

## **CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The chapter establishes a clear and in-depth discussion of the methodological process and procedure adopted to respond to the study's key aim, objectives and research questions. Research methodology in this context, entails a process of intellectual discovery through the adoption of a procedural blueprint or strategy of enquiry. This process logically moves from the underlying assumptions to research approach, research design and data collection (Ryan, 2018:42). The chapter thus, presents the concepts of research paradigm, approach and design, study location, target population, sampling, data collection process and methods that were used in the study. The justification for the adopted methodology, rigorous ethical considerations in child-related social work researches coupled with the limitations of the study (including mitigation measures) have also been established in the chapter.

The study has adopted an interpretivist research paradigm (also referred to as anti-positivism). The concept of 'research paradigm' as posited by Kuhn (1977) cited in Ryan (2018:43) is viewed as an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools. A paradigm therefore, suggests a structure, framework and pattern or system of academic and scientific assumptions, ideas and values (Ryan, 2018:43). Thus, the interpretivism was adopted in the study due to its compatible and rich features that best suit qualitative research. While deeply embedded in anthropology however, this paradigm has its origins in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the work of Giambattista Vico (Flick, 2014; Ryan, 2018). On the nature of truth and reality, the interpretivist philosophy offers a relativist ontological perspective that embraces multiple realities from participants owing to their different perceptions and experiences. This position greatly enriches the study's findings as the researcher was enabled to incorporate diverse inter-subjective yet in-depth knowledge

and information surrounding the nature of PTD programme and the impeding factors behind social workers' ineffective and poor participation in implementing diversion programmes in Zimbabwe. Thus, relativist or interpretivist researchers view reality as a product of socially constructed meanings. Constructed meanings in this vein, are the categories that make up participants' view of reality and with that actions are defined. These categories encompass culture, norms, understanding, social reality and definitions of the situations (Bryman, 2008; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Thus, there is no single shared reality in understanding social phenomenon; that in this context is restorative justice and the involvement of social workers. This is starkly opposed to positivist researchers who mainly focuses on objective reality that is value-free.

At an ontological level, reality with regards to the constraining factors impeding effective participation of social workers in implementing diversion programmes could be easily explored and constructed through human interactions and meaningful actions. More so, at an epistemological level, the interpretivist researcher could also discover how participants make sense of the phenomenon under study in the natural setting by means of their daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with other stakeholders within the diversion committee. These writings could be PTD Programme manuals, reports and documents. Many social realities hence, existed due to varying human experiences, including participants' knowledge, views and interpretations. In the same context, the researcher based his interpretation of the obtained information by drawing inferences and judging the match between the information gathered and some abstract pattern within the provided information. The interpretivist paradigm also stresses the need to put analysis in context while using meaning-oriented methodologies in research. By so doing, the researcher was enabled to focus on the full complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges instead of predefining dependent and independent

variables as established within positivist research methodologies. This paradigm also provided and informed the researcher on the uses of theories or frameworks in interpretive case studies.

The study has used qualitative research approach. A research approach as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2012), establishes a framework for the collection of data, its analysis and finally, its interpretation and presentation. This data could have been drawn from a myriad of philosophical assumptions. Thus, this the qualitative approach best suits the study as it adopts a naturalistic, interpretivist and subjective approach to the subject matter under scrutiny (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003 cited in Flick, 2014). In this context, the study sought to explore the key hurdles constraining effective participation or involvement of social workers in PTD Programme implementation process. Qualitative research to this end, allowed the adoption of non-manipulative methods of collecting data (interviews included) from participants in their naturalistic and flexible contexts. This approach's key aim in this vein, is to explore and discover issues about the problem at hand; because very little is known about the problem. Again, this approach assumes that, there is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of a problem. Hence, it uses 'soft' data to get rich data (Domegan and Fleming, 2007:24). In this light, the qualitative approach best suits the study as it allowed quality assessment of issues and the provision of quality results. This approach was also adopted mainly because, besides being inductive in nature, this approach established an in-depth, deep and holistic account of issues. Again, qualitative research could allow generalizability particularly detailed context-based generations on the phenomenon under study (Ryan, 2018:44). More significantly, this approach helped the researcher to develop a complex picture of the problem, reporting multiple perspectives and identifying diverse factors interfering with social workers' effective participation in implementing PTD programme. Finally, the research could sketch the larger picture of the problem that emerged.

