



FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**RESEARCH TOPIC**

**AN EXPLORATION OF COPING STRATEGIES OF STREET VENDORS IN A  
HYPERINFLATIONARY ENVIRONMENT OF 2018-2019: A CASE OF MVUMA**

**BY  
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.....

Mavis Dube

Date .....

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my four sons; Ashton, Ashford, Ashlon and Ashbold whom I deprived of their much-needed motherly attention due to this academic commitment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The strength to successful stories and to manoeuvre lies in the hands of the Almighty God. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. J. A. Dzimbahete whose assistance, encouragement, support, and supervision was exceptionally rendered.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

FAO	Food Agriculture Organization
RSACA	Revolving Saving and Credit Association
MFI	Micro Financial Institutions
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programs
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
CBD	Central Business District
LDV	Low Density Village
HVD	High Density Village
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

## ABSTRACT

*The thesis explored the coping strategies of street vendors in a hyperinflation of 2018-2019 in Mvuma town. It explored the coping strategies adopted by street vendors in reducing the impact of hyperinflation to their livelihood. To find coping strategies of street vendors, the research identified the vending activities in Mvuma, the challenges faced by street vendors and strategies they apply to overcome them. Structuration theory was used to enhance the theoretical understanding of critical issues under investigation. Qualitative research method was deployed in this study, interviews were used to collect data. This study unearths the coping strategies used by street vendors to sustain their livelihoods in Mvuma. The research proposes an in-depth understanding of street vendors' operational environment. It establishes that street vending has played an important role in employing many urbanites in Zimbabwe against the high unemployment rates in the country at large. Therefore, there is need for improving infrastructure for street vending as well as facilitating credit facilities to street vendors*



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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The deepening economic conundrum, coupled with increasing cases of poverty and unemployment, has necessitated the uptake of street vending in Africa as a survival option (Marapira, 2013). Street vending serves as a means of earning a living for urban residents, and lately, rural residents, especially in developing countries. In times of hyperinflation, like what is currently prevailing in Zimbabwe, frequency of price changes put vendors in a much weaker position to adjust prices. Vendors are unable to pass high prices on to consumers because of intense competition among themselves. This is coupled by customers' expectations to negotiate for lower prices when they buy goods in the streets. Street vendors are also subject to trading losses and being pushed out of business. The unpredictable business environment and their unstable earnings and expenditure cycle undermines their ability to accumulate assets over time. The local currency, which is the RTGS dollar may be a questionable investment during inflation, as its value decreases due to its diminishing buying power as commodity prices go up. Given this background, this study seeks to explore the coping strategies used by street vendors to sustain their enterprises in Mvuma, a town in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

The economic meltdown has thrown citizens into cycles of outright poverty and socio-economic deterioration prompting scores of urbanites to turn to street vending as a coping strategy (Marapira, 2013). Street vending is understood as an 'illegal' working entity, characterised by roadside or sidewalk location, with self-made stalls or tents, mobile carts, or open-air display of merchandises (Muiruri, 2010). Despite the high rate of inflation in Zimbabwe many people are venturing into street vending. The increases in commodity prices at an alarming rate affect the informal sector in a negative way. Price increases on the supply side (wholesalers) consequently lead to an increase in the prices of commodities to be sold on streets markets. In the case of Mvuma, most street vendors get their products from South Africa, a situation which culminates into an increase in the demand for the Rand. The continuing loss of value of the local currency (RTGS dollar) against the South African Rand may push many street vendors out of business. Hence, the need for vendors to be innovative is inevitable, if they wish to stay in business.

Street vending has a central role to play in the socio-economic development of Zimbabwe in so far as self-employment and the minimisation of social problems associated with unemployment is concerned. It has been acknowledged that street vendors and other actors in the informal sector in general, are crucial to the development of the economy. Using the case study of Mvuma, the research explored survival strategies used in street vending in a bid to comprehend the various challenges faced by street vendors in their activities and ways used to overcome these challenges as well as the mechanisms used to govern street vending.

There is no single industry in the town of Mvuma since the main economic activity was gold mining. The mine was closed about more than two decades ago. Most residents of this small town have turned to vending since there are very few job opportunities in the formal sector, both at the local and national level. Understanding that most wares that vendors handle are procured from South Africa, a process which involves securing foreign currency (usually at the parallel market) provided the impetus to explore this topic and understand the nuances of street trading in such a hyperinflationary environment. Secondly, the shortage of notes and coins in circulation, leading to the prominence of ecocash use (a mobile money transfer facility), coupled with prices which are unpredictably changing in an upward direction added to the complexity of street vending and the need to explore the strategies used by vendors in Mvuma to sustain their businesses.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Street vendors engage in a variety of activities which range from producing or transforming goods at home and selling them in the streets, sourcing from wholesalers and selling at diverse locations, to providing a range of services including dressmaking, masonry, hairdressing, knife sharpening, carpentry, car guarding, computer repairs, accounting, shoe and watch repair etc. Rising prices and a sluggish demand for these commodities restrict the working capital available to many vendors, limiting the amount of stock that can be purchased and increasing the need for vendors to borrow from informal moneylenders. Much of the researches on street vendors have focused on large towns and cities leaving behind small towns and growth points yet street vending is also practiced in these areas. The hyperinflationary environment of 2018-2019 is affecting street vendors negatively due to the ever-escalating prices of goods and the devaluation of bond note in Zimbabwe. This research seeks to establish the coping strategies of street vendors in a hyperinflationary environment using Mvuma town which is a small town

in Zimbabwe as a case study. While Zimbabwe has previously experienced episodes of inflation, each new episode has its own dynamics. Given the current conditions of hyperinflation, little is known about the various strategies that vendors use to sustain their businesses.

### **1.3 Justification of the study**

The research showed how hyperinflation has affected street vendors' operations and how vending activities have been changed in a bid to cope with inflation. Street vendors' experiences obtained in this research study added to scholarly researches and may help policy makers to develop relevant economic and political policies.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

- i. To identify types of vending activities in Mvuma town.
- ii. To examine the challenges encountered by street vendors.
- iii. To explore the coping strategies adopted by vendors in Mvuma.

### **1.5 Research questions**

- i. What are the types of vending activities in Mvuma?
- ii. What are the challenges faced by vendors in Mvuma?
- iii. What are the coping strategies adopted by vendors in Mvuma?

### **1.6 Study setting**

According to the Central Statistics Office (2013), Mvuma town is located at the centre of Chirumanzu Constituency, about 80 km from Gweru, the capital city of Midlands Province. The town comprises a now defunct mine, and two residential areas, the Low-Density Village (LDV) and the High-Density Village (HDV) well known as locations. The population of Mvuma is estimated at 7 000 with two main food outlets, Chicken Inn and Chicken Slice which employ a few people from the town and surrounding areas. There are a few government offices for such ministries as Lands and Resettlement, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Public Works, National Registry, and Primary and Secondary Education. The social infrastructure in Mvuma includes a police station, a general (district) hospital and a Grain Marketing Board depot. The micro economy is largely reliant on subsistence farming and the informal sector (vending). Mvuma is a ghost mining town which is currently relying on peasant farming as the main source of livelihood. Peasant farming is practised in the surrounding areas mostly by

resettled Black farmers. Mvuma town was affected by the closure of Athens Gold Mine, which was the former employer of most residents. The closure of Athens Mine left many residents in a jobless status which pushed them into vending activities.

### **1.7 Contextual definitions**

**Street vendor:** A street vendor is a person who offers goods or services for sale to the public without having a permanently built structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head-load). Street vendors could be stationary and occupy space on the pavements or other public/private areas, or they could be mobile, and move from place to place carrying their wares on push carts, ride bi (or tri) cycles or carry baskets on their heads or could sell their wares in moving buses (National Policy on Urban Street Vendors 2004).

**Hyperinflation:** Hyperinflation is the general increase in the prices of goods and services exceeding 50 per cent per month into an annual inflation rate of 12.85 per cent compounded (Cagan 2005).

**Coping strategies:** Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events (MacArthur 2008).

### **1.8 Methodology**

#### **Data collection method**

This study used a qualitative approach, located within the interpretivist paradigm. The participants were purposively selected from a wide range of street vendors so as to obtain an in-depth understanding of the coping strategies used by street vendors in a hyperinflationary environment. In-depth interviews were used to elicit participants' views regarding working in an environment of hyperinflation is an interview schedule, which is a set of questions generated and moderated before the interview is conducted. The interview schedule was developed after a thorough literature search to identify gaps in the available body of knowledge. The interviews were audio-recorded to accurately capture participants' contributions to the topic and these are later transcribed to word format for analysis. Field notes were taken to supplement audio recordings. The interviews were guided by the principle of data saturation.

