

CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter has delved into the relevant literature on the phenomenon under study. This chapter proceeds to provide an in-depth and clear discussion of the methodological procedures and process used to respond to the study's key aim and objectives. Ryan *et al* (2002) assert that research methodology relates to a process of intellectual discovery through the adoption of a procedural blueprint; and it is meant to boost people's understanding and knowledge of the world's social phenomena. The chapter thus, presents the concepts of research approach and design, study location, target population, sampling, data collection process and instruments used. The justification for the adopted methodology, rigorous ethical considerations in child-related researches coupled with the limitations of the study (including mitigation measures) shall all be established in the chapter.

As averred by Bryman and Bell (2012), a research approach 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, the study has adopted qualitative approach as it helps one to fully explore the ascribed meaning given to any social problem or phenomenon. As the study seeks to explore the key underlying barriers behind juvenile offenders' failure to access PTD Programme and all the related services, the qualitative approach best suits the study in the context of quality assessment of issues and the provision of quality results. In the same vein, it follows that the interpretivist theoretical assumption therefore, has informed the study. This approach has also been adopted mainly because of its favourable characteristics. Key among these characteristics is that, it allows reflexivity by allowing the collection of data from participants within their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). As such, the researcher could easily assess the key barriers affecting these juveniles' access to PTD services. Again, besides being inductive in nature, this

approach establishes a holistic account of issues and thus, it allowed the researcher to develop a complex picture of the problem, report multiple perspectives, identify diverse factors interfering with juveniles' access to the PTD programme and finally, sketch the larger picture of the problem that emerged.

Research design entails the overall strategy that a researcher can select or choose to integrate the different components of the study in a logical and coherent manner and it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Flick, 2011; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In this context, a research design presents itself as a comprehensive yet strategic framework for action whose protocol according to Creswell (2014) is iterative or cyclical in nature. Thus, it is usually 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.

Creswell (2014) views case study as a qualitative research design that provides a framework for evaluation and analysis of complex issues; and it involves an up-close, in-depth and detailed examination of a particular case(s) within a real world context. Given the qualitative nature of the study therefore, a case study research design was consequently adopted. This design 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). As such, it allowed the researcher to explore in-depth, antecedent factors affecting juvenile offenders to access diversion services or a case of restorative justice within its 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 maintains deep connections to fundamental values and intentions, hence 'particularistic and heuristic' (Merriam, 2009:46; Flick, 2011). The latter attributes could 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, it helped the researcher to best understand the phenomenon of restorative juvenile justice and finally respond to the study's objectives. On the same note, this design allowed research findings to emerge from the key themes inherent in the raw data of the study and finally provided a clear framework for investigating the phenomenon under study and prioritizing 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. However, this design has never gone without criticism from other researchers who question this design's lack of objectivity. Yet still, this criticism cannot disqualify this design's credibility and capacity in providing quality and aimed answers for the study. To this end, although juvenile justice is never an alien or new concept in social work practice, the key underlying barriers to PTD related services were supposed to be assessed and fully explained.

Chitungwiza, also nicknamed 'Chi-town' is a high-density dormitory town in Zimbabwe. It is believed to be approximately 30 kilometres (19 miles) of the Harare city centre. It falls under Harare province and was formed in 1978 from three townships that are Seke, Zengeza and St Marys. According to HDI Report (2018), as of February 2021, Chitungwiza had a total population of 340 000 people with almost 25% of this total population being children. The selection of the study location was triggered by the observation that besides Chitungwiza being the first target location where the preventive, rehabilitative and restorative PTD programme was launched, a huge number of juvenile offenders 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. However, given the researcher's limited time for the study

versus covid-19 restrictions, the researcher had to mainly focus on St Marys where juvenile offending was rife; and the researcher eventually used Justice for Children Trust that would then assist in the process of identifying the participants for the study.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) define target population as a certain group of the population sharing similar characteristics and is usually identified as the intended or objective audience for research. In the context of the study, the researcher capitalized on Justice for Children Trust that was already on the ground working with juvenile offenders coupled with the DSD among other key stakeholders in Chitungwiza district. As such, juvenile offenders between the age of 14 and 18 years residing in St Marys, Chitungwiza District were primarily targeted. The reason why this age group or range was targeted is that, juveniles who fall under this category have no situational factors considered that give them an advantage in the juvenile justice system as provided in the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (Chapter 9:07) unlike those who are below the age of 14. More still, the above-mentioned child group had more exposure to the retributive, retrogressive and punitive justice system as many had experienced challenges in the process of accessing pre-trial diversion services.