The study adopted the exploratory case study design due to the interpretivist and qualitative nature of the study. This design as purported by Creswell (2014) is one of the qualitative research designs that provides a comprehensive framework for evaluation and analysis of complex issues. Yin (2003:19) in this context, postulates that, “colloquially a research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where ‘here’ may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and ‘there’ is some set of conclusions (answers)”. Thus, it could imply the overall strategy (whose protocol is iterative or cyclical in nature) that a researcher could select or choose to integrate the different components of the study in a logical and coherent manner (Flick, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the case study design usually is intended to establish deeper or well-informed understanding of a given situation, starting with conceptualization and particularization of the problem while moving through several interventions and evaluations. This design also best suited the study because of its ability to draw together naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods in ‘a palette of methods’ (Merriam 2009:53; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In the same light, this design also involves an up-close, in-depth and detailed examination of a particular case(s) within a real-world context. As such, it allowed the researcher to explore in-depth, impeding factors constraining effective and full involvement or participation of social workers in implementing the PTD programme within the practical real-life context.

More still, it provided the researcher with a level of flexibility by allowing greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participants. Thus, the case study maintained deep connections to fundamental values and intentions, hence ‘particularistic and heuristic’ (Merriam, 2009:46; Flick, 2011). The latter attributes might not have been easily and readily offered by other qualitative designs such as narrative and historical research designs coupled with grounded theory. To this end, this design enabled the

researcher to best understand the phenomenon of restorative juvenile justice and social workers' participation; and finally respond to the study's objectives. On the same note, this design also allowed research findings to emerge from the key themes inherent in the raw data of the study. In the same light, it provided a clear framework for investigating the phenomenon under study and prioritising its exploration until a depth of understanding was achieved. Thus, Creswell (2009:183) supports that this in-depth understanding is accomplished through paying attention to every detail shared by study participants through the use of in-depth and key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

The study was conducted in St Marys that is part of the locations under Chitungwiza District. While it is also nicknamed 'Chi-town', this location is approximately 30 kilometres (19 miles) of the Harare Central Business Centre (CBD). St Marys is therefore one of the townships (among Zengeza and Seke) that were established when Chitungwiza as a district was formed in 1978. It is worth noting that, having been recently declared an urban centre, Chitungwiza is currently expanding to cover other locations such as Dema among others. Hence, the need to focus on a specific location for well-informed study. According to HDI Report (2018), as of February 2021, St Marys alone had a total population of approximately 210 000 people with almost 25% of this total population being children and youths. The selection of the study location is necessitated by the observation that, Chitungwiza is the first district where the preventive, rehabilitative and restorative PTD programme was launched hence, this could enable the researcher to easily reach the target population and obtain rich findings. More so, a huge number of juvenile offenders from this location remain entangled in harsh criminal justice system while reports of recidivism, detention (that must be a last resort in legal sense) and juvenile(s) incarceration have seemed to reach intolerable proportions. More so, there are reports that, poor implementation of the programme due to ritual involvement of social workers in the diversion process cannot be repudiated.

However, given the researcher's limited time for the study, the researcher had to mainly focus on St Marys where juvenile offending seems to be rife. Hence a need to account for the barriers constraining the effective participation of social workers in PTD implementation process to present a case for law and programme reform.

Target population as suggested by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) is a certain group of the population sharing similar characteristics. This group is usually identified as the intended or objective audience for research. To this end, the researcher primarily targeted social workers who are working under the restorative juvenile justice system (PTD programme) in particular. Due to the limited number of social workers under PTD programme (Ministry of Justice), the study thus, also made use of social workers who through CATCH and Justice for Children, have also been working with young offenders under diversion programme. Secondly, the study also targeted other professionals within the diversion committee (magistrate, prosecutor, victim-friendly unit officer) who work with social workers in diversion processes. This secondary group included key stakeholders from various government ministries and departments but bearing a significant stake on restorative juvenile justice promotion in Zimbabwe. Thus, these general participants and key informants have been selected as they have a strong influence and first-hand experience and contact with the PTD programme and juvenile offenders.

