BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



EVALUATION OF POLICE OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE: A HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE STUDY.

BY

B231081B

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (HONOURS) DEGREE IN POLICE AND SECURITY STUDIES OF BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION. FAUCULTY OF COMMERCE. DEPARTMENT OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY.

JUNE 2026

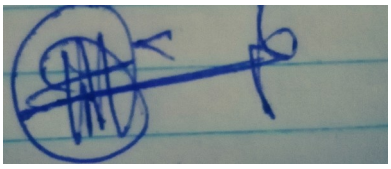
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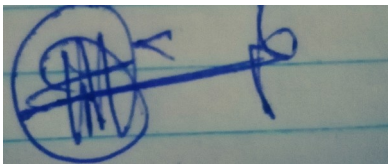
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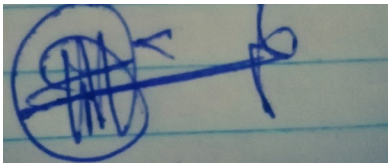


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DECLARATION FORM

I, **Munapo Tichaona**, solemnly declare that the information of this dissertation prepared in partial fulfilment of the Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) Degree in Police and Security Studies and submitted to the Department Of Security Intelligence, Faculty of Commerce at Bindura University of Science Education has not been presented, submitted or published in this nature or part. Previous works have been duly accredited and acknowledged properly.



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DEDICATION FORM

I would like to dedicate this work to my wife Patience Mutsvare, my mother Sarah Pingurai whose constant love, support, and encouragement have been the foundation of my academic success.

ABSTRACT

Despite Zimbabwe's 2013 constitutional reforms establishing the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) and mandating impartial policing under Sections 219 and 242 of the Constitution, persistent reports of excessive force, arbitrary arrest, and partisan policing within the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) reveal a critical gap between constitutional design and operational reality. This study investigates why oversight mechanisms in Harare Metropolitan Province are failing to produce human rights compliance, and identifies the structural and political factors responsible.

A convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a stratified random survey of 400 citizens across Harare Central, Chitungwiza, and Epworth. Qualitative data were gathered through 70 semi-structured interviews with ZHRC officials, ZRP officers, civil society representatives, and complainants. Documentary analysis of 15 primary sources, including ZHRC Annual Reports (2018–2023) and parliamentary records, provided a third data strand. All data were obtained through field research in Harare Metropolitan Province in 2025.

Quantitative data were analyzed using multiple linear regression in IBM SPSS Statistics. Qualitative data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis, and documentary data were assessed using Bovens' (2007) accountability framework. The regression model was statistically significant ($F(3, 389) = 161.6$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.61$). Political interference was the strongest predictor of compliance ($\beta = -0.48$), followed by institutional independence ($\beta = 0.42$) and public awareness ($\beta = 0.24$). Five qualitative themes emerged which are nominal independence, political capture, resource deprivation, institutional silence, and civil society substitution. Documentary analysis confirmed a near-total complaint attrition of 412 complaints received and zero prosecutions resulting.

The study concludes that oversight failures are structural and political rather than administrative. Recommendations include amending the ZHRC Act to confer binding recommendation authority, establishing constitutionally guaranteed funding, enacting anti-retaliation legislation for complainants, and integrating mandatory human rights training into ZRP pre-service programs.

Keywords **:** Police oversight, Human rights compliance, ZRP, ZHRC, Political interference, Institutional independence, Public awareness, Accountability gap, Mixed methods, Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give all the glory to the Almighty God for making this a reality, and I want to first acknowledge and thank Him for everything. I wish to also express my heartfelt gratitude to my Wife Patience Mutsvare, my mother Sarah Pingurai and my son Nathaniel Nyasha Munapo, whose constant support, encouragement, and understanding have been the cornerstone of my academic path. Their presence has helped me navigate through the challenges and successes of this path, and I remain forever grateful to them. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) for offering a conducive and supportive academic environment that promoted my intellectual development and research efforts through the resources, guidance, and opportunities they provided, which were crucial in shaping my academic goals and facilitating the completion of my dissertation.

Additionally, I want to recognize my dissertation supervisor Mr. E Maravanyika, his guidance, expertise, and insightful feedbacks have been exceptional, valuable, and pivotal in shaping this research, and I will always be thankful to him for playing such a significant role in helping me realize this dream. To my colleagues, Sungano Machemedze and Lazarus Vhenge, I am grateful for the love, support, understanding, and companionship you provided during both the peaks and valleys of this academic journey. Even during the most challenging and difficult moments, you were always there for me, despite your careful cost-benefit assessments, for which I will always be indebted to you. Finally, I wish to thank everyone who played a vital role and contributed significantly to this study with their time and effort (participants), whether directly or indirectly and in both visible and invisible ways; I am eternally grateful to you all. This dissertation stands today as a testament to our collective efforts; it is a result of all of you, and this achievement belongs as much to you as it does to me.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APA **:** American Psychological Association

APCOF **:** African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum

BBA.PSS **:** Bachelor of Business Administration in Police and Security Studies

BUSE **:** Bindura University of Science Education

CI **:** Confidence Interval

CMP **:** Complainant (participant code)

CSO **:** Civil Society Organisation

HRBA **:** Human Rights-Based Approach

IPID **:** Independent Police Investigative Directorate

JSC **:** Judicial Service Commission

MOPA **:** Maintenance of Peace and Order Act

NGO **:** Non-Governmental Organisation

NPA **:** National Prosecuting Authority

OVT **:** Organised Violence and Torture

POSA **:** Public Order and Security Act

RTA **:** Reflexive Thematic Analysis

SD **:** Standard Deviation

SPSS **:** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UN **:** United Nations

UNDP **:** United Nations Development Programme

VIF **:** Variance Inflation Factor

ZHRC **:** Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

ZIMSTAT **:** Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

ZimLII **:** Zimbabwe Legal Information Institute

ZRP **:** Zimbabwe Republic Police

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

In any democracy public power is exercised for public purposes and, by definition, those who exercise public power are accountable for the exercise of such power. This is particularly the case with police officers who have contact with members of the public and have coercive powers. For residents of Harare Metropolitan Province, the question of whether and how the ZRP is held accountable is not just an academic issue but an issue of whether policing implementation is a form of protection or a form of abuse.

The objective of the study is to establish the extent to which constitutional and statutory oversight mechanisms over human rights compliance by the ZRP have impacted on human rights compliance. Despite the existence of constitutional and statutory oversight apparatus in the form of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), Parliamentary Portfolio Committees, internal police disciplinary mechanisms, the courts and civil society organisations, allegations of excessive force, arbitrary arrests and politicization of the police in Harare have continued post-2013 constitutional reform.

The chapter introduces the study by examining the historical and institutional context of police accountability in Zimbabwe. It then outlines the research problem, research objectives, research questions and hypotheses, and the importance of the study. The

chapter also discusses the assumptions made, and the scope and delimitations of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

To understand the current police oversight approach in Zimbabwe, one must begin with the BSAP, the ZRP's colonial predecessor. The BSAP was never intended for the African population. Regarding the BSAP, Maringira (2017) concludes that the police existed to enforce settler interests, suppress African political activity, and maintain racial order through selective and often brutal force. This foundational character that the police is an instrument of control rather than protection shaped the institutional culture that the post-independence ZRP inherited.

When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the new government kept most of the existing colonial security structures. Command and control, operational concepts and institutional culture were all transferred into the new Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) . Over the next two decades, the ZRP gradually politically became aligned with the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The political alignment of the ZRP was considerably accelerated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with ZANU-PF facing its first serious electoral challenge from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Activists were arrested on made-up charges and tortured, while the police routinely refused to investigate violence committed by ZANU-PF-affiliated militias (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Sachikonye, 2018). The police had become, in a very real sense, a partisan instrument.

More importantly, it was not just that abuses were taking place: the mechanisms for accountability were absent or had fallen into disuse. Courts that found against the government were ignored. Civil society organisations such as those documenting abuses suffered harassment. With a ruling party in parliament, there was no serious

scrutiny. This led to a culture of impunity whereby officers understood that they would not face punishment for crimes they committed in service of the ruling party (Alemika, 2021; Sachikonye, 2018).

The GNU, established by the 2009 SADC-mediated political agreement, set the stage for constitutional change, resulting in the adoption of Zimbabwe's new constitution in 2013, which incorporated several innovations. Section 219 requires the ZRP to act impartially. Section 242 provides for an independent constitutional commission, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) to investigate human rights violations. The chapter provided for new and more autonomous commissions to oversee accountability throughout the government, a major change from 2013 and before.

Yet formal provisions and operational realities are not the same thing. Between 2018 and 2023, the ZHRC received an estimated 412 complaints of alleged ZRP misconduct in Harare Metropolitan Province alone. Fewer than 10 per cent resulted in disciplinary hearings and there are no cases of criminal prosecution (ZHRC, 2023). The important question that follows is: why is the oversight system failing to provide accountability in spite of having constitutional status? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand how oversight is applied in practice, and Harare Metropolitan Province, the most politically active and surveilled space in Zimbabwe, is the best test case.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

On paper, Zimbabwe's police oversight mechanisms are layer-cake. The ZHRC, Parliamentary Portfolio Committees, internal ZRP disciplinary

procedures, independent courts, and civil society organizations have formal roles. In practice, however, these checks have proven ineffective. Amnesty International (2023) and Human Rights Watch (2022) state that throughout the post-2013 reform era, police in Harare Metropolitan Province have involved themselves in use of excessive force, politically motivated arrests, and arbitrary detentions. Despite ZHRC data and the fact that very few complaints are heard and none successfully prosecuted, the perceived culture of impunity persists.

The mismatch between the requirements of what an effective oversight system should provide and what it does provide is not merely an inefficiency, it is a systemic failure rooted in three factors. Oversight institutions may be structurally incapable of holding the government to account, however, because they lack the legal powers to do so, or their functional independence from the government is subverted by the executive. Alternatively, oversight institutions may be structurally adequate but politically compromised, for example by being subjected to executive pressure or, in some cases, being captured by pre-2013 political partisanship. Third, and most likely, both processes may take place simultaneously, with institutions already weakened by political interference being eroded in a vicious cycle.

If structural weakness is the problem, then it calls for reform through legislation; if political compromise is the problem, then it calls for constitutional independence. Given the complexity thereof, any effort to reform them in the absence of evidence is bound to be misdirected given the abundance of possible explanations for the phenomenon in the specific provincial context we study, Harare. The aim of this study is therefore to address this gap in the evidence, and do so by providing the first systematic province-level mixed-methods assessment of oversight effectiveness in Harare Metropolitan Province, from the perspectives of citizens, police and oversight actors.

1.4 Aim of the Study

Research objectives are clear, specific statements of what a study seeks to achieve, and usually guide the research process and act as a benchmark against which the results are assessed (Kumar, 2019). The general and specific objectives that guide this study are outlined below.

General Objective

- To evaluate the police oversight mechanisms in upholding human rights in Zimbabwe paying particular attention to Harare Metropolitan Province.

Specific Objectives

- To identify and document the structures, legal frameworks, and operational procedures of each formal oversight mechanism for the ZRP in Harare Metropolitan Province.
- To assess how citizens, ZRP officers, and oversight officials perceive the effectiveness of these mechanisms in addressing complaints of police misconduct and human rights violations.
- To identify and categorize the principal institutional, political, and resource-related challenges that hinder effective oversight.
- To examine the relationships between the institutional independence of oversight bodies, public awareness of complaint mechanisms, political interference, and levels of human rights compliance within the ZRP.
- To develop evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening police oversight and human rights protection in Harare Metropolitan Province.

1.5 Research Questions

- What oversight mechanisms formally exist to ensure human rights compliance within the ZRP in Harare Metropolitan Province, and how are they structured, mandated, and resourced in law and in practice?

- How do citizens, ZRP officers, and oversight officials perceive the effectiveness of these mechanisms, and what accounts for differences in perception across these groups?
- What institutional, political, and resource-related factors most significantly constrain the effective functioning of oversight mechanisms in Harare Metropolitan Province?
- What are the empirical relationships between the independence of oversight bodies, public awareness of complaint mechanisms, political interference, and human rights compliance within the ZRP?
- What specific legislative, institutional, and operational reforms are most likely to strengthen oversight and improve human rights compliance within the ZRP?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

A hypothesis may be defined as a tentative, testable prediction about the expected outcome or relationship between two or more variables, formulated prior to data collection and subjected to empirical verification (Creswell, 2014).

Three testable hypotheses are advanced. Each is grounded in the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two and will be tested through the quantitative component of the mixed-methods design, with the qualitative component providing contextual explanation of any statistically significant findings.

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the institutional independence of oversight bodies and their perceived effectiveness in enforcing police accountability in Harare Metropolitan Province.

H2: Higher levels of public awareness of police oversight mechanisms and complaint procedures are significantly associated with greater trust in policing institutions and increased reporting of police misconduct.

H3: Political interference in oversight processes exerts a statistically significant negative effect on the capacity of oversight institutions to promote human rights compliance within the ZRP.

Operationalization of Key Concepts

Since the hypotheses depend on abstract constructs, it is important to clarify how each concept will be measured in practice.

Oversight effectiveness refers to the degree to which oversight mechanisms produce meaningful accountability outcomes. It will be operationalized through four dimensions measured in the citizen survey:

- Perceived independence of oversight bodies, rated on a five-point Likert scale
- Perceived ability to address misconduct complaints, also Likert-rated
- Citizens' experience of procedural fairness in police interactions

In addition the overall level of trust in the ZRP and oversight institutions as measured by their internal documentation (complaints received, disciplinary outcomes and prosecution rates) will be tracked.

Institutional independence is the degree to which an oversight body's actions are free from political direction or interference. This will be operationalized as survey measures of the perceived pressure on the ZHRC, Parliamentary committees, and internal discipline of ZRP officers. This will then be supplemented by qualitative measures building on interviews with oversight body officials and ZRP officers regarding their perceptions of other forms and intensity of pressure.

Political interference will be measured with a six-item subscale on the citizen survey. Respondents will be asked how often they believe that the executive intervenes in oversight decisions, directs policing operations for partisan purposes, and protects officers that have political connections from punishment. This topic will be explored with qualitative interviews.

Indicators of compliance with human rights will be based on the extent to which ZRP officers' operational conduct aligns with constitutional rights enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). Documentary analysis of data generated by the ZHRC and court records for complaints lodged will be used. Perceptions of police conduct will also be examined.

The definitions ensure that our hypotheses are not simply hypothetical latent states, but rather are represented in specific indicators that are amenable to the mixed-methods design described in Chapter Three.

1.7 Significance of the Study

1.7.1 Importance to citizens and communities

The communities that are most affected by this study are those residing in the Harare Metropolitan Province, especially in low income settlements such as Epworth and parts of Chitungwiza where communities have very limited access to the judiciary system and where the communities are most vulnerable to police brutality. By producing evidence about why oversight is failing and what would make it more effective, the study provides community members and civil society actors with evidence-based arguments to hold the police and oversight institutions to account.

1.7.2 Importance to Policymakers and Oversight Institutions

For ZHRC, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees, the Ministry of Home Affairs and senior ZRP leadership, the study provides evidence-based diagnostic assessment of what is preventing accountability from working, and evidence-based recommendations from the perceptions and experiences of the people, officers and officials involved, which should be specific enough to guide legislation, institutional redesign and training priorities.

1.7.3 Importance to scholarship

This research has three contributions to the literature. The first makes an empirical contribution as the first province-level qualitative and quantitative study of police oversight effectiveness in Zimbabwe. Secondly, it provides a strong demonstration of the use of the Accountability Theory, Institutional Theory, Procedural Justice Theory and the Human Rights-Based Approach. Thirdly, it adds the rigorously researched case study of Zimbabwe to the comparative African policing research literature alongside South Africa, Kenya and West Africa.

1.7.4 Importance and relevance to Bindura University of Science Education

This study adds to the existing body of work produced by the Faculty of Commerce and the Department of Police and Security Studies and is an example of how a mixed method research design can be applied to an area of governance and human rights research, within the undergraduate academic environment.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

We make the following assumptions:

Maintaining respondents' truthfulness and cooperativeness is encouraged through anonymity, voluntary participation, selection of interview location and withdrawal rights baked into our survey design. However, because the topic is sensitive, it must also be noted that respondents' fear and social desirability effects cannot be completely controlled, and maintaining the non-material nature of their participation in surveys and interviews requires alertness. Some officers and oversight officials may choose to downplay their responses to avoid repercussions on their organization, and citizens with personal experience of the event may downplay the extent of the misconduct.

Triangulation through three data sources limits this potential bias but is a potential weakness.

Although sensitive internal documents may not be accessed, these institutions have enough administrative independence to allow the access of public documents and published annual reports to the researcher.

Collaboration with the ZRP in data collection will be governed by ethical and research access mechanisms outlined in previous institutional collaboration and formal letter of research access at Bindura University.

The research period must also be characterized by sufficient political stability to ensure that respondents, including officers and oversight officials, can speak freely without undue risk.

The five oversight mechanisms identified by the conceptual framework represent the main accountability structures related to the research questions, and the measurement instruments developed are appropriate to measure the theoretical constructs they represent.

1.9 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The scope of the study includes the subject of the research, the study area, the study population, and the time frame for the research, whilst delimitations refer to the limitations that the researcher imposes on the research to make it manageable (Saunders et al., 2019).

The study will be conducted in Harare Metropolitan Province in the districts of Harare Central, Chitungwiza and Epworth not just because of convenience. Harare is the locus of such policy challenges and scrutiny, representing the most appropriate, analytical province for this research, although the findings from Harare cannot necessarily be generalized across the other provinces.

With regard to institutional accountability, this analysis considers the ZHRC, Parliamentary Portfolio Committees, the internal disciplinary arena of the ZRP, and the courts and civil society organisations. Other possible avenues of police accountability such as the National Prosecuting Authority and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, which can challenge the police, are not analyzed in this paper.

We observe 2010 to 2025, capturing the constitutional reform period during the GNU (2010 to 2013) and the implementation period following the reform from 2013 to 2025, thus being able to ascertain whether improvement in oversight practice has been driven by the reform.

The study does not assess police effectiveness in preventing and detecting crime. The study rather seeks to examine the oversight role played by oversight institutions in advancing fundamental rights of citizens within policing. Other security forces and the military are not included unless joint operations with the ZRP directly relate to the human rights violations.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of cross-sectional work is that it provides no information about whether the differences the study reports between groups on accountability have grown, shrunk, or stayed the same over the period covered by the data. Cross-sectional data cannot tell us what causes the observed difference: while cross-sectional data is useful for establishing an association and associations are probably true, causation is not something that can be established on the basis of cross-sectional data.

