

CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



INSTITUTE OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Centre of Development Studies and Sustainable Technologies

**Vocational and Life Skills Training Impacts on Resilience Building among Young
Women in Rural Contexts in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts, Zimbabwe**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of Lifelong Learning and Development Studies in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies**

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CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



INSTITUTE OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

D.Phil in Development Studies

RESEARCH PROJECT RELEASE FORM

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Vocational and Life Skills Training Impacts on Resilience Building among Young Women in Rural Contexts in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts, Zimbabwe

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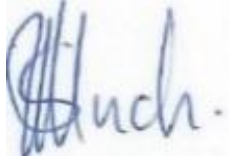
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Declaration

I, Chipso Muchabaiwa, do hereby declare that this research project is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgements, references and comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

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Date: 16.07.2024

Dedication

This project is dedicated to all women who have had to juggle everything and still manage to do it well. To my daughter Nokutenda Muchabaiwa, you come from a line of fierce women and you can do anything you set your mind on.

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My appreciation to Dr M. Chiweshe and Prof. J. Mapara for their guidance as my supervisors throughout the time it took me to complete this research. Appreciation is made to the staff and project participants from the ZRBF Project in Chiredzi and Mwenezi who availed their time to share their experiences in the climate resilience project. I would also like to acknowledge Tafadzwa Muchabaiwa, Tendai Chikonye and Nothando Ndhlovu my friend and mate in all things academic since our undergraduate studies, for their support throughout.

Abstract

Existing research shows that external shocks such as climate change and extreme weather conditions are major threats to the attainment of well-being outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) particularly in rural areas. This research through a mixed methodology approach sought to understand the extent of vulnerability of young women in rural areas to various external shocks. The study evaluates the impact of vocational training on resilience building in young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts in Masvingo Province which are two of 18 districts where the UNDP coordinated ZRBF-ECRAS project focused on vocational and life skills training was implemented. This study underscores the importance of life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training programs in reducing vulnerability and building resilience. In addition, the study highlights the need to address contextual shocks, gender inequality, and barriers such as gender norms, attitudes and practices as well as limited participation in economic value chains to ensure sustainable livelihoods for young women in rural areas. This research also proposes a comprehensive model that addresses the limitations of current vocational training programs. It offers practical insights and recommendations that can facilitate the design and implementation of more effective interventions, ultimately promoting the resilience and well-being of young rural women.

Keywords: Resilience, Young Women, TVET, Life skills, Vulnerability, Entrepreneurship skills, Gender-responsive training, Rural livelihoods, Climate resilience

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ECRAS	Enhancing Community Resilience and Sustainability Projects.
HEXCO	Higher Education Examination Council
ILO	International Labour Organisations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
UNESCO- <i>UNEVOC</i>	UNESCO's International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNISDR	United Nations International Disaster Reduction Strategy
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VTCs	Vocational Training Centers
YETT	Youth Empowerment Transformation Trust
ZIMDEF	Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund
ZIMFEP	Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production
ZRBF	Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

External shocks such as climate change, extreme weather conditions like droughts and floods, and other unexpected events originating outside the country's economy are major threats to attaining well-being outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Mugari et al., 2016). In addition, reliance on rain-fed agriculture makes most rural people vulnerable to external shocks such as droughts, crop failures, and price fluctuations (Mugari et al., 2016). This research dissects the extent of vulnerability of young women to external shocks such as droughts, floods, and economic instability, resilience to these external shocks, as well as the impact of vocational and skills training on building the resilience of the vulnerable. Generally, women are affected differently by external shocks (Neumayer, Plümper & Barthel, 2014) hence the need to investigate the problem arose to interrogate and reveal the extent to which young women are affected. More so, this will help in revealing women's degree of resilience as well as what has been done about it particularly vocational and skills training offered to build resilience. The study evaluates the impact of vocational training on resilience building in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts located in Masvingo Province.

According to Chingarande and Matondi (2020), although Masvingo Province is dedicated to a variety of activities, such as livestock production, irrigated farming, wildlife conservancy, and smallholder agricultural production, the province experiences frequent adverse climatic events including flooding and droughts. These external shocks have increased the vulnerability of the rural people in the province, particularly the youths and women from the seven districts of Bikita, Chiredzi, Chivi, Gutu, Masvingo Rural, Mwenezi and Zaka (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020). Hence, there have been several interventions towards resilience building in the province. One of the interventions includes funding vocational and life skills training being offered by organisations such as CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) Zimbabwe and the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP) which were the coordinators of the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) and the Enhancing Community Resilience and Sustainability (ECRAS) projects.

The life skills and vocational training programmes were implemented in two out of the seven districts of Masvingo Province namely Mwenezi and Chiredzi mainly targeting youths and women towards building their resilience. However, there was no empirical study that existed on the impact of these training programmes on the resilience building of the youths and women. This study therefore investigated the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women using a case of Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. This chapter provides the introduction of the research by presenting the background of the study followed by the statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the research and lastly outline of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the Study

This research was aimed at assessing the contributing factors in building and improving the resilience of young people with a specific focus on young women, in vulnerable communities of Zimbabwe. The study focused on Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts which are two of 18 districts where the UNDP coordinated the ZRBF-ECRAS project (2020) which was being implemented in Masvingo Province. Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts are in agro-ecological regions 5b (Zimbabwe National Geospatial and Space Agency, 2020). These communities rely on rain-fed agriculture for their food and livelihood security in climatic conditions that are arid and semi-arid. They are also characterized by low rainfall. Young people, however, are not enthusiastic about practising farming but instead prefer projects that have a quick financial return. Migration to urban areas and jumping the border to South Africa in search of viable livelihood options are thus common in the two districts (Mutambara & Mutambara, 2014).

Key pillars explored in this research include an appreciation of the socio-economic barriers that young women face in accessing continuous education and training opportunities,

thereby encumbering improved access to inclusive, equitable, safe, diverse technical, and vocational skills training. It was important to assess how this in turn affects their adaptive, absorptive, and transformative capacity when faced with shocks. According to the Youth Empowerment Transformation Trust (YETT) (2019), young people in sub-Saharan Africa face significant challenges and risks whose effects are largely borne by girls and young women. The study assessed what resilience project activities (interventions) must accomplish to get the intended outcomes through life skills and vocational expert training with a particular focus on young women. A prominent distinguishing attribute of most life skills training is their emphasis on improving socio-emotional skills tied to technical livelihoods to improve livelihood options and decision-making skills which are key pillars in resilience building.

There were however knowledge gaps on how to measure the efficacy of building socio-emotional, vocational, and technical skills and the importance of such expertise in explaining the market and community participation and agency outcomes of young people, particularly disadvantaged young women. It was crucial to know how socio-emotional skills can be acquired and if they contribute to the strengthening of absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities in resilience building. According to Pindiriri and Muhoyi (2011), vocational training is meant to address the technical training needs. It sought to improve the ability and competitiveness of young people to participate in the labour market and create livelihoods for themselves. From a policy standpoint, it was thus important to assess if these contribute to resilience building in young people, particularly young women.

The study therefore explored ways in which life and vocational skills training contributes to the capacity of individuals to traverse their way to resources that sustain their well-being. Secondly, the study looked at how the improved capability of individuals to provide and access resources eventually translates to the capacity of individuals, their families, and their communities to negotiate culturally meaningful and sustainable ways to share resources. The study focused on young women in the Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts in Masvingo province,

who are considered one of the most vulnerable population groups in Zimbabwe (Tekwa, 2020; Mutambara & Mutambara, 2014).

Natural disasters, climate change, extreme weather conditions, drought and disease outbreaks are major threats to the attainment of well-being outcomes for women in Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts who are predominantly unemployed and not engaged in income-generating activities (Mutambara & Mutambara, 2014; Tekwa, 2020). This makes them particularly vulnerable to unfavorable conditions. Mutopo (2011) also reported that the livelihoods of youth and women in rural areas of Zimbabwe have been affected as they have been left out of development programs including the Fast-Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) and irrigation schemes.

Results from a youth assessment conducted by the ECRAS (2019) showed that youths face climate-related, economic, and social shocks including cash shortages (66%) natural hazards such as drought (36%), human diseases (20%), inconsistent rains and crop pests and diseases. Successive droughts in Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts have resulted in increased food insecurity and malnutrition (Mamombe, 2017). As a result, policy and development efforts have progressively shifted towards strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers through the promotion of enterprises that are well-adapted to local conditions (ECRAS, 2019). The other reason is that most of the rural people including youth and women in the two districts heavily rely on rain-fed agriculture making them vulnerable to climate change and recurrent droughts (Mutambara and Bodzo, 2020). In addition, economic crises such as unemployment and inflation have also heightened vulnerability risks for rural people. Unemployment rates in Zimbabwe have been cited as being over 92% and the rural youth livelihoods are adversely affected and the youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi are also not spared (Tekwa, 2020). Related to this is the fact that few youths had at least a skill attained formally or informally, showing that there is generally a low level of skilling amongst the youth. As a result, these youths remain less competitive in economic activities that could help them gain the required skills to assist them in building their capacity to become more resilient (Mamombe, 2017). Hence, youth particularly women have been vulnerable to these

crises such that they are in extreme poverty. Therefore, as a way to build resilience in the two districts, the ECRAS project, the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF), non-governmental organisations such as CARE Zimbabwe and Sesithule Vamanani Caring Association (SEVACA) and private sector organisations such as Montana Carswell Meats, National Organic Produce and Pro-seeds have been engaging in resilience building projects such as poultry production, cassava production, beekeeping, fish farming, cattle pen fattening and contract farming (Defe and Matsa, 2021; Mupakati and Tanyanyiwa, 2017).

According to Mutambara and Bodzo (2020), successive droughts in the Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts have resulted in increased food insecurity and malnutrition. As a result, policy and development efforts have progressively shifted towards strengthening the resilience of the rural people through the promotion of enterprises that are well-adapted to local conditions (Defe and Matsa, 2021). However, according to Mufudza (2016), young women in the Mwenezi district have not benefited much from the income-generating projects aimed at improving rural livelihoods as they lack knowledge and skills. In this sense, youth, and women in Chiredzi and Mwenezi are being offered vocational training in life skills as a strategy to reduce vulnerability and build resilience (ECRAS, 2019).

At a global scale, vocational, entrepreneurial and life skills training have been found fundamental towards poverty reduction, vulnerability, and resilience building. Fighting poverty and vulnerability is in line with the United Nations Vision 2030 Agenda which highlights the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, vocational training is promoted under SDG 4 which aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNDP, 2021). Particularly, Target 4.3 of SDG 4 aims to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university by 2030 whilst Target 4.4 aims to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational ones (UNDP, 2015). In addition, Target 4.5 also aims to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable (UNDP, 2021).

Based on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (JM1), most developing countries including Zimbabwe have been aiming to empower women and youths through vocational, life and entrepreneurial skills training programmes. These programmes are crucial towards sustainable development as they reduce poverty and lessen vulnerability to external shocks such as natural disasters (Shamano, 2010). A recent UNDP (2021) report on vocational training and re-skilling for vulnerable youth and women in South Africa for post-COVID-19 recovery indicated that vocational training plays an important role towards resilience building and recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same vein, from the theoretical perspective, it can be observed that training plays a significant role in resilience building and vulnerability reduction. For instance, the Pressure and Release (PAR) model highlights that lack of training and appropriate skills are some of the driving factors for increased vulnerability and limited resilience to external shocks (Blaike et al., 2004). In the same theoretical perspective, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) also predicts that human capital is one of the livelihood resources essential for increased resilience and reduced vulnerability (Scoones, 2009).

In Zimbabwe, the issue of vocational and entrepreneurial skills has existed since the pre-colonial era (Sisimayi and Chikasha, 2016). Following the attainment of independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean government embarked on expanding the provision of education and in that process replaced the F2 system of education vocational training through the establishment of Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in all the eight provinces in Zimbabwe at that time. After that, the Government of Zimbabwe also adopted the philosophy of 'Education for Self-Reliance' called the Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP) (Sisimayi and Chikasha, 2016). According to Muzira and Bondai (2020) citing Zvobgo (1997), ZIMFEP had elements of vocational skills as it combined theory and practice in the curricula.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has emerged as one of the most effective human resource development strategies that African countries need to embrace to train and modernise their technical workforce for rapid industrialisation and national

development (Shereni, 2020). In this vein, vocational training has also been included in the new Zimbabwe Education 5.0 model, which aims to blend academic and vocational skills training. Besides, the 4th industrial revolution (4IR) has also driven the need for vocational education in most countries including Zimbabwe. According to Spöttl and Windelband (2021), vocational education and training is highly relevant in this 21st century and the occupational schooling system must respond to the needs and expectations of the 4th Industrial Revolution such as digitalization and automation. In addition, Avis (2021) states that vocational training and education are necessities in this 4th Industrial Revolution towards increased productivity and sustainable human and economic development.

Based on this background information, the Government of Zimbabwe has been promoting vocational training and education as evidenced by efforts such as the TVET policy review of 2005 and the implementation of programs like the Integrated Skills Outreach Programme (Shereni, 2020; Tshabalala and Ncube, 2014; Nyika, 2016). Precisely, the Government of Zimbabwe launched the Integrated Skills Outreach Programme (IOSP) as an effort to facilitate the participation of the youths by assisting them to acquire technical and entrepreneurial skills within their communities (Nyika, 2016). Thus, TVET in Zimbabwe has also been found to have positive outcomes on poverty reduction, addressing gender disparities, improving preparedness for disasters as well as reducing vulnerability to external shocks (Pindiriri and Muhoyi, 2011; Nyika, 2016). According to Nyika (2016), in Zimbabwe, where deindustrialization has forced many people out of formal employment, TVET plays a vital role in equipping youth for self-employment and poverty reduction.

Given the vulnerability of women and youths to external shocks in Masvingo province, several stakeholders including the government, non-governmental organisations, and private sector companies have made collaborative efforts towards resilience building for the vulnerable target youths and women (Mutambara and Bodzo, 2020). Most of the programmes have been undertaken in two of the districts which are the focus of the study namely Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts. One of the intervention strategies is funding vocational and life skills training for the youths and women who are the most vulnerable to

external shocks (ECRAS, 2021). Recently in 2021, more than 2000 women and youths in Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts have benefitted from the US\$225,000 empowerment programme availed by Plan International in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (ECRAS, 2019). This programme has seen youths and women from the two districts undergoing training courses at Mushagashe Training Centre and Mwenezi Development Training Centre (MDTC). These training programmes are aimed at empowering the youths and women in the districts to be resilient.

However, there were limited empirical studies that existed on the contribution of the training programmes to the resilience building of the beneficiaries. This study therefore investigated the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women using a case of Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. Understanding the impact of vocational and life skills training on adverse shocks is crucially important and this study sheds light on that by documenting how different voluntary and life skills training programs can increase resilience to external shocks and facilitate the recovery from the shocks.

1.3 Statement of Problem

There exist harmful norms and barriers to education for girls and young women. This scenario exists in most rural areas of Zimbabwe including disaster-prone zones such as Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts. Most young women in rural areas are unemployed, lack formal education and are deficient in control of livelihood resources such as land (Mamombe, 2017; Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020; Mutopo, 2011). This has put this population group at risk of vulnerability to external shocks such as natural disasters, climate change, disease outbreaks and economic crises. As a result, there have been several stakeholders including NGOs, private sector companies and the government implementing development projects in the two districts to improve livelihoods and increase resilience. However, young women continue to be vulnerable to external shocks. As a strategy to improve resilience, youth in the districts have been funded by NGOs to undergo vocational training. However, there is a lacuna in empirical studies focusing on the impact of these training programmes on the resilience building of the beneficiaries. This study therefore provides a nuanced

analysis of the impacts of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women using the case of Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The study findings provide a model that is aimed at improving the impact of vocational training on the resilience of young women to external shocks.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To examine the contextual shocks increasing vulnerability of female youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi,
2. To evaluate the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training are being incorporated into resilience building for rural young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi and
3. To develop a framework through analysis and validation on how to strengthen resilience building by reducing vulnerabilities to shocks and reducing drivers of risk.

1.5 Research Questions

The inquiry was guided by the questions that follow:

1. How are differential vulnerabilities of young women reflected in the shocks affecting resilience capacities?
2. How effective are training interventions in life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training in resilience building for female youths in rural areas? vague
plit into 3 questions
3. What should characterize effective strategies for interventions aimed at building the resilience of vulnerable young women and reducing drivers of risks?

1.6 Justification of the Study

This research highlights the complex and interconnected shocks and stresses that affect young women in a rural context, and how programme interventions with life skills and vocational skills development are designed to build capacities that help them to absorb, adapt and/or transform. Young women are more vulnerable to shocks or stresses and their vulnerability is compounded by unequal access to education, training healthcare and services, marginalization, and abuse, and these are often linked to non-responsive policies, and economic and social factors. It is thus critical to have interventions with different actors taking into consideration the unique capacities young women may need to deal with a shock or stress and accounting for how shocks and stresses affect them differently. This research provides an understanding of the phases that young women need to go through to continue a resilience trajectory and continue to use their capacities to absorb, adapt and/or transform. Knowledge from this study informs actions that focus on building resilience as well as how to create the contextualized conceptual basis for young women empowerment interventions, develop perception and identification of risk factors and strengthening of capacities to operate, create resilience, prepare better and respond appropriately to the impact of shocks and stresses.

The research also adds value to policy making particularly national and local development policies as well as gender policymaking. In particular, the findings and recommendations are of importance towards women's empowerment in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts as well as at the national level.

The local communities such as those in Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts also benefit from this study as they get to understand the benefits of vocational training and motivate them to make use of vocational training programmes in their communities for the benefit of themselves and the communities at large.

The study also makes significant contributions to the body of knowledge by bringing new knowledge regarding the effect of vocational training on resilience building among

vulnerable populations. In this regard, the research is of great importance to future scholars and researchers as the research serves as the source of empirical evidence in their research.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) refer to delimitations as boundaries the researcher sets in terms of the study of geographical limit, duration, methodology and theoretical scope. The delimitations for the study were as follows:

Geographical scope: The study was confined to Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe focusing only on two districts located in the Southeastern part of the Lowveld namely Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts. The location of the two districts is shown in Figure 1 below.

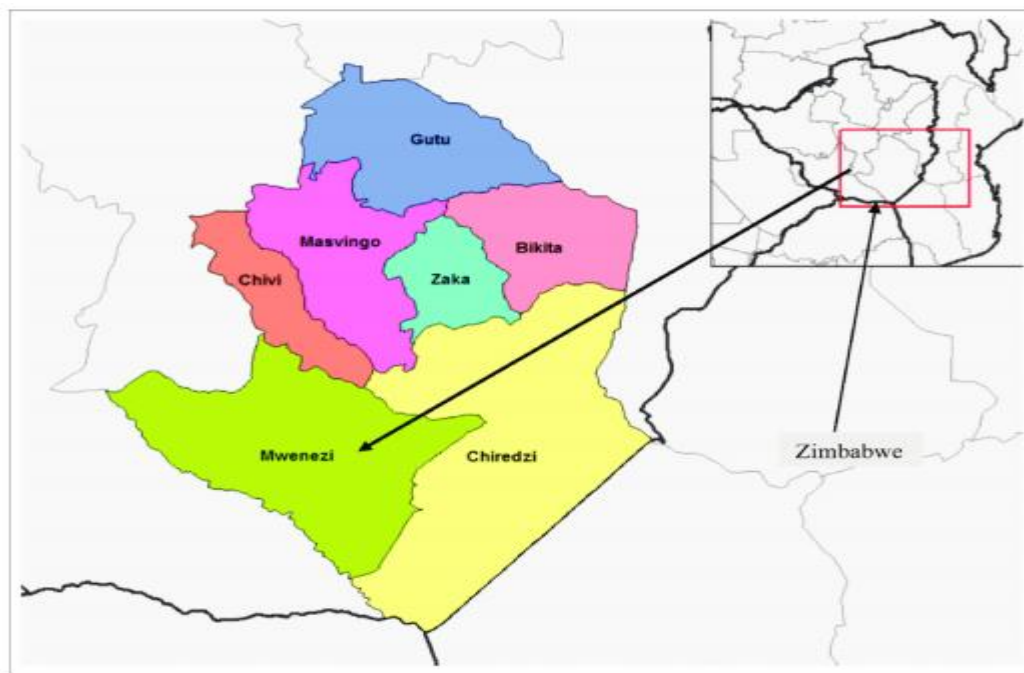


Figure 1: Location map for Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts of Zimbabwe

Time scope: The research specifically makes use of the period 2010-2021, the period in which several external shocks such as floods, drought, extreme weather conditions, cyclones and disease outbreaks severely hit the two provinces and the nation as a whole. This period

has also seen many intervention projects being implemented in the case areas as a strategy to improve livelihoods and build the resilience of the people, particularly women and youths.

Theoretical scope: The study was guided by three main theories namely the theory of intersectionality, the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) and the Pressure and Release (PAR) model. These theories help explain the degree of vulnerability and resilience of the young women in the Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts.

Methodological scope: The research was mixed-method research targeting young women who have benefitted from the youth empowerment interventions implemented in the two districts of interest. Both youths and women are some of the population groups mostly vulnerable to external shocks however, women and girls are the most vulnerable groups compared to men and boys due to gender disparities and gender and cultural norms. Hence, the study only targeted young women between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

The research comprises seven main chapters outlined chronologically as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This initial chapter introduces the study by outlining the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives and questions guiding the study, the significance of the study and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This second chapter critically discusses literature relevant to the study. The chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding the study as well as literature relating to the vulnerability and resilience of young women to external shocks. The main theories underpinning the research are presented and discussed in this chapter as well as theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature relating to the research objectives. The knowledge gap covered by the study is also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Contextual Shocks in Zimbabwe

This chapter presents an analysis of the contextual shocks in Zimbabwe. This is from previous studies conducted on contextual shocks and vulnerability of young women in Zimbabwe. The chapter presents literature on the prevalence of contextual shocks in Zimbabwe including cyclones, floods, drought, pandemics, political instability and macroeconomic instability. The chapter also presents the evolution of TVET in Zimbabwe and how it is influencing resilience-building among women.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter presents and discusses the various research procedures, tools, methods, and techniques employed in this study. The chapter also discusses epistemological and ontological perspectives underlying the research, the research approach, the research design, population, sampling techniques, research methods, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Presentation and Discussion of Results: Contextual Shocks Increasing Vulnerability of Female Youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi

The chapter presents, analyses and discusses the research findings from the questionnaires, interviews and document review and observations. The results are discussed by drawing on the literature review presented in Chapter Two to help answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. In this chapter discussion focuses on the results to improve the understanding of answering the research question: “What is the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts?”

Chapter 6: Results Presentation and Discussion: Efficacy of Life Skills, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Skills Training Intervention in Resilience Building for Female Youth

This Chapter discusses the results to improve the understanding of answering the research question: “What is the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building

among young rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts?” This chapter focuses on presenting, discussing and analyzing the data collected from the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, zooming in on the second research objective to evaluate the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training being incorporated into resilience building for rural young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi.

Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This seventh chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further research. The summary of the study will be two-fold that is the summary of the entire research as well as a summary of the major findings followed by the major conclusions drawn from the results. As part of this comprehensive overview, the chapter recommends a model based on the study’s findings. This model encapsulates the most effective approaches and strategies identified during the research process. By outlining a cohesive and practical framework, the recommended model offers a blueprint for implementing vocational and life skills training programs to build resilience among young rural women in similar contexts.

1.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the introduction of the study, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions, the significance of the study as well as delimitations of the research. The outline of the thesis has been presented indicating the organisation and flow of the research. The following chapter offers a critical review of relevant literature related to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

VOCATIONAL, LIFE SKILLS, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING AS PATHWAYS TO RESILIENCE

2.1 Introduction

The earlier chapter presented the introduction and background of the study. This chapter critically seeks to discuss literature relevant to the study. Snyder (2019) perceives literature review as a methodical way of gathering and synthesizing previous research. The utility of the literature review process and the secondary data it surveys lies in how the gathered insights can be integrated into findings thereby forming the base for advancing knowledge while addressing research questions (Snyder, 2019). Furthermore, the literature review unearths areas with disparities and areas where research is needed which is a critical component of theoretical frameworks and conceptual models (Dlamini & Johnston, 2016). Thus, a literature review gives an in-depth comprehension of the research topic and propels further research. This review of literature looks at scholarly work and academic papers and publications which examined the contribution of life and vocational skills to rural development in local communities. The chapter presents literature relating to the vulnerability and resilience of young women to external shocks as well as the impact of vocational skills, entrepreneurship skills and life skills training on resilience building. Empirical literature relating to the research objectives will also be presented in this chapter. The knowledge gap covered by the study is also outlined in this chapter.

2.2 Conceptualisation of vocational and life skills training

Within the policy realm, skills development, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), life skills training and entrepreneurship training are concepts that are used often interchangeably (Lyckander, 2021). Hence, it is good to provide clear specifications of what each concept entails.

2.2.1 Vocational education and training

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (2019) defines technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as education designed to provide participants with practical skills and knowledge needed for employment in certain occupations or trades. However, the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) (2017) argues this definition is too narrow in post-conflict reconstruction contexts where TVET programming is often part of broader goals like reintegration, economic stimulation, and recovery. UNESCO-UNEVOC (2017) therefore proposes a more expansive definition, stating simply that TVET develops knowledge and skills related to the world of work.

UNESCO-UNEVOC (2017) also provided a working definition of a holistic TVET approach, describing a system where both "soft" and "hard" skills are built within an integrated framework seeking to boost livelihoods, inclusion, community and individual agency. Similarly, Cantor (2017) stated that TVET includes learning that is relevant to the world of work in various contexts like schools and workplaces. It encompasses both preparation for particular occupations and careers generally (Brennan-Kemmis & Green, 2013). In both cases, the goal may be immediate employment or further education and training.

According to Oketch (2015), TVET refers to initial vocational preparation for youth entering the job market and continuing development for adults in flux. In other words, TVET includes both gaining first-time job skills and reskilling or upskilling later (Oketch, 2015). Training programs for the unemployed are sometimes designated Unemployed Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2017). Thus, vocational education and training is delivered in many forms. UNESCO-UNEVOC (2017) categorizes TVET provision into three main types: public/government-funded programs, private training in institutions and universities, and NGO/international organization-backed efforts.

It can be argued that TVET's identity stems from unique knowledge production, use and transfer, linked to particular teaching and learning approaches (Cedefop, 2017). Despite the varying definitions, this research broadly defines vocational education and training as initial training that equips female youth with employable skills to improve livelihoods. Such training can provide women with opportunities and resources to pursue economic goals helping reduce vulnerability.

2.2.2 Life Skills Training

Life skills training refers to training programs designed to teach a broad set of social and behavioural skills also referred to as “soft” or “non-cognitive” skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life (World Bank, 2018). According to Roodbari, Sahdipoor and Ghale (2013), the term life skills development and training is used to describe a wider array of institutions and activities that influence the daily living of humans. Life skills are abilities; individuals can learn which help them to live a fruitful life. Life skills have been defined in the Targeting Life Skills (TLS) model as skills that help an individual be successful in living a productive and satisfying life (Rao, 2015; Simona, 2015). Life skills training is the education or training designed to provide people with basic skills (Prashanthi & Devi, 2019). While access to secondary and tertiary education remains important, so does access to life skills training (Gerami *et al.*, 2015).

Life skills include decision-making skills (such as critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving skills), community living skills (such as effective communication, resisting peer pressure, building healthy relationships and conflict resolution skills), personal awareness and management skills (such as self-awareness, self-esteem, managing emotions, assertiveness, and stress management skills) (World Bank, 2018). According to Rao (2015), life skills are a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address the balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Rao (2015) listed the ten core life skills as self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-

solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, empathy, coping with stress and coping with emotion. These basic life skills provide readily available tools to deal with the challenges/demands of daily lives the youth face, from managing their emotions to making informed decisions (UNICEF, 2015).

Studies have shown that incorporating life skills training into technical and vocational education curricula enhances critical thinking abilities and impacts living life actively, being responsible in jobs and in future planning (Prajapati *et al.*, 2017; Paryono, 2017). Integration of life skills into TVET also fosters employability skills for students and helps them make the right decisions, solve problems effectively, build healthy relationships, communicate well, think critically and creatively, empathize with others, and manage their lives productively (Okolie *et al.*, 2020; Ondieki *et al.*, 2019).

Specifically, life skills training/education considers psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help students to make the right decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives healthily and productively (Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2017). The World Bank (2018, page?) classified life skills into three broad categories: (a) thinking skills that enhance the logical faculty of the brain using an analytical ability, thinking creatively and critically, and developing problem-solving skills and improving decision-making abilities, (b) social skills that include interpersonal skills, communication skills, leadership skills, management skills, advocacy skills, co-operation and team building skills and (c) emotional skills involves, knowing and being comfortable with oneself such as stress and self-management skills.

According to Prajapati *et al.* (2017), life skills training enhances critical thinking abilities, which further impact living life actively, being responsible in jobs and in future planning too. Prashanthi and Devi (2019), in their study, proved the effectiveness of life skills training in increasing mental and physical health, pro-social behavior and decreasing behavioral, social problems and self-destructive behaviours. Rao (2015) in his research showed that life skills training has a positive effect and improves social development, and emotional and

social adjustment. Life skills can be applied to actions directed at either the self, other people, or the local environment (Kwena, 2017). Studies also indicate that factors like adequate policies, infrastructure, public-private partnerships and qualified instructors influence the effectiveness of life skills training in TVET institutions (Abdullah et al., 2020; Fatma, 2017; Salleh & Puteh, 2017).

2.2.3 Entrepreneurship Skills Training

Entrepreneurial skills are skills needed for the process of designing, launching, and running a new business, which is often initially a small business (Akhmetshin *et al.*, 2019). Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business (Akhmetshin *et al.*, 2019). Entrepreneurship education programs often guide youth through the development of a business plan and may include simulations of business start-ups and operations (World Bank, 2020). More so, entrepreneurial skills training can also be defined as a more planned and orderly endeavour to widen or transform skills and knowledge through learning experiences to attain effective performance in an activity (Jusoh *et al.*, 2011). The study of Kwena (2017) documents that although life skills can resolve issues of unemployment and poverty reduction, it will not be achieved unless a successful pro-poor economic strategy is developed.

According to the World Bank (2020), entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business and these skills are not limited to the ability to take initiative, to creatively seek out and identify business opportunities, to develop budgets and forecast resource needs, to understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option and to communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas. Entrepreneurship skills training and education introduce the values and basics of starting and running a business (World Bank, 2020). They often guide participants through the development of business plans and may include simulations of business start-ups and operations. Entrepreneurial skills center around attitudes (soft skills), such as persistence, networking, and self-confidence on the one hand and enabling skills (hard skills) on the other hand, including basic start-up knowledge, business planning, financial literacy, and

managerial skills (Jusoh *et al.*, 2011). Entrepreneurship education and training equip people with the foundations to learn and develop the wide range of talents wished for innovation in all its forms, and with the power to improve capabilities and adapt to converting marketplace situations (Kwena, 2017).

2.3 Conceptualisation of resilience building

The emergence of the resilience concept has shifted the focus to self-reliance as a counter to vulnerability, particularly for the poor and the marginalised (Mavhura, 2016). The current resilience paradigm became popular after the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA): Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters 2005-2015 (Mavhura *et al.*, 2017). According to Mavhura *et al.* (2017), HFA is the milestone in endeavoring for the requirements and methods to establish disaster-resilient communities. The concept of resilience has evolved over the past few decades, especially considering the growing interest in preparing and responding to current and future challenges (including threats posed by major meteorological events) facing countries, states, and cities (Patel *et al.*, 2017).

Resilience is a term often used in many disciplines and resilience to external shocks and stress is an important factor in maintaining the sustainability of livelihoods. Generally, resilience is the ability to self-organize, learn, and adapt to risk hazards (Opiyo, Wasonga and Nyangito, 2014). The United Nations International Disaster Reduction Strategy (UNISDR) (2019) defines resilience as a transition process in which households or communities at risk effectively resist, absorb, adapt, and recover from disasters on time. Opiyo *et al.* (2014) also define resilience building as the ability of a country, community, environment, or family to respond to changes by sustaining or changing living standards without compromising its long-term prospects or future lives in the face of shock and/or stress. Martin (2015) further describes resilience dimensions as economic, social, technological, cultural, organisational and natural.

In the existing literature, resilience is also discussed in terms of dimensions or types (economic, social community, housing/ infrastructure, environmental and institutional) (Cutter, Ash and Emrich, 2014). Adger (2006) defines resilience as the capacity of a group or community to cope with external pressures and interference caused by social, economic, environmental, and political changes. Although there has been debate regarding the true definition of resilience, a common understanding is that it is multifaceted and involves many systems (Cutter *et al.*, 2014). Thus, Adger (2006) pointed out that to minimize the vulnerability of disasters, multilevel intermediaries may be necessary.

The focus of resilience for this present study is on social or community resilience as also defined by Chandra *et al.* (2017, p. 12):

...community resilience requires the community to have the ability to continuously develop capacities to solve for its vulnerability and develop the ability to help the community (i) prevent, withstand and mitigate the pressure of a hazard; (ii) recover in some way to restore the community to be self-sufficient and restore at least the same life and social function after a dangerous event and (iii) use knowledge from past responses to enhance the community's ability to resist the next hazard incident...

This insight from Chandra *et al.* (2017) provides a comprehensive and widely accepted definition of community resilience that accounts for the three element on absorptive adaptive and transformative capacities, which is central to the present study. The definition aligns with the conceptualization of community resilience proposed by influential organizations and frameworks in the field, such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Additionally, building resilience has become an important focus for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and programs. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in TVET systems globally, highlighting the need to improve resilience to future shocks and stressors (Odoni *et al.*, 2022). Strategies such as adopting flexible teaching models, strengthening digital infrastructure, diversifying funding sources,

and prioritizing staff development can enhance the resilience of TVET institutions (Gideon, 2023; Odondi *et al.*, 2022).

Incorporating resilience concepts into TVET curricula is also key. For example, a project in Vanuatu focused on developing accredited qualifications related to improving coastal community resilience to climate change impacts (Martin *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, integrating disaster risk reduction and resilience education into curricula has been piloted at the primary and TVET levels in Fiji (Havea *et al.*, 2020). Such initiatives help strengthen the resilience capabilities of both learners and surrounding communities. Overall, resilience is increasingly recognized as an essential capacity for TVET systems to develop in a world facing growing uncertainty.

From the review of literature, there are several definitions of resilience and some of the dominant definitions are summarised in Table 1 below.

Definition	Scholar
The capacity of a system to absorb and recover from the occurrence of a hazardous event; is reflective of a society's ability to cope and to continue to cope in the future.	Herman et al. (2011).
The ability to withstand an extreme event without suffering devastating losses, damage, diminished productivity, or quality of life without a large amount of assistance from outside the community.	Cutter (2016).
The ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure.	Paton and Johnston (2017).
The capability to bounce back and to use physical and economic resources effectively to aid recovery following exposure to hazards.	Timmerman (2020).
A sustainable network of physical systems and human communities, is capable of managing extreme events; during	Campanella and Godschalk (2012).

disaster, both must be able to survive and function under extreme stress.	
The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure.	Vanhove et al. (2016).
The capacity or ability of a community to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover quickly from the impacts of disaster.	Sweya et al. (2020).
A transition process in which households or communities at risk effectively resist, absorb, adapt, and recover from disasters promptly.	United Nations International Disaster Reduction Strategy (UNISDR) (2019).
The ability of a country, community, environment, or family to respond to changes by sustaining or changing living standards without compromising its long-term prospects or future lives in the face of shock and/or stress.	Opiyo, Wasonga and Nyangito (2014).

Table 1: Definitions of Resilience by Various Scholars

Source: *Researcher's constructions from literature review*

As shown in Table 1, there are various definitions of resilience relevant to human communities. However, most of the definitions use the terms *capacity* and *ability* of a system when defining the concept. This shows that many researchers agree that disaster resilience is the capacity/ability of a system, community, society, or people to resist, mitigate, respond and recover from the effect of an event. In general, several other key points can be extracted from the presented definitions. Meanwhile, this study assumes that there is no single best definition of resilience. It defines resilience as the ability of a socio-economic system to respond and recover from disasters. This includes those inherent conditions that allow the

system to absorb impacts and cope with the event, as well as post-event, adaptive processes that facilitate the ability of the social system to reorganise, change and learn in response to a threat (Mavhura, 2016). Thus, resilience is conceptualised as a process of transformation and not as ‘buffering’ as this will lead to the reinforcement of existing practices and prevent the questioning of underlying assumptions and power relations.

Pasteur (2011) in Nyahwo (2020) defined resilience as the ability of a system, community, or society to resist, absorb, cope with, and recover from the effects of disasters, and to adapt to longer-term changes in a timely and efficient manner without undermining their wellbeing. Resilience can take on different forms. In this study, resilient outcomes include the ability to manage risks reduce the occurrence of disasters associated with drought and move out of poverty. In this research, resilience building therefore is defined as increasing the capacity of young women potentially exposed to contextual shocks to resist, adapt and recover from the adverse effects of the contextual shocks.

