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An Investigation into the Major Drivers of Robbery Heists in the Private Sector in Zimbabwe: A Quantitative Analysis of Primary Data

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Abstract: ***Robbery heists linked to private security firms, and the leaking of inside security information, remain on the rise in Zimbabwe, posing significant risks to public safety and the broader economy. This study examined the key drivers of robbery heists across Zimbabwe's private security sector and the private companies that employ security personnel. A quantitative, positivist design was adopted, with data collected from 240 participants ranging from police investigating officers, corporate security experts and security operatives through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS (Version 26), including correlation and regression statistics. Findings were interpreted through Routine Activity Theory, Rational Choice Theory, the Fraud Triangle, and Strain Theory, against a backdrop of 16.4% national unemployment and an informal sector accounting for more than 85% of the workforce. Insider collusion emerged as the dominant driver, followed by weak internal controls, poor remuneration and unemployment. Existing organisational security measures spanning risk assessment, staff training, technology use, cooperation with law enforcement, emergency response planning and insurance coverage were judged to fall well short of what is needed, despite comparatively favorable views of specific components such as surveillance and technology in isolation. The study argues that tackling these drivers requires better pay for security guards and practitioners, stronger internal controls, and expanded employment opportunities for young people, alongside legislative reform, specialized training, thorough background screening, deeper collaboration with law enforcement, and public awareness campaigns.***

Keywords: Robbery heists; Quantitative primary data analysis; Zimbabwe; Private Sector Security; Private Security Practitioners, Conviction rate; Routine Activity Theory, Fraud triangle

1. Introduction

A persistent escalation in armed robbery has placed Zimbabwe's private sector at the centre of the threat landscape, with banks and remittance houses, mining operations, manufacturers, retailers, fuel outlets and parastatals all bearing the brunt. National police spokesperson Commissioner Paul Nyathi recorded 1,282 robbery cases in the past year, a marginal 4% decline from 1,340 the year before, a figure he himself described as “unacceptably high” (My Zimbabwe News, 2026; Zimbabwe Situation, 2026; ZIMSTAT, 2024), with Harare and Bulawayo the leading hotspots. Private-sector reporting (Safeguard Security, dev.safeguard.co.zw) over the same period shows continuing monthly fluctuations in robbery cases, underscoring that these crimes remain a nationwide concern. This article departs from a purely narrative treatment of these statistics by collecting primary data alongside subjecting published figures to systematic quantitative analysis computing percentage changes, rate ratios and percentage-point shifts to establish with greater precision which factors most plausibly drive robbery heists against private businesses.

The severity of robbery heists is not unique to Zimbabwe. In South Africa, more than 200 cash-in-transit robberies were recorded in 2024, concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal (27%), Gauteng (25%) and the Eastern Cape (21%), with the Cash-In-Transit Association of South Africa recording 180 cases in 2025. Interviews with incarcerated robbers found police members and industry employees repeatedly implicated in facilitating robberies or accepting bribes (Thobane, 2014; Lochner, 2016, cited in Burger, 2018) a significant finding for a Fraud Triangle reading, since it shows the “opportunity” leg of the triangle can be institutionally produced rather than purely circumstantial. In Nigeria, unemployment, poverty and inequality significantly contribute to cash-in-transit crime rates (Agbamu, 2024), while Kenyan reporting repeatedly documents inside involvement in major heists, including cases where offenders drilled through bank walls with apparent insider knowledge of security gaps, or posed as police officers to intercept cash-replenishment personnel (Kenyans.co.ke, 2021).

Zimbabwe is not immune to this trend. The Zimbabwe Republic Police's 2023 Annual Report notes a marked upsurge in armed robbery cases nationally. On 3 October 2024, six AK-47-wielding robbers attacked a Safeguard cash-in-transit van outside an Ecobank branch in Bulawayo in under two minutes, stealing US$4,000,000 a national record with police suspecting an inside job given the unusually high cash volume held at that branch (News24, 2024; IOL, 2024; The Herald, 2024). Cases like this point to insider collusion as a structural rather than incidental causal factor, consistent with a Fraud Triangle reading in which the “opportunity” leg is institutionally produced through weak internal controls rather than individual moral failure. Although a range of security measures has been put in place, robberies in Zimbabwe show no sign of abating, prompting pressing questions about the root causes and weaknesses within the private security sector. Against this background, the study set out to systematically examine the principal drivers of robbery heists in Zimbabwe's private security industry, to evaluate whether current regulatory and policy frameworks are adequate, and to assess how effective existing security measures have been, with the aim of generating evidence to inform stronger security protocols and policy reform.

