academic nature with an element of practical application and theory.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has set the context and approach of the research to develop intervention strategies for improving financial sustainability and financial resilience of Kwekwe United FC. The part began with the background of the study which revealed the acute financial crisis that the club endured in the 2025 Premier Soccer League season. This time, the season was labeled “disastrous” because of players' strikes over unpaid wages of three months. In addition, there was an unprecedented number of points lost and relegation was the result. Further, the chapter demonstrates this as a component of broader challenges that faced Zimbabwean football. The main problem outlined in the problem statement was Kwekwe United relied heavily on donations that were not guaranteed and it did not have alternative funding sources to the donations, and it was one owner working under a governance plan. The study had many significant aspects. It would assist in providing the club with practical solutions. Likewise, it could be used to inform the policies of the Zimbabwe Football Association. Last but not least, it would add to the theoretical knowledge of financial sustainability in African football settings. Research question and objectives presented guided investigation diagnostic assessment, development of intervention, and planning for implementation. The limitations depicted were that the study was geographically restricted to Kwekwe United FC only. As far as the field of research, the only thing that was focused on

was the financial sustainability in participation costs. The study only looked at key stakeholder groups in terms of participant. The study was also limited temporally because data collection was six weeks long from 19 April to 31 May which also included the 2025 season to ensure focused and feasible inquiry. This study outline concludes the chapter, resulting in the dissertation being divided into five chapters. The following chapter is a literature review on financial sustainability in football. This includes a study of any relevant theoretical concepts. As well as empirical literature from Africa as well as comparable contexts. It will also consider existing good practice. Lastly, it will point out the lack of knowledge this investigation will be tackling.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of literature pertaining to financial sustainability and resilience in football clubs, with particular focus on the Zimbabwean context and the specific circumstances of Kwekwe United Football Club. The purpose of this literature review is to establish the theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how football clubs can develop sustainable financial models to cover participation costs, and to identify gaps in existing knowledge that this study seeks to address.

2.2 Conceptual Review

Financial Sustainability

According to (Dayı & Mousa, 2025), financial sustainability is a club's ability to consistently generate enough revenue to cover its expenses without relying on excessive debt that erodes its equity. Financially sustainable clubs are those which eventually, fund their operation either from their internally generated resources or from the levels of debts they can sustain and not from repeating cycles of borrowing that eventually lead to negative equity. Therefore for Kwekwe united, financial Sustainability will be defined as the club's ability to consistently and predictably generate sufficient cash flow to cover all participation costs (player wages, travel, equipment, league fees) without relying on unpredictable donations or the personal wealth of the owner.

The concept of financial stability in football has evolved from early recognition of the "soft budget constraint" where clubs survived chronic losses due to expected bailouts from wealthy patrons (Andreff, 2005) to formal regulatory intervention. UEFA’s Financial Fair Play (2009) introduced break-even requirements to harden these constraints, but criticism led to its replacement by the Financial Sustainability Regulations (2022), which added squad cost controls and overdue payables rules. Concurrently, predictive models like the S-Score (Evans, 2024) were developed to anticipate distress, while governance research (Oliveira & Carvalhal, 2018) highlighted internal accountability as crucial.

Debt

(Dayı & Mousa, 2025), view excessive debt not just as a liability, but as a primary threat to sustainability. The key aspect is that when clubs must borrow not only to fund assets (like players) but also to cover operating losses, they enter a dangerous spiral. While (Dayı & Mousa, 2025) center on massive accumulated debt, Kwekwe United's immediate crisis is about liquidity (unpaid salaries, inability to pay fines) and the structure of its equity (reliance on a single owner/shareholder). The key concept will be financial fragility, which is having thin liquidity buffers and being exposed to short-term shocks.

Financial resilience

As defined by Wicker et al., (2013) the resilience of an organization is understood as being several facets; robust, redundancy resourcefulness and rapidity. As per their study, the recovery process used mainly human and financial resources. In addition, it states that inter-organizational relationships, seeking grants from the government, having relevant insurances, helped clubs to reach higher resilience. The clubs' ability to withstand financial shocks when having few months without donations and still surviving, have a cash buffer and breadth the income streams so that failure of some of them does not lead to their collapse; The idea of financial resilience in football has been identified through three distinct periods. In the period before 2010, resilience was completely absent from the body of knowledge around football finance.

For Kwekwe united, resilience will be defined as the club's capacity to absorb financial shocks for example a few months without donations and continue operating, as well as building cash reserves and diversifying income so that the failure of any single revenue source doesn't lead to collapse.

The conceptualization of financial resilience in football has evolved through three distinct phases. Prior to 2010, resilience was not explicitly addressed in football finance literature; scholarly and regulatory attention centered primarily on solvency and the prevention of bankruptcy. Between 2010 and 2020, Wicker, Filo and Cuskelly (2013) introduced resilience frameworks from disaster management into the study of community sport clubs, linking the concept to the 4R model, robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness and rapidity, focusing on recovery from natural disasters and economic shocks. From 2020 onwards, the financial disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted regulators to embed resilience formally into their mandates.

Revenue Diversification

(Darshini & Gayithri, 2019) revenue diversification is a process of changing the level of diversity of revenue mobilization as a part of mitigating the risk associated with reliance on a single or a few revenue sources. Wicker and Breuer (2013) define revenue diversification as the creation of diversified income portfolio, grounded in the financial portfolio theory. Therefore, for Kwekwe united revenue diversification is conceptualized as the development of multiple active revenue streams across four domains which include math-day income, merchandising, corporate partnerships and player development income.

Fabozzi et al.,(2008) wrote that revenue diversification as a concept stems from MPT (Markowitz, 1952) which explains that a portfolio of multiple assets has a risk and volatility that is less than that of individual asset portfolios. In fact, the corporate conglomerates of the 1960s-1970s implemented the principle in the way that they diversified earnings across numerous, unrelated industries to smooth their profits. The concept was then transferred to public finance, as Wicker & Breuer (2013, 2014), where revenue diversification reduced the dependence on a single tax source and also to the non-profit sector which as a result, experienced an improvement in its financial condition. Goslin and Mosola (2020) state that the four-pillar revenue model of football was sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting, and merchandising. At present, diversification is no longer First and foremost about risk reduction, but more about building strategic resilience. In particular, this includes many small-scale streams like supporter membership and crowd funding for smaller clubs which cannot replicate elite broadcasting deals. Kwekwe United feels that this change gives them a chance to concentrate on four areas which are locally feasible i.e. match-day income merchandising different corporate partnerships, and player development income.

2.3 Theoretical Review

Soft Budget Constraint Theory

Originally developed by Hungarian economist (Kornai, 1986) to understand business behavior in socialist economies. The theory posits that organizations operate under "soft" budget constraints when they expect to be bailed out of financial difficulties, reducing the incentive for financial discipline. (Andreff, 2007) notes that French clubs are often drawn to overspending and rely on patrons for bailouts, suggesting a persistence of lax management despite financial difficulties (Feuillet et al., 2024).

Relevance to the study

This theory is directly applicable to the continuous existence of Kwekwe United due to prolonged liquidity distress. In addition, (Andreff, 2007) phenomenon explains why Kwekwe United continued recruiting thirty new players despite lacking revenue to pay them, why the club survived the 2025 season despite unpaid salaries and fixture forfeiture. As a result, the theory assists in diagnosing behaviors causing financial unsustainability. For Objective 1 (understanding the current financial situation), it tells why the club's financial practices developed the way they did. For Objective 3, intervention strategies should harden budget constraints through improved governance and accountability mechanisms.

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)

RDT examines how organizations depend on external resources and seek to manage those dependencies to reduce uncertainty and increase autonomy (Dieleman & Widjaja, 2019). The theory suggests that organizations must secure resources from their environment to survive, and this creates power relationships with resource providers (Choi, 2023). Resource Dependence Theory argues that clubs should eschew financial vulnerability by diversifying their revenue, increasing funder legitimacy, and having a proactive and open board.

Relevance to the study

For Kwekwe United, RDT illuminates the club's near-total dependence on a single resource provider, the vulnerability created when that resource flow is disrupted, the power imbalance between the club and its resource providers and the need to diversify resource dependencies to reduce risk. RDT identifies factors affecting Kwekwe united sustainability by highlighting resource dependency as a structural vulnerability, suggesting strategies for revenue diversification to reduce dependence on any single source.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory, comprehensively applied in sport management research, suggests that organizations must consider the interests of all groups that affect or are affected by their activities, not merely shareholders or owners (Zdroik, 2016).

Relevance to the study

(Strittmatter et al., 2021) work on stakeholder analysis in sport organizations provides a framework for understanding Kwekwe United's stakeholder ecosystem:

i. Primary stakeholders: Players (unpaid), coaches, supporters, the single owner

ii. Secondary stakeholders: PSL, ZIFA, local businesses, community members

iii. The stakeholder power map: Who holds influence, and whose interests are currently neglected?

This theory identifies all parties affected by the financial crisis, suggesting that sustainable interventions require engaging multiple stakeholders and balancing their interests, rather than relying on a single patron. The stakeholder perspective also addresses the governance gap identified by the (Lauwo et al., 2022) framework.

Organizational Resilience Theory

The Resilience Framework moves beyond crisis management to examine the characteristics and factors that make organizations viable over time (Andersson et al., 2019). The framework integrates elements of evolutionary theory, complexity theory, and resource-based views to understand sustained viability (Koh et al., 2024).The Resilience Framework includes specific attention to financial resilience: the role of financial balance, profitability, and ownership (Paas et al., 2021).

Relevance to the study

For Kwekwe United, this theory helps conceptualize the difference between surviving day-to-day (current state) and long-term viability (desired state), the resources needed to absorb shocks that is liquidity buffers and diversified revenue and the role of ownership structure in either enabling or undermining resilience. This theory is central to the study's core concepts of sustainability and resilience, identifying what resilience resources the club lacks, and how to build those resources. The framework's emphasis on followership and social resources also highlights the importance of stakeholder relationships (Andersson et al., 2019).

Profit versus Utility Maximization Theory

A foundational debate in sports economics concerns whether clubs maximize profits like conventional firms or utility, such as playing success and fan satisfaction. (Plumley & Wilson, 2022) text, in the context of professional team sports, examines profit and utility maximization as a core theoretical concept (Golding et al., 2025)

Relevance to the study

These theories are perspectives that reveal the tension between sporting ambition that is promotion (the recruitment of thirty new players) and discipline, whether the club operates according to a utility-maximization logic that undermines financial sustainability and how the single-owner model seems to favor the owner's utility (prestige and emotional satisfaction) over financial sustainability. Kwekwe's financial behaviors can be understood through this theory. It also provides insights into potential interventions. For instance, it suggests that a sustainable financial model must align the incentives of players, staff and owners. And to do this one way is to shift the club's objective function so that it takes into account the financial impact of on-field decisions.

Financial Distress Prediction Theory (S-Score/Z-Score Models)

(Evans, 2024) S-Score research extends Altman's classic Z-score models to develop football-specific financial sustainability metrics. The research identifies four scenarios that have caused insolvency for football clubs in the English Football League and suggests minimum financial tolerances for accounting ratios that provide a reasonable level of resilience. The four insolvency scenarios provide a typology for understanding how clubs fail and suggests what thresholds clubs should maintain.

Relevance to the study

Therefore, the focus on resilience for financial sustainability aligns with the study's core concepts. This theory provides diagnostic categories for understanding Kwekwe United's financial distress, suggesting what financial health might look like and what ratios/targets the club should work toward.

Institutional Theory and Football Governance

(Plumley et al., 2021) Extensively examine ownership structure, governance, and regulation in professional team sport as part of their comprehensive framework. This theoretical perspective views clubs as entrenched in institutional environments that shape their behavior through regulations, norms, and expectations.

Relevance to the study

This theory illuminates how ZIFA's regulations shape club behavior, the institutional pressures that lead kwekwe to spend beyond their means such as competitive pressures or fan expectations and the role of club licensing and financial regulations in either enabling or preventing financial crises. Therefore, this theory identifies Kwekwe united institutional

factors that contribute to financial unsustainability, suggesting that interventions must work within and potentially seek to change the institutional environment to ensure financial sustainability.

2.4 Thematic Review

The Zimbabwean Football Context – Historical Challenges and Systemic Weaknesses

The Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League's Structural Vulnerabilities

To grasp the financial troubles at Kwekwe United, one has to locate the club in the context of the historical and structural problems facing Zimbabwean football. (Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023) study of the Zimbabwe Premier Soccer League (ZPSL) during the COVID-19 pandemic provides critical insights into the systemic weaknesses that predate and exacerbate individual club failures. In a study published in the Journal of Global Sport Management, a desk research methodology was used to investigate how football authorities and football clubs and administrators, and football players were affected when the league was suspended due to COVID illness. The researchers discovered that pre-existing economic and political challenges of football in Zimbabwe were consolidated and worsened by COVID-19. Among them are the financial sustainability of the clubs, poor administration, corruption, lack of sponsorship, and the general malaise of the game.

(Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023) findings are important to Kwekwe United's plight as they show that this financial crisis is exemplary of a situation and not accidental, and that there are problems within the Zimbabwean football system. The challenges of funding and lack of disaster preparedness they discuss created the context where a newly promoted club, without deep reserves or varied sources of income could be fatally destabilized by a few months of interruption in donor support.

The case of Kwekwe United exemplifies the severe financial challenges and lack of sustainability that (Dandah & Chiweshe (2023) document. Observations taken from the 2025 season news shows the empirical grounding of how this model works

(Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023) research indicates that intervention to deal with Kwekwe United's financial problem has to go beyond just generating revenue to fixing structural weaknesses in Zimbabwean football. The fact that they identify poor administration, corruption and lack of sponsorship as perennial issues indicates that any sustainable solution must include governance

reform, transparency mechanisms, and commercial infrastructure development, and not just cash support.

In addition, the fact that COVID-19 "entrenched and worsened" pre-existing challenges means that economic shocks be it a global pandemic, currency volatility or interruption of donor support will continue to destabilize clubs lacking multiple streams of revenue and adequate reserves. This shows why resilience is a different concept from sustainability: clubs need to generate enough income but also need to build buffers to withstand disruptions to any single income.

Financial Sustainability in Lower Division and Regional Football Clubs

The Portuguese Study: Understanding Regional Club Challenges

While (Dayı & Mousa, 2025) target top clubs with huge revenues, the Portuguese study Cunha (2024) provides significant insights into the financial sustainability of clubs not involved in elite competitions. This dissertation was conducted at the Instituto Universitário de Lisboa and took a mixed-methods approach, using the Cavalier Method through semi-structured interviews of managers from 24 district-level clubs and by analyzing socio-demographic and sporting indicators. Cunha (2024) raises a very salient issue that is similar to the one in the Kwekwe United case, what happens to the 'smaller' clubs and how might they survive? How do they deal with issues surrounding future financial security, efficient operations, nurturing their communities and longevity?

Regional clubs face serious issues according to Cunha (2024), especially regarding stable revenue and outside financing. Similar is the case of Kwekwe United; its CEO stated that the club relies on donations from well-wishers as the club has no money. Clubs are highly dependent on the community and have very few sponsors, the research showed. This reliance on local support structures presents both opportunities and vulnerabilities. On the one hand, community commitment can enhance resilience, while on the other hand, limited local economic capacity constrains revenue potential.

According to Cunha (2024) socio demographic factors such as population density and local income level affect their density capacity greatly. This discovery is particularly relevant for club Kwekwe United is based in a mining town with specific economic traits that affect its ability to generate revenue. According to the study, the sustainability of regional clubs can be achieved through diversification of income, enhancement of community involvement and more

constant external support from the government and nongovernment agencies. The Kwekwe United strategy framework for developing interventions comprises a three-pronged strategy involving diversification, community involvement, and outside help.

Comparative Insights from Other Contexts

Emery & Weed (2006) study of football clubs outside the 'top flight' in England, cited in (Fan et al., 2023), examined the financial management strategies of clubs operating in the shadow of elite competitors. Their research found that such clubs employ distinctive strategies including cost containment, volunteer labor, and community embeddedness, to survive.

African Football's Commercial Viability – Lessons from Mosola's Research

The Mosola Thesis: A Comprehensive Analysis

(Goslin & Mosola, 2020), "The business of sport: towards a viable commercial model for the management of professional football in Africa," completed at the University of Pretoria, provides the most comprehensive academic treatment of African football's commercial challenges.

According to (Goslin & Mosola, 2020) professional football clubs in Africa need to identify the limited resources from an infinite number of potential revenue sources. In addition, clubs need to apply their expertise in sport and financing to ensure that the limited revenue sources are allocated to achieve maximum satisfaction for their supporters and to generate commercial profit for the owners of the clubs.

The study employed a mixed-methods design, gathering both quantitative numerical information (three-year financial records of leagues and clubs in Europe and Africa) as well as qualitative textual information (semi-structured interviews and analysis of research documents from professional football experts). This methodological approach enabled (Goslin & Mosola, 2020) to compare financial performance across continents while also capturing the perspectives of football administrators and experts.

Therefore, the thesis identified that, professional football clubs, as an element of the South African sport industry, depend largely on four main sources of revenue: sponsorships, gate revenue, television and broadcasting rights, and merchandising. This four-pillar framework provides a benchmark against which Kwekwe United's revenue model can be assessed.

Goslin & Mosola (2020) documented specific challenges including rising ticket prices; corporate sponsorship facing economic and regulatory concerns; broadcasters facing a great challenge in integrating social media into their offerings; and rising player costs and talent development with long lags before they pay off. These challenges create a difficult operating environment where even well-managed clubs struggle to achieve viability.

Moreover, the study showed that professional football clubs in Africa are not financially viable and do not yield healthy returns on investment for their owners. More so, they lag behind Europe in terms of commercialization of professional football. Differences in football governance applications and commercial infrastructure caused by availability and structural constraints.

Goslin & Mosola (2020) concluded that the answer to why African clubs are not commercially viable is both complex and multi-layered. This finding warns against simplistic explanation and interventions must tackle multiple dimensions simultaneously. A central contribution of Goslin & Mosola (2020) thesis is its examination of whether European models can be transferred to African contexts. This question is critical for the Kwekwe United study, which must determine whether interventions derived from European or Turkish research can be adapted to the Zimbabwean environment.

Goslin & Mosola (2020) implicit conclusion is that transfer is possible but requires careful adaptation. The profitability pillars such as sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting and merchandising are indeed able to deliver in different contexts however the level of impact and the ways of achieving them should reflect local conditions. Although a Kwekwe club can't copyrighted the broadcasting revenues of a Turkish Süper Lig club, it can develop community-based sponsorship and merchandising suitable to its means.