2.4 Conceptualisation of vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability has been in use for over five decades, especially across disaster risk management, development economics, anthropology, sociology, geography, global change, and environmental and health studies (Mavhura *et al.*, 2017). Although in the prevailing literature, the definitions and measurements of the term ‘vulnerability’ vary across scholars and researchers. According to Shitangsu (2013), vulnerability has no universally accepted definition since scholars and researchers from various disciplines use and define vulnerability differently leading to diverse measuring methods that serve their interests and purposes.

Approaches to define ‘vulnerability’ vary across disciplines due to various components of risk, response and welfare outcomes (Shitangsu, 2013). Hence, conceptualizing and measuring vulnerability is an important stage along this path. The progression of vulnerability is best explained by Blaikie *et al.* (1994) in what they termed the PAR model. Blaikie *et al.* (1994) posited that vulnerability is a result of ‘dynamic pressures’ that are born

from ‘root causes’ within society which then lead to ‘unsafe conditions for some classes of people’. Hence, an ongoing need for DRR strategies to shift the focus from assessing hazardous events to reducing vulnerability in social systems (Briceño, 2015).

In disaster management, vulnerability is defined as the conditions determined by physical, societal, economic, and environmental factors or processes that increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards (Zhou *et al.*, 2014). Juran and Trivedi (2015) characterized vulnerability as multidimensional and defined as the absence of physical and ecological features, natural and human resources, and social, economic, political, and technological capacities that offer protection from the shocks of natural disasters.

Broadly defined, vulnerability is a potential risk of loss or injury (Burton, Rufat and Tate, 2018). This may include structural vulnerabilities of buildings and lifelines, biophysical vulnerabilities (physical exposure) of people and places to natural events, and social vulnerabilities based on different sensitivities based on social, political, and economic factors (Cutter, 2010). Social vulnerability is the susceptibility of social groups to various hazards, such as injury, death, loss or disruption of livelihoods and resilience or ability to recover adequately from shocks (Mavhura *et al.*, 2017). Kusenbach, Simms and Tobin (2010) believe that social vulnerability is the susceptibility of humans to shocks and stressors and the necessary conditions for their survival and adaptation, while physical vulnerability is regarded as harmful to the extent that the community and other systems are adversely affected making them incapable of adapting to such influence.

Social vulnerability is also the demographic, socioeconomic and institutional, characteristics of individuals, communities or systems that reduce the ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters or disasters (Solangaarachchi *et al.*, 2012; Siagian, *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, this research focused on social and physical vulnerabilities. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) can play a crucial role in building skills to increase resilience and adaptability in the face of disasters, as Pathak (2017) highlights. Integrating disaster preparedness and response training into TVET programs, as Osidipe (2017) suggests, can better equip youth and communities to cope with and recover from disasters.

In social science research, the term ‘vulnerability’ usually refers to the state of people and not the physical structure of the earth, economy or region (Wisner *et al.*, 2004). Vulnerabilities vary widely in social and geographic spaces (Cutter, 2010; Rahman, 2013). Social space refers to who is a disadvantaged group and is defined by people's political, economic and institutional capacities at specific times and places (Burton *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, geographic space describes the vulnerable location and scale of people and places (Cutter, 2010). Many definitions of vulnerability to hazards appear in the literature, most of which include components of susceptibility, exposure and adaptability (Table 2.2 below). Exposure is the degree to which the elements of the human and built environment intersect the spatial extent of the hazardous event. Susceptibility (also expressed as fragility or sensitivity) is an incentive for vulnerable exposed people and places. Adaptability and coping ability refer to the ability of people, communities and systems to adapt to the effects of adverse hazards and are explained by socioeconomic indicators (Burton *et al.*, 2018). Migration and displacement in the face of disasters also interact with vulnerabilities, as Wedekind *et al.* (2019) discuss. Providing accessible TVET opportunities for migrants and displaced persons can build resilience.

Definition	Scholar
Comprehensive measurement of the overall human welfare of the harmful effects of social, environmental, political and economic factors on humanity.	Kelman et al. (2016).
Dynamic pressures stemming from the “root causes” within a society which then lead to “unsafe conditions” for certain classes of people.	Lavender et al. (2020).
Measure of the ability to resist and recover from disasters in the short and long term.	Tso et al. (2020).

Exposure of people and property to losses caused by a given level of a hazard at a particular place, time, way and with a particular magnitude.	Fuchs and Thaler (2020).
A state of defencelessness that makes a society powerless to withstand the devastating effects of a disaster or natural hazard.	Mustafa et al. (2019).
The extent to which a system or sub-system is likely to experience harm due to a hazard or disaster	Le Bris et al. (2020).
Personal or group characteristics that affect the ability to predict, respond, resist and recover from the impact of natural disasters or hazards	Wisner (2018).
A state of susceptibility due to exposure to stress related to environmental and social changes and lack of adaptability	Ford et al. (2018).
The internal risk factors of a system or subject which are exposed to the hazard and correspond to its inherent trend of being affected or vulnerable	Cutter and Emrich (2016)
Conditions determined by physical, societal, economic, and environmental factors or processes that increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards	Zhou et al. (2014).
Absence of physical and ecological features, natural and human resources, and social, economic, political, and technological capacities that offer protection from the shocks of natural disaster	Juran and Trivedi (2015).
Potential risk of loss or injury	Burton, Rufat and Tate (2018).
Susceptibility of social groups to various hazards, such as injury, death, loss or disruption of livelihoods and resilience or ability to recover adequately from shocks	Mavhura et al. (2017).

Susceptibility of humans to shocks and stressors and the necessary conditions for their survival and adaptation, while physical vulnerability is regarded as harmful to the extent that the community and other systems are adversely affected making them incapable of adapting to such influence	Kusenbach, Simms and Tobin (2010).
Demographic, socioeconomic and institutional, characteristics of individuals, communities or systems that reduce the ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters or disasters	Solangaarachchi et al. (2012); Siagian, et al. (2014).

Table 2 Definitions of Vulnerability by Various Scholars

Source: *Researcher's constructions from literature review*

Table 2.2 provides a summary of some definitions of vulnerability by different authors and scholars. It is however, clear from the definitions summarised in Table 2.2 that the vulnerability of any system on any scale is reflective, of the system's tolerance and sensitivity to dangerous conditions and the system's ability or resilience to adapt, cope or recover from the influence of those conditions. In this study, 'vulnerability' refers to conditions determined by social, physical and economic factors or processes that increase the impact on natural disasters and the susceptibility of individuals, assets, communities and systems. In other words, vulnerability in this context refers to being susceptible to conditions caused by contextual shocks that prevent residents from sustaining their livelihoods during or after the disaster. Vulnerable groups are usually classified by age, class, race, gender, physical or mental disability. Depending on the nature of a hazard and the social and cultural background, different groups are more vulnerable than others (Rahman, 2013). Although the definitions of vulnerability vary, common elements of most definitions of vulnerability are the capacity to suffer harm from exposure to perturbations or stresses and this capacity is conditioned by a variety of internal factors that shape the state of the people, system/place

or being exposed to collapsing (expanding) endowments (Mutambara and Mutambara, 2014).

Overall, integrating TVET into disaster preparedness and response strategies can play a key role in building resilience, as authors like Pathak, Osidiye and Wedekind (2017) highlight. Targeting training programs to vulnerable populations identified through social vulnerability assessments can further increase adaptive capacities.

2.5 Impact of vocational, entrepreneurship and life skills training on resilience building

Life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training have been found to have positive impacts on resilience building. Resilience has been defined as the ability of people, households, communities, and institutions to prepare for, respond to and recover from shocks and stresses (Levine, Vaughan and Nicholson, 2017). Mutambara and Bodzo (2020) define resilience as the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth. Households and communities can achieve this through increased capacity to access assets, opportunities, and wider choices to improve their well-being outcomes and withstand shocks/ stresses in a favourable enabling environment (Mutambara and Mutambara, 2014). From the Pressure and Release (PAR) model, lack of training and appropriate skills are some of the driving factors for increased vulnerability and limited resilience to external shocks (Blaike *et al.*, 2004). In the same theoretical perspective, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) also predicts that human capital is one of the livelihood resources essential for increased resilience and reduced vulnerability (Scoones, 2009). Frankenberg *et al.* (2013) vocational training and education are associated with higher levels of resilience over the longer term. Weichselgartner and Pigeon (2015) and Pathirage *et al.* (2014) support the impact of training on resilience building and vulnerability reduction stating that vulnerability assessments, warning systems, legislation, and institutional and technical capacities that focus on physical hazard processes without addressing knowledge are incomplete and insufficient to improve resilience.

The important role of education and training in disaster risk reduction and mitigation has been recognized in the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*, followed by the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, the first major United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development which highlighted the need for population-wide resilience building and the enhancement of disaster preparedness for effective response and fast recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (Hoffman & Blecha, 2020; Pathirage *et al.*, 2014). From there several studies such as Weichselgartner and Pigeon (2015) and Torani *et al.* (2019) have documented the effects of training and education on resilience building and vulnerability reduction. The studies have found that education and training influence resilience building and vulnerability reduction directly and indirectly. The direct and indirect effects of education on disaster vulnerability and resilience building were summarised by Hoffman and Blecha (2020) as shown in Figure 2 below.

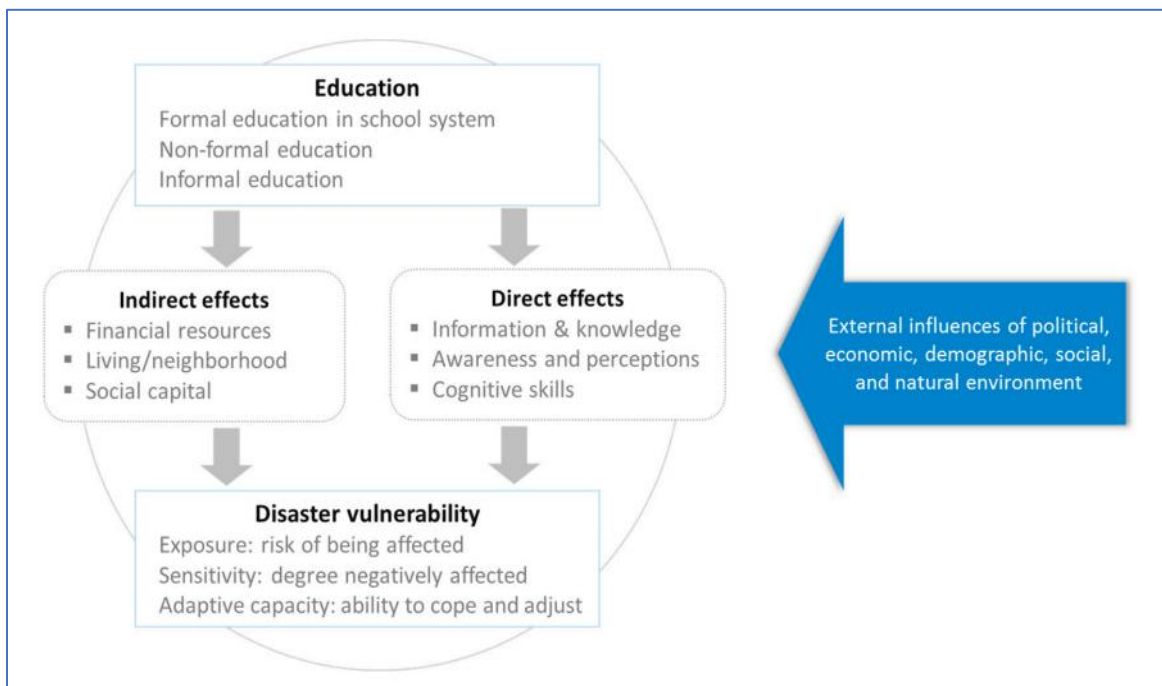


Figure 2: Conceptual relationship between education, resilience building and disaster vulnerability

Source: Hoffman and Blecha (2020, p.87)

As shown in Figure 2, education gives individuals access to knowledge and information about threats, as well as about ways to adequately take measures against them thereby reducing vulnerability to external influences. Hoffman and Blecha (2020) explicitly stated that through education and training, individuals directly acquire skills and competencies that can help reduce their vulnerability to external shocks and these include cognitive skills, decision-making skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills. Further, Hoffman and Blecha (2020) stated that skills training can potentially lead to resilience building and vulnerability reduction as communities gain literacy skills which enhance individuals' ability to read, understand, and use the information to make informed decisions and follow instructions in the context of mitigating, preparing, responding, and recovering from a shock or disaster. Karanci, Aksit and Dirik (2015) also indicated that in the aftermath of a disaster, knowledge gained from training and education can help people cope with the events and adapt to the changing environment.

Figure 2 shows how education and training can indirectly influence disaster vulnerability by having a positive impact on household's access to economic and informational resources, their settlement decision, and their social capital. According to Hoffman and Blecha (2020), on average, individuals with higher formal and informal education receive greater earnings and have more possibilities to diversify their income in case one of their income sources can no longer be sustained because of a natural hazard. In addition, they have more resources at their disposal to buffer the negative consequences of a shock (& Pigeon, 2015).

According to Moyo (2019), vocational training and education is an opportunity to raise awareness of disaster risk reduction and help reduce vulnerability of the marginalised groups. In support, Muttarak and Lutz (2014) reported that highly educated and trained individuals and societies are reported to have better preparedness and response to disasters, suffer lower negative impacts, and can recover faster. Shamano (2010) also added that vocational education and training is one of the strategies towards preparedness in disaster

management, which is the capability to foresee, react to and cope with the impacts of a disaster. Vocational and skills training represent some of the effective mechanisms for addressing gendered vulnerabilities towards resilience in disaster management as highlighted by Shamano (2010). Therefore, life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training play a significant role towards resilience building and reducing vulnerability to shocks. Muttarak and Lutz (2014) postulate that vocational training and education can play an important role in reducing the negative impacts of extreme climate events in direct and indirect ways. Directly, formal vocational training and education are considered a primary way individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies that can influence their adaptive capacity (Muttarak and Lutz, 2014).

A study by Moyo (2019) found that to reduce vulnerability to external shocks, women should extend their skills through vocational training. This form of training has the potential to empower women, thus making them self-sufficient and self-reliant (Moyo, 2019). Moyo (2019) further adds that vocational training should not only be limited to technical and entrepreneurial skills but also focus on their rights and responsibilities as women and address general lifelong survival skills. Thus, Mabaya (2020) recommended that governments should invest in women's and youth's quality education especially vocational training to reduce vulnerability to contextual shocks. Fatemi *et al.* (2017) support the role of education in transforming and enhancing the resilience of communities to disasters by indicating that individuals who have been through some form of education have more access to resources and are better able to cope with disasters. Similarly, Muttarak and Lutz (2014) stated that training and education enhance knowledge of disaster risks and how to effectively respond to such risks.

In support, Fatemi *et al.* (2017) further added that individual capacity building and vocational training are essential towards disaster risk reduction and resilience building because they improve knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, awareness, and motivation which are critical in disaster mitigation. Hoffman and Blecha (2020) also state that education and training can influence disaster vulnerability as the capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist,

and recover from natural hazards in direct and indirect ways. Directly, through education and learning, individuals acquire knowledge, abilities, skills and perceptions that allow them to effectively prepare for and cope with the consequences of disaster shocks (Hoffman and Blecha, 2020). Indirectly, education and training give individuals and households access to material, informational and social resources, which can help reduce disaster vulnerability (Hoffman & Blecha, 2020). In the same vein, Muttarak and Lutz (2014) stated that training and education, including both school-based and less formalized approaches, can also make an important contribution to reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and hazards, referring to the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards.

Public education and training including life skills and entrepreneurship skills training was also regarded by Mabaya (2020) as an effective mechanism towards addressing vulnerabilities caused by natural hazards and disasters towards building resilience in disaster management. Training ensures that stakeholders and communities are educated and trained to take pre-planned steps in minimising hazard threats and to vacate out of the threats' way. According to Ahmed (2019), life-skills training also intensifies the capacity of communities to detect and react to hazards and disasters. Learning is also among the three layers that constitute the community resilience heuristic framework which through application assists in defining key drivers and barriers towards building resilience in any society within a hazard-exposed population (Kruse *et al.*, 2017). Spivak (2005) cited in Moyo (2019) corroborates the findings of Ahmed (2019) that the lack of employment opportunities, limited educational or vocational skills, and other similar factors by women, make them more vulnerable to natural hazards.

As stated by Vaughter (2016), skills training plays a critical role towards resilience building as it improves absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and transformative capacity. Capacity building and training in disaster management help in capacity building as they seek to create human resources that can act together to deal with hazard events as well as to supply the

necessary equipment and make appropriate decisions (Cvetković *et al.*, 2021). Further, Cvetković *et al.* (2021) posit that capacity building and training for disaster mitigation is the process of developing skills to ensure that disasters have the least impact on individuals, institutions, and society.

Absorptive capacity is the ability to minimize exposure to shocks and stresses through preventative measures and appropriate coping strategies to recover quickly and avoid permanent, negative impacts (Hemstock *et al.*, 2017). Disaster risk reduction/management (DRR/DRM) supports improved absorptive capacity by helping households and communities reduce risk and absorb the impacts of shocks without permanent, negative impacts on their livelihoods (Moyo, 2019). Adaptive capacity is the ability to make proactive and informed choices about alternative livelihood strategies based on an understanding of changing conditions (World Bank, 2018). According to Cutter (2016), improved adaptive capacity results from livelihoods diversification, asset accumulation, and improved social and human capital which in turn result in disaster risk reduction.

Patel *et al.* (2017) state that transformative capacity encompasses the governance mechanisms, policies/regulations, infrastructure, community networks, and formal and informal social protection mechanisms that constitute the enabling environment necessary for systemic change. Transformative capacity refers to system-level changes that enable more lasting resilience at the household and community levels (Cutter, 2016). According to Moyo (2019), long-term and sustainable resilience building is not possible without building transformative capacity, which addresses the underlying drivers of risk and vulnerability, and promotes social cohesion through public assets and human capital.

2.6 Effective strategies towards building resilience among vulnerable young women

The dynamic nature of vulnerability and the intensification of climate and environmental shocks necessitate the need to build resilience among communities. From previous literature,

several strategies towards building resilience among vulnerable populations have been widely documented. For instance, Mabaya (2020), stated that promoting the participation of women and youths in community planning and decision-making can also help in building resilience among the marginalised groups. Research shows that women and girls are not involved in community decision-making (Mabaya, 2020). According to Rahman (2013), women and girls play an important role before, during and after a disaster.

Mwape (2010) further argues that ignorance of gender differences leads to a lack of sensitivity and efficiency of relief operations, which largely circumvent the needs of women and their potential to help in relieving and mitigation efforts. Therefore, women's active participation can potentially increase the effectiveness of disaster prevention or mitigation measures. However, the important or potential roles played by women are often undermined and women themselves are largely marginalized in the development of policies and decision-making processes, and their voices are not heard (UNISDR, 2019). Since women have extensive experience with the family and surrounding environment, they can help assess vulnerability and capacities (Rahman, 2013).

The other strategy is ensuring integrated and holistic programming approaches. According to Mavhura *et al.* (2017), resilience building relies on integrated programming, a cross-sectoral approach with a long-term commitment to improving the three critical resilience capacities: absorptive capacity (disaster risk management), adaptive capacity (longer-term livelihood investments) and transformative capacity (improved governance and enabling conditions). Thus, programmes with an integrated approach ensure that various stakeholders work together to address key leverage points and adopt complementary, synergistic strategies to promote resilience among communities (UNISDR, 2019). In the same vein, Wisner (2018) adds that building resilience is a long-term process (that is 10 to 15 years) that requires the sustained commitment of all relevant actors. Thus, to ensure resilience building, stakeholders such as NGOs should support governments in developing

comprehensive national plans and align their support behind those plans in a coordinated manner and according to their comparative advantage.

Effective disaster preparedness is also critical towards addressing gendered vulnerabilities and improving resilience building (Mavhura *et al.*, 2017). UNISDR (2019) opines that preparedness in disaster management is the capability to foresee, react to and cope with the impacts of a disaster. There are nine key components of disaster preparedness namely vulnerability assessment, planning, effective institutions, warning systems, information systems, response mechanisms, resource base, rehearsals, public education and training (Mabaya, 2020; UNISDR, 2019). These key components represent some of the effective mechanisms for addressing gendered vulnerabilities towards resilience building.

2.7 Effective strategies towards building resilience among vulnerable young women

There is an increasing body of research that examines how vocational skills, life skills entrepreneurship training, and education impact disaster vulnerability and how they can be utilised to enhance the resilience of households and communities. Furthermore, the literature review has examined multiple studies that specifically investigate gender-based susceptibilities to external disturbances. This section will now examine specific findings from the literature regarding the impact of various types of training on the development of resilience and the reduction of vulnerability. It will also explore the vulnerability of young women to external shocks in their environment.

The research conducted by Hoffman and Blecha (2020) examined the influence of education on the mitigation of vulnerability to disasters in Southeast Asia. The study revealed that education has a positive impact on reducing vulnerability to disasters by equipping individuals with knowledge and skills that enhance their ability to anticipate, cope with, withstand, and recover from natural hazards. The study revealed that individuals acquire knowledge and skills through the process of education and learning.

Disaster resilience refers to the collective knowledge, abilities, skills, and perceptions that enable individuals to adequately prepare for and effectively deal with the consequences of disaster shocks. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that education provides individuals and households with the means to obtain material, informational, and social resources. This can effectively decrease their susceptibility to disasters and contribute to the development of resilience. In a systematic literature review, Torani et al. (2019) investigated the impact of education and training on disaster risk reduction and preparedness in vulnerable individuals in Iran. The literature search was restricted to peer-reviewed articles written in English and published from 1990 to 2017. The study revealed that the primary objective of disaster education and training is to impart knowledge to vulnerable individuals and groups, enabling them to take proactive measures in order to minimise their susceptibility to disasters.

Pereznieto, Harper and Jones (2011) investigated the influence of macro-level disturbances on the younger population in Ghana, Mozambique, and Vietnam. Their literature review conducted at their desk served as the foundation for the study's conceptual framework. The study was conducted using qualitative methods and revealed that young women in the three countries are particularly susceptible to external shocks, such as natural disasters and economic downturns, due to elevated levels of unemployment and limited access to education among women and young girls. The study thus suggested providing training and enhancing capacity development to decrease vulnerability and foster resilience among young women.

Hamidazada et al. (2019) examined the susceptibility of women living in rural areas in Afghanistan. The study also examined the factors that contribute to the heightened vulnerability of rural Afghan women to disasters caused by natural hazards. The study collected data by conducting focus group discussions with rural women and men, as well as person-to-person interviews with government and NGO employees at the national and local levels in Afghanistan. The study employed the grounded theory and interpretive structural

modelling methodologies to analyse the collected data. The study revealed that Afghan rural women exhibit a higher susceptibility to natural hazards and disasters.

Hemstock et al. (2017) examined the impact of formal education in the technical, vocational education and training sectors on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the Pacific islands region. The researchers argue that the lack of adequate formal training on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the region has resulted in maladaptation and increased vulnerability and risk, especially among young people and women (Hemstock et al., 2017). The data collected for this study were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. They were analysed using various methods including descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and content analysis. The study revealed a significant correlation between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the ability to adapt to climate change and reduce the risks associated with disasters. Vaughter (2016) corroborates the conclusions of Hemstock et al. (2017) by asserting that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a crucial role in enhancing society's ability to withstand and recover from hazards. In addition, Vaughter (2016) states that training plays a crucial role in enhancing the resilience of susceptible populations, enabling them to effectively adapt to potential disruptions.

In their study, Muttarak and Lutz (2014) investigated the extent to which education plays a crucial role in mitigating susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change. The primary hypothesis examined was that societies can enhance their long-term defence against the perils of climate change by bolstering human capacity, primarily through vocational training and education. The researchers also discovered that during emergencies, such as when a disaster occurs, individuals who are educated and trained may be more competent in their ability to respond and take action. Muttarak and Lutz (2014) argue that education and training improve the acquisition of knowledge, values, and priorities, as well as the ability to plan for the future and allocate resources effectively. These factors are crucial for building resilience.

In a study conducted by Kwena (2017), the impact of life skills training and mentorship on youth empowerment in Kenya was examined. Kwena (2017) aimed to determine the impact of life skills training on youth empowerment and to examine the influence of entrepreneurship training on youth empowerment. The study utilised the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition and the psychological theory of entrepreneurship as its foundation. A descriptive research design was utilised to collect data through the administration of questionnaires and interviews. The study discovered that providing training in life skills and entrepreneurship has a positive impact on empowering young people. This empowerment can then be translated into projects that generate income, thereby reducing the vulnerability of young people to economic shocks.

The primary aim of the Sigenu (2021) study was to examine the impact of drought hazards on female smallholder farmers in South Africa and evaluate their ability to cope, adapt, and remain resilient in the face of droughts, in comparison to male smallholder farmers in rural communities. The study also aimed to evaluate the susceptibility of female smallholder farmers to drought hazards. Furthermore, the study aimed to examine the drought resilience of female smallholder farmers in comparison to male smallholder farmers. Moreover, the study examined the strategies employed by female smallholder farmers to cope with and adapt to drought conditions. Finally, the study evaluated the communication tactics utilised by male and female small-scale farmers to promote resilience against drought. The study determined that female smallholder farmers exhibited greater susceptibility to drought in comparison to their male counterparts. The study also revealed that while both male and female smallholder farmers demonstrate resilience, male farmers exhibit greater resilience due to their access to and control over farming resources and agricultural benefits.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The independent variables are life skills

training, entrepreneurship skills training and vocational skills training. The dependent variable is resilience building. The mediating variables are the factors increasing the vulnerability of female youths to contextual shocks.

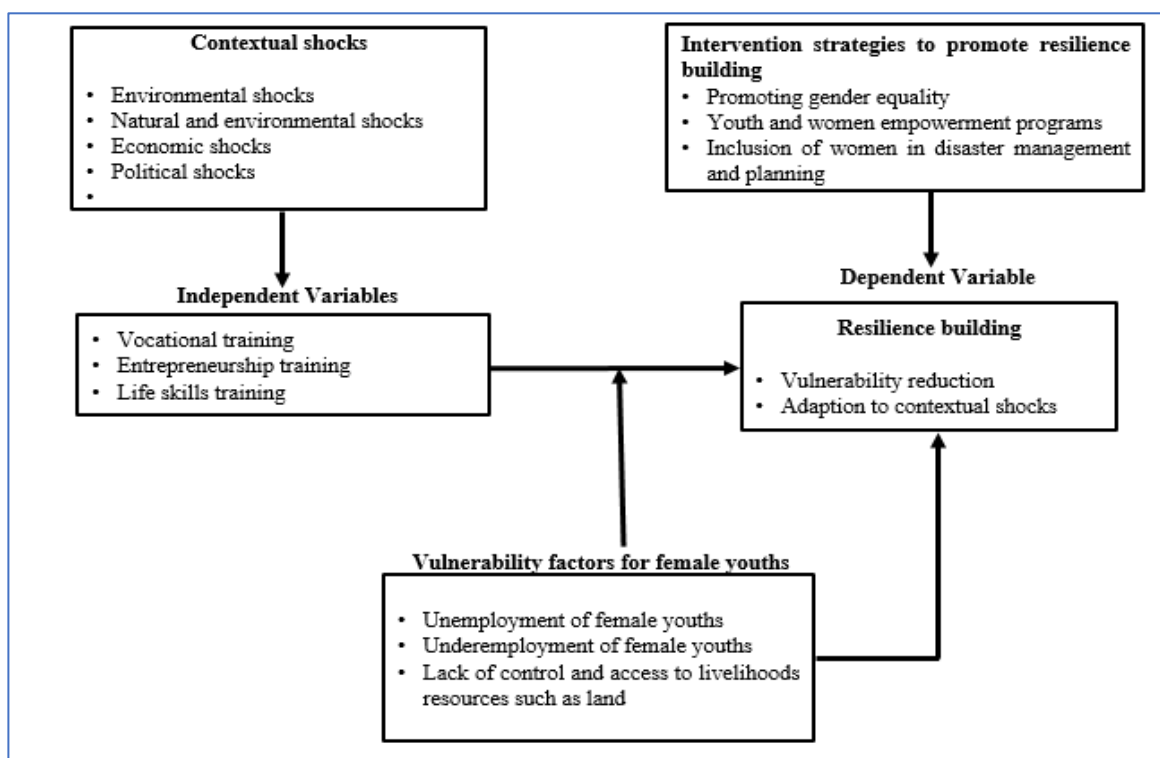


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's illustration

This framework draws heavily on the Pressure and Release (PAR) model developed by Blaikie *et al.* (2004). The PAR model posits that vulnerability to disasters is influenced by root causes, dynamic pressures, and unsafe conditions. Root causes include limited access to resources, skills training, education, and technology. As Blaikie *et al.* (2004), explain, these root causes lead to dynamic pressures like food insecurity, unemployment, poverty, and social inequality. Together, the root causes and dynamic pressures produce unsafe conditions that increase vulnerability to disasters and reduce resilience (Blaikie *et al.*, 2004).

The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 3 reflects the PAR model by showing how contextual shocks create vulnerability for female youth. As noted by Enarson (2012), Mavhura and Mucherera (2020), and Zhou *et al.* (2014), factors like unemployment, underemployment, and lack of access to resources disproportionately impact young women. Enarson (2012) argues that disaster impacts are experienced differently based on gender, with women facing higher economic and social losses. Similarly, Mavhura and Mucherera (2020) found that female youth in Zimbabwe were more vulnerable to cyclones due to existing gender inequalities. For instance, a study on the impacts of the 2019 Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, revealed that young women faced challenges in accessing relief aid and experienced disruptions in their education and livelihoods (CARE 2019; RGA Cyclone IDAI 2019). Additionally, Zhou *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that young women in China had fewer coping mechanisms when impacted by earthquakes. These studies collectively show that conditions like poverty, inequality, and unemployment make it difficult for young women to cope with and recover from shocks like environmental disasters, health pandemics, economic crises, and political instability.

To build resilience and reduce vulnerability, the framework draws on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). As Scoones (2009) explains, the SLF identifies five livelihood resources that influence resilience: human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital. Human capital in the form of skills training is particularly important according to Scoones. Of these capitals, human capital in the form of skills training is particularly important. As shown in Figure 2.2 and supported by research from Fatemi *et al.* (2017), Frankenberg *et al.* (2013), Mabaya (2020), Moyo (2019), Pathirage *et al.* (2014) and Weichselgartner and Pigeon (2015), interventions aimed at building human capital through vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, and life skills education can significantly strengthen the resilience of young women to contextual shocks.

For example, Hoffman and Blecha (2020) demonstrate through a study in Nepal that skills training equips women with the capacity to better anticipate, cope with, resist and recover

from disasters. Both hard skills (e.g., vocational training) and soft skills (e.g., life skills education) were shown to play an important role. Specifically, Hoffman and Blecha found that training women in agriculture and financial literacy helped them be more prepared and resilient when facing floods and landslides. The framework shows that in combination with other interventions like gender equality promotion (Mabaya 2020), disaster management inclusion (Mwape 2010), and women's empowerment programs, skills training helps mediate the impacts of shocks by reducing vulnerability and nurturing resilience.

Mabaya (2020) supports this in a study on climate change adaptation in Zimbabwe, showing that programs promoting gender equality, agricultural training, and women's empowerment led to improved food security outcomes. Similarly, Mwape's (2010) research demonstrated that actively including women in disaster management planning in Zambia allowed for more holistic and resilient approaches to flooding. By combining both hard and soft skills training with related social interventions, young women can be equipped with greater agency and capacity to cope with contextual shocks (Hoffman & Blecha, 2020).

Additionally, Fatemi *et al.* (2017) argue for the importance of an integrated approach across skills training programs to effectively target root causes of vulnerability like unemployment and poverty. By offering bundled vocational, entrepreneurial, and life skills training, marginalized groups like female youth can more sustainably build resilience across shocks. Frankenberg *et al.* (2013) support this with evidence from Indonesia showing that resilience following earthquakes was higher for women with more diverse skill sets spanning occupations, education levels, and community involvement. Therefore, the conceptual framework emphasizes the need for multifaceted skills training rather than isolated interventions.

In sum, the conceptual framework integrates key elements of the PAR model and SLF to illustrate the study variables and their hypothesized relationships. It guides data analysis towards the research objectives of examining contextual shocks impacting female youth vulnerability; evaluating existing skills training programs; and formulating evidence-based

recommendations to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability through skills training and related interventions.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the theoretical lens of decoloniality, which offers a critical perspective for examining systemic inequalities and vulnerabilities in the postcolonial context of Zimbabwe. As Mpofu (2018) explains, decoloniality refers to “an epistemic perspective that calls for the questioning, rewriting, and broadening of modes of knowledge production in order to eliminate the hegemonic Eurocentrism that marginalizes other epistemologies.” In particular, a decolonial framework highlights the need to challenge Western concepts, methods and knowledge systems that underpin research, policy and practice (Manthalu & Waghid, 2019).

Within development research and practice, Afolabi (2020) argues that applying a decolonial lens helps avoid perpetuating imperialist ideologies and assumptions. For instance, conceptualizations of ‘resilience’ and ‘vulnerability’ common in Western disaster studies have been critiqued for lacking sensitivity to local worldviews and knowledge systems (Kelman et al., 2016). Indigenous communities may have different understandings of risk, adaptation and transformation not captured by external definitions and indicators. By centering local voices and perspectives, decolonial research can lead to more contextually grounded insights on building systemic resilience. In the context of technical and vocational education, authors like Anthonie (2019), Dube et al. (2020) and Tikly (2019) emphasize the need for decolonized approaches that challenge Eurocentric curricula and disrupt the view that Western knowledge is inherently superior. Anthonie (2019) and Staeger (2016), for example, critique the uncritical transfer of TVET models from the Global North that fail to address Africa’s priorities and realities. Applying decolonial thinking would involve reimagining TVET systems, content and pedagogies in ways aligned with indigenous cultures, values and needs.

For this study on skills training and women's resilience in Zimbabwe, a decolonial framework highlights several imperatives including recognizing local knowledge systems. Indigenous communities possess traditional knowledge of risk management passed down over generations that is often excluded from policy and practice (Kelman et al., 2016). Centering local perspectives and traditional coping strategies in the research enriches understanding of existing resilience capabilities. Another imperative entails avoiding deficit framings. Mainstream vulnerability discourse tends to construct at-risk communities as lacking in capacity, deficits that must be filled by outside experts (Manuel-Navarrete & Pelling, 2015). A decolonial approach emphasizes identifying inherent strengths, resources and forms of resilience within marginalized groups. Power relations and inequality are yet another factor to consider. Disaster impacts reflect and amplify existing societal inequalities structured along gender, race, class and other axes of marginalization (Enarson, 2012). Applying a decolonial lens reveals how skills training strategies are shaped by unequal power relations requiring transformative change. Through incorporating these decolonial perspectives, this study aims to generate contextually situated insights on enhancing young women's resilience in Zimbabwe in ways that challenge, rather than reproduce, systemic inequities and dominant regimes of knowledge production. The research methodology outlined in the next chapter operationalizes a decolonial approach through participatory, feminist and indigenous research principles.

2.10 Summary of Empirical Literature Review and Literature Gaps

This study has been backed by empirical evidence. Hence, this section presents a summary of the empirical review of related studies that have been conducted across the globe. Previous studies have attempted to assess the gendered impacts of natural hazards in different countries using different methodologies. However, the studies have reached a consensus that contextual shocks such as natural hazards and economic crises do not equally affect all groups of people hence the vulnerabilities vary across gender, age, and income level among other socio-economic factors. Notably, the majority of the studies have found that women and young girls particularly from rural areas among other marginalized groups are more

vulnerable to contextual shocks compared to their male counterparts. Table 2.3 below provides a summary of the previously reviewed empirical studies.