Gaining access to disciplinary records within the ZRP, if at all possible, is likely to be difficult and analysis of records obtained is likely to be limited to publicly-available information which may not give a complete picture of accountability mechanisms and outcomes. ZRP officers may also be reluctant to openly discuss conditions within the organization, even anonymously.

Albeit generalizable to other urban regions, the findings of this study are constrained by issues of external validity and may not be applicable to other provinces outside Harare. The political clout of police officers, budget constraints, or public awareness of their rights, among other phenomena studied in this research, may not apply elsewhere.

Finally, social desirability bias is a well-known potential threat to research investigating politically sensitive subjects. Respondents may under-report negative experiences or give more moderate evaluations than they would otherwise due to the threat of retaliation for criticizing institutions or superiors. Lastly, all perception-based data in this study reflect respondents' perceptions of institutional behavior and not verified facts. The gap between perception and objective documentation of misconduct/interference should be kept in mind when considering the results. Several steps were taken in this study to avoid this type of bias. First, there were no identifying marks on the questionnaires, and interview participants were assigned codes; audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews were stored securely and only the researcher and research supervisor had access to them.

ZRP personnel and oversight players had the liberty to choose neutral or secret venues, outside of their place of work, where colleagues or superiors could not know that they had volunteered to take part in the research and, thus, be discouraged from speaking candidly to avoid institutional reprisal. The interviewees were at liberty to withdraw

from the research at any stage, without any negative implications. They were free to refuse to respond to certain inquiries. In part, these design features reduce social desirability bias, which the less methodologically refined of the citizen survey is sometimes prone to. Triangulation between the three types of data collection the citizen survey, qualitative interviews and documentary analysis is the backbone of minimizing such bias. The processes of corroborating evidence collected independently in each of the three strands create additional checks against social desirability that no one strategy can accomplish alone.

1.11 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter has outlined the context of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, importance, assumptions, scope and limitations. Chapter Two reviews the academic literature and sets forth the integrated theoretical framework based on four theories: Accountability Theory, Institutional Theory, Procedural Justice Theory, and the Human Rights-Based Approach. It presents the conceptual framework. Chapter Three describes the convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design, sampling strategy, data collection instruments and process, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the findings of the citizen survey, qualitative interviews, and documentary analysis, followed by a converged analysis of the three data collection methods. Chapter Five provides discussion and a consideration of the theoretical and empirical implications of the findings, followed by conclusions, policy implications, contributions and limitations, and a final conclusion.

1.12 Chapter Summary

The historical background of the ZRP and the evolution of policing in Zimbabwe from post-independence through to the political turbulence of the 2000s and the

constitutional amendment of 2013, together with the enduring nature of these concerns in Zimbabwean history, have been established in this chapter. This is supported by the finding that in the past five years, only 412 complaints have been registered, fewer than 10% have proceeded to hearing, and none have led to a prosecution.

The accountability gap may be due to structural institutional weakness, political interference or a combination of both. The objectives, research questions and hypotheses of this study will outline the research framework. Section 1.6 provides definitions of key constructs and measures that will be used throughout the study to clarify the concepts analyzed. Chapter Two surveys the theoretical and empirical literature on which this analysis is built.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Following a review of the existing literature on police oversight and human rights standards at the international, African regional and national levels in Zimbabwe, the chapter then outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the analysis, broken down by the overarching research question addressed in the thesis: under what conditions do police oversight mechanisms produce accountability, and what prevents them from doing so? The chapter also discusses theory and research data that informed the study. It identifies gaps that the current study fills and concludes with a theoretical framework outlining the associations between key study variables.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the part of the thesis where the theory or theories that form the basis of the research are defined and explained. The theoretical framework is to some extent the lens through which the research problem, research questions and findings are read and interpreted (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The study identifies four complementary theoretical frameworks, namely, the Accountability Theory, the

Institutional Theory, the Procedural Justice Theory, and the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). Each reveals a different aspect of the oversight problem, and together they offer a more complete analysis than any one theory on its own would.

2.2.1 Accountability Theory

Out of the three theories, Accountability Theory is the one most closely related to the subject matter. According to Bovens (2007, p. 450), accountability is a relationship in which an actor is obliged to explain and justify its conduct to a forum that can pose questions, pass judgment, and impose sanctions. It entails three different elements: answerability (an obligation to report and explain), justification (the capacity for scrutiny), and consequences (the authority to impose sanctions or demand remedial action).

Applied to police accountability, this means that the researcher is able to identify exactly where the system is failing. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission can accept complaints that meet the answerability requirement, but cannot compel the ZRP to act on its recommendations, and hence the third requirement is not satisfied. As Alemika (2021) puts it, this is procedural accountability without substance: accountability in form only.

A further problem raised by Accountability Theory is whether internal or external mechanisms work better. While internal mechanisms have the advantage of institutional knowledge and immediacy, their disadvantage is the pressure for solidarity described by Goldsmith (2005) as the 'blue wall of silence'. External entities, by definition, are not exposed to the pressure of loyalty. Their disadvantage is that no sanctions can be applied. As Walker (2020) argues, the important distinction is whether enforcement authority is meaningful, rather than whether the enforcement mechanism is internal or external to the mechanism.

However, accountability theory does have limitations in this context. Bovens' (2007) model was originally developed with Western democracies' institutional frameworks in mind, where forum actors truly have coercive authority over stakeholders. It does not fully capture scenarios in which accountability forums have political authority subordinate to the actors they are charged with overseeing, as is the case for many accountability institutions in Zimbabwe. The framework also tends to implicitly assume some degree of stability and formality in the relationship between actors and forums, while in post-colonial African states these relationships can be fluid, contested and informally renegotiated. When applying the framework, it must nevertheless be understood that even if the three dimensions of answerability, justification and consequence are present, substantive accountability may not be achieved, which the concept of procedural accountability without substance (Alemika, 2021) can help conceptualize and which is not explicitly addressed by the framework.

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory (Scott, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) explains how an organisation might adopt formal structures which do not lead to a change in organizational behavior. An organization is pressured by its environment to appear legitimate. This means adopting the right committees, reporting arrangements and formal policies, irrespective of what happens in practice. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) use the term isomorphism to indicate that similar pressures generate similar structures even when those structures are not efficient in their own right.

This tendency for constitutions and constitutions to be drafted in a way that promises reform but elides substantive police reform is visible elsewhere in Africa: Scott (2014) describes this phenomenon in the field of policing as a kind of 'decoupling' between

formal structure and behavior. And while a police oversight commission might gazette, receive complaints, produce annual reports, and issue recommendations, all of which can then be framed as oversight achievements, the police on the ground often act with effective impunity.

However, from an Institutional Theory perspective, this issue begs a question that is addressed under Hypothesis 3: do the omissions in supervision in the Harare Metropolitan Province reflect a failure of institutional design, or of the political context in which sufficient institutions must operate?

However Institutional Theory is not without criticism as isomorphism and decoupling can be used to deterministically explain institutional failure where certain structural conditions make it impossible for institutions to change and so fail. This may understate the importance of agency the choices made by individual officials, civil society actors, or political leaders that can disrupt or accelerate institutional change (Scott, 2014) and the theory can also underemphasize internal sources of organizational change that are not externally driven, including the professionalization of staff, changes in organizational culture, or international training programs that affect individual officers' norms. For the purposes of this study, Institutional Theory is regarded as an analytical framework that explains the underlying mechanisms leading to decoupling rather than a theory predicting a decoupling.

2.2.3 Procedural Justice Theory

Procedural Justice Theory (Tyler, 2006) states that the way policing is done is directly related to the citizens' perception of and trust in the police. Tyler (2006) argues that citizens will obey the law and cooperate with the police, not because they are afraid of the authority, but because they are treated fairly. Follow-up research identified four conditions that appear to affect perceptions of procedural justice: opportunities to

speak to police; treatment that is fair and non-discriminatory; polite treatment by police; and treatment intended to help the public.

Second, when monitoring mechanisms work, people conceive of the police as accountable to rules designed to protect citizens. And finally, when accountability is denied and impunity is the norm, people tend to view the procedural quality of police conduct as illegitimate and they lose their trust and confidence in police. According to Sunshine and Tyler (2003), procedural justice outlook predicts police legitimacy more strongly than crime statistics or detection rates.

However, closer to Zimbabwe, Tankebe (2013) found in Ghana that procedural justice predicted police legitimacy, but instrumental concerns (i.e., whether the police actually protect people) matter independently of respect or procedural justice. In South Africa, Bradford et al. (2014) find that historical police violence has generated complex relations between different social groups and police legitimacy. The implication is that Tyler's theory can apply in Africa, as in Zimbabwe, where confidence in public institutions has been low after 2000, but national conditions must be considered.

A limitation of Procedural Justice Theory is it overemphasizes legitimacy possibly neglecting material conditions (poverty, geographic marginalization, fear of violence) that generate different relationships between police and marginalized communities. In underprivileged communities like the peri-urban town of Epworth and the outer district of Chitungwiza, procedural justice may not be a priority amongst citizens who are unable to access formal complaint channels. Tyler's model assumes that policing contexts are relatively stable, and that experiences in these contexts continue to define people's perceptions of procedural fairness over time. These assumptions may not hold in the same way in Zimbabwe, given the variation in police conduct over electoral cycles.

2.2.4 Human Rights-Based Approach

The HRBA framework, which this study uses to assess the performance of oversight institutions, is detailed in the UNDP (2012). It sees state institutions as having obligations beyond merely refraining from infringing rights; they must also protect, respect and fulfill human rights. Rather, they have the responsibility to realize rights, based on five key principles: participation; accountability; non-discrimination; transparency; and the rule of law.

In applying the HRBA principle to police accountability, the focus is shifted from reactive models (which are satisfied after the fact by responding to complaints following an HR violation) to proactive models (which seek to avoid HR violations through pre-emptive approaches such as the introduction of training, surveillance and an organizational culture that makes the respect of HRs a requirement for the efficient performance of policing and law enforcement).

A major limitation of the HRBA as an analytical framework is that, as a prescriptive normative framework, it tells us what state institutions should be doing without telling us much about why, in practice, they are not doing it and what conditions would be needed for rights-based policy and program norms to be adopted. This normativity is precisely what makes the HRBA a useful evaluative framework rather than a causal theory. The reasons are in part that the HRBA assumes a commitment to rights on the part of states that we cannot take for granted in politically contestable contexts. However, in the context of the institutional and political challenges facing Zimbabwe, such a level of accountability, at least in practice, is not readily achievable.

2.2.5 The Four Frameworks Integrated

Accountability Theory identifies what is expected of oversight and its limits. Institutional Theory explains the ineffectiveness of formally appropriate oversight mechanisms within the political constraints of a state. Procedural Justice Theory links oversight effectiveness with public confidence in police. The HRBA is the rights-based standard against which oversight is measured. It is from these propositions that the main assumption to be tested by this study has been derived. The assumption in question is as follows: human rights compliance within the ZRP in Harare Metropolitan Province depends on the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms, which depends on their design and independence, which in turn depends on political interference, resources and public awareness.

It is important to keep in mind that the four theoretical frameworks are not intended to be dealt with separately, but should be understood as a multi-layered and mutually complementary analytical structure. Each theory accounts for different aspects of the phenomenon. Accountability Theory built around formal democratic institutions, and drawing on prescripts of answerability, justification, and consequences, as a matter of fact, can identify where accountability mechanisms break down. But it is not enough to explain why, even in sufficiently high-functioning democratic contexts, accountability institutions seem to fail in triggering consequences. Institutional Theory thus seems to fill this gap: the concepts of isomorphism and decoupling explain why institutions even adopt the external form of accountability without the operational substance. However, this theory does not explain what citizens experience when interacting with police officers. It also does not offer an indicator of police performance.

Thus, Procedural Justice Theory fills in the experiential gap by theorizing how police legitimacy (or lack thereof) affects public trust in, and cooperation with, the police. However, it is largely descriptive of the citizen-police relationship and does not consider how government oversight institutions should be structured. The HRBA thus

closes the normative gap left by the three previously discussed perspectives, because it provides what is necessarily a rights-based account of the requirements and expectations of oversight institutions, although it fails to explain why oversight institutions do not live up to their requirements, or when they do meet their (human rights) obligations.

Since all of the theories have implications for research design, the four theoretical models are productively, analytically related. Accountability Theory, in particular, provides the theoretical framework for the documentary analysis. The three-part taxonomy of answerability, justification and consequences is the framework used here to analyze the ZHRC complaint and recommendation files as well as successful prosecutions (see Section 4.3). However, the Institutional Theory framework was only applicable to the qualitative element in so far as the concepts of decoupling and isomorphism helped sensitize the thematic analysis carried out on the qualitative element, as indicated in Section 4.7 on political capture and nominal independence.

Procedural Justice Theory supports the procedural fairness and public trust subscales of the survey of section 4.4 and Hypothesis 2. Finally, the HRBA is used as the yardstick for the policy recommendations in section 5.4, which are designed to help move policy responses to the issues identified from a reactive approach to alleged rights violations through complaints to a proactive approach to rights protection. In this context, the combined framework should not be seen merely as a synthesized version of the four individual frameworks. Rather, it divides the explanatory/evaluative role of the framework between the four theories in a way that the individual frameworks cannot.

2.3 Empirical Review of Related Literature

An empirical review is the evaluation of past research that has produced data-focused findings on a particular topic, seeking to ascertain what is known, how this knowledge came into being, and how the present study fits into this context (Hofstee, 2006).

2.3.1 Police Accountability in Established Democracies

The existing literature on policing accountability tends to focus on the experiences of Western Europe and North America, where civilian oversight developed mainly as a tool of policing reform from the 1960s. In the UK, the Police Complaints Board, established in 1977, was one of the earliest civilian oversight bodies for policing, but it was widely criticized for lacking investigative powers and for relying on police to investigate themselves (Goldsmith, 2015). Its successor, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), created in 2018, attempted to create a more radical model in which independent investigations were allowed without police involvement in the most serious cases (Walker, 2020).

On the most developed systems, researchers notice that complaints handling is more transparent and the public is more aware of accountability mechanisms. Walker (2020) observes that even the most developed accountability systems show tension between investigations and prosecution outcomes. Although unlawfulness has been identified in IOPC investigations, it is difficult to prosecute officers. For example, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in England and Wales has historically applied a high threshold for prosecutions of officers, and many cases referred to the CPS for consideration by the IOPC in England and Wales do not proceed to prosecution. This prosecutorial gap appears, in some form, in virtually every oversight system we examined (Goldsmith, 2015).

The lesson here is that, for police oversight to be successful, there needs to be not only an independent mechanism for investigation, but also a viable prosecutorial mechanism, and police leadership willing to support and participate in the process of accountability (Walker, 2020; Bayley, 2006).

2.3.2 Police Oversight in the African Context

Although there are lessons to be learned, the policing sector of most African countries bears similarities to that of Zimbabwe with similar colonial legacies. Police were designed for social control with security sectors historically more politicized in service of ruling parties than the public (Alemika, 2021; Maringira, 2017). Reforms in Africa have produced a wide range of institutional innovations, albeit with mixed outcomes. The most wide-ranging case studies are in South Africa, where the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), reconstituted under the IPID Act of 2011, has improved the registration of complaints and the quality of investigation in non-sensitive areas. Despite this, as Bruce (2018) has noted, the under-resourcing, reliance on the police for evidence, and the refusal of the Minister of Police to implement recommendations without giving a reason, show that the IPID shows both what independent oversight can achieve, and its limits, in the absence of political will.

IPOA was established in Kenya in 2011, following a broadly similar pattern. According to Mutonyi in 2020, IPOA has had some success over its first ten years in increasing complainant visibility and public knowledge, but not in increasing prosecution, especially for ethnic or electoral violence. Mutonyi (2020) considers that the IPOA has made greater strides than its predecessors but has not changed the culture of impunity within the Kenya Police Service.

In a general study of the matter, Olanrewaju (2020) finds that in Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone disparate executive control has diminished the oversight agencies through budget-dependence, limited executive enforceability, selective enforcement (prosecuting low-ranking officers, but not politically sensitive cases), and selective complaint rejection. For Alemika (2021), the result is that the oversight agencies are performing 'decorative accountability': fulfilling the formal administrative components of accountability, but not producing the disciplinary sanctions, the prosecutions, and the behavior change that would define real accountability.

Two debates that are at the forefront of the study of African literature are particularly relevant for our purposes here: one concerns the importance of institutional design. While Bruce (2018) argues that well-designed independent institutions can add value during polarizing political times, Alemika (2021) argues that structural political constraints will defeat good design. This paper tests these competing perspectives with empirical analysis. The second debate is about civil society. According to Newham and Faull (2011:4), the CSOs in many African countries have partially offset the shortcomings of formal oversight mechanisms through litigation, documentation, and advocacy. In Zimbabwe, organizations such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Zimbabwe Peace Project have already undertaken this role, documenting ZRP abuses when the state has not, so in this study, civil society is also considered as one of the five oversight mechanisms because civil society serves an important accountability function.

2.3.3 Police Oversight in Zimbabwe

With the only exception of Sachikonye (2018), whose historical account has the most complete and clear rendering of the progressive politicization of the ZRP from the early 1980s until the crisis of 2000-2008, literature on police accountability in Zimbabwe is sparse and fragmented. According to Sachikonye, however, the transformation of the ZRP into a partisan tool was structural, a choice made by decision-makers at the highest political levels to use the police to secure their political survival, and that this damaged the institution in a way not addressed by constitutional changes in 2013. Maringira and Gibson (2019) provide a sociological account of police organizational culture going back to the crisis years.

Since 2013, the literature has shifted focus to the disjuncture between constitutional reform and implementation. Muzondidya (2020) finds evidence of partisan policing in the context of the 2018 elections, where ZRP officers were deployed to disadvantage supporters of opposition parties in a continuation from the previous decade.

Chikowore also identifies three institutional factors that have crippled the ZHRC: that it is not sufficiently funded by the constitutional allocation, that the police are not legally required to follow its recommendations and that the ZHRC has an institutional culture of ambivalence when responding to the security sector. She concludes that the ZHRC is not designed to fail but is under-resourced and politically constrained.