The researcher adopted purposive sampling to select participants for in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). The emic nature of the study has invoked the adoption of this non-probability sampling method. This sampling technique as asserted by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), is one of the non-probability sampling techniques that is mostly applicable in qualitative studies. In this light, it implies judgmentally subjective and deliberate choice of an informant on the basis of the qualities, expertise or experiences one possesses. Unlike the probability sampling methods (quantitative research-friendly), this

method seldom emphasises on statistical or mathematical power. It rather focuses on comprehensive and in-depth exploration of social phenomenon under study. The latter referred phenomenon in this context, is a thorough exploration of the key factors constraining effective social workers' participation in PTD implementation process. It is however worth noting that, prior to the selection of a sample, the researcher firstly, defined a sample frame and to achieve this, a flow population was used. Sample frame according to Bryman and Bell (2015) and Flick (2014) is an act whereby samples can be generated by identifying people in a particular setting such as an organisational setting, meetings, conferences or rallies. In the context of the study therefore, stakeholders' committee meetings among other conferences on child protection in Chitungwiza Hall provided the researcher with the opportunity to draw samples that objectively suits the characteristics of the target population.

This was, however, achieved through the help of the CATCH Justice for Children and more importantly, Ministry of Justice under that the PTD lies. To this end, the researcher purposefully selected nine (9) social workers for in-depth interviews (under Ministry of Justice) who are still (or those who have been) working under the PTD programme. For key informant interviews, five (5) key informant interviewees were purposely selected from the Ministry of Justice (2), Department of Social Development (1), Ministry of Home Affairs particularly, the Victim-Friendly Unit (1) and the other one (1) from a CSOs' representative, Justice for Children. These key informants were in this regard, selected mainly for the researcher to tap into their lived yet rich work experiences and expertise on restorative juvenile justice in relation to social workers' participation in implementing the PTD programme. As for FGDs, seven (7) social workers (who have been working under the PTD programme for at least three years) were also purposively selected. Through this focus group discussion, the researcher sought to establish a more open and comparative assessment of their responses on the key

barriers to social workers' effective participation in PTD programme implementation process.

Sample size as viewed by Flick (2014) is the total number of subjects in a study. The sample size of the study was 21 participants (inclusive of 9 participants for in-depth interviews, 5 key informants and 1 FGD that was made up of 7 participants.) As recommended by Creswell (2014), the researcher maintained a reasonably small size to allow rich and vivid exploration of the phenomenon under study that would later result in saturation. In the context of qualitative research, it is saturation that determines the sample size. The researcher thus, achieved this through 'contrast analysis' that as supported by Schutt (2006:349) entails the determination of nuanced differences to predict specific variations or similarities between participants' views; with the aim of ascertaining whether their views are being reflected in the data or not.

The researcher used a combined set of various qualitative methods (both primary and secondary) to fully gather data. Data collection in this context, is a methodological process of gathering and analysing specific information to proffer solutions to relevant research questions and evaluate results. This process to Flick (2014) is procedural throughout and validated standards and techniques and methods are used. In the context of the study, these included interviews, FGDs and documentary review (PTD manual, reports from Justice for Children, and UNICEF coupled with child-related laws informing juvenile justice). The 'cross method' that is a once-off task (Patton, 2001; Creswell, 2012) to this end, was fully adopted by the researcher. This enabled the researcher not to ensure reliability and validation only, but more so, to deepen and widen his understanding while producing innovation in conceptual framing coupled with explanation of the richness and complexity of the phenomenon under study by studying it from more than one point. These methods thus, are fully explained hereunder with their justifications in aiding reliable, in-depth and deeper collection of data from participants.