Statement of the Problem

In Zimbabwe, robbery heists targeting private sector entities create a layered problem: they threaten lives, cause direct financial losses, drive up security spending and, as this article contends, expose an underlying weakness in data reliability

that limits the private sector's ability to plan for risk on an evidence-based footing. Discussion of this issue has so far been largely qualitative, drawing on isolated incidents and official pronouncements. Missing from this picture is a rigorous quantitative analysis of figures already published by the ZRP, private security providers and international indices one that works out rates, ratios and trends, and treats the scale and consistency of these figures as evidence in its own right. This article seeks to address that gap.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by three primary objectives: (i) to identify the major factors contributing to increases in armed robbery cases throughout the country; (ii) to identify current legal and policing regulatory frameworks governing armed robbery cases; and (iii) to assess the effectiveness of current legal and policing measures and generate evidence-oriented recommendations for mitigating the scourge of armed robbery heists.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is premised on the interaction between socio-economic pressures, institutional vulnerabilities, and individual behavioral drivers in explaining the occurrence of robbery heists within Zimbabwe's private security sector. Crime is conceptualized not as an isolated act, but as an outcome of interconnected structural and organisational dynamics.

At the macro level, socio-economic variables such as unemployment, poverty and income inequality are widely recognized as significant predictors of crime. High unemployment reduces access to legitimate income sources, increasing the likelihood of individuals engaging in criminal activities (Becker, 1968; Agbamu, 2024). Zimbabwe's economic conditions, characterized by high informal-sector participation and youth unemployment, provide a fertile environment for criminal recruitment.

At the meso (organisational) level, weaknesses in internal systems within private firms serve as critical enablers of robbery heists, including inadequate internal controls, poor background vetting, lack of staff training and insufficient remuneration. Organizations with weak governance frameworks are more susceptible to internal fraud and collusion, particularly where employees have direct access to sensitive operational information (Wells, 2017).

At the micro level, individual motivations and decision-making processes influence criminal behaviour. Employees or perpetrators often respond to financial pressure, perceived inequity, or opportunity structures within their environment (Cressey, 1953); low wages and job dissatisfaction can increase the likelihood of insider involvement in crime, particularly in high-risk sectors such as private security.

The conceptual model therefore positions robbery heist as the dependent variable, influenced by independent variables (unemployment, low wages, poverty, weak internal control, insider access), intervening variables (law enforcement effectiveness, organisational culture, regulatory framework), and moderating variables (technology adoption=n, surveillance systems, risk management practices). This framework aligns with contemporary criminological thinking, which emphasizes the interaction between structural pressures and situational opportunities in explaining criminal behaviour (Felson & Boba, 2010).

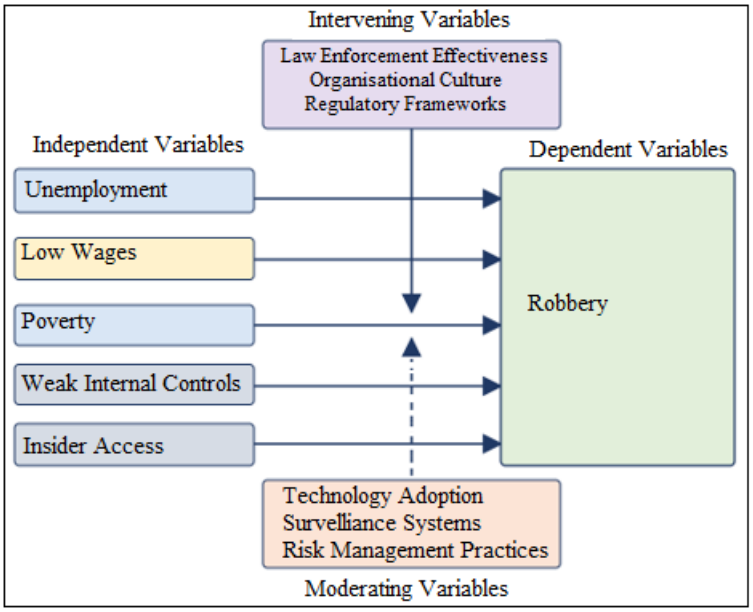

Figure 1: Robbery conceptual framework
Source: Researchers' deductions (2026)

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts a theoretical framework anchored in four interrelated criminological theories Routine Activity Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Fraud Triangle Theory, and Strain Theory to account for the multidimensional nature of robbery heists.