According to Moyo (2021), the structural problem is the pervasive influence of the executive on the security sector. Constitutional provisions cannot, on their own, prevent political patronage in the appointment of senior ZRP officers, political guidance when responding to politically sensitive law and order issues, or selective protection of accused officers from facing punitive measures. This discussion has direct implications for Hypothesis 3, and one major gap in previous literature is the lack of province-level empirical analysis. All studies undertaken thus far are national-level studies, not addressing the provincial context, not taking into account the fact that the oversight of police accountability will differ depending on the political environment, the degree of concentration of civil society and the general situational context, all of which differ widely across Zimbabwe's provinces.

Also, though, there are criticisms of the generally negative literature reviewed above, rejecting the tendency to overstate the failure of oversight in post-colonial African states. Kyed (2017) has also cautioned that a focus on the failure of oversight at the institutional level in studies of African police reform can cause researchers to overlook the small but genuine advancements that have been made. Community-based accountability interventions and grassroots-level socialization of officers have produced modest improvements in police behavior. The opinions of some urban Kenyans have shown modest improvement in police behavior following civilian oversight campaigns (Ruteere & Pommerolle, 2003), but there is considerable variability across and within policing environments in Africa. A more general theoretical critique, presented by Prempeh (2008), questions the validity of applying exacting standards from consolidated democracies to newly liberalized or democratized states, thus treating partial progress as total failure. Though these

perspectives do not call into question the substantive research findings of accountability failure in Zimbabwe, they do suggest that the evidence is not automatically deterministic and that prospects for reform (albeit limited so far) have not been entirely written off.

2.4 Identified Research Gaps

In research, a research gap is a problem or area of a field that has not been explored in depth, or has only been explored under a different set of conditions (Miles, 2017).

On the basis of the foregoing review it is possible to identify three main gaps.

This is partly because there is little empirical work on police oversight at the province level in Zimbabwe and the existing literature while useful does not explain how the institutional, resource and political dynamics of police oversight in Harare Metropolitan Province specifically play out.

Second, the existing body of literature on police accountability in Zimbabwe has largely considered aspects of the problem in isolation, with studies adopting institutional frameworks, or merely applying political science accounts that view the executive as the dominant institution. This study adopts four different theoretical frameworks to analyze police accountability.

Third, while qualitative and documentary research have been predominant in Zimbabwe, few studies have surveyed citizens, and little evidence exists on citizens' views on the effectiveness of oversight institutions, their awareness of complaints processes, or their confidence in the police. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining citizen survey data with qualitative interview and documentary evidence to tackle this issue.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a visual or written product that seeks to explain by depicting the key variables, factors, and presumed relationships between them that a researcher may envision in trying to make sense of the phenomenon being studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2.5.1 Overview

The conceptual framework translates the above theoretical propositions into the independent, dependent and moderating variables of the empirical analysis. The independent variables are five oversight mechanisms. The dependent variable is the human rights compliance of the ZRP, and the moderating variables are political interference, institutional capacity and public awareness, which are hypothesized to moderate the relationship between oversight and police compliance.

Furthermore, the relationship between each of these oversight mechanisms is not assumed to be linear and separate. The civil society documentation mechanism may have the effect of increasing the number of individual complaints sent to the ZHRC. Parliamentary oversight may serve to legitimize the role of civil society by using civil society documentation in its hearings. It is likely that the moderating variables are also correlated, such as political interference possibly worsening resource deprivation as the police institution is explicitly targeted by budget cuts for threatening the interests of the executive. Moreover, a low level of public awareness may reduce reputational pressure on the police to comply. The framework should, however, be understood as a system of relationships that mutually influence each other, rather than a simple chain of causation. An analysis of these relationships in practice in Harare Metropolitan Province appears in Chapter Four as an analysis and integration of the two strands of data above.

2.5.2 Independent Variables: Oversight Mechanisms

These are the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), Parliamentary Portfolio Committees, internal policing mechanisms within the ZRP, the judiciary and courts, and the civil society organisations. Each of these has been analyzed based on their institutional

independence, legal powers, resources, transparency and their power to compel compliance. These assessment criteria are drawn from the Bovens (2007) accountability framework and the institutional design criteria found in the comparative African literature (Bruce, 2018; Alemika, 2021).

Institutional independence is measured in terms of perceived threats of political interference presented in a set of survey items for each mechanism. Legal powers and enforcement capacity are derived from governing legislation. Transparency is analyzed through publicly available information in annual reports and resource adequacy is measured using interview data and information on budget allocations.

2.5.3 Dependent Variable: Human Rights Compliance

The extent to which ZRP officers in Harare Metropolitan Province (HMP) protect and respect citizens' constitutional rights is measured by four indicators: ZHRC complaints made and disciplinary actions taken by ZRP (quantitative, documentary); citizen ratings of ZRP compliance with procedural justice (survey); citizen trust in ZRP (survey); and court opinions on ZRP member conduct (quantitative, documentary).

2.5.4 Moderating Variables

Political Interference. Executive interference or political pressure on oversight is expected to weaken the oversight-compliance relationship. A six-item citizen survey measure and interview questions will be used to assess the perceived type and extent of political pressure experienced by oversight officials and ZRP officers.

Institutional Capacity gauges the funding, staffing and technical expertise to strengthen the relationship when appropriate. It is assessed through interview data with oversight officials and an analysis of budget allocations.

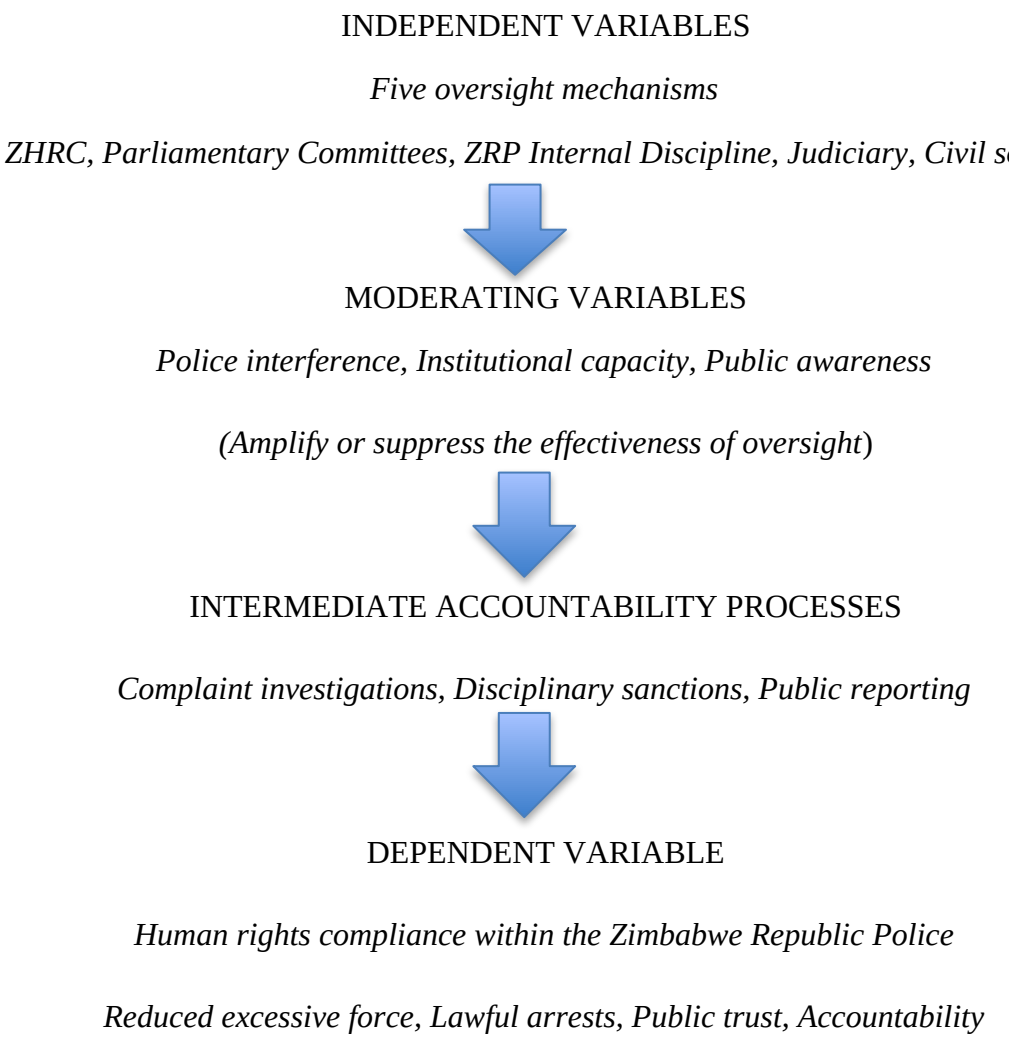
Public awareness, defined as citizens' awareness of how to file a complaint and their confidence in oversight institutions, is expected to moderate oversight effectiveness by

affecting the volume of complaints made and the reputational pressure on the police to cooperate with oversight. It is measured by Section B of the citizen questionnaire.

2.5.5 Conceptual Framework Diagram

Figure 2.1 below presents the conceptual framework diagrammatically, showing the proposed direction of relationships between variables.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's own construction, based on Bovens (2007), Scott (2014), Tyler (2006), and the HRBA.

The framework proposes that oversight mechanisms shape human rights compliance by conducting intermediate accountability processes that investigate complaints, impose disciplinary sanctions, and ease public reporting. This central relationship faces political interference that moderates it, while institutional capacity and public awareness also shape it, each of which can either improve or obstruct the effectiveness of the accountability chain. Political interference particularly influences analytical interest as the historical patterns of executive influence over the ZRP, which Section 2.3.3 documents, indicate.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has precisely reviewed both the theoretical and the empirical literature concerning police oversight as well as human rights compliance within the various levels of global, African, and Zimbabwean contexts. Four theoretical frameworks introduce Accountability Theory, Institutional Theory, Procedural Justice Theory, and the Human Rights-Based Approach. Integration into a unified system has occurred. The empirical review has thoroughly traced various oversight models that come from established democracies through the important African reform experiences observed in South Africa, Kenya, and West Africa. It also relates these findings to the context of Zimbabwe, identifying three research gaps: the absence of province-level empirical research; theoretical fragmentation in the Zimbabwean literature; and a lack of mixed-methods research incorporating the perspectives of citizens.

The conceptual framework in Section 2.5 transforms these theoretical propositions into measurable relationships. It offers the analytical framework for the data gathering alongside analysis methods detailed in Chapter Three. The five oversight mechanisms function as independent variables, while human rights compliance functions as the dependent variable, and political interference, institutional capacity, along with public awareness moderate the results.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the researchers conducted the study by employing the methods. It effectively justifies and thoroughly provides a detailed description of the research philosophy, the research design, the target population, the sampling strategy, the data collection instruments, the data analysis techniques, along with the measures that have been implemented to ensure validity, reliability, and ethical compliance. The chapter adheres to the principle that the nature of the research questions must guide methodological choices rather than being constrained by a commitment to a particular methodological tradition.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy consists of the beliefs and assumptions about how researchers create knowledge, including views on the nature of reality, what makes researchers regard knowledge as acceptable, and how values shape the research process (Saunders et al., 2019).

The study adopts a pragmatist philosophical stance that is consistent with the increasingly recognized consensus in mixed-methods research, which holds that philosophical foundations must be determined by what is necessary for answering the research questions rather than by strict adherence to a single epistemological doctrine of (Creswell, 2014; Morgan, 2007). Pragmatism holds that knowledge claims are to be evaluated in terms of their practical utility and their capacity to illuminate the phenomena under investigation, and that the epistemological assumptions which underlie both quantitative and qualitative research are not fundamentally incompatible but are instead complementary perspectives on complex social realities (Creswell, 2014). This study manages the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods through a systematic convergent parallel design in which researchers rigorously conduct each strand according to its own methodological conventions, and they integrate at the level of interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.3 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall plan or blueprint that guides the collection of, measurement, and analysis of data for specifying the procedures necessary to obtain the information needed to address the research problem (Kothari & Garg, 2014) . The study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design, characterized by the concurrent collection and examination of quantitative and qualitative data, succeeded by the integration of results during the interpretive stage of the process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The case study element restricts the inquiry to Harare Metropolitan Province as a specific geographical, institutional, and political unit. This restriction aligns with Yin's (2018) definition of conducting a case study as an empirical inquiry into a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context.

The quantitative strand answers Research Questions 2, 3, and 4, generating contextually grounded data that relates to citizens' perceptions of effective oversight, their awareness of complaint mechanisms, and their trust in policing institutions. The survey presents key findings that researchers can subsequently generalize to the broader urban population of the Harare Metropolitan Province from which the sample clearly derives. Researchers should not apply these results to Zimbabwe as a whole because policing dynamics and civil society density vary considerably among provinces. The qualitative component effectively tackles Research Questions 1, 3, as well as 5, producing contextually rooted with detailed descriptions of how oversight mechanisms operate in practice. Harare Metropolitan Province gets chosen due to its high population density, engages in active political activity, while exhibits the high visibility of ZRP operations characteristics that generate a particularly information-rich setting for examining oversight dynamics.

3.4 Target Population

Table 3.1

Target Population

Category	Description	Estimated Size
Citizens	Residents of Harare Central, Chitungwiza, and Epworth aged 18 and above	400 respondents
ZRP Officers	Officers stationed in Harare Metropolitan Province with at least one year of service	50 officers
Oversight Officials	Staff of ZHRC, Parliament, JSC, and CSOs with direct involvement in police oversight	20 officials
Total		**470 participants**

Note. Source: Author's own construction, 2025.

3.5 Sampling Strategy and Sample Size Justification

3.5.1 Stratified Random Sampling for Citizens

The citizenry will be stratified by random sampling methods. Harare Metropolitan Province will be stratified into three local area administrations, namely, Harare Central, Chitungwiza and Epworth. The purpose of the stratification will be to ensure that the socio-economic and exposure diversity of the three areas is well represented, i. e. that the sample does not become dominated by the largest or easiest stratum. The sampling is probability sampling: every household in each of the strata has a known non-zero probability of being selected. In each stratum, households will be selected by systematic random sampling of ZIMSTAT ward maps and household data, based on a sampling interval determined by the ratio of the stratum's share of the provincial population (Harare Central 44.5%, Chitungwiza 35.8%, Epworth 19.7%).

Only one adult respondent per household is selected using the Kish selection grid; if a household is vacant, or if an enumerator calls twice without finding the

respondent, the next eligible household on the enumeration list is substituted. This preserves the probability design while allowing for practical non-response handling. The stratification design also makes sure that the sample is fully representative over all strata, for example in Epworth, a town which is geographically on the edge of the area and relatively under-catered for, avoiding inner-city strata crowding Epworth out of the sample. A methodological limitation is that because of the greater homogeneity of the Epworth stratum, the design effect in this stratum is larger than that for Harare Central, and subgroup comparisons with Epworth should therefore be interpreted with appropriate caution.

3.5.2 Purposive Sampling for Officers and Officials

Purposive sampling will be used to select ZRP officers and oversight officials such that the cases that are selected are information-rich cases (individuals best positioned by virtue of their professional roles to provide substantive insights into the research questions) (Creswell, 2014). For ZRP officers, only ZRP officers that are currently posted in Harare Metropolitan Province and have served in these positions for at least 1 year will be included. Additionally, oversight officials must have direct professional responsibility for any police oversight activity and have at least one year of experience in their current position.

3.5.3 Snowball sampling of misconduct victims

A snowball sampling method will supplement the purposive sampling method to identify those who have experienced police misconduct first hand and have been complainants in police oversight. Initial participants will be identified through civil society organizations recording human rights violations.

3.5.4 Sample Size Justification

The target sample size of 400 citizens was calculated using the Cochran (1977) sample size formula for large populations, $n = Z^2 \times P (1-P) / E^2$, where $Z = 1.96$ (for 95% confidence interval), $P = 0.5$ (maximal variance), and $E = 0.05$ (5% margin of error). This led to a sample size of $n = 384$, which was then increased to 400 to account for non-response and incomplete questionnaires. For qualitative participants, a sample of 70 is justified by the principle of data saturation (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

3.6.1 Citizen Questionnaire

The citizen questionnaire was divided into three sections, the first of which was Section A which yielded demographic data and Section B which assessed knowledge of oversight mechanisms and direct interaction with the ZRP. Section C contains 25 five-point Likert-style items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) pertaining to four subscales: independence of oversight bodies (n = 6 items), effectiveness of oversight bodies to address police misconduct (n = 7), police propriety during citizen encounters (n = 6), and trust in the ZRP and policing institutions (n = 6). The questionnaire will be piloted among 20 participants, and the items will be revised based on the results of the pilot.

3.6.2 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The interviews have semi-structured interview guides for each stakeholder group. For oversight officials, the interview guides explore institutional mandate and legal framework; complaint and investigation procedures; institutional independence and political interference; adequacy of resources and capacity; output and outcome effectiveness. Each ZRP member will be interviewed about their awareness of oversight institutions, experience with internal oversight processes, experience with external oversight institutions, and factors that ease or inhibit compliance with human

rights standards. Interviews will be audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim.

3.6.3 Document Review

Data from documentary sources will comprise a review of publicly available institutional documents. These include ZHRC annual reports for the years 2018 to 2023, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee reports, selected court judgments, annual reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs and civil society watchdog reports. Templates will be developed to code data, including complaint numbers, findings of investigations, political interference, resource allocation and institutional recommendations.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making (Field, 2018).

3.7.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data will be entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics software (V.26) and verified via double-data entry. Imputation will be used to handle missing data when fewer than 10% of responses for any of the items are missing. Thus, for analysis, composite scale scores for each of the four subscales were created by calculating the mean of all items within that subscale, which is standard practice when using Likert-type scales (Field, 2018); and because none of the items needed reverse coding, as all four subscales included items worded only in positive or only in negative directions, there was no need to use reverse coding.

A series of four ancillary analyzes were conducted: (1) preliminary data analysis and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha threshold values for reliability: $\alpha \geq 0.70$); (2) descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of demographic variables; (3) a Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the bivariate association between the study variables; and (4) a multiple linear regression analysis examined the independent and joint effects of institutional independence, political interference, and institutional capacity on human rights compliance utilizing R^2, adjusted R^2, F-statistic, standardized beta coefficients, and Variance Inflation Factors.