Debt Sustainability and Governance Structures

The Italian Perspective on Football Debt

According to (Zanda et al., 2024) provide additional theoretical grounding through their analysis of debt sustainability in the football industry, with the evocative title "One, Nobody and One Hundred Thousand Owners". Published in Corporate Governance and Research & Development Studies, this paper examines the financial and economic performance of Italian football clubs in comparison to their European counterparts.

The study's findings reveal clear economic and financial challenges facing the professional Italian football industry, reflecting the patterns (Dayı & Mousa, 2025) document in Turkey. Zanda et al. (2024) draw on Franck's (2010) concept of governance structures in European football, noting that the unique ownership and governance models characteristic of football clubs ranging from private firms to member associations create distinctive financial dynamics.

The Italian study's reference to (Neto et al., 2017) on "the determinants of Brazilian football clubs' debt ratios" highlights an important dimension: governance structures shape financial outcomes. (Oliveira & Carvalhal, 2018) finding that "football clubs with good governance have higher performance" suggests that financial sustainability cannot be achieved through revenue generation alone; it requires institutional frameworks that ensure accountability, transparency, and strategic discipline.

The literature suggests that sustainable clubs require governance structures that distribute responsibility, ensure accountability, and create institutional resilience independent of any individual. For Kwekwe United, this implies that intervention strategies must address not only revenue generation but also the ownership and governance model that currently concentrates all risk on a single individual.

Economic Sustainability as an Integrated Framework

The Iranian Study: A Holistic Approach

Atghia & Nazarian (2024) study, "Economic sustainability: a solution to the financial problems of football clubs," published in *Sport, Business & Management*, offers an integrated framework for understanding football club financial health. The research, conducted with 13 members of football clubs in the Iranian Premier League, employed semi-structured interviews to develop a framework for economic sustainability.

Atghia & Nazarian (2024) found out several components that enhance economic sustainability like media and social networks, entrepreneurship and club business development, commercialization of the club, privatization, investment and ownership, strategic communication plan, financial management and management instability.

In their framework, Atghia & Nazarian (2024) state that the structural changes of football clubs and strategic plans for the promotion of entrepreneurship and commercialization, in addition to the environmental and management part of football clubs is necessary for sustainability. The

physical, tactical, ecological and managerial angles that the growing social and political movements bring to bear on United Kwekwe.

Risk of Financial Failure

Sport Financial Self-Sustenance

According to (Charumbira, 2022) there are four financial zones and these are

There is a financial red zone where failure is most likely and organizations are spending way beyond the sport generated revenue. Then, we have low revenue financial amber zone where organizations earn very low sports revenue insufficient to meet expenditure. Furthermore, we have high expenditure financial amber zone. Finally, there is financial green zone where organizations achieve financial self-sustainability by containing expenditure within sport generated revenue. This framework is important in evaluating Kwekwe United's financial situation as it allows a thorough analysis of Kwekwe United's operational capacity beyond mere profit and loss.

Financial self-sustaining as defined by Charumbira's (2022) as relying on core operating and commercial activities may implicitly involve a westernized model of sport commercialization. Denying these exceptions may hinder the ability of organizations, including charities, after-funding entities, and property holding bodies, to access grants from governments or other funders. Consequently, the framework makes a distinction between revenue from sports and revenue not from sports. However, there is insufficient theorization about the link between them or how entities can transition from not being sports dependent to being sports self-sustaining.

While the framework advocates containing expenditure within sports revenues, it does not address the competitive pressures that drive expenditure inflation, the arms race dynamic well-documented in football literature (De Oliveira & Borba, 2021).

Moreover, unlike (Mia et al., 2026) and the governance literature reviewed earlier, Charumbira (2022) framework does not explicitly address how ownership structures, board composition, or accountability mechanisms affect financial self-sustenance. For the research, Charumbira (2022) framework provides a useful diagnostic tool and a Zimbabwean theoretical resource within Theme 2 and must be complemented by other literature particularly on governance (Mia et al., 2025) and lower division clubs (Bertheussen, 2023) to address its limitations. The Kwekwe United study can extend Charumbira's work by applying the framework to a club

lacking published financial statements, testing its utility in the Zimbabwean context, and addressing the governance gap that Charumbira's framework leaves unexplored.

2.5 Conclusion

Trends and gaps

Despite the richness of this literature, significant gaps remain that the Kwekwe United study addresses:

Contextual Gap

While (Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023) document Zimbabwean football's challenges generally, and (Goldman & Mashinini, 2018) examine African football broadly, no study has conducted an in-depth analysis of a specific Zimbabwean club's financial crisis and developed contextually tailored intervention strategies.

Intervention Gap

The literature is predominantly diagnostic, identifying problems and their causes, but provides limited guidance on developing and testing specific intervention strategies. Studies recommend what clubs should do: diversify revenue, improve governance, and strengthen community engagement without explaining how resource-constrained clubs in challenging economic environments can practically implement such strategies.

Resilience Gap

While sustainability is extensively theorized, resilience the capacity to absorb shocks and continue operating receives less attention. The Kwekwe United case, with its acute vulnerability to disrupted donor support, highlights the importance of building resilience alongside sustainability.

Practice Gap

There is limited research that engages directly with club stakeholders to co-develop interventions, ensuring that strategies are not only theoretically sound but also practically implementable given local constraints and capabilities.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

Based on the literature review, this study adopts a conceptual framework that integrates key constructs from the reviewed research. Financial Sustainability is conceptualized as the club's

ability to consistently generate sufficient revenue from diversified sources to cover all participation costs, maintain positive cash flow, and build reserves that enable investment in future development (Barget & Chavinier-Rela, 2017; Öner et al., 2024).

Resilience is conceptualized as the club's capacity to absorb financial shocks including interruptions to any single revenue source and continue operations without accumulating unsustainable debt or compromising player welfare (Fasey et al., 2021; Shipway & Miles, 2020).

Governance is conceptualized as the structures and processes that ensure accountability, transparency, and strategic discipline, distributing responsibility and risk across multiple stakeholders rather than concentrating them in a single individual (Thompson et al., 2023; Yeh & Taylor, 2008)

Community Embeddedness is conceptualized as the club's relationships with its local community, which provide both resources (through support, volunteer labor, and local sponsorship) and constraints (through limited local economic capacity) (Cousens & Barnes, 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2015).

Revenue Diversification is conceptualized as the development of multiple income streams, including corporate sponsorship, match-day revenue, broadcasting income, and merchandising, adapted to the club's scale and context (Grabowski, 2021)

These concepts, derived from the literature, will guide the empirical investigation and intervention development in subsequent chapters, ensuring that the study is theoretically grounded while remaining practically focused on Kwekwe United's specific circumstances.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive review of literature pertaining to financial sustainability and resilience in football clubs, organized thematically to align with the research objectives of the Kwekwe United FC study. The review synthesized scholarly works from diverse geographical contexts to establish both theoretical foundations and empirical insights applicable to understanding and addressing the club's financial crisis. The next chapter presents the research methodology employed to investigate the financial sustainability challenges facing Kwekwe United Football Club and to develop contextually appropriate intervention strategies.

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of the philosophical assumptions, research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and analytical procedures that guide the study, ensuring that the research process is transparent, replicable, and rigorous.

3.2 Methodological Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of individuals within their natural contexts, and is particularly suited to exploratory and explanatory inquiries in which the aim is to gain deep insight into complex social phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Justification for Choosing a Qualitative Approach

The financial sustainability challenges facing Kwekwe United FC are complex, context-dependent, and under-researched in the Zimbabwean context. The financial situations of these clubs cannot be captured using quantitative approaches (which rely on fixed variables and large sample size) because it involves governance and resource dependence issues that are interrelated and also stakeholder relationship and institutional pressure issues. Qualitative research allows for flexibility and emergent discovery, enabling the researcher to explore unforeseen dimensions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The study's objectives, which seek to understand the club's current financial position, identify factors that are impacting sustainability, and developing strategy interventions, demand rich, detailed accounts of those closely involved. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and document analysis produce thick description (Geertz, 1973) that illuminates the

mechanisms, motivations, and meanings behind financial decisions, rather than merely measuring their outcomes.

The study will employ a single case study design. Qualitative approaches are the predominant and most appropriate choice for case study research, as they enable the researcher to capture the holistic, context-sensitive, and multi-perspectival nature of the case (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). The primary unit of analysis is the club's financial management subsystem specifically, the recurring practices, decision-making routines, and stakeholder interactions involved in mobilizing revenue, prioritizing expenditures, and responding to monthly liquidity shortfalls, as perceived and enacted by participants. The case is classified as instrumental (Stake, 2006): while Kwekwe United is a distinct entity, it is examined primarily to provide analytical insight into the broader, recurring phenomenon of financial precarity among semi-professional football clubs in similar regional and economic settings, rather than being studied purely for its unique intrinsic qualities. Its selection is further justified by its revelatory potential (Yin, 2018).

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study, Resource Dependence Theory, Soft Budget Constraint Theory, and Organizational Resilience Theory are conceptually rich and require data that capture processes, perceptions, and relationships. Qualitative research is well-suited to exploring such constructs in depth (Maxwell, 2013)

The club might not produce audited financial statements, making quantitative financial ratio analysis (as in Dayı & Mousa, 2025) impossible. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to reconstruct financial practices through interviews and available documentary evidence, thereby working around data limitations (Ekanem, 2007)

Implementation of the Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach was implemented through a single case study design. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews from five stakeholder categories (club leadership, technical staff, players, administrative personnel, and external stakeholders). The interview guides were developed from the theoretical framework and pilot-tested. In addition, a total of 19 interviews and a focus group of four people was achieved as well as document analysis of a media report titled **"Nightmare continues for Kwekwe United players, coaches" (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11, December 2025)**

All data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), supported by NVivo software. The analysis followed a hybrid deductive-inductive approach, where initial codes

where drawn from the theoretical framework. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and a reflexive audit trail (Lincoln et al., 1985).

The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to capture the lived experiences of players who endured unpaid salaries, the strategic dilemmas of club leaders, and the perceptions of sponsors and regulators providing a holistic understanding that forms the basis for developing intervention strategies.

3.3 Time Horizon

Choice of Time Horizon: Cross-Sectional

This study adopted a cross-sectional time horizon. Cross-sectional research involves collecting data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the phenomenon under investigation (M. Saunders et al., 2019) . It contrasts with longitudinal research, which collects data over an extended period to examine change and continuity.

Justification for Choosing a Cross-Sectional Design

Alignment with research objectives

The primary aim of the study is to understand the current financial sustainability challenges of Kwekwe United FC and to develop intervention strategies. While the study does consider historical events (the 2025 season), the core data collection occured within a defined period (19 April–31May2026), capturing participants' retrospective accounts and current perspectives. A cross-sectional design is appropriate for such descriptive and exploratory inquiries (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implementation of the Cross-Sectional Design

The cross-sectional design was implemented by conducting all primary data collection within a six-week period from 19 April to 31 May 2026. During this period, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 participants for interviews and 4 participants for one focus group meeting, with each interview capturing retrospective accounts of events from 2024–2025 (the promotion campaign, the 2025 PSL season) as well as current perspectives on the club's situation in early 2026.

In addition, document analysis focused on the media report **"Nightmare continues for Kwekwe United players, coaches" (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11, December 2025)**,

providing a historical dimension to the cross-sectional snapshot. The results of the research were collected in a quick time frame, the study ensures that the findings reflect a coherent snapshot of the club's financial situation as perceived by participants in the immediate aftermath of the 2025 season. This temporal focus is appropriate given the study's objective to diagnose the club's position and develop contextually relevant interventions.

3.4 Research Strategy

Choice of Research Strategy: Case Study

This study employed a case study research strategy. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). The case study strategy is particularly appropriate when the research seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions, when the researcher has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon (Warren & Bell, 2022) .

The main aims of the study were to understand the financial sustainability challenges faced by Kwekwe United FC, factors affecting its financial health and developing intervention measures. The case study strategy is capable of demonstrating these objectives. Hence, with the case study strategy, it was possible to provide an in-depth, contextualized understanding of a specific organization, (Stake, 2006). The study sought to answer questions such as "Why did Kwekwe United experience such severe financial distress?" and "How can the club develop sustainable financial practices?" questions that are well-suited to case study inquiry (Yin, 2018). Financial sustainability in football is heavily shaped by local context: the club's ownership structure, its relationship with supporters, the regulatory environment, and the broader economic conditions of Kwekwe and Zimbabwe. The case study strategy allows the researcher to capture this contextual richness and to understand the phenomenon within its natural setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike experimental or survey designs that seek to isolate variables, the case study embraces complexity and context.

Kwekwe United's 2025 season marked by player strikes, fixture forfeiture, unpaid salaries, and relegation with a record-low points tally represents a revelatory case. Yin (2018) argues that a single case can be justified when it provides an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to research. The club's extreme financial distress offers a powerful lens through which to examine the broader challenges of football sustainability in Zimbabwe.

Case study research is distinguished by its reliance on multiple sources of evidence Yin (2018).The present study uses semi-structured interviews, document analysis and a focus group which enables triangulation and a better understanding of the case. The case strategy creates a framework through which these diverse data can be integrated.

Theory development and testing: The case study strategy is well-suited to both theory development and theory testing (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). This study draws on existing theories (Resource Dependence Theory, Soft Budget Constraint Theory, and Organizational Resilience Theory) to frame the investigation, while also allowing for the emergence of new insights that may extend or refine these theories in the Zimbabwean context.

3.5 Population and Sampling

3.5.1 Population

The target population for this study comprised of individuals who have a direct stake in or significant knowledge of the financial management, governance, and operational sustainability of Kwekwe United Football Club. This includes club executives and board members, technical team members (head coach, assistant coaches, team manager), players (both current and those who were part of the 2025 Premier Soccer League squad), administrative and finance staff, Supporters' trust/committee representatives, local business leaders or potential sponsors with knowledge of the club's financial engagements and officials from the Premier Soccer League (PSL) and Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) who have oversight or regulatory interaction with the club.

3.5.2 Sampling Procedures

Sampling Strategy: Purposive Sampling

This study followed a qualitative case study design. The sampling strategy was non-probability in nature. Specifically, purposive (or judgmental) sampling was the primary technique. Purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting participants based on their ability to provide rich, relevant, and diverse information pertinent to the research questions (Patton, 2015).

According to (Flyvbjerg, 2006) case study research depends on selecting information-rich cases, both with regard to the case itself (Kwekwe United) and the participants. Purposive sampling is where the researcher selects individuals who are able to illuminate the phenomenon being studied which in this case are challenges of financial sustainability and resilience for Kwekwe United.

Depth over breadth

The study aim was to develop a deep, contextual understanding of the club's financial situation and co-create intervention strategies. Purposive sampling ensures that participants are not only knowledgeable but also represent different stakeholder perspectives (management, players, supporters, regulators), enabling triangulation of data sources (Donkoh et al., 2023).

Practical constraints

Kwekwe United FC is a specific organization with a finite number of individuals who possess the desired knowledge. Random sampling would be impractical and could have yield participants lacking direct experience with the club's financial affairs, thereby reducing the richness of the data (Subedi, 2023)

Theoretical grounding

The sampling strategy is also informed by the theoretical frameworks identified in Chapter Two. For instance, Resource Dependence Theory suggests that understanding the club's relationships with external resource providers is crucial (Dieleman & Widjaja, 2019); therefore, participants such as local business owners and PSL officials will purposively be included. Similarly, Soft Budget Constraint theory directs attention to decision-makers (the owner, executives) who shape the expectation of bailouts (Robinson & Torvik, 2006); they will therefore be targeted.

Implementation of the Sampling Strategy

The purposive sampling strategy was implemented through a structured process hence identifying stakeholder categories based on the inclusion criteria and the research objectives. The five broad stakeholder categories included club leadership, technical staff, players, administrative and finance personnel and external stakeholders that is the supporters, local business owners or sponsors, and a ZIFA official.

Sample size determination

In qualitative case study research, sample size is not fixed in advance but is guided by the principle of data saturation, the point at which no new insights emerge from additional interviews (Guest et al., 2006). The target was conducted between 15 and 20 in-depth interviews, distributed across stakeholder categories. This range was chosen based on typical

qualitative case studies of organizations, were such numbers were sufficient to capture the complexity of the case while remaining manageable.

Documented selection

For each participant approached, a brief justification was recorded for example selected because they served as finance officer during the 2025 season and handled salary payments. This audit trail enhances the transparency and trustworthiness of the sampling process (Lincoln et al., 1985).

3.5.3 Sample Size Determination

Sample Size Determination for Qualitative Study

In qualitative research, sample size determination differs fundamentally from quantitative research. Rather than being determined by statistical power calculations, sample size in qualitative studies is guided by the principle of data saturation, the point at which new data no longer yield new insights relevant to the research questions (Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 2000). For case study research, the depth of understanding of the case takes precedence over the number of participants (Millar et al., 2023).

Principles Guiding Sample Size

The sample size for this study is determined by the following principles:

Saturation: The aim was to continue data collection until no new themes emerge from interviews and the existing themes are sufficiently rich and well-developed (Guest et al., 2006). Saturation is widely considered the gold standard for justifying sample size in qualitative research (B. Saunders et al., 2018).

According to (Malterud et al., 2021), the required sample size depends on the study's information power a function of the aim, sample specificity, use of established theory, quality of dialogue, and analysis strategy. Studies with a narrow aim, highly specific participants, strong theoretical grounding, and intensive dialogue require smaller samples.

Moreover, for a single-case design, the adequacy of the sample is judged by whether the selected participants collectively provide a comprehensive representation of the case's key stakeholder perspectives (Gentles et al., 2015). The focus is not on statistical representativeness but on capturing the range of experiences and viewpoints relevant to understanding the case. Given the size of the organization and the finite number of individuals who held key positions

during the 2024–2026 period, the potential participant pool was naturally limited. The sample size was therefore determined partly by the available population.

Justification of the Selected Sample Size (n = 19) for interviews

This study achieved a sample of 19 participants, comprising:

i. Club leadership: Planned 3, interviewed 3.

ii. Technical staff: Planned 2, interviewed 4.

iii. Players: Planned 5, interviewed 4.

iv. Administrative/finance personnel: Planned 2, interviewed 0.

v. External stakeholders: Planned 6, interviewed 8.

Justification of the Selected Sample Size (n = 4) for the focus group

This study achieved a sample of 4 participants, comprising of the representatives of external stakeholders only, the representatives of the other stakeholder groups were absent and did not participate in the focus group.