## **1.9 Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of five chapters which are as follows:

### **Chapter One: Introduction to the study**

The chapter introduces the study. It briefly provides the background information of the study. This introductory chapter is essentially a road map as it directs and informs the reader about what to expect in this write up. It also contains the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, contextual definitions, data collection methods and the structure of the dissertation.

### **Chapter Two: Review of literature and conceptual framework**

This chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the study. The literature focuses on general studies on street vending in Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. The structuration theory by Giddens (1984) was used to shed more light on street vending. The theory helped as a framework within which to understand the arguments by the participants vis-à-vis the different scholars who write about this topic.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the research approach that was used to carry out this study. It describes the qualitative research design that was adopted in this study. The research strategy and methods that the researcher chooses are inherently reflective of the research philosophy of the researcher, which is qualitative method, and importantly, this ought to be clearly articulated for the benefit of the reader (Saunders et al. 2009). In this regard, the chapter presents the research approach and paradigm, the study setting, entry into the field, selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations that informed the study. Finally, it presents the limitations to the study and how these were mitigated.

## **Chapter Four: Presentation of findings and discussion**

This chapter focuses on the findings generated through in-depth interviews. These are the responses from street vendors and adequately nuanced to give the reader a clear picture of the context within which data was collected. This chapter also discusses the various coping strategies used by street vendors to fight the negative impact (s) of hyperinflation on their businesses. The insight provided by protection motivation theory in chapter two was utilised as a conceptual framework for the analysis of coping strategies used by street vendors.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter concludes the study which seeks to explore the coping strategies of street vendors in a hyper inflationary environment in Mvuma town. The researcher drew a conclusion and provided recommendations on how to mitigate the challenges facing street vendors and how to make this sector beneficial to the mainstream economy.



## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to present the views of other writers concerning street vending. It helps to find out ways of relating the research to similar researches that have been done by others elsewhere. In this study, the terms vending, and street trading are used interchangeably.

### **2.1 Unpacking street vending**

Rover (2014) describes street vending as the selling of commodities on the streets. She also notes that street vendors operate their businesses on open space, temporary shelter, on trucks while others move around carrying and advertising their wares. Brown (2016) views street vendor as someone who sells food, goods and other merchandise on the street or in an open-air market rather than in a traditional store. Orleans (2019) asserts that street vendors' store shuts down daily at night or it exists as a cart that can be moved from one location to the other, and it is either taken home at the end of the day or locked at some designated space. Globally, street vendors constitute an integral component of the urban economy. They supply virtually every commodity ranging from fresh vegetables to prepared food items, building materials, garments, crafts and auto repairs.

Tissington (2009) refers to street trading as a livelihood strategy often adopted as a survivalist tactic in a climate of growing unemployment and increasing poverty. Street vending offers a viable livelihood though earnings are low, coupled with high risk for many vendors. According to Crossa (2009), in Mexico City, it is reported that a special alliance exists between street vendors and shop owners, where street vendors sometimes sell products on the street on behalf of shop owners. Donovan (2008) argues that urban authorities' perceptions of vendors and their attitude to street vending in general changes during different economic periods. In Bangkok (Thailand), for instance, the financial and economic recession of 1997 compelled people to embark on street food (SF) trading. Thus, SF became a source of income and essentially a form of employment. The central and municipal governments in Bangkok went to the extent of encouraging citizens to take up SF vending as an alternative source of income during this financial crisis (Harper 1996; Donovan 2008). Similarly, during economic difficulties in the

1990s, the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur reduced regulations on vendor licenses and set aside more areas for street vending.

Tshuma and Jari (2013) note that street vending is an attractive economic strategy and source of livelihood for the unskilled and illiterate new arrivals in urban areas. Charms (2000) asserts that street trading is estimated to account for the largest share of urban jobs in Africa. According to Skinner (2009), available statistics indicate that street vending accounts for 15 to 25 per cent of total informal employment in Africa's cities, contributing between 46 and 70 per cent of total trade value added in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Mali, and Tunisia. An important factor responsible for the increase in the numbers of street traders in Africa is the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s. The cocktail of privatisation, restructuring of the public sector and opening of African economies to foreign commodities culminated into the marked shrinking of the formal economy in Africa (Skinner 2008).

Street trade is an important component of the informal sector. Anjaira (2006) notes that the visibility of street activities tends to lead to overshadow the other segments of the informal sector such as manufacturing. Street vending in Africa is unaccounted for and unrecognised in most national economic statistics. In the past, street trade has been regarded as an underground activity that undermines the healthy function of the formal economy. This perception has resulted in conflicts with urban authorities over licensing, taxation, site of operation, sanitation and working conditions. Mitullah (2003) asserts that, mainstream economists lack an understanding of street vending, and hence its lack of coverage in economic measurement in all African cities. Even the local authorities who collect substantial revenue from the sector do not maintain records on street vending. The negligence of the street vending activities has resulted in the lack of accurate estimates of the numbers of street traders in Africa.

Murta (2011) cites instances where newspapers argue in favour of city authorities and present a negative image of street vendors to readers. The author indicates how words such as riots, fear, criminality, violence, and organized crime have been used to represent vendors. Due to these negative perceptions, street vending in general has become a phenomenon associated with poor levels of city or urban development and modernization. Anjaria (2006) posits that in African cities like Kumasi in Ghana, city authorities perceive street vendors as sources of

congestion and poor environmental sanitation, and their structures are accused of negatively affecting the aesthetic quality of the urban settlements.

Forkour (2017) argues that vending activities are perceived as attracting those who have limited opportunities for obtaining formal employment and/or prestigious business and minimises chances of social exclusion and marginalisation, street vending is increasingly becoming an option for many African citizens. Several entrepreneurs have entered the trade as an option, especially since the beginning of the SAPs that resulted in the retrenchment of civil servants across Africa. Anjaria (2006) cited the Ugandan case study showing the importance of the informal economy throughout Uganda's turbulent civil strife. The informal sector was nearly the largest employer in Uganda accounting for 13 per cent of the labour force as compared to 5.3 per cent in the formal sector in 2003. The growth of the sector is linked to the military regime of Idi Amin that resulted in economic dislocation and gross mismanagement of the economy. For example; Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians disrupted the country's economy. Instead of replacing the Asian entrepreneurs with a structure that would foster economic development, a bureaucratic structure that fostered vandalism of the abandoned Asian establishments was installed.

Bhowmik (2005) notes that although street vending is seen as an option for the poor, their legal and social status and business prospects differ from one country to another both in the domestic context and regional context. Furthermore, policies concerning the legality of street vending have various impacts on street vendors. In Zimbabwe for example, street vending has been regarded as illegal and street vendors have been harassed by municipal police and been punished heavily by means of paying fines. Although the above literature shows that women income can improve after engaging in street vending, it did not explain fully how it benefits women in terms of financial sustainability.

According to Manyahaire et al. (2007), men who find themselves without formal employment often resort to vending to ensure the economic survival of their families. This is eroding the historical predominance of women vendors. But women still predominate and engage in vending in the context of eroding wages of male breadwinners and the death of husbands from HIV/AIDS related diseases. In addition, street vending appeals more to women due to its flexibility, as women can merge street vending with domestic duties, including taking care of children. This is in line with Marxist feminist thinking which states that women are

overburdened by offering labour outside the home and caring out domestic duties at home. At times, due to the gendered dimension of vending.

Street vending is a growing business in many southern African countries. Brown and Rammidi (2014) argue that in Botswana, street vending and other forms of informal sector development activities are being encouraged to promote self-reliance. Miruiri (2010) adds that street vending argue that street vending should be legitimised and encouraged as a strategy to boost socio-economic development and transformation in communities where poverty and unemployment are rife, and where a need exists to promote social justice in terms of gender and other variables. Forecasts of street vending activities project growth in the market segment served by street vendors in most African countries. Clearly, street trading is growing in its profile and significance, hence the need for the quality of the services delivered by street vendors to also improve.

Street vending is a service linked to socio-economic goals. Murta (2011) argues that globally, street vendors provide easy access to a variety of commodities in the public spaces of cities around the world, which ranges from fresh fruits and vegetables to building materials, garments and crafts to consumer electronics, prepared food to auto parts and repairs. Vending activities generate demand for formal and informal suppliers, create jobs for porters, guards, and transport operators, and generate revenue for local governments. Rover (2014) notes that women constitute most of both registered and unregistered street vendors because they are disproportionately affected by unemployment when compared to their male counterparts. However, men work as street traders in certain sectors for example, wholesale of agricultural goods and retail of high value and expensive items such as stereos and LCDs and parts for auto and home repair. They are also involved in the sale of bricks, river sand, pit sand and firewood and provide car wash services and being baggage carriers.