Routine Activity Theory
Routine Activity Theory, developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), posits that crime occurs when three elements converge: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship. In the Zimbabwean context, robbery heists often occur where valuable assets such as cash are present and security systems are inadequate or compromised; weak surveillance, predictable cash-movement schedules and limited law enforcement presence reduce guardianship, thereby increasing the likelihood of attacks (Felson & Clarke, 1998). The theory underscores the importance of strengthening target-hardening measures, such as surveillance technologies and access control systems, to reduce opportunities for crime.

Rational Choice Theory
Rational Choice Theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1986) assumes that offenders make decisions based on a rational evaluation of potential risks and rewards. In the case of robbery heists, offenders often target high-value assets such as cash-in-transit vehicles, where perceived rewards are substantial and insider information further reduces uncertainty (Clarke, 1997). Low risk of apprehension, weak investigative capacity, and low conviction rates may reinforce the perception that crime is a viable option; organised robbery groups often engage in careful planning, reconnaissance, and exploitation of institutional weaknesses (Burger, 2018).

Fraud Triangle Theory
Cressey's (1953) Fraud Triangle offers a framework for understanding criminal conduct through three interacting factors: pressure (financial difficulties and broader economic strain), opportunity (inadequate internal controls and unrestricted access to sensitive operational systems), and rationalisation (the offender constructing justifications for the act). Within the private security industry, staff frequently work in settings where exposure to cash-in-transit operations and security-related information forms part of everyday duties; where supervisory and control structures are deficient, this creates conditions conducive to collusion between internal personnel and external criminal elements (Albrecht et al., 2012). The framework holds particular explanatory value for understanding how insiders become implicated in robbery incidents, demonstrating that such offences frequently stem from structural and organisational shortcomings rather than isolated individual misconduct.

Strain Theory
Merton's (1938) Strain Theory posits that criminal behaviour emerges from a gap between culturally prescribed goals and the legitimate avenues available for attaining them. Zimbabwe's socio-economic context marked by high unemployment and constrained formal employment generates this kind of structural strain, an effect especially acute among young people who, shut out of meaningful economic participation, become susceptible targets for recruitment into criminal activity (Agnew, 1992). Strain Theory thus accounts for the underlying motivation behind criminal conduct, complementing perspectives that emphasis opportunity structures and rational decision-making.

Taken together, these theories illustrate that robbery heists emerge from the interplay of structural pressures and operational vulnerabilities, underscoring the necessity of multidimensional intervention strategies.

Empirical Review
Both African and international empirical research point to a connection between socio-economic factors, organisational shortcomings, and the prevalence of crime. Burger's (2018) South African study found that robberies tend to be well-organised operations, often carried out with the cooperation of insiders such as security staff and police officers, and that lax internal controls and corruption make robberies considerably more likely to succeed. Agbamu's (2024) investigation into Nigerian robbery trends similarly established a clear link between joblessness, poverty and violent offending, particularly in cities. Kenyan research points to comparable patterns, with documented heists relying on inside information and offenders frequently exploiting institutional weaknesses or posing as police officers (Kenyans.co.ke, 2021).

Internationally, Clarke (1997) and Felson and Boba (2010) show that criminal activity tends to cluster wherever oversight is lacking and valuable targets are available, lending support to Routine Activity Theory and the value of situational crime-prevention strategies. Looking at organizations specifically, Wells (2017) found that fraud and collusion from within tend to surface more often where governance is weak, oversight mechanisms fall short and staff are poorly compensated, while Albrecht et al. (2012) similarly stressed that insider threats grow more likely when wages are low and employees feel dissatisfied. In the Zimbabwean context, data from the Zimbabwe Republic Police and private security companies point to an upward trend in armed robberies, frequently with suspected insider involvement; while rigorous empirical research on this remains scarce, both anecdotal accounts and administrative records suggest that low pay, inadequate internal controls and widespread unemployment continue to be recurring drivers behind these heists.

Taken together, this body of literature supports the study's core argument: robbery heists arise from a mix of financial strain, institutional gaps and opportunism, making the case for coordinated policy and organisational interventions.

4. Research Methodology

Research Philosophy
According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), a research philosophy is a system of beliefs and assumptions about how knowledge is developed, including how data should be gathered, analysed and used. A positivist ontology was adopted for this study on the premise that there is one reality fixed, measurable and observable that can be assessed objectively, with knowledge based on evidence that can be experimentally verified and explained through cause-and-effect relationships (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Saunders et al., 2023). This paradigm was chosen because the study required the formulation of variables that could be evaluated objectively and deductively and is closely associated with quantitative approaches.

Research Design
A research design is the framework for a study that connects the empirical data to be gathered, the research questions, the analysis and the results (Saunders et al., 2023). Of the three broad strategies descriptive, exploratory and explanatory an explanatory design was adopted, since it determines how variables interact with one another and identifies cause-and-effect relationships (Auka, 2020), which suited the study's focus on the links between robbery and factors such as unemployment, low wages, poverty, weak internal controls and insider access.

