An Investigation on the Major Determinants of Cash-In-Transit (CIT) Heists Within the Private Security Industry in Zimbabwe

Masuku Gift[1]*, Hove Sam[2], Dr Tshuma Edward[3], Dr Makamache Wiklef[4], Dr Dhokura Eunice[5], Tembo Evans B.[6], Sengu James[7], Taruza Tavonga[8]

Zimbabwe Republic Police Staff College, Harare, Zimbabwe

***Corresponding Author**

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500714

Received: 30 April 2026; Accepted: 05 May 2026; Published: 11 June 2026

ABSTRACT

Cash-in-transit (CIT) heists involving private security companies continue to escalate in Zimbabwe, posing serious threats to public safety and economic stability. This study investigated the major determinants of CIT heists within Zimbabwe's private security industry, focusing on Harare Metropolitan Province. Using a mixed-methods convergent parallel design underpinned by triangulation, data were collected from 49 security operatives (structured questionnaires), 178 corporate security experts (online poll survey), and 5 police investigating officers (semi-structured interviews). Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (Version 26) and qualitative data through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). Integration of the two strands was achieved through a joint display comparative framework. The study found that poor remuneration, weak internal control systems, and insider collusion are the primary drivers of CIT heists. The current security measures employed by private security companies — including risk assessment, armoured vehicles, personnel training, technology integration, law enforcement collaboration, emergency response protocols, and insurance — were found to be largely inadequate. Additionally, the existing legal and regulatory frameworks governing CIT operations were perceived as ineffective by 58% of respondents. The study concludes that addressing the root causes of CIT heists requires improving security guard salaries, tightening internal control systems, and creating youth employment opportunities. It recommends legislative reform, specialised training, rigorous background checks, enhanced law enforcement collaboration, and awareness campaigns to strengthen CIT security protocols in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Cash-in-Transit, CIT Heists, Private Security Industry, Zimbabwe, Collusion, Internal Controls, Remuneration

INTRODUCTION

Cash-in-transit (CIT) heists involving private security companies have become a major security concern for law enforcement agencies and the corporate world. These incidents not only result in violence, injury, and loss of life, but also cause significant financial losses. The private security industry is one of the fastest growing industries globally, with a growth rate of 6.8% annually, and private security officers constituting approximately 70% of law enforcement worldwide (Lindner, 2024). The proliferation of private security companies is driven by rising crime rates, limited public police resources, and declining public confidence in conventional security apparatus.

The severity of CIT heists is particularly alarming in Africa. In South Africa, CIT robberies were declared a national crime emergency, with 2,521 CIT robberies recorded between 2010 and 2019 (Thobane, 2019) and US$31 million stolen in 2017 alone (Hosken, 2018). In Nigeria, socio-economic challenges including unemployment, poverty, and inequality significantly contribute to CIT crime rates (Agbamu, 2024). Zimbabwe is not immune to this trend. According to the Zimbabwe Republic Police 2023 Annual Report, there has been a marked upsurge in armed robbery cases. On 3 October 2024, armed robbers attacked a Safeguard security company CIT vehicle in Bulawayo in broad daylight and escaped with over US$4 million (The Herald, 3

October 2024). Earlier, in 2022, five soldiers were arrested over a US$92,000 CIT heist at Newlands Shops in Harare, and in 2021, three security guards lost US$2.5 million to hitchhikers along the Harare-Chinhoyi Road (Netsianda, 2021).

Despite the implementation of various security measures, CIT heists continue to escalate in Zimbabwe, raising urgent questions about underlying causes and vulnerabilities within the private security sector. This study was therefore motivated to systematically investigate the major determinants of CIT heists within Zimbabwe's private security industry, to assess the adequacy of existing regulatory and policy frameworks, and to evaluate the effectiveness of current security measures, thereby providing an evidence base for enhanced security protocols and policy reform.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by three primary objectives: (i) to identify the major factors contributing to the occurrence of CIT heists within the private security sector in Zimbabwe; (ii) to identify the current legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks governing CIT operations in Zimbabwe and assess their effectiveness; and (iii) to assess the effectiveness of current CIT security measures and develop evidence-based recommendations for mitigating CIT heists in Zimbabwe's private security industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

This study conceptualises CIT heists as a product of three interacting variable clusters: motivational drivers (unemployment, greed, low educational attainment), opportunity drivers (insider involvement, poor security measures, inadequate regulation), and circumstantial drivers (economic conditions, organised crime groups). These independent variables are mediated by security protocols, employee vetting processes, and regulatory oversight, collectively influencing the dependent variable — cash-in-transit heists. This framework draws on Ogunwale et al. (2019) who note that crime in contemporary society is multifaceted, with numerous interconnected social, economic, political, and cultural causes (Oyelade, 2019). Evidence in the literature consistently shows a link between socio-economic status (poverty, unemployment, inequality) and crime rates (Malik, 2016; Chen and Miller, 2013).