Bromley and Mackie (2009) posit that street traders tend to operate in central locations in cities, near public transport links as these ensure constant human traffic in the form of commuters and other pedestrians. Tissington (2009) argues that street traders do not have enough legal trading spaces allocated to them, this means that some street vendors do not have access to legal trading spaces and resort to trading in areas that have not been designated for this activity. Street vendors that work in illegal spaces risk being chased away by municipal authorities.

Destombes (2010) posits that commodities supplied by street vendors are mostly produced by cheap material and accessed by poor and lower middle-class society, due to their affordability. Handoko (2011) identified the major factors that encourage the poor to work as street vendors. These include: (1) limited urban economic resources accessible to the poor, such as property, capital, and information; (2) the difficulty of entering the formal sector that requires certain conditions that the poor cannot meet; (3) the opportunity to enter the informal sector, particularly as street vendors is widely open due to the unlimited demand and supply of labour. Thus, street vending in sub-Saharan Africa is used as a way of mitigating poverty and high rates of unemployment.

In post-colonial Africa, most governments are against informal trading, a stance they arguably inherited from their former colonisers. This has played a major role in street vending failing to gain enough legal support from African states and city authorities. For instance, Crossa (2009) points out those street vendors in southern Africa are often portrayed as offensive and illegitimate invaders, who inhibit the ability of cities to modernise and achieve a global status. Street vendors are perceived as a sign of chaos and disorder; and a failure of metropolitan authorities to instil order within the cities. City authorities and regulators have often perceived and portrayed street vending as negatively affecting the attractiveness and beauty of their cities. Forkuor, Akuoko and Yeboah (2017) further explain that in Windhoek, Namibia, street vendors are offensive, inconvenient, and illegitimate traders which is a symbol of metropolitan space gone out of control. The media is often accused of playing a crucial role in shaping the public's negative perceptions of street vendors.

Lyons and Msoka (2009) argue that in Tanzania street vending business is an engine of pro-poor development and a means of participation by the poor in an increasing commercial economy. A study carried out in Tanzania shows that Tanzania Local by-laws in the 1960s and 1970s made petty trading illegal, but the 1980s economic crisis and the introduction of the Nguvu Kazi license gave traders some legitimacy. However, the Business Licensing Act (2003), simplified license categories, and abolished the peddling licence, cancelling the Nguvu Kazi licence and effectively making street-trade illegal. The findings of the study suggest that the current legal and business reforms in Tanzania failed to address fully the needs of micro business (street vending in particular) hence continue to stigmatize it.

Donovan (2008) argues that despite being potential for the employment, income generation, and distribution of relative priced goods, street vending businesses do not contribute significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction due to many constraints impeding it. Studies show that, a street vendor earns more than 1 USD per day, however they could earn more than that amount. Bhomick (2003) adds that in many developing countries street vending is often looked down as an undesirable activity undertaken by criminals which impinges on the use of public space. Furthermore, it is often persecuted, lives in uncertainty, and works in poor conditions, with little access to infrastructure. Being a part of the marginalized urban poor, street vendors are treated as troublemakers whose sole purpose is to create chaos on the streets. The public criticizes the existence of street vendors because they cause congestions and jams on the road.

Chen and Skinner (2014) argue that despite the various positive effects of street vending for urban residents, the industry phenomena are not gaining enough support, and often, in some instances it is even repressed by the local authorities and urban planners. Yatimo (2008) notes that street vending is portrayed as a cause of congestion, theft, dirty-ness and urban waste which causes disorder in urban areas. It is against this background that evictions and relocations of street vendors in most southern African cities were implemented. Jongh (2015) notes that the government of Malawi forcibly removed the vendors from the streets into newly constructed flea-markets using both the police and the army. This led many vendors to indeed occupy the newly constructed market spaces or to return to the rural areas to pursue subsistence farming. These forced relocations and the increased pressure of the authorities on the vendors, thereby not allowing them to vend outside the designated market spaces, led to a variety of tensions between the vendors and the city authorities. For instance, in Lilongwe, soon after the forced relocations, vendors started to abandon their market spaces due to lack of profits emanating from the inaccessibility of these designated spaces by most customers.

As a response to the pressure, which is given to city authorities by street vendors, designated areas were developed where vending must take place. According to Jongh (2015), street vending is supposed to take place in designated areas in each city. However, people who want to vend outside designated places of the market would need to obtain a licence which is controlled by the city councils in cities. Street vendors either obtain a licence, so that their activities are legalized, or they are temporarily allowed and thereby labelled as semi-legal. Being a legal vendor entails paying a fee to the city council to be allowed to conduct a business

from the streets. By constructing flea markets in both Blantyre and Lilongwe, city councils justified removing second-hand clothes and vegetable sellers from the streets as they should occupy a space inside these markets.

Onyango et al. (2012) assert that street vending is the sub-sector of informal businesses that operate in urban spaces meant for other uses. The locations that street vendors took up are usually influenced by attractiveness, accessibility, number of customers, competitors, allocation by municipalities and the original site where vendor businesses started. A study by Ndhlovu (2010) in Zambia has established that, for street vendors accessibility to customers is a key consideration and they are strategically located on the streets to avoid formalization costs such as rent, taxes and licenses. Hence the potential sites for street vending business are the places with highest levels of pedestrian and vehicular congestion. As a result, street vendors have been criticized because they can cause traffic accidents, increase levels of vehicle volumes in town, cause air pollution, impede the movement of police, and, ambulances, can cause crowded sidewalk, and block pathways.

Mramba (2015) notes that Tanzania and Zambia have taken some initiatives to assist street vendors in terms of business locations. He purports that “Machinga” complex is a 7-storey building built by the government of Tanzania to accommodate 10 000 street vendors in the Dar es Salaam city. Unfortunately, vendors refuse to use the building because the location of the building is not accessible to customers, rent is high, and the want to avoid paying taxes. Instead, they prefer the open-air roadside stall lined along major arteries such as Uhuru and Msimbazi Streets. Ndhlovu (2010) adds that the same scenario happened in Lusaka Zambia, where in 2009 the Zambian government completed the construction of Soweto Market and allotted the vendors with stores. However, the allotted vendors did not occupy them, instead they continued vending on the street. The reason for rejection was, high rent rates ranging from 12.6 USD to 6290.5 USD per month depending on the size.

Mramba (2015) argues that street vending business like any other informal business is important to the livelihood of many less educated people. It acts as a substitute of employment for those who lacked such opportunity in formal sector due to low level of education or lack of enough capital. However, the street vendors face many challenges due to the absence of supportive laws, regulations, and poor policies of the government; therefore, their contribution to the income poverty reduction is minimal. In order to strengthen the role of street vending

business in income poverty reduction the governments should develop supportive policies, laws, and regulations that address the informality and illegality of street vending business. This supports the romantic view of informal economy that, street vending industry is the same as other forms of formal business which is lacking constructive interventions. According to this view informal firms are actually or potentially extremely productive but held back by government taxes and regulations as well as by the lack of safe property rights and access to finance. If such barriers were lowered, street vending activities would register and take advantage of the benefits of their formal status.

Gcumeni and Reeler (2015) view street vending as an important form of employment to a substantial number of the urban and migrant population. According to Sinthumele and Mkumbuzi (2019), the rate of unemployment in Zimbabwe is pegged at 95 per cent. Civil society organisations estimated that street vendors account for two-thirds of the population in the major cities. Street vending also indirectly sustains the jobs of other employees who work in the formal sector for example in industries that produce the commodities that are sold by the street vendors. As such it is not only the livelihood of vendors which relies on street vending but also those of the farmer, small scale producers and other home-based industries lacking the resources to market their own product.

In addition to employment creation, Flaming et al. (2015) note that the activities of street vendors have a cascading effect across the local economy. This is shown when street vendors sell their products to passers-by, as their profits accumulate, it leads to higher demand for more goods and services from local suppliers. The end results are; increase of their stock levels and sales. Demand from suppliers in this chain enables the creation of more employment opportunities in the upstream supplier chain thereby broadening the tax revenue base for the state.