3.7.2 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data will be analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). RTA follows Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019): (1) familiarization (reading and re-reading all transcripts in detail); (2) initial coding (data relevant to each research question will be systematically attached to a code, then a thorough list of codes will be compiled across all transcripts); (3) searching for themes (codes with similar meaning will be grouped together into themes); (4) reviewing themes (will check whether the candidate themes fit the data as a whole, as well as whether they are distinct and contain sufficient data); (5) defining and naming themes (each theme will be defined and succinctly named); and (6) writing up (the themes will be presented and supported with quotes, and integrated to form an overall narrative).

Confidentiality and systematic cross-referencing are ensured through anonymised codes (e.g., ZHRC01 refers to officials at the ZHRC; ZRP11 refers to officers at ZRP; CSO17 is a ZHRC-solicited civil society representative; and CMP21 is a complainant) . Thematic analysis is guided by a conceptual framework incorporating political interference, institutional autonomy, resource capacity and perceived legitimacy as

sensitizing concepts. It also remains open to the possibility of emergent themes. NVivo qualitative data analysis software eases the organization and coding of themes, along with audit trails.

3.7.3 Integration of Findings

This analysis follows mixed-methods conventions of convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to create an integration matrix that arrays quantitative correlational and regression results across qualitative themes of participant interviews with emphasis on convergence/divergence/complementarity of quantitative/qualitative results for each research question. The matrix provides an organizational structure for Chapter Five, allowing for systematic integration.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

3.8.1 Quantitative Validity and Reliability

We assessed content validity from feedback received from two academics and one experienced senior civil society practitioner. We relied on the literature to assess construct validity by deriving the scales from the Police Legitimacy Index (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003) and the Police Oversight Perception Scale (adapted from Alemika, 2021) . Internal reliability of each scale was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient with a criterion $\alpha \geq 0.70$. Reliability of the pilot and full data was established. The alpha coefficients for subscales were: perceived independence of oversight bodies ($\alpha = 0.79$), perceived effectiveness of handling police misconduct ($\alpha = 0.82$), procedural justice in police-citizen relationship ($\alpha = 0.76$), overall trust in ZRP and oversight bodies ($\alpha = 0.81$) and political interference ($\alpha = 0.84$). All subscales passed the threshold. Overall reliability was acceptable, as all scales exceeded the minimal level of acceptable reliability. The survey's external validity was assured by the choice of a probability-based stratified random sampling.

3.8.2 Qualitative Trustworthiness

Of Lincoln and Guba's (1985, p. 300) four criteria for trustworthiness, credibility is achieved through member checking, prolonged engagement with the data, and peer debriefing with the supervisor; transferability is improved through a thick, rich description of the research context. Dependability is established through providing an audit trail of decisions made throughout the analysis, while conformability is established through NVivo coding documentation.

3.8.3 Triangulation

Triangulation can include method triangulation (surveys, interviews, and documentary analysis), source triangulation (citizens, police officers, and oversight officials) and theoretical triangulation (applying multiple theories). Triangulation reduces specific methodological biases and creates a broader picture of the results.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are a set of norms that guide the behavior of researchers toward the subjects of their work and the research community at large, such as informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and an obligation to avoid harm (Resnik, 2020).

The study follows the ethical guidelines of the Bindura University of Science Education and the Belmont Report (1979) and written informed consent is obtained from all participants. Participants' anonymity is protected by the use of pseudonyms and suppression of identifying information to conceal their identity. Data are kept on password-protected computers to which only the principal researcher and the supervisor have access. Additional measures may be taken for participants judged to be at increased risk. The Research Ethics Committee of Bindura University of Science Education is approached for ethical clearance prior to fieldwork.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the methodology of the study. It described the rationale for the adoption of a convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design, the sampling process and sample size, data collection tools, quantitative and qualitative data analyzes, integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, and validity, reliability and ethics of the study. The empirical findings are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, interprets and discusses the empirical findings of the collected primary and secondary data. These will be discussed below. The chapter draws from a citizen survey (n = 400), a set of semi-structured interviews with Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) officers, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) officials and civil society actors (n = 70) and an analysis of institutional documents from 2018 to 2023. The chapter answers the five research questions and tests three research hypotheses. As explained in Chapter Three, the chapters have a convergent parallel mixed methods structure whereby both the quantitative and qualitative strands are presented separately before being integrated in terms of points of convergence, divergence and complementarity.

Section 4.2 describes survey respondents, and Section 4.3 directly answers Research Question 1, as well as describes the formal oversight landscape. Perceived effectiveness ratings are used in Section 4.4 to answer RQ 2, while Section 4.5 analyzes barriers to oversight in terms of structures, politics, and resources to answer RQ 3. Section 4.6 contains quantitative testing of the hypotheses, such as correlation and multiple regression analyzes, and Section 4.7 contains a reflexive thematic

analysis of interview data. Section 4.8 integrates these two strands, and Section 4.9 summarizes the chapter and previews Chapter Five.

4.2 Respondents to the survey

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the three strata of Harare Central (n = 178), Chitungwiza (n = 143), and Epworth (n = 79) in proportions corresponding to the distribution of the population in the Harare Metropolitan Province as explained in Chapter Three. All the questionnaires were returned, and those without missing items were used to compute the subscales. Seven questionnaires missing three or more responses were removed from subscale analyzes, although they were included in descriptive frequency analyzes, resulting in a sample size of 393 participants for hypothesis testing. The 100% return rate of the questionnaire was eased by the face-to-face method of administering questionnaires: trained research assistants distributed, collected questionnaires and followed up with a systematic call-back procedure for respondents who were not available on the first visit.

While this approach substantially reduced non-response, it may have introduced a degree of social desirability bias, as some respondents may have felt reluctant to leave questionnaires incomplete in the presence of field staff. This limitation is acknowledged; however, the seven excluded records confirm that respondents did exercise discretion in declining to answer items they found sensitive. Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the full sample (n = 400), showing that the sample is broadly representative of the urban, mixed-education population of Harare Metropolitan Province.

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents (n = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	218	54.5
	Female	175	43.8
	Prefer not to say	7	1.7
Age Group	18-30 years	148	37.0
	31-45 years	162	40.5
	46-60 years	74	18.5
	Over 60 years	16	4.0
Area of Residence	Harare Central	178	44.5
	Chitungwiza	143	35.8
	Epworth	79	19.7
Education Level	Primary	31	7.8
	Secondary (O-Level)	137	34.3
	Secondary (A-Level)	98	24.5
	Tertiary / University	134	33.4
Total		**400**	**100.0**

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

As Table 4.1 shows, male respondents constituted a slight majority (54.5%), with females comprising 43.8% and a small proportion declining to specify gender (1.7%). The modal age group was 31 to 45 years (40.5%), followed by 18 to 30 years (37.0%), reflecting the relatively youthful population profile of Harare Metropolitan Province. Harare Central contributed the largest share of respondents (44.5%), consistent with its higher population density. Educational attainment was distributed across secondary and tertiary levels, with only 7.8% reporting primary education. The demographic distributions are illustrated in Figures 4.1 to 4.4 below.

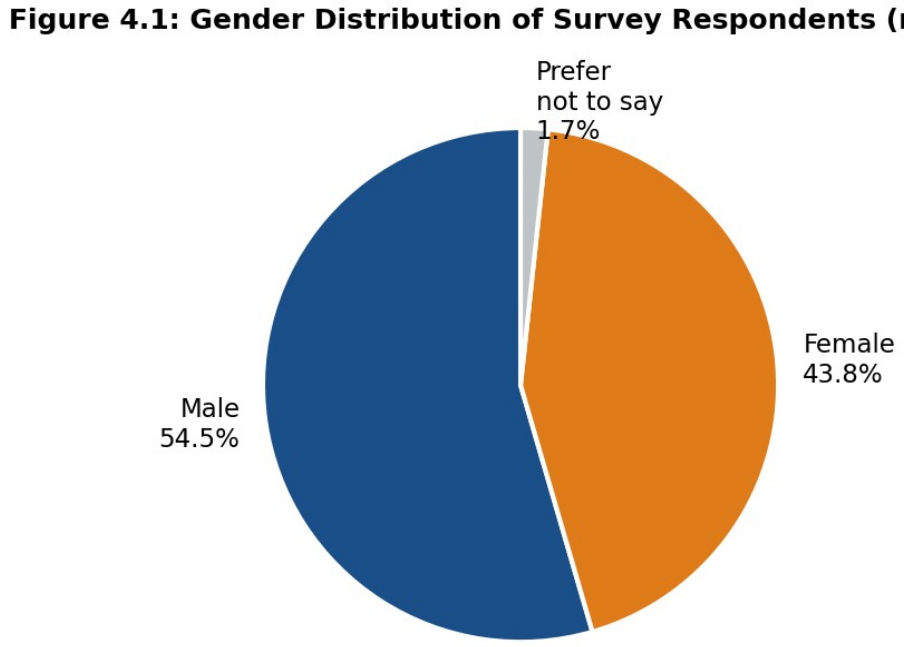


Figure 4.1. Gender Distribution of Survey Respondents (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

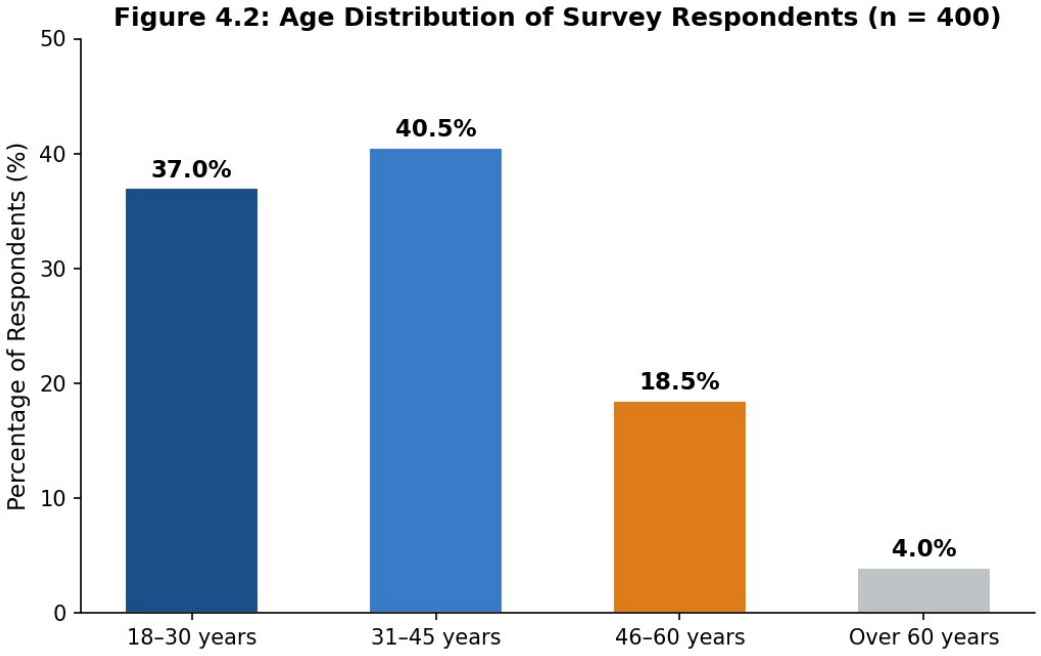


Figure 4.2. Age Distribution of Survey Respondents (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

Figure 4.3: Area of Residence of Survey Respondents (n = 400)

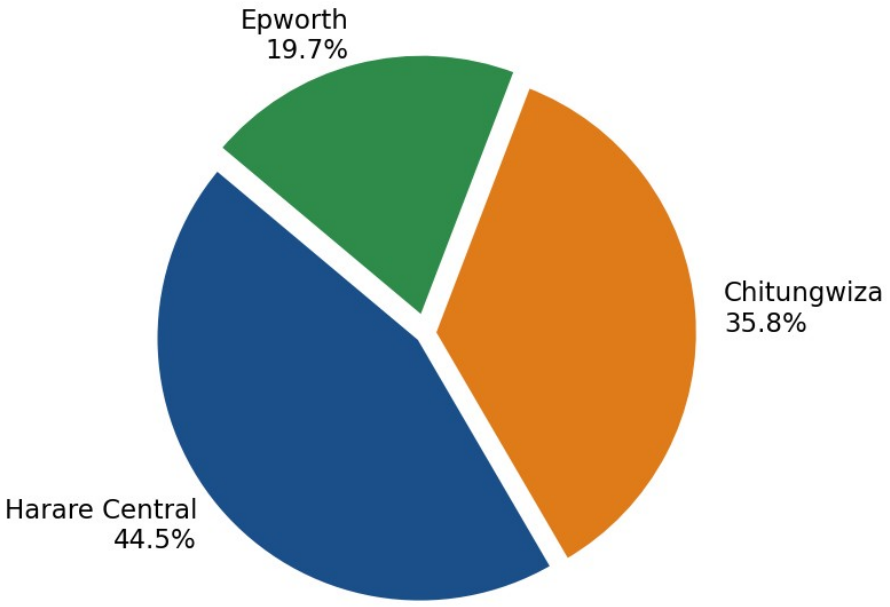


Figure 4.3. Area of Residence of Survey Respondents (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

Figure 4.4: Education Level of Survey Respondents (n = 400)

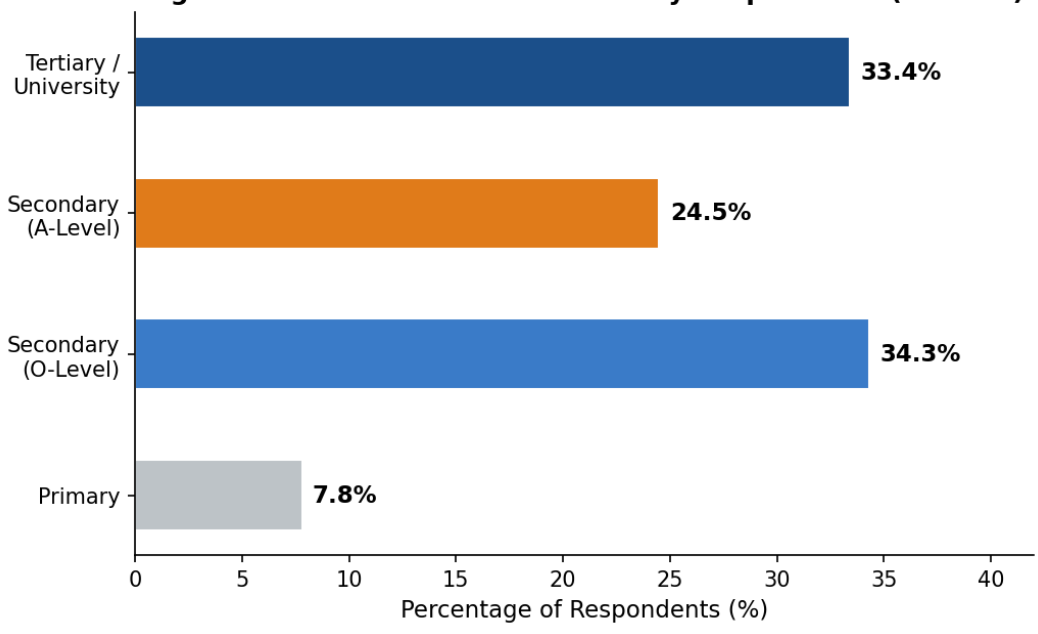


Figure 4.4. Education Level of Survey Respondents (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

4.3 Research Question 1: The Formal Landscape of Oversight Mechanisms

The first research question, which asked what oversight mechanisms formally exist to ensure human rights compliance within the ZRP in Harare Metropolitan Province, and how are they structured, mandated and resourced in law and in practice, was answered using a document analysis of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), the ZHRC Act, the Police Act (Chapter 11:10), selected Parliamentary Portfolio Committee Reports and selected court judgments. Five key oversight mechanisms were identified: the ZHRC, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees, ZRP internal disciplinary mechanisms, the judiciary and courts, and CSOs. Their formal characteristics and operational realities are examined below.

4.3.1 The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC)

An independent constitutional body, the ZHRC, established by Section 242 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), is mandated to promote, protect and enforce human rights in Zimbabwe. Apart from receiving complaints, the ZHRC has powers to investigate and hold inquiries, make recommendations and also recommend prosecution to the National Prosecuting Authority. However, the gap between the statutory powers and actual performance can be quite wide. For example, in the ZHRC Annual Report (2023) it was reported that out of the 412 complaints of alleged ZRP misconduct lodged in Harare Metropolitan Province between 2018 and 2023, 347 were lodged, 126 were investigated, 39 recommendations of formal action were made to ZRP, yet no arrests or prosecutions occurred. This pattern of attrition, shown in Figure 4.9 (section 4.6), from 412 complaints to nil prosecutions, can be accounted for by three structural obstacles.

The budget allocation to the ZHRC has always been insufficient for the ZHRC to staff its offices in the provinces at their full complement (ZHRC, 2023). Further, recommendations made by the ZHRC to the ZRP have no legal force, and the ZRP is not legally required to implement these recommendations. Third, the executive often seeks to influence the appointment of top leadership in the commission, raising

concerns about independence and autonomy. Together, these dimensions of the commission, as Chikowore (2021) puts it, create an institution that is formally powerful but operationally constrained.

4.3.2 Parliamentary Portfolio Committees

The Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services is empowered under Section 152 of the Constitution to oversee the executive, hear petitions and summon witnesses. It has held inquiries into police conduct intermittently and received reports from ministers on the state of policing. Yet documentary analysis of the committee's oversight of the ZRP from 2018 to 2023 shows that no substantial sanctions were imposed on the ZRP owing to committee oversight within the period under study, and that mechanisms for following up on committee recommendations are still underdeveloped within parliament. The prospects for effective parliamentary oversight are further hampered by a ruling party structural bias towards majority representation within parliament, which creates incentives against independent committee oversight. Moyo (2021) argues that the executive's control over the security sector is reproduced, rather than constrained, by formal institutions like parliament.

4.3.3 ZRP internal discipline system

Discipline within the ZRP is maintained internally and is defined in the Police Act (Chapter 11:10) and the ZRP Disciplinary Code. The disciplinary process begins at the station investigation level, is reviewed by a divisional board and is heard by a Police Commissioner's Tribunal if the charges are serious. The workings and outcomes of this internal process are not made public, so that disciplinary statistics according to Makumbe (2019) cannot therefore be independently verified. Documentation of investigated police misconduct in ZHRC records and interviews indicate that internal

disciplinary mechanisms mainly focus on administrative offenses, namely absenteeism and insubordination, rather than violations against the public.