CIT robbery is defined as the unlawful and violent interception of cash under the protection of a security company from an armoured vehicle en route to deliver or collect cash (Mahlogonolo, 2019). Thobane (2019) posits that CIT heists are not opportunistic crimes committed by amateurs; rather, they require extensive planning and sufficient, capable manpower with the audacity to use violence. He identifies various roles within CIT robbery syndicates, including front men, spotters, cash collectors, rovers, and drivers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in four complementary theoretical perspectives. The Anomie/Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) provides a framework for understanding how the gap between societal expectations and actual opportunities for success generates frustration that may drive individuals to criminal behaviour. The Social Disorganisation Theory centres on the breakdown of societal norms and cohesion, whereby weakened social bonds and disintegration of informal control mechanisms increase community susceptibility to crime. The Routine Activity Theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979) explains how crime opportunities arise from the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets (cash-in-transit), and the absence of capable guardians (inadequate security). Finally, the Rational Choice Theory (Cornish and Clarke, 1986) posits that offenders weigh costs and benefits before committing a crime, suggesting that where perceived financial gain outweighs the risk of detection and punishment, heists become more likely.

Empirical Review

A study by Agbamu (2024) in Nigeria found a significant negative correlation between access to quality

education and crime rates, and a significant positive relationship between unemployment and crime rate. Arisukwu et al. (2020) similarly found that enhancing educational access serves as an effective crime mitigation strategy. The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS, 2020) identified financial gain, insider involvement, poor security measures, unemployment, and lack of effective law enforcement as the major drivers of CIT heists. The South African Banking Risk Information Centre (SABRIC, 2019) found a significant increase in CIT heists between 2015 and 2018, with the most common modus operandi being the blasting of armoured vehicles, particularly during peak traffic hours.

Closer to the Zimbabwean context, Thobane (2014, cited in Burger, 2018) found through interviews with 40 jailed armed robbers that CIT criminals depended heavily on complicity from police officers and industry insiders, including bribing prosecutors and magistrates. Moyo (2020) highlighted inadequate training, technological gaps, and insufficient regulatory frameworks as critical contributors to CIT vulnerability in Zimbabwe. Chikozho (2021) emphasised the role of organised crime syndicates exploiting weaknesses in security protocols, while Nyoni (2019) and Mariwo (2008) underscored the role of poor remuneration, long working hours, and a hostile economic environment in driving security guards towards corruption and collusion.

The majority of existing empirical studies were conducted outside Zimbabwe or focused on the private security industry in general rather than CIT heists specifically. The few Zimbabwe-based studies are now outdated (Moyo, 2020; Chikozho, 2021) and used different methodologies. This study addresses these gaps by providing a contemporary, Zimbabwe-specific, mixed-methods investigation of CIT heist determinants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Philosophy

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and a case study research design, which enabled thorough in-depth analysis of the research problem in its real-life context (Rashid et al., 2019). A mixed-methods research methodology was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches through triangulation. This design was selected because the shortcomings of one methodology are offset by the strengths of the other, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of findings (Gray, 2014; Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Three sources of data and three data collection methods were used to triangulate findings.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in Harare Metropolitan Province. The target population comprised police investigating officers, corporate security experts, and security operatives/guards working in selected private security companies in Harare's Central Business District. Table 1 below presents the target population, sample size, and sampling percentages. Security operatives were drawn from five registered private security companies operating CIT services in the CBD, selected on the basis of active CIT operational status and willingness to participate. Corporate security experts were recruited from a verified professional network maintained by the National Employment Council for the Security Industry of Zimbabwe (NECSIZ), representing practitioners with a minimum of five years' experience in corporate security management. Police investigating officers were recruited through formal institutional liaison with the Zimbabwe Republic Police's Criminal Investigations Department, targeting officers with direct experience in CIT heist investigations. Across all groups, participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Table 1: Target Population, Sample, and Percentage of Sample to Population