Research Approach
A deductive approach was used, being the dominant approach in the natural sciences and well suited to subjecting existing theory to rigorous test, explaining causal relationships between variables, and supporting the collection of quantitative data (Saunders et al., 2023; Creswell, 2019). This fits the positivist paradigm and the study's aim of gathering substantial data to statistically confirm or challenge theory.

Research Strategy
A survey strategy was adopted, given its capacity to efficiently collect large amounts of standardised data from a sizeable sample in a cost-effective way, and its consistency with a quantitative methodology and positivist philosophy.

Population and Sampling
The study was conducted in Harare Metropolitan Province. The target population comprised police criminal investigations detectives, corporate security experts and security operatives working in selected private security companies in Harare's Central Business District, giving a total unit of analysis of 1,550 (Saunders et al., 2023). Security operatives were drawn from five registered private financial services in the CBD; 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 ten years' experience; and police investigating detectives were recruited through formal institutional liaison with the Zimbabwe Republic Police's Criminal Investigations Department, targeting officers with direct experience of robbery heist investigations. Participation across all three groups was voluntary and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Sample Size
Sample size was computed using the formula $N = n / (1 + n \times e^2)$, where n is the study population and e is the margin of error, giving $N = 1,550 / (1 + 1,550 \times 0.05^2) \approx$ **317**.

Of the 317 structured questionnaires administered, 240 were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 75%.

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

Respondents	Target Population	Sample	% of Sample
Police Investigating Officers	50	10	4%
Corporate Security Experts	1000	180	75%
Security Operatives (Guards)	500	50	21%
Total	1550	240	100%

Data Collection Instruments
Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended Likert-scale and multiple-choice items developed from the conceptual framework, administered to police investigating officers, security operatives and corporate security experts to capture factors contributing to robbery heists, current security measures and regulatory effectiveness within Harare Metropolitan Province. The intrinsic and practical benefits of the research were explained to participants, who took part voluntarily and at their own convenience, with findings promised to be shared with them on completion. The sample achieved (n=240; 75% response rate) provides sufficient statistical stability for the descriptive analysis reported.

Data Processing and Analysis
Quantitative data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26, applying econometric estimations to ascertain relationships among the study's variables.

Descriptive statistics
Descriptive statistics were used to numerically describe and compare variables, focusing on central tendency (mode, median, mean) and dispersion (interquartile range and standard deviation for the middle 50% of data). ANOVA was used to test the statistical significance of sex, education level and sector of operation.

Reliability and normality testing
Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS, with a coefficient of 0.7 taken as the threshold for acceptable internal consistency; the questionnaire was also reviewed by experts to improve wording and reliability. The Shapiro-Wilk test, appropriate for samples of this size, was used to assess normality of the data, with $p > 0.05$ taken to indicate no significant departure from normality and $p < 0.05$ indicating a need for nonparametric testing.

Correlation and Regression Analysis
Pearson's product-moment coefficient was used to determine the degree of correlation between independent and dependent variables, with correlations for normally distributed data ranging from -1.0 to +1.0. Regression analysis was subsequently used to identify predictive relationships between construct sets, informing refinement of the conceptual framework.

Ethical Considerations
Ethics refers to the standards of behaviour that guide conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of, or are affected by, a piece of research (Saunders et al., 2023), and researchers are obliged to protect participants, clients and consumers of research from adverse consequences (Cooper & Schindler, 2010; Deyganto & Mekonnen, 2018). Accordingly, participation in this study was entirely voluntary and free of coercion, with no material benefit offered for taking part; participants were informed of the study's goals, benefits and risks before deciding whether to participate, in line with the principle of informed consent, and the scope of the study was not extended beyond what had been agreed without seeking further permission. Identities were kept anonymous and no personally identifiable data were

collected or linked to responses. The risk of physical, social or psychological harm was kept to an absolute minimum, and questions likely to cause discomfort or humiliation were avoided. Findings were analysed and reported truthfully and accurately, and the researchers committed to sharing the results with participating police investigating officers and corporate security experts, consistent with good practice around plagiarism and research integrity. This study did not undergo formal institutional ethics committee review, as it was conducted independently of any university or organisational research programme; nonetheless, it adhered to standard ethical principles for social science research involving human participants, including voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality as described above.

5. Results and Discussion

Of the 317 administered questionnaires 240 were responded giving a 75% response rate.