Furthermore, Flaming et al. (2015) state that street vendors offer a low-cost, decentralised and highly efficient system of distributing products that are required on a daily basis. These are goods such as fruits and vegetables, a market which the formal sector cannot adequately serve. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has also acknowledged the important role played by street vendors in promoting access to food at low prices (FAO 2016). According to Natawidjajaja et al. (2015), in Surakarta, the street vendors have also been a form of tourist attraction, thereby contributing to the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



Muiruri (2010) posits that street vendors' ability to improve their working environment rests on the ability to organize themselves just like other micro businesses. The street vendors' organizations/associations are supposed to enable vendors to defend their rights, secure access to the basic services, influence public policy, and increase their bargaining power. Chen (2001) notes that in Sub-Saharan Africa except South Africa, vending associations address largely welfare issues, with very few focusing on business issues affecting their operations such as services, site of operation, licensing, policy and advocacy. In South Africa, associations provide some business services for members, such as bulk purchase, storage, marketing, training, negotiation and advocacy. Other associations in African cities are weak and cannot effectively advocate for their right to trade, they happen to arise only when there is a need thereafter disappear. In Dar es Salaam, some group of vendors referred themselves as an association based on contributions they made per day/week/month however they don't have clear organizational goals, policy and regulations.

Skinner (2016) notes that street traders work in hostile environments without basic infrastructure and services, but full of harassment, including being beaten and confiscation of goods by urban authorities. They face both market and investment problems. Overcrowding, dwindling sales due to poor location and low purchasing power among customers are some of the market problems. Investment problems include lack of capital, secure site of operation, corruption, heavy taxation and confiscation of goods by urban authorities among others.

Mithula (2003) asserts that, street vendors have no access to formal finance, and largely rely on their own savings, and finances from friends and relatives. In cases where they have organised themselves into groups, they are able to pool their resources through Revolving Saving and Credit Associations (RSACA). The street vendors find these institutions easy to deal with as compared to the formal Micro Financial Institutions (MFIs) that have come on board to fill the gap left by formal financial institutions that require collateral. The MFI requirements and interests' rates have, over time approximated what the formal banking systems require, therefore pushing informal traders such as vendors away.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2002), the development of relevant skills and knowledge is a major instrument for improved productivity, better working conditions, and the promotion of decent work in the informal economy. Furthermore, the

possession of relevant business skill is important for a trader to perform core business activities like marketing research, sales, business strategy, bookkeeping, and general business management. However, Okubena (2014) asserts that street vendors in sub-Saharan Africa possesses a low level of skills hence there is a need to intervene with these aspects in order to make street vending business work efficiently to the income poverty reduction.

In support of the above, Machipisa (2014) notes that informal entrepreneurs in the city have limited access to loan facilities, limited training and lack of access to finance. Hence, most street vendors operate below capacity because they have no access to loans from financial institutions due to lack of collateral security. This concurs with the assertion of the renowned Zimbabwean economist John Robertson (2016) who stated that it is difficult for people in the informal sector to secure credit facilities because they do not have evidence to secure such services since their incomes are erratic and low with little production involved and they lack things like payslips and bank account statements as an indication to the lender that one can service their loans. Street vendors take-out loans from friends or relatives where interest rates are lower, and they also have traditional moneylenders who charge much higher interest rates and do not hesitate to use strong-arm tactics to ensure repayment. This is a major challenge in boosting the informal economy to be sustainable because cash inflows are often erratic.

Adhikhari (2011) argues that street vending is one of the key manifestations of urban poverty especially in developing countries like Nepal. Now it has become growing sector of small-scale economic activity due to lack of alternative source of income. Street vending is a simple way of income generation by investing small capital. Thus, poor people are interested in such activities. Most of the common goods such as local product, low cost jewellery, crafts, religious items, dolls, watches, socks, caps, toys, CDs, clothes, books, snacks, cooked foods, fruits, vegetables, radios etc. are available in the street. The reasoning for this phenomenon is that these individuals may be involved in street food vending as a temporary activity while they search for better employment opportunities and have no incentive to invest and expand their businesses.

Miruiriri (2010) discusses security as a major issue of concern for street traders, particularly women. In many cities, crime threatens traders' lives and goods, and their customers' lives and properties. This reduces income and generally interferes with successful trading. It is unfortunate that most urban authorities view street traders as criminals and do not effectively

respond to the insecurity facing them. Instead, street vendors are harassed whenever there is an increase in criminal activities around their areas of operation. In most cases women in both streets and markets lose their goods to thieves and con persons.

Rajagoal (2001) purports that globally, street vendors face a common set of challenges ranging from harassment from civic authorities, arbitrary relocations from vending sites to confiscation of their goods. Street vendors are perceived as a nuisance, a symbol of chaos and disorder, eviction is often intense, involving the use of evictions and relocations can be conceived as a demonstration of the power of cities and use of bulldozers, and justified as necessary to restore order and sanity back to city life. This is so because of the competing interests between street vendors and regulators. Street vending has come to depend largely on a constant negotiation among vendors, buyers, and regulators. Negotiations for public space and their outcome have important implications for the well-being of street vendors, because having a good space for vending is one of a variety of significant factors that affect the well-being of street vendors. The eviction of street vendors from busy city centres have power implications because the vacation of the streets by street vendors makes these profitable streets and city centres available to large scale and powerful formal businesses at the expense of small-scale vendors.

Watson (2003) argues that efforts to formalise street vending represents a potential solution for creating the proper urban environments thus making the vendors part of the urban planning regime. Such attempts are articulated by the authorities engaging in regulations to control the number of sellers, through issuing quotas of permits for example, or by spatially controlling them, through designating certain areas specifically for vending. The formation of associations among street vendors potentially supported them to become (temporarily) accepted in the urban environment. Being organized helps vendors to negotiate with the authorities and it also facilitates the city council to control them.

Njaya (2014) notes that street vending activities are not peculiar to the recent era in Zimbabwe urban space but are rather traceable through various epochs of the nation's history. Scholarly evidence indicates that the hype of street vending dates to economic policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of the mid-90s, the Land Reform Programme of 2000 and Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act of 2007. In Zimbabwe, Economic Structural Adjustment Programme sounded the death knell of state subsidies, free healthcare as well as free basic education. Kanyenze et al. (2003) point out that

the failure of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme to shift the economy onto a superior and sustainable growth path, and especially its underperformance in terms of economic development and employment creation left a legacy of poverty and marginalization in urban areas.

Marapira (2010) asserts that the economic Structural Adjustment Policy also boosted an imperfect record due to its emphasis on reduction of wage bill leading to retrenchments which had a direct consequence to the exponential growth of the informal sector as it forced thousands of the working class into street vending. Musoni (2010) adds that the expansion of informality was catalysed by job losses in the shrinking formal economy as retrenched were forced to engage with the informal economy.

On the other hand, Njaya (2014) argues that the removal of white settlers from their farms through the 'Fast Track Land Reform Programme' (FTLRP) of 2000 affected agricultural activities and consequently impinged on industries that relied on agricultural raw materials, further exacerbating the plight of workers both in farms and factories). Matenga (2014) posits that urbanites' woes were further aggravated by the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policy adopted by the Zimbabwean government in 2007 which required foreign mining companies to cede 51 per cent of their shares to the government. The policy, which is still in existence, is highly unpopular because it scares away investors, hence fails to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which is the missing link in Zimbabwe's efforts to rejuvenate the economy and create formal employment. Musoni (2010) discovered that poverty levels intensified in urban areas and this facilitated the mushrooming of street vending in Zimbabwe.

Kanyenze et al. (2003) argue that, what this implies is that economic downturns are associated with the growth of street vending. Furthermore, Marapira (2013) posits that economic downfall pioneered the hyperinflationary environment which reached its zenith in 2008. Consequently, the nation endured notorious economic doldrums characterised by skyrocketing unemployment rates between 1998 and 2008, a period which has been referred to as 'the lost decade'. Street vending rampantly increased and has become the most employing sector in Zimbabwe. Njaya (2014) notes that street vending is the most targeted practice by the City officials due to congestion and environmental problems it poses in cities and this has unfortunately resulted in the harassment of street vendors by the City officials.

Despite being blamed for causing dirt, the sector is a panacea to poverty reduction in Zimbabwe like it is in other cities of the global South (Hart 2010). Huchzermeyer (2011) purports that most Central Business Districts (CBDs) in Zimbabwe are highly crowded by street vendors operating at street corners, shop verandas, pavements and open spaces in Central Business District. Njaya (2014) notes that street vending competes with formal shops hence creating tensions between the vendors and the city officials who regulate and enforce the by-laws. Dube (2012) further argues that the increase of vending activities contradicts with the city by-laws which repress and force them to operate in designated areas. However, Roggerson (2016) notes that due to the rapid increase in unemployment and the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, such problems left citizens without any choice but to invade the streets for survival. Street vending has become the most employing sector in Zimbabwe as it helps in income generation for the urban poor.

