**CRIMINAL DOCKET SYSTEM**

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Hungry Zimbabwean police officers turn to corruption for survival (Mbuba et al., 2021). For many years, media reports have continuously highlighted the seriousness of stolen and lost case dockets plaguing the Zimbabwe Police Service. The Criminal Docket System, which is a web-based application that will be used by the Zimbabwe Republic Police to manage the dockets for courts and petty dockets, acts as a decision maker system to state whether the case should be dismissed on fine payment or the person should proceed to court. The system will be available at the police stations and will enable the police investigating officer to enter the details of the case and information about the accused or suspect. It will also provide a platform for accused persons' replies, statements, fingerprints, and if the case is serious, it will accommodate the public prosecutors' reference to which court the case is going to. In addition, the system will accommodate the criminal record bureau reference.

The proposed system will be used by police officers to open and manage dockets. All the information will be copied to the main administrator’s dashboard. Each user will have an account and will be registered using their force number and preferred password so as to easily track the owner of the case. It will also accommodate PDFs that will be uploaded in the event of power cuts, poor network, and other police stations in rural districts where there is no electricity and poor internet connectivity. If properly used, the system will curb theft and sale of dockets as well as manipulation and loss of docket information from the police stations. Each case docket is first indexed and registered on the Crime Administration System before being scanned on the centralized system, accessible at all the Zimbabwe Police Stations. Once the case is opened, it cannot be deleted. The added advantage of this system is the ability of the information system to undertake audit trails and capture judgements from magistrates or judges on the dockets with the new system.

The main focus of this chapter is to address the main aims and objectives. The problem definition and objectives must be established in order for the system development life cycle to be successful. The researcher will examine the methods and instruments necessary for the system development, background of study, justification, and rationale. Chapter one will provide an overview of major aspects that support the development of the criminal docket system.

**1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The background of the study reviews the existing literature on a particular area of research, leading to suggestions or proposed topics. Insights (2018). According to Malamud and Springman (2017), a docket is a list of cases awaiting action in a court, and it is difficult to measure or determine the precise numbers of stolen or lost dockets despite disclosure by the police officer. Chingarande, (2022) reportedly reports that a number of cases are being destroyed in Zimbabwe. Corrupted police officers are given ultimatums by local business people to participate and destroy evidence in cases. The researcher gave an insight into the concern to curb all such malicious acts in the ZRP and central intelligence department.

According to Mujoni (2017), in Zimbabwe, criminal dockets and related evidence mysteriously go missing at the courts or before quite often. There are two reasons for the disappearance of these documents.

1. Judicial Fraud
2. Judicial system seems not to be doing enough work

Mujoni (2017) cited that once the evidence is missed, justice is largely undermined. Furthermore, the vanished documents have been meticulously calculated, and some of the individuals involved work for judicial and law enforcement units.

As per Ngoepa and Makhubela (2015), proper record management plays a pivotal role in supporting the justice system. Records such as dockets are of paramount importance as evidence that a particular action took place. Without these records, the court or government cannot administer justice, and offenders can be set free while victims are denied justice.

This gave insight and justice to understand what technologies are available and how they are used to eradicate such myriad problems for justice to exist in Zimbabwe. All criminal dockets will be kept safe from all kinds of loss, for instance, fire, theft, misplacement, wear and tear. The system is important as it will evenly distribute all case data across multiple police stations, monitor police documents, and store them.