Author & Year	Country	Main Aim(s)	Methodology	Main Findings
Rahman (2013)	Bangladesh	To understand women's special vulnerabilities to natural disasters and their coping mechanisms	Both secondary and primary data were collected and analyzed using content analysis	Natural disasters increase and reinforce gender inequalities making young women more vulnerable
Hamidzada and Cruz (2017)	Afghanistan	To understand vulnerability of women to natural hazards in Afghanistan	Literature review and FGDs	Women's traditional roles make them more susceptible to disasters
Hamidzada <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Afghanistan	To establish vulnerability factors for Afghan rural women due to disasters	Qualitative study using personal interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs)	Afghan rural women are more vulnerable to natural hazards and disasters.
Jahangiri, Izadkhar & Sadighi (2014)	Iran	To identify factors driving women's vulnerability to natural disasters	Qualitative study using FGDs and literature review	The most vulnerable group to natural disasters in a society are women and girls
Hoffmann and Blecha (2020)	Southeast Asia	To examine the effect of education on disaster vulnerability reduction	Desk research	Education and training help in reducing vulnerabilities to disasters.
Toorani <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Iran	To review the importance of education and the effect of different methods of education on disaster risk reduction and preparedness in vulnerable people.	Systematic literature review	Education positively reduces vulnerability to disaster risks
Sigenu (2021)	South Africa	To assess the vulnerability of smallholder female farmers regarding drought hazards	Quantitative and qualitative data collected using questionnaires and interviews	Female farmers more vulnerable to drought and less resilient to drought compared to male farmers
Pereznieto <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Ghana, Mozambique and Vietnam	To understand youth vulnerabilities to macroeconomic shocks	Desk research	Youth particularly female youths are more vulnerable to shocks
Mapingure (2020)	Zimbabwe	To analyse vulnerability and adaptation of rural women to climate change	Mixed method research using questionnaires and observations	Women in rural areas are more vulnerable to climate change

Mabaya (2020)	Zimbabwe	To establish gendered vulnerabilities experienced by Rusitu Valley inhabitants as a result of Cyclone Idai disaster	Qualitative study using interviews, secondary data and FGDs	Women and girls were more vulnerable during and after the disaster
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Table 3: Summary of relevant empirical literature to the study

While studies of gendered vulnerabilities to external shocks are abundant across the globe, including Zimbabwe, there have not been many studies that explicitly consider how women, particularly young women, are vulnerable to external shocks and their degree of resilience. Some studies have examined the impacts on women after Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe. This study therefore seeks to fill the remaining gaps in knowledge. As previously stated, vulnerabilities vary across physical geographic spaces. However, in the past few decades, most studies have been conducted in countries in Asia and the American continent, such as Afghanistan, Iran, USA, Pakistan, Chile, Bangladesh and Nepal. Very few studies have been conducted in Africa, and in particular, no comprehensive study has been conducted in the context of Zimbabwe examining resilience beyond a specific disaster event. The need for broader research in the context of Zimbabwe is based on the prevalence of external shocks in Zimbabwe. According to Mutambara and Mutambara (2014), Zimbabwe is one of the countries deemed to be vulnerable to external shocks such as climate change due to a wide range of factors as most of the country is dependent on rain-fed subsistence agriculture making it highly vulnerable to vicissitude of weather patterns. In addition, no study has been conducted to examine the influence of vocational training on resilience building in Zimbabwe targeting disaster-prone areas such as the Southeast region of Zimbabwe. This study therefore sought to fill the gap in knowledge by examining the impact of vocational skills, life skills and entrepreneurship skills training on resilience building of young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

2.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter has critically discussed literature relevant to the study. The conceptualizations of key terms to the study have been provided followed by a literature review relating to the research objectives. In particular, literature relating to the impacts of vocational, life skills and

entrepreneurship training on resilience building has been critically reviewed followed by literature on the vulnerability of female youths to contextual shocks. In addition, literature on effective strategies towards promoting resilience building has also been critically reviewed. Moreover, the chapter presented an empirical literature review relating to the vulnerability and resilience of young women to external shocks. Thereafter, the knowledge gaps derived from the empirical and theoretical literature review have been presented. The next chapter therefore presents the research methodology adopted in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUAL SHOCKS IN ZIMBABWE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the contextual shocks in Zimbabwe as well as studies conducted on the contextual shocks and vulnerability of young women in Zimbabwe. In particular, the chapter presents literature on the prevalence of contextual shocks in Zimbabwe including cyclones, floods, drought, pandemics, political instability and macroeconomic instability. The chapter also presents the evolution of TVET in Zimbabwe and how it is influencing resilience-building among women.

3.1 Prevalence of Contextual Shocks in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is located in the Southern African tropical sub-region between 15° and 23°S, 25°E and 33°E, and lies on the African Plateau, with about 95% of the land lying between 300 and 2400 meters above sea level (ZIMSTATS, 2020). It has a rich wealth of natural resources, including minerals, flora and fauna, and rich soils which sustain a variety of farming activities which include game ranching, agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry (Mamvura, 2022). Its average annual temperatures can generally be divided into three categories: the hot region in the low veld areas to the extreme north and south (over 20°C), the warm region covering the rest of the Middle veld and virtually all the Highveld (15°-20°C) and the cool region covering the highest parts of the country (15°C or less). It has four distinct seasons which generally have 12 hours of daylight, while the rains ranging between 400 and 1400 mm per annum fall in summer, except for the occasional drought periods (ZIMSTATS, 2020). Besides this, the country has been hard hit by several shocks, over the past four decades since 1980, Zimbabwe has experienced several unprecedented economic, environmental and political shocks and stresses. These shocks include recurrent droughts, cyclones, extreme weather conditions, climate change, floods, and economic crises such as the 2007-8

hyperinflation crisis, disease outbreaks, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Nyahwo (2020), Zimbabwe has been affected by numerous shocks and stressors in the last several decades, many of which have had long-lasting impacts. Frequent natural disasters such as droughts and floods have further exacerbated poverty levels, especially because the predominant economic activity, rain-fed agriculture, is vulnerable to climatic variability (Shamano, 2010). As highlighted by Tekwa (2020), drought, the most common natural disaster affecting Zimbabwe, caused six of the ten biggest natural disasters between 1990 and 2020 including epidemics (e.g., the 2008 cholera outbreak) and pandemics (e.g., the novel Coronavirus of 2019).

3.1.1 Climate change and related hazards in Zimbabwe

Global climate change is viewed as a serious issue by the Government of Zimbabwe. The Government signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit and ratified it in November of the same year. The driving forces behind this concern stem not so much from problems of reducing Zimbabwe's emission of greenhouse gases (GHG), but rather the potentially serious impacts that global climate change might have on the country (Tui *et al.*, 2021). Most parts of Zimbabwe are vulnerable to the hazards caused by climate change (Shamano, 2010). According to Chidakwa *et al.* (2020), Zimbabwe is already experiencing the effects of climate change, notably increasing temperatures, rainfall variability and extreme events. The country is particularly vulnerable because of its heavy dependence on rain-fed agriculture and climate-sensitive resources (Chanza, 2018).

In Zimbabwe, climate change has caused average temperatures to rise by about 3°C and annual rainfall could decline by between 5% and 18%, especially in the south (Tui *et al.*, 2021). Due to this climate change, several climate-related natural hazards have hard-hit the country over the years. For instance, normal weather hazards experienced in Zimbabwe include tropical cyclones causing intense rainfall (more than 100mm in 24 hours) and thunderstorms sometimes leading to hailstorms, floods and flash flooding (Nyahunda, Chibvura & Tirivangasi, 2021). However, cyclones occur rarely in Zimbabwe. On average, they happen about once per year and the hardest hit regions are Mashonaland East and Manicaland. The typical cyclone season

depends on the summer monsoon. In the months before (May to June) and after (October to November), the most severe storms occur (Mavhura, 2020).

The country is often affected by droughts lasting from one to three years and occurring every five to seven years (Chanza, 2018) because of a natural cycle that has been partly influenced by a climate pattern called the El Niño-Southern Oscillation which originates in the Pacific Ocean (Tui *et al.*, 2021). According to Chidakwa *et al.* (2022), climate change impacts in Zimbabwe are related to water supply and food security. The country is already prone to droughts, which have become more recurrent over the last two decades. The geographical location of Zimbabwe in the tropics makes it vulnerable to shifting rainfall patterns, and water resources availability (Nyahunda *et al.*, 2021). In the context of cyclones, Cyclone Idai followed in the wake of the February 2000 Cyclone Eline, the March 2003 Cyclone Japhet, the 2013 Cyclone Cela and the February 2017 Cyclone Dineo (Mabaya, 2020). On the other hand, floods tend to occur in the southern and northern low-lying areas of Zimbabwe, in the paths of cyclones, in between river confluences, and downstream of major dams. According to Mamombe (2017), the frequency of floods and droughts is increasing in Zimbabwe because of climate change. Due to the phenomenon of climate change, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and hazards are increasing all over the world, especially in Zimbabwe including drought (e.g., the 2015-2017 El Nino drought), cyclones, floods (e.g., the Tokwe-Mukosi flooding of 2014), landslides, earthquakes and tremors (Chidakwa *et al.*, 2022; Nyahunda *et al.*, 2021).

3.1.2 Epidemics and pandemics in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is also vulnerable to health-related disasters from vector-borne diseases such as malaria, and waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid to HIV and AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics. In Zimbabwe, the first official case of COVID-19 was reported on 20 March 2020 (Chidakwa *et al.*, 2022). The novel pandemic brought significant health and economic effects making most people vulnerable particularly women and children (Nyahunda *et al.*, 2021).

Besides, HIV and AIDS are other pandemics of concern in Zimbabwe. The country is experiencing one of the world's most severe HIV and AIDS crises (Chingwaru & Vidmar, 2018). The HIV and AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe took hold in the mid-1980s. According to existing research, the rate of annual new HIV and AIDS infections among adults in Zimbabwe

is 0.38 per cent (0.54 per cent among women and 0.20 per cent among men) or approximately 31,000 persons over a year (Mugauri *et al.*, 2022). The prevalence of HIV among adults was 12.9 per cent, which corresponds to approximately 1.23 million adults in Zimbabwe living with HIV and AIDS in 2020 (Mugauri *et al.*, 2022). Generally, the survey by WHO found that HIV and AIDS prevalence in Zimbabwe is higher among women than men (15.3 per cent vs. 10.2 per cent).

Apart from COVID-19 and HIV and AIDS pandemics, the other epidemic prevalent in Zimbabwe is malaria. Malaria is a major health problem in Zimbabwe with about half the population at risk (Dube *et al.*, 2019). Malaria epidemiology varies across the country ranging from year-round transmission in lowland areas to epidemic-prone highland areas (Gunda *et al.*, 2017). According to Gavi *et al.* (2021), malaria transmission within Zimbabwe is spatially heterogeneous as areas from the northwest to southeast borders of the country are characterized as high malaria-risk zones. However, areas along the central plateau and in the southwest of the country experience little to no malaria transmission (Gunda *et al.*, 2017). The rainy season typically runs from October to April, with increasing average annual rainfall from the west to the east of the country such that half (50%) of the Zimbabwean population is at risk of malaria infection (Gavi *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid are among some of the major public health problems in Zimbabwe. The deterioration of the Zimbabwean sanitary and health infrastructures over the past years has led to a lack of safe drinking water and health services, especially in and around the cities, which led to cholera and typhoid outbreaks. Zimbabwe recorded its first case of cholera in 1972 in Mashonaland East Province, along the Nyamapanda border (Cuneo, Sollom, & Beyrer, 2017). From 1992, cholera occurred in approximately 10-year cycles followed by five-year cycles until 2002 (Jutla *et al.*, 2015). Since then, outbreaks have occurred almost on an annual basis in particular in the main urban centres and vulnerable districts along the borders (Jutla *et al.*, 2015). Between August 2008 and July 2009, Zimbabwe faced an unprecedented cholera outbreak, which resulted in 98,592 cases and 4,288 deaths (Cuneo *et al.*, 2017). In Zimbabwe, studies done in the past and a recent one by UNICEF in 2018 indicated that cholera is endemic and displays a seasonal pattern which correlates with the rainy season (November to April/June). Generally, most cases are recorded in five (Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Manicaland and Masvingo) out of the country's 10 provinces, including some suburbs of Harare reporting 69.5% of the burden

(Matambo *et al.*, 2016). The recent outbreak in Zimbabwe (in 2018-2019), affected several suburbs of Harare and spread to other parts of the country including districts such as Murehwa in Mashonaland East, Gokwe and Mberengwa in the Midlands province. Outbreaks of waterborne diseases in Zimbabwe are often associated and triggered by season- or climate-related factors such as heavy rainfalls, floods and droughts which may disrupt the supply of safe drinking water, aggravate hygiene conditions, and increase (per capita) water contamination (Cuneo *et al.*, 2017).

3.1.3 Macroeconomic instability

For more than three decades, Zimbabwe has experienced macroeconomic instability characterised by inflation, unemployment and a decline in living standards such that the country is currently in a recession (Makoto, 2020). The macroeconomic situation in Zimbabwe was further worsened by the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. The prevailing macroeconomic situation has increased the vulnerability of marginalised groups such as women and youths. According to Makoto (2020), the macroeconomic instability resulted in high unemployment among youths and women leading to increased poverty levels. For the past years, unemployment and inflation rates have been on the rise in Zimbabwe. For instance, the inflation rate in Zimbabwe averaged 80.42% from 2009 until 2022, reaching an all-time high of 837.53% in July 2020 (ZIMSTATS, 2021).

3.2 Historical background of TVET in Zimbabwe

This section traces the historical evolution and development of TVET in Zimbabwe from the pre-colonial, colonial to post-independence eras in Zimbabwe. According to Muwaniki and Wedekind (2018), the evolution and development of VET teachers has a long history in Zimbabwe and is officially recognized as an important component of human capital development and poverty reduction. As argued by Chinyamunzore (2015), early technical and vocational education in Zimbabwe developed with a strong Christian curriculum. After independence in 1980, new political and socio-economic issues became determinants of curricular development leading to the introduction of technical/vocational education as it adapts to the world of employment (Chinyamunzore, 2015; Nherera, 2018). Since the colonial era, TVET continues to play a catalytic role in addressing social and economic challenges and to actively create the conditions for development (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018).

Zimbabwe has a long history of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) predating the colonial era. TVET originated in Zimbabwe with crafts training overseen by the Natal Native Commissioner Loram in Natal (Mahuyu & Makochekeanwa, 2020). In 1923, Kegwin and Jowitt oversaw the reorientation of TVET theory in Rhodesia, establishing skills centers focused on building, carpentry, and agriculture in Tjolotjo and Domboshava. Prior to colonization, thriving industrial education systems training in areas like ironwork, sculpture, painting, architecture, and more existed in the Munhumutapa and Rozvi empires (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). Modern TVET has roots in this pre-colonial craft apprenticeship, where young people learned skills from experienced relatives skilled in various trades (Nherera, 2018; Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). Zimbabwe still evidences these skills through sites like Great Zimbabwe and Matopos, plus widespread artifacts, indicating skilled historic artisans. This traditional apprenticeship system provided agricultural, mining, and construction tools, benefitting pre-colonial economies (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2017).

3.2.1 TVET in Colonial Zimbabwe

Over the years, the Zimbabwean government instituted the end of the colonial F2 secondary school system (Chiripamunzore, 2015). The F2 system was a politically determined school for 35% of the 50% black primary school graduates to train on a craft-based course of study in preparation for employment as low-skilled workers in the service industry and business (Zvobgo, 2007). The F2 education transitioned into a short-lived system called the National Certificate of Education examination which did not last because politicians rejected it since they felt it was only a name change for the F2 system (Chiripamunzore, 2015). Therefore, there have been efforts to reform the education system in the country. The first attempts at establishing a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) policy in colonial Zimbabwe was through the Master and Servant Act of 1891 followed by the Education Ordinance of 1899 (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018; Zengeya, 2012). While the Master and Servant Act outlined conditions for apprenticeship training, the Education Ordinance specified the necessity for industrial training and established the basis for teaching low-level skills separated by race (Nherera, 2018).

Furthermore, the Education Ordinance of 1899 created two distinct systems for the schooling of whites and blacks just nine years after the occupation of Rhodesia (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). Education for Africans was provided solely by missionary churches with minimal

government assistance through grants. The course of study for Africans was completely vocational with half the time allocated to industrial training (Siyakwazi, 2014; Zvobgo, 2017). The aim of this curriculum was to make Africans manual workers in areas like building, carpentry, bricklaying, and agriculture and thereby prevent them from competing for “white jobs” (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018; Zvobgo 2007). In 1968, the Apprenticeship Training Act was enacted, enabling the establishment of the Apprenticeship Training and Skills Development Authority (ATSDA) (Zvobgo, 2007). Among its duties, the ATSDA was to evaluate future skilled workforce needs and encourage the training of technicians (Zengeya, 2012). A decade later, the passage of the Vocational Education and Training Act in 1978 represented a major step forward in the advancement of vocational training, including organizing the training of personnel. This led to the creation of the Manpower Development Training Authority (MANDATA) which assumed the role of the ATSDA formed after Ian Douglas Smith’s ‘Universal Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). MANDATA’s responsibilities included overseeing the apprenticeship training of both industries and training colleges. The Vocational Education and Training Act also made provisions for the building and maintenance of technical colleges, the imposition of a levy to finance workforce development, as well as the regulation of private TVET providers (Zengeya, 2012; Zvobgo, 2007). Therefore, TVET in Zimbabwe was improved by MANDATA's establishment (Mahuyu & Makochekanwa, 2020).

The above contributed immensely to the growth of TVET in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, the first two vocational and technical schools were opened at Domboshawa near Harare and Hope Fountain near Bulawayo providing training in agriculture (both crop production and animal husbandry), building, and woodwork for the native black population, during the colonial period (Davis, 2013; Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). The training had both theoretical and practical components needed by agricultural and home demonstrators (Davis, 2013). This was the first attempt at establishing TVET in colonial Zimbabwe. Just like general education, the TVET curriculum in colonial Zimbabwe was racialized. The Judges Commission in 1962 made recommendations that led to the introduction of different technical and vocational education curricula for Blacks and Whites in African countries including Zimbabwe. This signalled the formalization of a practical and vocational curriculum for blacks, known as the F2 system, which ran parallel to the prestigious F1 “academic” and higher technical system for Whites in

1970 (Gudyanga, 2014). In colonial Zimbabwe, TVET did not receive adequate attention as the colonial government focused more on general education (Siyakwazi, 2014).

3.2.2 TVET in Postcolonial Zimbabwe (1980 to date)

In Zimbabwe, up to 1980, TVET was racist and elitist (Chinyamunzore, 2015). The technical and vocational education was politically controlled so that Blacks could not compete with Whites (Nherera, 2018). The curriculum was racially and politically determined for Whites to dominate the Blacks (Zvobgo, 2007). However, independence in 1980 brought with it a whole range of imported and in-house curricular ideas to mix with the relics of colonial practices. There was a deliberate attempt to change the school curriculum including for TVET (Chinyamunzore, 2015). The Zimbabwean independence in 1980 brought with it a whole range of new changes with vocational training being instituted in vocational training centres (Munyoro *et al.*, 2016). According to Chinyamunzore (2015), technical and vocational training in Zimbabwe is the brainchild of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training that was led by Nziramasanga (Kondo, 2011; Munyoro *et al.*, 2016). This Nziramasanga Commission recommended that Zimbabwe adopt four pathways of education that are: academic, business, technological and vocational. A calling by the commission was to revamp the education system to ensure that learning is not just an academic exercise but should equip students with life skills. Currently, vocational training in Zimbabwe is being offered in forty-seven vocational centres 42 under the Ministry of Youth, Indigenization and Empowerment and five under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Muzari, Chasokela & Sithole, 2022).

As already noted, Zimbabwe formally attained independence from Britain in 1980. As argued by Muwaniki and Wedekind (2018), the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence was generally quite progressive in terms of the expansion of the provision of education including TVET. During the first decade of independence, Zimbabwe massively expanded education provision as a clear departure from the colonial past (Zvobgo, 2007). This expansion was not limited to primary and secondary education but extended to vocational and tertiary education (Gudyanga, 2014). In support, Muwaniki and Wedekind (2018), stated that following the independence of Zimbabwe from the British colonial rule, there was also a significant expansion of teacher training institutions and universities. Following this independence, there was a serious effort to reform education, including TVET to meet the demands of the new

social and economic order (Siyakwazi, 2014). The new government of Zimbabwe had a drive toward expansion of the provision of TVET as well as an expansion in vocational teacher education programs (Kondo, 2011).

In light of the realization of the importance of skills development, the government introduced the Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP) in 1981 drawing on the ideas developed by Van Rensburg in Botswana (Chinyamunzore, 2015). The ZIMFEP programme also sought to deal with the challenges of structure, content, and methods used in the delivery of practical subjects under the F2 system that was used during colonial times (Munyoro, Makota & Tanhara, 2016). ZIMFEP with its emphasis on the need for people to be skilled in several vocational trades, led the government to establish technical colleges to train vocational teachers especially in trades not offered at the then-only university, the University of Zimbabwe (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). From 1982 onward, Gweru Technical College was mandated to train TVET instructors in several disciplines including Electrical Engineering, Metal Work, Technical Graphics, Building, Computer Science, Accounting, and Secretarial Studies (Chinyamunzore, 2015).

Prior to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, several vocational training institutions were already established in what was then Rhodesia. One of the earliest was St. Peters Kubatana Technology Centre, founded by the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1963. Additionally, Harare Polytechnic and Bulawayo Polytechnic were set up in the 1920s, primarily serving the White population at that time (Chinyamunzore, 2015). After gaining independence, the Zimbabwean government recognized the pressing need to expand technical and vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities across the country (Chinyamunzore, 2015). The Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP), a liberation war project largely coordinated by Simon Matsvai, played a crucial role in this endeavor. At the tertiary level, institutions such as Harare Institute of Technology (HIT), Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT), and the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) were established to provide advanced technical and scientific education to meet the nation's development requirements (UNESCO, 2013).

Concurrently, numerous vocational and polytechnic institutions were founded to prepare students for various vocations like agriculture, carpentry, building, and others, catering to both urban and rural communities nationwide (Chinyamunzore, 2015). These included Joshua

Nkomo Polytechnic, Kushinga Phikelela Polytechnic, Kwekwe Polytechnic, Masvingo Polytechnic, Mutare Polytechnic, School of Hospitality and Tourism, Msasa Industrial College, Mupfure Self Help College, Westgate Industrial College, Magamba Vocational Training Centre, Nkululeko Vocational Training Centre, and Chindunduma Vocational Training Centre (Chinyamunzore, 2015).

In 1984, the Manpower Planning Development Act (MPDA) which was later revised in 1996 and 2002 was implemented. This overarching policy document empowered the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education to superintend over “all human capital development” issues in Zimbabwe (Zvobgo, 2007, p.9). The philosophy behind the MPDA was that, for Zimbabwe to develop, it must have sufficient numbers of skilled people to meet the needs of its industries (Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). The Act, among other things, was responsible for the provision of a comprehensive and constantly developing service for TVET (Chinyamunzore, 2015). Section 4 of the Act specifically focuses on the promotion of TVET, including the establishment of providers of TVET as well as the coordination and standardisation of all professional qualifications (Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). Further, the MPDA led to the establishment of the National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO) Act in 1989 and the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (ZIMDEF) in 1984 (Chinyamunzore, 2015).

In 1990, the Government of Zimbabwe introduced the Rationalization of Technical and Vocational Education and Training policy document to structure TVET into levels for easier progression in professional development (Kondo, 2011; Zvobgo, 2007). The lowest level was the prevocational level (PVC), followed by the National Foundation Certificate (NFC), the National Diploma (ND), and the highest level the Higher National Diploma (HND) which was equivalent to an undergraduate degree (Kondo, 2011; Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018). In 1991, the Zimbabwe Education Act committed to moving from quantitative expansion to quality and relevance in education through the vocationalisation of school curricula (Shereni, 2020).

In attempts to reform post-independence TVET in Zimbabwe, in 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe established the Higher Education Examination Council (HEXCO) with the sole mandate for TVET programmes in polytechnics, colleges, vocational training centres and schools to sit alongside the Apprenticeship Authority, which was responsible for lower-level TVET qualifications (Mahuyu & Makochehanwa, 2020). From there, at the end of 2015, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) introduced a new education

curriculum known as the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (CFPSE) (2016-2022) which is vocational in nature (Munyoro *et al.*, 2016). In the new curriculum, vocational education is now introduced much earlier in grade three, which has additional implications for teacher preparedness through initial teacher training as well as professional development (Hondonga, Ramaligela & Makgato, 2021). As of 2019, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development (MHTESTD) was developing a draft plan for the establishment of the Zimbabwe Examinations and Qualifications Authority (ZIMEQA) (Shereni, 2020). ZIMEQA will serve as the main body facilitating mobility within the education system and promoting training career pathways. To this aim, a draft National Skills Policy was developed as a framework for harmonising standards in higher and tertiary education (Shereni, 2020).

3.3 Contextual Shocks and Gendered-vulnerability in Zimbabwe

Research has shown that climate-related disasters in Zimbabwe have had significant impacts on various areas including agricultural production, food security, water management and public health (Chidakwa *et al.*, 2022). The severity of the impacts and the ability of populations to cope depends greatly on factors like socio-economic status, cultural norms, access to resources, poverty levels, and gender. Studies have also provided further evidence that the effects are not neutral across genders, as women and children face some of the highest risks (Chidakwa *et al.*, 2022; Nyahunda *et al.*, 2021). Supporting this, Brazier (2015) stated that climate change has exacerbated and continues to worsen hardship and poverty among Zimbabweans. According to Brazier (2015), women, children and those with disabilities, especially those in rural areas, are the most impacted. This is partly due to cultural norms that assign women responsibility for providing food and water, a task made increasingly difficult by climate change.

Mabaya (2020) carried out a qualitative case study to examine the gendered vulnerabilities of Rusitu Valley residents in Zimbabwe resulting from Cyclone Idai. The specific goals were to identify the different gendered impacts of the cyclone on valley men and women, analyze the specific post-disaster vulnerabilities, evaluate the extent to which resilience-building efforts addressed vulnerabilities, and recommend effective mechanisms for building resilience in disaster management. Various sampling methods were used and both primary and secondary qualitative data were collected via focus groups, interviews, and document analysis. Key findings showed that women and girls faced the most severe cyclone impacts. The

vulnerabilities of women included heightened risk of violence, sexual exploitation, limited healthcare access, increased family responsibilities, and constrained livelihoods. Proposed mechanisms to address vulnerabilities and improve resilience included community training and education.

Nyahwo (2020) aimed to develop a resilience framework to help resettled women cope with drought risk exacerbated by climate change. The Vulnerability to Resilience theoretical framework was applied alongside a mixed methods convergence design. Various sampling techniques were used and data were collected via questionnaires and interviews. Analyses established a vulnerability profile for resettled women based on limited awareness, preparedness, and planning. A resilience framework was proposed using structural equation modeling.

Nyahunda et al. (2021) demonstrated how the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change contributed a double injustice for rural Zimbabwean women. A qualitative descriptive design was used with focus group discussions and interviews. Thematic analysis revealed how the pandemic compounded climate impacts by disrupting food systems, livelihoods, caregiving capacity, and healthcare access. This was aggravated by gender inequalities, social exclusion, and patriarchy. The authors concluded that COVID-19 ravaged poor rural populations, especially women, who depend on precarious livelihoods.

Recently, Chidakwa et al. (2022) examined climate change vulnerabilities and implications for women's agro-based livelihoods in rural Zvishavane, Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach with purposive sampling, interviews, and focus groups was utilized. Findings showed gendered effects like increased household responsibilities for women. For example, depleted groundwater meant women had to travel greater distances to fetch water. The migration of men due to climate pressures also left more responsibilities for women and heightened vulnerability. Adaptation strategies were noted to require gender and geographical customization. The authors recommended gender-sensitive and evidence-based policies to address existing vulnerabilities.

3.4 Gap analysis

Though there are some clear gaps that demand more study attention, the body of current literature presents significant viewpoints on contextual shocks and gendered vulnerability in Zimbabwe. There is a dearth of studies especially looking at the junction of several concurrent shocks and their combined effects on women's vulnerability. Many studies usually focus on particular categories, such as climate-related disasters or economic crises, or individual shock events without considering their interdependence. Mabaya (2020) for instance looked at the gendered vulnerabilities resulting from Cyclone Idai, while Nyahunda et al. (2021) looked at the combined consequences of COVID-19 and climate change. Still, it is imperative to do more thorough studies including the complex interactions among several concurrent shocks—such as natural disasters, pandemics, and macroeconomic instability—and to know how these overlapping factors especially affect women's experiences of vulnerability.

In addition, there is a dearth of longitudinal studies looking at how women's vulnerability changes with time in respect to repeated or prolonged shock exposure. Most current research provide just glimpses of vulnerability at specific points, usually right after specific shock events. Mabaya (2020) looked at the weaknesses that resulted from Cyclone Idai. Still, there is a dearth of studies tracking the changes in women's circumstances, coping strategies, and resilience capacity over protracted periods as they face repeated or chronic stresses. Longitudinal studies could provide important new perspectives on the whole and maybe transforming effects of shocks on women's livelihoods, social roles, and adaptive capacities.

Also, despite some studies on women's adaptive strategies (e.g., Chidakwa et al., 2022), not enough thorough research has been done on the several coping mechanisms and resilience-building strategies women use when faced with several shocks. To fully understand the range of formal and informal strategies used by women, the factors that support or limit their adaptive capacity, and the possible unanticipated results or compromises connected with different coping mechanisms, one must look closer. This could inspire the creation of more contextually relevant and successful treatments meant to improve women's resilience.

Moreover, there limited research particularly looking at how Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) might improve women's resilience to shocks in Zimbabwe. Though the literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical evolution of TVET in the nation (Chinyamunzore, 2015; Muwaniki & Wedekind, 2018), it lacks a thorough

investigation on the ways in which TVET programs are presently helping (or not helping) women in developing the skills and capacities necessary to endure and adapt to varied challenges. TVET's ability to raise economic resilience and enhance livelihoods points to a vital area of further research.

Many current studies usually have a rather limited perspective of vulnerability and concentrate mostly on either financial or material aspects. Although these elements are undoubtedly crucial, it is imperative to investigate more broadly including the psychological, emotional, and relational aspects of vulnerability. For instance, Mabaya (2020) tackled issues of violence and exploitation, but more research on the effects of shocks on women's mental health, social networks, decision-making authority, and general well-being is still needed going beyond simple economic statistics. Moreover, even if some studies point to ways to improve resilience (e.g., Nyahwo, 2020), there is still a clear dearth of comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of various treatments meant to reduce women's sensitivity to shocks in Zimbabwe. To direct evidence-based policy and programming, more data is needed to ascertain which approaches are successful, in which settings, and the underlying causes.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the contextual shocks in Zimbabwe as well as studies conducted on the contextual shocks and vulnerability of young women in Zimbabwe. In particular, the chapter presented empirical literature on the historical background and prevalence of contextual shocks in Zimbabwe including cyclones, floods, drought, pandemics, political instability and macroeconomic instability as well as their impacts on resilience building towards vulnerability reduction. The evolution and development of TVET in Zimbabwe has also been presented as well as its role in building resilience among young women in Zimbabwe. The next chapter presents the research methodology adopted to achieve the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

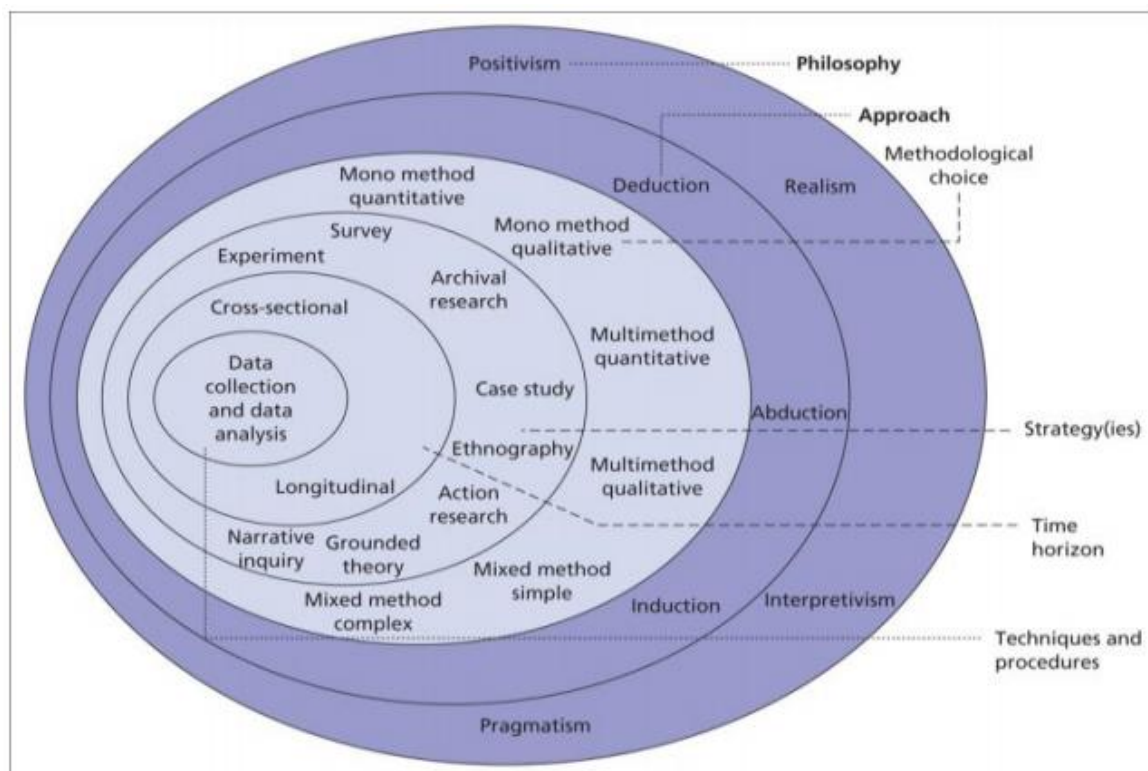
The previous chapter discussed the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This chapter presents the methodology that was adopted to answer the research questions. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2020, p. 65), methodology refers to the “specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic”. According to Sileyew (2019, p. 1), research methodology is a path through which a researcher needs to conduct a study. It shows the path through which researchers plan to conduct a study. A specific fact which is addressed in the problem statement is explored with a systematic approach. Methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based (Sileyew, 2019). The research methodology chapter of a study describes research methods, approaches and designs in detail highlighting those used throughout the study, justifying choice through describing advantages and disadvantages of each approach and design taking into account their practical applicability to a research (O’Leary, 2004, p.82). Thus, this chapter presents the research methodology that was adopted to achieve the research objectives set in chapter one and answer the research questions posed in chapter one. This chapter presents and justifies the research philosophy, the research approach, research design, sampling framework, data collection methods as well as data analysis techniques. Issues of reliability, validity and trustworthiness are also discussed in this chapter as well as the ethical considerations for the study.

4.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy involves a set of assumptions or beliefs about how the world works that dictate guidelines and principles for conducting research (Saunders et al., 2020). It refers to how new knowledge in a field develops and the nature of that knowledge, shaping choices of research approaches, strategies, and methods (Saunders et al., 2020). Philosophy reflects the relationship between knowledge and how it is generated. In social sciences, key philosophical elements include epistemology, axiology, ontology, and assumptions about human behavior (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Epistemology considers whether knowledge can, should, or is generated objectively or subjectively. Axiology refers to value judgments guiding inquiry.

Ontology examines whether knowledge and phenomena are objective or subjective (Saunders et al., 2020). Assumptions about human behavior address how research accounts for differences from natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). Any adopted research philosophy represents the intersection of these factors (Creswell, 2017; Neuman, 2007). While terminology varies, common philosophies include positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism. Major philosophies encompass positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2020).

Figure 4: Research onion



Source: Saunders et al. (2020, p.54)

The Research onion provides a structured way of understanding and selecting the appropriate research philosophy, approach, strategy, methods, and time horizon for a particular research project.

4.1.1 Positivism research philosophy

Positivism stems from the "positivist philosophy" conceived by 19th-century French philosopher August Comte, which largely adopts natural scientists' perspective of studying

observable social reality (Comte, 1975). It seeks to produce generalizable, law-like findings akin to those in natural sciences (Saunders et al., 2020). Positivism explains social phenomena by searching for causal links between constituent elements (Bryman & Bell, 2018). This involves applying and expanding current theory to develop hypotheses, which guide the gathering of observable facts that can confirm or reject the hypotheses in whole or part (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Highly structured, systematic, and objective (nomothetic) methods facilitate replication and generalization (Saunders et al., 2020). Emphasis is on quantifiable data enabling statistical analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2018).

A major criticism of positivism is its failure to recognize key ontological differences between social phenomena and natural science objects. Social sciences focus on human action, which has an internal logic that should be explored to understand behavior (Saunders et al., 2020).

4.1.2 Interpretivism research philosophy

Interpretivism fully recognises the ontological difference between social phenomena and the research objects in natural sciences. Consequently, it encourages social scientists to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman & Bell, 2018). The challenge for research is to adopt an empathetic stance i.e. to enter the social world of the research subjects and understand the scenario from their point of view (Saunders et al., 2020). As defined by Yin (2016) interpretivist research refers to a research paradigm that guides how data in qualitative research should be gathered, analyzed and interpreted. According to Hennink *et al.* (2010), interpretivism refers to a research paradigm which emphasizes the meaningful nature of people's participation and character in both cultural and social life.

The central theme of interpretivism is that individuals' interpretation, meaning and understanding of the world around them (i.e. social context) form the basis for their actions (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Interpretivism further holds that not only are social situations complex but they are also unique; they are a function of a particular set of circumstances and individuals involved (Bryman & Bell, 2018). The implication is that research that aims to capture the rich complexity of social situations is unlikely to generate findings which are generalisable to the larger population. The social world is ever-changing; the circumstances of today may not repeat in future and each social setting is different (Saunders et al., 2020). Hence, interpretivism leads to adopting a flexible research process and methods which flow from the views gathered from

the subjects of research. Indeed, interpretivism embraces methods that capture subjective accounts generated by getting inside research subjects' situations to understand their point of view (ideographic methods) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

4.1.3 Realism Research Philosophy

Realism posits the presence of a reality that is independent of people's knowledge and descriptions, as stated by Saunders et al. (2020). Social scientists should focus on studying and comprehending this phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2020). Realism and positivism have two common qualities. Both paradigms propose that the scientific and social sciences may and should utilise similar approaches and procedures for collecting, analysing, comprehending, and explaining data (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Both paradigms propose the existence of an external and objective reality that scientists should focus on. Put simply, there exists a reality that is distinct or autonomous from researchers (Saunders et al., 2019). Two primary forms of realism are frequently compared. Empirical realism states that reality may be understood through the use of suitable procedures. The approach is criticised for its focus on observable reality and failure to acknowledge enduring structures and generative mechanisms that underlie and produce observable events, making it superficial (Bryman & Bell, 2018).

