Introduction

This paper emerges from a doctoral research study examining flea market tradi activities in the Central Business District of Gweru, the capital of Zimbabwe Midlands province, a city with a projected population of approximately 198,2 in 2024 (Worldometer, 2024). The study focused exclusively on licensed fl market traders, deliberately excluding unlicensed traders and hawkers, wh likely outnumber their licensed counterparts. The participants operated fro small stalls located in various sites owned either by the city council or priva individuals.

As a qualitative study, data collection was conducted through unstructure interviews, recorded using a digital audio recorder. The interview data we subsequently analysed using NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis softwa The study employed a grounded theory methodology, which, as defined by i founders, seeks "the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtain and analysed" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). Grounded theory analysis detailed, progressing word by word and sentence by sentence, ensuring fideli to the themes and concerns emerging directly from the data. The analytic process begins with preliminary (or initial) coding, advances through selecti coding, and concludes with theoretical coding (Chen et al., 2024).

A key challenge in qualitative research is the transcription process, particular when working with unstructured interviews and indigenous languag that digital transcription software may not support. Researchers frequent encounter issues related to accuracy, time consumption, and the potential f bias in manual transcription (Irshad et al., 2024; Ko et al., 2024). The use transcription in grounded theory research, which requires an in-depth, iterati analysis, further amplifies these challenges. Recent studies have highlighted th need for methodological adaptations, such as partial transcription, to enhan efficiency without compromising the depth of analysis (O'Brien et al., 2025).

Moreover, qualitative researchers must navigate ethical concerns related to da accuracy and participant confidentiality. Advances in AI-based transcriptio tools have shown promise in overcoming some of these challenges, yet the effectiveness remains limited for lesser-known languages (Blonda et al., 202