Sampling is a process or technique of selecting a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2009:152) supports the view that this is possible because trends and tendencies in the larger population can be discovered from individuals. In general research, these two elementary sampling methods are probability and non-probability sampling. The former seeks to test hypotheses, hence more applicable in quantitative studies. The latter however, is based on deliberate selection of participants who best suit the characteristics of the objective target population.

Thus, the emic nature of the study has invoked the adoption of non-probability sampling method. This method seldom emphasises on statistical or mathematical power but rather, on comprehensive and in-depth exploration of barriers to PTD programme accessibility among juvenile offenders. It is 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 utilized. Sample frame according to Bryman and Bell (2015) in corroboration with Flick (2011) is an act whereby samples can be generated by identifying people in a particular setting such as meetings, conferences or rallies. In the context of the study therefore, stakeholders' meetings on child protection in Chitungwiza Hall provided the researcher with the opportunity to draw samples that objectively suited the characteristics of the target population. During these meetings, children in diverse situations including those who once or who would be going through juvenile justice process would be present together with the organisations who work with them among other government stakeholders.

Thus, the researcher utilised purposive sampling to select participants for in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and this was however achieved through the help of Justice for Children representatives (under whose charge these juveniles fell) and the consented parents and guardians present. Basing on Creswell's (2014) recommendation, the researcher maintained this position until the saturation point was recorded and eventually, 7 in-depth interviews were conducted. Among these 7 participants, for gender balance purposes, 2 were girl children and 5 were boys. Girl children occupied a limited space in the study as the highest number of cases for juvenile offenders are usually recorded among the male children. As for FGDs as highlighted above, nine (9) juvenile offenders were purposively selected and through this focus group discussion, the researcher sought to establish a more open and comparative assessment of their responses on the key barriers to PTD services accessibility.

For key informant interviews, the study also adopted purposive sampling. This latter sampling technique as asserted by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), is an informant selection tool mostly applicable in qualitative studies and implies judgementally subjective and deliberate choice of an informant on the basis of the qualities, expertise or experiences one possesses. As such, 5 key informants were selected from the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs (diversion officer, magistrate), the Department of Social Development (DSD) (probation officer), the Victim Friendly Unit (police officer) and Justice for Children Trust (lawyer representing children's rights and welfare). Accordingly, these key informants were selected mainly for the researcher to tap into their lived yet rich work experiences and expertise on juvenile justice in relation to the current PTD programme. It is also important to note that throughout the whole sampling process, WHO covid-19 regulations (social distancing, sanitizing and masking) were firmly ensured.

Flick (2011) views sample size as the total number of subjects in a study. Thus, a total number of 21 participants was the study's sample size. 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. Thus, the researcher realised that just after 7 participants had been interviewed, the information being provided by these participants was constantly and continuously similar. The researcher 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 reflected in the data or not. To this end, the sample size was made up of 7 participants for in-depth interviews, 5 key informants and 1 FGD that was made up of 9 participants. Nonetheless, the researcher recognized that similarities in their responses were most supposedly emanating from commonly

shared perceptual attitudes, opinions, lived experiences and views on juvenile justice accessibility.

Data collection is a methodological process of gathering and analysing specific information to proffer solutions to relevant research questions and evaluate results. This process to Flick (2011) is procedural throughout and validated standards and techniques are used.

The study adopted triangulation and as suggested by Creswell (2014) the latter method entails a process of validating the results of the study through the use of two or more methods. This allowed the researcher to check its reliability. Thus, the researcher used various methods to gather data and these included documentary review, interviews, observations and FGDs. The 'cross method' that is a once-off task (Patton, 2001) to this end, has been fully adopted by the researcher. This allowed the researcher not to ensure 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. Therefore, the following section provide a justified overview of the specific data collection techniques used in the study.

Being one of the most effective techniques used in qualitative studies, in-depth interviews were used by the researcher to obtain subjective analysis of key barriers to PTD programme accessibility among juvenile offenders in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. While guided by the interview guide, the researcher managed to fully explore the beliefs, opinions, attitudes and lived experiences of the participants. To design the interview guide however, 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 allowed the researcher to ensure that data are gathered from all participants on all relevant issues

surrounding the study. To this end, in-depth interviews were done with 12 participants including 7 juveniles and 5 key informants.

The use of in-depth interviews in the study is mainly based on the fact that, this technique allowed the collection of data from even some juveniles who could have found it difficult to write. Again, a high degree of flexibility provided by this technique helped the researcher to collect dynamic and comprehensive without circumscription that might not have been the case with close-ended questionnaire that limit participants' view and focus more on quantity. It is worth noting however that, the researcher ensured the use of vernacular language (Shona) among the participants and this helped in mitigating linguistic barriers that might have impeded the whole data collection process.