4.3.4 The Judiciary and Courts

Citizens may bring cases against the ZRP for violation of their rights through the High Court, Magistrates' Court, or Constitutional Court. Analysis of selected cases in the courts and legal documents from civil society groups indicates some civil suits were awarded against the ZRP for unlawful arrest, excessive force, and unlawful arrest or detention from the period covered by this report. Despite this, ZRP officers have been subject to criminal prosecution for human rights violations, although legal costs, evidential requirements and delays mean that recourse through the courts is generally limited to those complainants receiving pro bono legal assistance from civil society legal organizations.

4.3.5 Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organizations, such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) , Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, perform some documentation, advocacy, and litigation assistance that partially backfill oversight gaps. Civil society groups reported 687 alleged cases of ZRP abuses in Harare Metropolitan Province between 2019 and 2023, far more than the number of complaints listed in the ZHRC's register, showing that many incidents were not reported. Interviews indicate that these organizations increasingly represent the sole route through which evidence of abuses by the ZRP are brought to international monitoring bodies, as local avenues for accountability are virtually non-existent.

4.4 Research Question 2: Effectiveness of Oversight Mechanisms

4.4.1 Citizen Awareness of Oversight Mechanisms

Before considering perceived effectiveness, we need to establish whether respondents know about the mechanisms. It stands to reason that respondents cannot judge the effects if they do not know about the mechanisms. Table 4.2 shows awareness of the five mechanisms for the entire sample (n = 400). Figure 4.5 shows the same data in the form of a stacked horizontal bar graph.

Table 4.2

Citizen Awareness of Police Oversight Mechanisms (n = 400)

Oversight Mechanism	Aware (n)	Unaware (n)	Awareness Rate (%)
Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC)	184	216	46.0
Parliamentary Portfolio Committees	108	292	27.0
Internal ZRP Disciplinary System	213	187	53.3
Judiciary and Courts	**267**	**133**	**66.8**
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)	152	248	38.0

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. Highest awareness highlighted.

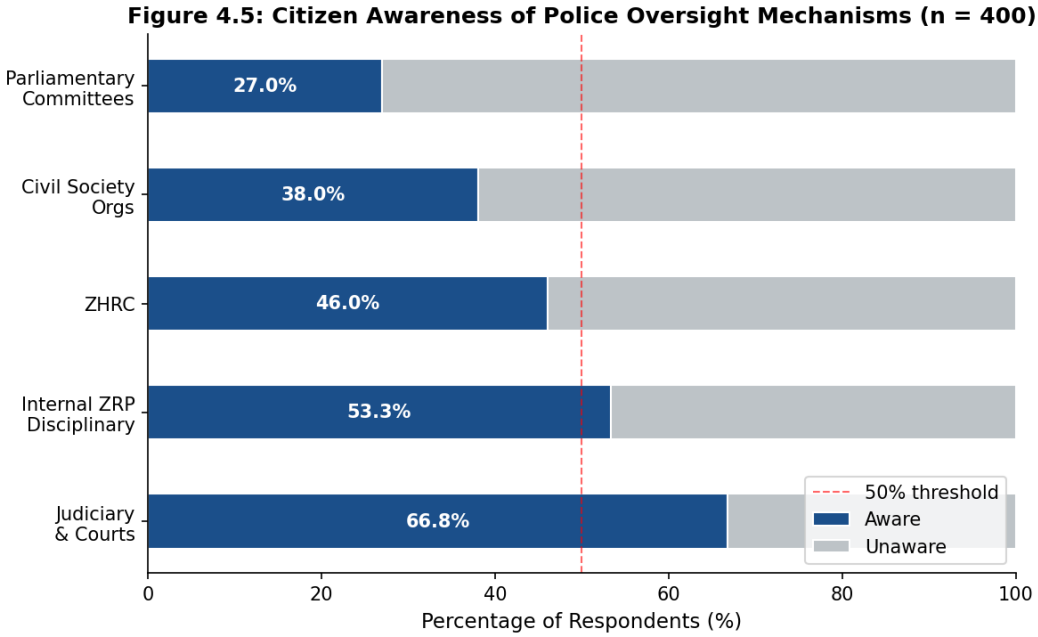


Figure 4.5. Citizen Awareness of Police Oversight Mechanisms (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

Despite the low to moderate awareness of the five mechanisms, the judiciary (66.8%) and the internal disciplinary mechanisms of the ZRP (53.3%) were the most commonly known by the citizens due to their high frequency of interaction. The low level of knowledge of ZHRC (46.0%) and Parliamentary Portfolio Committees (27.0%) is meaningful beyond mere description. Such a low level of awareness of oversight mechanisms is itself a form of accountability deficit since awareness of a complaint mechanism is an essential prerequisite to making a complaint. Thus, this finding has implications for Hypothesis 2 and the sequencing of the policy recommendations proposed in Chapter Five.

The ZHRC and Parliamentary Portfolio Committees have a very limited public outreach presence in the high density suburbs of Harare. Their offices and the few outreach programs they have are located almost entirely in the Central Business District, which is the least accessible part of Harare to residents living in Epworth and the outer fringes of Chitungwiza. Second, the small number of visible accountability

outcomes where complaints are logged but then nothing happens means there is little reputation based incentive for accessing and using this information. Third, Zimbabwe's existing public civic education regime has not been able to fill this information gap. Even if it has tried, it has been underfunded over the years and has been politicized. These conditions create a civic awareness deficit that is linked to the institutional oversight failures that we identified throughout the paper: low awareness leads to lower complaint levels, which leads to a lower degree of public scrutiny of the institutions, which leads to little responsiveness by the institutions and so on in a vicious cycle.

4.4.2 Perceived Effectiveness Ratings and Hypothesis Testing

For those respondents who indicated a mechanism existed, the survey asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of the mechanism on a five-point Likert-type scale (1=Very Ineffective, 5=Very Effective). As seen in Table 4.3, none of the mechanisms received a score above the neutral midpoint of the scale. Given this mean of below 3, none of the five mechanisms was considered effective (n = 393). A one-sample t-test on all five items tested against the scale midpoint of 3.00 showed that citizens do not believe any of the five mechanisms are effective (all $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.3

Perceived Effectiveness of Oversight Mechanisms: Mean Likert Scores (n = 393)

Oversight Mechanism	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	p-value	Interpretation
Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC)	2.31	0.88	< .01	Ineffective
Parliamentary Portfolio Committees	2.07	0.92	< .01	Ineffective

Internal ZRP Disciplinary System	2.19	0.95	< .01	Ineffective
Judiciary and Courts	2.84	0.97	< .01	Moderate
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)	3.12	1.03	< .01	Moderate
Overall Perceived Oversight Effectiveness	**2.51**	**0.75**	**< .01**	**Ineffective**

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. Scores below 2.50 = Ineffective (red); 2.50-3.49 = Moderate (green). All means significantly below midpoint of 3.00 (p < .01, one-sample t-tests).

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. Scores below 2.50 are classified as Ineffective; 2.50–3.49 as Moderate; 3.50 and above as Effective. All means are significantly below the scale midpoint of 3.00 (p < .01, one-sample t-tests).

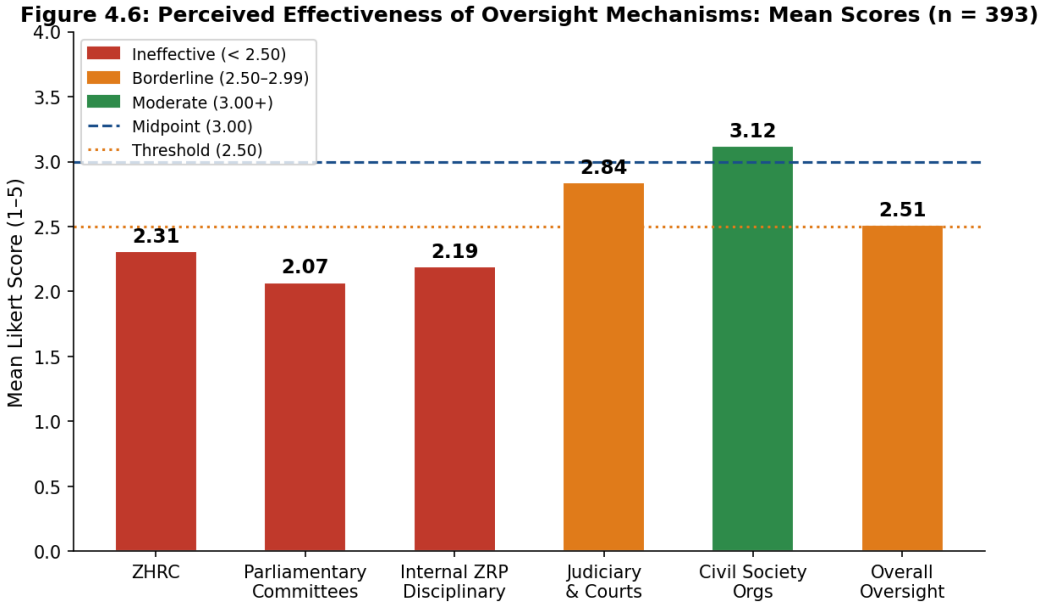


Figure 4.6. Perceived Effectiveness of Oversight Mechanisms: Mean Scores (n = 393). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

None of them rated over the scale midpoint, but close to it: civil society organizations (M = 3. 12, SD = 1.03) and the courts (M = 2.84, SD = 0.97) were almost effective, and the ZHRC (M = 2.31, SD = 0.79), the internal ZRP disciplinary system (M = 2.19, SD = 0.73) and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees (M = 2.07, SD = 0.69) ineffective. With an overall mean

effectiveness average of 2.51, aggregate oversight of the system can be considered marginally ineffective. Notably, of the different sub-groups, Epworth residents provided the lowest overall scores (M = 2.31), possibly as a result of low civil society presence or geographic inaccessibility.

The fact that civil society organisations are rated more highly than any of the constitutional state institutions including the ZHRC, has very important implications. It means that citizens in the Harare Metropolitan Province have, to some extent, withdrawn confidence in the state and delegated it to non-state actors. While this comparison is not definitive, many civil society organizations (CSOs) including the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) achieve more frequent follow-up, international reporting and suit initiation than the ZHRC, and survey data suggest that respondents perceive this relative performance gap as accurate. The governance implications of this discrepancy are serious. Democratic accountability structures, in which the non-state sector acts as a substitution for the modern, formal state, are necessarily tenuous (CSOs cannot coerce their members and are typically reliant on foreign donors and often legally constrained). Above all, the assertion that CSOs are superior is not a defense of the status quo but rather an admission that state accountability structures have not engendered public trust.

Public trust in the ZRP is used to assess how well the force respects human rights.

For the perceived performance of the ZRP as a rights-compliant institution (subscale), the mean score on the citizen survey was 2.28 (SD = 0.91). The mean score indicates low levels of confidence among the public in the adequacy of ZRP's operations with respect to citizen constitutional rights; 23.5% (n = 94) agreed or strongly agreed. In contrast, 71.0% (n = 284) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that ZRP officers treat citizens with dignity and respect when dealing with them in the policing process (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Public Trust in the ZRP as a Rights-Compliant Institution (n = 400)

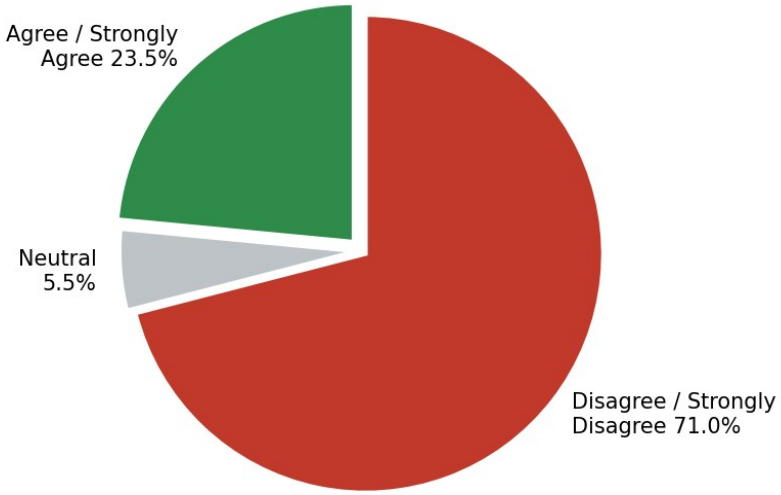


Figure 4.7. Public Trust in the ZRP as a Rights-Compliant Institution (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. Neutral category (5.5%) accounts for respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed.

4.5 Research Question 3: Barriers to Effective Oversight

Research Question 3 asked: What institutional, political, and resource-related factors most significantly constrain the effective functioning of oversight mechanisms in Harare Metropolitan Province? A dedicated questionnaire section invited respondents to select, from a pre-coded list, the barriers they considered most significant. Multiple responses were permitted. Table 4.4 shows that political interference was identified as the most significant barrier by 79.0% of respondents, while inadequate funding ranked second at 74.5%, placing both at the top of the barrier hierarchy.

Table 4.4

Perceived Barriers to Effective Oversight (n = 400, Multiple Responses Permitted)

Barrier to Effective Oversight	Cited by n	% of Respondents	Ranking
Political interference in oversight processes	**316**	**79.0**	**1st**
Inadequate funding and resources	**298**	**74.5**	**2nd**
Lack of enforcement / binding authority	**276**	**69.0**	**3rd**
Low public awareness of complaint channels	244	61.0	4th
Fear of reprisal when reporting misconduct	231	57.8	5th
Institutional solidarity / blue wall of silence	198	49.5	6th
Geographic / logistical access barriers	164	41.0	7th

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. Percentages exceed 100% as multiple responses were permitted. Top 3 barriers (red) cited by over two-thirds of respondents.

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. Percentages exceed 100% because multiple responses were permitted.

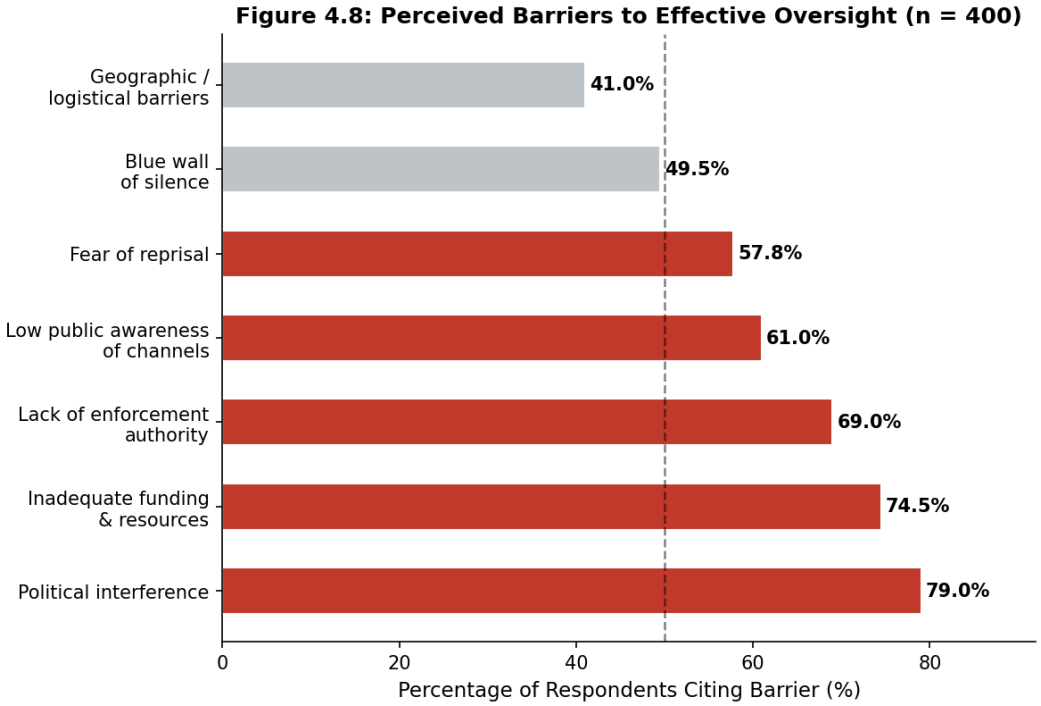


Figure 4.8. Perceived Barriers to Effective Oversight (n = 400). Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

Political interference (79.0%) was seen as the most meaningful barrier to effective implementation, followed by inadequate funding and resources (74.5%), and a lack of legally binding enforcement authority (69.0%) (Table 8). Taken together, the findings suggest that citizens attribute failures in oversight to both the design of the institutional arrangements as well as to the external political context (with each of the three barriers above cited by over two-thirds of respondents). Low public knowledge of complaint mechanisms (61.0%) and fear of retaliation (57.8%) are the next most frequently cited barriers, with implications for citizen accountability efforts.

4.6 Quantitative Hypothesis Testing: Research Questions 4 and 5

4.6.1 Regression Assumptions

Before regression analysis was carried out, four tests were applied. The residuals were checked for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test which showed that the residuals were approximately normally distributed with W = 0.987, p = .14. Multi-collinearity was tested by calculating the VIFs which were found to be between 1.43 and 2.07, which are below the cut-off value of 5.0 (Field, 2018). Levene's test of variance also indicated homoscedasticity (i.e. equal error variances) across the quartiles F = 1.24, p = .29 of the residuals. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.97, confirming that the errors were independent. In conclusion, all the assumptions of ordinary least squares estimation had been satisfied and the model was appropriate.

4.6.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlations between institutional independence, perceived political interference, public awareness, and perceived compliance with human rights were calculated prior to the regression analyzes. Table 4.5 shows that institutional independence has a positive correlation with perceived human rights compliance (r = 0.58, p < .01) while perceived political interference has a negative correlation in the strongest magnitude to perceived human rights compliance (r = -0.65, p < .01). These correlations are precisely what were hypothesized.

Table 4.5

Pearson Correlation Matrix: Key Study Variables (n = 393)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Institutional Independence	1.00			
2. Political Interference	-0.61	1.00		
3. Public Awareness	0.43	-0.37	1.00	
4. Human Rights Compliance	0.58	**-0.65**	0.41	1.00

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. p < .01 (two-tailed). Negative values indicate inverse relationships. Strongest association highlighted (r = -0.65).

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. p < .01 (two-tailed). Negative values indicate inverse relationships.