Being one of the most effective techniques used in interpretive and qualitative studies, in-depth interviews were used by the researcher to obtain subjective analysis of the hurdles constraining the effective participation of social workers in implementing PTD programme in St Marys, Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. The researcher, while guided by the interview guide, managed to fully explore the beliefs, opinions, attitudes and lived experiences of the participants. The latter mainly refer to the social workers within the restorative juvenile justice system in particular. To design the interview guide nonetheless, the researcher upheld Rubin and Babbie's (2011) recommendation that the researcher should consciously draft and ask questions in the same manner or sequence to maximize comparability of responses. This enabled the researcher to ensure that data are gathered from all participants on all relevant issues surrounding the study. Thus, in-depth interviews were done with 14 participants (inclusive of 9 social workers and 5 key informants). These selected key informants were inclusive of the VFU representative (police diversion officer), child protection officer under DSD, PTD programme's National Coordinator and prosecutor (under Ministry of Justice) and one child rights advocate from the Civil Society Organisation (Justice for Children). These informant interviews lasted for almost an hour at the Pre-trial Diversion Offices, Chitungwiza near the magistrate court.

As a result of these interviews, the researcher managed to obtain sound and well-informed information that richly responded to the study's key aim and objectives. The use of in-depth interviews in the study was basically hinged on the fact that, this technique allowed the collection of data in a deeper way as opposed to what questionnaires could have done. It should be noted however that, these in-depth interviews spent almost 1 hour and were conducted at Chitungwiza Community Hall where all the target population conveniently gathered. In the same light, this technique provided a high degree of flexibility to the researcher. As such, this the researcher was allowed to collect dynamic and

comprehensive data without restriction. This might not have been the case with close-ended questionnaire that limit participants' view and focus more on quantity (Flick, 2014; Ryan, 2018). However, emerging themes and questions during the interview process were closely converged within the subsets of the collected data.

Focused Group Discussion (FGD) as asserted by Patton (2002:385), is a form of an interview with a judicious number of people (6-8) who cross-pollinate ideas over a phenomenon or problem. In a bid to triangulate and compliment data, the researcher also had to use 1 FGD. More focus group discussions could have been logically most appropriate but, the researcher found out that, just after in-depth interviews with the social work diversion officers and key informants, data had almost reached saturation. Hence, one FGD sufficed as it could only gap-fit, cement and validate the findings in a more comparatively open-ended set-up for deep and rich data. To achieve this, the researcher took into cognisance Flick's (2010:192) caution that dominance by other participants should be prevented by the researcher through encouraging participants to be collectively involved; of that the researcher did. To this end, through this FGD (20 minutes in length), the researcher was able to generate diversified discourse on the hurdles impeding effective participation of social workers in implementing PTD programme in Zimbabwe. This discussion took place at Chitungwiza community Hall where the general Child Protection Committee (stakeholders) meetings are held. The different experiences of these participants on the diversion programmes implementation process thus, were successfully captured. In the same light, the researcher managed to observe how interactions influenced other participants' views and ideas (Rubin and Babbie, 2012). This could not have been achieved by the use of solely, in-depth and key informant interviews. As such, these participants as mentioned above, partly included some of the participants who had been used for in-depth interviews to validate the obtained data and compare responses among the involved participants. The pre-designed FGDs thus, was utilised to

guide the discussions and they lasted for approximately thirty (30) minutes.

As part of secondary data, the researcher utilised document review to obtain relevant information that provides insights into the phenomenon under study. As recommended by Bryman and Bell (2015:25), the researcher used PTD programme manual, child-related laws and policies, reports on juvenile offending and justice from the Ministry of Justice among other organisations working with these juveniles. These documents also included e-materials on various websites such as that of Veritas, Justice for Children Trust, Save the Children and UNICEF, among others. These secondary e-sources were of great importance in providing some partial information to the study's aim and objectives. This data collection tool thus, also helped the researcher to serve time and unnecessary travelling costs to some of these agencies as it these documents are easily accessible.