Respondents	Target Population	Sample	% of Sample to Population
Police investigating officers	50	5	10%
Corporate security experts	1,013	178	18%
Security operatives (guards)	500	50	10%

Respondents	Target Population	Sample	% of Sample to Population
Total	1,250	125 (+ 178 poll)	~10%

Three sampling techniques were employed. Purposive sampling was used to select police officers and corporate security experts on the basis of their specialised knowledge and expertise in CIT security, ensuring that only respondents with direct professional experience in the subject area contributed to the study (Rennison and Hart, 2019). Eligibility criteria for police officers required current or recent involvement in CIT heist investigations; corporate security experts were required to hold a senior operational or managerial role within the security industry. Snowball sampling was subsequently applied to expand the pool of hard-to-reach respondents—particularly corporate security experts—through chain referrals from initial contacts within the NECSIZ network, a technique appropriate for specialist professional populations with restricted access (Saunders et al., 2016). Convenience sampling was used to reach security operatives based on availability and willingness to participate at the time of fieldwork, ensuring minimal disruption to operational schedules (Gray, 2014). The combination of these three techniques reflects the heterogeneous accessibility of the study's three respondent groups and is consistent with mixed-methods designs that draw on both probability-adjacent and non-probability strategies to maximise data diversity.

Data Collection Instruments

Structured questionnaires were administered to 50 security operatives to gather quantitative data on factors contributing to CIT heists, current security measures, and regulatory effectiveness. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended Likert-scale and multiple-choice items developed from the conceptual framework and pre-tested on five operatives not included in the final sample to confirm clarity and face validity. An online poll survey was administered via a closed, moderated WhatsApp group maintained by the Global Institute of Security Management (GISM), comprising 1,013 verified corporate security professionals. It is acknowledged that online polls administered via social media platforms carry inherent limitations regarding sampling bias and response reliability (Bethlehem, 2010). These limitations were mitigated through several measures: (i) participation was restricted to verified security experts with confirmed professional credentials; (ii) the poll questions were standardised and unambiguous, reducing interpretive variability; (iii) the large achieved sample (n=178; 17.6% response rate) provides sufficient statistical stability for the descriptive analyses reported; and (iv) findings from the poll were cross-validated against the structured questionnaire data and interview findings through triangulation. While a more formally structured survey instrument (e.g., a validated Likert-scale questionnaire distributed electronically via institutional channels) would strengthen the robustness of this strand in future research, the GISM-mediated poll provided access to a geographically dispersed professional population that would have been difficult to reach through conventional survey administration. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five police investigating officers from the ZRP's Criminal Investigations Department to gather in-depth qualitative insights on CIT heist determinants, regulatory frameworks, and security protocols. Although this sub-sample is numerically small, it is consistent with the purposive logic governing selection (only officers with direct CIT case experience were eligible) and with qualitative inquiry norms where depth is prioritised over breadth (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and verified by participants to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS (Version 26), generating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for each variable. Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis through systematic coding and categorisation of transcribed interview data, following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through a convergent parallel design (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2018), in which the two data strands were analysed independently and subsequently merged for comparison at the interpretation stage. A joint display table (Table 10) is presented in the Discussion section to make this integration explicit, showing where quantitative frequencies and qualitative themes corroborate or diverge (Guetterman et al., 2015). Validity was established through triangulation across three data sources

(questionnaire, poll, and interviews) and participant validation of interview transcripts, while reliability was assessed through internal equivalency by comparing questionnaire and interview responses on overlapping constructs.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to research ethics guidelines including obtaining informed consent, ensuring respondent anonymity and confidentiality, maintaining objectivity, and properly acknowledging the work of other researchers (Hagan, 2017). No deception, falsification, or privacy violations were committed in the course of data collection or reporting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

Of the fifty questionnaires distributed to security operatives, 49 were returned, giving a response rate of 98%. All the five scheduled police interviews were conducted (100% response rate). Additionally, 178 of the 1,013 corporate security experts (17.6%) participated in the WhatsApp poll survey. These response rates were considered sufficient for reliable analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). Table 2 presents the questionnaire response schedule.