Alignment with Empirical Benchmarks

Empirical research on saturation suggests that thematic saturation in qualitative studies is often achieved within 12 to 20 interviews for reasonably homogeneous populations (Guest et al., 2006). For studies with multiple stakeholder groups, a sample size of 15–25 is common (Kim et al., 2014; Tiller et al., 2021). The sample of 19 falls within this well-established range.

Representation of the Case

The sample was purposively constructed to ensure that all key stakeholder groups were represented, including those with potentially divergent views such as players versus leadership. The inclusion of external stakeholders (sponsors, supporters, regulators) provides perspectives beyond the immediate organization, ensuring that the case is well understood in its broader context. This multi-perspectival approach enhances the richness of the case study without requiring a larger sample (Dorion, 2009)

Flexibility and Reflexivity

Consistent with qualitative research principles, the sample size will not be fixed in advance but will be treated as flexible. The researcher is initially targeting 15–18 participants but remains open to adding more if saturation is not reached or if new stakeholder categories emerge.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

This section describes the systematic process through which data was gathered to address the research objectives. The data collection was carried out in two phases: a pilot study (pre-test) followed by the main study. The procedures are detailed in terms of the instruments used, timing, setting, participants, and implementation steps, with justifications drawn from qualitative research methodology literature.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted to refine the data collection instruments, assess the clarity and appropriateness of interview questions, test the logistical arrangements, and allow the researcher to practice interviewing techniques before the main data collection. Piloting is widely recommended in qualitative research to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings (Miranda et al., 2023). This helps identify ambiguous questions, adjust the flow of the interview, and ensure that the instruments effectively capture the information needed to answer the research questions.

A pilot study was conducted on 15 April to refine the data collection instruments for the main study on improving Kwekwe United FC's financial sustainability and resilience. Following the principle of testing questions with representatives from the target population, a purposive sample of five (n=5) participants was recruited, comprising one individual from each of the main study's stakeholder groups: club leadership, technical staff, players, administrative/finance personnel, and external stakeholders. Inclusion criteria required participants to be current members of their respective stakeholder group with direct knowledge of the club's operations, while individuals who were not affiliated with Kwekwe United FC or were involved in the design of the study were excluded. The procedure involved administering the draft semi-structured interview and focus group questions to these five participants in individual, online sessions on whatsapp calls. The primary finding from this pilot was that the questions were generally clear and relevant, though minor wording related to financial terminology was adjusted for improved clarity for the player cohort before finalizing the instruments for the main study. The researcher also found out that using both English and shona was important for clarifying questions and making them more transparent.

Main Study

Semi-structured interview guides

Separate guides were developed for each stakeholder category (club leadership, technical staff, players, administrative/finance personnel, and external stakeholders). Each guide consisted of open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives and theoretical frameworks. Questions on resource dependence explored revenue sources and their reliability; questions on soft budget constraints probed expectations of financial bailouts; and questions on resilience examined past responses to shocks.

Document analysis checklist

A structured form was used to extract relevant information from documents. However the researcher only managed to make use of one media report **"Nightmare continues for Kwekwe United players, coaches" (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11, December 2025)** as Kwekwe United failed to produce the club's financial records hence triangulation was not achieved.

Focus group discussion guide

A focus group was conducted with members of the Kwekwe United supporters' trust. The guide included themes such as perceptions of the club's financial health, willingness to contribute financially for example through membership schemes, expectations of the club's leadership, and ideas for community-based revenue generation. The focus group will be designed to capture collective views and generate interactive discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Timing of Data Collection

The main study data collection took place over a six-week period from 19 April to 31 May 2026. This timing allowed the researcher to capture reflections on the just-concluded 2025 PSL season while also observing early preparations for the 2026 season in the lower division.

Conduct of the Research

The main study proceeded in the following steps:

STEP 1: Preparation and ethical clearance

Permission was secured from the Kwekwe United FC CEO representative and from the relevant gatekeeper.

STEP 2: Initial contact and scheduling

Potential participants were approached by phone calls and others in person. The researcher explained the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures to protect confidentiality. Those who agreed were scheduled for interviews at their preferred time and place.

STEP 3: Informed consent

At the start of each interview and before the focus group, participants were given a consent form to read and sign. The form detailed the purpose of the study, the use of a digital audio recorder, the option to skip any question or withdraw at any time, and the procedures for anonymizing data.

STEP 4: Interview and focus group sessions

Data was collected using multiple modes to accommodate participant availability and preferences: three interviews with club leadership were conducted via e-mail as asynchronous exchanges over approximately one week; seven interviews were carried out by telephone and WhatsApp call, each lasting 15–20 minutes; nine interviews with external stakeholders were conducted face-to-face in participants' homes, lasting 20–50 minutes; and one face-to-face focus group was held in a participant's home, lasting about 60 minutes. All sessions used both English and Shona, with questions provided in both languages and the interviewer translating or clarifying terms as needed to ensure clarity; responses in Shona were translated into English during transcription. With consent, WhatsApp calls, in-person interviews, and the focus group were audio-recorded and transcribed word for word, while e-mail responses were saved as written text. Field notes were taken for all modes, and non-verbal data was handled differently by mode: for face-to-face and focus group sessions, non-verbal cues such as body language, hesitation, and eye contact were noted in field notes; for phone and WhatsApp calls, paralinguistic cues such as tone and pauses were recorded; e-mail data provided no non-verbal information. Data quality therefore varied, with face-to-face and focus group modes yielding the richest, most nuanced data, phone and WhatsApp providing good depth but lacking visual cues, and e-mail being most convenient but less detailed.

STEP 5: Document collection

Document collection involved a request to Kwekwe United FC for financial records, including budgets, income statements, and audit reports; however, the club failed to produce any financial

documents. Consequently, the researcher supplemented primary data with publicly available secondary sources, specifically one media outlet document. This document, titled “Nightmare continues for Kwekwe United players, coaches” (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11 December 2025), provided contextual evidence of the club’s financial difficulties and stakeholder experiences. The article was retrieved online and reviewed to corroborate themes emerging from interviews and the focus group. No other financial or administrative records were made available by the club, limiting documentary triangulation. As a result, the media report served as the sole documentary source for external validation of reported financial sustainability challenges.

STEP 6: Data management and storage

All audio files were transferred to a password-protected computer immediately after each session. Anonymized transcripts were prepared within 48 hours of each interview to ensure freshness of recall.

Justification of the Data Collection Approach

Alignment with research objectives

The study aimed to understand a complex, context-specific phenomenon (financial unsustainability) and to develop intervention strategies. Qualitative methods are best suited to capturing the multiple perspectives, historical background, and institutional dynamics that shape the club’s situation (Yin, 2018).

Flexibility and depth

Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to follow emergent themes while ensuring that all key topics derived from the theoretical framework are covered. This balance between structure and flexibility is essential for exploratory case studies (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Triangulation

By combining interviews, document from one media outlet, and a focus group, the study triangulated data sources, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of findings (Flick, 2018).

Theoretical fit

The instruments were explicitly linked to the theoretical frameworks. Questions on resource dependencies, soft budget constraints, and organizational resilience were embedded in the interview guides, ensuring that the collected data directly inform the theoretical analysis.

Ethical sensitivity

The one-on-one interview format provided a safe space for participants, especially players and staff who felt vulnerable due to unpaid wages, to speak candidly without fear of reprisal. The focus group was conducted after individual interviews to avoid contamination of individual views. Given the club's recent relegation and financial distress, a mixed-method design requiring extensive quantitative data, for example surveys to a large sample, was not feasible due to limited access to participants and the absence of reliable financial records. The qualitative approach was therefore both appropriate and realistic.

Limitations of the Methods employed

A significant limitation was the absence of audited financial statements for Kwekwe United. The study therefore could not perform the kind of quantitative financial ratio analysis employed by (Dayı & Mousa, 2025) in their Turkish study. This constrained the ability to measure the club's financial position using conventional metrics such as debt-to-equity ratios, liquidity ratios, or the S-score model. In addition, the researcher encountered access constraints and unexpected factors that influenced the research.

3.6.1 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data Analysis Approach

Given the qualitative case study design, thematic analysis was selected as the primary analytical method. Thematic analysis was a flexible yet rigorous approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data, and was particularly suited to case study research where the goal was to understand participants' experiences and perspectives in depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2012).

The analysis followed the six-phase process outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

1. Familiarization with the data

2. Generating initial codes

3. Searching for themes

4. Reviewing themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing the report

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework using NVivo 15 (QSR International). All audio-recorded interviews and the focus group were transcribed word for word, with Shona responses translated into English during transcription, and e-mail responses were imported directly as text. Familiarization involved repeated reading of transcripts while listening to recordings to ensure accuracy, with initial reflective notes recorded in a research journal. An initial codebook was developed deductively from the research questions and literature, then expanded inductively as new codes emerged from the data. The researcher served as the sole coder, maintaining consistency across all transcripts. Initial codes were grouped into candidate themes, which were then reviewed against coded extracts and the full dataset to ensure coherence and distinctiveness. Negative cases, such as participants who expressed optimism about the club's future, were deliberately sought and examined to refine theme boundaries and avoid overgeneralization. A saturation log was maintained to track when new codes or themes ceased to emerge. Reflexive notes were kept throughout analysis to document researcher assumptions and potential biases. Themes were finalized, defined, and named, then organized into a thematic map to guide the presentation of findings. The final phase involved producing the report with illustrative participant quotations to support each theme.

Table 3.1

Kwekwe United Fc codebook

Name	Description
best practices in financial management	These are the best practices derived from participants that can promote financial sustainability
Budgeting	Participants proposed best practices
Merchandise sells	Participants proposed best practices
Transparency	Participants proposed best practices
Financial position	This is the financial position of the club

Name	Description
clubs expenses	Participant views on the club's main expenses
Current financial management system	The club's financial management system
largely dependent on sponsorships	Participant views on the club's main income generating revenue
Salaries	Participant view on salary payments at Kwekwe United Fc
governance structure	Provides the governance structure of the club
evolving to a community based governance	Participant views on the club's governance
Lacks communication	Participant views on the club's governance
lacks professionalism	Participant views on the club's governance
Single family power	Participant views on the club's governance
Implementation and monitoring	Resources, capabilities and support structures for implementation and monitoring
External auditing	Resources, capabilities and support structures for implementation and monitoring according to the participants
feedback systems	Resources, capabilities and support structures for implementation and monitoring according to the participants
Financial training	Resources, capabilities and support structures for implementation and monitoring according to the participants
League involvement	Resources, capabilities and support structures for implementation and monitoring according to the participants
measuring return on investments	Resources, capabilities and support structures for implementation and monitoring according to the participants
Intervention strategies	Intervention strategies developed from participants to develop a financially sustainable and resilient club

Name	Description
build a financial framework	Building a financial framework for sustainability
Community engagement	Community engagements for the club
Corporate partnerships	Partnerships that can financially assist the club
enhance on-field performance	enhancing on-field performance to boost financial income
Fan membership fees	Participants proposals on membership fees
Fundraising	These are suggestions from participants on fundraising to help the club
Grass-root development	developing grass-root talent for potential player sales
Infrastructural development	Developing infrastructure for revenue diversification
Revenue diversification	Diversifying revenue to generate more money
Sustainability challenges and barriers	Sustainability challenges and barriers facing Kwekwe United
Economic	Financial sustainability barriers
Governance	Financial sustainability barriers
Institutional	Financial sustainability barriers
lacks partnerships	Financial sustainability challenges
lacks revenue source diversification	Financial sustainability challenges
Poor fan turnout	Financial sustainability challenges
poor financial policies	Financial sustainability challenges

Table 3.1 shows an anonymised codebook and theme-development audit trail with descriptions for each code and sub-codes.

3.6.2 Software used: NVivo

To support the thematic analysis, NVivo (QSR International) was used. NVivo is a leading qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) that facilitates the systematic coding, organization, and retrieval of textual data, enhancing the rigor and transparency of the analytical process (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

Data Presentation

The researcher presented the major findings via text, quotations from participants, and visuals as appropriate. The findings were presented thematically under various headings. An explanation followed a heading, supported by relevant quotes from interview participants and other visual materials.

3.7 Trustworthiness (Qualitative Research)

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability are reframed as trustworthiness, a construct that encompasses four key criteria**:** credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln et al., 1985). These criteria ensure that the findings of this study are both rigorous and trustworthy. The strategies to be employed to address each criterion are described below.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to confidence in the truth of the findings, assessing whether the study accurately represents the experiences and perspectives of the participants(Lincoln et al., 1985). The following strategies will be employed to enhance credibility:

Prolonged Engagement

The researcher will spend an extended period in the field to build trust with participants and gain a deep understanding of the context. Data collection will be conducted over a six-week period, allowing the researcher to attend training sessions, observe club operations, and conduct interviews in a relaxed atmosphere. This prolonged engagement will help the researcher to distinguish between genuine accounts and superficial responses and to develop a nuanced understanding of the club's dynamics (Lincoln et al., 1985).

Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources, methods, and perspectives to corroborate findings (Denzin, 1978; Flick, 2018). This study would utilize source triangulation whereby data would be collected from different stakeholders (club leadership, technical staff, players, administrative staff, and external stakeholders) to ensure no one perspective dominates the findings. Different types of data will be collected from semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and documents. Carrying out data triangulation will enable checking of claims across varying forms of data. Lastly, theory triangulation will be employed and findings will be interpreted from different perspectives (Resource Dependence Theory, Soft Budget Constraint Theory, Organizational Resilience Theory) providing various analytical perspectives.

Member Checking

Member checking involves returning findings or interpretations to participants to confirm accuracy and resonance (Lincoln et al., 1985). Following the initial thematic analysis, member checking was conducted with five participants from each stakeholder category: a club leadership representative, a technical staff member, a player, and two external stakeholders. Each participant received a summary of the preliminary themes and was invited to review and comment on accuracy and resonance. Feedback was obtained via telephone for four participants and via e-mail for one participant. All five participants confirmed that the themes reflected their experiences and that the overall interpretation was credible. However, minor disagreements and revisions emerged. The player representative requested stronger emphasis on unpaid wages as a central driver of low morale and player departures. The external stakeholder suggested that community support was conditional on the club demonstrating greater transparency and accountability. The leadership representative clarified that some financial constraints resulted from sponsorship withdrawals rather than internal mismanagement alone, prompting the researcher to rename the theme from “financial mismanagement” to “governance challenges.” These refinements were incorporated into the final theme definitions and the reporting of findings. No participant requested withdrawal of any substantive theme, and member checking therefore provided evidence of credibility and confirmability for the study.

Reflexive Journaling

A reflexive journal was maintained throughout the research process, documenting methodological decisions, personal reflections, and emerging interpretations (Berger, 2015). This journal served as an audit trail and helped the researcher to remain aware of how their

own positionality (as a Zimbabwean academic with prior knowledge of the football landscape) might influence data collection and analysis.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts or settings (Lincoln et al., 1985). Although statistical generalization cannot be made from one case study, transferability is possible by providing sufficient contextual information for readers to assess its applicability.

Purposive Sampling

The use of purposive sampling, with explicit inclusion criteria and justification, ensures that the participants are representative of the key stakeholder perspectives relevant to the case. This transparency allows readers to understand the boundaries of the sample and to assess transferability to other populations.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency and replicability of the findings over time and across conditions (Ang et al., 2016). In qualitative research, the goal is not to achieve identical results but to ensure that the research process is logical, repeatable, traceable, and documented (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023)

Audit Trail

A comprehensive audit trail was maintained to document all research decisions and activities. The audit trail included raw data (audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes), data analysis records (NVivo project file, coding frameworks, and theme development notes), methodological decisions (sampling justifications, instrument revisions), reflexive journal entries and records of peer debriefing sessions. This audit trail enables an external auditor to trace the research process from data collection through to findings, thereby establishing dependability (Tewari & Maharajh, 2021).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality or the extent to which findings are shaped by the participants' experiences rather than researcher bias or motivation (Ang et al., 2016). This is established by demonstrating that the findings are grounded in the data.

Audit Trail

The same audit trail described under dependability also serves to establish confirmability by making the research process transparent. The audit trail allows an external reviewer to verify that the findings are rooted in the data and not simply the researcher's preconceptions.

Reflexivity

The reflexive journal will be kept throughout the research process to enable the researcher to critically examine how their own assumptions, values, and background might influence the research. Regular reflexivity ensures that the researcher remains mindful of potential biases and takes steps to mitigate them (Darawsheh, 2014).

Triangulation

As noted under credibility, triangulation across sources, methods, and theories ensures that findings will be supported by multiple forms of evidence, reducing the likelihood that any single perspective (including the researcher's) unduly shaped the conclusions (Murphy et al., 1998).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical clearance from the university's research ethics committee in advance before any data collection commenced, permission was also obtained from the relevant gatekeepers and from the administration of Kwekwe United Fc.

3.8.2 Securing Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from every participant prior to data collection. At the start of each interview, on every email attached interview, before the focus group, participants were given a consent form to read and sign. The form detailed the purpose of the study, the use of a digital audio recorder, the option to skip any question or withdraw at any time, and the procedures for anonymizing data.

Anonymity and confidentiality was protected throughout the data collection, analysis, and storage phases. Participants were assigned pseudonyms or participant numbers (for example, "C1, P4"). Names and identifying details were removed from transcripts and any published outputs. In addition, all data (audio recordings, transcripts, documents) was stored on a password-protected computer with an encrypted hard drive. Backups were stored on an encrypted external hard drive kept in a locked cabinet. NVivo project files were similarly password-protected. All audio recordings were deleted after the dissertation was examined

and accepted. Anonymized transcripts were retained for potential future research or publication, but only with explicit permission from participants. Focus group participants were reminded at the beginning of the session that complete confidentiality could not be guaranteed, and they were asked to respect the privacy of other participants' contributions. This was documented in the consent form.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has detailed the materials and methods employed in this qualitative case study of Kwekwe United FC. The research design, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, and analytical methods have been described and justified. The next chapter present the findings of the study, organized by the themes that have emerged from the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, organized by the themes that have emerged from the data analysis, therefore discussing the response rate, demographic data and findings linked to the research objectives.

4.2 Interview Response Rate

This section presents the response rate for the qualitative interviews and the focus group conducted in the study. The planned sample sizes were derived from the purposive sampling strategy outlined in Chapter 3, and the actual achieved numbers are reported with explanations for any discrepancies.

Table 4.1

Interview Response Rate

Stakeholder Category	Planned Interviews	Completed Interviews	Response rate %	Reason for Variance
Club leadership	3	3	100%	
Technical staff	2	4	200%	Two additional coaches (assistant coach and a former head coach) expressed willingness and

				provided unique insights, hence they were included.
Players	5	4	80%	One player withdrew consent at the last minute due to concerns about potential repercussions.
Administrative / finance personnel	2	0	0%	Both finance officers had left the club after relegation; one declined to participate and the other could not be located.
External stakeholders	6	8	133.3%	Two extra participants emerged (Fans) who showed interest.