Njaya (2014) notes that despite the burgeoning of informal economic activities, it remained that street vending continued to be illegal in Harare and Zimbabwe. Vending is legal only in areas designated by the Council. It was estimated that in 2012, 98 per cent of street vendors in the city were operating illegally. Spatially trading could be observed in most public and private places including industrial and construction sites, hospitals, schools, sporting stadia, bus termini, church buildings, shopping and commercial centres, pavements, sidewalks alleyways, open spaces and along virtually every street of Harare's suburbs as well as the central business district (ibid).

## **2.2 Street vending and women empowerment**

Kambara and Mutharayappa (2018) argue that generally, women enter the informal economy mainly for earning their livelihood, not for making a career. Hence, it becomes obvious that it is not their conscious choice, rather the lack of opportunities and support has made them take to street vending. The occupational background of the vendors' natal and of their in-laws' including husband's family economic background also has a significant influence on women taking up vending activity as street vendors to sell various items by squatting. Women street vendors are hardworking, struggling to sustain their livelihood through street vending activities.

Otoo et al. (2009) analyzed women's Entrepreneurship in West Africa in the Cowpea Street Food Sector in Niger and Ghana. The study observed that women entrepreneurship in the

informal sector, such as street food vending is important for economic development and poverty alleviation in West Africa. The street food sector provides employment for women and it also provides inexpensive and nutritious food for the urban poor. The number of women street vendors seems to be increasing day-by-day as the city grows. Most of them are illiterates and belong to lower castes. They live in poor conditions but cater for vegetables, fruit and flower requirements of people at convenient places and time. They face many problems on the street but continue with their occupation as they have limited alternative options as their family's sustenance depends on their vending business. In order to accommodate them in the urban setting and to help them earn their living, some of the following policy recommendations can be considered.

Mithula (2003) notes that women dominate street vending activities across Africa. This is mostly a result of limited economic opportunities for women in both rural and urban areas, gender bias in education, coupled with the need to augment the husbands' income. Apart from that, street vending tends to have a special appeal to women due to its flexibility. Women can easily combine street vending with other household duties that include looking after children. Mithula (2003) cites Côte d'Ivoire as a case study where women participate in street vending as a way out of a predicament. Women have moved from being subsistence and commercial farmers to engaging in trade and informal employment. In most cases, they participate in vending activities when their husbands cannot sustain the family or to supplement the husband's income. In Kenya the formation of women's groups gives women some form of recognition and freedom in largely male dominated society (Murta 2011).

According to Thakur et al. (2017), women might begin by helping their husbands in vending and then take off on their own to contribute something extra to the family kitty. Trades such as vending, empower women who then see themselves as equally productive partners in their households- contributing to the family hearth and even gaining some decision-making powers within the family. Such an engagement either as partners to their fathers, husbands or brothers, gives them income, decision making power and respectability. But there is a flip side to this story as well. The women for whom home and family management comes by default, now must squeeze in much more hard work in the time available- eating into their leisure time.

WIEGO (2017) points out that women in the city of Delhi India have been suppressed for decades and vending as an occupation has given them some voice in family matters, thereby

empowering them. Street vending has increased women s' income, expenditure and savings pattern as well as highlighted the impact of their occupation on their social empowerment- specifically considering literacy, decision making ability and the like.

Murta (2011) notes that Family support is central to the operation of most street food enterprises, particularly where religious beliefs dictate the way women entrepreneurs conduct their business. The study concluded that women street food enterprises are important avenues for employment and income generation. Enterprise development strategies geared at poverty alleviation in West Africa should include proactive measures that alleviate market barriers specific to informal women entrepreneurship such as street food vending.

Acknowledging many scholarly researches on street vending, none was carried out in Mvuma town. More so, much of the available literature dwells more on tensions between street vendors and city authorities, survival strategies of vendors against unfair regulations in cities and urban areas. This research largely focuses on the coping strategies of street vendors in a hyperinflationary environment of 2018-2019 which is a period where prices are escalating at an abnormal rate.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

### **Structuration theory**

The study is grounded in Giddens' (1984) structuration theory which emphasises on the "structure -agency" dichotomy. This theory gives credence to human agency through social action and recognises that human beings are rational actors who pose the ingenuity to cope and adapt to a myriad of challenges they confront on daily basis. Basing on the structuration theory, it may be argued that street vendors confront structural constraints emanating from political and economic crisis but they demonstrate innovativeness and rationality.

What should be underscored is that those structural economic repressive arrangements not only constrained but also enabled various forms of human agency simultaneously. Thus, while acknowledging the livelihood constraints that emerged from hyperinflation crisis, it should be noted that street vendors' ingenuity and resilience opened spaces to produce new forms of human agency epitomised by emergent coping strategies. Street vendors are not merely

“structured structures” but are simultaneously “structuring structures” as seen by them remaining in business despite the harsh economic conditions. Giddens (1984) conceptualises structures as rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems they are a form of recurrent patterned arrangements, whose influence limits individual choices. Giddens (1984) suggests that there is a recursive relationship between structure (external forces such as rules, resources, and social systems/macro) and agency (capability to make a difference/micro). The importance of Giddens’ structuration theory is that both structures and agency are important and equal in their influence on the individual. He also makes the argument that agents produce structures while the structures reproduce and sustain themselves through actions of the agents. Forshaw and Sawchuk (2007) argue that Giddens’ structuration theory is intended to demonstrate the complex interrelations of human freedom (or agency) and determination (or structure) where individual choices are partially constrained, but they remain choices nonetheless. This implies that it is false to assume or to place more emphasis on only one of the factors.

Structuralist discourse fits well in the Zimbabwean context which experienced almost two decades of economic challenges characterised by high unemployment, retrenchment of workers and closure of industry. According to Chirisa and Muchini (2011), in Zimbabwe most people were forced into street vending as a result of the rising cost of living, high unemployment rate due to an unproductive industrial sector, the stagnant and underperforming economy, and a mostly unproductive farming sector. Consequently, the increase in the number of vendors is out of necessity as a survival strategy (Njaya 2015). However, for some people street vending is necessitated by an entrepreneurial choice than a survival strategy. Njaya (2014) argues that some of the vendors are entrepreneurs who employ up to five paid employees. Therefore, individuals with an entrepreneurial eye enter street vending based on a rational economic decision that may entail escaping over-regulation in the formal sector or by-passing the costs, time and effort of formal registration.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Urban street vending is not only a source of employment, but it provides affordable goods and services to most of the urban poor. The chapter focused on arguments and literature from different scholars in trying to understand origins, definitions, concepts, and forms of street vending. Moreover, challenges and coping strategies of street vending were discussed in the chapter. Challenges and coping strategies of street vending in Africa in general and Zimbabwe



in particular, were explored. Issues to do with livelihood sustainability, coping strategies were also discussed in the section depicting arguments from different scholars. The provision of the literature was an insight for the study relating and bringing out scholarly views and arguments provided on the topic of street vending. Literature review guides the research on issues which have been tackled by other scholars and identify the research gap. Following the literature review, the chapter presented and illustrated the conceptual framework linking the main points and views from the literature which are important to the research. However, the following chapter is going to discuss the research methodology which the researcher intended to apply on carrying out the research.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) assert that methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known. This relates to the description of the research design as well as the methods that are going to be used in selecting participants, in the collection and analysis of data. This chapter thus, describes the nature of this study as well as the data collection procedures that were used to elicit views on street vending in an environment of hyper-inflation in Mvuma town.

### 3.1 Research design

The study is going to adopt a qualitative research design. Creswell (2013) posits that qualitative research seeks to explore and gain an understanding of the importance that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem. Taylor et al. (2015) argue that unlike quantitative research which generates numerical data, qualitative research produces descriptive data – presenting participants' own written or spoken words as well as observable behaviours. As such, the qualitative approach is suitable for this study because it permits an understanding of perceptions informed by the experiences of selected members of the street vending industry.