Table 2: Questionnaire Response Schedule (n=50)

Respondents	Administered	Received	Response Rate
Security operatives	50	49	98%

Demographic Characteristics

Regarding age, 50% of respondents were between 31 and 40 years, 30% were between 41 and 50 years, and 10% each fell in the 18–30 and over-50 categories. In terms of gender, 70% were male and 30% female, reflecting Zimbabwe's patriarchal gender dynamics. Most respondents were married (68%) and the majority held Diploma qualifications (40%), followed by Certificate (30%), Undergraduate (18%), and Postgraduate (12%) qualifications, consistent with Zimbabwe's high literacy rates. Tables 3 to 6 below present the demographic data.

Table 3: Age of Respondents (n=50)

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
18–30 years	5	10.0%
31–40 years	25	50.0%
41–50 years	15	30.0%
Over 50 years	5	10.0%
Total	50	100.0%

Table 4: Gender of Respondents (n=50)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	35	70.0%
Female	15	30.0%

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Total	50	100.0%

Table 5: Marital Status of Respondents (n=50)

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	34	68.0%
Single	16	32.0%
Total	50	100.0%

Table 6: Level of Education of Respondents (n=50)

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	15	30.0%
Diploma	20	40.0%
Undergraduate	9	18.0%
Postgraduate	6	12.0%
Total	50	100.0%

Major Drivers of CIT Heists: Security Operatives' Perceptions

Questionnaire respondents were asked to identify the major cause of CIT heists within Zimbabwe's private security industry. Table 7 presents their responses.

Table 7: Major Drivers of CIT Heists — Security Operatives' Perceptions (n=50)

Driver	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Poor remuneration	23	46.0%	46.0%
Unemployment/poverty	13	26.0%	72.0%
Inside job (collusion)	10	20.0%	92.0%
Weak internal control systems	4	8.0%	100.0%
Total	50	100.0%	

As shown in Table 7, the majority of security operatives (46%) identified poor remuneration as the primary driver of CIT heists, followed by unemployment/poverty (26%), inside job/collusion (20%), and weak internal control systems (8%). These findings align with Mariwo (2008), who found that meager wages in Zimbabwe's private security industry are associated with "survival strategies" that undermine work ethics, resulting in corruption and theft. They also corroborate NIALS (2020) and Agbamu (2024), which place unemployment at the centre of crime causation.

Major Drivers of CIT Heists: Security Experts' Perceptions

A WhatsApp poll survey involving 178 corporate security experts yielded contrasting but complementary findings. The majority of experts (41%, n=73) identified weak internal control systems as the primary driver, followed by poor remuneration (39.3%, n=70), inside job/collusion (16.9%, n=30), and unemployment/poverty

(2.8%, n=5). Notably, while security operatives ranked weak internal control systems as the least significant factor, security experts ranked it as the most significant, possibly reflecting experts' deeper understanding of organisational vulnerabilities in CIT security management. Both groups concurred that poor remuneration and collusion are among the top three drivers.

These findings resonate strongly with Burger (2018), who found that CIT robbers in South Africa routinely depended on complicity from police officers and industry insiders. Chikozho (2021) similarly found that organised crime syndicates exploit weaknesses in security protocols. One police interviewee emphasised: "There is need for private security companies to familiarise themselves with the backgrounds of their guards … They must never compromise their integrity for profit by hiring criminals."

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

A convergent parallel design (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2018) was employed, in which quantitative data from the security operatives' questionnaire and the corporate security experts' poll were analysed independently from the qualitative interview data, and the two strands were subsequently merged at the interpretation stage. Table 10 presents a joint display integrating the quantitative frequencies from the two survey instruments with the dominant qualitative themes derived from police officer interviews, enabling explicit comparison across data sources (Guetterman et al., 2015). The convergence evident in Table 10 substantially strengthens the credibility of the findings: where quantitative patterns and qualitative themes align, confidence in the conclusions is high; where divergence exists, the contrasting perspectives are discussed to provide a more complete account of the phenomenon under investigation.