Table 4.1 represents the interview response rates which were strong across club leadership, technical staff, players, and external stakeholders, but no administrative or finance personnel participated hence a serious limitation in the study, as the specialist internal financial perspective and access to financial records were unavailable. Coaches, leaders, and a single media article provided only indirect contextual evidence.

4.2.1 Focus Group Response Rate

Table 4.2

Focus Group Response Rate

Stakeholder Category	Planned Interviews	Completed Interviews	Response rate %	Reason for Variance
Focus group	6 participants	4 participants	66.6%	Only four supporters attended despite confirmations from other stakeholder groups, due to last-minute transport difficulties and

				unexpected community events.

As depicted in Table 4.2 above, the focus group yielded a 66.6% response rate. The focus group was attended by four participants and two did not attend due to personal reasons. Even though the target number of focus group participants was not achieved, the four that were present offered meaningful reflections on what supporters believe about the financial situation of the club, willingness to donate through membership fees and demands for transparency. Having a delay occurred naturally when the talk was at the table.

4.3 Interviewees Demographic Data

Based on the completed interviews (n = 19 individual participants) and one focus group (n = 4 supporters), the socio-demographic profile is summarized below.

Figure 1-4.3

Interviewee's demographic data

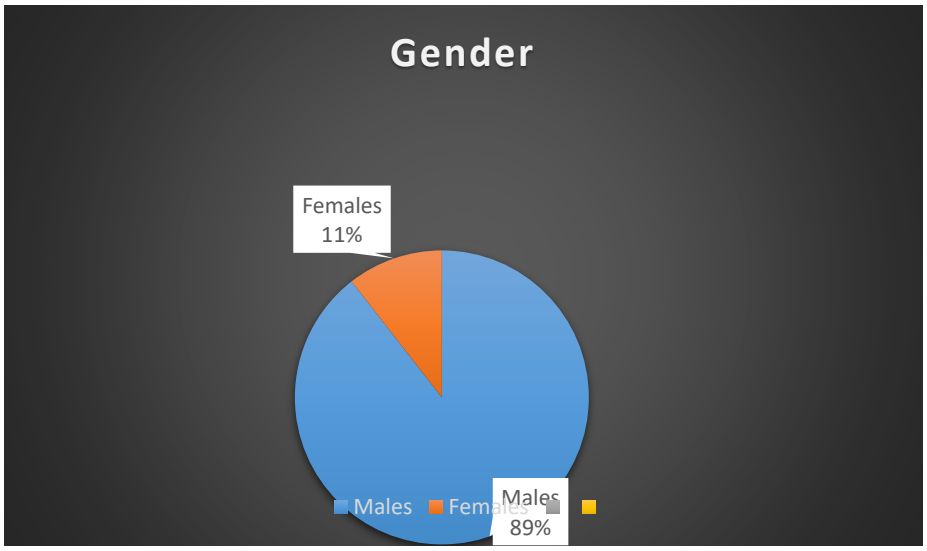


Figure 1- 4.3 represents the gender participation of interviewees with 89% males and 11% females showing that professional football in Zimbabwe is male-dominated both in terms of the gender which supports football in Zimbabwe and the gender which is dominantly under sport related jobs; the inclusion of 11% female participants interviewed provides necessary gender perspective without over-claiming representativeness.

Figure 2- 4.4

Focus group demographic data

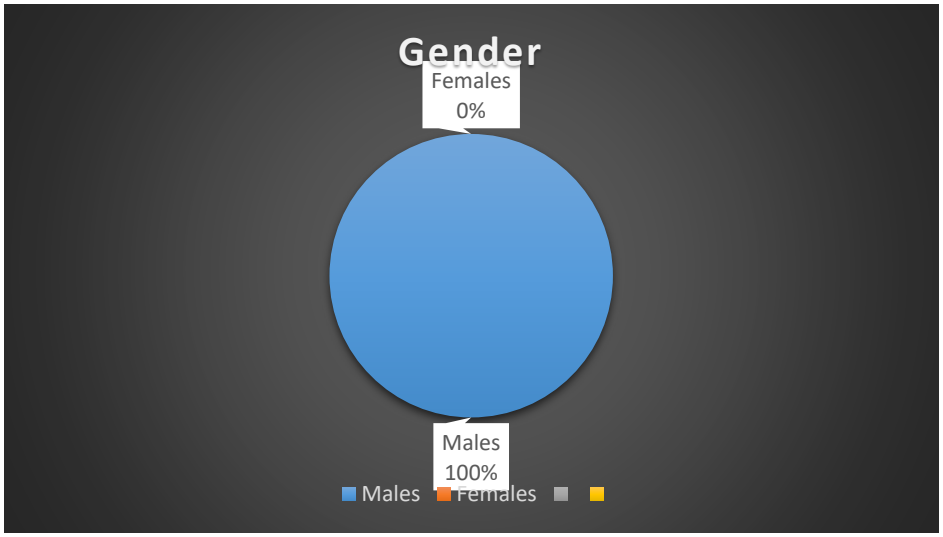


Figure 2- 4.4 represents gender inclusion of the focus group with 100% male participation showing that professional football in Zimbabwe is male-dominated, therefore the focus group only had four male kwekwe united fans, highlighting that the football club is dominantly supported by men rather than women.

Figure 3- 4.5

Participants Employment status

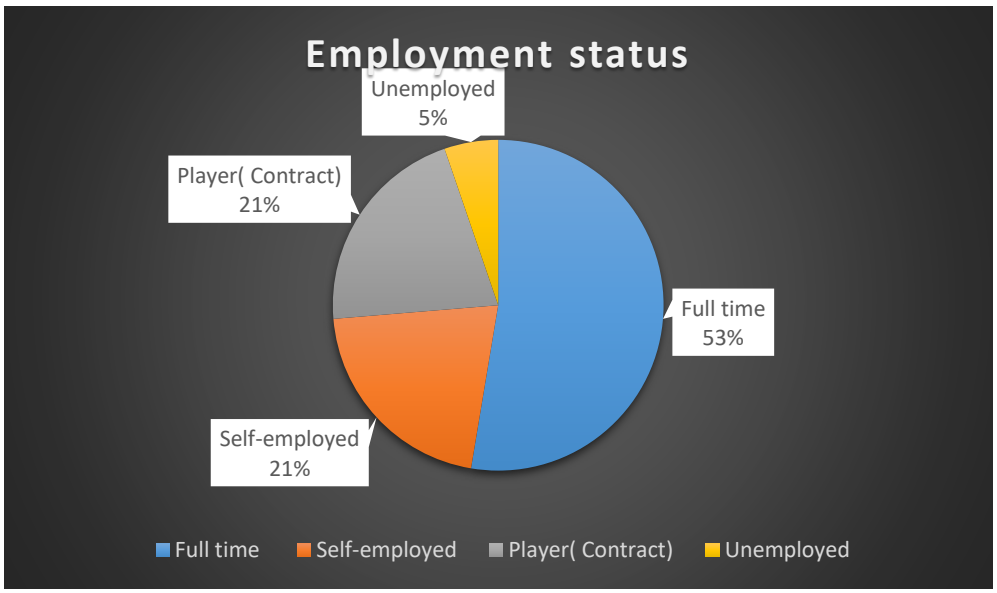


Figure 3-4.5 represents all the participants' employment status both interviewed and in the focus group hence low-income players and unemployed fans provided insights into the human cost of financial instability; higher-income sponsors and owners offer strategic views on revenue diversification and partnership feasibility.

Figure 4-4.6

Participants Ages

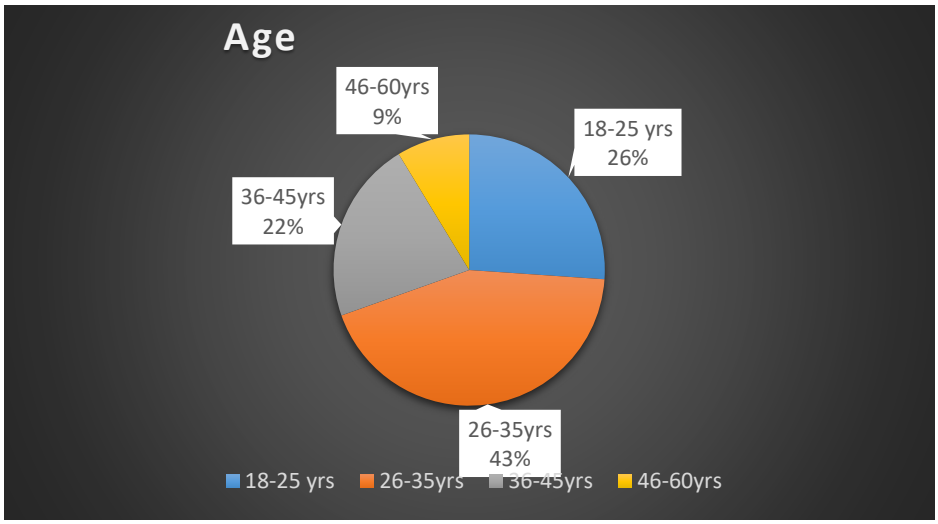


Figure 4-4.6 above represents the age groups of all participants 19 interviews and 4 members from the focus group.

Figure 5-4.7

Geographic location of participants

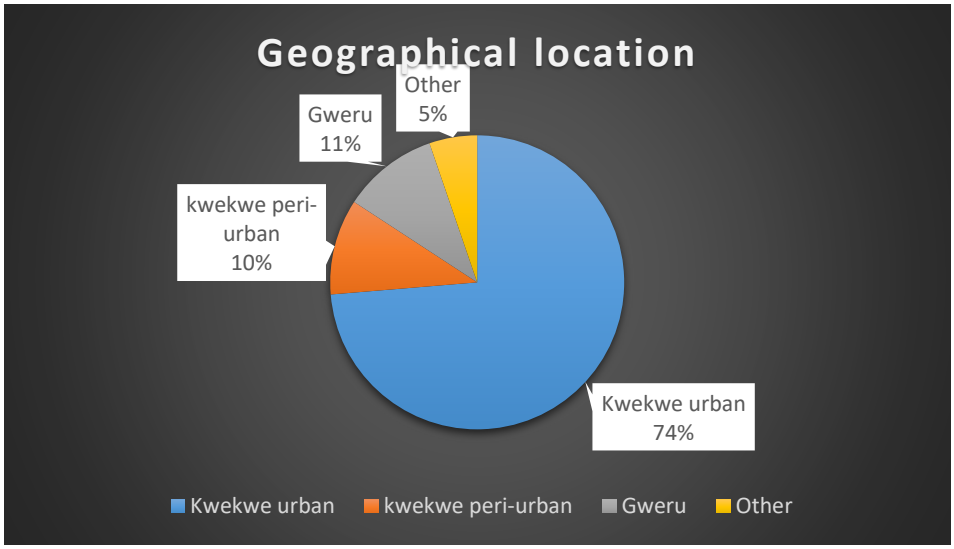


Figure 5-4.7 represents the geographic location of participants with Over 84% living in Kwekwe or immediate surroundings, ensuring local contextual knowledge. The few from Gweru 11% reflect the club's displaced home ground situation while the other locations are of the participants that have re-located and no longer stay in Kwekwe or nearby locations.

4.4 Presentation and analysis of data linked to the research objectives.

Collecting and analyzing data for all four research questions

Nineteen individual interviews were carried out with participants across five stakeholder categories. The interviews were conducted in both online (mobile phone calls, e-mail and WhatsApp voice calls, given their convenience and cheapness for participants) and physical (face to face) formats, at locations chosen by participants. Also, there was a focus group with four supporters. Participants were provided with a consent form to read and sign, which was done at the beginning of each interview as well as before the focus group. The form was read to the participants which elucidated the goal of the study, the use of a digital audio voice recorder, the ability to skip any question or withdraw at any given time, and measures for anonymizing data. The study adopted a thematic analysis based on the research objectives and theoretical framework of the study. The researcher entered coded the transcripts manually into NVivo15 (QSR International). Coding began by deductively applying pre-defined codes based on the literature. After which, new inductive codes emerging from the data were added iteratively. Once all transcripts were coded, the researcher grouped the codes into themes that were then reviewed, refined and defined. The researcher used NVivo 15 to retrieve and compare coded segments across stakeholder groups.

Theme 1: Diagnostic Assessment of Current Financial Position

What is Kwekwe United FC's current financial position, governance and sustainability challenges?

Table 4.3

Kwekwe united financial position reference codes from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR) for all stakeholder participants interviews n=19 and focus group n=4

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Salaries	5	5	33%
Largely dependent on sponsorships	4	5	33%
Club expenses	3	3	20%
Current financial management system	2	2	13%

Table 4.3 above represents the sub-codes for Kwekwe united main theme financial position with files representing the number of participants and references representing the number of times a concern was raised, hence showing the club's salary concerns raised by five stakeholder participants amounting to 33%, reflecting the widespread stakeholder recognition that player and staff remuneration is the club's largest and most problematic cost. According to Table 4.3, stakeholder participants are generally on the same page and agree that sponsorships are the main revenue source of the club. The major expense of the club being 20% and the current financial management system at Kwekwe united with 13% is a clear reflection capturing reference to broader operational costs. Other than salary include travel, match day expense and equipment. Thus, the levels of stakeholder disclosure indicated by the percentages show how much information they provided of kwekwe united financial position.

Salaries

References from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

"Multiple players explicitly described their wages *as "not consistent" (P1, P3, P4), "haphazard*" *(P2),* and characterized *by* "*inconsistent salary wages*" *(P4).* A club official *(O2)* acknowledged that the club operates in a *"reactionary manner"* regarding player remuneration. An external sponsor *(S1)* revealed that last year they personally "*covered some salaries"*.

These findings directly align with Dandah and Chiweshe's (2023) identification of lack of financial sustainability as a pre-existing systemic weakness in Zimbabwean football. The irregular payment of salaries is not merely a cash-flow problem; it is a manifestation of the structural fragility that characterizes clubs operating without diversified, predictable revenue streams. The players' consistent use of terms like *"inconsistent"* and *"haphazard"* echoes the soft budget constraint phenomenon (Franck, 2010; Dayı & Mousa, 2025), where clubs spend beyond their means because owners or donors are expected to intervene. In Kwekwe United's case, the sponsor's admission of having covered salaries last year confirms that external bailouts have occurred, thereby reinforcing the expectation that such support will continue, a classic soft budget constraint dynamic.

Moreover, Cunha's (2024) study of Portuguese regional clubs found that "regional clubs face considerable challenges, particularly in securing stable revenue streams and external funding."

The inconsistency of player wages at Kwekwe United is a direct consequence of this broader challenge. The fact that players reported inconsistency across multiple individuals (P1, P2, P3, P4) suggests a systemic, not isolated, failure consistent with Dandah and Chiweshe's (2023) argument that individual club crises are symptoms of national structural problems.

Largely dependent on Sponsorship
References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

One club official *(O3)* stated that *"corporate sponsorships are our main revenue source followed by player sells" [player sales]*. Another official (O1) noted that "*sponsorships bring in more money.*" *A fan (F6)* observed that the club is "*getting better this season they managed to secure a sponsorship.*" However, a sponsor *(S1)* expressed a critical limitation*: "when the club can generate its own revenue through sport to cover other basic expenses other than sorely depending on sponsorships."*

According to Goslin and Mosola (2020), sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting, and merchandising are the four pillar revenue model for African professional football. In considering the significant pillars of Kwekwe United, there appears to be sponsorships and player sales which are just mentioned. The research conducted by Mosola highlights this narrow revenue base as a key reason why African clubs are not commercially viable. The sponsor's call for the club to "generate its own revenue through sport" would have resonated with Mosola, who concluded that dependency on a single source (especially external donations or sponsorships) is unsustainable.

A fan commented that at least the club "managed to secure a sponsorship" this season which suggests that the club remains in the Low Revenue Financial Amber Zone of Charumbira's (2022) framework generating inadequate sports-related revenue to meet expenditure. The fact that a single sponsorship is being considered as a major step forward shows how far from the Financial Green Zone they are in terms of self-sustenance.

In addition, Dayı and Mousa (2025) would emphasize that Kwekwe United, unlike the Turkish top-four clubs, does not have the luxury of significant debt to run operations; it only has irregular inflows from sponsorship. This finding supports the emphasis by Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) on resilience and disaster preparedness as well as a higher vulnerability of the club to shocks

Club expenses

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Club officials (O1, O3) consistently identified *"salaries and travel costs"* (O1) and *"salaries and match-day costs"* (O3) as the main expenses. Another official (O2) simply noted *"remuneration of players"* as a key cost item.

In football finance, player salaries take the number one spot as an expense (Dayı & Mousa, 2025; Atghia & Nazarian, 2024). However, for Kwekwe United, a lower division club, Cunha (2024) points out that travel costs are unreasonably high relative to revenue, as is the case for regional clubs. Considering that last year the sponsor (S1) covered, for example, "transport costs and travel expenses as well as covering some salaries", we can claim that these two groups are the most pressing and the most difficult for the club to self-finance.

In the soft budget constraint theory, the inefficacy of the club in consistently meeting these fixed costs without intervention indicates that the expenditure structure of the club is misaligned with its revenue generation potential. According to Dayı and Mousa (2025), this scenario represents a basic form of unsustainability. Indeed, the club's operating model means that it needs to spend at a level which its own revenues cannot support. That is, at some point, it needs a one-off bail-out (from owner or sponsors).

Financial management systems

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

One club official (O3) stated that *"We have our own internal auditing to keep track of our financial state."* Another official (O2) characterized the club as *"reactionary"* in its financial approach.

The existence of "internal auditing" suggests that system of financial control is in place. Yet, labeling them "reactionary" (O2) suggests they are simply responding to crises as opposed to being pro-active. According to Dandah and Chiweshe (2023), the poor administration of football is a systemic problem in Zimbabwe. As per Zanda et al. (2024) and Oliveira & Carvalhal (2018), good governance needs more than just auditing but also future-oriented financial planning, transparent reporting and mechanisms for accountability. Atghia and Nazarian (2024) argue that a "reactionary" approach is essentially the opposite of strategic financial management that ensures economic sustainability. Also, the absence of participant references to external audit, published financial statements and a formal budget implies that

the financial governance of Kwekwe United does not conform to best practices referred to Mosola (2020b) and Cunha (2024). The club's financial tracking may be internal, but it does not drive strategic change which is why the cycle has been consistently inconsistent

The Gap between Current Position and Financial Self-Sustenance

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

The sponsor's comment (S1) about the need for the club to *"generate its own revenue through sport"* encapsulates the core gap. The fan's (F6) observation that the club is *"getting better"* with a new sponsorship shows incremental improvement, but not yet transformation.