These relationships are described in the correlation matrix and they provide bivariate validation for H1, as institutional independence is positively and considerably correlated with human rights compliance ($r = 0.58$, $p < .01$). The matrix also shows that perceived political interference is the most statistically meaningful bivariate association with perceived compliance outcomes ($r = -0.65$, $p < .01$) (H3) and that perceived public awareness is positively and considerably correlated with perceived compliance ($r = 0.41$, $p < .01$) (H2). Second, we find a negative correlation between institutional independence and political interference ($r = -0.61$, $p < .01$), which suggests that institutions perceived as more politically captured are viewed as less independent.

4.6.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was computed to assess the ability of institutional independence, political interference, and public awareness to predict human rights compliance. The full multiple linear regression equation is shown in Table 4.6. The most important independent predictors of variance in human rights compliance scores are perceived political interference ($\beta = -0.48$) and institutional independence ($\beta = 0.42$), followed by public awareness about the ZHRC ($\beta = 0.24$). The ZHRC complaint attrition pattern illustrated in Section 4.3.1 is also shown in Figure 4.9. Figure 4.10 displays the standardized regression coefficients.

Table 4.6

Multiple Linear Regression: Predictors of Human Rights Compliance (n = 393)

Predictor Variable	B	B	T	p-value	95% CI

Constant	1.04	—	4.81	< .001	[0.61, 1.47]
Institutional Independence	**0.39**	**.42**	**6.74**	**< .001**	**[0.28, 0.50]**
Political Interference	**-0.44**	**-.48**	**-7.93**	**< .001**	**[-0.55, -0.33]**
Public Awareness	0.21	.24	3.86	< .001	[0.10, 0.32]

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. $R^2 = 0.61$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$; $F(3, 389) = 161.6$, $p < .001$. VIF values ranged from 1.43 to 2.07. CI = confidence interval. Green = positive predictor; Red = negative predictor.

Note. Source: Primary survey data, 2025. $R^2 = 0.61$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$; $F(3, 389) = 161.6$, $p < .001$. VIF values ranged from 1.43 to 2.07. CI = confidence interval.

Figure 4.9: ZHRC Complaint Attrition, Harare Metropolitan Province (2018–2023)

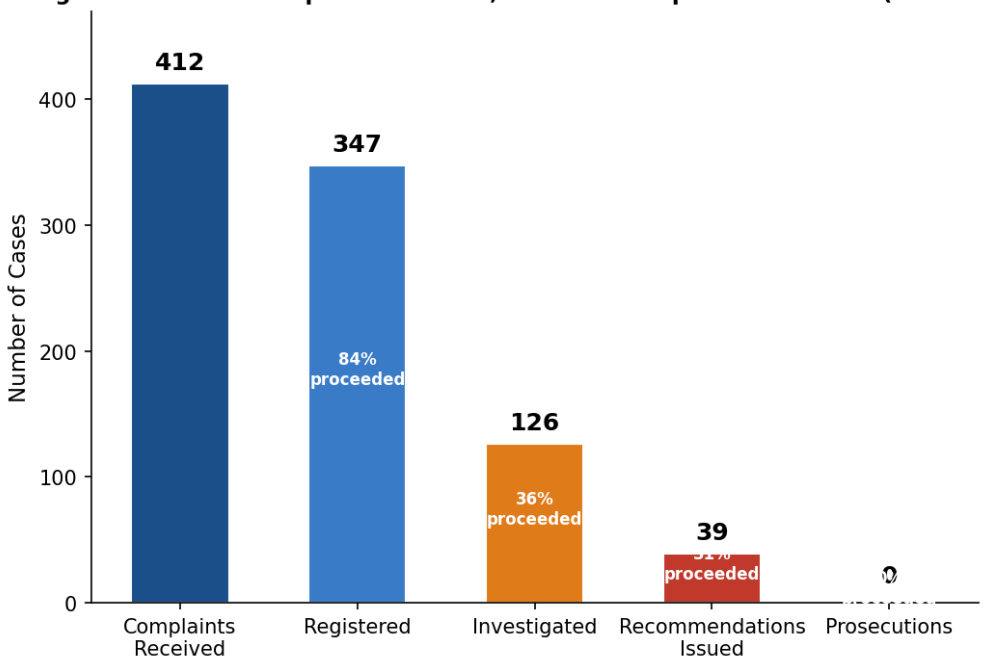


Figure 4.9. ZHRC Complaint Attrition, Harare Metropolitan Province (2018-2023). Source: ZHRC Annual Report (2023); Primary documentary analysis, 2025.

Note. Source: ZHRC Annual Report (2023); Primary documentary analysis, 2025. The complaint attrition figure silhouette seen in the above figure comes from the ZHRC Annual Report (2023). The funnel shape (based on aggregate statistics for the ZHRC's Harare Metropolitan Province office between 2018 and 2023) indicates that out of 412 complaints received, 347 were registered, 126 were investigated, 39 were

formally recommended, and 0 were prosecuted. These figures correspond to categories within ZHRC published reporting metrics; the data are drawn directly from annual report tables. There are no estimates or projections in this figure; the data are drawn directly from published ZHRC data. With the exception of the funnel graphic as a tool to better explain the attrition process, all figures are as reported. In instances where the ZHRC Annual Report does not separate out sub-provincial areas, the figures as reported by the Harare Metropolitan Province office have been used based on the available provincial totals.

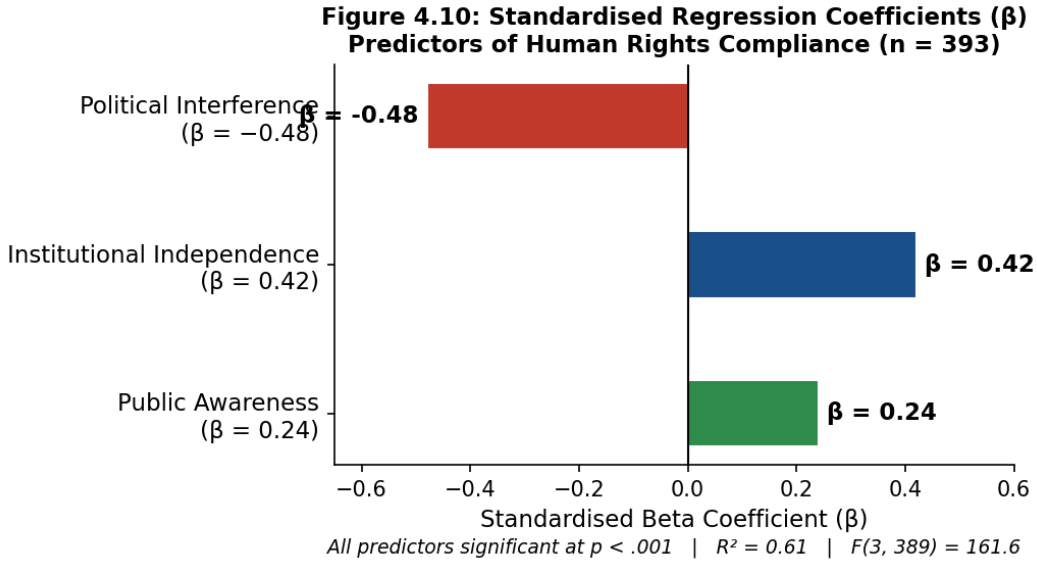


Figure 4.10. Standardized Regression Coefficients (beta): Predictors of Human Rights Compliance (n=393).

Source: Primary survey data, 2025.

The overall regression model was statistically meaningful ($F(3, 389) = 161.6$, $p < .001$) and accounted for 61% of the variance in the human rights compliance scores ($R^2 = 0.61$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$). Each of the three variables was statistically meaningful and accounted for unique variance. The results, displayed in figure 4.10, show that perceived political influence was the strongest predictor in this model ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < .001$), followed by institutional independence ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$) and public awareness ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$). Since the confidence intervals of all three estimates do not include zero, we can conclude that our estimates are accurate. Therefore, this

cross-sectional perception-based study only allows statistical correlations to be drawn between the constructs, but not cause or directionality to be conclusively established.

But the beta coefficients themselves are also substantively important. For example, the political interference coefficient ($\beta = -0.48$) means that, in our sample at least, political capture has an effect on the compliance score that is much more than either institutional design or an informed public can overcome. If this is the case, purely institutional reforms focused on re-designing oversight institutions will not lead to compliance improvements unless the political conditions that prevent institutional independence are also addressed. The positive coefficient for institutional independence ($\beta = 0.42$) suggests that even if political interference cannot be eliminated, reforms that put the independence of oversight institutions on a more secure footing (e.g., guaranteed funding and multi-stakeholder appointment procedures) can be effective. The smaller but still substantial effect size of $\beta = 0.24$ for public awareness indicates that although awareness-raising has independent value of a specific kind, it may be effective only in conjunction with the co-presence of the structural and political conditions that make answering complaints in a responsible manner possible. These effect sizes inform the priority order of reform recommendations in Chapter Five.

4.6.4 Hypothesis Testing Summary

H1: There is a statistically meaningful positive relationship between institutional independence of oversight bodies and the perceived effectiveness of their police accountability efforts.

Supported. The bivariate correlation between institutional independence and compliance was $r = 0.58$ ($p < .01$). Institutional independence was found to contribute independently and statistically considerably to the regression model ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$). H1 is therefore accepted.

H2: Greater public awareness of police oversight and complaint procedures was statistically associated with greater levels of trust in police institutions and reporting of police misconduct.

Awareness was positively associated with compliance ($r = 0.41$, $p < .01$) and contributed independently to the regression model ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$). Cross-tabulation showed that as awareness increased, trust in institutions and likelihood of complaining also increased. This is qualified by Section 4.8's qualitative evidence that awareness cannot by itself guarantee compliance when fear of reprisals is high. H2 is recognized only to the extent that it is coupled with appropriate institutional and systemic safeguards, thus making it more likely that accountability objectives will be achieved.

H3: Political interference in oversight processes has a statistically important negative effect on the capacity of oversight institutions to promote human rights compliance within the ZRP.

Supported. Perceived political interference had the largest bivariate ($r = -0.65$) and multivariate ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < .001$) negative association with perceived human rights compliance. This suggests that perceived political interference is associated with lower levels of perceived human rights compliance even after controlling for each of the variables measuring institutional design and levels of public awareness. H3 is accepted; however, because of the cross-sectional design, these relationships are perceived associations and thus, causality cannot be established.

4.7 Qualitative Findings: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

A reflexive thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews identified five major themes: nominal independence of oversight bodies, political capture of accountability processes, resource deprivation and capacity deficits, fear and institutional silence, and civil society organisations as accountability substitutes. The interviews comprised 20 with ZHRC officials and investigators (coded ZHRC01-20), 30 with

ZRP officers (coded ZRP01-30), 12 with civil society representatives (coded CSO01-12), and 8 with complainants who had made a direct complaint to an oversight body (coded CMP01-08). All interviews were conducted one-on-one, recorded, and transcribed verbatim with informed consent. Interviews lasted between 35 and 75 minutes, with an average interview time of approximately 52 minutes. A total of 247 codes were generated for the total transcripts of the first wave of coding. This data was then grouped into 18 sub-themes and then into the five themes presented below. Table 4.7 presents a summary of each theme with verbatim responses by participants.

Figure 4.11: Distribution of Interview Participants (n = 70)

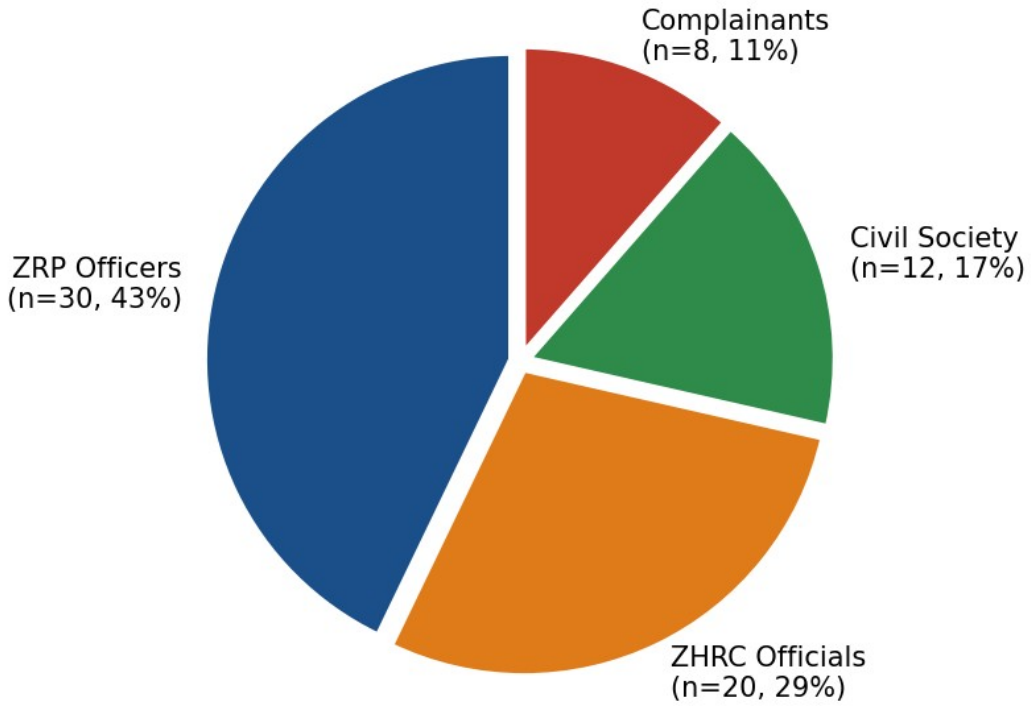


Figure 4.11. Distribution of Interview Participants by Group (n = 70). Source: Primary interview data, 2025.

Table 4.7

Summary of Qualitative Themes with Representative Quotations

Theme	Sub-themes	Representative Quotation
Nominal Independence	Formal mandate vs. operational reality; institutional decoupling	*"We exist on paper. The police know there is nothing we can do if they ignore us." (ZHRC Official, ZHRC03)*
Political Capture	Partisan direction; protected officers; file suppression	*"When the case involves connected people, the file disappears. Everyone knows which cases to leave alone." (ZRP Officer, ZRP11)*
Resource Deprivation	Budget shortfalls; transport deficits; staffing gaps	*"We cannot investigate complaints in Epworth when we have no vehicle and no fuel allocation for the month." (ZHRC Investigator, ZHRC05)*
Fear and Silence	Citizen intimidation; officer solidarity norms; chilling effect	*"I was beaten and I wanted to complain. But people told me nothing would happen and I would only get more trouble." (Complainant, CMP04)*
CSO as Accountability Substitute	Documentation role; UN reporting; formal gap-filling	*"We are doing the work that the ZHRC should be doing. We document, we report to the UN, because domestically there is no accountability." (CSO Representative, CSO07)*

Note. Source: Primary interview data, 2025. Participant codes are anonymized. Each theme is colour-coded for visual clarity.

Note. Source: Primary interview data, 2025. Participant numbers are internal codes; pseudonymity is maintained throughout.

4.7.1 Nominal Independence: The Gap Between Form and Function

Among the institutional actors, the most common finding was that mechanisms of oversight established by the constitution were effectively crippled in practice, even to

the point of weakening the independence they were supposed to guarantee: for example, ZHRC officials complained about completing investigations only to find that the police (with no obligation to explain) disregarded their recommendations. One senior ZHRC official (Participant 3) informed the authors, as a commission we can investigate, write a report, and make a recommendation, but whether anything happens after that depends entirely on whether or not the police are willing to cooperate. As Scott points out, the formal structures may be in place to confer legitimacy externally, but the actual logic of action occurs within organizations (Scott 2014).

ZRP officers who participated also confirmed that internal disciplinary processes were taken most seriously when conduct became public and was scrutinized by the media or civil society organizations. Yet, the practical result under conditions without external scrutiny is that internal accountability for police abuses is, in the words of one officer, something that gets handled quietly, if at all. In a sense, the ZRP's internal accountability processes are driven by reputational risk, a fragile and contingent basis for compliance.

Some ZHRC staff were candid about this gap, such as one investigator (ZHRC08): "We complete the investigation, we submit the report, and then we wait. We are never told what was done. Sometimes we see the same officer named again in a new complaint a year later and we know nothing changed. Another ZHRC official (ZHRC14) reflected the institutional culture produced by this lack of transparency: "People stop complaining not because there is nothing to complain about, but because they know it will not matter. We have become a paper exercise." A civil society representative (CSO03): "The ZHRC is good at receiving. It is not good at resolving. And the police know that. So the oversight has become a management tool for the government it absorbs complaints and releases the pressure without producing accountability.' In light of these experiences and the demonstrable lack of prosecutions

arising from 412 complaints, we suggest that nominal independence is not merely a structural problem but a lived organizational reality experienced by the institutions charged with delivering accountability.

4.7.2 Political Capture: The Invisible Hand in Oversight Processes

Political capture was the theme interviewees in all four groups returned to most frequently, and with most intensity. ZHRC officials, ZRP officers, civil society representatives and complainants all accepted that certain cases are effectively shielded from accountability because of the political ties of some perpetrators. The mechanism might have operated such that investigations of officers with patronage networks were reassigned to less senior investigators, quietly archived, or resulted in findings that fell below the threshold of what evidence would otherwise have warranted. This informal infrastructure of impunity is described by Moyo (2021) as 'a culture of no accountability'.

One civil society actor described parliamentary oversight as theatre: the right questions are sometimes asked in committee, but ministerial answers are rarely subjected to the sustained follow-up that would make accountability meaningful. This buttresses Mapuva's (2021) argument that parliamentary oversight of the security sector in Zimbabwe is structurally weakened by executive dominance, though here with first-person interview testimony to further illustrate the point.

4.7.3 Resource deprivation and capacity deficits

All three oversight bodies cited resource constraints, but only the ZHRC investigators provided operationally specific testimony. For example, the ZHRC repeatedly cited the ZHRC inability to conduct field investigations in Epworth and outer Chitungwiza due to chronic transport and fuel shortages as examples of complaint attrition cases that

are registered but never investigated because investigators cannot reach the communities where the violation originated. This suggests a causal mechanism to explain why Epworth residents judge oversight less effective than other neighbourhoods' but also shows how lack of resources translates political will into inequality.

Similar comments were made regarding parliamentary oversight. One respondent familiar with parliamentary committees stated that committee support secretariats, while meant to oversee the police, work with few staff and little research capacity to provide oversight of government ministerial reports, or proactively investigate reports of misconduct by the ZRP.