Critical realism (CR) is a distinct type of realism that aims to acknowledge the existence of the natural order, events, and discourses in the social world (Bryman & Bell, 2018, p.17). CR acknowledges the need to identify the unobservable structures that generate observable events and discourses in order to understand and transform the social reality. These structures are not immediately visible in the observable events and can only be recognised through the practical and theoretical efforts of social scientists (Bryman & Bell, 2018, p.17). Scientists should systematically identify the entities accountable for an occurrence and characterise the generating mechanism.

4.1.4 Pragmatism Research Philosophy

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition with the view that sometimes choosing one philosophical paradigm (e.g. positivism) rather than the other (e.g. interpretivism) may be unrealistic in practice (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Consequently, pragmatism suggests that the most important determinant of the choice of research philosophy is the nature of the research

question(s). On the one hand, one philosophical paradigm may sometimes be more appropriate than the other(s) to answer particular research questions(s). On the other hand, if the nature of the research question does not suggest unambiguously that either a positivist or an interpretivist philosophy be adopted, this suggests the pragmatist's view may be a possibility (Saunders et al., 2020). Pragmatism is generally concerned with what is applicable (i.e. what works) to find a solution for a research problem (Patton, 2015). The main point is that researchers should focus on the research problem and then use all relevant and necessary research paradigms, approaches and methods to comprehensively understand the research problem (Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015). As a consequence, pragmatism is usually the philosophical underpinning for multi-research strategies and methods (Saunders et al., 2020; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2018).

4.1.5 Research Philosophy Adopted

This study utilised the pragmatic research philosophy due to the investigation's nature. The study utilised multiple research methods, making pragmatism the most appropriate research philosophy. Given this context, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were necessary. Qualitative research following the interpretivist paradigm was necessary for a thorough comprehension of the research issue, alongside quantitative research focused on gathering numerical data. The main reason is that triangulation helped establish whether there is convergence or divergence in the findings related to the social phenomenon. The pragmatic research philosophy was chosen for this study because it was determined as best suited for the study's attempt at evaluating the efficacy of vocational and life skills training programmes toward improving the wellbeing outcomes of the intended beneficiaries.

4.2 Research approach

The research approach is a plan and procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). According to Saunders et al. (2020), a research approach is therefore based on the nature of the research problem being addressed. Gray (2017) emphasized that it is very important for every researcher to appreciate all the research approaches that guide the research process. Creswell (2014) and Yin (2016) agreed that there are three distinct research approaches namely, mixed method research approach, qualitative research approach, and quantitative research approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), these three approaches vary in aim and scope.

Therefore, each approach adopted should have enough justification for being adopted. Saunders *et al.* (2016) explored the three research approaches; the quantitative research approach emphasizes statistical and numerical analysis of data gathered through, surveys, polls or questionnaires. In most cases, the aim is to establish the causal effect between two or more variables. The qualitative research approach focuses on exploring human experiences, opinions and ideas, hence often grounded on interviews and focus groups. A multi-method approach is a combination of the two approaches in differing ratios (qualitative research approach and quantitative research approach). The combination of the two ensures that the strengths of one approach compensate for the weaknesses of the other.

4.2.1 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A qualitative study relies mostly on interpretive or acute social science and follows a non-linear method. The normal terminology used in this type of research is “cases & context”. In most instances, it also tries to give authentic interpretations that are specific (Hennink, Huttler & Bailey, 2010). According to Heale and Twycross (2015), in simple terms, qualitative research is used to scrutinize realistic information and examine the type of patterns to understand and explain the study of life. It is basically about analyzing soft data which includes words, impressions, context and perhaps pictures. This type of method is nonlinear as it makes successive passes. It always helps the researcher to gain new perceptions and brings a lot of meaning to the concept being studied.

Bryman (2012) also describes qualitative research methods as an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, as interpretivist where the emphasis is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. Creswell (2014) purports that a qualitative research method is basically a methodology which focuses on understanding and discovering the meaning presented by groups or individuals who are experiencing a collective or social problem. The practice with this type of research method is a procedure of questions which are asked, data collection is done in the participants setting in order to make them comfortable in order to gather as much information as possible, and data collection is done from different general themes and finally, the researcher making sense out of the meaning of the collected data.

Neuman (2007) further emphasizes that a qualitative research method is very flexible and encourages focusing on a specific topic throughout a study. The method is normally vague and the researcher gathered information from a general topic and notion of what is really relevant. Normally the kinds of questions used in qualitative research start with words like **How**. They attempt to discover new ideas. In most instances, qualitative research captures meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data. Its concepts are in the form of themes. The analysis of data is mostly based on a generalization of evidence in order to provide a clear picture. Methods of collecting qualitative data include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document reviews. The data collected is usually applicable to specific or small populations and the results are not intended to represent a wider population (Neuman, 2007). Babbie and Mouton (2013) further explained that qualitative methods are generally suitable for research seeking to gain insights into the nature of specific phenomena.

Hence, a qualitative research approach was used largely due to how instrumental the approach is in uncovering new insights and perspectives to a phenomenon. A qualitative process in research gives the researcher thoughts to share in the understanding of other people, explores the structure and how people give meaning to their lives and context to information (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

4.2.2 Quantitative research approach

The quantitative research approach focuses on using numbers to measure, collect, and analyse empirical data. This may involve using a logical method that focuses on testing theories (Saunders *et al.*, 2020). This technique integrates the behaviours and norms of the natural science paradigm and views social reality as an external, objective reality. The process begins by utilising established theory, formulating hypotheses, and gathering and evaluating data (observations) to evaluate, disprove, or validate the hypotheses (Saunders *et al.*, 2020). The quantitative research approach is a deductive procedure that moves from theory to observation. Quantitative research may lack the ability to offer detailed explanations for human conduct, specifically in addressing the underlying reasons behind social phenomena.

4.2.3 The Multi-method Approach

A mixed methods research approach is characterized by the combination of at least one qualitative and one quantitative research component, a dynamic approach that helps to address

complex and multi-faceted research problems often encountered in the social sciences sector (Saunders et al., 2020). Mixed methods strategies originated in the 1950s when scholars utilised multimethod to validate psychological traits (Creswell, 2017). The recognition that qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than rival led to the preference for multi-methods, given the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each single method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2018).

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), there are four major types of mixed methods designs: convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and embedded/nested. Each has its own rationale and procedure. In a convergent parallel design, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, analyzes them separately, and then compares the results during interpretation to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other. This allows for triangulation of the data to increase validity.

In an explanatory sequential design, quantitative data is first collected and analyzed. Based on the quantitative results, qualitative data are collected to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative findings. This design is useful when a researcher wants to assess trends but also be able to explain outliers or unexpected results. In an exploratory sequential design, qualitative data is first collected and explored to guide the development of a quantitative instrument that is subsequently administered to a sample population. This is helpful when existing theories or measures may not adequately capture the construct of interest. Finally, in an embedded/nested design, one form of data plays a supporting role within a larger design driven by the other form of data. This provides a way to address different research questions within the same overall study.

Beyond the four major types, mixed methods research exists along a continuum from fully integrated to independent, and qualitative and quantitative strands can have equal or unequal priority (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Researchers can also utilize an intervention design where one method represents the intervention and a transformative design where the research contains an overarching philosophical or theoretical lens.

Overall, mixed methods strategies can be employed for illustration, convergent validation or the development of analytic density or ‘richness’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2018). Key benefits include obtaining a more complete picture, increased confidence in conclusions, clarification of any contradictory findings, stronger inferences, and investigation of a greater diversity of

perspectives. However, mixed methods also have challenges such as requiring expertise in multiple methods, being more time-consuming, and needing to reconcile discrepancies that emerge across the quantitative and qualitative data strands.

4.2.3 Research Approach Adopted

This study adopted the mixed methods research approach, specifically utilizing a convergent parallel design. That is, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed concurrently to answer the research questions. The rationale for choosing this mixed-method approach is that it allows a combination of datasets to provide a better, more complete understanding of the research problem and yield more robust evidence thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of research findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2018).

On a philosophical level, mixed methods research combines paradigms, allowing investigation from both the positivism and interpretivism perspectives, and consequently enabling researchers to integrate theory generation and hypothesis testing within a single study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2018). The specific convergent design was selected to allow for triangulation and corroboration of findings across the qualitative and quantitative data sources.

The quantitative component involved the collection of closed-ended survey data from a sample of young women who participated in vocational training programs using scales to assess constructs such as self-efficacy, locus of control, social support, financial literacy, and resilience. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted on this survey data, assessing variable relationships and group differences.

The qualitative component relied on semi-structured interviews with a subsample of the survey respondents, exploring their perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and beliefs related to the impacts of vocational training on resilience capacities. An inductive thematic analysis was undertaken on the interview transcripts to identify emerging themes and explanatory relationships.

Through collecting both forms of data concurrently, the plan was to ultimately integrate and compare the quantitative statistical results and qualitative thematic findings during

interpretation to ascertain areas of convergence, corroboration, and discrepancy. This integration enabled the development of meta-inferences and a more holistic understanding of the complex relationship between vocational training and gendered resilience building. The visual model below depicts the procedures for this convergent parallel mixed methods design:

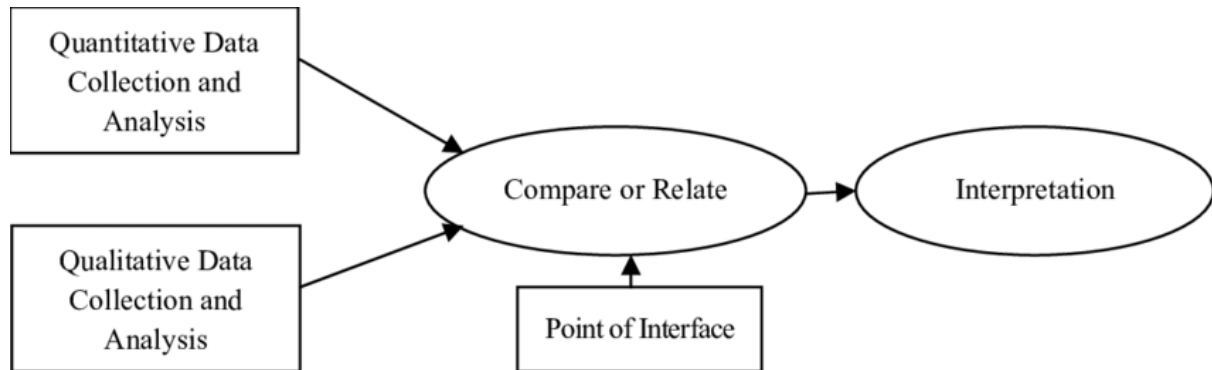


Figure 5: Concurrent QUAN and QUAL data strands and integration

Source: Creswell & Plano-Clark (2011, p.33)

Hence, the mixed method research approach through a convergent parallel design allowed the comprehension of the lived experiences of the individuals involved in the vocational training interventions in Chiredzi and Mwenzezi districts aimed at building resilience, while also assessing hypothesized statistical relationships between key variables quantitatively. The approach offered a voice to participants while also grounding findings in their contexts and experiences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2018). In addition, mixing datasets provided more complete evidence and increased validity and reliability compared to utilizing a single qualitative or quantitative method.

4.3 Research design

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2017, p. 195), a research design is a strategic plan that outlines the structure for gathering data in a study. The research design encompasses the strategy for choosing participants, research locations, and methods of gathering data in order to address the research inquiries. Bryman (2012) defines research design as the systematic plan that outlines the methods for collecting and analysing data in order to address specific research objectives and questions. According to Grey (2017), a research design is a comprehensive and systematic approach or framework that is used to logically and coherently integrate different elements of a study. This ensures that the study effectively investigates, explores, and addresses

the research problem. According to Yin (2016), there exist multiple discrete research designs. The designs encompassed are casual design, case study design, experimental design, sequential design, and action research designs. According to Leavy (2017), causality studies are research studies that focus on comprehending a phenomenon through conditional statements. An action research design prioritises practical and problem-solving research over the testing of theories. Experimental research design seeks to examine the causal factors behind an occurrence or understand the process by which something happens. Grey (2017) defines a case study research design as a study approach that examines and investigates a phenomenon within its authentic real-life setting. It is a comprehensive and detailed examination of a group, individual, or occurrence.

This study utilised the multiple case study research design. According to Yin (2017), a case study is a thorough and detailed investigation of a particular individual or group within a specific context. A case study research design is a versatile strategy that can be employed in both qualitative and quantitative research studies. The process begins by transforming the research question into more precise and investigable problems. This is then followed by employing various methods and illustrations to collect, arrange, and present information obtained from case studies. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that this particular approach is highly beneficial when the researcher aims to identify and address study issues while planning to conduct an assessment of policies and strategies. According to Yin (2016), case studies can be categorised as either single or multiple case studies. Researchers have the option to choose either a single case study or a collective case study. This research employs a multiple case study approach to investigate the two areas. This will facilitate a comprehensive comprehension of the phenomenon.

In a case-study research approach, a researcher typically examines multiple instances of a few cases in great depth over an extended period of time. This involves collecting highly detailed, diverse, and extensive data, often in a qualitative format. The researcher judiciously selected a limited number of significant cases to illustrate a specific issue and gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept, while carefully considering the explicit viewpoint for each case (Neuman, 2007). A case study is distinct from other forms of qualitative research designs in that it focuses on providing a detailed description of a specific and intricate entity that functions as a unified system. The purpose may lack a solid foundation but it should be structured as a system. The case study can be conducted either in the field or based on existing documents.

The outcomes of a case study encompass a precise delineation and thorough examination of the particular case (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 1995). The study will concentrate on two study sites, therefore, the multiple case study research design is more suitable in comparison to the single case study. According to Yin (2013), if a researcher wants to analyse data in various situations and circumstances, they should opt for conducting multiple case studies instead of single case studies. Baxter and Jack (2008) also stated that in studies with multiple cases, it is suitable to conduct multiple case studies.

In addition to its relevance to the study, the multiple-case study research design will also provide several benefits to the study. A multiple case study design allows the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon, such as vocational training, as suggested by Yin (2013). A multiple case study is appropriate for this research as it enables the researcher to gather and analyse data within each specific setting and across the two districts. Baxter and Jack (2008) found that the evidence derived from multiple case studies is dependable. Creswell (2013) also noted that a multi-case design investigates complex systems with multiple boundaries in real-world settings by collecting detailed and comprehensive data from various sources. Nevertheless, Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that conducting multiple case studies can incur significant costs and consume a substantial amount of time. Therefore, the multiple case study research design is appropriate for the study that aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the effects of skills and vocational training on the development of resilience in young women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The study utilises the multiple-case study research design, which is considered suitable due to the intricate and diverse characteristics of the gendered resilience building concept. The case study examined two districts, Chiredzi and Mwenezi, located in Agro-ecological Regions IV and V. These are distinguished by unpredictable rainfall patterns and periods of drought. The UNDP (2015) hazard mapping assessment found that droughts, dry spells, cereal prices, crop pests, and livestock diseases are significant hazards in the Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts.

The chosen districts have not been exempted from the detrimental effects of COVID-19, particularly as they are areas experiencing significant migration pressure. The migration patterns in these areas have a substantial influence on the well-being of young individuals, particularly young women. Furthermore, both districts are categorised as areas prone to disasters, and numerous development initiatives are currently underway in order to enhance

resilience and enhance the well-being of rural communities, with a particular focus on the youth and women. Consequently, the study chose the two districts as the subjects of investigation.

4.5 Population and sample

The target population for the study was the young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts below the age of 35 who are the beneficiaries of the youth empowerment programmes such as the ECRAS-ZRBF project and the Plan International Zimbabwe vocational training fund. According to Patton (2015), a population is a group of people that have one or more characteristics in common that are of particular interest to the researcher. According to the ECRAS (2019), a total of 2659 young women from the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts have benefitted from the youth empowerment programmes including vocational training. For the purpose of the research, it was not feasible to target all the beneficiaries hence sampling was conducted. Saunders *et al.* (2020) define sampling as the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample one may fairly generalize results back to the population from which they were chosen. According to Kothari (2014), a sample is a subset of the total population and the concept arises from the inability of the researcher to test all the individuals in the estimated population. The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

For the quantitative part, the stratified random sampling technique was employed where the two districts represented the strata. From each stratum, the random sampling technique is applied. This sampling method will allow a proportional representation of the two case studies. The participants in the quantitative research who received the questionnaires were young women who received youth interventions in life skills and vocational skills training from the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

4.6 Sampling framework

Given the population of 2659 (1550 from Mwenezi district and 1109 from Chiredzi district), the representative sample for the quantitative research was determined using Slovin's (2012) sample size determination formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size and e is the margin of error. Given the target population of 2659 and the error margin of 5%, the representative sample size for the study will be 348 using the Slovin (2012) formula. This sample size was therefore distributed as shown in Table 4.1 below. The sample sizes for each stratum were derived using the proportionate representation of the populations.

Stratum	Population size (N)	Sample Size (n)
Mwenezi district	1550	203
Chiredzi district	1109	145
Total	2659	348

Table 4. Sample size for the study

Sampling can be interpreted as specific principles used to select population members to be included in the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). As Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) indicate, sampling is very vital as it is not feasible to interview all members of the target population or society. Sampling provides a practical way to collect data from a subset that is representative of the whole. According to Maree (2010), sampling methods can be divided into two main categories: probability sampling methods based on principles of randomness, and non-probability sampling methods.

The choice between probability and non-probability sampling depends on the nature and goals of the research study. As Maree (2010) explains, non-probability sampling techniques are commonly associated with qualitative research studies which aim to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon rather than make statistical inferences about a population. In contrast, probability sampling methods allow researchers to make quantitative estimates and test hypotheses by drawing a random and thus representative sample from the target population.

Non-probability sampling techniques include convenience, purposive and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling involves selecting the most accessible participants, while purposive sampling focuses on individuals with certain characteristics of interest. Snowball sampling identifies initial key participants who then recruit additional relevant members from their

networks. On the other hand, probability sampling techniques include simple random, stratified random, systematic random and multi-stage sampling. These aim to give all members of the target population a known, non-zero chance of inclusion. This study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques namely stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques.

4.6.1 Stratified random sampling technique

Stratified random sampling is a modification of simple random sampling in which the target population is divided into subsets known as strata, with each stratum containing cases with similar attributes (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Thereafter, individuals or cases from each stratum are randomly chosen for inclusion in the sample (Creswell, 2017). This helps ensure that key subgroups in the population are adequately represented.

In this study, the researcher employed stratified random sampling to select respondents from the two districts, with each district representing a separate stratum. This ensured that young women beneficiaries from both the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts were fairly represented in the final sample. Specifically, the sample size was allocated to each stratum proportionally based on the relative population sizes, as shown in Table 4.1. This further reduced sampling bias and helped achieve representativeness.

Stratified random sampling offers several advantages in this particular study context as outlined by Lavrakas (2008) and Daniel (2011). Firstly, it ensured the inclusion of key subgroups of young women beneficiaries from the two program districts (Daniel, 2011). By separating the population into relevant geographical strata first, representation of these important segments in the final sample was guaranteed, facilitating analysis of potential differences across groups and areas. Secondly, the approach improved the precision of resultant effect estimates overall by reducing variability within strata (Lavrakas, 2008). With less heterogeneity in each district subset, marginal sampling error was lower, lending credibility to statistical analyses comparing intervention effectiveness and outcomes between locations.

Additionally, stratified sampling enabled the drawing of meaningful quantitative comparisons between the defined strata during data analysis (Daniel, 2011). Any emerging district-level differences and similarities across the geographic areas and beneficiary groups are highly relevant from a youth program planning and improvement perspective. These could directly

inform decisions regarding optimal resource allocation, activity prioritization and contextualization of empowerment initiatives to maximize outcomes by area moving forward.

From a feasibility standpoint, the approach also meant that sampled elements within each stratum were more internally homogenous (Lavrakas, 2008). This ultimately made data collection across all selected respondents by the researcher more focused, convenient and economical. Finally, the inherent flexibility of stratified sampling was leverageable at multiple stages. During the allocation phase, different sampling fractions were easily applied in the strata - here, the sample sizes were made proportional to the relative district populations. However, unequal proportions can be utilized where needed. Subsequently, during analysis, the strata could be handled in either a pooled or separated manner depending on the specific research objectives and data characteristics (Daniel, 2011). Overall quantitative findings can therefore be aggregated across strata or analyzed independently by district as suitable.

In applying this technique, the sample frame consisting of the names of all 2659 young women beneficiaries of youth empowerment programs across the two districts was firstly divided into two strata by district. Assuming a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, Slovin's formula was then used to determine an overall sample size of 348. This was split proportionally between the two strata based on their relative populations, as shown in Table 4.1.

Finally, using computerized random number generation, the required number of elements (203 and 145) were randomly selected from each stratum's sampling frame. This gave all beneficiaries within a district an equal chance of inclusion, allowing unbiased quantitative estimates and statistical inference. The result was a representative stratified random sample that facilitated comparative analysis by district in addressing the research objectives.

The stratified sampling technique therefore enabled the recruitment of an unbiased and more precise sample from a heterogeneous population, while retaining focus on subgroups of interest from the youth empowerment program areas. This supported robust quantitative analysis in line with the deductive aspect of the study.

4.6.2 Purposive sampling technique

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or subjective sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when selecting

members of the population to participate in a study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). It is a deliberate choice of informants based on the qualities they possess. The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find participants who are willing and able to provide the required information by virtue of knowledge, experience or qualifications.

As explained by Bryman (2012), the goal of purposive sampling is to sample participants strategically so that those selected are relevant to the research questions. The technique does not aim to make statistical inferences or quantitative estimates that can be generalized to the entire population. Rather, it enables insightful exploratory research based on informative cases. This makes it commonly associated with qualitative research designs.

Several key elements comprise purposive sampling as highlighted by Guest et al. (2006) and Lavrakas (2008). Firstly, the researcher must establish a clear set of criteria or characteristics that participants must meet to qualify for selection. These eligibility aspects are grounded in the study purpose and the expected nature of contributions by sample members. Secondly, an active process follows where the researcher deliberately recruits cases deemed information-rich vis-a-vis the phenomenon of interest based on the background screening (Lavrakas, 2008). Attention focuses more on the relevance of participants' experiences rather than overall representation. Finally, new cases continue getting added iteratively until a point of empirical saturation is reached – where incremental interviews yield no fundamentally new insights (Guest et al., 2006).

The researcher opted for a purposive sampling technique to select participants for the qualitative aspect of this mixed methods study based on several key advantages of the approach put forth by Guest et al. (2006) and Palinkas et al. (2015). Firstly, it enabled the identification and selection of information-rich cases - individuals most knowledgeable about and directly involved in youth empowerment interventions in the two districts for a prolonged period. These key informants provided valuable factual insights into the program processes, outcomes and challenges based on their direct exposure and experience (Palinkas et al., 2015). Secondly, purposive sampling allowed for the recruitment of participants able to provide diverse perspectives by virtue of their different roles. Here, program staff from multiple implementing organizations were included to capture a range of viewpoints instead of limiting to beneficiaries alone. This qualitative breadth and comparison yielded additional insights (Guest et al., 2006). Thirdly, the flexibility of the non-probabilistic approach allowed expanding the sample during

fieldwork to follow new leads. As key themes emerged, additional participants were added iteratively to build understanding much like theoretical sampling in grounded theory research (Guest et al, 2006). Finally, from a logistics perspective, the small sample was more economical, viable and efficient for an exploratory qualitative study component vis-a-vis probabilistic alternatives. Still, data credibility was preserved through the deliberate sourcing of expert participants (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In this study, ten participants were purposively recruited including staff from the ECRAS-ZRBF Project (five (5) participants), Plan International Zimbabwe (three (3) participants) and the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (two (2) participants). These organizations were selected for their central role in youth empowerment program design, funding, implementation, monitoring and administration across the two target districts. Participants had to meet the criteria of being directly involved in program activities at a leadership level for at least two years. Maximum variation sampling was then employed within the sample to achieve balance in hierarchical levels and roles like project heads, M & E officers and field coordinators. The result was a diverse mix of rich perspectives from informants with substantial experience in, and triangulation on, the subject matter. As Guest et al. (2006) posit, a purposive sample size of 6 to 12 participants often suffices for meaningful qualitative analysis where the focus is on gathering insights rather than quantifying data or testing hypotheses. The sample of 10 experts here exceeded the threshold.

In-depth interviews were then conducted using a guide centred on assessing program processes, and monitoring approaches, outcomes and challenges. Data collection stopped when saturation occurred - the point at which incremental interviews yielded no fundamentally new information. This was at the point when incremental interviews no longer yielded fundamentally new information. In total, 10 interviewees provided a robust qualitative sample for thematic analysis aimed at better understanding what approaches work well, implementation lessons learned, and priority areas for improving the effectiveness of youth empowerment initiatives.

4.7 Data collection techniques

The researcher employed various data collection techniques and instruments, including interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and document analysis, to gain a

comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through methodological triangulation. Triangulation refers to the practice of employing multiple data collection methods in a single study to ensure that the data accurately reflect reality (Silverman, 2016). Through utilising two reference points, the researcher was able to determine the precise location of the "reality" (Silverman, 2016). The method of triangulation involves the utilisation of multiple research methods within a single study. The researcher acknowledged the importance of employing multiple methodologies (interviews and documents) to substantiate the findings and augment the credibility of the data. In addition, the researcher served as the primary tool for collecting data in the study by actively listening, recording, and asking insightful questions to gain a more profound comprehension. The researcher's task was to document the subjects in their unaltered habitat. The researcher meticulously, precisely, and impartially documented the objective truth as described by the participants.

The compilation of both primary and secondary data was intended to provide information for the conclusions. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data, while secondary data was obtained from sources such as publications, organisational reports, media, and peer-reviewed journals. Hence, the primary data collection techniques employed in the study encompassed questionnaires, key informant interviews, and document analysis.

4.7.1 Questionnaire

The primary instrument used to collect data for the study was a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research tool that has a set of questions designed to collect information from study participants (Cooper & Schindler, 2018). Cooper and Schindler (2018) categorised questionnaires as structured, unstructured, or semi-structured. Semi-structured questionnaires, consisting of both open and close-ended questions, were utilised for this research. The researcher and research assistants distributed the questionnaires. The survey included both primary quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was selected as the primary tool for data gathering for various reasons. Questionnaires are advantageous because they may efficiently gather data from a wide range of participants in a short timeframe. Questionnaires are more cost-effective and time-efficient than approaches like observations and interviews. Questionnaires are criticised for gathering restricted information in comparison to interviews,

focus groups, and observations. However, the deficiencies of the questionnaire were compensated for by key informant interviews.

4.7.2 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted for the purpose of qualitative interviews. This method exclusively gathered primary qualitative data to corroborate the quantitative findings obtained from the questionnaire. Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) provided a definition for a key informant interview as a type of dialogue involving two or more individuals, primarily intended for the purpose of collecting information through the use of open-ended questions. Maree (2010) defines a key informant interview as a reciprocal conversation where the interviewer poses questions to the interviewee in order to collect information and gain insight into the participants' thoughts, beliefs, opinions, views, perceptions, and attitudes. This approach allows researchers to gain a firsthand understanding of the participants' perspectives. This research involved conducting individual key informant interviews, which consisted of one-on-one dialogues between the interviewees and the interviewer. Open-ended questions relating to the research topic were designed to guide the dialogue and inductive inquiry was used to obtain in-depth information. The interviewer addressed inquiries that were pertinent to the research questions and objectives. Similar to questionnaires, interviews can be categorised as unstructured, semi-structured, or structured (Patton, 2015). In this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into the subject matter. In certain cases, telephone interviews were conducted instead of face-to-face ones as a result of COVID-19 regulations. The qualitative method is an effective research tool for gaining profound understanding of how individuals perceive, experience, and interpret their experiences with adaptability. Key informant interviews facilitated the collection of comprehensive data on the effects of vocational training and resilience development on young women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. Nevertheless, conducting key informant interviews incurs significant costs and requires a substantial amount of time. However, the research instrument was considered appropriate for the study in comparison to other qualitative data collection methods like observations and focus groups. Patton (2015) asserts that key informant interviews are valuable because they offer unique data and insights that cannot be acquired through other research methods, as they involve gathering information directly from knowledgeable individuals.

The researcher conducted individual phone interviews with each participant. The interviews were recorded using a mobile phone and then transcribed for analysis. The interviews are characterised by a more flexible format, in which the interviewer intends to delve into particular subjects and pose specific open-ended inquiries. The interview guide provided a structured framework for the topics and interview questions. Nevertheless, the interview did not adhere strictly to the predetermined sequence of topics or research questions. Occasionally, the researcher may need to modify the phrasing and sequence of specific questions outlined in the interview guide based on the anticipated response of the interviewee (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The interviews aimed to gain insights into the participants' perspectives on the world. Patton (2014) emphasises the importance of the interviewer in keeping the interview on track and preventing the interviewees from deviating from the main topic. The primary benefits of utilising interviews in this study were the ability to easily adjust and the capacity to be versatile (Babbie & Mouton, 2013).

The researcher conducted additional investigations through interviews to gather more comprehensive information from the respondents. In this study, the researcher employed follow-up inquiries to elucidate ambiguous assertions, thereby facilitating the interviewees' comprehension of the specific information sought by the researcher. This factor facilitated the researcher in acquiring additional data from the participants. The interviewer endeavoured to build trust and rapport with interviewees by creating a relaxed and non-judgmental atmosphere, maintaining eye contact, and employing active listening techniques. This approach allowed for the acquisition of information that individuals might not reveal through other methods of data collection (Babbie & Mouton, 2013).

Haralambos and Holborn (2008) noted that interviews have several limitations, as the responses provided may be unreliable or fail to accurately represent actual behaviour. Participants who comprehend the researcher's perspective may either deceive or lack pertinent information sought by the researcher, or they may furnish deceptive data (Patton, 2014). In this study, the researcher demonstrated a high level of sensitivity by respecting participants' autonomy and refraining from pressuring them to respond to questions they were unwilling to answer. Patton (2014) also noted that the presence of the interviewer may influence the respondents, and the responses provided may be influenced by how the respondent interprets the situation. In this study, the researcher took measures to prevent the participants' answers from being influenced

by their subjective interpretation of the situation. This was achieved by maintaining a neutral and professional attitude.

Interviews can be time-consuming due to the extensive amount of time required to transcribe and interpret the recorded data (Babbie & Mouton, 2013). Several mechanisms were implemented to mitigate this constraint. To conduct the tele-interviews, the researcher utilised a dependable virtual platform and ensured a consistent internet connection to prevent any interruptions. The researcher also notified the participants regarding the anticipated duration of the interview to ensure their accessibility. To conduct the face-to-face interviews, the researcher deliberately selected a serene and cozy environment in order to reduce disturbances and create a relaxed atmosphere for the participants. In order to minimise prejudice, the researcher refrained from using suggestive gestures, such as making statements like "yes or no" to confirm or dismiss respondents' answers.

4.7.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are a qualitative research technique that can be used to collect detailed information from a small group of participants. According to Gibbs (1997), a focus group is an in-depth, open-ended group discussion with a selected set of participants focusing on a given topic. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990). In focus group discussions, the researcher creates a relaxed environment that fosters different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants to reach consensus (Kitzinger, 1994).

For this study, the researcher conducted focus group discussions to complement the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. Focus groups were included as an additional data collection technique based on the advice of Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014), who recommend method triangulation using multiple data sources to improve the credibility of findings. The rationale for using focus groups was mainly to take advantage of group dynamics inherent in such discussions which can yield rich information that may be less accessible in interviews (Gibbs, 1997). Kitzinger (1994) asserts that the interactions amongst participants highlight their viewpoints and reveal more information than obtained from one-to-one interviews. Through group discussions, the researcher aimed to develop a deeper understanding

of the respondents' shared as well as unique experiences and perspectives related to the research problem.

In conducting the focus group discussions for this study, the researcher followed guidelines by Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) on the number of groups, size of groups, selection of participants, choosing facilitators, and developing questions. The discussions followed a semi-structured format using open-ended questions prearranged in an interview guide. However, flexibility was allowed to explore issues arising spontaneously from the participants. As the sole facilitator, the researcher utilised effective questioning and listening techniques to encourage participation, probe for more details, and clarify statements. Each session was audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim along with observational notes for analysis.

Despite the richness of information elicited, focus groups have some disadvantages worth acknowledging. The composition of the group and group dynamics can strongly influence participant responses (Gibbs, 1997). Dominant personalities may silence shy participants or skew the discussion toward their own viewpoints. To minimise such issues, this study employed strategies suggested by Krueger and Casey (2014) - giving clear ground rules, using experienced facilitators to guide discussions, and asking follow-up questions to draw out quieter group members. Additionally, the artificial environment necessary for focus group research reduces contextual understanding of actual behaviours and experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Hence, the data obtained requires cautious analysis and triangulation with other methods like interviews. Overall, incorporating focus group discussions supplemented the researcher's emerging interpretations and enabled a well-rounded investigation of the topic.

4.7.4 Document analysis

Qualitative secondary data was collected using document analysis. According to Bowen (2010), document analysis is a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyze documentary evidence and answer specific research questions. Similar to other methods of analysis in qualitative research, document analysis requires repeated review, examination, and interpretation of the data to gain meaning and empirical knowledge of the construct being studied (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Bowen (2010) states that document analysis can be conducted as a stand-alone study or as a component of a larger qualitative or multi-methods study, where it is often used to triangulate findings gathered from another data source

(such as interviews and surveys). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2018) explain how when used in triangulation, documents can refute or corroborate, elucidate, or expand on findings across other data collection methods sources thereby helping to guard against bias. The study made use of articles and reports of (i) ECRAS and ZRBF projects, (ii) NGOs such as CARE Zimbabwe, and SEVACA (iii) the Internet (iv) the media and (v) published journal articles, research reports and books.

The main motivations for using document review in this study include the fact that documents can provide data to help researchers to understand for instance, the historical roots of a specific phenomenon and point out the conditions that affect the object currently being studied (Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) notes that researchers can use data extracted from documents to contextualize information collected using other research tools. The information obtained from the document review can also suggest some questions that can be queried and what can be observed as part of the research (Yin, 2016). Another advantage of document review is that it saves time because it requires selecting data rather than collecting it (Bowen, 2009). However, document analysis also has some disadvantages. For example, some documents may provide inadequate detail as they are often made for some other purpose other than research thus, Bowen (2009) recommends that researchers should carefully consider whether and how the documents fit the specific research purposes and as analysts, researchers must determine the relevance of the documents to the research question and purpose. In addition, Yin (2016) pointed out that sometimes documents cannot be retrieved or they are difficult to retrieve. For example, certain organizational documents may be consistent with organisational policies and regulations, so access to such documents may be intentionally prohibited or blocked. Considering its efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the advantages of document review clearly outweigh the limitations (Bowen, 2009) hence the study made use of this data collection tool.

4.8 Data analysis techniques

Data analysis refers to the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques.

4.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The study leveraged descriptive, independent T-test and correlation analyses to scrutinize the quantitative data from the questionnaires. Before analysis, the quantitative data from the questionnaires was cleaned, sorted and coded in Excel and then exported to SPSS version 27 for analysis.

Data cleaning involved checking the data for errors, inconsistencies, and missing values. This was an important first step, as any errors in the raw data could skew the analysis. Common data cleaning tasks included checking for outliers, determining how to handle missing data, and validating response options. For example, if a question had response options from 1 to 5, any invalid responses outside that range were flagged. The researcher filled in missing values where reasonable through mean substitution but also analyzed patterns of missingness.

After cleaning, variables were labelled clearly and value codes were defined (e.g., 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree etc.). The coding schema was recorded in a codebook for reference. In some cases, it was necessary to recode data. For instance, collapsing a 5-point Likert scale into three (3) points. Recoding decisions were made thoughtfully based on the research questions and the data distribution.

Once the data was properly prepared, the initial analysis involved generating descriptive statistics. The specific descriptive analyses computed included means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages to summarize and describe the distribution of the quantitative responses for each survey question. Examining frequencies showed how many participants selected each response option. Means allowed the researcher to see average responses and standard deviations and provided information about how dispersed the data was. Cross-tabulations were also generated to view distributions of different variables by subgroups. These univariate descriptive analyses enhanced the understanding of each variable individually.

Bivariate analyses were then conducted to assess relationships and group differences. Specifically, correlations evaluated associations between vocational training aspects and resilience measures. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used given the continuous nature of the variables, and showed both the direction (positive/negative) as well as strength of the linear relationship. Correlations range from -1 to $+1$, with 0 indicating no relationship. The significance level used to assess the probability of getting the observed correlation by chance

if no association exists, in reality, was .05. This informed the decision rule for determining meaningful relationships from the data.