Applying Charumbira's (2022) four-zone framework, Kwekwe United appears to oscillate between the Low Revenue Financial Amber Zone (when sponsorship is present) and the Financial Red Zone (when sponsorship dries up, leading to unpaid salaries and fixture forfeitures). The club has not yet reached the High Expenditure Financial Amber Zone because its expenditure, while problematic, is not systematically higher than its revenue generation; rather, its revenue generation is chronically inadequate. The path to the Financial Green Zone requires not just more sponsorship but the development of multiple revenue streams that is merchandising, match-day income, broadcasting (even at a local level), and community based initiatives as advocated by Mosola (2020b) and Cunha (2024).

Table 4.4

Kwekwe united Governance reference codes from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR) for all stakeholder participants interviews n=19 and focus group n=4

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Lacks professionalism	4	6	50%
Lacks communication	4	4	33%
Single family power	1	1	8%
Evolving to a community-based governance	1	1	8%

Table 4.4 above represents Kwekwe united governance breakdown and governance codes derived from all stakeholder participants with files representing the number of participants and references representing the number of times a concern was raised, hence revealing a predominantly negative perception of Kwekwe United's governance structure and practices**.** Stakeholder participants raised much concern over the club's lack of professionalism with six references and lack of communication with four references characterized by a single family power with two positive references indicating that the club is evolving to a community based governance confirming that governance is the foundational barrier to financial sustainability at Kwekwe United.

Governance Structure

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C3) provided a striking critique: *"The club's outdated governance structure gives a single family power over any financial reform, blocking all attempts to modernise revenue collection."* In the focus group, a supporter stated bluntly: *"No trust. The board has never published a single financial report."* Another official (O2) acknowledged the need for *"transparent handling of finances"*, while sponsors (S1, S2) repeatedly called for *"transparency in management"* (S1), *"accountability and transparency"* (S2), and *"measurable return on investment"* (S2). A fan (F2) advocated to *"involve all stakeholders"*.

According to Zanda et al. (2024) based on Franck (2010), governance structures shape financial outcomes. The concentration of power in "a single family" (C3) at Kwekwe United is the opposite of the distributed, accountable governance Oliveira and Carvalhal (2018) found leads to better performance. Supporters have expressed concerns regarding the publication of financial reports, with one statement indicating that such reports have not been made readily available. The supporters' statement that "the board has never published a single financial report". This perspective may resonate with the broader findings of Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) identification of poor administration and lack of transparency as a systemic weakness

in Zimbabwean football. If the club published its financial reports, external stakeholders like sponsors, supporters, and regulators can assess the club's financial well-being.

Such concentrated governance reinforces the soft budget constraint phenomenon (Franck, 2010; Dayı & Mousa, 2025). When a family is solely responsible for financial decisions and there are no external checks, a club can spend beyond its means assuming the family will bail it out. However, supporters' distrust and sponsors' desire for transparency signal the limits of this model, which has now reached its end. Goslin Mosola (2020) found that African football clubs need governance reform and commercial development.

Table 4.5

Kwekwe united sustainability challenges and barriers reference codes from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR) for all stakeholder participants interviews n=19 and focus group n=4

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Institutional	7	7	33%
Lacks revenue source diversification	4	4	19%
Lacks partnerships	3	3	14%
Poor fan turnout	3	3	14%
Governance	2	2	10%
Poor financial policies	1	1	5%
Economic	1	1	5%

Table 4.5 above represents the breakdown of Kwekwe united sustainability challenges and barriers codded from NVIVO15 QSR for all stakeholder participants with files representing

the number of participants and references representing the number of times a concern was raised . Table 4.5 shows institutional barriers as the main dominant challenge to sustainability and suggests that sustainable solutions must address systemic governance and regulatory weaknesses beyond Kwekwe United itself. However, the combined weight of diversification, partnerships, fan turnout, and governance codes (totaling 57%) confirms that club-level interventions are equally essential. The coding pattern indicates that stakeholders view sustainability as a multi-layered challenge requiring both internal reform and external institutional change.

Lack of Revenue source diversification

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C1) stated clearly: *"Kwekwe United relies on a single unpredictable sponsor for 80% of its income, leaving the club bankrupt whenever the deal is renegotiated."* Multiple fans (F5, F6) noted that the club *"lacks sponsors"* and *"lacks quite a number of sponsors."* A player (P4) identified *"lack of corporate partnerships"* as a key barrier. An official (O2) acknowledged *"low revenue generating streams especially low gate takings due to poor fan out."* A sponsor (S1) expressed the ideal that the club should *"generate its own revenue through sport … rather than sorely depending on sponsorships."*

This finding supports the work of Goslin and Mosola (2020), who identified four revenue pillars for African football clubs: sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting and merchandising. The participants' estimate of Kwekwe United relying on a single sponsor generating 80% of income indicates lack of revenue diversification. The low revenue financial amber zone identified by Charumbira (2022) refers to organisations generating inadequate sports revenue fails to cover their expenditure. Kwekwe United is in this position. If a situation arises wherein the club's only sponsor renegotiates or walks away, then the club enters the Financial Red Zone just like the 2025 salary crisis.

Cunha (2024) report found that "regional clubs face significant challenges, especially around revenue stability". The unpredictability of the single sponsor who is described in the report as "unpredictable" (C1) is a major weakness. The sponsor's own words (S1) "Club mustn't be dependent" prove even present sponsors deem this as unsustainable, so a move is vital. According to Mosola, the commercial viability of African club has "complex and multi layered" challenges, with concentration of revenue a key layer.

Governance Failure

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C3) provided the most direct critique: *"The club's outdated governance structure gives a single family power over any financial reform, blocking all attempts to modernize revenue collection."* Multiple fans (F1, F2, and F4) and a player (P1) repeatedly cited *"poor club management systems"* as the biggest factor. An official (O2) acknowledged the club is *"reactionary"* from earlier data. Another coach (C2) noted *"a deeply entrenched culture of informal handshake agreements."* A sponsor (S2) concluded *"poor organizational management."*

Financial results are profoundly affected by governance structures (Zanda et al, 2024; Franck, 2010). The localized concentration of power within the Kwekwe United family is contrary to decentralized and accountable governance Oliveira and Carvalhal (2018) found leads to high performance. This shows that as Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) stated, poor administration is one of the systemic inadequacies presently found in Zimbabwean football.

The phrase *"blocking all attempts to modernize revenue collection"* (C3) is particularly significant. This suggests that even if club management wanted to implement best practices such as merchandising, online sales, corporate partnerships, the governance structure prevents it. This is consistent with the soft budget constraint phenomenon (Franck, 2010; Dayı & Mousa, 2025), where concentrated ownership allows decision-makers to avoid financial discipline. The *"culture of informal handshake agreements"* (C2) further reinforces the absence of formal, transparent, and accountable systems a governance gap that Atghia and Nazarian (2024) would identify as management instability and lack of strategic planning.

Poor financial policies

Findings from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C1) explained: *"Player transfer fees are spent entirely on immediate operating costs rather than being partially reinvested or held in reserve, leaving zero financial buffer for emergencies."* Another coach (C2) revealed: *"There is no formal procurement or expense approval process; coaches and managers make unbudgeted purchases at will, and the club cannot account for nearly 30% of its monthly expenditures."* A third coach (C4)

added: *"High debt accumulation – the club is ever in debt. They hired and fired coaches and staff members and owe some of these coaches for sudden contractual termination."*

Dayı and Mousa (2025) found that Turkish top-clubs' financial deterioration resulted from increased borrowing and lack of liquidity buffers. At Kwekwe United, the absence of any financial buffer is even more acute *"zero financial buffer for emergencies"* (C1). This directly contradicts the resilience principle that Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) emphasized that clubs must build buffers to withstand shocks.

An unverified claim that *"nearly 30% of monthly expenditures cannot be accounted for"* (C2) is alarming. This indicates not just poor budgeting but potential misappropriation or complete absence of financial controls. Dayı and Mousa (2025) stressed the importance of debt management and financial structure ratios; at Kwekwe United, the problem is not managing debt but the inability to track expenses at all. This is a more fundamental failure than the Turkish clubs' excessive debt. The accumulation of debt through *"hiring and firing coaches"* with contractual termination payments (C4) reflects the "*reactionary*" management style noted earlier. This pattern of incurring costs without planning for termination liabilities exemplifies the soft budget constraint where decision-makers do not bear the full consequences of their actions (Franck, 2010).

Poor Fan Turnout

Findings from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

An official (O3) stated: *"We do not have a home ground that is approved in the Premier League, so this already affects our fan turnout."* A player (P3) elaborated: *"Because of all the away games played by the club, our home ground was in Gweru and fans had to travel every home game; with time numbers dropped."* Another official (O2) noted *"low gate takings due to poor fan out."*

The absence of an approved home ground in Kwekwe is a unique infrastructural barrier not extensively covered in the reviewed literature, but it has direct implications for revenue generation. Cunha (2024) identified that socio-demographic factors such as population density and local income levels influence regional clubs' capacity to thrive. In Kwekwe United's case, having to play "home" matches in Gweru a different town, eliminates the natural advantage of local fan support and imposes travel costs on supporters, reducing attendance and gate revenue. This finding also relates to Goslin and Mosola's (2020) gate

revenue pillar. Without a local stadium that meets Premier League standards, the club cannot develop match-day income. The player's observation that *"numbers dropped"* over time suggests a cumulative effect: fans become disillusioned with travelling, which further reduces revenue, which further degrades performance.

Economic Environment

Findings from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

An official (O3) explained: *"The economic landscape of Zimbabwe affects our financial sustainability. You would realize that the ever-changing currency rates affect our budgeting, resulting in debt accumulation, mostly for salaries."*

This finding is specific to the Zimbabwean context and is not a focus of European or Turkish studies like Dayı and Mousa (2025), which assume relatively stable currencies. However, Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) noted that COVID-19 "entrenched and worsened the already existing economic and political challenges" in Zimbabwean football. Currency volatility is a structural barrier that clubs cannot control but must manage.

The official's statement that currency fluctuations lead to *"debt accumulation for salaries"* indicates that even when the club budgets in a stable currency (e.g., US dollars), the actual revenue may be in local currency, or sponsorship agreements may be eroded by inflation. This barrier reinforces the need for resilience: clubs in such environments require even larger financial buffers than clubs in stable economies. Charumbira's (2022) framework would need to account for external economic shocks as a factor pushing clubs from Amber to Red zones.

Lack of Alternative Revenue Streams

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C3) noted: *"Match-day ticket sales have dropped over two seasons, yet the club has failed to develop any alternative revenue streams such as broadcasting or corporate partnerships."* Another coach (C4) added: *"Kwekwe United have no youth player transfer fees, no stadium naming rights, and no competitive prize money, making every month a struggle to pay basic bills."*

Goslin and Mosola's (2020) four-pillar framework of sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting and merchandising serves as a benchmark. Kwekwe United has only one pillar

(sponsorships), and even that is fragile. The absence of broadcasting revenue is understandable for a lower-division club, but the lack of merchandising as detailed in Theme two and youth player transfer fees represents missed opportunities that Cunha (2024) identified as critical for regional club survival. Youth development not only feeds the first team but also generates transfer fees, a revenue stream that clubs like Kwekwe United could cultivate with relatively low investment.

The absence of *"stadium naming rights"* (C4) is another missed opportunity, though this depends on having a stadium to name. The lack of *"competitive prize money"* is a structural feature of finishing at the bottom of the league, but it also reflects the performance consequences of financial instability.

Institutional barriers

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C2) identified *"a deeply entrenched culture of informal handshake agreements"* as a barrier. This was echoed by players' repeated demands for *"clear contractual agreements"* (from Theme 2 data). The coach (C4) noted that the club owes terminated coaches *"for sudden contractual termination"* indicating that even when agreements exist, they are not honored.

This cultural barrier is consistent with Dandah and Chiweshe's (2023) identification of poor administration and corruption as systemic challenges. The *"handshake agreement"* culture reflects an absence of professional contract management, which undermines trust between the club and its employees (players, coaches) and external partners (sponsors). Atghia and Nazarian (2024) emphasized strategic communication and management stability as factors for economic sustainability; an informal culture undermines both. Moreover, this finding connects to the soft budget constraint phenomenon (Franck, 2010). The informal nature of agreements allows the club to breach obligations more easily and makes it harder for creditors or employees to enforce a claim. As a consequence of the use of Floatation, the budget constraint softens even further and thus the club continues to function without facing any hard consequences.

Synthesis: Kwekwe United's Position in Charumbira's Financial Zones

Based on the coded findings, Kwekwe United currently oscillates between Charumbira's (2022) Low Revenue Financial Amber Zone and the Financial Red Zone. The club does

generate some sponsorship revenue and has occasional player sales. When sponsorship is active, it can partially cover salaries and travel costs indicating that the club sometimes enters the amber zone. In addition, the single sponsor provides 80% of income, and any disruption (renegotiation, withdrawal) pushes the club into crisis that is unpaid salaries, fixture forfeitures, and debt accumulation. The absence of any financial buffer (C1) and the inability to account for 30% of expenditures (C2) are hallmarks of the Red Zone. The club is not in the High Expenditure Amber Zone because its expenditure, while problematic, is not consistently higher than its revenue generation; rather, its revenue generation is chronically inadequate and unpredictable. Therefore to move toward the Financial Green Zone, the club must address the seven categories of barriers identified above, with governance reform and revenue diversification as the top priorities.

Theme 2: Identification of Gaps between Current Practice and Best Practice

What are the established best practices in financial management and governance for football clubs operating in comparable contexts, both within Zimbabwe and in similar African football economies?

Table 4.6

Kwekwe United financial management and governance best practices reference codes from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR) for all stakeholder participants interviews n=19 and focus group n=4

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Transparency	9	11	79%
Merchandise sales	2	2	14%
Budgeting	1	1	7%

Table 4.6 above shows the views of all Kwekwe united stakeholder participants on best financial management and governance best practices with files representing the number of participants and references representing the number of times a concern was raised ,hence transparency being the most cited best practice, with nine interview files and eleven coded references. The overwhelming consensus suggests that all the stakeholders in all the categories consider transparency the principal governance value that Kwekwe United must adopt. This

code's scope and frequency suggest that failure to disclose financial information is the most recognized governance failure. The merchandise sales that equate to fourteen percent (14%) find docketed in a couple of files. Thus, this indicates the stakeholder's acknowledgment of merchandising's potential as an opportunity lost for revenue. The stakeholders consider merchandising a practical and low-cost intervention that the club could implement quickly to diversify revenue, the code shows. Finally, table 4.6 shows Budgeting (7%) is only present in one file. This indicates that while there is recognition of the need for budgeting, it is not a major concern. The single reference may suggest that budgeting is a management function while transparency has direct impacts on all stakeholders.

Transparency

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Players consistently called for *"clear contractual agreements"* (P1, P2, P3). One player (P4) noted that *"budgets were communicated"*, but coaches revealed a different reality: C1 stated, *"Not much, I was only told that everything will be handled financially so I focused on on-field performance"*; C2 said *"Never heard of it"* regarding budgets; C4 added, *"It was communicated at the beginning of the season but along the way there was no clear communication on the budget, our expenses and profits."*

The contrast between the player who said budgets were communicated and the coaches who reported no communication or only initial information suggests inconsistent or incomplete dissemination of financial information a symptom of poor administrative systems (Dandah & Chiweshe, 2023). The coach's comment that he was only told *"everything will be handled financially"* reflects the reactionary approach noted in Theme 1 (O2), where financial matters are treated as someone else's responsibility rather than integrated into club operations.

Atghia and Nazarian (2024) identified financial management as a key factor for economic sustainability, including strategic planning, budgeting, and control. Kwekwe United's lack of clear, ongoing budget communication represents a failure in this dimension. Moreover, Charumbira's (2022) framework for financial self-sustenance emphasizes that clubs must contain expenditure within sports-generated revenue. Without transparent and consistently communicated budgets, the club cannot realistically track whether it is achieving that containment.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Fans expressed frustration with the club's lack of professionalism and communication. F5 noted that *"players were not getting paid on time and this might have led to all that bad performance"* and described the club as *"not professional because they do not pay players on time."* F6 acknowledged improvement *"they are getting better this season they managed to secure a sponsorship"* but still labelled the club *"not professional."* F4 cited *"lack of transport to away matches"* as a practical failure. One official (O1) claimed the club has *"evolved to a much more community-based governance structure including partnership with community business people"* but this claim is contradicted by the coach's statement about a single family blocking reform (C3) and the focus group's lack of trust.

According to Cunha (2024), regional clubs depend on the community to engage in sport, however, that involvement should be reciprocal and transparent. Kwekwe United fans believe there is unprofessionalism and communication failure at the club. The idea proposed by the fan (F5) which states that "Kwekwe United should lure sponsors and keep them by being professional and performing well in the league" resonates well with Atghia and Nazarian (2024) on the need for professional communication and commercialization. Thus, sponsors won't invest, and fans won't financially commit their loyalty without professional communication.

The contradiction between the official's claim of a 'community based governance structure', and the coach's claim that the reforms are being blocked by 'a single family' is revealing in itself. It suggests that the leaders of the club might not have self-awareness or are superficially adopting community talks without any change. Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) caution that such disconnects between what is stated and what is done are often a result of poor administration.

Transparency and Accountability

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

The demand for transparency and accountability was the most frequently repeated theme across stakeholders. Sponsors (S1, S2) explicitly conditioned future support on transparency. S1 said: *"Hopefully when there is improved team performance and transparency in management"* and *"More accountability and transparency in the club's organization is important so they should focus on that."* S2 added: *"Kwekwe United should be more transparent and should have measurable return on investments."* The focus group's

statement that *"the board has never published a single financial report"* provides concrete evidence of the transparency gap.

Zanda et al. (2024) and Oliveira and Carvalhal (2018) demonstrated that good governance, including transparency and accountability, is positively associated with club performance. The absence of published financial reports at Kwekwe United is not merely an administrative shortcoming; it is a fundamental governance failure that perpetuates the soft budget constraint (Franck, 2010). Without external scrutiny, the club's leadership faces no pressure to align expenditure with revenue, and potential sponsors cannot verify the club's financial stability.

Charumbira's (2022) Financial Green Zone requires not only financial self-sustenance but also the systems to demonstrate that self-sustenance. Transparency is the mechanism that builds trust with stakeholders, enabling the revenue diversification that Mosola (2020b) advocates. The sponsors' insistence on *"measurable return on investment"* (S2) indicates that Kwekwe United must move from ad-hoc sponsorship appeals to structured, transparent partnerships with clear deliverables.