More still, these in-depth interviews were applied to the key informants. Flick (2011) reveals that key informant interviews are part and parcel of in-depth interviews. As such, key informants are key subjects whose position in the context of qualitative study, exposes them to various spheres of work that later expose them to expertise or credible know-how about other people, processes or events than any other lay person in the community. Thus, the selected key informants were five (5) inclusive of the VFU representative (police), probation officer, diversion officer and a lawyer from JCT coupled with the magistrate. 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. However, emerging themes and questions during the interview process were closely converged within the subsets of the collected data.

Patton (2002:385) contends that a FGD is a form of an interview with a reasonable number of people (6-9) who cross-pollinate ideas over a phenomenon or problem. The researcher in this context, also used FGD to further triangulate and complement data. To ensure this, the

researcher took into cognisance Flick's (2011:192) caution that dominance by other participants should be prevented by the researcher through encouraging participants to be collectively involved; within which the researcher did. As such, through FGDs, the researcher managed to generate diversified discourse on PTD programme accessibility and the different experiences on juvenile justice issues. The researcher was also observing how interactions influenced other participants' views and ideas (Rubin and Babbie, 2011). This could not have been achieved by the use of solely, in-depth and key informant interviews. Thus, these participants as mentioned above, included the same participants that were part of the juvenile offenders to validate the obtained data and compare responses among the involved participants. The pre-designed FGDs in this context was used to guide the discussions and they lasted for 12 minutes. However, it should not be forgotten that, these interactions were guided by WHO covid-19 regulations.

As part of secondary data, document review was used by the researcher to obtain relevant information that provides insights into the phenomenon under study. As recommended by Bryman and Bell (2015), the researcher used reports, books and journals; including e-materials on various websites such as that of JCT, JCS and UNICEF among others. These secondary e-sources were of great importance in providing partial some information to the study's aim and objectives. Given this covid-19 issue, this method was also thought to be in tandem with the WHO covid-19 regulations that partly restrict physical visitation to agencies and places. This data collection tool also helped the researcher to serve time and unnecessary travelling costs to some of these agencies.

Data analysis entails the organisation of data into specific criteria and reduce it to a more manageable form. In the context of qualitative study, data analysis is therefore, a process of reducing huge chunk of data into smaller fragments and thus, it seeks to make sense out of the participants' views and opinions of situations, corresponding patterns,

themes, categories and regular similarities (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 128). 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 suited the qualitative nature of the study. Another reason is that the study had embraced no pre-determined ideas or theories; and as such, it emphasises the significance of liberalizing the process of data analysis to allow themes to emerge as opposed to railroading preconceived themes (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). To this end, this data analysis process followed several stages.

The first stage during data analysis was familiarization with the data and at this stage, the researcher began to convert (from Shona to English) the recorded audios into texts (transcription). The researcher began to notice the general yet major themes popping out and these 'key theme-factors' were socio-economic, politico-legal, religio-cultural and physical factors. The researcher further went on to search for patterns and subthemes and these subthemes were assigned to codes according to the emerging elements the researcher found. This process according to Flick (2011) is data mapping and interpretation. Just after, these subthemes were subdivided and these were subdivisions of major themes that specifically focused on aspects that were relevant to the study. The researcher further reviewed potential subthemes and all the identified and categorized themes were then checked to determine if they fitted the data and to see whether the themes did exist in the data. Again, this was done to check whether there were any themes missing and finally, to dictate whether some themes could be removed. At last, themes were labelled and finalized and the researcher tried to align the themes with the study's research questions and/or objectives as recommended by Creswell (2014). For consistent flow of these themes and meaning, data were presented on the basis of this criteria. Thus, this enabled the researcher to come up with themes and sub themes that

represented the views of participants on key factors affecting access to diversion services. The table below summarises some of the issues highlighted by research subjects and more detail of these themes will be presented in chapter 4.

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes representing the views of participants

Major Theme(s)	Subtheme(s)	Issue(s) Raised
Socio-economic barriers	Limited diversion options and poor referral system	~ options available are not comprehensive enough and referral is not taken seriously
	Resource constraints and shortage of skilled labour	~ financial, material and human resources are very scarce that later affect implementation
	Lack of support and involvement of parents or guardians	~ parents and/or guardians often times, fail to avail themselves when needed during diversion processes
	Lack of knowledge about PTD and children's needs	~ there is lack of general awareness among children, parents and some professionals on children needs and the PTD programme
	COVID-19 restrictions and Regulations	~ lockdown measures affected travelling and many diversion arrangements
	Unavailability of identity validation documents	~ many children failed to avail birth certificates and IDs needed for other diversion processes
Politico-legal barriers	Lack of political will and the absence of the Child Justice Act	~ Approval (that took years) and enactment of the Child Justice Bill among other key bills due to lack of political will has been seriously delayed
Religio-cultural barriers	Beliefs, norms and perceptions about children and juvenile delinquency causation	~ Cultural values and religious belief systems have caused many juveniles to opt for other means outside the programme.
Physical barriers	Poor infrastructure	