Table 10: Joint Display — Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings on CIT Heist Determinants

Determinant	Security Operatives (Questionnaire, n=49)	Corporate Security Experts (Poll, n=178)	Police Officers (Interviews, n=5): Thematic Findings	Integration Outcome
Poor remuneration	Ranked 1st (46%)	Ranked 2nd (39.3%)	Theme: Low wages erode guard integrity; guards become susceptible to recruitment by heist syndicates	CONVERGENCE — all three sources confirm poor remuneration as a primary structural driver
Weak internal control systems	Ranked 4th (8%)	Ranked 1st (41%)	Theme: Inadequate vetting procedures and gaps in operational oversight create exploitable vulnerabilities	PARTIAL DIVERGENCE — operatives underestimate organisational controls (proximity bias); experts and qualitative data converge on systemic vulnerability
Insider collusion	Ranked 3rd (20%)	Ranked 3rd (16.9%)	Theme: Heists typically require inside information; rigorous background checks and vetting are essential	CONVERGENCE — all three sources identify insider complicity as a consistent and significant driver

Determinant	Security Operatives (Questionnaire, n=49)	Corporate Security Experts (Poll, n=178)	Police Officers (Interviews, n=5): Thematic Findings	Integration Outcome
			preventive measures	
Unemployment / poverty	Ranked 2nd (26%)	Ranked 4th (2.8%)	Theme: Macro-economic factors (inflation, unemployment) create conditions of desperation that syndicates exploit for recruitment	PARTIAL DIVERGENCE — operatives weight socio-economic context more heavily than experts; qualitative data explains divergence through Anomie/Strain Theory
Regulatory ineffectiveness	58% disagree frameworks are effective	Not directly measured in poll	Theme: Weak enforcement, loopholes in Chapter 27:10, and absence of structured police-security collaboration undermine compliance	CONVERGENCE — quantitative and qualitative data agree that regulatory frameworks require urgent legislative reform

Source: Guetterman et al. (2015); adapted from study data.

The joint display reveals strong convergence across data sources on three core determinants: poor remuneration, insider collusion, and regulatory ineffectiveness. The principal divergence concerns the relative weighting of weak internal control systems, which security operatives ranked last (8%) while corporate security experts ranked it first (41%). This divergence is explicable through the lens of Routine Activity Theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979): operatives, embedded within daily operational routines, may normalise systemic control weaknesses and attribute heist vulnerability more directly to personal financial precarity, whereas experts—operating at the strategic and managerial level—recognise organisational control failures as the structural condition that enables opportunistic offending. Police interview data corroborate the expert position, identifying inadequate vetting and the absence of genuine intelligence-sharing as critical organisational gaps. The divergence in rankings for unemployment and poverty (operatives: 2nd at 26%; experts: 4th at 2.8%) similarly reflects positional differences: frontline guards experience the economic context of heist motivation directly, while expert assessments are shaped by organisational risk models that emphasise controllable systemic factors. In sum, the convergent parallel design demonstrates that quantitative survey data and qualitative interview findings are substantially mutually reinforcing, with divergences explicable through theoretical frameworks and positional differences between respondent groups rather than methodological inconsistency.

Effectiveness of Regulatory and Policy Frameworks

The second research objective assessed the effectiveness of the current legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks governing CIT operations in Zimbabwe. The key legislative instruments identified include the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act [Chapter 27:10], the Banking Act [Chapter 24:20], and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]. Regulatory oversight is provided by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), and the Ministry of Home Affairs

and Cultural Heritage. The National Security Policy and Private Security Policy Guidelines provide operational direction. Table 8 presents respondents' assessments of the effectiveness of these frameworks.

Table 8: Effectiveness of Current Regulatory and Policy Frameworks (n=50)

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Strongly agree	6	12.0%	12.0%
Agree	5	10.0%	22.0%
Neutral	10	20.0%	42.0%
Disagree	15	30.0%	72.0%
Strongly disagree	14	28.0%	100.0%
Total	50	100.0%	

As shown in Table 8, a combined 58% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the current regulatory and policy frameworks are effective in curbing CIT heists. Only 22% expressed agreement. The 20% neutral category may reflect insufficient knowledge of regulatory provisions. These findings suggest an urgent need for policymakers to reassess and reform existing frameworks. Moyo (2020) similarly found that insufficient regulatory frameworks and lack of technological security systems are major contributors to CIT vulnerability. The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act [Chapter 27:10] has been identified as containing numerous loopholes requiring legislative amendment.