Additionally, independent samples *t*-tests were run to analyze mean differences in resilience scores by time period – pre- versus post-vocational training exposure. The *t*-test is appropriate for comparing the means of a continuous variable, resilience, between two groups – the same young women before receiving the vocational training intervention versus after. The Levene's test checked the assumption of equal variance. If variance did differ significantly between groups, adjustments would be made to the *t*-test calculation. Then the output *t* statistic and corresponding significance level were examined. A significant result would indicate the change in resilience from pre to post-training was greater than what would be expected by chance.

The quantitative results from the statistical analyses in SPSS were exported to Excel for further processing and visualization via tables and charts depicting key findings. Frequency tables clearly showed response percentages. Bar charts effectively displayed mean differences. Scatterplots with trend lines exhibited the relationship between variables. Interpreting and presenting the statistical outputs facilitated drawing meaningful conclusions and effectively communicating the quantitative findings.

4.8.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

On the other hand, thematic analysis was employed to analyse and integrate qualitative findings from the open-ended questionnaire items, interview transcripts, and documents. According to Braun and Clarke (2018), thematic analysis involves identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns and themes within qualitative data. It provides a flexible yet systematic framework for coding and making sense of textual data as it relates to research questions at hand.

The first phase involved becoming intimately familiar with the full dataset through repeated active reading. For interview data, the researcher listened to audio recordings while comparing against notes, then carefully transcribed the dialogue while noting any initial impressions. The goal was to immerse oneself in the information to start noticing relevance to the research objectives.

In the next stage, initial codes were generated by systematically cataloguing interesting elements across the entire dataset and organizing data into meaningful groups. Segments of

text – be they interview quotes or passages from documents – were assigned codes reflecting a concept, idea, observation, or theme they embodied. This phase focused on describing what the data entails. Coding was conducted both deductively guided by the research questions and inductively allowing for new insights to emerge. Codes could tie to either explicit statements or derived interpretations, capture semantics or conceptual underpinnings, and range from being more descriptive to abstract or analytical.

The researcher then searched for themes by examining how codes relate to one another and combine to form overarching concepts and coherent patterns addressing the research questions. Themes were refined through an iterative process of clustering data extracts with similar meaning together, evaluating splits and connections in relation to conceptual coherence, reviewing to ensure they tell a compelling story about the data, and determining clear definitions and names.

To further develop the analysis, each theme was explored in depth and thematic maps were generated to depict relationships across themes. The analysis also considered how themes relate to existing literature. Compelling extract examples that capture the essence of each theme were identified. Quantitative survey results could be integrated at this point to lend statistical support for prevalence of key themes where applicable. Throughout the qualitative analysis process, the researcher actively recorded thoughts on interpretation and kept an audit trail detailing the progression of coding decisions and theme development for transparency.

In the final two stages, the convincingly answered research questions were evaluated, selecting extract examples that vividly brought the qualitative analysis to life. Finally, the write-up of findings wove together narrative and data evidence around themes supported by literature in making logical arguments addressing the original objectives. Beyond just describing patterns in transcripts, higher-level interpretations of underlying meaning and implications in real-world contexts were put forth.

Ultimately through examining common experiences, opinions, and values from multiple participants, documents, or open-ended surveys, qualitative analysis aimed to develop themes to make sense of subjective views around the complex social phenomena of interest and finds depth, nuance, and meaning across narratives.

The procedure followed by the researcher is summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Procedure of the thematic analysis

1) Familiarization with data	The researcher will transcribe the recordings verbatim and verify content by listening to them again. The researcher will then read the transcripts severally taking grasp of initial potential codes. This will enable the researcher to become engrossed in the data.
2) Coding	At this phase, the researcher will generate for characteristics of the data fitting to the primary research purpose. The Atlas.ti version 8 software will be used to help with coding
(3) Searching for themes	The next step will be to use the codes to search for emerging themes. The researcher will employ inductive reasoning in search of themes
(4) Reviewing the themes	The researcher will have to reflect on whether or not the themes express a convincing and persuasive story concerning the data, and start to explain the nature of every theme, and the correlation between the themes.
(5) Defining and naming themes	At this phase, the researcher will define and name the emerging themes.
(6) Writing up	This final phase will comprise the account which will involve knitting together the logical narrative and (clear) data excerpts to inform the reader an intelligible and persuasive narrative about the data and contextualizing it in accordance with available literature.

Source: Braun and Clarke (2018, p.17)

4.9 Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

4.9.1 Reliability

Reliability pertains to the consistency and stability of measures, enabling the replication of research (Cooper & Schindler, 2018). It evaluates the level of agreement among various measurements of a variable (Hair et al., 2019). Internal consistency is an often recognised indicator of reliability. It evaluates the coherence of variables inside a construct. The argument is that the components or indicators of the scale should all measure the same construct and be substantially inter correlated (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most

commonly used metric of internal consistency, also known as the reliability coefficient. The scale's consistency is evaluated as a whole (Cronbach, 1951). The study utilised the Cronbach Alpha test to assess dependability.

4.9.2 Validity

As defined by Gravetter and Forzano (2017), validity refers to the extent to which a study effectively addresses the specific question it was designed to answer. The researcher ensured that the research satisfied the requirements of content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity, face validity, and external validity. To ensure content validity, the researcher made sure that the items in the questionnaire gathered information that pertained to all of the research objectives. The researcher utilised existing literature and questionnaires from previous studies with similar objectives. In order to assess criterion-related validity, the researcher ensured that the questions in the data collection instrument were derived from the instruments utilised in comparable prior studies. In order to establish construct validity, the researcher took measures to ensure that the data collection instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) were meticulously designed using pertinent existing literature. In addition, in this study, face validity was established by sharing the data collection instrument with research experts, including the research supervisor, to assess the adequacy and relevance of the questions included in the instrument. Therefore, the questionnaire was evaluated for its face validity using expert judgement. Methodological triangulation was employed to further strengthen the study's validity.

4.9.3 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability fall under the concept of trustworthiness (Yin, 2016). According to Gray (2017) and Creswell (2014) in qualitative research the concept of trustworthiness is segmented into four categories namely; dependability, transferability, credibility and confirmability.

Credibility: to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study through credibility, the researcher clearly linked the research findings with reality to demonstrate the truth about the phenomenon investigated. Further triangulation (the use of multiple data sources) was adopted to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by ensuring credibility. The researcher established credibility by employing suitable and widely acknowledged research methodologies. Hence,

the data collection meetings incorporated specific procedures, including questioning methods and data analysis methods, that were successfully adopted or modified from previous procedures employed in similar research. Prior to data collection, an early familiarisation with the participants was conducted to establish credibility. This was accomplished through initial phone conversations with the participants, which allowed the researcher to understand them sufficiently and build a rapport of trust with the research subjects. Methodological triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the study.

Confirmability: Confirmability, similar to objectivity, is a significant concern for researchers (Silverman, 2016). To ensure confirmability, the researcher took measures to ensure that the findings accurately represent the ideas, views, and experiences of the research participants, rather than being influenced by the researcher's personal opinions. In addition, confirmability was ensured by comparing the research findings to existing studies. Furthermore, to guarantee that the research findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences and ideas rather than being influenced by the researcher's personal characteristics and preferences, triangulation was employed. This method was used to minimise researcher bias and provide a comprehensive description of the research approach, allowing the integrity of the findings to be thoroughly examined.

Dependability: In addressing the issue of dependability, Silverman (2016) pointed out that if one needs to repeat a research with same participants in the same context, in the same way, he/she must obtain similar results. In order to ensure dependability, the researcher layed? out in detail the entire research process adopted there by empowering future research to conduct similar research studies.

Transferability: According to Silverman (2016), transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to different settings or situations. In order to ensure the transferability of the research, the researcher included ample information about the context of the research fieldwork. This allows other researchers to determine whether the research findings can be reasonably applied to other research settings. This study provides background data that can be used by future researchers for comparative purposes in establishing the research context. The researcher adequately presents background information about the study sites, allowing readers to assess the level of confidence in applying the proposed results and conclusions to different scenarios. The final report includes details regarding the number of

participants involved in the research and their demographic characteristics, the methods used for data collection, the duration of the interview sessions, and the timeframe during which the information was gathered.

4.10 Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights into the impacts of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women, it is important to acknowledge key limitations that bound the research. As with any academic inquiry, constraints related to methodology, sampling, data collection, analysis, and researcher bias must be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. This section transparently addresses the main limitations of this investigation and details how they were mitigated as far as possible.

A primary limitation stems from the choice to focus specifically on young women beneficiaries in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. While this enabled an in-depth case study within defined geographic parameters, it restricts the generalizability and transferability of results to other regions in Zimbabwe or beyond (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Regional variances in culture, development levels, shock exposure and training approaches mean findings cannot be readily extrapolated. However, the study does provide a framework and evidence base to inform future comparative research across different locales towards more universal insights on effective resilience-building strategies.

Additionally, as a cross-sectional study collecting data at one point in time, the research was unable to assess the longer-term impacts of vocational and life skills training (Leedy & Ormrod, 2017). Factors like the sustainability of livelihoods, ongoing shock exposure, and retention of skills over time remain uncertain. Follow-up longitudinal studies tracking the same cohort of female youth over an extended post-training period would provide further confirmation and refine understanding of long-term resilience. While unfeasible presently, the researcher suggests this as an area for future investigation.

The sampling methods also introduce certain limitations. Despite aiming for representativeness, the stratified random and purposive sampling techniques may have inadvertently excluded some subgroups of young women from the study (Lavrakas, 2008). Rural women facing more significant marginalization could have been omitted given the reliance on program beneficiary lists as the primary sampling frame across locations. By

diversifying the sampling approach, future studies could mitigate this bias and ensure findings encapsulate the most vulnerable.

Additionally, while a sample size of 306 questionnaire respondents and 10 key informant interviews surpassed common thresholds for statistical power and qualitative saturation respectively, larger samples would further boost result precision (Guest et al., 2006; Slovin, 2012). Particularly for subgroup analysis, disaggregating data across different age brackets, skill types and shock exposures would have benefited from larger subgroup sample sizes. Practical constraints related to the researcher's time and resource limitations precluded significantly expanding the study's scope, but this can be explored in follow-up inquiries.

The choice of data sources and collection methods also comes with inherent strengths and weaknesses that impose boundaries. For instance, self-reported data from survey questionnaires and interviews relies on participant honesty and accuracy which cannot be independently verified (Cooper & Schindler, 2018). Potential issues like faulty recall, subjective interpretations, reflexivity and social desirability bias may skew responses away from actual experiences, distorting results. To minimize this, questions were carefully worded to be neutral rather than leading. Expert review of the instruments pre-testing also enhanced validity. Still, incorporating ethnographic observation and review of administrative records could overcome reliance biases if feasible.

Similarly, while document analysis offers the advantage of leveraging existing secondary data, the credibility and relevance of sources must be vetted (Bowen, 2009). Documents reflect the biases of original authors and may lack information specifically pertinent to the research questions at hand. Dated or incomplete records could thus hamper analysis. Here, the researcher mitigated this limitation by judiciously selecting recent documents directly focused on the vocational training context in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts from reputable organizations. This information was also triangulated against primary qualitative and quantitative data to validate findings.

Researcher bias represents another potential study limitation based on the investigator's close engagement in data collection and analysis (Mehra, 2002). While useful for gaining depth of understanding, the qualitative aspect leaves room for biases to shape the collection, interpretation and theming of results. Maintaining meticulous audit trails, member-checking results with participants, enlisting peer examination, and triangulating across mixed methods

helped control for selectivity and confirmation bias on the researcher's part but cannot fully eliminate subjectivity.

4.11 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are of utmost importance when conducting research involving human participants and animals. As Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, p. 11) state, people participating in research "should be treated with dignity ... their wellbeing should be secured and respected" and there should be "fairness in the distribution of the benefits" to all participants. More broadly, ethical research ensures the rights, safety, dignity and well-being of those involved. While definitions of research ethics are important, Yin (2016) argues that the application of ethical principles is even more vital in practice. Indeed, researchers must carefully consider and address key ethical issues throughout the research process.

Leedy and Ormrod (2014, p. 17) outline several prevalent ethical concerns in research, including "confidentiality and anonymity, protection from harm, informed consent, privacy and honesty." When planning this particular study involving young women, the researcher recognized the need for thoughtful ethical deliberations given the vulnerable population. As such, core ethical considerations were contemplated and integrated across research activities, namely: permission to conduct research, informed consent, confidentiality/anonymity, protection from harm, and scientific integrity.

As a fundamental ethical requirement, the researcher first sought and obtained permission to conduct the proposed study. Gray (2017, p. 25) states that researchers have an ethical responsibility to "respect the rights, privacy, and dignity of participants" which involves gaining the necessary approvals before proceeding. Thus, before any data collection, the researcher requested consent from relevant authorities and gatekeepers in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, including local leaders like councilors and village heads as well as organizational management. After securing this initial clearance, the researcher then approached the target participants themselves to invite study participation and obtain their personal permission as well.

Closely tied to permission is the ethical imperative of informed consent (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2015). Essentially, prospective participants must fully understand a study's purpose and procedures before agreeing to voluntarily take part. As Gray (2017, p.26) explains, researchers

must provide details on “the research purpose, research procedures, and research risks” so individuals can make an educated decision about involvement. Consequently, the researcher developed consent forms that outlined key study details and clearly indicated participation was optional. Each potential participant received a form to review and sign as formal documentation of their voluntary, informed choice to contribute data or not.

Bryman (2012) further cautions against deception in how the research rationale or process is promoted, which relates to honesty in informed consent procedures. So, in keeping with ethical principles, the researcher was completely transparent from the outset about all aspects of the study to prevent misleading the young women targeted for participation.

In addition, respecting respondents’ right to privacy represents another central ethical demand (Creswell, 2013). The sensitive information collected imposes an imperative duty of discretion upon the researcher to uphold participant confidentiality and anonymity at all times. The researcher assured volunteers that any contributions would remain anonymous in final reports and only be accessed by the researcher for strict analytical purposes. Following data collection, the researcher took measures to prevent unauthorized access, such as securing transcripts and using pseudonyms like “Participant 1” as identifiers rather than actual names. These types of precautions preserve confidentiality and anonymity standards within qualitative studies.

Moreover, research participation should not impose excessive burdens or risks beyond normal everyday activities, as Leedy and Ormrod (2014) discuss. Thus, investigating sensitive topics with vulnerable groups requires strategies to prevent psychological, emotional or physical harm. Here, the researcher ensured interview questions and procedures would not cause stress or discomfort greater than ordinary experiences. COVID-19 guidelines like social distancing, masking and hand sanitizer further minimized risks. The researcher also reminded volunteers that involvement was completely voluntary, so they could halt participation without penalty if they felt troubled, demonstrating respect for personal boundaries and dignity. While no financial incentives were offered that could be coercive or distressing if unmet, participants gave their time freely without expectation of reward. Through such considerations, the researcher fulfilled the ethical duty of preventing harm.

Lastly, honesty and objectivity constitute bedrock principles of integrity in research (Creswell, 2013). This study upheld professional standards related to transparent, unbiased processes and reporting. Most critically, the researcher committed to accurately conveying participant

perspectives without fabrication or misleading. Using a text citation method with direct quotes and references ensured findings were objectively tied to raw data. While absolute neutrality is impossible in qualitative approaches, the researcher strived for fair representations of volunteer viewpoints. Additionally, descriptions of procedures provide enough detail for outside assessment and reproducibility. Through such ethical practices, the study demonstrates commitment to scientific integrity and scholarship excellence.

In essence, ethical issues were thoroughly addressed across all phases of this research involving vulnerable young women. From initial permissions to final reporting, deliberate efforts shaped an emphasis on participant rights, dignity and protections. Permission protocols, informed consent, confidentiality precautions, assessments of potential harm, and transparency practices upheld critical ethical obligations. While no single study can guarantee perfect adherence on all ethical dimensions, consciously identifying issues and directly integrating resolutions helped conduct appropriately rigorous, ethical research. Through such diligent considerations, the inquiry respected participant perspectives and boundaries during sensitive investigations to ethically produce valid scholarly contributions.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology that this study adopted. In particular, it discussed and justified the adopted components of the research methodology. The chapter discussed that the research approach that was adopted was the qualitative research approach and the research design that follows which is the case study research design. Further to that, the research study anchored on document review and interviews as data collection methods. The sample size was also discussed. Research ethics that were considered are also presented and discussed. The next chapter will present research findings that were reviewed based on the research methodology adopted, including discussions and presentations of the findings obtained through the different research methods described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEXTUAL SHOCKS INCREASING VULNERABILITY OF FEMALE YOUTH IN MWENEZI AND CHIREDDI DISTRICTS

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the results from data collected from questionnaires, interviews, FGDs and documents. This chapter introduces and discusses the results to improve the understanding of answering the research question: "How are differential vulnerabilities of young women reflected in the shocks affecting resilience capacities?". Therefore, this chapter focuses on presenting, discussing, and analysing the data collected from the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, aligning with examining the contextual shocks increasing female youth's vulnerability in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. The chapter starts by restating the research objectives and then presenting and discussing the response rates. The reliability and validity test results are presented and discussed, followed by the participants' demographics. Lastly, the main results are presented in line with **Objective 1**, which aims to unpack the contextual shocks increasing rural young women's vulnerability. To draw inferable trends from the results, this section is based on the literature review introduced in the second and third chapters and the primary data collected from the questionnaire responses, interviews, and focus group discussions.

5.2 Restatement of Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To examine the contextual shocks increasing vulnerability of female youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi
- To evaluate the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training are being incorporated in resilience building for rural young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi
- To develop a framework through analysis and validation on how to strengthen resilience building by reducing vulnerabilities to shocks and reducing drivers of risk.

5.3 Response Rate Analysis

5.3.1 Questionnaires

This sub-section presents and discusses the study's response rate. Table 6 below presents the questionnaire response rate.

Questionnaire Response	Targeted response	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	348	100.0%
Questionnaires not returned (non-response)	23	6.6%
Questionnaires returned	325	93.4%
Invalid questionnaires	19	5.4%
Valid questionnaires	306	87.9%

Table 6: Response rate for the study

The results in Table 6 show that the researcher successfully distributed 348 questionnaires, as was the study's sample size. Of the 348 questionnaires, 23 were not answered and sent back to the researcher, representing a non-response of 6.6%. Although a total of 325 (93.4%) questionnaires were collected, the data cleaning process by the researcher resulted in the identification of 19 questionnaires, either partially completed or spoilt questionnaires. These were considered invalid and discarded from the analysis. Resultantly, 306 questionnaires were found to be completely and correctly filled, leading to a successful response rate of 87.9%. This response rate was excellent for data analysis and inferences, as Bryman and Bell (2018) state that at least 80% of response rates are excellent. This commendable survey response rate was attainable as the researcher personally administered the survey questionnaires and made rigorous follow-ups to remind the sample participants to complete the questionnaires. The response rate is also attributable to enough time given to the respondents to fill in the questionnaires.

5.3.2 FGDs

The researcher also conducted three (3) Focus group discussions with two (2) young women from Chiredzi (12 participants) and Mwenezi (eight (8) participants) and 1 with Chiredzi

Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation and Ward-based Community Development coordinators (six (6) participants).

5.3.3 Interviews

In this research, the researcher conducted interviews with 10 purposively sampled individuals who are staff members of ECRAS-ZRBF Project (four), Plan International Zimbabwe (three), Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation (three) and a local training institution, Mwenezi Development Training Centre (one), who had been involved in the youth empowerment interventions in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. These were, therefore, key informants to the study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), sample sizes between five (5) and 25 are sufficient for qualitative research. Hence, a sample of 10 was sufficient in this study.

5.4 Reliability and Validity Test Results

The researcher undertook the Cronbach Alpha and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests to check the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, respectively. The results for the two tests are presented in Table 7 below.

Construct	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Contextual shocks increasing vulnerability of female youths	10	0.705	0.755
Efficacy of life, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training on resilience building	11	0.844	0.701
Effective strategies towards resilience building	6	0.724	0.735
Overall	28	0.886	0.874

Table 7: Cronbach Alpha and KMO test result

The results presented in Table 7 indicate that all three questionnaire constructs attained Cronbach Alpha and KMO statistics of at least 0.7. Overall, the survey questionnaire with 28 items attained Cronbach Alpha and KMO statistics of 0.886 and 0.874, respectively. These

imply that the questionnaire attained internal consistency (reliability) and sampling adequacy (validity). Hence, the data collected was dependable for analysis and inferences.

5.5 Demographical Information of Participants

The respondents to the survey questionnaire and interviews were requested to provide their demographic and background information, including age, educational qualifications, marital status, years of residing in the targeted district and training status. Therefore, the results about these demographics are presented and analysed as follows: The respondents were asked to indicate their ages; the results are presented in Figure 6. As illustrated in Figure 6, 65.4%, representing the majority, were aged between 31 and 35 years, followed by 31.4%, aged between 25 and 30 years and 3.3%, aged between 18 and 24 years. The results show that youngest women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts are between 31 and 35 years old.

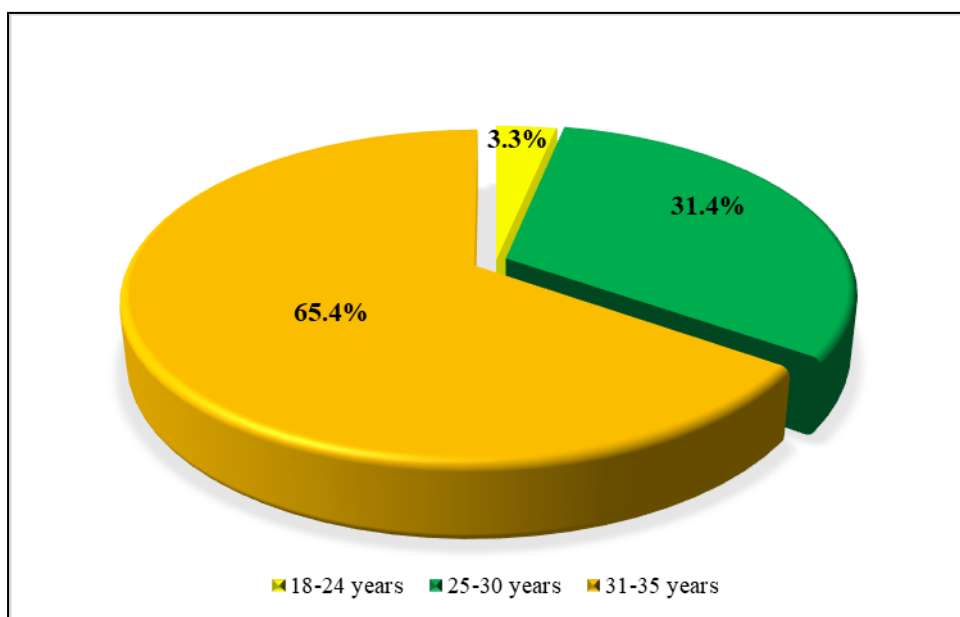


Figure 6: Age of Respondents

Furthermore, the sample participants were asked to indicate their highest educational qualifications. The responses were therefore linked to the age distribution responses to have a clear picture of the characteristics of the participants. The cross-tabulation results are presented in Table 5.3. As depicted in Table 5.3, the majority of those aged between 31 and 35 years had secondary educational qualifications (48.7%), whilst 16.7% of those with secondary education

were aged between 25 and 30. In addition, all participants aged between 18 and 24 had attained tertiary education. The results show that data was gathered from a varied sample regarding age and educational qualifications, thereby implying enhanced validity of findings.

Highest education attained * Age Crosstabulation						
			Age			
			18-24 years	25-30 years	31-35 years	Total
Highest education attained	No formal education	Count	0	3	5	8
		% of Total	0.0%	1.0%	1.6%	2.6%
	Primary education	Count	0	0	36	36
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	11.8%
	Secondary education	Count	0	51	149	200
		% of Total	0.0%	16.7%	48.7%	65.4%
	Tertiary education	Count	10	42	10	62
		% of Total	3.3%	13.7%	3.3%	20.3%
Total	Count	10	96	200	306	
	% of Total	3.3%	31.4%	65.4%	100.0%	

Table 8: Cross tabulations for age and education of participants

Furthermore, the study collected information regarding the marital status of the respondents. Thus, cross-tabulations for age and marital status are presented in Table 8. The results presented in 5.4 shows that 45.1% of the participants were married, 34.0% were single, and 17% were divorced. In addition, 2.6% were widowed, whilst the most minor proportion of 1.3% had other statuses such as cohabiting. Moreover, most married participants (27.1%) were between 31 and 35 years, followed by 18.0% married young women between 25 and 30 years. Marital status is a factor in accessing vocational education and participation of young women as the spousal permission and support determines participation. There are also conflicting duties in the marital home and the in-laws homestead where is they are not supportive attendance to course outside the locale area may be a challenge. In the FGD's a number of participants indicated that some of their counterparts dropped out of courses to get married. The results show that most of the women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts are married, followed by singles. Interestingly, the majority of single young women are also between 31 and 35 years old because indications are the younger respondents are either in formal schooling or not engaging in vocational training but as they get older the need for a skill to support livelihoods becomes apparent.

Marital Status * Age Crosstabulation						
			Age			
			18-24 years	25-30 years	31-35 years	Total
Marital Status	Single	Count	9	13	82	104
		% of Total	2.9%	4.2%	26.8%	34.0%
	Married	Count	0	55	83	138
		% of Total	0.0%	18.0%	27.1%	45.1%
	Divorced	Count	0	22	30	52
		% of Total	0.0%	7.2%	9.8%	17.0%
	Widowed	Count	1	4	3	8
		% of Total	0.3%	1.3%	1.0%	2.6%
	Other	Count	0	2	2	4
		% of Total	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	1.3%
Total		Count	10	96	200	306
		% of Total	3.3%	31.4%	65.4%	100.0%

Table 9: Cross tabulations for age and marital of participants

The participants in the study also indicated the number of years they had been residing in the two districts; the results are presented in Figure 9. The results in Figure 5.2 demonstrate the participants' years of stay in the districts. They show that most of the young women (73.2%) who participated in the research had resided in the districts for over 15 years. Those with 11 to 15 years of residence constituted 19.3% of the sample, whilst 7.5% had five (5) to ten (10) years of residing in their respective districts. These show that the respondents had an array of different experiences within Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts which create a conducive environment for the preservation and sharing of knowledge about the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women as well as the vulnerability of their areas to external shocks.

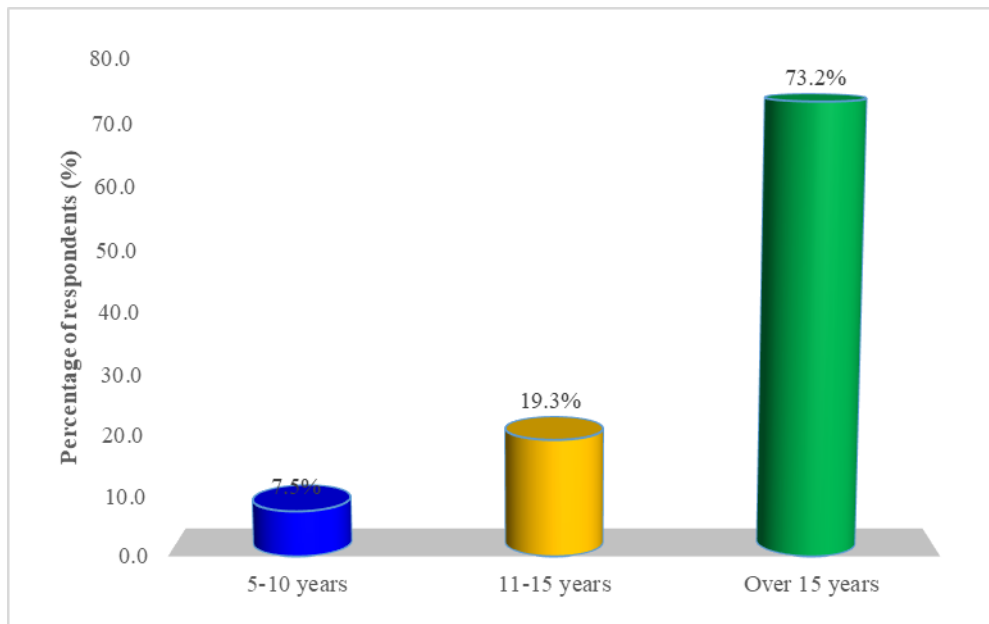


Figure 7: Years of residence in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts

Moreover, the respondents were asked if they had received any life, entrepreneurship, or vocational training. The responses to the question are summarised in Figure 5.3. The results shown in Figure 8 indicate that the majority of the participants, 96.1%, had undergone life, entrepreneurship, or vocational training, whilst the minority (3.9%) had not gone through training during the time of the study. The results show that youngest women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts were using the life, entrepreneurship, or vocational training programmes.

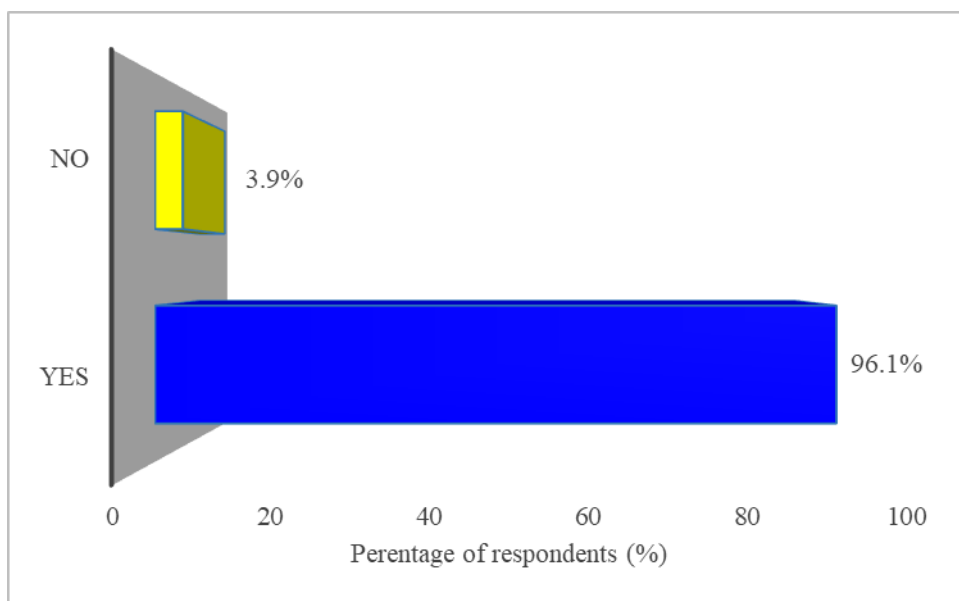


Figure 8: Participation in life, entrepreneurship, or vocational training

The profile of respondents aligns with previous evidence on disaster vulnerability highlighted by Rahman (2013), Mavhura and Mucherera (2020), and Enarson (2012) regarding ingrained gender inequalities and economic insecurities disproportionately affecting married women aged 25-35 years. This reinforces the rationale for targeting resilience initiatives at this segment.

Additionally, the relatively high education levels point to existing capacities to absorb training, while longer district residence provides localized knowledge to contextualize risks and solutions. This "setting-specific social capital" mirrors Frankenberg et al.'s (2013) finding that community connectedness enables disaster resilience. However, the low tertiary education attainment echoes Hemstock et al.'s (2017) highlighted skills gap regarding specialized technical capacities needed to promote climate adaptation. This corresponds to barriers to higher education for Zimbabwean women noted by Kwenza (2017), underscoring the imperative of accessible vocational programs. Meanwhile, most women having prior skills training provides a useful baseline to build upon through further training towards resilience goals. However, the generality of the training participation question makes it difficult to diagnose specific skill gaps that require tailored interventions. A more disaggregated skills diagnostic would enable targeted curricula based on needs.

Still, the training exposure highlights encouraging conditions for deploying strategies, notwithstanding content optimization needs. Facilitated by strong community ties, reinforcing local human capital through contextualized training could activate wider development co-benefits over time as envisioned by Vaughter et al. (2016) around TVET's links to resilience and economic advancement.

Methodologically, profiling married 25-35 year olds with baseline education corresponds to Solangarachi et al. (2012) and Siagian et al.'s (2014) emphasis on disaggregating groups by demographic risk factors when designing resilience initiatives. Findings affirm the importance of differentiating across age, marital status and education levels given varied risk exposures.

Further qualitative investigation to complete the vulnerability mapping would provide a rich picture of complex, intersecting risks experienced by female youth in the districts. Pairing quantified demographic data with in-depth qualitative insights on shock impacts, asset

portfolios, and existing capacities would enable more comprehensive tailoring of training and wider support.

For example, Rahman (2013) combined surveys and focus groups to detail how disasters exacerbate gender inequalities in Bangladesh. Similar mixed methods could uncover multidimensional vulnerabilities while diagnosing community strengths to build upon through social programs like vocational training, mentorships, cooperatives and social assistance. Longer-term ethnographic approaches would also further unpack complex social dynamics shaping household resilience as Cutter (2010) examined through extensive fieldwork in US communities. Detailed observational studies in Zimbabwean villages could chronicle lived disaster experiences and risk management trade-offs by female youth over disaster event cycles.

This would provide a richer reference point for scaffolding training capacities. For instance, Kwenza (2017) and Moyo (2019) emphasize life skills beyond technical vocational abilities, including rights awareness and social barriers. In-depth vulnerability narratives would elucidate priority capability gaps and training needs in areas like decision-making, self-confidence, and social navigation to inform comprehensive curricula for building resilient livelihoods strategies.

Therefore, while the current study provides useful confirmation of a priority target group for resilience programming, further qualitative enquiry would enable more contextualized, emic design of training and wider support packages tailored to the most critical capability needs voiced by women themselves.

5.6 Contextual Shocks Increasing Vulnerability of Female Youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts

The study examined the contextual shocks increasing the vulnerability of female youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. Both primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed to achieve the stated objective. In doing so, the participants were asked if they had witnessed any contextual shocks which increased the vulnerability of female youths in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The results are presented in Figure 5.4. The results in Figure 5.4 show that the majority of the participants (57.2%) strongly agreed that there were contextual shocks increasing the vulnerability of female youths in Mwenezi and Chiredzi,

followed by 42.2% who agreed. Equal proportions of less than 1% were neutral whilst others strongly disagreed. These results imply that there are contextual shocks increasing vulnerability of the young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

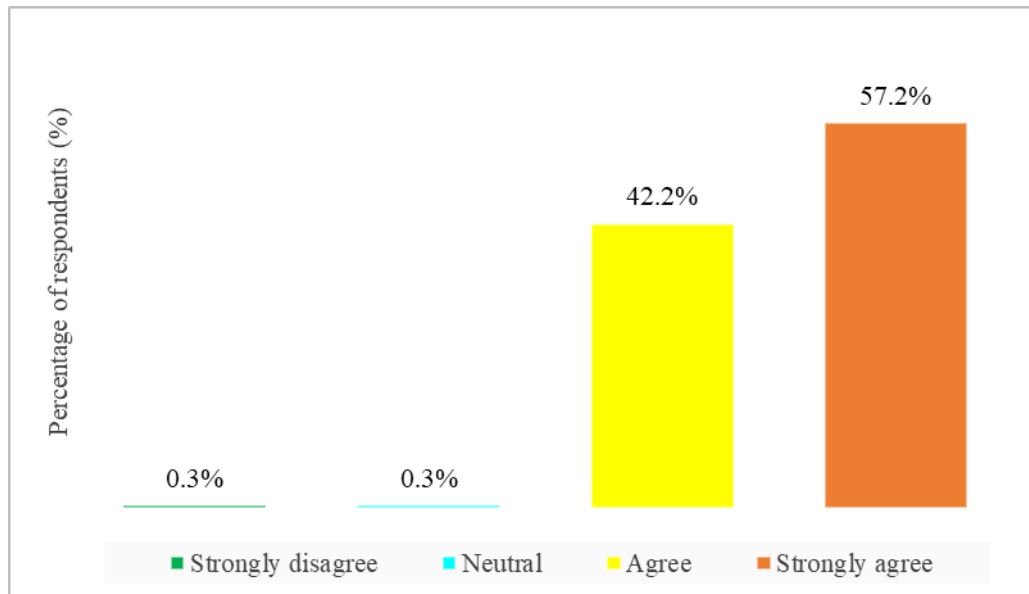


Figure 9: Extent of external contextual shocks

Additionally, the participants were asked to indicate if young women in rural areas were more vulnerable to external shocks than their male counterparts. The results about this question are presented in Figure 9. The results show that most participants (52%) agreed that young women were more vulnerable to external shocks than their male counterparts. In support, 27.5% strongly agreed, whilst 18.3% were not sure. The minority (2.3%) disagreed. The results show that young women are more vulnerable to external shocks than their male counterparts. The existing literature supports this.