The researcher initially engaged the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs through a formal letter writing requesting for authority to conduct research; and permission was granted. Thereafter, the researcher entered the research field where after informed consent, he made use of the interview guides he had designed. The first one was generally meant for the in-depth interviews with social workers (General Interview Guide) while the other one (Key Informant Interview Guide) was meant for key informant interviews. These guides covered the study topic, purpose and the researcher's identity among other key information. They also contained about twelve (12) and thirteen (13) open-ended and unstructured questions (respectively) to be administered to the participants. These questions were sequentially arranged and informed by the study aim and research objectives and questions. Each question could take the maximum of approximately five (5) minutes; making the total time length of about one (1) hour for the general in-depth interviews with social workers. Regarding the length of

time for key informant interviews, the researcher spent almost ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes (on each interviewee) on all the provided questions. More so, the researcher used the Focused Group Discussion Guide (FGDG) that also constituted about twelve (12) open-ended questions informed by the study's aim and objectives. This guide also incorporated some of the key features (topic and purpose of the study among others) provided on the interview guides. This discussion took about fifteen twenty (20) to thirty (30) minutes. In this light, the researcher allocated the total number of two (2) hours and thirty (30) minutes for the whole data collection process. It should be noted that, these guides were underpinned by the principle of clarity, readability, simplicity and use of understandable terminology (Creswell, 2014; Rubin and Bubbie, 2013). More so, the researcher also used the documents (PTD Manual by Justice for Children Trust in collaboration with Save the Children, UNICEF and the Ministry of Justice) among other legislative documents uploaded on the Veritas Website (including the websites of the above-mentioned organisations). All this was done to provide a rich, deep and comparatively well-informed understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data analysis, as suggested by Flick (2014), concerns the organization of data into specific criteria and reduce it to a more manageable form. In the context of qualitative study, Cohen *et al.* (2007:128) view data analysis as the process of reducing large chunk of data into smaller fragments. Thus, according to them, data analysis seeks to make sense out of the participants' views and opinions of situations, corresponding patterns, themes, categories and regular similarities. The study therefore, has adopted the thematic analysis as opposed to other qualitative data analysis tools that include content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis and framework analysis. This was because the thematic analysis adequately and contextually suited the interpretive nature of this research study. More so, the study had embraced no pre-

determined ideas or theories; and as such, it emphasised the importance of liberalizing the process of data analysis to allow themes to emerge as opposed to railroading preconceived themes (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Thematic analysis best suits the study as it is a constant-comparative method that involves reading and re-reading the transcripts in a systematic way (Cavendish, 2011). The most vital aspect in this data analysis technique is that, the analysis process should be systematic so that the final product is of good quality. To maintain necessary rigour in the analysis process, the study adopted the 'six-phase' process as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006:63-65); each of that is explained hereunder. On the other hand, those analytic procedures are not a linear series of steps but rather, an iterative and reflective process. That is, it involves a constant moving back and forward between phases. Therefore, this data analysis process followed several stages:

**Familiarisation with the data:** at this phase, the researcher started with familiarising himself with data. This helped him to figure out (and number) themes that, through the data might emerge. While guided by some steps, the researcher initially transcribed all the oral diaries and interviews in full. He did this to gain a sense of how the participants reacted to pertinent concerns raised in the study. For analysis, these transcripts were then transferred into NVivo 10. Thereafter, a repeated careful reading of the transcript was made to read the transcripts as 'things in themselves' (Ryan, 2018:44). He did this to avoid the influence of the researcher's prior knowledge and experience in the field. All the thought-provoking information was highlighted as he read all the transcripts. In this process, the researcher detected the interest points as he cross-referenced them against the study's research questions. The key thrust of going through all the data in such a manner was to allow himself to become wholly immersed in the whole data-set thereby collecting initial points of interest. Therefore, this phase informed the researcher about the depth and breadth of the content.

**Generating initial codes:** at this phase the researcher focused more on initial codes generation. However, it should be noted that, though the preceding step allowed the emergence of rich initial findings, the centrality of transcripts rereading was ensured prior to the creation of codes. Thus, the researcher carefully coded all the data. To achieve this, an efficient NVivo coding feature allowed multiple codes to be applied through the selection of phrases, sentences or paragraphs that were of interest. In this context, after a careful reading of the transcripts for several times, all transcripts were coded. As such, a huge number of codes did emerge- some containing merely one phrase while others could contain more.