To achieve the above, street vendors in Mvuma are going to be selected for interviews. Open-ended questions about participants' experiences and challenges encountered as well as the important strategies adopted to cope with an environment of hyperinflation among street vendors in Mvuma town are going to be posed to those selected. Street vendors were able to share their experiences regarding the challenges that they encounter in their vending businesses in Mvuma. The researcher was able to actively engage participants through the provisions of the qualitative research design. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) assert that qualitative research privileges the exploration of phenomena in its natural setting, often characterised by the interpretation of meanings in context. As such, the researcher used street vendors whose experiences are relevant to Mvuma town. Polkinghorne (2005) calls such participants, information rich, or encultured participants whose suitability is enhanced by personal experiences relevant to the study.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

This study was informed by an interpretivist paradigm. Wayhuni (2012) asserts that interpretivists believe that reality is constructed by social actors and people's perceptions of it. To understand the social world from the experiences and subjective meanings that people attach to it, interpretivist researchers' favour to interact and to have a dialogue with the studied participants. In this study on the coping strategies adopted by street vendors, the researcher is mainly interested in vendors' interpretations and constructions of the concept of coping strategies in the face of inflation. Essentially, according to Decon et al. (1995:10), "interpretive approaches concentrate on meanings people mobilise to make sense of their world". Interpretivism is closely related to constructivism. Furthermore, an interpretivist philosophical orientation is based on the belief that, "all knowledge is co-produced out of the multiple encounters, conversations and arguments that the researcher has with the people they are studying" (Decon et al. 1995:10).

The study participants were given the space to voice their own interpretations, perceptions, and opinions relevant to the challenges and coping strategies used by street vendors in a hyperinflationary environment of 2018-2019. The overall approach to the study's data collection was dialogic. According to the popular Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire (1970), being dialogic is not being dictatorial, but it is about being attentive to the participant's articulations in a discussion calibrated by mutual respect, and importantly, not imposing the researcher's privileged views. The dialogic process yielded deeper insights into the topic on the coping strategies of street vendors in a hyperinflationary environment of 2018-2019, while at the same time, providing the study participants with a discursive space where their voices could be heard.

### **3.3 Selection of participants**

This section describes how those who participated in the qualitative interviews were selected.

#### **3.3.1 Selection of participants**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the methodology was guided by an interpretivist approach. To collect qualitative data, the qualitative researcher should engage with people "who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002:104). In this study, possible participants are street vendors who operate their businesses in Mvuma town. The participants

were purposively selected street vendors. A large pool of possible participants is going to be established. I introduced myself as a researcher to many vendors in Mvuma prior to the interviews to increase opportunity for selecting few information-rich cases, since in qualitative research, detail and depth take precedence over numerical accuracy. The researcher interviewed eight street vendors who sell different commodities in Mvuma. The interviews included both male and female vendors for gender balance.

### **3.4 Data collection**

In this section, focus is on the data collection methods, data collection instruments, and a description of the data collection process.

#### **3.4.1 Data collection methods**

##### **Interviews**

Interviews were guided by an interview schedule with open-ended questions that were developed from the relevant literature. Open-ended questions were used because they allowed the researcher to source data in detail by remaining conversational and situational. Ulin et al. (2002) asserts that open-ended questions are advantageous in that the answers provide richer, more sensitive insights into the views and activities of participants. This is important in order to contrast themes, experiences and perceptions from different participants.

More so, open-ended questions also allow a two-way communication between the researcher and the participants, which also allows for the exploration of aspects relevant to the study in a focused manner. A digital audio recorder was used to capture the data during interviews. Permission to record voices was sought routinely from each participant prior to the beginning of the interview. Audio recording allowed the researcher to transcribe the interviews for purposes of data analysis.

The interview sessions were held at venues that were identified by the respondents within Mvuma. Prior to each interview, the nature and aims of the study were explained to each participant. The participants were then asked to volunteer participation. Shenton (2004) views obtaining informed consent as not only an ethical requirement but as something that also helps to ensure that those who participate are free to volunteer their knowledge, which enriches the data and ensures trustworthiness of the findings.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

The aim of the study was explained prior to each interview session. All the interviews were audio-recorded after the permission to use an audio recorder during each session was sought. The fact that high standards of privacy would apply with regards to the handling and storage of the recordings was emphasised. Furthermore, explanations from the researcher assisted participants to understand their rights and other ethical issues that guided the research as expressed in the informed consent.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter described the research design, paradigm that informed the study. The researcher provided a clear, logical and comprehensive description of how the data were collected. Finally, the researcher reflected on ethical considerations. The next chapter is the presentation and discussion of findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 4.0. Introduction

The chapter presents and discusses the findings obtained from the fieldwork. The presentation of findings is going to be discussed under three broad themes and these are: vending activities in Mvuma town, the challenges associated with street vending in Mvuma, and the coping strategies employed by vendors to overcome the challenges they face in street vending.

### 4.1 Vending activities in Mvuma

The findings of the research attest to the fact that there are many vending activities which are done in Mvuma. These include the selling of clothes on designated and undesignated areas. Some street vendors reported that they get their supplies from Harare and Musina in South Africa. They reportedly stock clothes of different types whilst others practise specialisation as indicated by one vendor, Mai Chimuti who had this to say:

*“Inini ndinotengesa maschool uniforms andinozvigadzirira ndega. Ndonohodha mucheka kuHarare ndosona ndega” (I am selling school uniforms which I make from the cloth material which I get from Harare).*

Mrs Tanga is a street vendor who resides in Mvuma and she sells second-hand clothes. She reported that she gets her supplies from Maputo in Mozambique but she indicated that sometimes she gets her supplies from Mutare. She specialises in selling second-hand clothes on the streets.

Some vendors reported that they sell furniture which includes wardrobes, beds, kitchen units and chairs. Those who specialise in the selling of furniture also get their wares from Harare and Musina. Some of them buy finished stock whilst others order planks and carve the furniture themselves. Mr Pfuti revealed that he buys finished wardrobes and kitchen units from industries in Waterfalls in Harare and resells them at a profit in Mvuma Town. Mr Tengadzose, another furniture dealer said:

*Ini ndinotenga mapuranga kuHarare ndogadzira ndega mabeds, wardrobes, kitchen units and chairs. Ndinogadzira machairs nemadesk ezvikoro zvakawanda. Vanondipa ma orders ndovagadzira. ” (I buy planks from Harare and make sleeping beds, kitchen units, chairs and I make chairs and desks for schools that place orders).*

Mr Tengadzose is a carpenter who manufactures furniture and sells it to the community around Mvuma. He sells it to both individuals and schools. In most cases, he makes furniture in accordance with the orders given to him by the customers.

The findings of the study reveal that some vendors sell beverage drinks like Pepsi, Miranda and Coca-Cola together with biscuits, maputi, snacks and roasted ground nuts. Apparently, these vendors specialise in street food vending. Mrs Mavhu confirmed that they get their supplies from delivery trucks except for maputi, which they reportedly obtained from a factory shop located 10 kilometres east of Mvuma.

Selling of vegetables and fruits vending are the most popular activity in Mvuma as the majority of vendors get vegetables, potatoes and fruits from nearby farms and plots. Some farmers utilise their trucks to transport farm produce which they sell in town. Some vendors walk around carrying basketfuls of vegetables and fruits whilst others stay at permanent places which are adjacent to the bus rank. They reported having been allocated to these places by the Municipality of Mvuma.

Mvuma Town is located along the Harare-Beitbridge highway, the busiest road which connects Zimbabwe and South Africa. Due to this advantage of proximity, some people engage in the business of buying and selling money, which has become a burgeoning money exchange business. They buy and sell South African Rand and United States Dollars to people travelling to and from South Africa.

As prices of commodities are constantly increasing, street vendors in Mvuma are now selling groceries such as cooking oil, soaps, washing powders and toiletries on the streets. They buy these commodities from South Africa and resell them on the streets at lower prices than the formal shops charge.

## 4.2 Challenges faced by street vendors in Mvuma town

The research unearthed many challenges encountered by vendors in their day to day activities in Mvuma Town. It was discovered from the research that inflation is the main challenge confronting street vendors in Mvuma. Dzirutwe (2017) posits that the annual inflation rate in Zimbabwe shot up following the dedollarisation of the Zimbabwean economy and the subsequent shortage of the United States Dollar, which then led to the collapse of the country's parallel bond note currency. This triggered sharp hikes in the prices of many goods and services.