**1.2.1 Background of the Organisation**

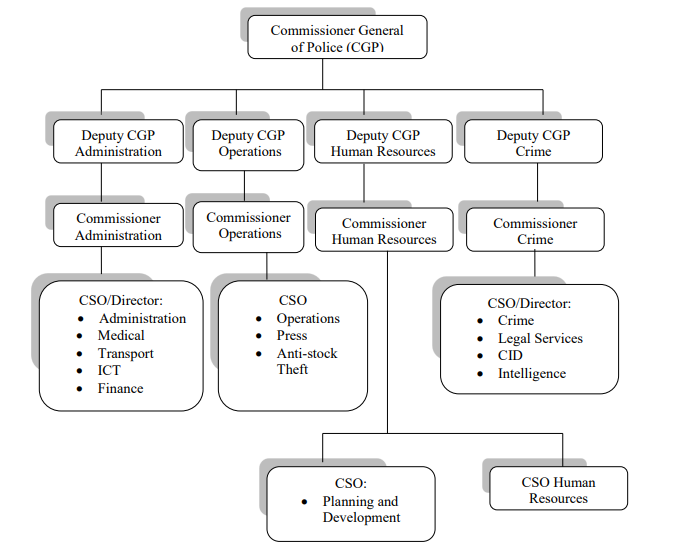
As accessed at (<http://www.zrp.gov.zw/index.php?option=com> on 10 October 2022) The police force was created by Cecil John Rhodes Pioneers when he was the prime Minister of the Cape Colony. In July 1890 he firstly recruited and trained 200 white men which then became the British Southern Company Police. In 1892 the group grew up to 500 strong policemen when Lieutenant Colonel Penne Father led the pioneer into the country.

The police leadership was taken over by the blacks, both in the Army and Airforce. The Zimbabwe Republic Police was born in 1980 with the integration of the British South Africa Police ZIPRA and ZANLA forces after the Chimurenga War, and the first black commissioner of the ZRP was Wiridzayi Nguruve in 1982, and passed to Mr. Henry Murukazhizha in 1985. In 1993, Cde Augustine Chihuri became the commissioner of the ZRP. It became black advancement up to this era where vacancies are available for all blacks and through the creation of the Economic Revival Programme Strategy Strategic Plan Vision, whose main goal was to stop all corrupt activities that are leading to economic haemorrhage in the country, the police also started implementing the New Economic Programme ushered in by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.

**1.2.2 Organisational Structure**

As per Kenton, (2022) an organizational structure is a framework that specifies how specific tasks are to be carried out in order to meet the objectives of an organization. Rules, roles, and responsibilities may be a part of these activities.

**Fig 1 Zimbabwe Republic Police Organogram**



**1.2.3 Vision**

To be the leading police service providers in the organisation in the provision of quality and professional service.

**1.2.4 Mission Statement**

To create an environment conductive for the attainment of vision 2030.

**1.3 PROBLEM DEFINITION**

According to Kember and Corbett (2018), problem definition is crucial in all decision-making processes. A research problem is a statement about a problem that needs to be solved, a condition that needs to be improved, or a perplexing question that exists in scholarly literature, theory, or practice and indicates the need for deeper understanding and deliberate investigation.

Currently, the ZRP is heavily relying on physical paper dockets and has cast doubts on the veracity of the chain of evidence when a docket goes missing and resurfaces. Ultimately, it results in miscarriages of justice for victims and complainants who depend on the criminal justice system to address their concerns. Important criminal records are rapidly being lost or misplaced as they move from one office to another, jeopardizing the entire criminal system. The Central Criminal Bureau (CCB), which is housed at the Criminal Investigation Department headquarters, uses the manual system to keep records, which is becoming more unreliable as more criminal records pile up day by day, resulting in record misfiling. It becomes difficult to track some criminal records that are lost on a daily basis using the current system.

Due to poor management systems of important documents, paper dockets have become a loophole for important and heart-wrenching cases to disappear in the dust. Missing dockets and ineffective policing result in an average of 22 cases of gender-based violence, including rape and murder, being thrown out of Western courts every month (Reddy 2020). The proposed system will try to overcome such loopholes as the case dockets will be handled on a web application and stored in an archive at the police station once the investigation has been concluded.

In light of how advanced and mobile today's criminals are, the Zimbabwe Republic Police must exchange crucial information about them with law enforcement officials all around the country. To effectively deal with these criminals who hop from town to town committing various offenses like robbery, drug trafficking, murder, and many other serious crimes, the ZRP needs to effectively share useful information and biological data of criminals, such as fingerprints, criminal evidence, and witness statements, to name a few.