Current CIT Security Measures and Their Effectiveness

The third objective assessed the effectiveness of current CIT security measures. The study identified the following measures currently employed by private security companies in Zimbabwe: (i) risk assessment and planning before every cash transport operation; (ii) use of armoured vehicles with advanced features such as bullet-resistant glass and reinforced structures; (iii) rigorous selection and training of personnel, often ex-military or police officers; (iv) technology integration including GPS tracking, biometric access controls, and surveillance cameras; (v) collaboration with law enforcement agencies and the ZRP; (vi) emergency response protocols with regular drills; and (vii) comprehensive insurance coverage.

However, despite these measures, the study found significant shortcomings. Due to financial constraints, many companies use non-armoured vehicles and operate without adequate technology. The collaboration between security firms and the ZRP often exists only on paper. One police officer noted: "I suggest we exchange contact information and start communicating, updating each other on what is happening… The security companies must ensure that they have contacts of their nearest police stations." Poor remuneration continues to undermine even well-trained personnel, predisposing them to collusion. Table 9 presents respondents' assessments of the effectiveness of current CIT security measures.

Table 9: Effectiveness of Current CIT Security Measures (n=50)

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Strongly agree	9	18.0%	18.0%
Agree	7	14.0%	32.0%
Neutral	8	16.0%	48.0%
Disagree	16	32.0%	80.0%
Strongly disagree	10	20.0%	100.0%
Total	50	100.0%	

Table 9 shows that a combined 52% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with current security measures, while only 32% expressed confidence in them. The 16% neutral response may indicate ambivalence or information gaps. These results suggest that existing protocols are perceived as inadequate, with vulnerabilities that expose cash transport operations to increased risk. Moyo (2020) and Chikozho (2021) reached similar conclusions, identifying lack of technology and inadequate training as major factors undermining CIT security effectiveness in Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the major determinants of cash-in-transit heists within Zimbabwe's private security industry. Three principal conclusions emerge from the findings. First, poor remuneration of security guards, weak internal control systems, and insider collusion are the major drivers of CIT heists in Zimbabwe's private security industry. Unemployment and poverty, while significant, are less central than structural organisational factors. These findings are consistent with global empirical evidence from Nigeria (Agbamu, 2024; NIALS, 2020), South Africa (Burger, 2018; SABRIC, 2019), and Zimbabwe (Mariwo, 2008; Moyo, 2020).

Second, the current legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks — including the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act [Chapter 27:10], the Banking Act, and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act — are perceived as largely ineffective by the majority of respondents (58%). Gaps in legislative provisions, weak enforcement, and insufficient institutional collaboration contribute to this inadequacy.

Third, while private security companies employ a range of security measures including risk assessment, armoured vehicles, personnel training, technology integration, and law enforcement collaboration, these measures are undermined by financial constraints, technological deficits, and the corrosive effects of poor remuneration on personnel integrity. Over 52% of respondents found the current measures inadequate. Comprehensive, multi-pronged reform targeting both root causes and systemic vulnerabilities is urgently required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study advances the following recommendations. First, addressing the root causes of CIT heists must be prioritised: improving security guard remuneration is critical since poor salaries are the primary driver and a precondition for collusion. Internal control systems must be tightened to eliminate organisational loopholes. The government should create employment opportunities for youth to address the poverty-crime nexus.

Second, the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act [Chapter 27:10] must be comprehensively amended to address its numerous loopholes and strengthen regulatory compliance requirements. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to ensure all CIT companies understand and adhere to licensing and compliance requirements. Third, specialised and regular refresher training for CIT personnel should be made mandatory to keep pace with evolving criminal tactics. Fourth, private security companies must conduct thorough background checks on all recruits in collaboration with the ZRP to exclude individuals with criminal histories. Fifth, genuine and structured collaboration between private security firms and the ZRP must be institutionalised beyond paper frameworks, including information sharing, joint vetting, and co-monitoring of security personnel. Sixth, increased funding and resource mobilisation should be pursued to enable private security companies to invest in advanced technology, including GPS systems, biometric controls, and surveillance equipment.

Future research is recommended to investigate the challenges affecting private security companies in implementing safe CIT operations, the factors behind private security firms' reluctance to share information for research purposes, and the broader developmental impact of CIT heists on Zimbabwe's national economy.

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