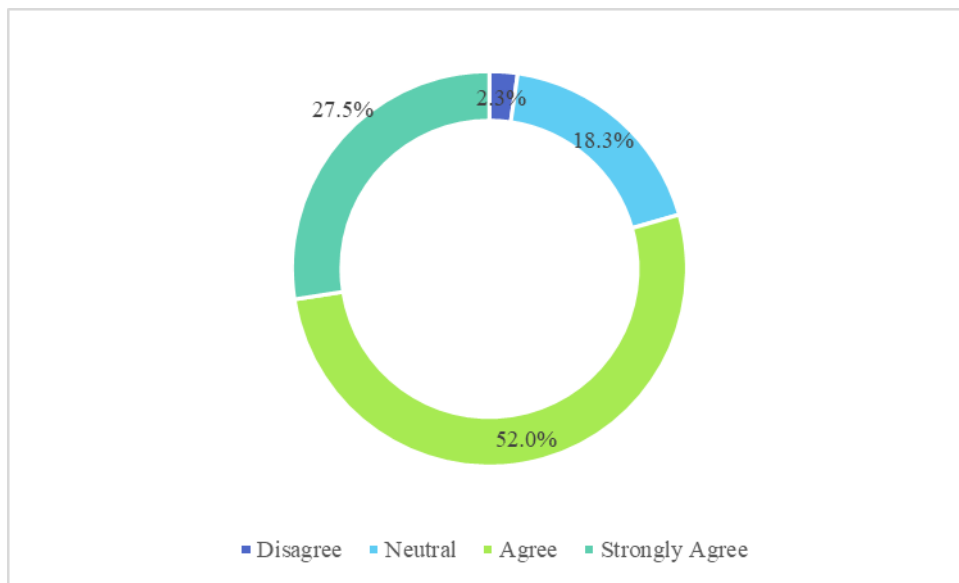


Figure 10: Vulnerability of young women to external shocks compared to male counterparts

The gendered division of labour, which leads to women and girls taking on home chores, is commonly acknowledged in literature to have a negative impact on their involvement in education and training. According to UNICEF (2016), globally, girls aged 5–14 dedicate 550 million hours daily to home duties, which is 160 million more hours than boys of the same age. This results in disparities in the educational achievements of girls in comparison to boys. Early marriages, power imbalances in marriages, and limited sexual and reproductive health rights and services for young women all lead to early pregnancies and high fertility rates, which affect educational and training opportunities. Child marriages are more prevalent among migrant groups in host countries compared to levels prior to migration, as indicated by Akyuz et al. (2018), Culbertson and Louay (2015), and Human Rights Watch (2020). Early marriage shifts the caregiving role from parents to husbands, making girls and young women more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based abuse (Government of Lebanon and United Nations, 2019).

According to WALPE (2020) cited in Chamunogwa (2021), homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic placed gender-specific constraints on parents, particularly women, who were mostly responsible for family and child care. Children in households led by women were impacted since their mothers or female carers had to dedicate more time to informal work to

maintain money and support their families' well-being, leaving them with little time to homeschool their children. Girls are often impacted by their involvement in care work in households, as it is typically anticipated in a patriarchal society that women will provide care assistance for families. This include tasks such as cleaning the house, cooking, and collecting water, among others. A participant stated that:

We now understand that in the past; we did not understand this. Sometimes, the men look at the output from the training and from the fields and would rather their wives stay home because, in their comparison, it's more productive to farm than attend training in their eyes.

Another one confirmed:

So also, those who support their wives' training either have businesses or work somewhere. Those not working will ask them what you are here for. Your role is to give birth and farm. Some also think if you uplift a woman or wife through training, you encourage them to be promiscuous. Sometimes, the approach from the wives might cause chaos. There needs to be a proper approach to get permission.

In light of the findings presented, it is evident that young women were disproportionately affected by vulnerable shocks compared to their male counterparts, mainly due to religious beliefs, gender inequality, and cultural influences in their respective communities. The statements from participants highlight the deeply ingrained gender roles and societal expectations that hinder women's access to education and training opportunities. These findings underscore the significant impact of religious beliefs, gender inequality, and cultural influences on young women's vulnerability to shocks. In communities where traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms are deeply entrenched, young women face numerous barriers to accessing education, training, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The statements exemplify the attitudes and mindsets that prioritize women's domestic and reproductive responsibilities over their pursuit of knowledge, skills, and economic empowerment.

Some household decision-makers maintain unfavourable views towards educating females and prioritise girls' education less, particularly when women are paid less than men and job options are limited. Girls are viewed as temporary assets and not considered worth long-term

investment because they typically leave their parents' home after they get married. Girls are often expected to assist with household tasks like cooking, cleaning, and looking after younger siblings, which can lead to greater sacrifices in terms of educational opportunities in many societies. Women's reproductive duties, related to both family and farming tasks, limit their availability for training and economic pursuits, which may clash with set training schedules and lengths. Challenges such as long distances to educational institutions, limited public transportation, inadequate boarding and sanitary facilities, and a shortage of female teachers and trainers can greatly hinder female education and training in rural locations. Women may find it difficult to afford higher education and training due to their limited financial resources and lack of influence in accessing household funds for training. Additionally, education and training programmes are not usually tailored to meet the specific learning requirements of women. Trainers and educators may exhibit discriminatory attitudes towards girls and women, leading to their fear of sexual harassment and insecurity when attending schools and training institutes.

Adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa face more obstacles to working outside the home compared to boys. Statistics show that 14.9% of young women are unemployed, while only 11.4% of young men are unemployed in this region (World Bank World Development Indicators, modelled ILO estimates). In sub-Saharan Africa, young women typically have lower educational attainment compared to men, which hinders their readiness for employment. Their domestic responsibilities limit their availability for work, and societal norms discourage them from seeking employment in lucrative sectors. Early childbirth frequently hinders the career advancement of young women. Most youth employment schemes do not take into account the special obstacles faced by women.

In counter-arguing the factor of cultural influence, a participant mentioned that Shangani men now understand that women can also get educated by commenting:

We now understand in the past, we did not understand this. Sometimes, the men look at the output from the training and the fields and would rather their wives stay home because, in their comparison, it's more productive to farm than attend training. Also, those who support their wives' training either have businesses or work somewhere. Those not working will ask them what you are here for; your role is to give birth and farm. Some also think that if you uplift a woman or wife through training, you

encourage them to be promiscuous. Sometimes, the approach from the wives might cause chaos. There needs to be the proper approach to get permission.

Globally, girls continue to lag substantially behind boys in secondary completion rates, and gender bias in the education system reinforces occupational segregation. Gender stereotypes perpetuated by classroom design and the behaviour of faculty, staff, and peers have lasting effects on academic performance and choice of study, particularly in STEM disciplines. The repercussions of restricted educational options for girls are substantial. Poverty is the primary factor that determines if a girl can obtain an education. A 2022 World Bank study analysing data from 24 low-income countries found that, on average, 34% of girls in the poorest-quintile households finish primary school, whereas 72% of girls in the richest-quintile households do so. Research repeatedly shows that females who experience various forms of disadvantage, such as low income, geographic location, handicap, and/or ethnolinguistic heritage, are the most disadvantaged.

The study collected data on the main contextual shocks for young women in Chiredzi and Mwenezi districts. The results are presented in Table 10. The results shown in Table 10 show that the majority of the participants agreed that the main contextual shocks increasing vulnerability of the young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts include Covid-19 (M= 4.63; SD= 0.529), inflation (M= 4.77; SD= 0.470), drought (M= 4.71; SD= 0.503), natural disasters (M= 4.57; SD= 0.540), climate change (M= 4.75; SD= 0.481), unemployment (M= 3.92; SD= 0.776), political instability (M= 4.29; SD= 0.746), culture and accustom religious practices (M= 4.19; SD= 0.694) as well as historical beliefs regarding educating girl child (M= 4.38; SD= 0.705). The results indicate that several contextual shocks are increasing the vulnerability of young women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

External shock:	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
COVID-19	306	4.63	0.529
Inflation	306	4.77	0.470
Drought	306	4.71	0.503
Natural disasters	306	4.57	0.540
Climate change	306	4.75	0.481
Unemployment	306	3.92	0.776
Political instability	306	4.29	0.746
Culture and accustom religion and practices	306	4.19	0.694
Historical beliefs regarding educating girls	306	4.38	0.705

Table 10: Contextual Shocks Increasing Vulnerability of Female Youths

The results are corroborated by evidence from secondary sources and the interviews carried out. Various variables contribute to vulnerability. These variables hinder self-protection, limit social protection, impede recuperation, and disproportionately expose certain populations to more severe or frequent risks. Factors such as fast population increase, poverty, hunger, poor health, low education levels, gender inequality, living in unstable and hazardous areas, and limited access to resources and services, including information and technology, can lead to the breakdown of social structures. Religious beliefs and practices that influenced daily life were connected to the susceptibility variables of adolescent girls stated earlier. Beliefs about the acceptability of girls' early marriage were influenced by dominant religious ideologies.

Adolescent girls are vulnerable to child marriage due to a combination of traditional religious beliefs, male dominance, and gender imbalance. Adolescent girls are seen as subjects of male dominance, with the ability to decide on marriage being a prerogative exclusive to men. Feminists have extensively condemned marriage as a primary source of female oppression, where women lack independence, agency, and basic human rights.

The inadequate legal framework interacts with social and cultural customs, gender expectations, and stereotypes to influence women's involvement in Vocational and Life Skills Training. Norms regarding suitable career choices based on gender often dissuade many women from pursuing non-traditional occupations (Paudel, 2019). In addition to access, gender stereotypes and macho institutional cultures play a role in causing biases and unease among young women in Vocational and Life Skills Training (Colley et al., 2003). Survey participants identified sociocultural obstacles such as gender norms, family duties, and insufficient child-care assistance as more impactful for young women compared to other demographics. Family responsibilities and lack of child-care support were major obstacles for young women in accessing Vocational and Life Skills Training. Regarding other types of disadvantage, gender norms were perceived as either insignificant or important concerns.

An inclusive learning environment accommodates the diverse requirements of learners by customising teaching approaches, curriculum, resources, physical surroundings, and support services accordingly. A substandard learning and working environment negatively affects the access and learning outcomes of numerous young individuals in education and training. The physical characteristics of the constructed surroundings pose a significant obstacle to the entry and advancement of students, particularly young women and individuals with impairments. In numerous poor and middle-income nations, Vocational and Life Skills Training institutions lack adequate washrooms, accommodations for young women, and infrastructure that is accessible for individuals with disabilities. This hinders learners' involvement and results in Vocational and Life Skills Training institutes discriminating against them during admissions. However, several poll participants mentioned investments in study areas, additional tutors or classes, and specialised learning resources in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a significant obstacle cited by learners in and around the school environment that hinders their engagement, according to Matenda (2020). Approximately 246 million children worldwide are subjected to sexual and gender-based

violence annually (UNESCO, 2016). Female learners, especially those in war or emergencies, unstable contexts, or with long commutes to school, are more likely to be disproportionately affected by SGBV. This risk is also higher for individuals facing other types of discrimination. Although the dynamics may vary due to factors such as age range and work placements, it is realistic to anticipate that this is a significant concern in Vocational and Life Skills Training. Most respondents indicated that gender sensitivity in the educational environment was of minor or no importance for the growth of young women. Additional research on the experiences and perspectives of learners in Vocational and Life Skills Training in this field would be beneficial.

Vocational and Life Skills Training is strongly connected to both employment and self-employment. Youth face numerous obstacles in the employment market and transitioning from education to work. Factors contributing to the problems include the nature of economies, skills mismatch, and the available support structures. These factors combine to have a greater impact on certain students. Skills mismatch, which refers to the disparity between the skills provided by Vocational and Life Skills Training institutions and those required in the labour market, is a significant factor contributing to unemployment and underemployment in the Vocational and Life Skills Training field. Various types of skills mismatch exist, with vertical and horizontal mismatch being the most prominent. Vertical mismatch arises when individuals possess qualifications that exceed or fall short of the requirements for the available positions. Horizontal mismatch refers to a situation when a person's qualifications or skills are not suitable for the job they are in (International Labour Organisation, 2014). The latter arises due to inadequate connections between Vocational and Life Skills Training curricula and labour market demands, emphasising the importance of collaborating with employers and utilising current information technology.

Access to information, advice, and guidance (IAG) is crucial for capitalising on financial possibilities, establishing strategic connections, and manoeuvring through intricate labour markets and educational institutions to make well-informed decisions regarding career choices, educational courses, and paths. Multiple studies emphasise the absence of Individualised Academic Guidance (IAG) as a primary factor contributing to the low participation and advancement of young individuals in Vocational and Life Skills Training. All young individuals require Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG), with refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, youth in rural regions, and young women often having a greater need for it. The majority of poll respondents verified this. The absence of Individual Academic Guidance (IAG)

for female students leads to gender inequalities in STEM fields and non-traditional courses or vocations (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020a). Insufficient IAG, along with inadequate direction, perpetuates stereotyping and worsens disadvantage. Youthful females, individuals with impairments, and refugees (especially those falling into multiple categories) may receive guidance to direct them towards less popular vocational degrees, many of which are unpopular due to their limited connection to favourable employment opportunities. Discriminatory attitudes often lead to realistic aspirations of disadvantaged learners being viewed as unrealistic and improper. Programmes are provided without sufficient consideration of individuals' choices and without proper information on opportunities for higher education or professional advancement (Beilmann and Espenberg, 2016). This leads to dropouts as a result of a lack of interest in the programmes.

A study examined obstacles hindering the involvement of underprivileged youth in New South Wales, Australia. It highlighted that in 2015, the Smart and Skilled programme provided funding for approximately 200,000 fee waivers for disadvantaged youth. Insufficient promotion, unclear qualifying restrictions, and lack of information for the intended audience resulted in a mere 12% uptake of the waivers in the initial year. This indicates the need for additional efforts to offer young individuals with Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) as well as other necessary support to enhance access and enhance advancement in Vocational and Life Skills Training.

This study's results confirm feminist assertions about the susceptibility of girls to early marriage. One participant reported observing early marriage occurring as young as 13 years old or immediately after completing the 7th grade in primary school. Maguranyanga (2011) states that gendered religious teachings still impact the behaviour of women and adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwe. These beliefs compel young women to marry at a young age based on dreams foretold by religious leaders (Chamisa et al., 2019). In addition to religion, dominant gender norms and societal views increased the susceptibility of adolescent girls to child marriage. Participants noted that young females received frequent messages emphasising that marriage was a pathway to a dignified existence (Susanti et al., 2018; Cleuziou, 2019). Participants claimed to receive unwelcome remarks regarding marriage. Other participants emphasised other aspects that heightened their sensitivity by stating that:

Usually, when you get married early, you return home and face other challenges as a single mother.

Here, close to the business centre, a lot of sex for favours like phones, money or food is happening.

There is a lot of movement to South Africa, but it's not as good as people think. A lot of people are suffering in South Africa, and girls end up resorting to prostitution.

In addition, migration was a significant issue from the interviews on factors increasing the vulnerability of young women in areas to external ration. Many young women confirmed that some left the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts before completing their vocational training. One participant mentioned that migration was also prevalent in this area. She said:

You see these participants; tomorrow, you might not find them. There are youth whom we mobilised to attend today's meeting; they have left as we speak. And they don't even tell you as the coordinator that they are leaving. So sometimes they leave courses midway, and when you follow-up, you are told that find someone else.

She added that this was the same case for both male and female youth:

Yes, it's the same. They all migrate. You find girls especially are encouraged to migrate by their boyfriends, and they go or their bus tickets are paid for by those who have migrated earlier and go and stay with their boyfriends or partners.

Another participant had to highlight the chances of opportunities when these youth migrate by commenting that:

In some instances, they move, and there is further migration. They might face challenges, and the family units also face problems there. So, in this context, they face challenges there where they go as a couple, but they usually have broken homes that side; the social fabric there is not the same as this side.

She had to add:

On the way, there are challenges by those who transport or traffic the people, and some are unscrupulous and end up forcing the girls to stay with them before passing them to

those who would have sent for them. It used to happen in the past, especially if they had not paid for the travel. But for those who go, there is usually safe passage if there is someone to get you there.

Climate change was also noted as a major challenge towards young women. This was because young women confirmed that climate change directly affected them. Existing literature supports that among the different external shocks affecting the poor, climate change can increase hazards, risk and vulnerability (Davies et al., 2009), by increasing the magnitude and frequency of shocks.

During climate change, the poor will likely be the hardest hit because of their relative lack of resilience and adaptive capacity (Kuriakose et al., 2012). The poor and vulnerable mostly live in rural areas, out of reach of services, and thus are vulnerable to economic, climatic and conflict-related risks and shocks, which can destroy their income and livelihood and result in engaging in negative coping strategies (FAO, 2019). In these settings, women and girls are the most vulnerable. Evidence shows that social protection can protect against the impoverishing effects of external shocks, including humanitarian disasters, climate change, droughts, floods, and other disasters. One participant mentioned that:

There is poverty that strikes us when you cannot get income. Prices end up going up as a young woman, I will not have anything to buy with. We won't get any money to invest in our enterprise, like buying machines for our dressmaking project. Like now, at the end of sewing, when we go back, we have no machines of our own. We use these machines at this community centre since we are on attachment.

Women in semi-arid parts of Zimbabwe lead the entrepreneurial economy by engaging in rural livelihood methods like pottery, cooperatives, vending, and agriculture. Rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi District mostly engage in livelihood activities such as irrigation schemes and ceramics. Limited access to competitive markets hinders these economic empowerment projects. Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts, being marginalised, lack easily accessible marketplaces. Therefore, remote markets are advantageous, despite these women lacking sufficient transportation to bring their commodities for sale. Research by Ncube (2012) and Mutami and Chazovachii (2012) confirmed that women in underdeveloped countries have disproportionate obstacles when trying to access and compete in the market. The lack of accessible markets hinders women's economic empowerment initiatives in Mwenezi and

Chiredzi District. Favourable markets are located in remote areas like Masvingo town, approximately 60-70 kilometres away. Inadequate transportation delays the delivery of items to marketplaces, which undermines women's economic advancement.

An in-depth interview with one participant revealed this challenge when the woman stated:

I have established my skills in making pots. I make various pots for different purposes. In towns, most people like the decorative pots that I design for their displays, but the major problem is how to carry them in bulk to town for selling. The towns are very far from here, and I do not have reliable transport, considering the fragility of my items. This has made it very difficult to earn from pottery as I end up selling it along the main road. When I grow vegetables in my garden, I can only rely on other villagers to come and buy them or send them to nearby schools to sell to teachers. If sales are poor I am forced to dry the vegetables, which are very difficult to sell. (Female Villager Participant)

This statement highlights the specific challenges faced by rural women in accessing markets for their products, particularly due to the lack of reliable transportation and the distance to major markets. It illustrates the barriers that undermine their economic empowerment efforts.

The World Bank (2007) contends that to achieve economic empowerment, women must be enabled to be competitive. It is crucial to close the economic gap between men and women in business. To empower women economically in semi-arid regions, it is crucial to improve the spread of information about existing markets to rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. This will prevent them from selling their agricultural products at lower prices in local markets due to limited market access. Thus, to enhance market competitiveness, women must be educated and equipped with knowledge on utilising current technology to reach more advantageous and efficient marketplaces.

Lin (2011) and Mudimu (2002) contend that rural women face a range of challenges worldwide, such as those stemming from globalisation, technological progress, policies, external interventions, resource access and control, women's leadership, and enhancing capabilities like education, health, and equality. Rural women in regions like sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia predominantly work in agriculture, but relying solely on agricultural activities to support households has become increasingly difficult. Rural women have

implemented several livelihood strategies to enhance their agricultural revenue to attain economic empowerment. However, this diversification is influenced by factors including resource availability and education (FAO et al. 2010; Mutopo 2014; O’Laughlin 1998; UNDAW & UNIFEM 2001). Diversification might vary according to the country.

Women in Latin America are employed by large agriculture corporations, such as the flower plantations in Ecuador, and get wages on a seasonal basis. In Thailand, women have outsourced their family land to cultivate baby corn and asparagus for a larger corporation (UNDAW & UNDESA 2008). Women engaged in prawn farming under contract with large corporations for export have experienced increased earnings compared to growing rice, as well as reduced working hours (UNDAW & UNDESA 2008). In South and Southeast Asia, numerous rural women were compelled to relocate to metropolitan regions due to the decline of agriculture, seeking economic possibilities. In Bangladesh, a significant proportion of rural women who migrate to metropolitan regions for labour possibilities are unmarried or divorced and have low levels of education (Davies et al. 2013; UNDAW & UNDESA 2008). These women would be employed in textile sectors, which have a high female workforce (UNDAW & UNDESA 2008). Oberhauser et al. (2004) contend that rural women employ a variety of livelihood strategies to fulfil their duties. Women in Porto Novo were reported to engage in selling food to generate consistent income and ensure food supply for their families (Oberhauser et al., 2004). Studies in developing countries have demonstrated that women, despite facing constraints and challenges, retain the right to select a livelihood strategy that suits them. This choice has led to a sense of ownership, ensuring that women work hard and remain dedicated (UNDAW & UNIFEM 2001). In regions like Pennsylvania and South Africa, women have the flexibility to make significant decisions regarding their families, as supported by Oberhauser et al. (2004).

Decisions are influenced by the presence and ease of access to markets, infrastructure, religions, and traditions that restrict women's involvement in economic endeavours. Countries in semi-arid regions like Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana face challenges in choosing livelihoods due to natural factors such as droughts, cyclones, and other elements that hinder livelihood strategies (Campbell et al. 2002; Ellis 2000; Frost et al. 2007). Rural communities develop strategies to handle challenging events, and their capacity to manage these shocks leads to community empowerment (Kabeer & Natali, 2013). Resilient communities employ strategies to mitigate hazards that support long-term growth and facilitate change.

Disasters can lead to prolonged disturbances in social interactions, disorganisation in society, increased poverty, and destabilisation of established societal functions and institutions. Individuals in resource-scarce or conflict-trapped communities are particularly vulnerable to disasters caused by natural hazards like floods, storms, and earthquakes, as well as those caused by human activities such as violent conflicts and terrorism.

Youthful women in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe are leading the way in the entrepreneurial sector by engaging in rural livelihood strategies like pottery, cooperative vending, and agriculture. In Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, a study discovered that young rural women experience extrinsic challenges including as early child marriage and drought. Koubi (2019) states that rural communities in poor countries face a greater challenge in maintaining livelihoods during drought due to the lack of infrastructure for convenient water transportation. Due to conventional gender roles, women and girls are primarily responsible for gathering water in the family (Solomon & Angula, 2019). Gaidzanwa (2019) states that drought leads to poverty by depriving people of access to vital services including healthcare, food, housing, development opportunities, and a satisfactory standard of living. Poor economic situations significantly contributed to young women being more susceptible to early marriage practices.

An in-depth interview with different participants revealed this challenge when the woman stated:

Yes, it's prevalent, and that is where we get early marriages coming on.

We also get a student choosing not to continue with attachment and not telling the parents, and I had to intervene because he decided to drop out and not continue, he was not committed to going to the out-of-town opportunities for fear of meeting with peers from town areas yet coming to form an illiterate background also is a challenge.

He also married before, so that might be a reason for the reluctance.

Women are often given domestic work and accountable for various types of care, such as childcare and old-age care, according to the conventional labour division. In rural regions, inadequate infrastructure, like transportation, services, access to clean water, electricity, and time-saving devices such as household appliances, increases the time required for household

tasks. This hinders women from engaging in income-generating activities and forming connections beyond the village. Simultaneously, it is crucial to link with employment prospects in the job market. This division of tasks typically commences early in life. Girls may be engaged in household chores instead of attending school, which hinders their potential, decreases productivity, and limits their access to decent work and skilled career prospects. These obstacles diminish their autonomy and hinder their potential for social and economic advancement. Research indicates that women frequently encounter obstacles in obtaining productive assets and resources such as land, technologies, financial services, and tools. Additionally, rural women experience greater levels of unemployment compared to their urban counterparts.

Consequently, they frequently engage in unpaid labour as contributing family workers, mainly in precarious and adaptable positions that do not offer social security or other perks. Women in the agricultural industry primarily focus on food production, whereas males are more interested in cultivating commercial crops. Although women may participate in commercial food production, there are significant asymmetries and strict work allocation. Women in rural non-agricultural areas are primarily engaged as domestic workers. Women are underrepresented and have little influence in rural employers', workers', and farmers' organisations, resulting in little negotiating power. Women's limited engagement in organisations and decision-making is influenced by societal standards, cultural attitudes, restricted access to education, and significant domestic duties. Rural women's rights at work, such as equal pay, fair wages, and social protection, are frequently overlooked, diminishing their socioeconomic influence, contribution, and welfare.

Diverse shocks from health, economic, and climate crises support the Pressure and Release model's idea that susceptibility stems from common root causes and dynamic pressures (Blaikie et al., 2004). Confirming dangerous situations for young women verifies the model's sequential approach to risk cascades and highlights prospects for interventions targeting specific leverage points. The discovery that shock impacts are intensified for young women based on identities supports the Social Constructivist perspective that resilience is influenced by social values and structures beyond physical occurrences (Bankoff, 2003). This supports the need for critical examination of historical backgrounds that have led to the acceptance of women's vulnerabilities, rather than just focusing on technical assessments (Kapoor, 2004).

The limitations on voice, mobility, and choice despite improvements in skills reflect criticisms of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for not adequately addressing the complex systems that restrict agency (Rigg, 2007). The results support the Transformative Capability academics' focus on ensuring freedoms and valued methods of 'being and doing' (Alkire, 2008), which now highlights the contextual constraints that hinder women's development aspirations.

Thus, while confirming established risk pathways, the results support the viewpoints of feminist resilience theorists who critique the idea of vulnerability that ignores patriarchal norms and unfair structures (Bradshaw, 2013). This shifts the focus to examining sociopolitical circumstances that operationalize feminine fragility as a problem requiring more than just technical solutions but fundamental changes that support liberation and social equality.

The prevalence of findings indicating disempowerment in various areas highlights the analytical value of the Protection-Participation-Promotion people-centred paradigm (3Ps) as suggested by Haider (2021). Implementing this model based on human security principles would reinterpret results by considering all aspects and revealing underlying violence that is not apparent in segmented resilience measurements that oversimplify intricate experiences into data. Improving measurement methods by using critical, feminist, and social constructivist viewpoints to analyse contextual connections would help develop comprehensive programmes that address complexity and systems of oppression. This supports the capacity approach's focus on comprehending settings before taking action (Alkire, 2005).

5.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five discussed the data from the questionnaire, interviews, and FGDs carried out. It gave the demographic profile of questionnaire respondents in terms of gender, age, level of education, and migratory trends. The chapter focused the discussion on examining the contextual shocks increasing the vulnerability of female youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi based on the data from the questionnaires, KIIs, and FGDs. Climate change and extreme weather events were reflected as contributing to the vulnerability of female youths in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. In the local context, religion, gender inequality, and cultural influences play significant roles in making young women more vulnerable to the climatic shocks in their communities. In addition to the climatic shocks, the main contextual shocks identified in the study included COVID-19, inflation (currency volatility), drought, and natural disasters. The wider macroeconomic environment also has unemployment, political instability, cultural

practices, and historical beliefs regarding educating girl children which further compounds the vulnerability of rural female youth.

CHAPTER 6

EFFICACY OF LIFE SKILLS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING INTERVENTION IN RESILIENCE BUILDING FOR FEMALE YOUTH

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the results to improve the understanding of answering the research question: “What the impact of vocational is and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts?” It presents the data collected from the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, zooming in on the second research objective to evaluate the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training being incorporated into resilience building for rural young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. Like the previous Chapter, the discussion also draws on inferable trends from the results. It is also based on the literature review introduced in Chapters 2 & 3 and the primary data collected from the questionnaire responses, interviews, and focus group discussions.

6.2 Efficacy of Life Skills, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Skills Training in Resilience Building

The study also aimed to evaluate the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training are being incorporated into resilience building for rural young women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The participants were therefore asked to indicate if life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training helps reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The results are summarised in Figure 11. The results show that most participants (60.8%) strongly agreed, whereas 36.3% agreed that life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training help reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. However, the minority, 2.6%, were neutral, and 0.3% strongly disagreed. The results imply that life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training helps reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

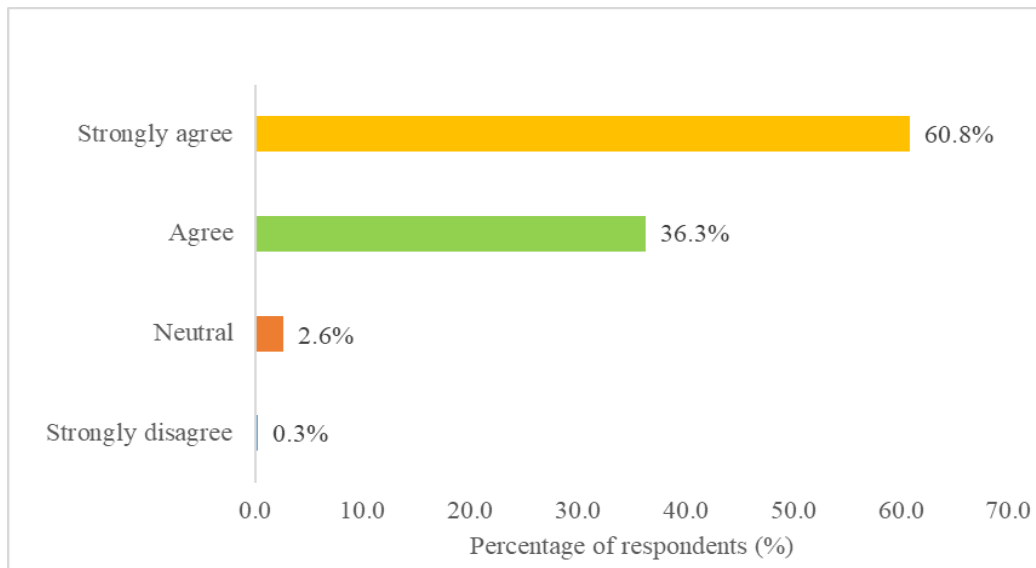
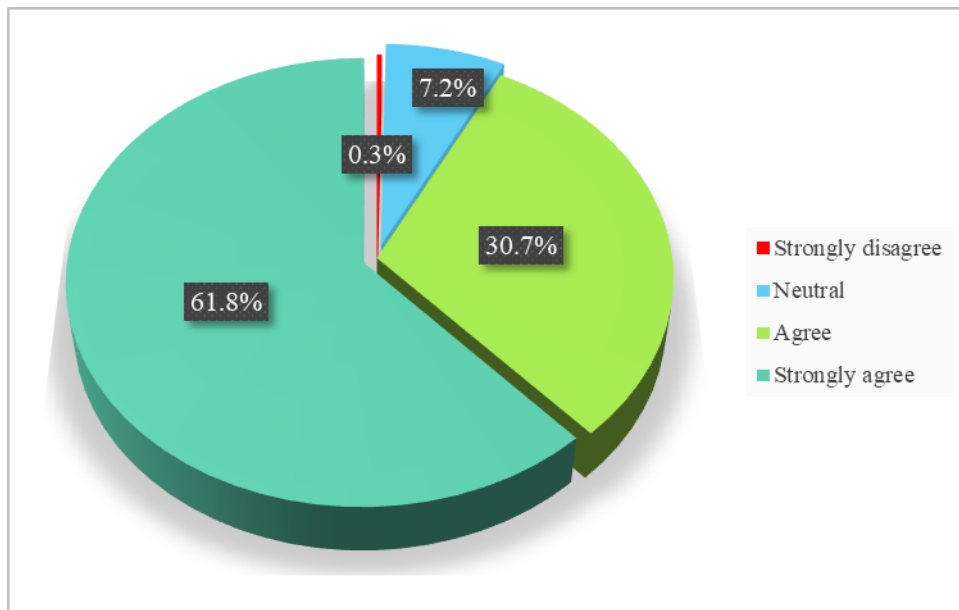


Figure 11: Efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training on vulnerability reduction

The study also aimed to evaluate the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training are being incorporated into resilience building for rural young women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The participants were therefore asked to indicate if life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training helps reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The results are summarised in Figure 11. The results show that most participants (60.8%) strongly agreed, whereas 36.3% agreed that life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training help reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. However, the minority, 2.6%, were neutral, and 0.3% strongly disagreed. The results imply that life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training helps reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

Figure 12: Effectiveness of life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training in promoting resilience building.



Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate efficacies of life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training to help build resilience among young women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. Table 11 presents the results of this question. The results in Table 11 show that most respondents agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in gaining skills and knowledge to improve livelihoods, as shown by the mean score of 3.77 and standard deviation of 0.95. Also, as shown by the mean of 4.26, most respondents agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in gaining knowledge and information about threats. Most participants also agreed that life, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training results in gaining skills and knowledge to cope with and adapt to external shocks, as indicated by the mean of 4.01. More so, the mean of 4.14 indicates that the respondents agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training result in skills and knowledge to adapt to the changing environment and take measures against external shocks.

Efficacy of life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gaining skills and knowledge to improve livelihoods	306	3.77	0.952
Gaining knowledge and information about threats	306	4.26	0.796
Gaining skills and knowledge to cope with and adapt to external shocks	306	4.01	0.872
Skills and knowledge to adapt to the changing environment and take measures against external shocks	306	4.14	1.003
Gaining literacy skills which enhance the ability to read, understand and use information to make informed decisions	306	3.85	1.078
Acquiring skills and knowledge to start livelihood projects or small businesses	306	4.36	0.989
Increased access to economic and informational resources	306	3.73	0.874
Gaining disaster management and response skills and knowledge	306	3.65	0.759
Skills and knowledge to become self-reliant	306	4.04	1.057

Table 11: Efficacy of life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training in promoting resilience building

Additionally, the respondents agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in gaining literacy skills, which enhances the ability to read, understand and use information to make informed decisions, as indicated by the mean of 3.85 and standard deviation of 1.078. As shown in Table 5.6, most respondents agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in acquiring skills and knowledge for starting livelihood projects or small businesses, as shown by the mean score of 4.36 and standard deviation of 0.989. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents, as shown by the mean of 3.73, agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in increased access to economic and informational resources. More so, most participants agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in gaining disaster management and response skills and knowledge, as indicated by the mean statistic of 3.65 and standard deviation of 0.759. The

mean statistic of 4.04 indicates that the respondents agreed that life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training results in gaining skills and knowledge to become self-reliant. The results indicate that life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training are effective as they help build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

Chi-square tests were undertaken to determine the efficacies of life, entrepreneurship or vocational skills training on vulnerability reduction and building resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts to support the aforementioned descriptive results. The results are displayed in Table 5.7. The results in Table 5.7 show that life, entrepreneurship or vocational skills training is significantly associated with resilience building ($\chi^2 = 133.767$; $p = 0.000$) and vulnerability reduction ($\chi^2 = 21.942$; $p = 0.000$). The results indicate that life, entrepreneurship, or vocational skills training represents critical tools for promoting resilience building and vulnerability reduction among the young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts.

Variable		Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Resilience building	Pearson Chi-Square	133.767	3	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	59.677	3	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	60.847	1	.000
	N of Valid Cases	306		
Vulnerability reduction	Pearson Chi-Square	21.942	3	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	25.207	3	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	12.106	1	.001
	N of Valid Cases	306		

Figure 11: Chi-square test results

Interview findings and secondary data complement these results.

The findings that life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training help reduce vulnerability and build resilience among young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts support conclusions from previous studies. As the conceptual framework outlined, human

capital development through skills training is a key component in strengthening resilience according to the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 2009).

Specifically, the high level of agreement from respondents that such training equips women with knowledge and skills aligns with evidence from Hoffman and Blecha (2020), who found that both hard vocational abilities and soft life skills play an important role in preparing women to cope with disasters in Nepal. Similarly, the survey finding that skills training provides literacy and information aligns with Muttarak and Lutz's (2014) conclusion that education enhances knowledge and planning capacity to aid resilience.

The specific skill sets that respondents highlighted as resulting from training also reflect those identified as resilience promoters in earlier research. For example, the view that skills training enables adaptation, self-reliance and livelihood improvements mirrors Fatemi et al.'s (2017) and Moyo's (2019) conclusions about the vulnerability-reducing potential of such capabilities. The perception that access to economic and informational resources increases after training also reflects Hoffman and Blecha's (2020) identified pathway of education leading to greater coping resources.

The widespread agreement regarding the efficacy of skills training in building resilience further coincides with evidence from Weichselgartner and Pigeon (2015), Vaughter et al. (2016), and Pathirage et al. (2014) about the vital role of knowledge and skills in mitigating disaster impacts. Similarly, the sentiment that training nurtures crucial capacities like disaster preparedness and management aligns with conclusions by Shamano (2010) and Ahmed (2019) about the effectiveness of education for improved disaster response.

On the whole, the high level of consensus from the survey that skills training enables resilience building provides confirmatory evidence to the range of previous studies highlighted in the conceptual framework which identified human capital improvements through education as a key strategy for vulnerability reduction. By validating the pathways and mechanisms conceptualized based on existing theory and literature, these results strengthen the rationale for investing in wide-scale skills training programs to empower vulnerable rural women to better cope with contextual shocks.

Nonetheless, while the efficacy pathways are largely confirmed, the scope remains for skills training curricula to be further optimized towards resilience goals. For instance, the lower

average score for gaining disaster management knowledge points to a potential gap in sufficiently prioritizing direct shock-coping skills relative to more general livelihoods training. Findings suggest that continuing to adapt training content to stress resilience concepts could better activate key capacities like emergency preparedness.