Contractual Clarity and Player Welfare

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Three different players (P1, P2, and P3) independently emphasized the need for *"clear contractual agreements."* This repetition suggests a systemic problem with contract enforcement, clarity, or both. A coach (C4) noted that "*budgets were communicated at the start but not maintained"*, indicating that contractual and financial commitments are not honored over time.

While previous literature on financial sustainability focused on macro level debt and revenue, the player perspectives reveal a gap on the micro level: unclear and unenforced contracts. According to Dandah and Chiweshe (2023), poor administration is a systems challenge and non-existence of formal contractual obligations is an expression of that poor administration. Furthermore, the players lose their motivation and become inefficient due to their debts that cannot be repaid. The fans' observation (F5) that irregular payments "might have resulted in all that bad performance" supports the finding directly.

Merchandise sales

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C1) provided a concrete example of a missed opportunity: *"Merchandise sells, the club has no online store, no retail partnership, and no staff assigned to merchandise; potential sales are lost entirely to informal street vendors selling fake replicas."* Another coach (C2) mentioned *"selling players"* as a revenue source but this is irregular and depends on player development. Notably, no participant mentioned gate revenue, broadcasting, or community-based events as existing income streams.

Goslin and Mosola (2020) identified the four pillars of African football club revenue: sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting, and merchandising. Kwekwe United relies almost exclusively on sponsorships (as seen in Theme 1), with player sales as a secondary, unpredictable source. The complete absence of a formal merchandising operation, despite evident demand as evidenced by informal vendors selling *"fake replicas"*, represents a glaring gap. This mirrors Cunha's (2024) finding that regional clubs often fail to capitalize on commercial opportunities due to lack of capacity.

The fact that the club has *"no online store, no retail partnership, and no staff assigned to merchandise"* indicates not only a revenue gap but also a strategic failure to professionalize. Mosola's thesis emphasizes that European models can be adapted, but adaptation requires deliberate investment in commercial infrastructure. Kwekwe United's current practice falls far short of even basic merchandising best practices.

The Gap Summarized: From Amber/Red Zone to Green Zone

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A fan (F5) offered a clear prescription: *"Kwekwe United should attract and keep sponsors by showing professionalism and putting on a good performance in the league for as long as they remain in the Premier League – more sponsors will knock on their door."* Another (F6) saw improvement but not yet professionalism.

Discussion with literature

Applying Charumbira's (2022) four-zone framework, Kwekwe United currently oscillates between the Low Revenue Financial Amber Zone (when sponsorship income is present) and the Financial Red Zone (when sponsorship lapses, leading to unpaid wages and fixture

forfeitures). The club is not in the High Expenditure Amber Zone because its expenditure, while problematic, is not consistently higher than its revenue generation; rather, its revenue generation is chronically inadequate. The path to the Financial Green Zone requires:

i. Governance reform, moving from single-family control to transparent, accountable structures – (Zanda et al., 2024).
ii. Revenue diversification, developing merchandising, gate revenue, and community-based income – (Mosola, 2020b; Cunha, 2024).
iii. Professional communication, regular financial reporting, stakeholder engagement – (Atghia & Nazarian, 2024).
iv. Hardening budget constraints with clear contracts and enforced budgets – (Franck, 2010; Dayı & Mousa, 2025).

Theme 3: Development and Validation of Intervention Strategies

What intervention strategies can be developed to address the identified gaps, drawing on best practices while accounting for Kwekwe United's specific constraints and opportunities?

Table 4.7

Kwekwe United financial sustainability and resilience intervention strategies reference codes from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR) for all stakeholder participants' interviews n=19 and focus group n=4

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Grassroot development	8	9	26%
Revenue diversification	5	6	17%
Enhance on-field performance	4	5	14%
Fundraising	4	5	14%
Corporate partnerships	3	3	9%
Community engagement	2	2	6%

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Infrastructural development	1	2	6%
Fan membership fees	1	2	6%
Build a financial framework	1	1	3%

Table 4.7 above represents Kwekwe united financial sustainability and resilience intervention strategies derived from all stakeholder participants with files representing the number of participants and references representing the number of times a concern was raised. The coding pattern reveals a dual focus on immediate revenue generation (fundraising, corporate partnerships, fan fees) and long-term structural development (grassroots, infrastructure, financial frameworks). Grassroots development's dominance of 26% suggests that stakeholders view investment in youth and community programs as the most sustainable long-term strategy building talent pipelines that generate both sporting success and financial returns. The strong emphasis on diversification confirms that stakeholders have internalized the lesson that single-sponsor dependency is fatal. The relatively lower emphasis on financial frameworks 3% indicates that stakeholders prioritize visible, tangible actions over administrative reform though the latter remains essential for enabling all other interventions.

Revenue Diversification

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C2) explicitly called to *"diversify revenue sources."* A player (P4) agreed: *"Club should have more than one corporate sponsor."* An official (O1) proposed *"selling training kits and selling academy players."* Another official (O3) suggested *"introducing stadium concessions and selling replica jerseys on match days."* Fans (F1) mentioned *"partnerships, merchandise and duels"*; (F6) advocated *"selling jerseys"*; (F3) said *"focus on grassroots development"*; (F4) said *"invest in youth developmental academies."* A coach (C1) proposed *"marketing and sponsorship in grassroots programs."* The focus group suggested *"crowd funding campaigns for away match expenses."*

Goslin and Mosola's (2020) four-pillar framework of sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting and merchandising provides the benchmark. Kwekwe United currently relies

almost exclusively on a single sponsor (Theme 2). Stakeholder proposals directly address the missing pillars:

i. **Merchandising**: Selling replica jerseys (O3, F6), training kits (O1), and stadium concessions (O3) would activate merchandising and match-day revenue. The earlier finding (Theme 2) that the club has no online store or retail partnership makes this a low-hanging fruit.

ii. **Youth development as revenue**: Multiple stakeholders proposed investing in youth academies (C4, F3, and F4) and selling academy players (O1, C4). This aligns with Mosola's observation that player transfer fees are a critical revenue source for African clubs, though with "long lags before they pay off." The focus group's lament that *"talented young players sign for other clubs for free"* underscores the opportunity cost of not having a formal youth system.

iii. **Partnerships beyond sponsorship**: A coach (C3) called to *"secure partnerships within the Midlands"* not just cash sponsorships but potentially in-kind support, joint events, or shared resources. A fan (F2) suggested *"increase corporate social responsibilities to gain trust and support from the community and other business people,"* which would build a pipeline of local partners.

iv. Cunha's (2024) study of Portuguese regional clubs concluded that sustainability requires diversifying income sources, strengthening community involvement, and securing consistent external support. The stakeholder proposals reflect all three elements. Charumbira's (2022) framework would note that moving from the Low Revenue Amber Zone to the Green Zone requires exactly this kind of multi-stream revenue generation.

Fundraising: Supporter-Led Financial Models

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Fans (F1, F2) suggested *"crowd funding."* The focus group provided the most detailed proposals: one participant said, *"I'd pay 2 per month. If 500 of us do it, that's1000 a month for basics like medical kits."* Another offered *"5monthly, but I need to know where it goes. I want to see' this month's fees bought new match balls." A third proposed "a crowd funding campaign for away matches expenses like transport costs."* The focus group also discussed organizing to *"run our own fundraising, volunteer labor, and put pressure on the board to be*

transparent." A fan *(F6)* suggested *"fans can give the club may be a minimum of 5 monthly, but I need to know where it goes. I want to see 'this month's fees bought new match balls."* A third proposed *"a crowd funding campaign for away matches expenses like transport costs."* The focus group also discussed organizing to *"run our own fundraising, volunteer labor, and put pressure on the board to be transparent."* A fan *(F6)* suggested *"fans can give the club maybe a minimum of 2 just to help them get back on their feet."*

Supporter-led financing is not a major focus in the European or Turkish literature (Dayı & Mousa, 2025; Zanda et al., 2024), but it is highly relevant for community-based clubs in lower-income contexts. Cunha (2024) found that regional clubs rely heavily on community involvement. Emery and Weed (2006) noted that clubs outside the top flight use volunteer labor and community embeddedness to survive. The focus group's specific offers $2 *or $*5 per month are modest but meaningful when aggregated. The conditionality (*"only if I see a clear budget," "I need to know where it goes"*) reflects the transparency and accountability gaps identified in Theme two. This aligns with Atghia and Nazarian's (2024) emphasis on strategic communication and financial management as factors for economic sustainability. A supporter membership scheme would not only generate revenue but also deepen stakeholder engagement and trust provided the club implements transparent reporting. The proposal for *"volunteer labor"* (e.g., stewarding, match-day organization) directly reduces operating costs, which is a form of cost containment, a key element of Charumbira's (2022) financial self-sustenance. The focus group's desire to *"put pressure on the board to be transparent"* also addresses governance, which Zanda et al. (2024) identified as foundational.

Infrastructure development

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A fan (F6) noted: *"They do not have their own Premier League approved stadium that can help them generate income through gate takings or rentals for other purposes."* The same fan added: *"They should invest in building a stadium and sell jerseys."* Earlier data (Theme 2) confirmed that the club plays "home" matches in Gweru, reducing fan turnout and gate revenue.

The absence of a home stadium is a structural barrier that is not extensively covered in the general football finance literature, which assumes clubs have access to a ground. However, it

directly affects Goslin and Mosola's (2020) gate revenue pillar and Cunha's (2024) observation that socio-demographic factors including location influence regional clubs' capacity to thrive. A stadium would enable not only match-day income but also rental for community events, concerts, or other sports providing a form of revenue diversification.

Building a stadium requires significant capital investment, which Kwekwe United currently lacks. However, the fan's suggestion (F6) implies a long-term aspiration. In the short term, the club could negotiate better terms with the stadium in Gweru (e.g., a share of concessions, reduced rental fees) or explore a partnership with the local municipality in Kwekwe to upgrade an existing facility to Premier League standards. This aligns with the stakeholder proposal for *"partnerships within the Midlands"* (C3).

Enhancing Performance, Professionalism as Brand Image as Enablers

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A coach (C4) stated: *"Improve performance to keep sponsors."* A sponsor (S1) said: *"Hopefully when there is improved team performance and transparency in management."* Another sponsor (S2) echoed: *"Hopefully when there is improved team performance and more positive brand image."* The focus group linked performance to player welfare: *"You can't win matches when players are worried about rent."* Fans (F5 in earlier data) noted that inconsistent payments led to bad performance.

The relationship between financial stability and on-field performance is bidirectional. The coded data show that sponsors condition their support on performance and brand image. This is consistent with Atghia and Nazarian's (2024) identification of commercialization and strategic communication as factors for economic sustainability. A positive brand image attracts sponsors, which improves finances, which enables better player recruitment and retention, which improves performance forming a virtuous cycle. Kwekwe United is trapped in the exact opposite cycle.

The sponsor's emphasis on *"transparency in management"* (S1) and *"positive brand image"* (S2) aligns with the governance and professionalism gaps identified in Theme two. Short-term interventions to stabilize player payments (e.g., the supporter membership scheme) could quickly improve performance and morale, which would then support sponsor retention and attraction. This is an example of sequencing interventions for maximum impact.

Governance and Financial Transparency

Findings from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A sponsor (S1) called for *"a clear financial framework that should be administered to key stakeholders."* The focus group conditioned their financial support on seeing *"a clear budget"* and knowing *"where it goes."* A player (P4) advocated for *"clear communication."* Earlier data (Theme 2) showed that the board has never published a financial report, and a single family blocks reform.

Without governance reform and transparency, many of the proposed revenue interventions will fail. Zanda et al. (2024) and Oliveira and Carvalhal (2018) demonstrated that governance structures shape financial outcomes. Atghia and Nazarian (2024) included financial management and management stability as key factors. Charumbira's (2022) Green Zone requires not just financial self-sustenance but the systems to demonstrate it.

The focus group's condition – *"only if I see a clear budget"* – is a rational response to the board's history of non-disclosure. The club's leadership must therefore prioritize publishing regular, simplified financial reports for example monthly income and expenditure summaries to build trust. This is a low-cost, high-impact intervention that enables all others.

Grassroots Development and Talent Pathways

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Multiple stakeholders proposed youth development as both a revenue stream and a cost-containment strategy. A player (P2) noted *"home-grown talent is cheaper."* A coach (C3) called to *"commercialize junior development."* Another coach (C4) proposed *"invest in youth academy"* and *"selling club youth players."* An official (O1) agreed on *"selling academy players."* Fans (F3, F4) also supported youth academies. The focus group mourned "*losing talented young players to other clubs for free"*.

Youth development serves multiple purposes in the sustainability framework. First, it reduces recruitment costs – *"home-grown talent is cheaper"* (P2) – which addresses the expenditure side of Charumbira's equation. Second, it generates revenue through transfer fees, a key pillar in Mosola's (2020b) framework, though with the caveat that returns take time (as Goslin & Mosola noted). Third, it builds community engagement and brand loyalty, as local players become heroes. In addition, the focus group's observation that *"talented young players sign for other clubs for free"* represents a direct opportunity cost.

Community Engagement and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

A fan (F2) suggested: *"Increase corporate social responsibilities to gain trust and support from the community and other business people."* An official (O2) proposed: *"Community initiatives – the club can host community games and raise funds from that."* The focus group expressed willingness to *"organize, run our own fundraising, volunteer labor."* Another fan (F4) advised: *"Engage with the community more often to gain their support."*

Cunha (2024) found that regional clubs rely heavily on community involvement, and that strengthening this involvement is key to sustainability. Emery and Weed (2006) noted that lower-league clubs use volunteer labor and community embeddedness to survive. Therefore, community initiatives such as hosting community games, offering coaching clinics in schools, opening the stadium for community events would generate goodwill, which translates into volunteer support, crowd funding participation, and local sponsorship. The fan's suggestion to *"increase CSR"* (F2) is incisive: by positioning itself as a community asset rather than just a football team, the club can attract support from local businesses that value the association with community development. This is a low-cost intervention that leverages the club's existing social capital.

Theme 4: Implementation Planning and Sustainability

What implementation plans and monitoring frameworks can help the club track progress toward financial sustainability and identify emerging challenges?

Table 4.8

Kwekwe United Implementation & monitoring of intervention strategies codes from codded data (NVIVO 15 QSR) for all stakeholder participants interviews n=19 and focus group n=4

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Financial training	3	3	33%
Feedback systems	3	3	33%
League involvement	1	1	11%

Sub-code	Files	References	Share
Measuring return on investments	1	1	11%

Table 4.8 above represents Kwekwe united implementation and monitoring of intervention strategies derived from all stakeholder participants with files representing the number of participants and references representing the number of times a concern was raised . The coding pattern reveals that stakeholders prioritize internal capacity-building and communication over external or purely financial monitoring mechanisms. The joint dominance of financial training and feedback systems (66% combined) suggests that stakeholders view successful implementation as requiring both skills (training) and accountability structures (feedback). The relatively minor emphasis on league involvement and ROI measurement indicates that stakeholders see the primary responsibility for implementation resting with the club, though they acknowledge the need for external support and commercial accountability. Therefore this represents an external, systemic intervention shifting responsibility to the Premier Soccer League and ZIFA to provide transition funding for newly promoted clubs. While this is not a club-level implementation mechanism, it highlights stakeholder recognition that some barriers are beyond the club's control and require institutional change.

Financial training

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

Two different coaches (C1, C3) independently identified *"financial literacy training for managers"* as a necessary implementation intervention. An official (O3) similarly called for *"financial literacy education."* A player (P1) suggested *"offer feedback platforms"* to improve communication. An official (O1) proposed *"tracking performance consistently measuring the amount of money spent and received."*

The repeated call for financial literacy training (C1, C3, O3) reflects the earlier finding (Theme 2) that the club lacks formal financial management systems, with nearly 30% of monthly expenditures unaccounted for and a "reactionary" approach to finances (O2, earlier). Atghia and Nazarian (2024) identified financial management as a key factor for economic sustainability, and management instability as a barrier. Training current managers in basic financial planning, budgeting, and expenditure tracking would address both.

The proposal for *"tracking performance consistently"* (O1) aligns with Dayı and Mousa's (2025) emphasis on using financial structure ratios to assess club health. For Kwekwe United, simple metrics such as monthly cash flow, accounts payable ageing (e.g., salary arrears), and the ratio of sponsorship income to total income would provide a baseline. Without such tracking, the club cannot know whether interventions are working. The player's suggestion of *"feedback platforms"* (P1) would enable two-way communication between management and stakeholders, supporting accountability, a point also raised in the focus group's demand for transparent budgeting (Theme 3).

Charumbira's (2022) framework assumes that clubs have the capacity to track their revenue and expenditure to determine which zone they occupy. For Kwekwe United, building that capacity through training is a prerequisite for any meaningful movement toward the Financial Green Zone.

Feedback systems

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

The focus group proposed the most specific monitoring mechanism: *"An independent audit every six months, paid for by the supporters' trust, not by the club. We hire the auditor."* An official (O3) suggested *"monthly or annual evaluation meetings."* Another official (O2) called for *"transparent handling of finances."*

Discussion with literature

The focus group's proposal for a supporter-funded independent audit is remarkable for two reasons. First, it directly addresses the trust deficit identified in Theme 2 (*"the board has never published a single financial report"*). Second, it shifts the power dynamic: by paying for the auditor themselves, supporters gain leverage over the club's financial disclosure. This aligns with Zanda et al.'s (2024) conclusion that sustainable governance requires accountability mechanisms independent of management.

Regular evaluation meetings (O3) whether monthly or annually would institutionalize financial review. Dayı and Mousa (2025) noted that Turkish clubs lacked sufficient liquid assets to meet debt obligations; regular monitoring would help Kwekwe United track liquidity and detect emerging shortfalls before they become crises. The official's call for *"transparent handling of finances"* (O2) echoes the sponsors' demands (Theme 2) and

reinforces that transparency is not a one-off event but an ongoing practice. In the context of Cunha's (2024) regional clubs, monitoring would also track community engagement metrics volunteer hours, crowd funding participation, membership numbers which are as important as financial ratios for sustainability.

Systemic Support for Promoted Clubs

References from coded data (NVIVO 15 QSR):

An official (O2) argued that *"promoted clubs should be awarded with enough money to support them financially to meet the demands of the new league."*

This proposal moves beyond club-level interventions to address a structural flaw in Zimbabwean football governance. Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) identified "lack of financial sustainability of clubs" as a systemic problem, and "lack of disaster preparedness" as a weakness. The official's suggestion implies that the Premier Soccer League or ZIFA should provide transition funding to promoted clubs, recognizing that the revenue gap between lower divisions and the top flight is too large for newly promoted clubs to bridge alone.