Demographic Characteristics (n=240)

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics (n=240)

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percent
18-30	40	16.7%
31-40	140	58.3%
41-50	50	20.8%
Over 50	10	4.2%
Total	240	100%

Regarding age, 16.7% of respondents fell in the 18–30 years band, 58.3% were between 31 and 40 years, 20.8% were between 41 and 50 years, and 4.2% were over 50.

Gender of respondents (n=240)

In terms of gender, 66.7% were male and 33.3% female, reflecting Zimbabwe's patriarchal gender dynamics (Figure 2). Most respondents were married (66.7%).

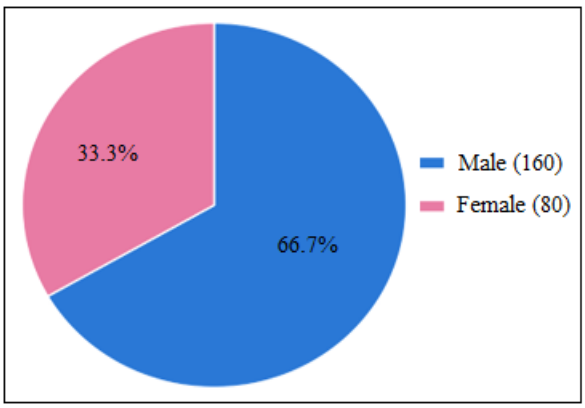

Figure 2: Gender of respondents

Level of education of respondents(n=240)

Regarding educational levels, the majority of respondents held Diploma qualifications (33.3%), followed by undergraduate (25%), postgraduate (20.8%), O-level (12.5%) and Certificate (8.3%) qualifications (Figure 3), consistent with Zimbabwe's high literacy rates. This spread indicates that respondents had adequate knowledge and appreciation of what constitutes robbery heists in the private sector, lending legitimacy to their perspectives on the study's findings. Figure 3 show the distribution by level of education.

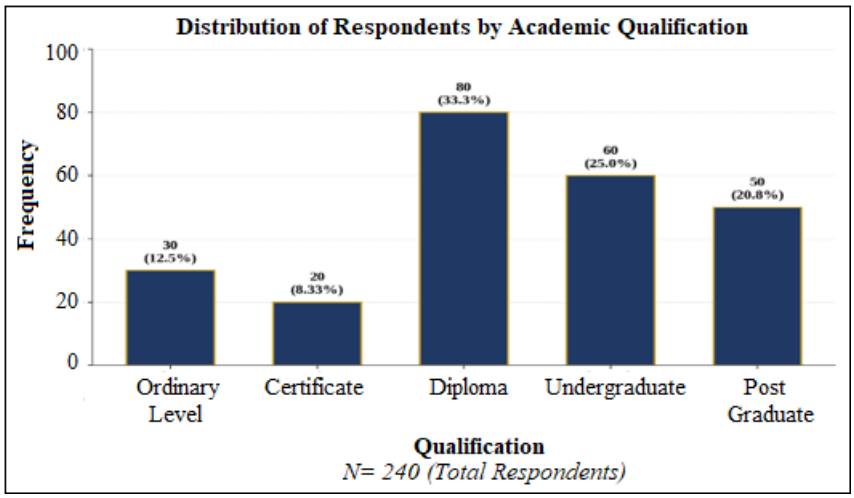

Figure 3: Level of education of respondents

Marital status of respondents(n=240)

Table 3: Marital status of respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	160	66.7%
Single	80	33.3%
Total	240	100%

The majority of respondents (66.7%, n=240) were married, while the remaining 33.3% (n=240) were single indicating that married individuals formed the dominant demographic group, and that the security fraternity in this sample is dominated by married personnel.

Sector of operation of respondents(n=240)

On sector of operation, security operatives made up (50/240 giving a percentage of 21%), corporate security experts a three quarter of the sample (180/240 reflecting 75%) and police officers the smallest group (10/240 resembling 4%), reflect the stratified/quota sampling approach used (Figure 4).