Similarly, while positive perceptions regarding access to resources after training mirror conceptual arguments, persistent constraints around asset building point to remaining limitations in the extent to which skills uptake supports tangible resilience-building outcomes at the household level. Qualitative insights indicating continued barriers to asset ownership and income-generating activities hence highlight opportunities to bundle skill-based empowerment initiatives with complementary economic interventions to address structural disadvantages.

Therefore, while confirming the critical human capital pathway, findings reinforce conclusions by authors like Fatemi et al. (2017) and Frankenberg et al. (2013) about the particular value of multidimensional skills training that interweaves vocational, entrepreneurial, and life skills development to provide women transferable capacities to navigate complex risks and shocks. Continued innovation around the content and delivery of blended training curricula that bridge these skill spheres could further activate resilient potentials.

The study's findings affirm the core elements of the Pressure and Release (PAR) model which underpins the conceptual framework. As Blaikie et al. (2004) outline, the PAR model sees lack of skills and appropriate training as key "root causes" driving vulnerability in conjunction with poverty, inequality and marginalization. Survey and interview insights confirm skills gaps and barriers to specialized training as factors heightening rural female youth's sensitivity. This aligns with the first stage of the PAR model in exposing risk drivers. The confirmation that specialized skills and knowledge cultivation through tailored training programs can strengthen resilience capabilities and outcomes also reflects the model's second stage by pointing to targeted human capital interventions as a "release" mechanism to alleviate identified pressures (Blaikie et al., 2004).

Equally, results validate the relevance of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 1998) to this context by demonstrating the importance of 'human capital' in the form of knowledge and skills as a key asset influencing resilience. As Scoones predicted, deficiencies in human capital appear pivotal in hindering young women's abilities to anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks. Meanwhile, the finding that training can have cross-cutting resilience benefits

across economic, social, psychological and institutional spheres aligns with the multifaceted nature of resilience postulated by theorists like Martin (2015) and Patel et al. (2017). This affirms the need for measurement approaches capturing resilience as a complex construct spanning capabilities across Cutter's (2016) 'dimensions' model.

However, constraints around asset conversion caution about skills training being necessary but insufficient for resilient outcomes without wider structural changes. This tension highlights the importance of 'transformative capacity' as the third pillar in the 3As resilience framing (Béné et al., 2012), going beyond absorptive and adaptive capacities targeted by training to address underlying gender barriers via empowerment efforts (Mabaya, 2020; Mwape, 2010). Thus in applying relevant models, results broadly validate hypothesized training influences on resilience, while highlighting opportunities to extend the analytical lens towards transformative and emancipatory framings that view resilience as also encompassing emancipation from oppressive norms, systems and power structures inhibiting sustainable livelihoods (Brown & Westaway, 2011). This aligns with shifts in resilience theory emphasizing analysis of historical, political and economic factors shaping vulnerability in given contexts, rather than a narrow behavioral or technical focus (Davoudi, 2012). Findings suggest that for training efforts to strengthen resilience sustainably, the analytical orientation may need to expand beyond immediate skills upgrades towards deeper interrogation of structural chains constraining agency if resilience perspectives are to inform transformative gender agendas (Leach, 2008).

6.3 Local understanding of vocational skills training amongst respondents

This question aimed to explore women's comprehension of vocational skills training. The study found that all interviewees showed a high level of comprehension of vocational skills training. All interviewees comprehended vocational skills training as obtaining employable abilities mostly including craftsmanship or handicrafts. The interviewee stated that craftsmanship involves receiving training to manufacture items by hand and selling them to get revenue. Another interviewee expressed that they interpret it as a skill that is always readily available and cannot be lost. It will remain with you until death, and you can utilise it whenever you desire to work with it and generate cash. Another respondent defines vocational talent as the ability to utilise one's career by creating crafts or designs for sale using hands. You possess the skill, and you can develop it no matter where you are. You can even train your children as well. The researcher observed that vocational skills are ingrained in women once acquired and

cannot be removed or forgotten. The survey found that interviewees see vocational skill training as a viable option for women who lack academic abilities or did not pursue higher education.

Vocational training helps young women generate cash and develop essential life skills. Programmes must involve the private sector to achieve success. Youthful females face greater challenges in obtaining financial resources and have restricted access to educational opportunities, information, and expertise that could result in economic progress compared to males. Insufficient policy structures and unfair gender standards frequently impede the economic progress of girls. Empowering women is crucial for achieving all the millennium goals (Kabeer, 2005; Hasin et al., 2018). Ahmed et al. (2016) contend that providing education, vocational training, and skill development to all individuals, including women, can lead to development and act as a catalyst for promoting women's empowerment and reducing the significant gender equality disparity between men and women. This is a step towards achieving sustainable development. Research indicates that women who gain vocational skills might enhance their socio-economic position by contributing to home management. This enables them to achieve financial independence and reduces their susceptibility to men (Ahmed et al., 2016).

Women's empowerment through vocational skills is crucial for enhancing household productivity, employment opportunities, and income generation, ultimately contributing to sustainable development. Sohail (2020) stated that women have been occupying various employment responsibilities for the last decade, although they still do not have equal status to men. He advocated for the establishment of institutions to ensure equitable access for both genders. Public awareness of women's rights should be raised through NGOs and media outlets. Policies addressing gender disparity, promoting access to education and job opportunities, and preventing payment discrimination in workplaces are also necessary.

To create a strong financial plan, it is crucial to connect workforce development and employment plans with market demands and opportunities. Vocational training and employment programmes should incorporate these activities to align with market demands and possibilities. This method involves creating a high-quality training programme that enhances the technical and interpersonal abilities of girls and secures businesses' dedication to recruiting participants. Efforts to grow the workforce and implement job solutions are crucial in assisting

girls in elevating themselves and their families from poverty. Young women often join the profession to provide financial assistance to their families. Research indicates that they also appreciate the potential for mobility, possibilities for social connections, and increased independence that employment may offer. Age and suitable career chances can enhance their economic standing, as well as enhance social welfare and future employment prospects.

The global economic crisis has posed significant hurdles for young employment, despite the evident advantages of investing in job possibilities for females. The global youth unemployment rate has increased since 2007, according to the International Labour Organisation's 2012 report. Medium-term predictions indicate a minor improvement in the next years. Moreover, young women face higher unemployment rates than young men in almost every region due to macroeconomic factors. Vocational training is crucial in assisting ladies in securing employment amidst these obstacles. Vocational training usually involves enhancing technical expertise, entrepreneurship, and business acumen. Optimally, vocational training is focused on meeting demand and developing precise skills that align with the requirements of potential employers. Youthful females can acquire a diverse range of soft skills, like conflict resolution, team building, and communication, through different vocational training programmes to apply in different occupations. Research shows that the effectiveness of vocational training relies on the program's capacity to focus on and assist females in acquiring the technical and business skills that employers require, even though soft skills might be beneficial.

In addition to customising vocational training programmes to meet the requirements of companies, assessments show the significance of securing official agreements from them to employ participants. Studies indicate that vocational training courses with employment pledges from participating enterprises and corporate partners have greater job placement rates compared to those without such relationships. Women's economic empowerment relies on employment availability, protective legislative contexts, and community-based support for their workplace participation. Advocates and legislators should ensure that laws support gender equality and encourage employers to provide work conditions that are conducive to girls.

The study aimed to determine the primary skills acquired by young women through these skills training programmes. Interview responses indicated that the majority of interviewees recognised the employment opportunities for women in many fields as a key factor in

empowering their society. One respondent stated that vocational skills training is the primary activity that empowers the women in the neighbourhood, and they require support to gain these abilities. Another interviewee noted that vocational skill training is the preferred path for many women in their town. Another person argued that the lack of a bustling market in their isolated region makes it unprofitable for women to participate in trade. The optimal choice remaining is a vocation. She added:

You can buy and sell if you find someone to give you a start capital to do business. Even with a start, I would need to be trained on how to handle the business because as it is, if I got capital, I do not even know where to begin to make sure the business is profitable, knowing what to go and stock for your business, e.g. Chipo went and bought clothes that she fits herself so now she is wearing those clothes the business is down.

One respondent stated that empowering women in the community can be achieved through acquiring and pursuing a vocation. The participants stated that baking, dressmaking, hairdressing, and catering were the most common occupations for women in their areas. One interviewee noted that in their community, common jobs for women are sewing, hairdressing, pastry making, and soap making. Another interviewee stated that in this area, sewing and hairdressing are prevalent occupations that offer high income. Consequently, many women choose to pursue training in dressmaking and hairdressing to ensure work opportunities after completing their training. The other interviewee disclosed that young women learned vocational skills such as hairdressing, catering, cosmetology, driving, and dressmaking. The survey found that some women engage in commerce, pastry making, soap making, and bead making; these pursuits are not commonly pursued by women. Baking, dressmaking, hairdressing, and catering services are highly desired professions due to their focus on essential aspects of life. The survey found that most interviewees mentioned that women were actively engaging in acquiring and pursuing vocations, in addition to farming and commerce.

The perspectives on vocational skills training predominantly revolving around handicrafts and livelihood-enabling occupations align with definitions from UNESCO-UNEVOC (2017) and Oketch (2015) focused on the acquisition of applied skills for employability and income generation. The characterization of vocational skills as being 'inherent' also reflects Cedefop's (2017) linkage to knowledge production rooted in practice. Hence, respondents demonstrate an understanding of the practical nature of vocational abilities for securing livelihoods.

Meanwhile, the view that skills training offers an alternative pathway beyond academic education corresponds to arguments by Lyckander (2021) and Cantor (2017) about vocational learning experiences occurring outside of conventional schooling systems. The references to vocational skills empowerment also connect to evidence from Ahmed et al. (2016) and Akhmetshin et al. (2019) regarding entrepreneurial capacities derived from such training. Therefore, the perspectives voiced draw out the applied essence of vocational education centred on tangible livelihood improvements contrasted against regular academics, which confirms conceptualizations in the TVET discourse. This further cements the rationale for skills training as a grassroots intervention for economically empowering women otherwise deprived of higher education opportunities – a key premise highlighted by authors like Kwenya (2017), Moyo (2019) and Spivak (2005).

Additionally, the specific vocations listed emphasise predominantly feminized spheres like cooking, hairdressing and sewing that potentially pigeonhole women while closing off opportunities in less traditional careers. Even farming and trading mentions reinforcing gender stereotypes noted by scholars such as Rahman (2013) and Mwape (2010) in terms of women being limited to subsistence domains. While such skills surely enable basic livelihoods, restricting women to gendered occupations likely inhibits empowerment potentials as also cautioned by Kabeer (2005). Findings suggest that breaking down stereotypes through vocational guidance could open avenues for women to thrive in male-concentrated vocations once considered unconventional.

Indeed, the global evidence shows that purposefully expanding TVET options and guiding non-traditional career choices deliver transformative outcomes for female learners in sectors like renewable energy, automotive engineering, construction, and more (UNESCO-UNEVOC 2021). Zimbabwe has shining examples like the Zimbabwe Women in Engineering organization that could be leveraged for mentoring female youth (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014). So while current skills training enables subsistence livelihoods, targeted efforts to dismantle limiting social norms could unlock more fulfilling, higher-growth vocational pathways for women. Progressive policy and advocacy efforts emphasizing non-discrimination like CEDAW (which Zimbabwe ratified) provide useful anchors for multiplicity (Garwe & Chireshe, 2010).

Furthermore, perspectives highlighting entrepreneurial motivations beyond livelihoods to include autonomy, mobility and friendship align with Kwenya's (2017) findings linking skills training to socioeconomic empowerment beyond income goals. The need for ancillary business training underscores Holmboe-Ottesen and Wandel's (1991) argument that pairing vocational and entrepreneurial skills develops resilience and agency. Hence an explicitly multidimensional framing of vocational training inclusive of social empowerment could more holistically nurture resilience capabilities spanning economic, social and institutional spheres as envisioned by Martin (2015). This entails delivery models focused not just on tasks but also on mindsets, relationships and support structures (CARE, 2020).

For instance, Egypt's Ishraq program demonstrates a culturally attuned empowerment approach to improving girls' functional and interpersonal abilities alongside social reintegration (Brady et al., 2007). Such multilayered programming addressing complex capability needs voiced by women themselves is vital for transformative change. This further links to the study's emphasis on anchoring skills training in wider ecosystem partnerships (e.g., policy, community sensitization) for responsive workforce development per ILO (2012) and Sohail (2020). Collaborative vocational models attuned to market demands and sociocultural barriers are well-placed to activate economic potentials while reframing gender norms for sustainability. So in sum, while confirming conceptual TVET elements around practical skill-based learning, findings suggest that truly empowering delivery approaches require moving beyond technical occupation-readiness towards holistic capability enrichment. This entails tackling stereotypes by expanding sectoral choice, coupling hard vocational and soft business skills, and scaffolding skills application through wider system supports attuned to employers and communities.

An explicitly multidimensional, ecosystem focus would more profoundly nurture resilience across economic, social, institutional and psychological dimensions of livelihoods security in alignment with the study's conceptual model emphasizing interlinked capitals and capabilities.

Methodologically, the open qualitative questioning drawing out unprompted understandings lends contextual rigor in grounding analysis in emic community vocabularies. This affirms Winegardner's (1998) call for honoring local voices and meanings when designing development programs.

Building on this cultural reliability, further participatory concept mapping approaches as Mulwa (2008) proposes could enrich program planning in Zimbabwe. Visual diagramming of

lived skills training experiences using village symbols and meanings would provide textured insights on multidimensional impacts shaping women's perceived well-being. A longitudinal ethnographic study tracking graduates' livelihood trajectories would also offer thicker descriptions of evolving empowerment processes across social, economic and psychological domains to inform iterative training improvements towards resilience goals. Therefore, intensive qualitative strategies could continue unpacking complex capability advancement pathways based on women's situated vocabularies and narratives to maximize contextual responsiveness and sustainability of skill development initiatives.

The perspectives on vocational skills predominantly as livelihood-enabling applied skills validate the premise of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 1998) around 'human capital' as a key asset influencing resilience. By confirming skills gaps as hindering women's resilience capacities, results affirm the model's notion of human capital deficiencies heightening vulnerability. Equally, the finding that skills application unlocks socioeconomic empowerment pathways affirms the framework's hypothesis that nurturing human capital strengthens multiple, intersecting livelihood capacities spanning absorptive, adaptive and transformative domains (DFID, 1999).

However, constraints around asset conversion despite skills uptake highlight the limits of the SLF's deterministic skill-resilience linkage without factoring in wider structures inhibiting agency. This tension between livelihood capacities and outcomes signals the relevance of the Transformative Capabilities framework advanced by Alkire (2008) which spotlights empowerment as the freedom to pursue valued ways of 'being and doing'. In that orientation, findings suggest skills realization barriers likely reflect deeper oppressions around women's restricted freedoms limiting humanitarian development (Sen, 1999). Results affirm the Capability Approach's premise of understanding contexts before intervening (Alkire, 2005).

Relatedly, confirmation of gender stereotypes in vocational exposure reinforces feminist critiques of the 'feminization of vulnerability' stemming from the structural devaluation of women's lives (Mohanty, 2013). The prevalence of cooking and hairdressing as dominant skills spheres affirms Enarson's (2012) argument around disaster impacts magnifying existing gender inequalities.

Findings corroborate the Social Constructivist view of risks and resilience as products of cultural values and sociopolitical history, challenging technical solutions devoid of cultural

analysis (Bankoff, 2003). Thus, while validating livelihood frameworks, results spotlight the analytical purchase of critical sociological lenses illuminating resilient outcomes as not just skill-dependent but as shaped by identities, ideologies and systems of power beyond the disaster itself. This affirms Davis' (2012) contention that resilience perspectives narrowly fixated on vulnerability contexts and assets without questioning the historical-material roots of differential disaster impacts have limited emancipatory value. As such, findings affirm the relevance of theories like the Capability Approach and Social Constructionism for targeting transformations in structures and norms producing gendered vulnerabilities, versus resilience framed solely as skills enhancement.

6.4 Ways in Which Skills Improve Resilience to External Shocks among Young Women

Resilience enhances rural women's ability to address obstacles stemming from their surroundings. Resilient livelihoods are crucial for promoting human well-being, improving living standards, and increasing access to basic requirements through the economic empowerment of women (Pelling, 2011). Developing strong and sustainable livelihoods involves recalling past methods and strategies used to address difficulties that impact the livelihoods of rural women, as discussed in several studies (Jaka & Shava, 2018). Some writers contend that sustainability is dependent on resilience, suggesting that any development strategy lacking resilience will not be sustainable (Klein et al. 2003; Perrings 2006). Scholars recognised the significance of humans' capacity to envision, anticipate, predict, and plan, and so incorporated the social part of resilience to enhance a system's resilience (Perrings, 2006). Resilient livelihoods can help communities withstand calamities and poverty, leading to sustainability.

Maleksaeidi and Karami (2013) argue that to achieve sustainable livelihoods, farmers must demonstrate inventiveness and resilience. They should have the capacity to endure the impacts of climate change and environmental processes, as well as to enhance, endure, and recuperate (Maleksaeidi & Karami, 2013). The analysis highlighted the significance of enhancing resilience through livelihood opportunities to empower rural women and households. It is crucial to empower women to ensure that rural women can access the resources necessary for their households. The significance of rural women in development and their societal responsibilities will be better understood and have greater beneficial impacts if they possess robust livelihoods, as mentioned in earlier studies.

The interviews revealed that unemployment had a greater impact on young women than on young males in nearly all global locations. Developing vocational skills can enhance young women's prospects of securing employment, establishing self-employment, or initiating an apprenticeship that may result in improved job opportunities later on. Acquiring and applying these practical skills significantly improves their prospects by creating career chances in secure, stable, and lucrative fields where they can further enhance their skills and potential. Acquiring vocational skills enables young women to generate income by utilising their expertise, thus decreasing their risk of poverty and enhancing their standard of living. However, ensuring self-sufficiency for themselves and their families extends beyond mere financial gain; it also involves establishing stability for them. Young girls are significantly impacted by poverty and financial instability, which negatively influence their physical and mental health and provide a major obstacle to their growth and well-being. Insufficient income increases the likelihood of early marriage and partnerships as a means of seeking security, leaving individuals vulnerable to potential violence and abuse. Youthful females are enhancing their employability by acquiring vocational skills that also foster soft skills like communication, interpersonal, managerial, negotiation, and networking abilities, thus improving their prospects for employment or entrepreneurship. Vocational training has been demonstrated to decrease teenage pregnancies. In the Caribbean, reductions of up to 20% were observed, along with enhancements in cognitive abilities and self-esteem. This is supported by the notable growth in future hopes of achieving a better life in 20 years, owning a business, or securing the desired job.

The study gathered that most interviewees agreed that vocational skills training helps reduce poverty in their communities. An interviewee responded:

Once we have secured a job out of our vocational skills, we are in a good position to fight poverty ... We are assured of some income at the close of work every day ... I admit that poverty conditions are common in my community, but those of us with vocation make ends meet.

Another said:

Yes, it can reduce poverty. I used myself as an example. I can make ends meet ... I can feed myself and my child and provide all our personal needs ... Talk of clothing, shelter

and other needs for survival ... Though I am not counted amongst the rich, I am also not impoverished.

Another also remarked:

I agree with you perfectly because our vocation has helped and continues to help us address our poverty burdens ... We have reduced our financial challenge mainly because we earn income from work.

The findings from the responses showed that women could secure jobs and employment out of the vocational training they have acquired and are in an excellent position to fight poverty. The women can meet their needs daily and reduce their financial challenges because they earn income from their vocation daily.

In addition, in response, the interviewees identified employment and the ability to earn income as immediate benefits. One of the interviewees remarked:

The benefits are plenty to count. The women will be self-reliant financially because they will work with their skills and earn some income. I have gained recognition and respect in my family because my family members see that at least I bring something home at the end of the day. And I can provide my personal needs by myself.

Another also said:

I can bear witness that all the women I know in this community that (sic) have acquired vocational skills are self-employed and earning money from their work. They have all set up their shops, which is refreshing and motivating. The vocations bear testimony, motivating the young girls here to acquire a vocational skill.

Benefits include self-employment, offering related services, or establishing an apprenticeship training centre for learners. Women with a stable income can fulfil their personal needs autonomously, without depending on their husbands or family members.

Rural women are facing growing risks and vulnerabilities in their means of living, which might affect the well-being of their families. The sustainable livelihoods idea is crucial for building resilience, empowering women, and alleviating poverty. This essay focuses on building strong livelihoods to increase the empowerment of women in rural communities. Improving resilient

livelihoods entails protecting them from unforeseen events and pressures, thereby reinforcing community frameworks to enhance their ability to withstand shocks and recover from disruptions. Resilience refers to a system's capacity to return to its initial state following a disturbance or the extent of disruption it can endure before transitioning to a different state. Nelson and Stathers (2009) described resilience in the socio-ecological context as the effective use of resources, skills, and adaptive abilities to reduce the impact of disturbances and pressures, while encouraging self-organization and aiding in recovery. Birkmann (2006) and Davies et al. (2013) proposed that resilient livelihoods may endure and recover from challenges, unexpected events, and stresses without causing damage to the environment. The items must be reliable and long-lasting to effectively fulfil the requirements of households.

Resilience is the ability to use different resources and capabilities to reduce the impact of shocks and pressures, resulting in adaptation. A resilient system can achieve sustainability and security (Klein et al., 2003). Resilience is the capacity of systems to preserve their identity, structures, and functions even when faced with shocks, stresses, or extreme events (Folke et al., 2002). Resilience involves the ability to learn, cope with events, adapt, and recover from stressors, resulting in enhanced, sophisticated, and durable ways of dealing with constantly changing and unpredictable difficulties (Perrings 2006; Rockström, 2003).

Actions that support the empowerment of rural women and enhance household well-being are crucial for attaining sustainable and resilient livelihoods. The interactions should prioritise improving access to resources, farming techniques, livelihood diversification, and empowering women (Gabrielsson & Ramasar, 2013; Mortimore et al., 2009). Women in rural areas of semi-arid regions face challenges in handling disasters, shocks, and pressures because they have restricted access to information and coping mechanisms (Davies, 2015). Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts depend on grain production, small animal farming, informal work in affluent households, and gold panning in specific areas close to the Runde River (WFP 2014). The region is resource-poor and susceptible to extreme natural disasters caused by climate fluctuations like as droughts, floods, and heatwaves. Women are the most vulnerable category due to the disproportionate impact of high poverty rates on them (WFP, 2015).

Skills training enables women to achieve sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty by enhancing human capital through the acquisition of skills and knowledge, as outlined in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 1998). The findings validate that acquiring

occupational skills boosts income and aids in lessening the impact of unexpected events. Research by Martin (2015) suggests that training improves self-reliance and social recognition, contributing to a holistic approach to livelihood development that encompasses economic, social, and psychological dimensions.

Educated women face restrictions on owning assets, which aligns with critiques of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) for oversimplifying the issue. Moser and Dani (2008) highlighted this oversight, emphasising the constraints that impede advancement in livelihoods. This emphasises the importance of the Transformative Capabilities framework (Alkire, 2008), which centres on empowerment through attaining desirable ways of 'being and doing'. The results validate the Capability Approach's claim that the development of skills depends on having secure freedoms and the capacity to convert assets into desired outputs (Sen, 1999). The study verifies that enhancing the skills of marginalised women alone is insufficient to generate positive outcomes without simultaneously tackling the fundamental norms and systems that contribute to resource disparities. This is consistent with the Pressure and Release paradigm, which emphasises addressing the fundamental sources of vulnerability. When analysing theories that connect skills and incomes, the findings align with criticisms that highlight the investigation of oppressive conditions that impede resilience (Rigg, 2007). This aligns with the arguments made by authors like Brown and Westaway (2011) in favour of transitioning from technical competency models to emancipatory resilience frameworks that address disempowering structures.

Bankoff (2003) argues that resilience is influenced by societal values and political contexts, as seen by the continued large exposure to disaster risk despite advancements in skills. This emphasises the constraints of technical solutions that overlook cultural aspects.

The findings indicate that resilience can be strengthened or weakened based on identities, social standing, and experiences of marginalisation, potentially necessitating reform. The results underscore the significance of utilising critical sociological views to analyse the historical and material foundations of different levels of resilience by stressing the link between skills and incomes. The text highlights the significance of integrating principles of shared prosperity, inclusiveness, and social justice into resilience frameworks that target unequal power relations, aligning with Sen's idea of development as freedom (Davies et al., 2013).

6.5 Effectiveness of Training Interventions in Resilience Building for Female Youths in Rural Areas

Rural women's vocational training is seen as a significant project to enhance entrepreneurial skills and increase employability in formal and informal sectors for rural women (IFAD, 2010). Vocational training courses provide many illiterate rural women with an opportunity to become self-employed or employable. In Burkina Faso, approximately 78% of rural women are illiterate and have received assistance from the vocational training project provided by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 2014). Most rural adults in Egypt are women, with around 30% of rural households being led by women. However, they face poorer living conditions because of a lack of economic empowerment (Sacko, 2018). Neqdar Nesharek organisation created community-based vocational training initiatives for rural women to promote their overall development. These programmes aimed to equip poor rural women with practical skills for self-employment. Sacko (2018) has confirmed that the programme has improved the economic situation of many rural women in the country and has decreased the number of domestic abuse incidents.

Zimbabwe's condition is unique. After gaining independence, vocational training was implemented to help ex-combatants and young individuals who were denied education during the colonial period. This effort aimed to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among young people and veterans, as well as enhance their capacity to find employment. The government expanded vocational training institutes to promote participation regardless of socioeconomic class due to the success of the programme (Mutambanengwe, 2014). The expansion aimed to eliminate poverty and marginalisation by ensuring that all individuals were economically active. Consequently, vocational training opportunities were made available to all those interested. Currently, there are 43 vocational training centres nationwide. Despite their abundance, vocational training institutions have not succeeded in meeting the empowerment needs of rural women as required by their mandate to empower all marginalised groups. This has been ascribed to factors such as their geographical location and cultural and religious beliefs, among other reasons. In nations such as Egypt, vocational training has successfully empowered rural women. Between 2014 and 2015, the proportion of rural women with vocational education increased from 39% to 56%.

The study found that the majority of participants stated that women are empowered by their profession. The study found that women who have a strong sense of purpose are self-reliant,

particularly within their marriages, and are held in high regard by their spouses and family members. An interviewee remarked that:

If you have a vocation, you will develop in life. Besides, one will become independent, especially in your marriage. My husband understands and respects me because I can support him by providing for the family.

Another interviewee said:

Acquiring vocational skills will empower you as a woman. You will secure a job, earn income and provide for your needs without necessarily depending on your husband or family for those personal needs. Look at me now: I have a secured job to do, and I make money daily. I decide what to do with my money, what to buy, and what not to buy. So, I feel empowered.

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Results affirm the Capability Approach's view that skills realization depends on the secured agency to convert assets into outcomes (Sen, 1999). Findings confirm that skills alone don't automatically uplift marginalized women without transformation in norms and systems producing resource gaps (Mohanty, 2013). This upholds arguments by authors like Brown and Westaway (2011) about moving from technical capability models towards emancipatory resilience frameworks addressing disempowering structures. The emphasis on skills plus

complementary interventions like rights awareness and gender equity policies reinforces this integrated approach.

Indeed, confirmation of high disaster risk exposure despite skill gains reinforces contentions by Bankoff (2003) that resilience is socially constructed within value systems and sociopolitical contexts. Results validate the Social Constructivist view of resilience capacities being enabled or disabled based on identities, social status and histories of marginalization warranting transformation.

Thus while affirming livelihood theories connecting skills and socioeconomic gains, findings spotlight the analytical purchase of critical sociological lenses questioning the historical-material roots of differential resilience. This upholds the need for inclusion and social justice principles at the resilience framework's core to address unequal power relations (Davies *et al.*, 2013; Sen, 1999). Additionally, the finding that community-based delivery platforms promote accessibility aligns with models like PAR emphasizing localized interventions attuned to context (Blaikie *et al.*, 2004). The role of partnerships spotlights systems perspectives on resilience emerging from interconnected capabilities across state, market and community pillars (Vargo & Seville, 2011). Hence results validate the relevance of blended theoretical insights spanning livelihoods, feminism, social constructionism and ecosystem thinking to inform multidimensional, contextualized skills interventions that balance practical empowerment with awareness of structural change needs for lasting resilience.

6.6 Effective Strategies towards Building Resilience among Vulnerable Young Women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi

Lastly, the study aimed to find effective strategies for building resilience among vulnerable young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. The participants were, therefore, asked to indicate the strategies to build resilience among vulnerable young women. The results are presented in Table 12. The results indicate that most respondents agreed that women empowerment programmes aid in promoting building resilience, as shown by the mean of 3.74. Also, the mean of 3.78 and standard deviation of 0.949 shows that providing financial support/government grants for life, entrepreneurship or vocational training and education is one of the strategies to promote resilience building. The mean of 4.52 also shows that most

respondents strongly agreed that increased women's involvement and participation in development planning promote resilience building.

Furthermore, the respondents strongly agreed that implementing policies to support and encourage life, entrepreneurship or vocational training can enhance resilience building. The respondents agreed that stakeholder involvement, such as NGOs and private sector players, could promote resilience building, as shown by the mean score of 4.34. The results also indicate that increasing vocational training institutions may enhance resilience building, as indicated by the mean of 4.43 and standard deviation of 1.045.

Strategy	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Women empowerment programmes	306	3.74	0.670
Provision of financial support/government grants for life, entrepreneurship or vocational training and education	306	3.78	0.949
Increased women's involvement and participation in developmental planning	306	4.52	0.989
Implementation of policies to support and encourage life, entrepreneurship or vocational training	306	4.55	0.872
Stakeholder involvement, such as NGOs and private sector players	306	4.34	0.857
Increasing vocational training institutions	306	4.43	1.045

Table 12: Effective strategies towards building resilience among vulnerable young women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi

The conclusions are backed up by further data and findings obtained from the interviews. Various global, regional, and national measures are implemented to facilitate the training of rural women. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted an international convention named the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in response to the prevalent discrimination against women. Since its implementation, there has been an increased focus on the circumstances of rural women.

Muchena (2006) emphasised that in Zimbabwe, a report was submitted to the board in 1995 outlining programmes established to implement the provisions of CEDAW. This involved creating a gender policy to direct different sectors in integrating gender into all programmes. This has helped rural women get recognition in courses such as vocational training. Despite the government of Zimbabwe's efforts, rural women may have participated more in vocational training. The international world recognised the notion of gender mainstreaming as a way to include women in development cycles at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference) in 1995. The objective was to attain gender equality throughout all sectors of society. This method helped rural women, particularly in affluent countries where patriarchal structures have weakened, to obtain vocational training (Malhotra, Schuller & Boender, 2002).

In 2012, the United Nations implemented a strategy to provide vocational training to rural women, focusing on practical skills development. The Accelerating Progress Towards the Empowerment of Rural Women (RWEE) programme was initiated to provide vocational training in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda (UN, 2015). This campaign successfully empowered rural women with food drying and gardening skills, enabling them to initiate their own livelihood initiatives. The United Nations established an International Day for Rural Women, observed annually on October 15th. This initiative was established to unite people worldwide in aiding all rural women in asserting their rights via education and training (UN, 2015). The initiative has advanced vocational training for rural women by urging member states to support them, ensuring there are significant achievements to showcase on the memorial day (UN, 2015).

In 2012, the ILO emphasised that vocational education providers in Asia made a collaborative effort to extend resources and teach practical skills like sewing and baking to rural women to achieve comprehensive development. This measure was introduced to address the challenge of having to travel long distances to training centres and the inadequacy of resources (Adelakun, Oviawe & Barfa, 2015). In addition, ILO (2012) mentioned the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) programme in Asia. This community-based training initiative aims to support disadvantaged women in rural areas by creating income-generating and employment opportunities. The strategy includes collaborating with local partner institutions, identifying economic possibilities and training needs in the community, providing skills training, and offering post-training support to help trainees find jobs or start their businesses. In Bangladesh, the concept has been utilised to leverage solar energy by training staff in servicing solar

residential systems. Rural women have been trained as proficient solar energy technicians to generate income (ILO, 2012).

Bhaves (2014) argues that skills training and education provide women a basis for positive change and societal transformation. Once women are empowered with skills, they can become innovative in their thoughts and understanding towards developing themselves and their surroundings. In impoverished regions, the training of rural women can lead to economic empowerment as they are trained on how to effectively manage resources and tap into the opportunities to create a value generation on a micro (household) level and a macro (societal level) level. Several interviewed women gave their suggestions on effective strategies for interventions aimed at building resilience. One interviewee mentioned that:

Scheduling of training needs to be more flexible, especially during the farming season. There is a need to support the skills with equipment support after training, e.g., I might have a sewing machine but am unable to afford an overlocking one. We would also want courses like computers that make us more marketable in industry or if we go to look for work elsewhere.

Another mentioned that:

Sometimes older women can take opportunities for younger women because they won't give the youth opportunities and leadership positions. Older women understand the value of participation. The younger youth sometimes don't appreciate the value; they take it as entertainment, not as a source of livelihood, and sometimes they don't do something beyond training.

It's important to educate men and husbands to be able to support the women to get into the development programs. It can help to reduce conflicts over resources if women are also empowered to bring income into the house. A lot of conflicts are about money and resources. When a program comes, it's important to have thorough sensitisation at the entry point it will get acceptance.

Additionally, several studies have also been conducted that characterise effective strategies for interventions aimed at building the resilience of vulnerable young women and reducing drivers of risks. In Mozambique, a Gender Strategy for the Education Sector was adopted to create

equal educational rights and opportunities for girls (Sawadogo-Lewis, 2018). The policy recognises the need to promote girls' secondary school attendance by providing scholarships and thematic campaigns that address barriers to girlhood education (Chibango & Silumba, 2018).

Similarly, in the rural community of Mutoko in Zimbabwe, organisations such as Plan International, through the *Because I am a Girl* campaign, have had success in changing the community's negative attitudes towards the support of girls' education (Plan International, 2019). Moreover, the campaign has successfully granted girls access to quality primary and secondary education in a safe and supportive environment (Potvin, 2019). Thus, education has been a panacea towards reducing drivers of risks for young women, which respondents in Mwenezi and Chiredzi have also confirmed. One participant acknowledged:

Training should be supported with a revolving fund or empowerment loan to support the youths. Conducting courses closer to the villages, not just ward centres, would be helpful. Also, please make use of group capital and peer support. Sometimes, youth can help other peers' slow learners so they are not left behind. Also, see how we can leverage intergenerational learning. Can attachment costs be covered, especially if the training is far from their local areas, board, and food? The life skills component needs to be able to reach more youths. It's very critical, especially when dealing with attitudes. Improve the variety of courses, including bookkeeping. Youth centres can ensure youths have a central place to mobilise and easily escape trouble.

Furthermore, patriarchal hegemony continues relentlessly in the greater Nyanga district, resulting in less than 30% of women participating in community dialogue meetings, community health clubs, and other educational training (Maponde, 2018).

This study informed participants that several strategies could be adopted to reduce the drivers of risks for vulnerable young women. A participant mentioned that:

Increase opportunities so they can get into the program. After training, they should be empowered to have three cycles of production. A start-up kit is important. They are left with just the know-how, e.g., one does detergent making but cannot get the detergents to be processed, or one knows how to weld but doesn't have a welding machine it's as good as they are back to square one after training.

Another mentioned:

Can the course have variety so that different areas can meet different skills to promote the markets and demand and avoid skills flooding, thus reducing their chances of getting a competitive livelihood? The courses are essential, but if they flood and the interventions can help, even those who have not attended school can do so. Youths can be stubborn. It is good if they can emulate those who see the value of others and are trained and unable to do anything. Others think it's not fruitful to be trained instead of getting trained.

Several nationwide Vocational and Life Skills Training systems were established based on block or day-release models for learners who are already working. Nevertheless, this method has decreased in popularity, especially in less developed nations. Consequently, many students aim to increase their earnings while pursuing their studies. Efforts are undertaken to promote work possibilities for underprivileged students to fund part or all of their tuition fees and other expenditures, in order to encourage their enrolment in Vocational and Life Skills Training. The employment opportunities focus on generating cash, but students anticipate them to be helpful or meaningful to their technical and vocational degrees.

In China, local governments and Vocational and Life Skills Training institutions provided students with job chances in manufacturing. Nevertheless, issues such as internships in unrelated fields, challenging conditions, and inadequate pay were documented (Koo, 2016). This creates the idea that programmes aimed at improving access to Vocational and Life Skills Training are seen as a discriminatory dual-track option (Palmer, 2019). Effective work-integrated learning improves learning outcomes, yet many students struggle with balancing jobs to fund their studies, which can harm their academic achievement.

Elsayed and Roushdy (2017) stated in their research conducted in Egypt that involving local community leaders is crucial for establishing supportive conditions for empowering rural women. Community leaders in rural areas play a key role in rural women's livelihood projects by helping them secure support from the community to execute sustainable vocational training programmes. Vocational training promoters in rural parts of Egypt conducted house visits accompanied by traditional leaders to address recipients' absence or familial restrictions. This has increased the participation rates of rural women in vocational training courses (Elsayed and Roushdy, 2017). Research conducted in low-income nations such as Malawi and Sri Lanka

revealed the presence of organisations that assist women in diminishing the gender disparity. For instance, the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women Organisation (GEOWO). It backs initiatives that tackle obstacles to women's economic empowerment and disparities in incomes and productivity (Schuller, 2012). This serves as evidence of a significant issue of gender inequality that particularly impacts rural women.