4.7.4 The Chilling Effect of Fear and Silence

Quantitative evidence for the chilling effect is that 57.8% of respondents in the 2015 general population survey reported fear of reprisals as a barrier to using the mechanisms. Qualitative evidence correlates with this in that citizens have experienced ZRP abuse but do not report it not due to ignorance of the mechanisms, but because they feel the process is futile or would worsen their situation. In addition to these individual experiences, participants also regularly described being informally pressured by police friends or acquaintances in their communities after reporting the police, suggesting that the deterrent effect operates through social mechanisms.

The ZRP culture was one of solidarity, in which officers would reportedly be punished socially for whistle-blowing on the misconduct of other officers. This norm, which Goldsmith (2005) calls the blue wall of silence had become a secured organizational reality within the ZRP, but it was not an abstract theoretical construct, rather something which officers described in concrete terms. This culture of impunity also

impedes external accountability, as many violations never reach the level of oversight where they can be addressed.

A strong illustration of the anxiety produced by this phenomenon was given by a complainant (CMP02) who explained, "After I went to the ZHRC, an officer came to my neighbourhood. He did not threaten me directly. He just made sure I knew he knew where I lived. I withdrew the complaint the next week. Other examples were given as to why victims may not pursue the case further, such as one (CMP06) explaining: My neighbour had gone through the same thing two years before. He spent months going back and forth, nothing happened, and after that his relationship with the police in our area became very difficult. I decided it was not worth it." A ZRP officer (ZRP18) described the solidarity norm: "If you report someone, you will be seen as a troublemaker. It is not written anywhere. But everyone knows. Now you will have the difficulties, not the one whom you reported. These reports indicate that the chilling effect is not a mere feeling but social, professional, and physical consequences that cannot be reduced by formal campaigns that lack measures to protect people who report harassment.

4.7.5 Civil Society as an Accountability Substitute

Multiple civil society, ZHRC and judicial respondents characterize CSOs as performing functions that should be the responsibility of formal oversight institutions and mechanisms. ZPP's incident documentation database, ZLHR's provision of pro bono legal representation and the Human Rights Forum's shadow reporting to UN treaty bodies are a small, but meaningful, accountability infrastructure that has been created in the absence of formal oversight bodies. This substitution effect is not guaranteed, since CSO support will depend on donor financing that lacks state coercive capacity, and the window of opportunity for CSOs has in fact been closed in Zimbabwe from time to time. These observations have important implications for the design of reforms. A sustainable accountability system must build up its formal institutional foundations. This is because although civil society is particularly valuable

in accountability-improving roles in the short term, it can never sustain accountability itself. This tension between reliance on civil society in the short term, and the risk of developing a reliance on civil society in the longer term, is one of the most serious problems of governance identified in this study.

4.8 Connecting quantitative results and qualitative findings

To identify convergences, divergences and complementarities, we map the results to the integration matrix under each research question. The overall finding is one of strong convergence: across the five research questions and the three hypotheses, the two strands of data tell a consistent story. In addition, the integration reveals how qualitative themes relate to, illuminate, and even contradict the respective regression predictors, adding causal texture and shape to the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables.

With regard to the dimension political interference (H3), both layers converge unequivocally. The quantitative analyses suggest that, out of the model features, perceived political interference is the strongest predictor of human rights compliance ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < .001$). These qualitative themes of political capture and nominal independence explain the statistical relationship we observe in our regression model. The political capture theme described through the interviews on file suppression, selective investigation, and police protection for politically well-connected officers serves as the content of the regression coefficient. Citizens are not the only ones that perceive political interference in casework. Both ZHRC investigators and ZRP police officers confirmed there exists informal political direction regarding which cases are to be addressed. The theme of nominal independence also explains the present regression finding. Where the ZHRC formally registers and investigates a complaint, its independence is somewhat compromised as political interferences prevent the case from leaving the space of case registration and investigation. In conclusion, with the confirmation of H3 as well as its strong effect, political influence is ensured not only by interference in handling cases but also

by institutional limits restricting independent agencies from translating investigations into actions.

On institutional independence (H1), the two strands are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Quantitative analyses indicate a moderate positive association between institutional independence and human rights compliance ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$). The nominal independence theme also contextualizes these descriptive results, whereby the lack of meaningful operational independence manifests as non-binding recommendations, investigation reports that are not implemented, and institutions that have become inclined to work with rather than against their environment. More explicitly, all three results show that the regression coefficient for institutional independence in such settings does not represent the relationship between formal independence and compliance, but reflects a combination of non-binding recommendations, budget dependence and appointments that are used for executive control of institutional independence, thus rendering independence as a formal concept devoid of meaning.

The theme of under-resourcing contributes to this finding. In this context of relative political independence, historic underfunding has left the ZHRC functionally dependent on the executive's resource allocation priorities. This suggests that without reform, improving formal independence without increasing funding autonomy and creating a right of legally binding recommendation would raise the independence coefficient, but not the same extent as operational autonomy would.

As for public awareness (H2), the findings for both strands are complementary with one important exception: in the quantitative strand, the relation between awareness and compliance was considerably positive ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$). However, other qualitative themes, particularly Fear and Silence and Civil Society Substitution, contextualize and complicate this finding. These themes illustrate the inadequacy of awareness alone in triggering a complaint. Respondents who are aware of oversight mechanisms and

complainant interviews cite several reasons for declining to use them, including the lack of measures to reduce structural retaliation. Thus, the qualitative data indicates that the awareness beta coefficient is the smallest of the three predictors because awareness is conditionally linked to compliance via the availability of retaliation protections.

The civil society substitution theme relates to the additional structural protections provided by civil society organizations, which participants view CSOs as having while the ZHRC does not, with an average rating of M = 3.12 compared to M = 2.31. Civil society organizations provided not only information on how to complaints, but also accompaniment and legal support. This leads to a recommendation for policy to be designed and sequenced in a way that the complainant has access to anti-retaliation legislation before being encouraged to consider lodging a complaint, and that complementary legal and accompaniment services are in place, as discussed in Chapter Five.

One area of divergence was the perception of the judiciary's effectiveness, with people rating the courts moderately at 2.84 compared to other formal institutions. This finding is considerably softened by qualitative data. Those who had experience of court procedures highlighted considerable procedural obstacles, suggesting that the moderate quantitative score may be the result of the court's constitutional legitimacy and symbolic independence, rather than an indication of its accessibility to the populous as an effective court to file grievances. Institutional legitimacy and practical accessibility may be analytically separated, indicating two distinct dimensions of oversight effectiveness.

In conclusion, the two lines of evidence are strongly complementary. The accountability deficit in Harare Metropolitan Province corresponds to the

simultaneous operation of political intrusion into accounts, scarcity of resources, institutional weakness, a lack of public awareness, and fear; the factors interact in a system that is resistant to intervention through one lever.

4.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter offered an evidence-based critical assessment of the empirical findings. The citizen survey suggested low to moderate levels of knowledge of oversight mechanisms and consistently below-midpoint perceived effectiveness of oversight. Political interference and lack of resources were consistently perceived as the main obstacles to accountability. Hypothesis testing revealed meaningful relationships in the direction expected between institutional independence (H1), publicity (H2), and political interference (H3) and compliance with human rights. Political interference was the strongest statistical predictor. Note that these are cross-sectional associations between reported levels of the constructs in question, and not causally interpretable in terms of directionality. The assumptions of the regressions were checked, and confidence intervals are provided to convey the precision of the estimates. The reflexive thematic analysis yielded five themes (nominal independence, political capture, resource deprivation, fear and silence, civil society substitution) which acted as causal mechanisms that explained the quantitative findings. Other things equal, within an overarching pattern of convergence, the two sets of findings converge on the importance of retaliation protection alongside awareness-raising for improving accountability outcomes. Chapter Five reviews the findings in the context of theory and research, draws conclusions, and suggests policy considerations and implications.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, And Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

Finally, Chapter Six fulfils the interpretive and prescriptive tasks of the dissertation by placing the findings of Chapter Four within the theory set out in Chapter Two. It then engages with the scholarship to identify what this study confirms, extends and complicates. Finally, in Chapter Six, I articulate findings with respect to each research question and provide evidence-based, prioritized policy recommendations to those responsible for oversight systems. The chapter then discusses the contribution of the study and its limitations, and recommends areas for further research.

The argument of this chapter is that the oversight deficit in Harare Metropolitan Province cannot be understood as an accident of circumstance or structural impossibilities. Instead, it is a product of three inter-related processes: institutions

possessing formal authority to conduct oversight, but lacking operational independence; a political context where the oversight architecture is employed politically to enforce accountability; and a citizenry lacking awareness and institutional security to activate complaint mechanisms. It follows that addressing this deficit would require reforms to all three dimensions at once. This has implications for legislative institutions and civil society.

5.2 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Theory and Prior Literature

5.2.1 Accountability Theory: Procedural Accountability Without Substance

According to Bovens (2007)'s framework of accountability, all three conditions (answerability, justification, consequences) must be met in order for accountability to be substantive rather than merely formal. While the Zimbabwean system of oversight can be said to meet the first condition based on the previous results, it does not meet the second and third. That the ZHRC only takes complaints (answerability), makes recommendations (partial justification) and has no real enforcement powers (consequences) is what Alemika (2021) refers to as accountability without substance. According to him, this is a system of procedural accountability without substance: a system that performs the rituals of accountability complaint registration, investigation reports, annual returns without producing the operational changes in police conduct that genuine accountability requires.

Goldsmith (2005)'s distinction between internal mechanisms limited by the blue wall of silence and external mechanisms without coercive power is illustrated by this study's findings that cases most regularly sanctioned by internal ZRP disciplinary mechanisms are administrative, with the least often sanctioned being those involving senior officers and politically sensitive operations. In this sense, the ZHRC, as a purely external mechanism, conducts more objective investigations, though it cannot sanction. While

both models fail, they do so in different ways, which matters for sequencing and targeting reforms.

5.2.2 Institutional Theory: Decoupling and Nominal Independence

Institutional decoupling (Scott 2014), the discrepancy between formal structure and the material closure of an organization, is empirically substantiated by the results of this study: the formal scope of the ZHRC's constitutional mandate is very broad. Qualitatively, the OHCHR is depicted as an institution that learned to operate within the political boundaries of its environment rather than test them. It is hesitant to engage the security sector, which is, in practice, impervious to recommendations. It focuses, increasingly, on outputs complaint registrations, annual reports, public statements that satisfy external legitimacy requirements, but not on the legitimacy of impunity.

The qualitative theme of nominal independence added a richly empirical dimension to what decoupling looked like from inside the institution. ZHRC investigators recounted completing cycles of receiving a complaint, interviewing, writing a report, and confronting the structural boundary of its formal power. The lack of legally binding recommendations made the entire system of accountability dependent on the ZRP's voluntary compliance. The gap between formal independence and operational independence is not merely theoretical. It creates an institutional reality that impacts organizational behavior, professional customs, and the extent of oversight work investigators are willing to carry out (e.g., the depth and breadth of investigations). This is why the regression results show that institutional independence ($\beta = 0.42$) is the second strongest predictor of compliance outcomes. Where formal independence approaches operational independence that is, where institutions have the authority to enforce rather than merely recommend compliance perceptions improve. If ex officio independence is nominal, the independence value for compliance is a fraction of the structure ceiling imposed by non-binding recommendations and politically influenced ex officio appointments.

The question then becomes, what structural changes would allow ZHRC to move from nominal to substantive independence? Through qualitative and quantitative analyzes, I identify three such changes in the remainder of this study. The first is binding recommendation authority: amend the ZHRC Act to make ZHRC recommendations binding. This takes away the most immediate structural bottleneck and makes the final leg of the accountability chain more than a request. The second is protected funding: government funding guaranteed in the constitution and based on a formula, so that the ZHRC is not operationally beholden to executive priorities regardless of the degree of constitutional independence. Third, insulated appointments: Transparent multi-stakeholder appointment panels with parliamentary ratification would reduce the executive's control over the hierarchy of institutional leadership and dampen the ZHRC's dislike to pursuing politically sensitive cases. These three criteria for independence are not simply administrative reforms. They are the structural conditions that would turn formal constitutional independence into operational independence and secure an independence effect on the compliance rate, in line with the regression predictor for independence.

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concept of institutional isomorphism goes to explain why the ZHRC's formal structures appear adequate. The ZHRC was designed to comply with international standards for independent human rights institutions as an architectural model of accountability, but without the necessary functional independence, this model does not ensure accountability. The same is found throughout Africa. Bruce (2018) and Mutonyi (2020) document the political and financial pressures that have led to the capture and institutionalization of semi-autonomous public agencies in South Africa and Kenya, respectively, with the result that their mandates afford them no protection.

5.2.3 Procedural Justice Theory: The Legitimacy Deficit

Consistent with Tyler's (2006) procedural justice model, the results of this study lend strong support to the view that perceived procedural fair treatment in police-citizen interactions is the most powerful predictor of public confidence in policing in Zimbabwe. Though the ZRP as an institution was generally viewed as lacking respect for the rights of individuals (M = 2.28), experiences of procedural unfairness were consistently associated with lower trust and higher estimates of police misconduct.

While Tankebe's (2013) caveat that, in African policing contexts, instrumental considerations of police effectiveness may matter alongside procedural justice is only partially corroborated by this study (some interviewees suggested that they would accept some procedural hardness in exchange for real crime reduction), the majority of survey and interview responses did not perceive the ZRP as procedurally fair or instrumentally effective at protecting ordinary citizens. This double legitimacy failure makes trust recovery considerably more difficult. The work of Bradford et al. (2014) in South Africa shows how experiences of police violence can complicate the process of legitimacy development, a finding that resonates strongly in Zimbabwe.

5.2.4 Human Rights-Based Approach: The Distance Between Rights and Reality

Without overstating the case, it can be said that the HRBA benchmark which requires accountability systems to not only be responsive to violations but seek to avoid breaches of rights appears to be the single biggest systemic weakness of the accountability arrangements in Zimbabwe. The institutions covered in this paper are conceptually and practically reactive. They are complaint-driven rather than proactive, post-hoc investigators rather than auditors and enforcers, and provide recommendations rather than internalizing HR standards into training and practice. A truly HRBA-compliant model of oversight for the ZRP would embrace numerous HRBA-compatible standards (including pre-training of officers, periodic auditing of conduct, community feedback, and public accountability), none of which is built in to the country's current oversight architecture.

5.2.5 Situating Findings in the Regional African Context

While there is overlap between cross-national and Zimbabwean contexts, the relationship between oversight effectiveness and institutional independence corroborates Bruce (2018) in South Africa, where institutional design must be theorized separately from a problem of political will. The perception that civil society organisations are more effective than formal accountability systems fits Newham and Faull's (2011) argument that civil society fills the gaps created by the failure of formal accountability systems across the continent.

Strong as they are, the regression results are further subtle by the fact that, in the multivariate model, political interference ($\beta = -0.48$) is more of an explanatory factor than institutional independence ($\beta = 0.42$). Thus, political capture in Zimbabwe is stronger than in South Africa, as Bruce (2018) found with regard to the South African IPID around the same period. In Kenya, Mutonyi (2020) finds similar evidence of political interference subordinating the formal institutional design. This provides further evidence of the more general theoretical claim that when the executive dominates the security sector, political capture is a more binding constraint on accountability than institutional design.

5.3 Conclusions

On the basis of the theoretical discussion and the empirical analysis, five major conclusions of this study can be drawn.

At the highest level, the monitoring of the ZRP in the Harare Metropolitan Province suffers from a fundamental and systemic accountability gap. Despite the existence of several mechanisms of accountability, none is able to translate complaints into consequences that change behavior. The period of five years in which 412 complaints were received in the ZHRC's office, and yet no successful prosecution of these complaints ever occurred, is no statistical coincidence. Such failures reflect the institutional, political and resource constraints documented throughout this report.

Second, consistent with our expectation, perceived political pressure is negatively associated with perceived human rights compliance, and is the strongest predictor of compliance in the model, having a more substantial independent effect than

institutional design weaknesses or public knowledge ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < .001$). One implication of this is that reforms to legislative or institutional design that fail to address the political context in which supervisors and monitoring bodies operate are unlikely to exert an important impact on compliance norms and practices.

Third, institutional independence is substantively important. The positive main effect ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$) is based on qualitative evidence that, without guaranteed funding of institutions, public appointment procedures for members, and legally binding recommendations, formal independence in a constitution does not guarantee autonomy in practice.

Fourth, public awareness is a necessary, but not sufficient condition of accountability. Citizens, even if they know where and how to complain, may fear retaliation, or doubt the process. But without structural protections for complainants and visible consequences for making complaints, these awareness-raising campaigns are unlikely to increase the number of complaints made or improve accountability.

Fifth, civil society organisations play an accountability role that the oversight system is unable to provide. While de facto accountability by NGOs is valuable, structural reliance on them to fulfill the accountability role is not ideal, and reform of formal oversight to reduce reliance on them would require a degree of political will that may not always be present.

5.4 Policy Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are all based on the analysis above and addressed to specific actors in the Zimbabwean governance system. The result of the priority setting process is shown in Table 5.1. These four structural reforms (amending the ZHRC Act, establishing independent funding, reforming appointments, and enacting anti-

retaliation legislation) must be undertaken before public awareness campaigns or transparency measures can be implemented.

Table 5.1

Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

Reform Area	Recommended Action	Responsible Actor	Priority
Legislative Reform	Amend the ZHRC Act to vest its recommendations with binding legal force over the ZRP, removing the current discretionary compliance model.	Parliament	**High**
Financial Independence	Establish constitutionally guaranteed, formula-based funding for the ZHRC independent of executive appropriation.	Ministry of Finance / Parliament	**High**
Appointments Process	Introduce transparent, merit-based, multi-stakeholder appointment panels for all ZHRC leadership positions, with parliamentary ratification.	Parliament / President	**High**
Anti-Retaliation Legislation	Enact statutory protections for complainants against ZRP retaliation, as a precondition for any awareness campaign.	Parliament / Attorney General	**High**
Human Rights Training	Integrate mandatory rights-based policing modules into ZRP pre-service training and	ZRP / Police Service Commission	**High**

	annual in-service development.		
Public Awareness	Launch sustained community-level education campaign on oversight mechanisms - prioritising Epworth and outer Chitungwiza - only after anti-retaliation protections are enacted.	ZHRC / Ministry of Home Affairs	**Medium**
Disciplinary Transparency	Require quarterly publication of ZRP disciplinary statistics disaggregated by offence type, rank, and outcome, with independent ZHRC verification.	ZRP Commissioner / Home Affairs	**Medium**
CSO Partnership	Establish formal data-sharing and case-referral protocols between the ZHRC and civil society human rights organisations.	ZHRC / CSOs	**Medium**

Note. Source: Author's own construction based on empirical findings, 2025. Red = High priority (structural foundations). Amber = Medium priority (implementation).