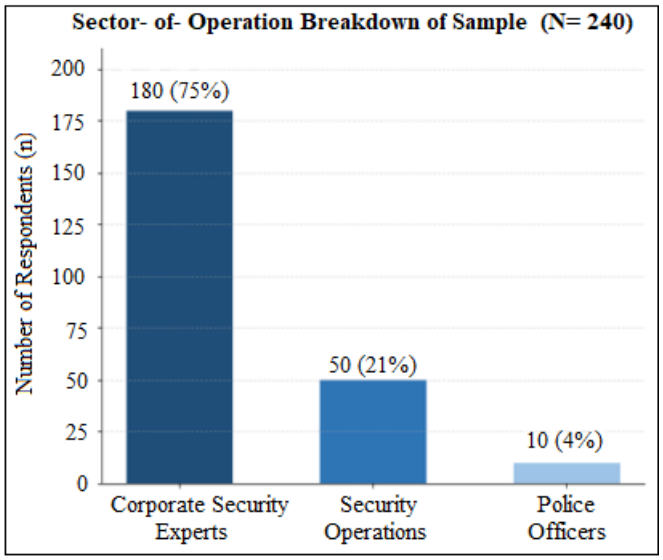

Figure 4: Sector of operation of respondents

Major Drivers of Robbery Heists: Perceptions by Respondent Group

Respondents in each professional group were asked to identify the single most significant driver of robbery heists from four options: poor remuneration, weak internal control systems, unemployment/poverty, and inside job/collusion.

Table 4: Major Drivers of Robbery Heists Police Investigating Officers' Perceptions (n=240)

Driver	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Poor Remuneration	02	20%	20%
Weak Internal Control Systems	03	30%	50%
Unemployment/Poverty	00	00%	50%
Inside Job (collusion)	05	50%	100%
TOTAL	10	100%	

Among police investigating officers, inside job/collusion was overwhelmingly the dominant driver (50%), more than the other three drivers combined, followed by weak internal control systems (30%). Cumulatively, collusion and control weaknesses account for 80% of responses, suggesting the two are interconnected weak controls (poor supervision, inadequate segregation of duties, lax cash-in-transit protocols) are often precisely what creates the opportunity for collusion to occur and go undetected. Poor remuneration (20%) and unemployment/poverty (0%) the more socio-economic drivers together accounted for only 20% of responses, running against the common assumption that heists are primarily poverty- or wage-driven.

Table 5: Major Drivers of Robbery Heists-Security Operatives' Perceptions (n=240)

Driver	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Poor remuneration	05	10%	10%
Weak internal control systems	15	30%	40%
Unemployment/poverty	05	10%	50%
Inside job (collusion)	25	50%	100%
TOTAL	50	100%	

Among the 50 security operatives surveyed, inside job/collusion was again the dominant perceived driver (50%), with a full half of respondents viewing heists as fundamentally an insider problem rather than a matter of external criminals overpowering defences. Weak internal controls (30%) was the second-largest factor conceptually linked to the first, representing the "opportunity" side of the Fraud Triangle equation. Poor remuneration is a classic precondition for the "pressure" element that pushes an insider toward collusion. Poor remuneration (5%) and unemployment (5%) reinforce this further, though representing the smallest driver, suggesting that operatives see this as a background socio-economic condition rather than a proximate cause.

Table 6: Major Drivers of Robbery Heists- Corporate Security Experts' Perceptions (n=240)

Driver	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Poor Remuneration	30	16.6%	16.6%
Weak Internal Control Systems	40	22.2%	38.8%
Unemployment/Poverty	10	5.5%	44.3%
Inside Job (Collusion)	100	55.5%	100%
TOTAL	180	100%	

Among the 180 corporate security experts surveyed, inside job/collusion again emerged as the single most dominant driver (55.5%), pointing to failures in personnel vetting, access control and trust-based systems that criminals often working with or as insiders are able to exploit. Weak internal control systems ranked second (22.2%), pairing logically with the inside-job finding since weak controls are precisely the conditions that make collusion possible and hard to detect; together, these two drivers account for 77.7% of responses, indicating that structural and organisational vulnerabilities, rather than purely socio-economic pressures, are perceived as the primary enablers of heists. Poor remuneration (16%) reflects a view consistent with the Fraud Triangle poor pay as pressure, weak controls as opportunity, and inside job as the resulting behaviour while unemployment/poverty ranked lowest (5.5%), suggesting corporate experts see broader socio-economic conditions as a comparatively minor driver relative to factors within the firm's direct control.

Table 7: Joint Display of Quantitative Findings on Robbery Heist Determinants

Determinant	Security Operatives (n=240)	Corporate Security Experts (n=240)	Police Officers (n=240)
Poor Remuneration/ low wages	05	30	02
Weak internal control systems	15	40	03
Unemployment/poverty	05	10	00
Inside Job (Collusion)	25	100	05
Total	50	180	10

The joint display reveals a broad convergence across all three respondent categories. Inside job/collusion is the dominant determinant in every group cited by 25 of 50 security operatives (50%), 100 of 180 corporate security experts (55.5%) and 5 of 10 police officers (50%), a narrow range that strengthens the validity of the finding and suggests it is not an artefact of any single respondent group's vantage point. This is consistent with a Fraud Triangle reading in which collusion reflects the convergence of opportunity (privileged access to

premises, cash or schedules), pressure (financial strain) and rationalisation (justifying betrayal of employer trust).