Many businesses are demanding payment in the United States Dollars only while others raised prices of goods and services by more than three hundred per cent for those who pay using bond notes, mobile money or bank cards. High cost of inputs limits the amount of stock vendors could buy and reduces the profit margin on their sales because the vendors have limited leverage in terms of passing on the exorbitant prices to consumers. The continuous escalation of prices of commodities at both the retail and wholesale level is posing difficulties to the operations of the vendors. Most of the vendors who participated in the research reiterated their concern regarding the prices which are rising on a daily basis. This escalation of prices presents difficulties in terms of charging commodities to customers. Mrs Chimuti bemoaned the situation, saying that:

*“Prices of clothes are doubling every day so are transport costs to the extent that we are mostly operating at a loss because sometimes, after selling of our stock, we may fail to make new stock. Therefore, rampaging inflation is threatening our business.”*

The devaluation of the Zimbabwean Bond currency, the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) against the South African Rand and the United States Dollar (USD) poses a huge threat to vending activities in Mvuma. Some vendors sell products from South Africa, so they need the South African Rand for them to make orders. The main challenge is that they buy their wares in South African Rand only to resell them in the local currency, the Real Time Gross Settlement Bond Dollars. Therefore, vendors need to continuously update the prices of their commodities. Mr Pfuti was complaining, saying:



*“Our Zimbabwean RTGS Bond is now useless as it is falling everyday against the South African Rand. We need to buy the Rand in order to go and make new orders for our stock. It is difficult to charge customers in South African Rand because they do not have such money in their possession.”*

The study attests to the fact that street vendors in Mvuma suffer the brunt of cash shortages owing to the limited availability of hard cash in circulation in Zimbabwe. During the data collection process, plastic money was reported as the readily available transactional option in Mvuma as most transactions were processed through this monetary facility via the Point of Sale (POS) machines and mobile money platforms like Eco-cash, One- wallet and Tele-cash among others.

Nyoni and Garikai (2017) regard the cashless transactions obtaining in the Zimbabwean economy as a necessary evil for development, arguing that plastic money cannot be used outside Zimbabwe. However, the vendors in Mvuma perceived the use of plastic money as a huge challenge that impedes their operations, citing the view that they do not have Point of Sale machines; hence, they are at the receiving end of this deepening and seemingly unrelenting cash crisis persistently hitting the Southern African nation.

One vendor lamented that;

*“The cash crisis seriously affects us as street vendors because we do not have swiping machines. More so, plastic money cannot be used outside Zimbabwe. So the cash crisis is giving us problems.”*

Despite acknowledging that they have access to mobile money platforms, the vendors who participated in this study expressed distaste for such platforms, bemoaning the unavailability of cash for cash-out transactions. It was highlighted that most of the vendors smuggle goods from nearby countries like South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia; hence, they need hard cash to process their transactions since they cannot use plastic money beyond Zimbabwe’s frontiers.

More so, the participants lamented the existence of a four-tier pricing system used by local suppliers. The system involves charging different prices for transactions processed in plastic money, bond notes, South African Rand and United States Dollars, with plastic money being the most expensive mode of payment. Resultantly, this further aggravates the distaste for the uptake of the plastic money facility by vendors and farmers. Having said this, it becomes

apparent that the prevailing cash crisis, reaching alarming proportions as depicted by people spending nights in long and winding queues, is unambiguously inimical to the trajectory of informal vending which forms the bedrock of sustainable livelihoods in Mvuma Town.

Apart from the cash crises, street vendors reported that they do not have collateral security, which is also a major constraint impacting negatively on street vending not only in Mvuma, but in Zimbabwe as a whole. The challenges facing informal entrepreneurs in the city are limited access to loan facilities, limited training and lack of access to finance. Most of the street vendors are operating below capacity because they do not have access to loans from financial institutions since they do not have collateral security. This supports the assertion by the renowned Zimbabwean economist John Robertson (2016) who avers that it is difficult for people in the informal sector to secure credit facilities because they do not have the evidence to secure such services since their incomes are erratic and low with little production involved and they lack authentic things like payslips and bank account statements which act as indicators of financial eligibility to the lender.

Therefore, vendors can pay take-out loans from friends or relatives where interest rates are comparatively lower, and they also resort to traditional moneylenders who charge much higher interest rates, at the same time using ‘strong-arm’ tactics to ensure repayment of such loans. This is a major challenge that threatens to derail the informal economy in terms of sustainability as cash inflows are too erratic to boost the sector. Due to such problems, lack of capital has emerged as the most challenging issue bedeviling vending operations as noted by one participant who had this to say;

*“Mabizinesi edu haakuri, tinongoramba tiri panzvimbo imwe chete nekuti mabhanga haadi kutipa zvikwereti achiti hatina zvibatiso (Our businesses cannot grow but remain at the same level because banks are not willing to provide us with loans citing our lack of collateral).”*

The research revealed that street vending faces low customer base as the goods vendors are dealing with are perceived to be fake ones. This is a major challenge to vending activities since some products can go for a long time in stock which results in the devaluation of the products. Some customers believe that buying merchandise like clothing material or electrical gadgets from the streets is a sign of poverty and they would like to show their buying power by purchasing goods from formal shops. This was clearly exhumed by the research as the places

at which second-hand clothes are sold are now nicknamed ‘Kotamai Boutique,’ meaning a place where one chooses clothes for purchase while bending down. People from affluent classes shun these places which they tend to associate with dirt and poor-quality clothing. Such conceptions by urbanites have a negative impact on the sales recorded in the vending sector.

While street vending offers products that are not only equivalent but also affordable to the living conditions of most of the urbanites, this research contends that such merchandise is specially confined to food products and cheap quality second-hand clothing called ‘mabhero’ in Shona. Those who sell imported products of high-quality face a double tragedy of losing out customers as well as being chased away from the streets. Most of the vendors who participated in the research disclosed to the researcher that because their products are being stigmatised, customers always want to bargain and due to desperation, these vendors end up selling their products at less than half the actual prices. Notably, the results indicate that the aspect of quality is compromising the livelihoods of street vendors in the Mvuma town. Compounding the above sentiments, a street vendor illustrated that:

*“Customers label our products ‘zhing zhong,’ referring to Chinese products that are perceived to be fake ones and as such, customers end up believing that Chinese products are not durable.”*

It was revealed that such labelling of vendors’ products affects street vending since customers end up having a generally biased perception of products being sold in the streets. For instance, fruits and vegetables from vendors are said to be prone to bad weather like high temperatures and dust; hence, that is believed to be compromising the quality of products being sold in the streets.

Conflict and competition for space were also highlighted as some of the major challenges confronting the vendors in the town of Mvuma. Though vendors have the habit of fighting amongst themselves over space, conflict is usually stirred by registered and licensed entities especially supermarkets like Spar and Slice Groceries in cahoots with Chicken Inn and Chicken Slice operators who chase vendors from pavements and verandas accusing them of snatching their customers as well as blocking shop entrances. This was also noted by Rogerson (2016) who posits that vendors are at loggerheads with registered business enterprises who accuse them of ‘stealing’ their customers. Admittedly, though, rapid encroachment of the streets by

the vendors jeopardises the operations of formal shops. It was further discovered that upon failure to chase away vendors, licensed business operators solicit for the services of the municipal police who usually respond in a high-handed manner to the reports made by these formal operators.

#### **4.3 Coping strategies adopted by street vendors**

To surmount cash and financial crisis that hamper operations in street vending, vendors have engaged in rotational savings (*mukando* in Shona). It was revealed that street vendors partake in rotational savings by parcelling out cash to each other on rotational bases. They form groups to collectively raise money which they rotate amongst the members of that quasi financial society. It was mentioned that these groups are formed on the basis of vendors' familiarity, trust and social associations. Reportedly, these rotational savings help street vendors raise huge amounts of money to bolster their bulky orders. Some of the respondents revealed that they engage in multi-rotational savings with different groups spontaneously in order to raise enough money to boost their orders. One of the street vendors confirmed that:

*“Tinokandirana mari muzvikwata zvedu vhiki roga-roga kuitira kuti tisimudzirane mubhizinesi redu. (We rotate money in our groups to boost our business).”*

Owing to the cash crisis that has hit Mvuma, street vendors were reportedly left without recourse other than to accept mobile banking such as Eco-cash as they eventually allowed customers to pay using the Eco-cash system. To that end, Mai Chimuti said that:

*“Regarding cash crisis in Zimbabwe, I decided to accept Eco-cash as a means of payment since most customers do not have access to hard cash.”*

Additionally, the respondents indicated that as vendors, they had to buy hard cash from money changers for them to make orders. As some wholesalers do not accept plastic money, some vendors end up buying cash for them to order new supplies. The buying of cash from money changers helps vendors to buy foreign currency. This especially applies to those vendors who acquire their commodities from neighbouring countries. Another vendor asserted that:

*“Tinotenga cash kumamoney changers kuti tiwane kunohodha kunana South Africa, Zambia ne Mozambique.” (We buy cash from money exchangers so that we can be able to buy supplies from South Africa, Zambia and Mozambique).*

In addition, some vendors in Mvuma even reportedly bribed till operators in Spar Supermarket and fuel attendants at Redan Service Station to make a ‘swipe’ transaction or make payment through the Eco-cash system and be given the equivalent amount in cash. A certain vendor said:

*“We talk with till operators at Spar Supermarket and fuel attendants at Redan Service Station to get cash at an agreed cost. In fact, they charge 10 per cent of the amount to be issued out as per transaction.”*

Thus, the buying of cash from money changers is a strategy vendor have developed in their bid to get bond notes which would enable them to obtain foreign currency needed to buy supplies. This strategy salvaged many vending businesses from the imminent collapse.