In line with Kratcoski and Edeilbacher (2018), corruption is when powerful people engage in dishonest or fraudulent behaviour, usually involving bribery. Through corrupt methods and in collusion with dishonest or corrupt police officers, criminals can conveniently evade punishment or sentences for their illegal cases or actions. In order to protect criminals for their own personal benefit, officers manning the records offices can easily destroy physical files of criminal records and all the evidence. Once such evidence and records are tempered with, criminals are released to continue perpetrating offences since the investigating and judicial officers need this information to proceed with the case or investigation.

**1.4 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

A research aim describes an expression of aspirations as to why researchers are undertaking research or a study (Smith, 2019). The main aim of the proposed system is to design a web-based application that ensures dockets are not lost or tempered with and to build a system that will also assist in the management and administration of criminal cases, inquests, and enquiries into the cases from when they are opened to when they are closed.

**1.5 OBJECTIVES**

Objectives have to focus on the problem definition of research, (Islam and Samsudin 2020), the objectives of this proposed system are to

* Create a decision web-based application that will determine whether the person should pay a fine or go to court.
* Create a system that accepts criminal bureau records.
* Design a system that will accommodate petty dockets and major or more sensitive cases.
* To design a system that will allow offline users to upload pdf document cases.
* Program an application that accommodates the fingerprints of the accused, the witness statement, the investigating officer, and the accused person's reply.
* The system will accept the public prosecutors' referral from the court and indicate which court the case will be assigned to.
* To develop a system for centralizing sensitive information to the intelligence department.
* Create a system that allows officers and detectives to create online dockets. That will also be connected to the court.

**1.6 INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS**

The instruments and methods are steps and tools that are vital in the development and research of the project from stretch. Step-by-step techniques are shown from the programming environment in order to have valuable research. The instrument and methods are designed to help researchers accomplish their goals and objectives (Habibi et al., 2020). Having assessed the Criminal Docket system, the researcher is going to make use of the following instruments and research methodologies. They are going to be used to create a more reliable and efficient web-based application.

**1.6.1 INSTRUMENTS**

**1.6.1.1 MySQL Database**

The programmer will use the MySQL database in order to store all the registration details, a statement from the witness, a court order, fingerprints of the accused, and other related formats of data. According to Siahaan and Sianipar (2020), MySQL archives have higher performance in terms of read and write operations. Siahaan and Sianipar (2020) cited that the MySQL database can handle sensitive information and maintain data consistency as it can be configured to reject null values. The use of MySQL will help the system design during account signup and login by storing passwords using the Harsh-MD5 function to encrypt sensitive information at each police station into scrambled format. Hence, data or information collected will become difficult to access by third-parties or hackers. As per Ohyver (2019), he added that the MySQL database is more convenient in terms of response time in retrieving or adding data.

**1.6.1.2 PHP, HTML, CSS, XAMP and Java Script**

To program the Criminal Docket System, the programmer will make use of PHP as a programing language, HMTL, and Java script to fully develop the system. All the hardcoding of the subpages and main pages, including all the input boxes and buttons to have a graphical user interface, will be done using HTML5 and PHP. As per Carr and Gray. (2018), the PHP framework is designed to facilitate software development and is increasingly popular in web-based applications.

Xamp will be installed to support and access MYSQL databases. As per Mearaj et al. (2018), the application runs each time when testing the application. It will run as a local host during the testing phase. Xamp stands for Cross Platform (X). The program will make use of this feature to compress different input data formats.

Sublime Text will be used as the PHP environment’s text editor. As argued by Mitchell (2017), Sublime Text has many features and can be used with a variety of languages, including PHP, Python, and JavaScript, to name a few, making it the preferred text editor for many programmers.

In addition, the programmer will use Cascading Style Sheets and Bootstrap to make the interfaces more visually appealing. Bootstrap and CSS are more powerful for creating responsive web pages. Dowden (2020) stated that CSS is a powerful tool for designing responsive pages and is essentially a programming language.

**1.6.1.3 Microsoft word**

Microsoft Word will be used as a text software to visibly document everything from the overview to the instructions on how the system will be used. All the chapters and user instructions will be in written text using Microsoft Word. It will be used to edit, add, and delete texts during the documentation phase.