Weak internal control systems rank second across all three groups, with (15/50 operatives, 40/180 corporate experts, 3/10 police officers) a striking convergence that is conceptually consistent with weak controls being what enables insider collusion to succeed in practice. Poor remuneration/low wages show a similar pattern (10% operatives, 16.6% corporate experts, 20% police officers), resonating with Strain Theory: inadequate compensation creates the financial pressure that lowers the threshold for participation in, or facilitation of, heists. Unemployment/poverty is rated lowest and fairly uniformly across groups which is notable given how prominently this factor features in general criminological literature on property crime suggesting respondents perceive robbery heists specifically as more organizationally driven than externally or socio-economically driven.

Perceptions of Institutional and Organisational Security Factors

In addition to the forced-choice ranking above, respondents rated their level of agreement with eleven statements on a five-point Likert scale (n=240 throughout), covering the same four drivers independently alongside seven further institutional and organisational factors.

Table 8 summarizes the proportion agreeing (strongly agree + agree), neutral, and disagreeing (disagree + strongly disagree) with each statement.

Table 8: Perceptions of Institutional and Organisational Security Factors (n=240)

Item	% Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree
Poor remuneration/low wages	58.0	12.5	29.5
Weak internal control systems	87.5	4.2	8.3
Unemployment/poverty	58.0	17.0	25.0
Inside job/collusion	94.0	2.0	4.0
Regulatory and policy framework effective	12.0	8.0	80.0
Law enforcement effective	30.0	4.0	66.0
Organisational culture a driver of heists	4.0	4.0	91.0
Technology adoption effective	71.0	8.0	21.0
Surveillance systems effective	84.0	8.0	8.0
Risk management practices effective	75.0	4.0	21.0
Existing security measures effective overall	4.0	4.0	92.0

The Likert results corroborate the forced-choice rankings above. Insider collusion drew the strongest endorsement of any single item (94% agreement), followed by weak internal controls (87.5%) the two drivers' respondents most frequently named as the dominant cause when forced to choose a single factor. Poor remuneration and unemployment/poverty were each endorsed by 58% of respondents, though both were consistently ranked behind collusion and weak controls in the forced-choice data, suggesting these socio-economic factors are perceived as a contributing backdrop rather than the immediate trigger.

Respondents held strongly negative views of the institutional environment surrounding these drivers: 80% regarded the regulatory and policy framework as ineffective, and 66% held similarly negative views of law enforcement effectiveness. Organisational culture, by contrast, was not perceived as a driver of heists (only 4% agreement, 91% disagreement), suggesting respondents locate the problem in specific control failures and remuneration rather than in the broader ethos of their organizations.

A notable pattern emerges around existing security measures. Individual components were rated favorably in isolation technology adoption (71%), surveillance systems (84%) and risk management practices (75%) yet only 4% of respondents agreed that current security measures, taken as a whole, are effective, with 92% disagreeing. This gap between well-regarded individual components and a poorly regarded overall system points to a coordination and governance failure: the building blocks of a security response exist within firms, but are not being integrated into a coherent, well-governed whole.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the major drivers of robbery heists within Zimbabwe's private security sector, to review the current legal and policing frameworks governing armed robbery, and to generate evidence-based recommendations for mitigating the problem. Using a quantitative, positivist design and structured questionnaires administered to 240 police investigating officers, corporate security experts and security operatives across Harare's Central Business District, the study moved beyond narrative accounts of robbery statistics towards a systematic, evidence-based analysis of the factors driving these crimes.

Insider collusion emerged as the single most consistently endorsed driver of robbery heists across all three respondent categories, with 94% agreement in the Likert data (Table 8) and independent identification as the leading single cause by police investigating officers (50%), security operatives (50%) and corporate security experts (55.5%) when asked to name the most significant driver (Table 7). Weak internal control systems followed as the second most cited factor (87.5% agreement), tracking closely with collusion across all three sub-samples and supporting the interpretation that weak controls are what allow insider collusion to occur and go undetected. Poor remuneration and unemployment/poverty were also endorsed by a majority of respondents (58% each), though both were consistently ranked behind collusion and weak controls when respondents identified a single dominant driver, suggesting heists in this sector are perceived primarily as an organisational and human-resource failure rather than a purely socio-economic phenomenon.