Owing to the sensitive nature of child-related issues and concerns, a need for rigorous ethical consideration was closely upheld by the researcher. Ethics in relation to social work research to this end, entails the appropriateness of a researcher's behaviour in relation to the stipulated rights of the research subjects or those who are directly or indirectly affected by it (Sanders *et al.*, 2012). In this context, the researcher designed the study in an ethically sound and methodologically noble manner such that participants' rights, needs, preferences, desires and values were fully respected (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the ethics that were observed by the researcher as proposed by many scholars in social research are discussed hereunder.

The researcher initially sought permission from the responsible authority that would influence the study process and, in this context, Justice for Children that was in charge of these juvenile offenders. Finally, the researcher was granted permission. However, since the parents and/or guardians (primary group of influence) of these juveniles were present, upon arrival, the researcher took the opportunity to brief them about the study purpose and objectives as he also sought their permission as advised by the JCT regardless of its secondary control (in the context of juvenile justice establishment) over these juveniles. Creswell (2014) supports 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 sought consent from participants to ensure voluntary participation among these participants. This was ethically necessary as confirmed by Rubin and Babbie (2011) who 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 parents and/or guardian of these juveniles' again, were made to sign these consent forms.

The researcher endeavoured to ensure the protection of the participants' personal identities and this according to Rubin and Bubbies (2011) suggests the desirable concern and professional responsibility in safeguarding their interests and well-being. Thus, the researcher ensured their right to privacy and power to decide as to what, who, when, how and where their information would be revealed. This was achieved through the adoption of anonymity by ensuring the exclusion of the participants' identifiers including names among others. Again, since the study directly converged both service users and providers, privacy and confidentiality became significant as the study was highly sensitive. As such, the researcher firmly guaranteed the participants that their identity would be concealed while their information would be shared and used solely for academic purposes. From this given position, it has become clear that privacy denoted the elements of personal lives while confidentiality implies 'how' the information should be handled. Therefore, on data analysis, only the position 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 researcher ensured safety of all the participants from any potential harm that might have been imposed by the study. This ethical principle is also termed 'protection from harm' (Flick, 2010) and as purported Saunders *et al.* (2012), this automatically becomes a keystone for sensitively child-related social researches. Safety of participants was therefore ensured through firm observation of covid-19 regulations: social distancing, masking and sanitization of all clients. Thus, measures were taken to ensure all participants were safe from any physical, emotional, psychological and social harm. These measures include the provision of adequate counselling among those who might have

reported or indicated any form of aversive experiences as a result of being involved in the study.

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.

Since feasibility is one of the considerably defining factor for any study to be carried, the researcher took it into cognisance. Rubin and Babbie (2011:141) accentuate that the scope, time required, costs, ethical considerations and the cooperation it requires are the common issues that determine the feasibility of any study. As such, the study was conducted in St Marys, Chitungwiza District that was within the reach of the researcher; hence data collection became easier in terms of transport costs among other expenses. Again, the availability of juvenile offenders and key stakeholders in juvenile justice processes and concerns made the study's key aim and objectives attainable without much difficulties. Most important 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 encountered many challenges during the study. The first challenge was a delayed research approval from the Department of Social Development due to COVID-19 related fears and set restrictions by the government. However, to maintain progress, the researcher took advantage of Justice for Children Trust-initiated stakeholders' meetings to access the primary target population among other key participants in Chitungwiza District. Another challenge was the unavailability of some of the key informants (magistrate in particular) due to tight schedules at the offices. Nonetheless, the researcher later opted for a phone interview that fortunately succeeded. Another challenge was restricted time that had been allocated by the department to carry the study, but still, the researcher dealt with this challenge through the use of a reasonably

small size of participants and also by choosing a closer study location. Again, due to the sensitivity of the study topic, rigorous ethical concerns evolved and as a solution, the researcher had to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) and make use of these juveniles' consent, their parents' or guardians' consent coupled with permission from JCT (that was in legal charge of these children) among other ethical considerations such as confidentiality and safety from any form from harm.

The chapter has provided the methodological processes and procedures that informed and guided the study. These methodological concepts include research approach, research design, sampling method, and data collection procedures and data analysis technique. The ethical considerations underpinning the study coupled with its limitations have also been provided. More importantly, the justification for the adoption of the above given methodology has been clearly provided in the context of the study's aim and objectives. The next chapter therefore, will present and analyse the data collected from the field.