The participants indicated that when making orders, they pool their resources together and send one person to buy the commodities in bulk. They further mentioned that sending one person to buy supplies in bulk helps them save money especially through cutting down on transport costs. It was also indicated that sending one person also helps vendors build social networks and relationships amongst themselves since they trust each other more, which enhances their ability to work together. Clearly, such networks also assist them in creating sustainable rotational savings groups and even in borrowing money from each other. Regarding this strategy, one respondent had this to say;

*“Tinosevha mari dzemabhazi kupfurikidza nekutuma munhu mumwe chete kunonotenga zvinhu zveboka revanhu (We save money for bus fare by sending one person to buy our supplies in bulk on behalf of the rest of the group).”*

Thus, by sending one person to order the supplies on behalf of the group, vendors have established a cost-cutting measure which enhances the accumulation of more profits. The strategy was also hailed by vendors since they reported that not even one of them would lose out as a result of going out to make new orders for the group because those who remain behind

would also be selling goods on behalf of the one who would have gone to make new purchases for their businesses.

It has been noted in the research that vendors are confronted by challenges relating to the shrinkage of customer base owing to the exponential growth that characterises the informal sector, inadequate storage facilities, negative customer perceptions on products sold on the streets and numerous other reasons. The research established that some vendors have invented a strategy which saw them supplying customers with products on credit, then they would get paid at the end of the month, but to circumvent inflationary contingencies, the product would be charged in foreign currency. Vendors who specialise in clothing and kitchenware are the majority of those who have established this coping strategy, and preferential treatment was given to civil servants and other trusted colleagues.

Further, some vendors have embraced the lay-by concept where they would allow their customers to pay for the purchased goods within two months. In this case, the respondents revealed that a customer pays a deposit equivalent to the wholesale price to enable the vendor to restock, a strategy which keeps the business thriving. This is a novel way of keeping vendors' businesses afloat in a competitive environment, which Marapira (2013) has described as a situation where the population of vendors seemingly exceeds that of the potential buyers.

The research discovered that street vendors order supplies twice or thrice per week when the business is at its peak to avert circumstantial shortage of stock. Some vendors reported that they buy foreign currency after their daily sales to save their money from being eroded by inflation. Thus, the buying of foreign currency is one of the survival strategies which vendors employ to prop their businesses during the period punctuated by hyper -inflationary pressures. One of the vendors said that:

*“Tinoenda kunohodha kaviri kana katatu kuHarare kuitira kuti tifambirane nemaprices eHarare, kana kuti tinotenga maUnited States Dollars kana maSouth African Rand kupera kwezuva roga roga kuti tisarare nebond mumba” (We get supplies twice or thrice per week from Harare to keep abreast with Harare prices, or we buy United States Dollars or South African Rand on a daily basis to avoid sleeping with bond notes in our homes.’’*

The strategy, which has seen many vendors ordering supplies more than once per week, is regarded as a brilliant strategy which is safeguarding many vendors' businesses from collapse. In that regard vendors do not run out of stock especially during these hyperinflationary periods where prices charged by formal shops are so exorbitant that many customers are buying goods and services from street vendors. Additionally, buying foreign currency also helps vendors to evade inevitable liquidation that threatens their businesses. Furthermore, in the Zimbabwean scenario, foreign currency appreciates value every day, which makes buying foreign currency an investment for the vendors. The vendors also reported that they can change their foreign currency into bond notes when they want to use them immediately.

The research unearthed the development which has seen vendors joining social media groups on the Whatsapp platform for those who buy and sell similar products. These groups inform vendors on the daily prices of commodities and foreign exchange rates. Many vendors reported that they check prices of commodities on a daily basis, particularly in the morning before the commencement of business. They also confirm exchange rates especially with money changers. This helps them to avoid either undercharging or overcharging their customers.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Three broad themes guided the discussion and analysis of data on street vending in Mvuma. These themes revolved around vending activities, the challenges faced by street vendors and the coping strategies used by these Mvuma-based street vendors in safeguarding their businesses from collapse. Vending activities in Mvuma are primarily fruit and vegetable selling, informal money exchange, the selling of school uniforms, carpentry and so on. Most of the vendors reported experiencing cash crisis, acute competition, low customer base and lack of credit facilities to boost their businesses. However, as human beings, it was evident that street vendors always eked out ways of overcoming the identified problems which include the use of rotational savings, acceptance of plastic money as a transactional method, buying Zimbabwean RTGS Dollars in cash from money exchangers and the practising of bribery to secure hard cash needed to buy foreign currency to preserve the value of their money and to purchase orders from other countries.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the research on coping strategies of street vendors in a hyperinflation environment of 2018-2019 in Mvuma. Main challenges and coping strategies used by vendors are going to be highlighted in this chapter. It concluded by giving possible recommendations to the problems encountered by street vendors in Mvuma.

### **5.1 Conclusions**

Most households in Mvuma confirmed that they rely on street vending economic activities for their sustenance in the absence of a well-functioning formal economy. While some confirmed that they just earn a little and survive from hand to mouth, some disclosed that they can they make significant earnings such that they can afford better quality education for their children, decent lives for their families and dependents while others are even able to make savings, acquire properties, and even expand their business ventures. Although the sector is regarded as already overcrowded and saturated, in Mvuma it continues to grow, absorb and accommodate more participants at a time when the formal economy is failing. As such, the study reached the conclusion that street vending businesses are strong forces to reckon with and play very important roles in constructing and sustaining urban livelihoods especially during times of economic crisis.

Street vendors in Mvuma sell many products which include fruits and vegetables, second-hand clothes, school uniforms, furniture and shoes. They get their supplies from Harare, Musina, Mutare and Mozambique. Street vending is done on designated and undesignated areas in Mvuma. Some vendors have permanent places where they sell their products whilst others move around carry their products.

Street vending as an industry has its own challenges. For instance, in a hyperinflation environment street vending in Mvuma face challenges of cash crisis, continuous escalating of prices, low customer base and competition from formal shops. Street vendors are rationally calculative and strategic actors responding to the constraints caused by hyperinflation environment in Zimbabwe. The study concludes that street vendors are not passive actors but have the capacity to device coping strategies to overcome problems posed by inflation to their



businesses. Street vendors in Mvuma have so far remained resilient as shown by their survival and coping strategies which have helped them to remain afloat in the quest for sustaining livelihoods in the face of life-threatening crises posed by the prevailing economic situation. And these coping strategies including rotational savings, buying of cash, accepting plastic money, only to mention a few. Street vending has become uncontrollable following the role it plays among the unemployed people and everyday forms of resistance employed by street vendors.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

- Linked to the above is the need to improve infrastructure for street vending sector. The sector has shown a lot of potential and if it has managed to endure operating with very little or no infrastructure at all, it will surely do wonders if adequate infrastructure is put in place. This will involve provision of clean and adequate water, electricity and suitable structures. It is also important to consider issues like setting up for example vending marts near strategic positions like bus terminuses, schools and even malls. Vending malls on nonstrategic points have proved to be less beneficial as they have been shunned by informal traders leading them to invading undesignated points where, they even operate without paying anything to anyone.
- Considering economic crisis and poverty in Zimbabwe, street vending is sustaining the livelihoods of many urbanites in Zimbabwe. Therefore, government should provide credit facilities and some training centres for street vendors to upgrade their skills. More so, cash should be made readily available in banks to reduce cash crisis. The study also realised how the vending sectors have ventured into manufacturing with some even producing high quality and durable products which can compete with those manufactured by established formal industries. The major factors constraining these manufacturers outside the formal economy are poor capital, shortage of operating land and poor marketing. The study thus argues that if some of these manufacturers are doing well in such a heavily constrained environment, they are bound to flourish if ideal conditions are availed to them, not only for their own benefit but the economy at large.
- Moreover, street vending should be evaluated as an economic development employed at the grassroots level due to the failure of the government to create employment for its

people and a battlefield where different actors position themselves in line with the likely benefits or challenges that emanate from informal economy. The government should guard jealously escalation of prices, continuous increase of commodity prices which is a big problem to vending industry. Therefore, the government should device a mechanism of controlling price of commodities at the market.

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