The study also examined the adequacy of existing regulatory, policing and organisational responses. Respondents held strongly negative views of the current regulatory and policy framework (80% ineffective) and law enforcement effectiveness (66% negative). Existing organisational security measures, taken as a whole, were judged even more harshly, with 92% disagreeing that current measures are effective despite comparatively favorable perceptions of

specific components in isolation: technology adoption (71%), surveillance systems (84%) and risk management practices (75%) were all viewed positively. This indicates that the individual building blocks of a security response exist within firms but are not being integrated into a coherent, well-governed system, and are not backed by a regulatory and policing environment that respondents trust.

These findings lend strong empirical support to the study's theoretical framework. The dominance of insider collusion and weak internal controls is consistent with a Fraud Triangle reading in which the "opportunity" leg is institutionally produced through lax internal governance rather than individual moral failure, while poor remuneration reflects the "pressure" leg. The weakness of external guardianship an ineffective regulatory framework and under-resourced policing is consistent with Routine Activity Theory's emphasis on the absence of a capable guardian as a precondition for crime, while the socio-economic backdrop of high unemployment and a large informal sector reflects the structural strain described by Strain Theory.

Overall, the evidence indicates that robbery heists in Zimbabwe's private security sector are best understood not as episodes of external, opportunistic crime, but as failures rooted primarily within the organizations themselves in recruitment and vetting, internal controls, remuneration and oversight compounded by a regulatory and law enforcement environment that respondents do not regard as an effective deterrent. The study is limited by its focus on Harare Metropolitan Province and its reliance on the perceptions of security-sector respondents rather than independently verified incident data; the findings should therefore be read as a systematic account of how those closest to the problem understand its causes, rather than as a definitive causal test. Even so, the consistency of the pattern across three independent respondent groups gives the central conclusion considerable weight: tackling robbery heists in Zimbabwe's private sector requires action focused squarely on internal organisational governance and human-resource practice, backed by a more credible regulatory and law enforcement response.

7. Practical Managerial Recommendations

1) Conduct thorough, ongoing background screening and vetting. With insider collusion the dominant driver across all three respondent categories (94% agreement), pre-employment vetting should be strengthened and extended into periodic re-vetting and lifestyle audits for staff in trusted or cash-handling positions, supported by verified professional networks such as the National Employment Council for the Security Industry of Zimbabwe (NECSIZ).
2) Strengthen internal controls and segregation of duties. Since weak internal controls were the second most cited driver (87.5% agreement) and tracked closely with collusion across all groups, firms handling cash-in-transit and other high-value operations should tighten supervision, enforce segregation of duties, rotate sensitive assignments, and introduce independent audit trails for cash-handling and access-control processes.
3) Improve remuneration and welfare for security guards and practitioners. With poor pay endorsed by 58% of respondents and ranked among the top drivers by security operatives and corporate experts, firms should review wage structures, benefits and working conditions for front-line staff in line with the NECSIZ framework, reducing the financial "pressure" the Fraud Triangle identifies as a precursor to collusion.
4) Reform the regulatory and policy framework governing private security and armed robbery. With 80% of respondents rating the current framework as ineffective, policymakers should review and update legislation governing licensing, oversight and accountability of private security firms, closing gaps that allow weak internal governance to persist unchecked.
5) Deepen collaboration between private security firms and law enforcement. With 66% of respondents viewing law enforcement effectiveness negatively, private security companies, corporate security departments and the Zimbabwe Republic Police should establish more formal information-sharing and joint response arrangements, particularly for cash-in-transit operations and investigations with suspected insider involvement.
6) Provide specialized training for security personnel and investigators. Training should be expanded to cover threat recognition, cash-in-transit protocols, fraud-awareness and ethics, targeting the human factors underlying insider collusion, and extended to police officers handling robbery cases.
7) Expand employment opportunities, particularly for young people. Although ranked lowest among proximate drivers, unemployment and poverty were endorsed by 58% of respondents as contributing to the environment from which perpetrators may be recruited; broader job-creation initiatives would reduce the pool of economically strained individuals susceptible to recruitment into criminal activity.
8) Run public awareness campaigns on security practices. Firms and regulators should run periodic campaigns for staff and the public on reporting channels for suspected insider activity, whistle-blower protections, and the risks of collusion, reinforcing a culture of vigilance across the sector.
9) Invest further in technology, surveillance and risk management, while addressing governance gaps. Respondents viewed technology adoption (71%), surveillance systems (84%) and risk management practices (75%) favorably; firms should continue investing in these areas but pair this investment with the governance reforms above, since technology alone was judged insufficient against the 92% who found current overall security measures ineffective.
10) Undertake further research extending beyond Harare. Given this study's confinement to Harare Metropolitan Province and reliance on respondent perceptions, future research should extend the survey to other provinces, incorporate verified incident-level data from the ZRP and private security providers, and track outcomes over time to test the causal relationships identified here.

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