While this is not a direct intervention that Kwekwe United can implement unilaterally, the finding is significant because it identifies a policy gap. Goslin and Mosola (2020) noted that African clubs lag behind Europe in commercialization partly due to weak institutional support. A promotion bonus or transition fund even a modest one would have helped Kwekwe United cover its first months in the PSL and potentially avoid the salary crisis. The official's perspective suggests that club leadership recognizes the need for systemic change, not just internal improvement.

Document Analysis

The intended club document analysis was not completed due to absence of organizational financial reports, financial documents, and the player's contracts both current squad and the 2024/2025 season squad. Therefore, the document analysis relied only on one media report published during the 2025 season by (Nyakwenda, 2025).

"Nightmare continues for Kwekwe United players, coaches" (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11, December 2025)

Figure 6-4.8

Kwekwe United financial position and management document analysis coverage

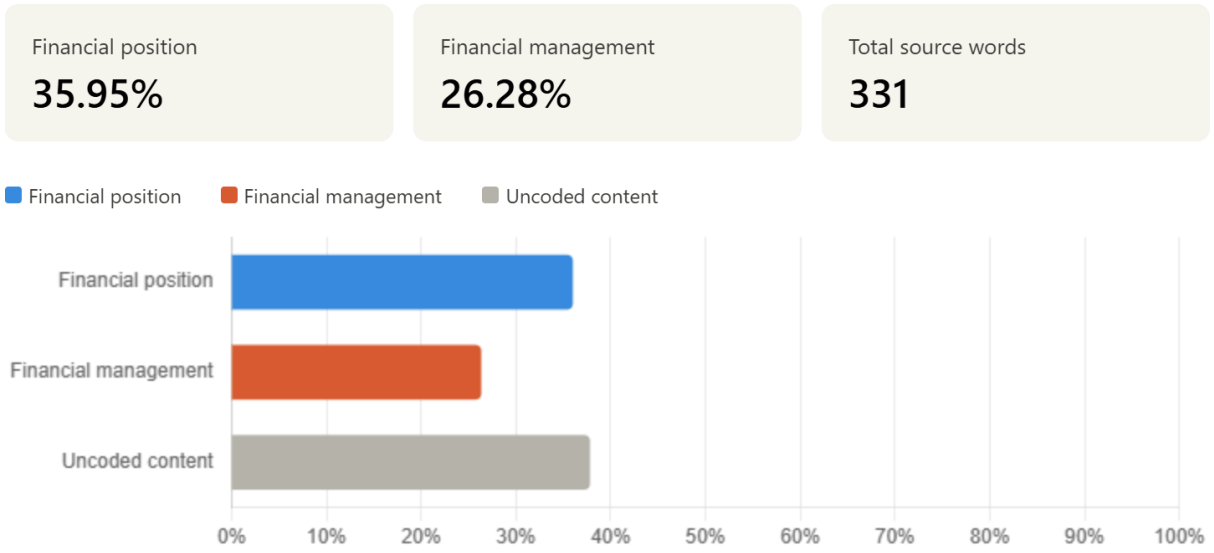


Figure6-4.8 above represents the document analysis of (Nyakwenda, The Herald, 11, December 2025) showing financial position 35.95% and financial management 26.28% coverage of Kwekwe united financial sustainability and resilience, hence the full text of the Herald article (Nyakwenda, 11 December 2025) was pasted into a plain text file and the raw word count 331 became the denominator for all percentages. No title, byline, or publication metadata was included; only the body text was counted. NVivo15 QSR calculated percentage coverage using words as the unit of measurement. Each passage selected (coded) under a node contributed its word count to the numerator.

The central theme of the article is how Kwekwe United's reliance on sporadic, voluntary funding proved catastrophic. The chief executive officer of kwekwe united candidly admitted that the club was *"surviving on donations from well-wishers because the club itself doesn't have money"* and that the salary backlog accumulated over the last three months of the season because they "*have not received any help from well-wishers".* This outspokenly validates the study's diagnostic finding that the club's primary barrier to sustainability is its over-reliance on a single, unpredictable income source. Darshini (2019) defines revenue diversification as *"a process of changing the level of diversity of revenue mobilisation as a part of mitigating the risk associated with reliance on a single or a few revenue sources."* Wicker and Breuer (2013) ground this in financial portfolio theory, where spreading risk across uncorrelated assets reduces overall volatility.

Kwekwe United has not begun this process, the club's revenue portfolio consists of essentially one asset, which is donations or a single sponsor with near-perfect correlation to the willingness of a small group of *"well-wishers*" to contribute. When that willingness ceases as witnessed in

the last three months of the 2025 season, the entire revenue stream collapses. The report details the immediate liquidity crisis: fixture forfeiture resulting in a US$3,500 fine, a player strike over unpaid wages, and a team that finished with a record-low 10 points. Nyakwenda's report confirms the study's reframing: Kwekwe United's crisis is not primarily about debt but about liquidity the inability to meet immediate financial obligations. The club may have no formal debt in the Turkish sense, but it has unpaid creditors (players, coaches, the PSL) and no cash reserves. This is the financial fragility that the study identifies as the core problem.

In addition, the report provided critical financial and sporting evidence that quantifies the crisis, revealing the exact salary arrears having an average player owed US$900, and technical team members owed up to US$2,400. These figures provide empirical weight to the findings on unpaid wages. Furthermore, the article also highlights the sporting statistical evidence of this financial failure: *"the club finished with 10 points, the lowest in the PSL's 18-team era, conceded 79 goals, and had a meagre 2.9% win rate"* connecting financial insolvency directly to on-field catastrophe.

Figure 7-4.9

(NVIVO 15 QSR) word cloud generated from 19 interviews and one focus group



Figure7-4.9 above represents the words dominantly used by all stakeholder participants therefore showing a word cloud suggesting and discussing how Kwekwe united football club can generate and manage revenue through sponsorships, partnerships, ticket/merchandise sales, balanced against expenses such as salaries, debt, and stadium costs, with recurring emphasis on financial transparency and community/management roles as best financial and club management practices.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the qualitative study, organized around the research themes derived from the data. The response rate was high, 19 individual interviews and one focus group (4 participants) were completed, slightly varying from the original targets due to participant availability and unforeseen circumstances. Demographic data showed a diverse sample across age, gender, income, and stakeholder roles, confirming the appropriateness of the sample for exploring Kwekwe United FC's financial sustainability challenges. Stakeholders proposed interventions including revenue diversification, supporter-led financing (crowd funding, monthly membership), youth development, financial literacy training, and independent audits. Implementation plans emphasized transparency, regular monitoring, and systemic support for promoted clubs.The next chapter provides summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides detailed conclusions and recommendations of the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, interprets the implications for theory and practice, and offers an actionable sustainability framework for Kwekwe United FC and similar clubs in Zimbabwe.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Theme 1: Diagnostic Assessment

What is Kwekwe United FC's current financial position, governance and sustainability challenges?

Table 4.9

Kwekwe United financial sustainability and resilience Diagnostic Assessment

Current financial position	Governance	Sustainability challenges and barriers

Inconsistent salary wages: A core symptom of financial fragility. Sponsorship is the dominant but fragile revenue Source. Expenditure Patterns: salaries and travel costs are the main pressures. Financial Management: internal auditing but possibly inadequate.	Governance Failure: concentrated power blocking reform	Financial Management Deficits: lack of reserves, procurement chaos, and debt accumulation. Infrastructure and Venue Barriers: No home ground, poor fan turnout. Macro-Economic Environment: currency volatility and inflation. Human and Cultural Barriers: Informal Culture and Low Expectations Revenue Concentration and Dependency: The "Single Sponsor" Trap

Table 4.9 above represents the summary of major findings of theme one bringing into light Kwekwe United's financial position, governance and sustainability challenges.

Theme 2: Identification of Gaps between Current Practice and Best Practice

What are the established best practices in financial management, governance for football clubs operating in comparable contexts, both within Zimbabwe and in similar African football economies?

Gaps

1. Governance Structure has concentrated power and lacks transparency
2. Financial planning and budgeting follows a reactionary system and has to be strategic

Best practices

1. Revenue diversification
2. Stakeholder engagement and communication

3. Transparency and accountability
4. Contractual clarity and player welfare

Theme 3: Development and Validation of Intervention Strategies

What intervention strategies can be developed to address the identified gaps, drawing on best practices while accounting for Kwekwe United's specific constraints and opportunities?

1. Revenue diversification moving beyond the single sponsor
2. Supporter-Led Financial Models such as crowd funding, membership, and volunteerism
3. Infrastructure Investment utilizing the stadium as a revenue asset
4. Performance, professionalism, and brand image as enablers
5. Governance and financial transparency as the enabling framework
6. Youth development and talent pathways
7. Community engagement and corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Theme 4: Implementation Planning and Sustainability

What implementation plans and monitoring frameworks can help the club track progress toward financial sustainability and identify emerging challenges?

1. Financial literacy and management capacity building
2. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks: Independent audit and regular Reviews
3. Systemic support for promoted clubs: A Policy Intervention
4. Sequencing and Phasing of Implementation

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Theme 1: Diagnostic Assessment of current financial position, governance and sustainability challenges?

The empirical findings from Kwekwe United FC paint a clear picture of a club in a precarious financial position. Inconsistent salary wages are the most visible symptom, but the underlying

causes are structural: a near-total dependence on sponsorship as the main revenue source, expenditure heavily weighted toward salaries and travel, and a "reactionary" financial management culture despite the presence of internal auditing. These findings are remarkably consistent with the systemic weaknesses identified by Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) in Zimbabwean football, the soft budget constraint dynamics described by Franck (2010) and Dayı & Mousa (2025), and the regional club challenges documented by Cunha (2024).

The club is trapped in Charumbira's (2022) Low Revenue Amber Zone, occasionally slipping into the Red Zone when sponsorship lapses. Moving toward the Green Zone of financial self-sustenance will require moving beyond a single-pillar revenue model, professionalizing financial planning, and hardening budget constraints themes that will be explored in subsequent themes of this study. The financial sustainability challenges and barriers facing Kwekwe United FC are not isolated; they are deeply interconnected. Governance failure (single-family control) enables poor financial management (no procurement process, no reserves, and debt accumulation) and prevents revenue diversification (blocking modernization efforts). Infrastructure deficits (no home ground) exacerbate low gate revenue, which reinforces dependency on the single sponsor. The macro-economic environment (currency volatility) adds an external layer of risk that the club's fragile system cannot absorb.

The literature from Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) on Zimbabwean football's systemic weaknesses, to Mosola (2020b) on African commercial viability, to Zanda et al. (2024) on governance consistently points to the need for integrated interventions that address governance, revenue diversification, financial management, and infrastructure simultaneously. A piecemeal approach (e.g., finding another sponsor) will not resolve the underlying structural barriers.

Theme 2: Identification of Gaps between Current Practice and Best Practice

The gaps between Kwekwe United's current practices and best practices are substantial and multi-dimensional. Participants views stated that governance is the most critical gap: a single family controls financial decisions, no financial reports are published, and stakeholders lack trust. Revenue diversification is absent: the club has no merchandising operation, no gate revenue strategy, and relies almost exclusively on sponsorship and occasional player sales. Transparency and accountability are universally demanded by sponsors and supporters but not provided. Contractual clarity is lacking, affecting player welfare and

performance. Professionalism in communication and financial planning is absent, despite fans noting incremental improvement.

These gaps are consistent with the systemic weaknesses identified by Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) in Zimbabwean football, the governance deficits highlighted by Zanda et al. (2024), and the commercial challenges documented by Goslin and Mosola (2020). Moving forward, intervention strategies must address governance reform as the foundation, followed by revenue diversification and professionalization of financial management.

Theme 3: Development and Validation of Intervention Strategies

The stakeholder proposals, when mapped against the thematic literature, form an integrated intervention framework with five strategic pillars:

Table 5.1

Kwekwe United Development and Validation of Intervention Strategies

Pillar	**Interventions (from coded data)**	**Literature Alignment**
1. Revenue Diversification	Multiple sponsors, merchandising, stadium concessions, youth player sales, grassroots marketing	Mosola (2020b) four pillars; Cunha (2024) diversification
2. Supporter Financing	Monthly membership of $2 or $5, crowdfunding for away travel, volunteer labour	Cunha (2024) community involvement; Emery & Weed (2006) volunteerism
3. Governance & Transparency	Clear financial framework, published budgets, transparent reporting to stakeholders	Zanda et al. (2024); Oliveira & Carvalhal (2018); Atghia & Nazarian (2024)

Pillar	Interventions (from coded data)	Literature Alignment
4. Youth Development	Formal academy, selling youth players, reducing recruitment costs	Mosola (2020b) player transfer revenue; cost containment (Charumbira, 2022)
5. Community & Infrastructure	Community games, CSR initiatives, stadium development (long-term)	Cunha (2024) community embeddedness; gate revenue pillar

Table 5.1 above represents the summary of major findings of theme three bringing into light Kwekwe United's intervention strategies.

Conclusion: From Amber/Red Zone to Green Zone

Charumbira's (2022) Financial Green Zone is achievable for Kwekwe United, but only through a sequenced, multi-pronged approach. The stakeholder-proposed interventions directly address the gaps identified in Themes 1 and 2: revenue concentration, governance failure, lack of reserves, poor transparency, and infrastructure deficits. The most urgent priorities are phased into the following:

1. Phase 1: Publishing a simple financial report to build trust and enable supporter financing.
2. Phase 2: Launch a supporter membership scheme ($2 or $5 per month) to create a predictable, small-scale revenue stream.
3. Phase 3: Formalize a youth academy to reduce recruitment costs and generate future transfer fees.
4. Phase 4: Diversify sponsorship beyond the single dominant partner.
5. Phase 5: Negotiate better stadium terms or explore local facility upgrades.

These are participant proposed intervention strategies yet to be tested, given the club's constraints, and they have been proposed by the very stakeholder participants who would implement or contribute to them.

Theme 4: Implementation Planning and Sustainability

The coded data for Theme 4 demonstrate that stakeholders and supporters have clear, practical ideas for implementing and monitoring sustainability interventions. The emphasis on financial literacy training, independent audit, regular evaluation meetings, feedback platforms, and systemic promotion funding shows an understanding that financial sustainability requires not just new revenue streams but new organizational habits and accountability structures. Furthermore, the focus group's proposal for a supporter-paid independent audit is particularly powerful because it decentralizes control, builds trust, and creates a checks and balances mechanism that the club currently lacks. When combined with transparent monthly reporting and consistent tracking of key indicators, these implementation plans address the governance and capacity gaps identified in Themes one and two.

The official's call for structural support for promoted clubs participant (O2) also highlights that some barriers are beyond the club's control hence a truly sustainable solution may require engagement with ZIFA and the PSL a finding that extends the study's implications beyond Kwekwe United to the broader Zimbabwean football system.

In summary, the implementation and monitoring framework derived from stakeholder data is realistic, low-cost apart from the stadium, and grounded in the club's specific context. Kwekwe United FC is not an isolated failure but a symptom of a broken financial ecosystem in Zimbabwean football, one characterized by weak governance, donor dependency, and a lack of institutional support. However, this study has shown that the club's stakeholders possess the local knowledge, commitment, and creativity to build a sustainable future. The intervention strategies proposed in this research, if implemented with fidelity, can move Kwekwe United from the brink of collapse toward the Financial Green Zone serving as a model for community-based clubs across Zimbabwe and beyond. The passion of the fans, the resilience of the players, and the pragmatic ideas of local sponsors and coaches are already in place; what remains is the courage to reform.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Methodological and Sample Limitations

Single case study design

The research focused exclusively on Kwekwe United FC. While this allowed deep, contextualized analysis, it limits external validity (generalizability). Findings may not apply to clubs with different ownership structures, geographic locations, or competitive histories. Therefore, the study provides thick description of the case and the Zimbabwean football context, enabling readers to assess transferability to their own settings. The theoretical frameworks used (soft budget constraint, resource dependence, resilience) were deliberately chosen to have broader applicability beyond the single case.

Absence of formal financial records

Kwekwe United failed to produce audited financial statements, hence the study could not perform quantitative ratio analysis for example liquidity and debt-to-equity that would have provided objective benchmarks. Therefore, the study relied on interviews with different stakeholder groups, document analysis of one media report, and the focus group.

Sample size and composition

Empirical research on saturation suggests that thematic saturation in qualitative studies is often achieved within 12 to 20 interviews for reasonably homogeneous populations (Guest et al., 2006). The final sample of 19 individual interviewees and a focus group of 4 supporters was modest. Notably, the two planned administrative personnel were not interviewed (both had left the club and could not be reached). The focus group had only 4 participants instead of the targeted 6–10. Despite these shortfalls, data saturation was achieved by the 15th interview, and the focus group provided rich qualitative data even with 4 participants. The absence of finance personnel was partially compensated by detailed operational financial insights from coaches and club leadership. The study transparently reports these limitations so readers can judge the findings accordingly.

Potential recall and social desirability bias

Participants recalled events from 2024–2026, and club leadership may have downplayed governance failures while players might have exaggerated salary delays. Therefore, triangulation across sources for example comparing player accounts with media reports and

club correspondence, helped verify claims. Member checking with selected participants confirmed that interpreted themes matched their intended meanings. Each participant received a summary of the preliminary themes and was invited to review and comment on accuracy and resonance. Feedback was obtained via telephone for four participants and via e-mail for one participant. All five participants confirmed that the themes reflected their experiences and that the overall interpretation was credible. However, minor disagreements and revisions emerged. The player representative requested stronger emphasis on unpaid wages as a central driver of low morale and player departures. The external stakeholder suggested that community support was conditional on the club demonstrating greater transparency and accountability. The leadership representative clarified that some financial constraints resulted from sponsorship withdrawals rather than internal mismanagement alone, prompting the researcher to rename the theme from "financial mismanagement" to "governance challenges." These refinements were incorporated into the final theme definitions and the reporting of findings. No participant requested withdrawal of any substantive theme, and member checking therefore provided evidence of credibility and confirmability for the study.

The researcher also used probing techniques during interviews to elicit specific examples rather than general claims.

Cross-sectional data collection

Data was collected within a six-week period, providing a snapshot. This cannot capture how financial practices or intervention outcomes evolve over time. The study incorporated retrospective accounts to reconstruct the 2024–2025 trajectory, and it explicitly framed its recommendations as a phased implementation plan for future longitudinal testing.