**Searching for Themes:** at this stage the researcher commenced with a long list of the codes that were identified across the data set. This phase's main purpose was to identify the patterns and relationships between and across the entire data set (Chamberlain, 2015). The codes had to be analysed considering how different codes could be combined to form an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006 cited in Flick, 2011). In simple terms, much focus was on the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes. As Ryan (2018) point out "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to a research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p.10).

Therefore, it was pertinent to conceptualise those codes as the building-blocks and combine similar or multiple codes to generate potential themes in relation to the research questions. This phase was the most difficult phase in the analysis process. To ease the process, following Ryan (2018) suggestions, a list of the codes was prepared on a separate piece of paper and then they were organised into theme-piles that reflected on the relationship between codes and themes. The transcripts were re-read and different codes were combined into potential themes, collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified

themes. When developing the themes, the researcher could bring in the concepts and issues that he had previously identified in his literature review. He found that some of the themes from the literature review were truly meaningful and some codes could be subsumed under them.

**Reviewing the themes:** At this stage all the themes (master themes, main themes and sub-themes) were intentionally brought together as it was aimed at the refinement of those initially grouped themes and presentation of those themes in a more systematic way. Ryan (2018) suggest that themes must be checked for internal homogeneity (coherence and consistency) and external heterogeneity (distinctions between themes). This stage consisted of two levels. At level one, all coded extracts relevant to each initial theme were extracted from the NVivo file and pasted into a Microsoft Word document to facilitate cross-referencing of coded extracts with the themes and to carry out the retrieval, comparison and organisation of coded extracts and themes in a meaningful way. The author reread all the collated extracts for each theme, clustered all the themes and sub - themes to check whether they could form a coherent pattern. All the codes and themes along with the collated extracts were considered to see whether they could form a coherent pattern adequately capturing the contours of the coded data. At level two, a similar process was followed but in relation to the entire data set. At this level, the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set was considered. It was very important to ascertain that the “thematic map ‘accurately’ reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:91). Therefore, all the transcripts were reread, (where appropriate, the extracts were also recoded) to ensure that the themes ‘work’ in relation to the entire data set. Some new codes emerged at this stage. During the reviewing process, many of the themes or sub-themes were either merged with other (main) themes or discarded. Other themes and/or sub-themes were also reviewed, renamed, discarded or merged in the same way.

**Defining and Naming Themes:** This phase began with an aim of further refining and defining the themes, that is, “identifying the essence of what each theme is about (and the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). Braun and Clarke argue that a theme cannot be too diverse and complex. Therefore, the author went back to collated data extracts for each theme and organised all the themes into a coherent and consistent account. Careful attention was paid to identify the ‘story’ that each theme told, and how it fitted into the broader overall ‘story’ that she wanted to talk about her data in relation to the research questions and to ensure that there was not too much overlap between the themes. The specifics of each theme were refined carefully. The themes were further refined by reading through all the main themes and subthemes, codes and extracts. Then, final name along with its definition was assigned to each theme to tell a story about the data.

**Writing the Findings Report:** The final phase of the analysis was to write down the report of the findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that report of a thematic analysis must convince the readers of the merit and reliability and validity of the analysis. Therefore, a great effort was made to provide a concise, coherent and logical account of the story that the data represented within and across themes by providing sufficient evidence and particular examples and/or extracts that could capture the essence of the point the author was demonstrating. The examples and extracts were embedded within the analytic narrative in such a way that they could make an argument in respect of the research objectives, besides illustrating the story being told.

The sensitive nature of the study invoked the need for the researcher to rigorously consider some ethical issues throughout the research process. Sanders *et al.* (2012) expounds that, ethics are at the crux of social work research and to this end, they concern the appropriateness of the researcher’s behaviour in relation to the stipulated rights of the research subjects or those who are directly or indirectly affected by it. To this end,



the researcher designed the study in an ethically sound and methodologically sound manner such that participants' rights, needs, preferences, desires and values were fully respected (Flick, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the ethics that were observed by the researcher as proposed by many scholars in social research are discussed hereunder.