Note. Source: Author's own construction based on empirical findings, 2025.

The first four items are High priority amendments to the ZHRC Act to provide for constitutionally guaranteed funding, reform of the appointments process, protection against retaliation and any additional legislative amendments. These amendments are the building blocks, without which no other reform can succeed. No amount of public education will increase complaint rates if complainants face retaliation that existing law does not prohibit. No amount of institutional strengthening can produce accountability if the ZHRC cannot enforce its findings. This recommendation is also consistent with the literature on procedural justice: when the goal is institutional culture change, rights-based norms are established most

effectively when police are trained on them in the beginning, rather than when these norms are added as an afterthought to reform the police misconduct itself.

Short term, medium term and long term reform horizons have been grouped by the supervisor in the recommendations to enable implementer entities to sequence the implementation of the recommendations. Near term reforms (0-12 months) which can be undertaken administratively without the need for legislative amendments are as follows: ZRP Commissioner and Police Service Commission should direct that human rights modules should be included in in-service trainings; and ZHRC should formalize data sharing agreements with civil society organisations within the scope of its statutory mandate. All these measures can be accomplished under existing frameworks, requiring only institutional will and coordination.

The priority legislative changes over the medium term (1-3 years) are: (1) amend the ZHRC Act to confer binding recommendation powers on the Commission; (2) pass a law prohibiting retaliation against complainants; (3) create transparent, multi-stakeholder appointment panels for ZHRC management. While political will and legislative majorities are needed for these changes, they can be immediately preceded by public consultation, civil society engagement and drafting of legislation. Long-term (3-5 years and beyond) the most structurally ambitious of all would be the creation of a constitutionally guaranteed formula-based funding of the ZHRC which would not be subject to executive appropriation.

However this would require a change to the constitution (the political conditions for which would need to be established). Public education initiatives must only be introduced with protections against retaliation as they do not achieve outcomes and are likely to expose vulnerable citizens to retaliation. The end game is therefore constitutional entrenchment, which is only possible through sustained civil society advocacy and international pressure. The effects of the medium-term legislative reforms create the political space and institutional precedent for the eventual attainment of constitutional entrenchment. This is the strategy for dealing with the difficulty of structural reform in a politically constrained context, which cannot occur simultaneously along all fronts but instead requires phased reforms that create the conditions for further changes.

Apart from the priority categories described in Table 5.1, the recommendations can be sorted into one of three implementation horizons, depending on the urgency and the institutional demand/effort required.

In the short run (0-12 months), the first priority must be to implement statutory anti-retaliation protections for complainants. This is a necessary precursor to all demand-side reforms: no citizen information campaign, community engagement program, or target for complaint-volume is likely to result in a meaningful impact while citizens are at risk of retaliation from authorities. Parliament should urgently introduce a Bill to amend the ZHRC Act, to give the ZHRC's recommendations the force of law. The ZRP should issue an internal circular clarifying its whistleblowing policy for police officers who report wrongdoing by police colleagues. These measures do not require any major constitutional amendments and can be enacted by the incumbent legislature and executive powers with minimal funding requirements.

In the 1-3 year medium term, once the legislative framework has been put in place, the ZHRC should be funded based on an agreed formula and the appointments process reformed through a multi-stakeholder panel. Human rights training should also be mandatory for the ZRP's pre-service and in-service training. A specific medium-term implementation plan should include parliament and budget processes, an agreement about working together between the ZRP and Police Service Commission, launching the public awareness campaigns in Epworth and outer Chitungwiza once the anti-retaliation legislation is enacted, and formal data-sharing agreements between the ZHRC and civil society organisations.

Longer term (over 3-5 years): 1) Publication of ZRP disciplinary statistics, verified on an independent basis by the ZHRC, 2) Increased public knowledge and public confidence in the ZRP as a public institution, 3) Reduction of attrition rates of nearly 100% to levels comparable to other institutions with established accountability systems. These longer term goals will depend on the cumulative effects of the short and medium term goals, and the lack of reversal of institutional reforms made in the previous phases. The ZHRC must monitor the progress

towards the above outcomes and submit an annual report to Parliament, with civil society submitting shadow monitoring reports.

5.5 Contributions to Knowledge

The study makes four contributions to academic and practitioner literature, particularly policing oversight in Africa. The first, and most direct, is empirical: this is the first mixed-methods study to look at the organization of provincial police forces and the effectiveness of police oversight mechanism at the provincial level in Zimbabwe, at a level of detail impossible at the national level. The second contribution is more theoretical. It shows how putting theory of Accountability, Institutional Theory, Procedural Justice Theory, and the Human Rights-Based Approach together in a conceptual framework reveals the analytical advantages of theoretical pluralism in oversight research.

Methodologically, the analysis has demonstrated the plausibility and useful application of a convergent parallel mixed-methods design in politically sensitive contexts in Zimbabwe (the implemented regression model, with its explicit assumptions, confidence intervals and effect sizes in particular, provides a methodological benchmark for quantitative accountability research in similar African contexts). From a policy point of view, the priority recommendation matrix in Table 5.1 allows the empirical findings to be translated into concrete reform recommendations, which are addressed to specific actors and sequenced according to evidential priority and logical dependency.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

There are four limitations to the interpretation of the findings of this study: a cross-sectional design provides a snapshot in 2025, it cannot establish directionality, it cannot differentiate between structural and political variation over time which leads to the accountability environment not being observed over time. It cannot provide causal inferences. Nevertheless, it is a sound approach to establishing correlations between characteristics of the accountability environment when using the available data. Second, we were not able to get

access to internal ZRP disciplinary records, but that was itself analytically useful, and speaks to an important lack of transparency obstructing accountability.

Third, transferability is not demonstrated. This is a case study of the Harare Metropolitan Province, so the findings may not be generalizable to the rest of Zimbabwe. Fourth, and most importantly for the correct interpretation of all quantitative findings in this volume, perceptions of institutional misconduct should not be taken as an indicator of actual proved misconduct or of outside interference documented in the literature. Comparative provincial research would be needed for generalizations to the national level. It should be noted that these findings can only tell us about respondents' perceived understanding of the oversight system during the period in which the data were collected, not how the institutions in question might actually have functioned at the time. In the context of a politically sensitive research project, the fear that candid critical responses might be traced back to the individual and invite retaliation remains a concrete methodological problem. Citizens that had been intimidated after reporting complaints earlier may have downplayed their experiences, and officers who feared an institutional backlash may have downplayed the political pressure they received from their superiors.

Social desirability bias (the tendency of study participants to describe themselves and their institutions in positive terms) and respondent fear may have also caused some of the ZRP officers who participated to underreport the extent of partisan direction. It is also worth noting that because this study is based on self-reported experiences, the study cannot disentangle those scenarios in which the participant themselves witnessed the phenomenon they are describing, and those where they know about it from their community, reputation or media coverage. That said, there were a number of features in the design that were meant to reduce risk. Some of these include: anonymous participant questionnaires (no identifying data) , interview participant codes (to prevent interview participants from having their identities revealed), and the choice of neutral/private office location for the interviews. None of these risk reduction strategies is a guarantee against social desirability bias, but triangulation across the three data sources substantially lowers the risk, even in those domains. It is important to note that all of the statistical data reported are based on perceived rather than objective reality.

5.7 Future Research Recommendations

There are four main avenues for future research that might suggest themselves from these findings. First, a study might follow up the present research at some point in the future when some of these laws are implemented to see whether or not they have had any direct effects on oversight or public confidence. A second, comparative, study would be to examine the quality of oversight in Harare, Bulawayo, and Masvingo in particular, to ascertain whether the same patterns are repeated in other political and demographic settings.

Third, to what extent might technological innovations, such as online complaint forms, body worn camera initiatives, and real time reporting of police activity/abuse, serve as tools of accountability? Though promising, these innovations have not been tested in Zimbabwe's specific institutional settings. A fourth direction, the practitioner approach (participatory action research), would follow ZRP officers as they design a ZRP human rights training program or as they re-evaluate their handling of complaints. It would complement the top-down policy approaches in this study by providing bottom-up information about what organizational reform could be accomplished within existing institutional constraints.

5.8 Conclusion

It must be acknowledged that police oversight is caught in a structural contradiction in the Harare Metropolitan Province, and that the 2013 constitutional framework is a real step forward in that it established institutions and mandates and articulated rights standards that were absent from the procedural landscape. But even well-designed constitutional architecture has its limits. The implications of this are that the obstacles to ZRP accountability are not a lack of systems for accountability, but a lack of political will, resources and authority to apply those systems, an important shortcoming that has yet to be addressed by reform.

That need not be so. As the regional experience of South Africa, and to a lesser extent, Kenya, shows, incremental institutional reform is possible even under difficult political conditions if civil society mobilization, international engagement, and windows of opportunity for political reform are well managed. This study provides the evidentiary

foundation for such improvement: it shows, with quantified precision, that the accountability gap is real and measurable; it identifies the specific, operationally verifiable factors that generate the gap; and it specifies the concrete, sequenced reforms that would address those factors. Making the evidence rigorous, accessible, and actionable is the proper contribution of research to governance, and it is the contribution this dissertation has sought to make.

Making the evidence rigorous, accessible, and actionable is the proper contribution of research to governance and it is the contribution this dissertation has sought to make.

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APPENDIX A

CITIZEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

My name is Tichaona Munapo. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying towards a Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) in Police and Security Studies. In partial fulfilment of my Degree program, I am carrying out a research project entitled;

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Police Oversight Mechanisms In Promoting Human Rights Compliance in Zimbabwe: A Case Of Harare Metropolitan Province.

Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. There are no right or wrong answers. Please do not write your name anywhere on this form.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick the appropriate box.

1. Gender

[ ] Male

[ ] Female

[ ] Prefer not to say

2. Age Group

[ ] 18 - 30 years

[ ] 31 - 45 years

[ ] 46 - 60 years

[ ] Above 60 years

3. Area of Residence

[ ] Harare Central

[ ] Chitungwiza

[ ] Epworth

4. Highest Level of Education Completed

[ ] Primary school

[ ] Secondary school (O-Level)

[ ] Secondary school (A-Level)

[ ] Tertiary / University

[ ] No formal education

SECTION B: AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCE

1. Are you aware of the following police oversight mechanisms? (Tick all that apply)

[ ] Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC)

[ ] Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs

[ ] ZRP Internal Disciplinary System

[ ] The Courts (Magistrate / High Court)

[ ] Civil Society Organisations (e.g., Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum)

[ ] None of the above

2. Have you ever had a direct encounter with the ZRP?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

3. If yes, how would you describe the way you were treated?

[ ] With full respect for my rights

[ ] Generally respectful but with some concerns

[ ] Disrespectful or intimidating

[ ] Subjected to force or unlawful action

4. Have you or someone you know ever submitted a complaint about ZRP conduct to any oversight body?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Wanted to but did not know how

[ ] Wanted to but was afraid

SECTION C: PERCEPTIONS OF OVERSIGHT EFFECTIVENESS

Please circle the number that best represents your view for each statement:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. Perceived Independence of Oversight Bodies

1.1 The ZHRC operates independently from government or political interference. 1 2 3 4 5

1.2 Parliamentary Portfolio Committees scrutinize ZRP conduct without political bias. 1 2 3 4 5

1.3 The ZRP's internal disciplinary process operates independently of senior officers. 1 2 3 4 5

1.4 Courts handle ZRP misconduct cases fairly and without political pressure. 1 2 3 4 5

1.5 Oversight institutions are free to investigate complaints against senior officers. 1 2 3 4 5

1.6 Overall, police oversight bodies in Zimbabwe operate with genuine independence. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Perceived Effectiveness in Addressing Misconduct

2.1 The ZHRC effectively investigates complaints of ZRP misconduct. 1 2 3 4 5

2.2 Complaints to oversight bodies result in meaningful consequences for officers. 1 2 3 4 5

2.3 The internal ZRP disciplinary system holds officers accountable for misconduct.
1 2 3 4 5

2.4 Courts provide effective remedies when ZRP officers violate citizens' rights.
1 2 3 4 5

2.5 Civil society organisations are effective in monitoring ZRP misconduct.
1 2 3 4 5

2.6 Oversight mechanisms reduce the likelihood of police misconduct in my area.
1 2 3 4 5

2.7 Overall, Zimbabwe's police oversight system effectively protects citizens' rights.
1 2 3 4 5

3. Procedural Fairness in Police-Citizen Interactions

3.1 ZRP officers treat citizens respectfully during stops, searches, and arrests.

1 2 3 4 5

3.2 ZRP officers explain the reason for their actions when interacting with citizens. 1
2 3 4 5

3.3 ZRP officers act consistently and do not treat different groups differently.

1 2 3 4 5

3.4 ZRP officers act in the public interest rather than for personal gain.

1 2 3 4 5

3.5 Citizens are given a fair opportunity to explain their situation when detained.

1 2 3 4 5

3.6 ZRP officers' conduct during operations respects citizens' constitutional rights.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Overall Trust in the ZRP and Oversight Institutions

4.1 I trust the ZRP to protect my rights and the rights of my community. 1 2 3 4 5

4.2 I am confident that if I reported misconduct, the oversight system would act on it. 1 2 3 4 5

4.3 The ZRP generally conducts its operations in accordance with constitutional rights. 1 2 3 4 5

4.4 Police oversight mechanisms make ZRP officers more accountable in practice. 1 2 3 4 5

4.5 I would feel safe reporting ZRP misconduct without fear of reprisal. 1 2 3 4 5

4.6 The oversight system in Zimbabwe gives ordinary citizens a meaningful voice. 1 2 3 4 5

SECTION D: BARRIERS TO OVERSIGHT

1. What do you consider the most significant barriers to effective police oversight? (Tick all that apply)

[ ] Political interference in oversight processes

[ ] Inadequate funding and resources for oversight bodies

[ ] Lack of binding enforcement authority (recommendations ignored)

[ ] Low public awareness of complaint mechanisms and procedures

[ ] Fear of reprisal when reporting ZRP misconduct

[ ] Corruption within oversight institutions

[ ] Lack of independence from executive authority

[ ] Insufficient capacity within oversight bodies

[ ] Other (please specify)

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ZHRC OFFICIALS AND OVERSIGHT STAFF

Participant Code: ZHR…… Date…….... Duration: 45-60 minutes

Preamble (read to participant):

Thank you for agreeing to participate. This interview is voluntary and confidential. Responses will be anonymised. You may decline any question and may withdraw at any time.

Theme 1: Institutional Mandate and Legal Framework

1. How would you describe the ZHRC's formal mandate in relation to ZRP oversight, and how adequate is the current legal framework?

2. What are the most significant gaps between the ZHRC's statutory powers and its operational capacity?

3. How has the ZHRC Act shaped or constrained the way your office handles ZRP-related complaints?

Theme 2: Complaint Handling and Investigation Procedures

4. Can you walk me through the complaint process from receipt to resolution? Where are the most significant bottlenecks?

5. What proportion of complaints have resulted in formal recommendations, and how many recommendations have been implemented?

6. What factors most commonly prevent complaints from resulting in accountability outcomes?

Theme 3: Institutional Independence and Political Influence

7. To what extent does the ZHRC operate free from political direction? Can you give examples of pressures experienced?

8. How does the appointments process for ZHRC leadership affect its operational independence?

9. Are there categories of case or officer against whom it is particularly difficult to proceed?

Theme 4: Resource Adequacy

10. How adequate are the ZHRC's current human, financial, and technical resources?

11. How do resource constraints shape case prioritization and investigation depth?

Theme 5: Reform Recommendations

12. What legislative or institutional changes would most improve the ZHRC's capacity to hold the ZRP accountable?

13. What do you consider the single most important reform needed?

Closing: Is there anything important about police oversight that we have not covered?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ZRP OFFICERS

Participant Code: ZRP…… Date: …… Duration: 40-55 minutes

Preamble:

This interview is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. Nothing you say will be shared with your superiors or colleagues.

Theme 1: Familiarity with Oversight Mechanisms

1. How familiar are you with formal police oversight mechanisms - ZHRC, Parliamentary committees, civil society bodies?

2. How do ZRP officers generally perceive oversight bodies - as legitimate, a threat, or irrelevant?

Theme 2: Internal Disciplinary Processes

3. How would you assess the internal ZRP disciplinary system - does it hold officers fairly accountable?

4. Are there types of misconduct that are systematically under-reported within the internal system?

5. To what extent does the 'blue wall of silence' operate within the ZRP in your experience?

Theme 3: External Oversight Experience

6. Have you or your unit been subject to external oversight scrutiny? How was it handled institutionally?

7. How effective is external oversight in changing actual officer conduct?

Theme 4: Political Pressure

8. Have you observed situations where officers received informal direction from outside the ZRP chain of command?

9. How does the political environment affect the ability of oversight institutions to hold senior officers accountable?

Theme 5: Human Rights Compliance and Reform

10. What training or institutional changes would most improve human rights compliance in ZRP operations?

11. What would need to change for the ZRP to operate in full accordance with citizens' constitutional rights?

Closing: Is there anything you would like to add about police oversight or ZRP conduct?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES AND COMPLAINANTS

Participant Code: CSO…....CMP…… Date: …….Duration: 40-60 minutes

Preamble:

This interview is voluntary and your responses will be completely confidential. You may choose not to answer any question.

For Civil Society Representatives (CSO)

1. What types of ZRP misconduct does your organization most commonly document, and how have patterns changed over 2013-2025?

2. When your organisations refers a case to the ZHRC or other oversight body, what typically happens?

3. To what extent are civil society organisations filling a gap that formal oversight bodies should be filling? Is this sustainable?

4. What are the most significant barriers your organization faces in holding the ZRP accountable?

5. What legislative or institutional changes would most improve police accountability?

For Complainants (CMP)

6. Can you describe - without personal identifying details - the nature of the incident that led you to seek redress?

7. What steps did you take to submit a complaint, and what was your experience from submission to outcome?

8. Did you experience any form of pressure or discouragement that made it difficult to pursue your complaint?

9. What was the outcome of your complaint, and how would you describe your overall experience of the oversight system?

10. What would need to change for you to trust and use the oversight system again in future?

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

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