**1.6.1 Research Methods**

The researcher is going to make use of the following methods to carry out a complete research project on different individuals and groups of people. As per Davi (2017), methods are various ways in which a specific task is done. Research methods are more concerned with how the research is conducted during the event in order to obtain reliable and valid results (Rose and McKinley 2019). It delves deeper into data collection techniques. It also covers the fundamentals of gathering information and managing data for research purposes (Zozus 2019).

The researcher will make use of a qualitative research approach in order to collect the necessary information. Qualitative research is an iterative process in which one gains a better understanding of the phenomenon being researched by gaining new important distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon. Qualitative research, as explained by Johnson and Chauvin (2020), "to contribute to the selection of appropriate research methods that increase trustworthiness and minimize researcher bias inherent in qualitative methodologies, research must be clear and focused, and well supported by a solid conceptual framework." For this project, the researcher will make use of interviews and questionnaires to obtain detailed information from police stations and other civilians during the research process. To add on, the researcher will make use of both primary and secondary sources to understand other literature related to the criminal docket system (i.e., field and desk research).

**1.6.2.1 Interviews**

To begin with, interviews are the most direct and straightforward method of collecting thorough and rich information on this project. The style of interview used to collect data can be tailored to the research questions, participant characteristics, and the researcher's desired approach Interviews promote the study of different thoughts that may arise during a face-to-face dialogue (Meyer, 2020). Structured, semi-structured, and narrative interviews are the three types of interviews that will be used for this research topic. The key distinction between them is the interviewer's level of control over the encounter and the purpose of the interview. The researcher will abide by ethics by keeping the names and identities confidential.

**1.6.2.2 Questionnaires**

Questions that are open-ended as well as closed-ended questions will be asked of certain individuals, and questions will be structured. This method has some advantages, as responders will be given ample time to answer the questions. The researcher will direct many questions to the police officer based on the existing system or systems and the challenges being faced using the current docket system. In the event of understanding such problems, it will be easy for the developer to design an appropriate application based on functionality and the application interface. When using open-ended or closed-ended response questions in a questionnaire, the response method is an important issue to consider. The choice of open-ended or closed-ended responses by researchers is heavily influenced by the study's goals. In this research, the researcher will use both open-ended and closed-ended questions to get the required information.

**1.7 Justification and rationale**

The proposed system is of paramount importance as it will come with a number of justifications from the previous system of paper-based dockets that are easily lost or show wear and tear. The current system being used has limited security and transparency features. To add to that, storage rooms can easily catch fire, and if all the written paper dockets go missing, a criminal can easily walk away. Hence, there is a need for the proposed system with the Zimbabwe Republic Police. The proposed system is fully justified as follows:

If the system is correctly used, the criminal docket system can be a powerful tool as it will ensure that when a case reaches the prosecutor, it includes all the necessary information to ensure that the culprits do not get off lightly due to a lack of evidence. Once the case is filed, it is centralized to the central intelligence department as evidence and is kept until the court dismisses the case. All computerized records will be kept in a large database and it will be difficult for the case to be easily deleted by one user as duplicate copies will be stored by different departments, from the police station up to the central intelligence. This will help to reduce the practice of bartering dockets in exchange for gratuities. Once the case is filed, it becomes difficult and risky to destroy evidence.

The proposed system will help to reduce paperwork for the police and ease the delivery of information on complaints from one department to another. The entire case docket will be scanned and stored electronically in case the hardcopy is lost or destroyed.

In addition, the system will aid decision-making by charging minor offenses with a fine rather than taking the case to court. Minor offenses such as public drinking, loitering, and assault, to name a few, will result in a fine. The proposed system has a high chance of serving justice to both the victim and the victimizers.

**1.8 Conclusions**

In conclusion, the researcher looked at the Criminal Docket System on how it will be used, how it will operate within the ZRP, and how the researcher is going to carry out research strategies making use of the interview and questioners to gather much more detailed information and data on how the current system is being used. The researcher also justifies why the project is crucial to the victims and government policy departments. The paragraphs above clearly state how the paperwork is being misused to benefit the offenders and how the proposed system will overcome some of the problems in the Zimbabwe Republic Police.