Initially, the researcher sought permission from the responsible authority that would influence the study process. In the context of the study, the researcher sought permission from the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs under that the PTD programme lies. Finally, the researcher was granted permission. This was in line with Creswell's (2014) recommendation that, any research that is conducted in institutions just like in communities, demands one to seek permission from the authority of the people in charge under that the participants fall under.

The researcher also ensured voluntary participation among the participants. Rubin and Babbie (2011) assert that social work research often interferes with people's lives, disrupts their usual life activities and requires them to invest a vital portion of their time and energy. Deception of participants was totally overruled through the provision of written and pre-signed informed consent with clearly spelt out rights and other issues about the general well-being of participants as supported by Creswell (2014).

The researcher throughout the research process, managed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. These research ethics generally concern the protection of the participants' personal identities. Rubin and Babbies (2011) suggests the desirable concern and professional responsibility in safeguarding their interests and well-being. The researcher to this end, ensured the participants' right to privacy and power to decide as to what, who, when, how and where their information would be revealed (Flick, 2014; Rubin and Babbies, 2011). This was managed through the

use of anonymity by ensuring the exclusion of the participants' identifiers including names among others. That is, the researcher firmly guaranteed the participants that their identity would be concealed while their information would be shared and only utilized for academic purposes. From this standpoint, it has become lucid that privacy denoted the elements of personal lives while confidentiality implies 'how' the information should be handled. Therefore, on data analysis, only the positions of key informants who are directly involved in the juvenile justice system were provided. Most importantly, the researcher was also guided by binding ethical principles, values and standards of the NASW code of ethics for professional practice (2008).

The ethical principle of non-maleficence was also of great significance in this research process. The researcher managed to ensure all the participants' safety and this was done to protect them from any potential harm that might have been imposed by the study. While this ethical principle is also termed 'protection from harm' (Flick, 2014); it automatically becomes a keystone for sensitive social work researches. Thus, measures were taken to ensure all participants were safe from any possible harm in terms of their physical, emotional, psychological, social and professional harm. Adhering to the ethos and pathos of professionalism to this end, was the researcher's diligent capacity and ability.

Since the researcher had firstly briefed the participants about the study's aim, objectives and implications of the study thereof, immediately after the completion of the data collection process, he did a review meeting with the participants for the purpose of debriefing.

Feasibility is one of the significantly defining factor for any study to be carried. To this end, the researcher took it into consideration. The scope, time required, costs, ethical considerations and the cooperation it requires are the common issues that determined the feasibility of the study (Rubin and Babbie, 2011:141). In this light, the study was carried

in St Marys, Chitungwiza District. The location was within the reach of the researcher. This then necessitates easier data collection in relation to transport costs among other expenses. More so, the availability of social workers and key stakeholders in juvenile justice processes made the study's key aim and objectives attainable without much difficulties. Most significant to the study's success was the guidance and shared judgements from the supervisor whose experience in researches of this kind was vastly relevant.

The researcher was beset with some challenges during the study. The first challenge was a small size of the sample and could partly limit the generalization of the findings. Despite this limited sample size, most interesting is the fact that, the objectives of the study could still be achieved by means of rich and detailed descriptions and reflections of participants. More so, the unavailability of some of the key informants (magistrate in particular) due to tight schedules at the offices could have affected the study, yet still, the researcher made use of the public prosecutor and this fortunately succeeded. Another challenge was that of limited time to carry out this demanding task. The researcher however, made use of a reasonably small size of participants as he also chose a closer study location. Again, due to the sensitivity of the study topic, rigorous ethical concerns evolved coupled with delayed permission from the authorities to carry out the study. Nonetheless, the researcher was later granted permission to carry out the research as he also got assistance to identify the targeted participants from Justice for Children and CATCH organisations.

The chapter has proffered the methodological procedures and process that guided and informed the study. Among the key thematic concepts covered in the chapter, are the research approach, research design, sampling method, and data collection procedures, data analysis technique and the study's feasibility. The ethical considerations informing the study coupled with its limitations have also been established. More significantly, the justification for the adoption of the

above-mentioned methodology has been explicitly provided in relation to the study's aim and objectives. The next chapter therefore, will present and analyse the data collected from the field.