Limitations of the Literature

Most existing research on football financial sustainability focuses on European (Dayı & Mousa, 2025; Zanda et al., 2024) or South African contexts (Goslin & Mosola, 2020). There is a scarcity of peer-reviewed studies specifically on Zimbabwean Premier Soccer League clubs. The study grounded its analysis in broader African football literature for example (Mosola, Cunha, and Dandah & Chiweshe) and adapted theoretical frameworks from European studies, carefully noting where contextual differences require adjustment. The empirical findings thus contribute to filling this gap.

Predominance of diagnostic rather than intervention-focused literature

Existing studies effectively diagnose the symptoms of financial distress such as debt accumulation, poor governance, and lack of diversification but provide limited guidance on how resource-constrained clubs can implement sustainable solutions. This study deliberately adopted a stakeholder-driven, co-design approach, generating intervention strategies directly from those who would implement or benefit from them. The resulting phased action plan is a practical contribution that the literature lacks.

Lack of literature on supporter-led financing in African low-income settings

Crowd funding, membership schemes, and volunteerism are discussed in European community-owned clubs but rarely examined in African contexts. The study used the focus group and fan interviews to explore these models inductively, generating original insights on willingness to pay ($2–$5 per month) and conditions for participation that is budget transparency, providing an empirical basis for future theoretical development.

Logistical Limitations

The researcher was self-funded with limited resources. This restricted the ability to offer incentives to participants (beyond refreshments), travel extensively for interviews, or extend the fieldwork period. Therefore, the researcher prioritized face-to-face interviews within Kwekwe town to minimize travel costs. Online interviews (WhatsApp voice calls) were used for participants in other locations, which proved effective and reduced expenses.

Reluctance of respondents to give information

Some participants, particularly those still employed by the club, were initially hesitant to discuss sensitive topics such as unpaid salaries, governance failures, and the owner's role. The finance personnel who had left the club declined to participate entirely hence the researcher invested time in building rapport before interviews, clearly explaining confidentiality protections, and allowing participants to skip questions. For the finance personnel, no alternative could be found, and this gap is transparently reported.

Access to documents

The club was unable to provide complete financial records hence the researcher relied on media report (Nyakwenda, 2025) and on-the-record statements from club officials as supplementary documentary sources.

Time constraints of participants

Coaches and players had training schedules; sponsors were busy. Several interviews had to be scheduled and rescheduled multiple times, and one interview was cut short. The researcher offered flexible timing (evenings, weekends) and conducted shorter interviews (20 minutes instead of 60) when necessary.

Logistical disruptions in Zimbabwe

During the fieldwork period (March–May 2026), intermittent electricity outages and mobile network disruptions affected recording and communication. The researcher used two recording devices (phone and a separate digital recorder), carried fully charged backup power banks, and saved transcripts locally. When network calls dropped, the researcher immediately called back and resumed from the last agreed point. One interview was conducted without recording (detailed notes taken) with the participant's consent.

5. 5 IMPLICATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications for practice

The following practical implications emerged from the stakeholder-driven analysis.

Immediate governance and transparency reforms

The club should publish a simplified monthly income and expenditure report, this low-cost intervention addresses the universal stakeholder demand for transparency and builds the trust needed for supporter-led financing.

Launch a supporter membership scheme

Based on focus group proposals, the club could introduce a voluntary monthly membership of $2–$5 per supporter, ring-fenced for specific basics such as medical kits, away transport, and match balls.

Formalize a youth academy

Using volunteer coaches and existing training facilities, the club should register a junior team, offer small stipends or in-kind incentives, and start producing home-grown players. This reduces recruitment costs and can generate future transfer fees, addressing both cost containment and revenue diversification.

Diversify sponsorship and merchandising

The club should approach multiple local businesses such as retail shops, mining supply companies and transport operators for smaller, less risky sponsorship packages. Simultaneously, it should sell replica jerseys and training kits on match days and through a simple mobile money ordering system, capturing demand that currently flows to informal street vendors.

Independent audit mechanism

The supporters' trust or a newly formed supporters' committee should raise funds to commission a bi-annual independent audit. The auditor reports directly to the trust, not the club's board. This decentralized oversight breaks the single-family veto power and provides external credibility.

Financial literacy training

All club managers including the owner, CEO, and coaches involved in procurement, should complete a basic financial management course covering budgeting, cash flow tracking, and expense approval processes. This can be delivered by a local business school or NGO at low cost.

Phased stadium solution

In the short term, the club should negotiate a better stadium-sharing agreement for example a percentage of concessions and reduced rental. In the medium term, partner with the local municipality to upgrade an existing ground in Kwekwe to league standards, enabling gate revenue and community rentals.

5.5.2 Implications for Theory

The study makes several contributions to the body of knowledge on football club financial sustainability, particularly in the under-researched context of lower-division African football.

Franck (2010) and Dayı & Mousa (2025) applied soft budget constraint (SBC) to European clubs with wealthy owners or systemic bailouts. This study shows that in a Zimbabwean context, the SBC may even be more extreme: a single family not only provides bailouts but also actively blocks any financial reform that would harden the constraint for example transparent reporting and independent audits. However, given that this interpretation is derived from a single cross-sectional case, it is offered as a working proposition for future inquiry rather than as a definitive theoretical extension.

Contextualizing Mosola's four-pillar framework

Goslin and Mosola (2020) identified sponsorships, gate revenue, broadcasting, and merchandising as the pillars of African club finance. Drawing on evidence from the present single-case study, however, the data tentatively raise the possibility that, for small-city, lower-division clubs, and two further mechanisms namely supporter-led financing for example (membership and crowd funding) and volunteer labor may assume particular operational significance. These observations lead to a context-specific proposition: in settings where the conventional pillars are weak or unreliable, these mechanisms may function less as optional supplements and more as critical operational supports..

Refining Charumbira's financial zones

Charumbira (2022) described four zones (Red, Low Revenue Amber, High Expenditure Amber, and Green). The study reveals a fifth dynamic: oscillation between zones depending on the arrival or withdrawal of a single sponsor. This suggests that zone classification should include a measure of revenue concentration such as the Herfindahl index to capture fragility, not just total revenue versus expenditure.

Bridging the governance-sustainability link

Zanda et al. (2024) and Oliveira & Carvalhal (2018) argued that good governance improves financial performance. This study provides empirical evidence from a low-resource setting, showing that poor governance (single-family control, no published reports) may directly cause specific financial failures (unaccounted expenditures, debt accumulation, and loss of sponsors). It bridges the gap by demonstrating causal mechanisms, not just correlation.

Adding resilience to sustainability discourse

Dandah and Chiweshe (2023) called for disaster preparedness, but the literature often treats sustainability as a static state. This study introduces the concept of financial buffer (cash reserves covering months of operating costs) as a measurable resilience indicator. For Kwekwe United, the unclaimed absence of any buffer highlighted by participants was the immediate cause of collapse when sponsorship was renegotiated. Resilience should be theorized as a separate but complementary dimension to sustainability.

5.5.3 Implications for Future Research

The limitations of this study and its findings open several avenues for further investigation.

Action research intervention testing

The proposed intervention strategies (membership scheme, independent audit, youth academy) should be implemented and evaluated over a two- to three-year period. Future researchers could use action research or a quasi-experimental design to measure the actual impact on salary timeliness, revenue diversification, and stakeholder trust. This is important because the current study can only propose, not test, interventions.

Multiple-case comparative study

A comparative study of three to five Zimbabwean Premier Soccer League clubs (with different ownership models: single-owner, supporters' trust, corporate) would reveal whether the patterns found at Kwekwe United are systemic or idiosyncratic. This would strengthen external validity and inform league-wide policy.

Longitudinal financial tracking

Future research should collect primary financial data such as monthly income/expenditure, cash reserves, and accounts payable over at least two seasons. This would enable quantitative analysis using Dayı & Mousa's (2025) financial ratios (liquidity, leverage, equity) and provide objective benchmarks for sustainability.

Supporter behavior studies

The focus group expressed willingness to pay $2–$5 per month, but actual uptake and retention rates are unknown. A discrete choice experiment or a stated preference survey could determine

optimal membership pricing, benefits, and payment modalities. This is important because member financing requires accurate demand estimation.

Role of women in football finance

The study under-represented female perspectives. Future research should purposively sample female supporters, administrators, and sponsors to understand their unique views on club sustainability and their willingness to engage in fan-based financing.

Policy impact assessment

If the PSL or ZIFA implements a promotion transition fund as suggested by one participant, a before-after study could assess whether such funds reduce the failure rate of promoted clubs. This would provide evidence for regulatory reform across African leagues.

Comparative African study

Replicate this qualitative case study design in other African countries such as Zambia, Ghana and Kenya to identify cross-national patterns and context-specific variations. This would contribute to a continent-wide understanding of financial sustainability challenges and best practices.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Five provided a comprehensive discussion of the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The key findings were recapitulated: Kwekwe United faces severe financial fragility due to revenue concentration, governance failure, lack of reserves, infrastructure deficits, and a culture of informality. Stakeholder-proposed interventions including supporter membership, youth development, independent audits, and financial literacy training and were discussed in light of best practices from Zimbabwean, African, and European football finance literature.

The chapter then presented a phased implementation plan (Phases 1–4) to move the club from Charumbira's Low Revenue Amber/Red Zones to the Financial Green Zone. The theoretical implications extend soft budget constraint theory, refine Mosola's four-pillar framework, and introduce resilience as a measurable buffer. Practical implications offer low-cost, actionable steps for the club, its supporters, and league regulators.

Finally, the chapter identified directions for future research: action research testing, multiple-case comparisons, longitudinal financial tracking, supporter behavior studies, gender analysis, policy impact assessment, and cross-national African studies. Taken together, these implications ensure that the study contributes not only to academic knowledge but also to tangible improvement in the financial sustainability of Kwekwe United FC and similar clubs across the continent.

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Appendices

Appendix A: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Bindura University of Science Education

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 BSc2634 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 intervention strategies to improve financial sustainability and resilience of Kwekwe United Fc 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: Research access letter

KWEKWE UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

"The Blues"

Redcliff, Zimbabwe | Email: admin@kwekweunited.com

14 April 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH AT KWEKWE UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

This letter serves to confirm that Kwekwe United Football Club has granted student B223929B permission to conduct academic research within the club, for the purpose of developing intervention strategies to enhance the financial sustainability and resilience of Kwekwe United Football Club.

The student is authorized to engage with relevant club officials, administrative staff, subject to the club's confidentiality requirements, for the sole purpose of gathering information necessary to complete this research. The club will, within reasonable capacity, provide access to relevant personnel to support this study.

Yours faithfully,

Kwekwe United Football Club

Email: admin@kwekweunited.com

Location: Redcliff, Kwekwe Zimbabwe

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study

Developing Intervention Strategies to Improve Financial Sustainability and Resilience of Kwekwe United FC.

Consent Statement

I have read and understood the information provided regarding this research study.

I understand that:

i. Participation is voluntary.
ii. I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
iii. Information collected will remain confidential.

iv. Data will be used solely for academic purposes.

v. There are minimal risks associated with participation.

By signing below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

This appendix contains the ethical clearance approval obtained prior to commencement of the study.

The study was reviewed and approved by the relevant ethics review authority in accordance with the ethical requirements of Bindura University of Science Education.

The approval authorized the researcher to:

- Recruit participants.
- Collect data.
- Implement the intervention programme.
- Analyze and report findings.

APPENDIX E: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Interview Guide for Coaches (Technical Staff)

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me I am a student at Bindura University of Science and education. I am researching on how Kwekwe United FC can become financially sustainable. Your perspective as a coach is vital because you directly experience how financial constraints affect team preparation and performance. Everything you share will be kept confidential and anonymised. You may skip any question or stop at any time. This interview will take about 15–30 minutes.

Theme Questions

Diagnostic Assessment

1. What was your understanding of the club's budget for player wages, travel, equipment, and match-day expenses? Was this budget communicated clearly?

2 .From your perspective, what are the biggest financial weaknesses of the club?

Gaps and Barriers

3. What barriers structural, economic, institutional, or cultural have prevented Kwekwe United from adopting more professional financial practices?

Stakeholder Opportunities

4. What opportunities do you see for the club to generate more income?

Intervention Development

5. If you were advising the club's leadership, what three changes would you prioritise to improve financial sustainability?

Implementation

6. What resources training, staff, systems, or equipment would the club need to implement better financial management?

Interview Guide for Players

"Thank you for speaking with me. As a player, you are at the heart of the club. Your experience with salaries, working conditions, and team morale is essential to understanding the financial crisis. Everything is confidential. You can skip any question. This will take about 20 minutes."

Theme Questions

Diagnostic Assessment

1. Describe your experience with salary payments during the 2025 season? Probes: Were payments on time? How many months were you owed? How did this affect you personally and your family?

2. What are the main reasons the club struggled financially? Probes: Is it about management, lack of sponsorship, poor fan turnout, or something else?

Gaps and Barriers

3. Have you played at other clubs in Zimbabwe? How did their financial management compare to Kwekwe United? Probes: What did those clubs do differently regarding payments, contracts, or player welfare?

Stakeholder Opportunities

4. Do you think there are local businesses or individuals in Kwekwe who could support the club better? Have any approached the team? What would make them more willing?

5. How do you think supporters could help the club financially for example, through membership fees, fundraising, or buying merchandise?

Intervention Development

6. What changes would you suggest to make sure players are paid on time and the club is stable?

C. Interview Guide for Fans (Supporters)

Thank you for participating. As a supporter, your connection to Kwekwe United is vital. This research aims to find ways to make the club financially stronger. Your views on how fans can help are essential. Everything is confidential, and you can skip any question. This will take about 20 minutes.

Theme Questions / Probes

Diagnostic Assessment

1. How long have you supported Kwekwe United, and what does the club mean to you and your community?

2. What have you observed about the club's financial struggles over the past two seasons?

3. Do you feel the club's leadership has been transparent about financial problems? Why or why not?

Gaps and Barriers

4. Compared to other clubs you follow how does Kwekwe United compare in terms of professionalism and financial management?

5. What do you think are the main reasons the club is not financially sustainable? Probes: Over-reliance on one person? Poor marketing? Lack of supporter involvement?

Stakeholder Opportunities

6. Would you be willing to pay a regular membership fee to support the club? What would you expect in return?

7. What other ways could supporters help raise money?

Implementation

8. What advice would you give to the club's leadership to build a stronger financial future?

D. Interview Guide for Previous Sponsors (Those Who Ended Sponsorship)

"Thank you for speaking with me. I understand you previously sponsored Kwekwe United but no longer do so. Your honest perspective on why the partnership ended is crucial for understanding the club's challenges. Everything will be kept confidential. This will take about 20 minutes."

Theme Questions

Diagnostic Assessment

1. When did you sponsor Kwekwe United, and what was the nature of that sponsorship (cash, goods, services)?

2. What were your expectations when you entered the sponsorship? Probes: Brand visibility, community goodwill, tax benefits, player access?

Gaps and Barriers

3. Why did you decide to end the sponsorship? Probes: Was it financial, contractual, relational, or reputational?

4. What specific problems did you experience with the club's management, communication, or delivery of benefits?

Stakeholder Opportunities

5. Under what conditions would you consider sponsoring the club again in the future?

Intervention Development

6. What advice would you give to the club to attract and keep sponsors?

Implementation

7. What practical steps should the club take immediately to show it is serious about corporate partnerships?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?

F. Interview Guide for Club Owners (including majority shareholder)

Introduction:

"Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. As the owner/shareholder, you have made significant personal investments in Kwekwe United. This research aims to develop sustainable financial strategies, and your perspective on the challenges and opportunities is essential. Everything you share will be treated confidentially. You may decline any question. This interview will take about 30 minutes."

Theme Questions

Diagnostic Assessment

1. Can you describe your journey with Kwekwe United, why did you become involved, and what is your ownership structure?

2. What are the club's main revenue sources, and what are the largest expenditure items?

3. How would you describe the club's current financial position, assets, liabilities, cash flow?

4. What governance structures and financial management systems currently exist? Probes: Board? Financial officer? Budgeting process? Reporting?

Gaps and Barriers

5. What do you see as the main barriers to financial sustainability, structural, economic, institutional, or cultural?

6. Compared to other clubs you know (in Zimbabwe or regionally), where does Kwekwe United stand in terms of best practices? What gaps are most urgent?

Stakeholder Opportunities

7. What opportunities for revenue diversification do you see in Kwekwe?

Intervention Development

10. What intervention strategies do you think would be most effective to improve financial sustainability?

11. Would you be open to bringing in additional investors or converting the club into a different ownership model (e.g., community trust, cooperative)? Why or why not?

12. How feasible and acceptable would it be to implement professional financial management systems?

Implementation

13. What resources, capabilities, and support structures would be needed to implement priority interventions?

14. How should progress be monitored, and what would success look like for you in 12 months?

Focus Group Guide

The purpose of this focus group is to investigate the financial sustainability and resilience challenges facing Kwekwe united football club and to come up with intervention strategies to ensure long term sustainability. Before we begin, I want to assure you about privacy. Your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to answer any question or leave the group at any time without any consequences. I will be audio-recording this session to ensure that I accurately capture your valuable feedback. The recording will be transcribed, and all identifying information will be removed from the transcript. All information you share today will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. The focus group should take at least 20 to 35 minutes long.

Understanding the Problem

1. From your perspective, what have you witnessed or heard about Kwekwe United's financial problems over the past two seasons?
2. How have these financial problems affected the team's performance on the pitch and your sense of pride as support?
3. In your view, what are the root causes of the club's financial instability?
4. Do you feel the club's leadership has been transparent with supporters about financial problems? Why or why not?

Supporters' Role

Purpose: To explore what role supporters are willing to play in the club's financial survival.

5. What role do you think supporters should play in the club's financial survival?
6. Would you be willing to pay a regular monthly membership fee to support the club? If yes, how much per month would be affordable for you? If no, why not?
7. What other supporter-led activities could raise money for the club?
8. Would you be willing to volunteer your time to help the club reduce costs?

Governance and Trust

Purpose: To understand supporters' trust in the club's leadership and their views on governance.

9. Would you trust the current leadership with any money raised by supporters? Why or why not?
10. Would you support an elected supporters' trust that holds a seat on the club's board?
11. What transparency measures would you need to see before contributing financially?
12. How would you like to be informed about the club's financial situation?

Ideas for Intervention

Purpose: To generate and prioritize intervention ideas.

13. What do you think are the best ideas we have discussed today that the club should implement immediately?
14. What barriers might prevent these ideas from working, and how could we overcome them?

15. How should we prioritize these ideas, and what steps should be followed?
16. Are there any local businesses, organizations, or individuals you know who might be willing to support the club if approached properly*?*