According to FAO (2017), Zimbabwe has ratified numerous treaties and protocols related to gender issues. The country has demonstrated its dedication to women's empowerment by ratifying international agreements such as CEDAW, the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development, and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa. Research conducted by UNICEF in the Hurungwe district revealed that government policies regarding women's empowerment are merely theoretical and not effectively implemented, resulting in a lack of economic empowerment for many women in rural areas. This has also hindered the execution and assistance of vocational training for rural women (UNICEF Strategy Paper, 2008-2011).

Padare/Enkundleni (2018) stated that numerous organisations in Zimbabwe are advocating for women's rights and working towards empowering women. CAMFED is a charity that targets rural communities in Africa with high poverty rates, aiming to support girls and young women who are marginalised from education and possibilities. The company aims to provide a supportive atmosphere for females to attend primary and secondary school, which are essential prerequisites for accessing vocational education in training centres located around the country. The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) is a network of women's rights activists and organisations with national structures.

NGOs have financed rural women's livelihoods in semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe due to the government's failure to support these programmes. Non-governmental organisations face insufficient funding due to shifting priorities in donor countries and government policies that hinder fundraising efforts, resulting in rural women's livelihoods being negatively impacted by the lack of financial support. Key informant interviews showed that rural women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts lack insurance for their livelihoods, leading to vulnerability to economic fluctuations and the absence of financial support. Conversations with these women revealed that the majority were unaware of insurance and its function. One woman said:

I have no idea what insurance is all about. In the villages, if you lose property due to fire, you can only rely on your neighbour's generosity to help you. In thefts and crop destruction cases, we used to have a community field where everyone would go and work, and the chiefs would keep the produce to give out to people experiencing poverty. However, people nowadays keep the produce for themselves. (Female Community Participant)

Most rural women's livelihoods in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts targeting women's economic empowerment are not insured from risks such as fires, floods, thefts, and droughts, in some instances where drought-affected Mwenezi and Chiredzi District, women suffered disproportionately as they championed rural livelihoods for improving household income in many households (Mutami & Chazovachii, 2012; Mutopo, 2014).

Women's socio-economic demands are impacted by the lack of insurance coverage for dry periods and other unforeseen effects of climate change. The paper contends that providing micro-insurance for rural women's lives is essential for enhancing women's economic empowerment and elevating living conditions in disadvantaged districts. Bajpai (2014) promotes the idea of providing micro-insurance to rural women to support their livelihoods, particularly when they begin their companies, as it is crucial for their long-term viability. Micro-insuring is crucial for the early functionality and development of rural women's livelihoods in semi-arid environments. Research by Chazovachii and Chuma (2013) found that rural livelihoods lack micro-insurance coverage for risks such as floods, fires, droughts, and earthquakes. The absence of micro-insurance negatively impacts the economic empowerment and livelihoods of rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi District.

Results from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in Mwenezi District indicated that women in the area face obstacles due to the restricted availability of credit facilities for supporting rural women's livelihoods. Rural women lack collateral to persuade banks and other lenders to provide them with credit, thus these lenders offer them lines of credit. Participants indicated that a persistent issue has been the lack of access to financing facilities, which has hindered the sustainability of women's clubs for an extended period. One member of the focus group stated that:

We do not have access to loans or money to support our small businesses as many of us are very poor and do not have assets to approach banks or other money lending institutions. Because of our poverty, we are afraid to borrow money since we do not

have the collateral security required by the financial institution for them to recover their loans in the event we fail to pay them back. This is a big challenge to us, which prevents us from improving our household income and reducing poverty (Female Village Participant).

The absence of financial facilities impedes the economic empowerment of rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi. Women in agriculture face insufficient support for rapid crop growth. The government's inability to access credit facilities is the reason why rural women's livelihoods are not sustainable due to financial problems. The restricted availability of financial facilities hampers rural women's livelihoods and hinders women's economic empowerment.

Research conducted by Banerjee, Karlan, and Zinman in 2015, as well as Banerjee in 2013, indicates that microcredit is not a universal solution for enhancing women's economic empowerment. The results oppose the findings of a study that showed how providing credit facilities in Mwenezi and Chiredzi District might decrease poverty and empower women economically by enhancing rural women's livelihoods. The research's empirical findings showed that micro-lenders charge high interest rates to micro-creditors, which have a negative impact on borrowers who end up trapped in debt. The research demonstrates that borrowing money from micro-lenders does not ensure success. The study by Banerjee et al. (2015) aligns with the results of this study, indicating that economic empowerment of rural women can be attained by providing them with access to credit facilities. Micro-crediting can help empower women through resilient tactics, but caution is necessary due to potential constraints from donor organisations or the government that may impede women's economic development.

Bhaves (2014) contends that skills training and education offer women a foundation for beneficial development and societal evolution. Empowering women with skills enables them to be innovative in their thinking and approach to self-development and improving their environment. Training rural women in disadvantaged areas can result in economic empowerment by teaching them how to efficiently manage resources and take advantage of opportunities to generate value at both the family and societal levels. This study's results demonstrate that the livelihoods of rural women play a crucial role in employment development and income generation in Mwenezi and Chiredzi District. Rural women's livelihood sustainability in Mwenezi and Chiredzi District is at risk due to a lack of skills in making efficient business decisions to enhance household income. Despite the notable role of

agriculture in the livelihoods of rural women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi, there is a lack of skills in enhancing farming techniques and adapting to droughts and floods. The absence of vocational schools offering training in business management and entrepreneurship for women is a barrier to achieving women's economic empowerment in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts. One participant interviewed remarked that:

No organisation has trained us on how to grow our businesses. Only in agriculture did the Agricultural extension officer visit once, but we were not given enough education to grow cash crops, which can increase our household income. Our limited knowledge is a barrier as we venture into less attractive livelihood programmes ... (Female Community Participant).

Enhancing women's agriculture and entrepreneurial education is crucial for achieving women's economic empowerment in Zimbabwe. A study conducted by Akhalwaya and Havnega in 2012 found that inadequate education and training for women hinders their economic empowerment. The study's findings suggest that education is crucial for women as they can use it to enhance the livelihoods and economic empowerment of rural women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts. Tornqvist and Schmitz (2009) conducted a study that confirmed the importance of vocational education for young women in rural areas in promoting women's economic empowerment. Youthful, economically engaged women possess the vitality to propel economic transformation by establishing sustainable rural livelihoods, as they are more capable of making prudent choices. Education fosters confidence in women, which is crucial for socio-economic change and building connections in rural women's lives.

Technological advancements on a global scale have significantly impacted the corporate world and economic progress. Therefore, companies and individuals must stay updated on these latest innovations. The study found that in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, many rural women lack proficiency in using modern technology equipment like laptops and cell phones to effectively promote their products. Technology enhances women's efficiency and authority in their ways of making a living. The study discovered that women in Mwenezi and Chiredzi are not utilising new technology to enhance their productivity and enter competitive markets. Women's economic empowerment is hindered by their poor abilities and lack of understanding of properly using technology technologies. One female participant lamented:

We do not have access to technology such as computers that can be useful for improving marketing and access to information on our livelihoods. We have made several requests to the government and stakeholders to assist us without success. We need technical knowledge on how to use these modern machines (Female Village Participant).

Studies by WFP (2014) and the World Bank (2014) recognised that when there are modern technological devices to improve agriculture, women suffer by using handmade tools that are inefficient and unproductive to reduce poverty levels. The study argues, therefore, that increased awareness of Information and Communication Technology services (ICTs) and their implementation can help bridge the socio-economic gap in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts while empowering women to sustain their livelihoods.

The findings on multi-pronged strategies spanning financial support, policy backing, community engagement and integrated programming affirm conclusions from Mabaya (2020), Wisner (2018) and UNISDR (2019) on pillars underpinning resilience building. The role of partnerships and the need for coordinated, long-term commitment align with resilience systems thinking (Vargo & Seville, 2011) and confirm the emphasis by authors like Pathirage et al. (2014) regarding mobilizing interconnected capabilities. Also, the finding that participatory planning enhances buy-in validates the PAR model's localization premise around attuning interventions to context (Blaikie *et al.*, 2004). This reinforces Mwape's (2010) and Ahmed's (2019) conclusions about actively including women in disaster management, underscoring feminist perspectives on interrogating power dynamics shaping marginalization.

Additionally, the constraints around asset conversion and credit access despite skills gains highlight barriers to resilience. This affirms the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework's limitations without addressing wider structures (Rigg, 2007), upholding the Transformative Capabilities emphasis on secured freedoms (Alkire, 2008). Therefore, while validating multi-stakeholder involvement, findings reinforce the need to expand the analytical lens towards transformation in tackling root inequities (Brown & Westaway, 2011), echoing Kapoor's (2004) call for resilience framed as emancipation, not technical adjustment.

Indeed, the finding that stereotypes and patriarchal barriers persist aligns with the social constructivist view of risks and resilience as products of cultural values and sociopolitical history (Bankoff, 2003). Results affirm the analytical purchase of critical perspectives illuminating resilient outcomes as shaped by identities, ideologies and systems of power

warranting redress (Davies *et al.*, 2013). Hence, while corroborating blended strategies, findings spotlight opportunities to advance resilience scholarship towards more critical, politicized directions assaying historical chains constraining agency. This upholds the capability approach's premise of understanding contexts before intervening (Alkire, 2005), now invoking a diagnostic spotlight on contextual chains and power relations inhibiting freedom.

Specifically, confirmed barriers around asset ownership, technology access, credit and insurance spotlight financial, human and social capital deficiencies warranting multidimensional capacity building. Policy awareness remains limited, signalling opportunities to enhance legal literacy regarding instruments like CEDAW that codify rights claims. Infrastructural gaps equally demand redress to tackle uneven connectivity and hardware gaps bridling productivity, income stability and shock absorptive capacities. Therefore, an amplified, women-centred analytical lens drawing on feminist and social constructivist insights on gendered vulnerabilities would more profoundly elucidate constraints around asset conversion, financial services access, digital exclusion and other resilience limitations. This would inform integrated programming attuned to complexity, intersectionality and structures of marginalization.

For instance, Sen's (1999) Capability Approach spotlights development as the freedom to achieve valued ways of 'being' and 'doing.' This orientation applied to resilience frameworks directs attention to blocks against women actualizing choice and agency across disaster phases. Combined with critical theorists' emphasis on historical context (Kapoor, 2004), this analytical approach interrogates societal conditions producing feminine vulnerabilities as a politicized choice warranting transformation, versus assumed phenomena to be technically managed. Equally, contemporary resilience scholarships' turn towards systems thinking and complexity (Davoudi, 2012) provides a more nuanced understanding of resilience as dynamically shaped by social ecologies of informal norms, relationships, networks and routines that enable the navigation of uncertainties across temporal phases. This echoes the contextual accent of the PAR model while spotlighting everyday community resilience less visible through binary preparedness metrics.

On the whole, while validating known intervention pathways, applying enhanced analytical perspectives drawing on frontiers of feminist, constructivist and systemic resilience thought would recast findings in a diagnostic light revealing contextualized entry points for

strengthening assets, capabilities and structures holistically to unlock sustainable, emancipatory resilience centring justice. Methodologically, integrating gender and complexity analysis through participatory concept mapping approaches as Mulwa (2008) proposes would enable Zimbabwean women to diagram resilience challenges and opportunities using emic vocabularies. Advanced visual narrative techniques would unpack contextual constraints around asset ownership, technology, social barriers and limited choice. Resulting community-grounded visual models codifying feminine resilience grammars would provide contextual rigor to inform responses tackling identified blockages across capability domains.

Longitudinal possessed video inquiry methods would equally centralize women's lifeworld narratives, tracking resilience trajectories to inform system improvements (Moyer & Walker, 2012). Iterative, women-centred qualitative and visual strategies drawing on critical, complex and feminist lenses would maximize contextual fit and sustainability of initiatives addressing diagnosed resilience limitations systemically including requisite cultural shifts.

6.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter Six discusses the data from the questionnaire, interviews, and FGDs. The Chapter evaluates the efficacy of how life skills, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training are incorporated in resilience building for female youth in Mwenezi and Chiredzi based on the data from the questionnaires, KII and FGDs. The Chapter stresses the importance of life, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training programs in reducing vulnerability and building resilience.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter serves as the pinnacle of this extensive study. It encapsulates the essence of the thesis by connecting the conclusions to the original research questions and underscoring the novel contributions made. To begin, the first research question asked: How are differential vulnerabilities of young women reflected in the shocks affecting resilience capacities? The study concludes that factors like unemployment, resource constraints and gender inequalities exacerbate the impacts of contextual shocks on young rural women. This affirms feminist perspectives on disasters reflecting and amplifying existing marginalization. Secondly, the question on training intervention efficacy found skills development enables critical resilience-building pathways, equipping women with knowledge and capacities to better cope with shocks. However, constraints around asset ownership despite skills gains spotlight opportunities to couple training with economic inclusion efforts to sustain outcomes.

Regarding effective intervention strategies, findings validate known pillars like partnerships and participation. However, persistent inequities highlight the analytical value of social justice perspectives to inform integrated programming tackling root causes of gendered vulnerability beyond technical fixes. Overall, the research makes several novel contributions. Empirically, it provides rare contextual evidence on intersections of gender, marginalization and resilience in Zimbabwean villages. Theoretically, it enriches constructivist understandings of risks and capacities as products of community values and histories demanding transformation. Methodologically, the mixed-methods approach underscores the rigor of integrated qualitative and quantitative data in unpacking complex social phenomena.

Additionally, the study proposes an innovative model for strengthening training impacts drawing on blended vocational, entrepreneurial and life skills curricula scaffolded by financial inclusion, post-training support and gender equity efforts. It outlines priorities like accessibility, localization and policy lobbying for contextualized, ecosystem initiatives balancing scale-up potential with cultural attunement. Therefore, this concluding chapter ties key inferences back to the originating research aims, elucidates theoretical advancements, and

clearly articulates the practical and academic contributions made towards strengthening marginalized women's resilience. It cements the study's importance for scholarship and practice while laying out an impactful agenda for future research and sustainable development programming in this critical domain.

7.2 Summary of thesis findings

This study investigated the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts. The core research questions driving the inquiry were:

1. How are differential vulnerabilities of young women reflected in shock impacts?
2. How effective are training interventions in building resilience?
3. What strategies effectively strengthen resilience capacities?

Regarding the first question, findings affirmed that existing gender inequalities and economic disadvantages amplify shock impacts on young women. Unemployment, social barriers and climate threats heighten sensitivity. This aligns with feminist perspectives on normalized feminine vulnerabilities reflecting ingrained marginalization.

The second research question found skills training activates critical resilience pathways, equipping women with knowledge and capacities to better anticipate, cope with and recover from disasters. However, constraints around asset ownership despite skill gains due to financial and social barriers highlight opportunities to couple training with wider inclusion efforts.

Lastly, on effective strategies, the study validated known pillars like partnerships, participation and policy frameworks. However, persisting inequities spotlight the need to tackle the root causes of gendered vulnerabilities beyond technical solutions alone.

In essence, the thesis makes several key contributions. Empirically, the Zimbabwe-based mixed-methods case study provides rare contextual insights on resilience programming, addressing gaps in Southern knowledge. Theoretically, the lens integrating feminist, constructivist and livelihoods perspectives enriches academic discourse on the social production of gendered disaster risks. Practically, the blended training model offers an innovative blueprint for resilience-building initiatives targeting young rural women.

Additionally, the research design underscores methodological lessons regarding the value of mixed qualitative and quantitative techniques to strengthen validity on complex social topics. Further participatory visual and narrative approaches would maximize the cultural attunement of future interventions.

In conclusion, the study pioneers fresh empirical terrain examining gendered resilience in Zimbabwean villages, proposing a contextualized skills model addressing diagnosed bottlenecks. It advances conceptual perspectives on risks and capacities as situated social constructs demanding transformation. As disasters proliferate globally amidst the growing feminization of vulnerability, this timely research informs policy and practice to uphold social justice principles at the center of marginalized women's resilience building.

7.3. Empirical Contribution and key Conclusion of the study

This mixed-methods research in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts investigating the role of skills training in strengthening young women's resilience yields several empirical conclusions and novel contributions:

Research Question 1

The first research question asked how differential vulnerabilities are reflected in shock impacts. The study affirms arguments by feminist scholars like Enarson (2012) that disaster effects expose and amplify ingrained gender inequalities. Constraints around employment, mobility and safety frequently reported spotlight economic and socio-cultural disadvantages hindering rural Zimbabwean women's resilience.

While climate threats like droughts and floods are impactful, findings reinforce contentions by authors like Blaikie et al. (2004) within the Pressure and Release model that risks arise from root causes and dynamic pressures rather than hazards alone. Hence results validate perspectives on endogenous social vulnerabilities shaping lived experiences of external shock events.

Novel Contribution – Contextualizing Feminist Resilience

A key empirical novelty is providing uniquely Zimbabwean, village-level evidence on gendered disaster resilience absent in current literature dominated by Western and Asian research. This pioneering case study unpacks intersectional risks woven into everyday gender roles, relations and routines that normalize women's fragilities; recasting resilience around addressing contextual processes of social devaluation.

Research Question 2

Regarding the second research question on intervention efficacy, findings confirm skills training is vital for building knowledge, capacities and choices to mitigate shock impacts, aligning with conclusions by authors like Hoffman and Blecha (2020) and Fatemi et al. (2017). However, persistent post-training barriers signal that human capital improvements alone are insufficient absent corresponding economic asset-building and gender equity efforts.

This highlights training as necessary but alone insufficient, corroborating warnings by Rigg (2007) and Moser and Dani (2008) regarding the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework lacking complexity without tackling structural oppression. Hence an integrated programming approach bundling complementary empowerment initiatives appears most promising.

Novel Contribution – Blended Training Model

This study's proposed model integrating vocational, entrepreneurial and life skills training paired with financial inclusion, ecosystem partnerships and gender advocacy offers a novel blueprint for strengthening marginalized women's resilience. This multidimensional approach addressing diagnosed bottlenecks provides an adaptable template for contextualized initiatives targeting the most vulnerable.

Research Question 3

Finally, regarding requisite strategies, findings validate established pillars around participation, localization and social protection policies. However, constraints around choice and freedoms mirror Alkire's (2008) contention that resilience demands secured capabilities not just assets or technical adjustments. Persisting gender biases spotlight opportunities to reframe resilience around transformation not stabilization of inequities.

This upholds arguments by Kapoor (2004) and Brown and Westaway (2011) that crisis interventions devoid of historical analyses risk reinforcing oppressive structures. Thus an analytical shift centering on social justice and emancipation principles appears vital to inform integrated programming tackling the roots of unequal risk distribution.

Novel Contribution – Advancing Conceptual Perspectives

Therefore, a key theoretical contribution is demonstrating the analytical value of feminist, social constructivist and capability perspectives for disaster scholarship. By spotlighting risks as situated social constructs demanding systemic redress versus purely technical phenomena, integrating these critical lenses better elucidates the cultural roots of feminine fragilities now demanding targeted policy responses.

In sum, this empirical investigation generates timely evidence, a blended training model, and theoretical advancements to inform gender-transformative resilience building addressing diagnosed vulnerabilities of disaster-prone Zimbabwean women. It pioneers fresh analytical terrain at a historic juncture of deepening feminization of risks, underscoring the need for inclusive climate justice.

7.4. Theoretical contribution

This study delves into the intricate analysis of the effects of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young women residing in rural areas. Specifically, it focuses on the case of the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts. The research findings present an innovative model that aims to enhance the positive outcomes of vocational training on the resilience of young women, especially in the face of external shocks.

By meticulously examining the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building, this study offers valuable insights into an often neglected aspect of rural development. The significance of this research lies in its ability to shed light on the potential benefits that vocational training programs can bring about for young women in rural areas.

The study's findings highlight a model that proposes various strategies to optimize the impact of vocational training on enhancing the resilience of young women. These strategies encompass targeted interventions and support mechanisms that can effectively bolster the capacity of rural

women to withstand external shocks, thereby equipping them with the necessary tools for long-term success.

The model suggested in this research emphasizes the need for comprehensive vocational training programs that go beyond mere technical skills development. It underscores the importance of incorporating life skills training, which encompasses personal development, self-confidence building, and resilience enhancement. By bridging the gap between vocational and life skills training, the model aims to equip young rural women with a holistic skill set that empowers them to navigate challenges and setbacks with greater adaptability and fortitude.

Furthermore, this study examines the specific context of the Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, which enriches its theoretical contributions. By delving into the unique circumstances of these rural areas, the research provides a nuanced analysis that deepens our understanding of the intricate interplay between vocational training, resilience building, and the challenges faced by young women in these specific regions.

Overall, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by presenting a comprehensive model that addresses the limitations of current vocational training programs. It offers practical insights and recommendations that can facilitate the design and implementation of more effective interventions, ultimately promoting the resilience and well-being of young rural women.

7.5 Recommended model

The objective of this research was to examine the impact of vocational and life skills training on resilience building among young rural women in the Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts. This mixed-method study focused on young women who have participated in youth empowerment interventions in these two districts.

It is crucial to address the vulnerability of both young people and women in society, particularly in rural areas. However, given the existing gender disparities and cultural norms, women and girls often bear a greater burden, making them more susceptible to external shocks. Therefore, this study specifically targeted young women aged between 18 and 35 years.

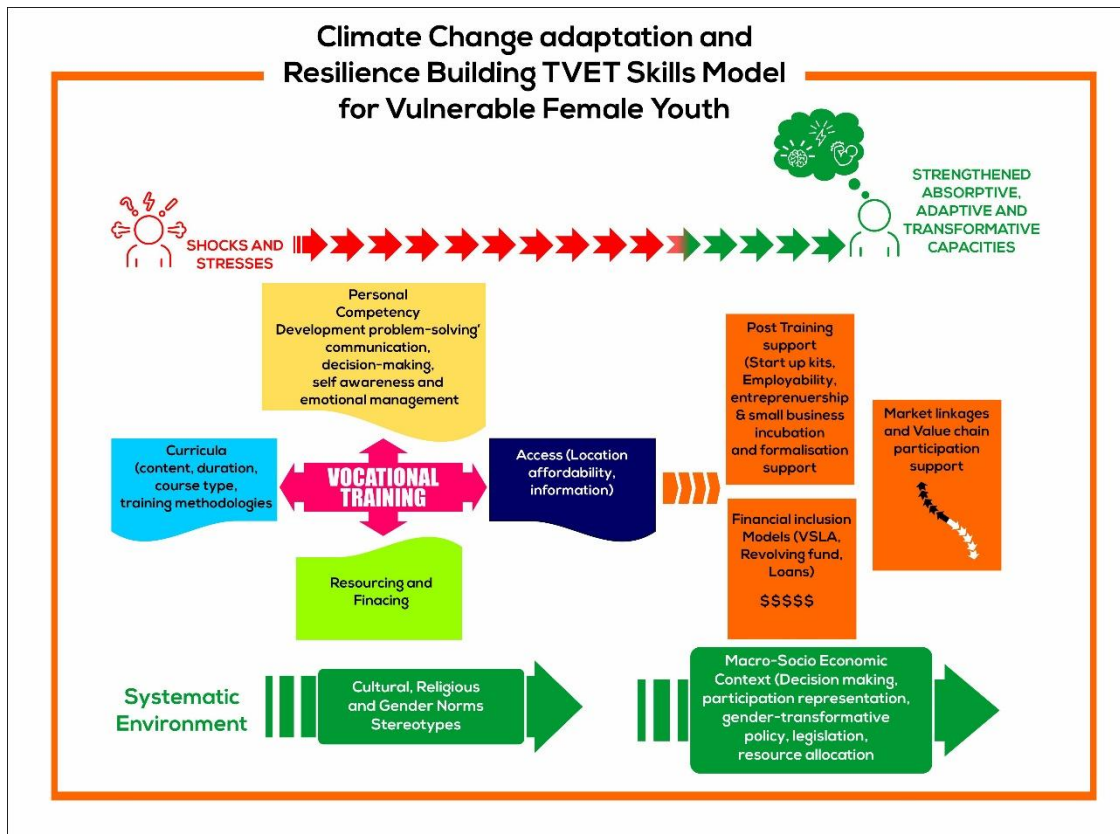


Figure 12: Climate Change and Resilience Building TVET Skills Model, 2023

The recommended model for this research involves a combination of vocational training and life skills development. This comprehensive approach aims to equip young rural women with both technical skills for employability and essential life skills for personal and social resilience. By combining these two components, the model promotes holistic and sustainable empowerment for young women in the study area.

7.5.1 Vocational training component

The vocational training component of the model entails skills development providing young women with specialized skills relevant to the local job market. This could include training in areas such as agriculture, entrepreneurship, handicrafts, or vocational trades. By acquiring practical skills, young women are better equipped to gain employment or engage in income-generating activities within their communities.

- a) **Personal Competency and Skills Development:** Simultaneously, the life skills development component focuses on enhancing personal and social resilience among young rural women. Life skills education covers areas such as problem-solving,

communication, decision-making, self-awareness, emotional management confidence, healing from trauma, mental health decision making and coping with shocks and stresses. These skills empower young women to overcome challenges and adversities they may face in their personal lives, while also enabling them to contribute positively to their families and communities.

- b) **Resourcing and Financing:** adequate resourcing is critical to support training materials and needs including on-the-job training costs which can be prohibitive to vulnerable youth. Gender-responsive resourcing promotes and accelerates youth development without leaving anybody behind. Solutions that promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls, including education, health, and economic opportunities, and help to ensure that interventions are accessible to female youths, in all their diversity, regardless of their socio-economic status.
- c) **Curricula design:** Primary and secondary school curricula should be gender sensitive and should account for the gendering of trade biases, flexibility to allow young women to participate as well as duration and content flexibility, accessibility and safety for young women to minimise risk. Curricula should offer a coordinated holistic approach to life skills and practical skills. Using methodologies that promote a safe learning environment.
- d) **Accessibility and Information:** Considerations need to be made to ensure that training is accessible including ward-based and village-based trainings as movement outside of the home can be difficult for most young women. Location and infrastructure must support the participation of young women and even consideration of young women with children to offer daycare for their children. In addition, adequate information on including proper career guidance of courses allows informed decision-making on trade selection

7.5.2. Post Training Support Component

This is especially critical to ensure that the gains of TVET are sustainable in resilience building. Training without post-training support will result in skill redundancy as they will not be able to fully utilise youths to gain experience that promotes their competitiveness in the labour market or their own businesses. Three main areas of support were identified during this research

- a) **Employability and Entrepreneurship development:** support includes on-the-job training apprenticeship opportunities and linkages, start-up kits, entrepreneurship and employability training, business incubation and formalisation.
- b) **Financial inclusion mechanisms and financial models:** examples include revolving funds, access to flexible and affordable loans etc, to ensure capital is available to support businesses and the economic viability of youth enterprise activity.
- c) **Market Linkages and value chain participation:** Young women need to be supported to participate in both on-farm and off-farm value chains in different capacities. Access to markets will also allow them to be gainfully occupied through employment or business leverage on skills attained. This will also ensure multiple streams for livelihood which are essential in minimising the impact of climate-induced shocks. This will also allow young women to become owners of productive assets in their own capacity.

7.5.3 Systemic Issues

Systemic issues highlighted in the model lean heavily on the intersectionality theoretical framework guiding this research. Understanding the macro socio-economic context where young women are, allows recommendations on TVET trainings to be relevant in a range of communities. Awareness of these issues means interventions can be adapted to the particular values, needs, strengths and challenges that each individual faces as they exist in the community. Interventions that support, create, implement, deliver and evaluate the quality of TVET Training for Resilience building need this context appreciation and lobby for an enabling environment in these spaces

7.6 Recommendations

Grounded in the study's conclusions revealing multidimensional skills and empowerment gaps hindering young rural women's resilience, the following priority recommendations would strengthen training impacts across individual capacities, community relationships, and wider systems:

7.6.1 Individual Level

Localize Delivery Platforms for Inclusion

Decentralizing life skills and vocational training programs down from district hubs to village centers would boost participation rates given mobility constraints. Real-time SMS enrollment alerts tracking demographic profiles would ensure marginalized women are accessing opportunities, triggering supportive transit where lacking. WhatsApp buddies would provide peer learning support. Telephonic helplines would enable personalized guidance around barriers. Post-training surveys would reveal remaining obstacles to address iteratively while longer-term alumni networks would sustain peer resilience.

Mainstream Gender Rights through Immersive Techniques

Beyond technical content, experiential curriculum incorporating participatory theater exposes gender-based vulnerabilities across disaster phases to elicit attitudinal shifts. Simulated SMS-based Choose Your Own Adventure roleplays would reinforce the application of blended life, financial and vocational skills to navigate trade-offs. Pre-post perception surveys and empathy mapping in focus groups would track changes in beliefs or behaviors signalling gaps. Ongoing polling via U-Report would maintain focus on addressing discrimination.

Bridge Hard and Soft Skills through Practice

Unified learning journeys blending vocational, business and psychosocial skills would develop multifaceted capabilities. Collaborative resilience planning project work would enable peer application to localized shock scenarios. Follow-up alumni meet-ups would sustain knowledge sharing on activating competencies towards flexible livelihoods and crisis mitigation. Progress metrics across income, self-efficacy and coping would validate integration using simple mobile-based Scalers to self-monitor.

7.6.2 Community Level

Stimulate Positive Norm Change through Role Modeling

Targeted community exchanges led by successfully trained women, alongside their supportive husbands, would showcase program benefits and debunk myths. Edutainment skits would spark reflection on restrictive norms and demonstration plots exhibit enhanced productivity. Tracking perceptions via monthly SMS polls would reveal uptake patterns across villages to reshape messaging. Program branding through resilient women champions would inspire enrollment.

Incentivize Male Engagement through Positive Messaging

Gender-synchronized orientation on household resilience dividends would secure male backing given entrenched gatekeeping over resource access and mobility. Local radio campaigns sharing husbands' testimonials would normalize cooperation. Monitoring household-level attitudes could highlight where course corrections are needed to uphold gender transformation commitments.

Build Peer Accountability Mechanisms

Women's committees representing district training cohorts would coordinate peer learning and savings. Simple cumulative scorecards would capture members' post-training progress across income, safety, mobility etc. to motivate continued advancement. Annual General Meetings to celebrate change leaders would institutionalize collective accountability towards gender inclusion.

7.6.3 Systems Level

Embed Training in Climate Adaptation Ecosystems

District steering committees would align women's economic empowerment plans with Early Warning, Social Protection and Climate Smart Agriculture roadmaps for synergy. Partnership contracts across government, civil society and the private sphere would designate roles leveraging comparative advantages. Annual resilience summits would take stock of contributions based on indicator-based scorecards towards adaptation, mitigation and transformation goals.

Institutionalize Gender-Responsive Budgeting & Measurement

Gender audits would diagnose budget allocations, policies, data ecosystems and staffing supporting young rural women's needs. Sequential district rankings would motivate priority-setting. Minimum percentage thresholds would safeguard funding commitments. Composite feminine resilience dashboards integrating quantitative and qualitative data would support systemic tracking against holistic well-being metrics spanning health, education, food security etc. beyond incomes alone.

Scale Replicable Models through Adaptive Management

Robust measurement would inform training model refinements using collaborative deep-dive analysis while multi-channel documentation would facilitate scaling. The phased expansion would assess transferability across locales based on contextual fit. Adaptive management would enable agile adjustments upholding evidence-based, gender-transformative programming for just, resilient futures.

In essence, the recommendations provide a roadmap for strengthening young women's resilience through skills training at individual, relationships, community and institutional levels. The suggested mechanisms support program evolution based on agile feedback systems. Together these would inform gender-responsive policy and programming to address diagnosed gaps holistically towards transformative and emancipatory strengthening of feminine resilience capacities across Zimbabwe's disaster-prone rural communities.

7.7. Chapter Summary

This concluding chapter is the consolidated breakdown of the comprehensive output of the research conducted in this study. It reviews the thesis, the key conclusions, empirical and theoretical contributions of the study. In this final chapter, the research presents a proposed recommended model that offers practical recommendations and considerations for interventions aimed at supporting resilience building in young women affected by climatic shocks and stresses through TVET. This chapter lays out the findings and insights generated from this study and how they can have a sustained impact on the field of resilience-building among young rural women.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

RESEARCH TOPIC: THE IMPACT OF VOCATIONAL AND LIFE SKILLS TRAINING ON RESILIENCE BUILDING AMONG YOUNG WOMEN IN RURAL CONTEXTS: A OF CASE MWENEZI AND CHIREDDI DISTRICTS.

Dear Prospective Respondent

My name is Chipso Muchabaiwa a PhD student at the Chinhoyi University of technology I am conducting a research titled: **‘The Impact of Vocational and Life Skills Training on Resilience Building among Young Women in Rural Contexts: A of Case Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts’**. The research will serve as a prerequisite for the completion of my degree. It is solely for academic purposes and all information obtained will be kept confidential. You are kindly requested to respond to the statements in the following questionnaire. Please your name is not required, but your responses are of great importance. I therefore highly value your co-operation. Please ensure that you respond to every question truthfully.

Thank you

Chipso Muchabaiwa

Contact number: +263777751335

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Instructions

This questionnaire is to solicit information to aid the researcher in getting data understand the significance of life, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training on resilience building. Strict confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained in the research. Kindly indicate your response by a tick (✓) or a cross-mark (x) in the appropriate box, representing the most appropriate answer. Thank you in advance for participating!

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS

1. Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age

18-24 years ☐ 25-30 years ☐ 31-35 years ☐

3. Highest level of education attained

No formal education	☐	Primary education	☐
Secondary education	☐	Tertiary education	☐

4. Marital status

Single	☐	Married	☐	Divorced	☐
Widowed	☐	Other (specify)	☐		

5. Years of residing in the district

Less than 5 years	☐	5-10 years	☐
11-15 years	☐	Over 15 years	☐

6. Have you received any life, entrepreneurship or vocational training yet?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes what was the training

**SECTION B: CONTEXTUAL SHOCKS INCREASING VULNERABILITY OF
FEMALE YOUTH IN MWENEZI AND CHIREDDI**

7. In your opinion, do you agree or disagree that there are contextual shocks increasing vulnerability of female youths in Mwenezi and Chiredzi?

Strongly disagree [] Disagree [] Neutral [] Agree [] Strongly Agree []

8. In your view, do you agree or disagree that young women in rural areas are more vulnerable to external shocks than their male counterparts?

Strongly disagree [] Disagree [] Neutral [] Agree [] Strongly Agree []

9. Below are some of the contextual shocks that could be increasing vulnerability of the female youths where you can indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking or cross-marking the box with the number that corresponds to your answer:

External shock:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
COVID-19					
Inflation					
Drought					
Natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and storms					
Climate change					
Unemployment					
Political instability					
Culture and accustom religion and practices					

10. Any other external shocks increasing vulnerability of female youths

.....

.....

Appendix B: Key informant interview schedule

Consent Note

Good day, my name is Chipso Muchabaiwa, a PhD student from the Chinhoyi University of Technology. I am conducting a research titled “**Vocational and Life Skills Training Impacts on Resilience Building among Young Women in Rural Contexts in Mwenezi and Chiredzi Districts**” in pursuit of a PhD Degree in Development Studies under the supervision of Dr. Manase.

The study may not directly benefit you but it is my sincere hope that information provided will assist in understanding various perceptions relating to vocational, entrepreneurship and life skills training and resilience building which would help in policy making.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout and your identity will be protected. Information provided will be combined with that of other participants therefore hence it cannot be traced back to you. The research will ensure that all interview recordings and transcribed material will be kept safe.

You have been selected as one of the participants to the interviews to provide with information for the study. Your honest response will help the researcher to understand your perceptions experiences on the research subject. You are free not to answer questions that seem controversial and also you may quit the interview session at any point you wish. The interview session should take about 40 to 50 minutes. Should you agree to participate on the basis of having read and understood the nature and conditions of this research study, please sign the designated section below.

Participant Declaration

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents and nature of the research and it is my consent to participate in the research study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature:..... Date:.....

Interview Questions

- 1) What is your gender?
- 2) What is your age or age range?
- 3) For how long have you served for your organisation?
- 4) In your observations, what could be the main external shocks impacting vulnerability of young women in rural areas particularly in Mwenezi and Chiredzi?
- 5) In your opinion, to what extent are the young women in rural areas of Mwenezi and Chiredzi vulnerable to these shocks compared to their male counterparts?
- 6) In your view, what could be the factors increasing vulnerability of the young women in areas to external shocks?
- 7) How are differential vulnerabilities of young women reflected in the shocks affecting resilience capacities?
- 8) In your opinion, to what extent are the young women in rural areas taking part in life, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training programmes?
- 9) What are the major skills gained by young women through these skills training programmes?
- 10) In what ways do these skills help in improving resilience to external shocks among the young women?
- 11) How effective are training interventions in life skills, entrepreneurship and vocational skills training in resilience building for female youths in rural areas?
- 12) In your opinion, what should characterize effective strategies for interventions aimed at building resilience of vulnerable young women and reducing divers of risks?